

INDEX

Foreword

Introduction

**Against fixity: A hybrid reading of Breyten Breytenbach's
art, poetry, writing, aesthetics and philosophy.**

1.1. The concept of 'fixity' in Breytenbach's work

1.2. The concept of 'fixity' in Breytenbach's work

1.3. The consequences of fixity

Melanie Hester Grobler

1.3.1. A hybrid reading of Breytenbach's work

1.4. The concept of 'fixity' in Breytenbach's work

1.5. The concept of 'fixity' in Breytenbach's work

1.6. The concept of 'fixity' in Breytenbach's work

1.7. The concept of 'fixity' in Breytenbach's work

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1.8. The concept of 'fixity' in Breytenbach's work

1.9. The concept of 'fixity' in Breytenbach's work

1.10. Summary

Chapter 1: The Movement of Bodies

2.1. Movement and the Language of the Moving Body

2.1.1. Nietzsche on Friedrich

2.2. The Zenith

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INDEX

Foreword	8
Introduction	35
Chapter One: Fire and Water	
1.1. Tears in Breytenbach's work	52
1.2. The dog of pain: <i>Dog Heart</i>	56
1.3. The consciousness of masochism: <i>The Bat</i>	58
1.3.1. A critical comparison between de Sade and Breytenbach.	62
1.4. Schism and the watery basis of things	65
1.4.1. The Watercourse Way	69
1.5. Fire Consciousness	70
1.5.1. Suchness	74
1.6. Water and fire as the essence of the void	78
1.6.1. Notes on the fire-like basis of consciousness	83
1.7. Network and pattern making	85
1.8. The nomadic way: Koyaanisqatsi and <i>le Coucher de soleil</i>	92
1.9. <i>Ars poetica</i> - values of the outsider	96
1.10. Summary	97
Chapter Two: The Movement of Bodies.	98
2.1. Movement and the landscape of the eluding horizon	99
2.1.1. Notes on Totleben	103
2.2. The Zennist	106

2.3. Multiplicities and repetition	108
2.4. The nadaist	112
2.5. The bodily movement towards death and decay	118
2.5.1. Notes on <i>cadavre exquis</i>	121
2.5.2. Notes on the death of George Dyer	123
2.6. Breytenbach and Bacon's cry	124
2.7. Fragments and other bodily pieces	127
2.7.1. Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge and BREYTEN 68	128
2.8. Notes on decapitation and the intellect	132
2.8.1. The intellect	134
2.9. <i>Ars poetica</i>	135
2.10. Summary	137
Chapter Three: Movement and Inscription	139
3.1. On inscription and identity	139
3.1.1. The first photograph	139
3.1.2. The second photograph	141
3.1.3. The third photograph	142
3.2. The social body and the nomad	143
3.2.1. The nomads	146
3.3. The political body and the landscape of revolution	148
3.4. Social criticism: art as social criticism	152
3.5. Commentary on interiors and bodies	156
3.5.1. <i>SKRYT</i>	158
3.6. The carnival-goer	161
3.6.1. The carnival mask	162

3.7. Borders	164
3.8. On consciousness (insect lament)	167
3.9. <i>Ars poetica</i>	170
3.10. Summary	170
Chapter Four: Memory.	173
4.1. Introduction	173
4.1.1. Notes on memory, writing, imagination and death	174
4.1.2. Notes on memory, writing and creativity	175
4.1.3. Notes on memory, painting and revolution	175
4.1.4. Notes on memory, prison and death	176
4.2. The Wall	180
4.3. Spaces between the walls	185
4.3.1. Notes on the labyrinth	185
4.3.2. The poetics of memory-space	188
4.3.3. The void	190
4.4. The prison drawings	192
4.4.1. Spaces in the prison drawings	196
4.4.2. The war machines	198
4.5. In memory of the ancestor	200
4.6. (Zen) memory-mirror	202
4.6.1. The dance	207
4.7. Fragments of identity	208
4.8. Memories of Yolande	211
4.9. <i>Ars poetica</i> on the carnival and the grotesque	218
4.10. Summary	220

Chapter Five: The Chameleon	223
5.1. The “sharded” self	225
5.2. Selflessness and Buddhism	230
5.3. Multiple identities	234
5.3.1. Relations between different identities	235
5.3.2. The Hybrid	238
5.4. The mouth is too secret not to feel pain	241
5.5. Exile	244
5.5.1. The border intellectual - the Afrikaner Dante	251
5.6. The nomadic novel	254
5.6.1. Notes on <i>A Season in Paradise</i>	256
5.6.2. Notes on <i>Return to Paradise</i>	258
5.7. Other spaces	260
5.8. Post-colonialism	265
5.8.1. The Other	269
5.9. <i>Ars poetica</i>	275
5.10. Summary	276
Chapter Six: Reflection.	279
6.1. Reality and consciousness	279
6.2. Zen and the direct pointing to reality	281
6.2.1. Paradox	282
6.2.2. Denial of Opposites	283
6.2.3. Thahata and sunyata	286
6.2.4. Satori and zazen	287

6.3. Realities of utopia	289
6.4. The simulacrum and simulations	293
6.5. The simulacrum of the theatre	299
6.6. The divine irreverence of images	303
6.7. The utopia of sur-reality - the nomadic way	306
6.8. The utopia of memory and forgetting	312
6.9. The <i>Ars poetica</i> of reality	317
6.10. Summary	318
Conclusion	320
7.1. The interview - <i>Reflections on identity</i>	320
7.2. The play - <i>Die Toneelstuk</i>	322
Principal Dates	333
Bibliography	346
Summary	369
Opsomming	371

Translations of poems and prose by Melanie Grabler.

In the Indo-European mythology, political sovereignty, or domination, have two heads: the magician-kind and the jurist-priest. Rex and Flamen, Raj and Brahman, Romulus and Numa, Varuna and Mitra, the despot and the legislator, the binder and the organizer. Undoubtedly, these two poles stand in opposition term by term, as the obscure and the clear, the violent and the calm, the quick and the weighty, the fearsome and the regulated, the “bond” and the “pact” etc. But their opposition is only relative; they function as a pair, in alternations, as though they expressed a division of the One or constituted into themselves a sovereign unity. They are at once antithetical and complementary, necessary to one another and consequently without hostility, lacking a mythology of conflict: a specification on one level automatically calls forth a homologous specification on another. The two together exhaust the field of the function. They are the principal elements of a State apparatus that proceeds by a One-Two, distributes binary distinctions and forms a milieu of interiority. It is a double articulation that makes the State apparatus into a *stratum*. It will be noted that war is not contained within this apparatus. Either the State has at its disposal a violence that is not channeled through war –either it uses policemen and jailers in place of warriors, has no arms, and no need of them, operates through immediate, magical capture, “seizes” and “binds,” preventing all combat –or the State acquires an army, but in a way that presupposes a juridical integration of war and the organization of a military function. As for the war machine in itself, it seems to be irreducible to the State apparatus, to be outside its sovereignty and prior to its law: it comes from elsewhere. *Indra, the warrior’s god, is in opposition to Varuna no less than to Mitra.* He can no more be reduced to one or the other than can he constitute a third of their kind. Rather, he is like a pure and immeasurable multiplicity, the pack, an irruption of the ephemeral and the power of metamorphosis (Georges Dumézil (1948 &1970) and Deleuze & Guattari (1986).

FOREWORD

Early in February 1998, the photographer and I arrived in Paris to photograph and document Breyten Breytenbach's paintings and drawings. We stayed in the district of Saint Germaine, right opposite the Procop, in an extended roof room, which would serve as a kitchen, bathroom, lounge and a separate bedroom. There was a supermarket around the corner where we could buy food that would, later, back at the "apartment", be transformed into a meal in a black pot. Breytenbach's apartment near the Pantheon, was within walking distance.

Looking back over his work, Breytenbach writes that he can usually ascribe a geographical location to his paintings. An experimental situation as well. In earlier years he worked in a studio in a wooden house, north of Paris. The quarter was poor and unpretentious. Facing the studio was a building that despite the large windows in the one wall blocked out the view outside. The paintings came out in tones of grey and brown. Often the works depicted figures isolated in a largish room and blinded by the exterior light. An Afrikaans writer, Chris Barnard (1939 -) who visited him there, described him as a restful man with a soft voice, vulnerable goat eyes and a shy smile. He stood between dozens of unframed paintings – a series of disturbing intimidating images in oil. Breytenbach had converted one room into a studio. Yolande headed off each morning to an office job to support his art. He was producing perverse, fetid northern imagery. By turn dreamlike, fevered, whimsical or crass, involuted or blatant, his work began to garner a certain reputation in Paris, but even more in Amsterdam, where the Dutch sensed a distant kinship with the Afrikaner and saw an affinity between his work and the, then reigning CoBrA¹ expressionists' sensibility. Examples of his

1

CoBrA is the acronym for Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam. It was initiated by an international group of painters and writers in Paris during 1948. These were Asger Jorm from Denmark, Dotremont from Belgium, Appel, Corneille and Constant from The Netherlands. The movement was a reaction on the theoretical aesthetics of the surrealism – the group made spontaneous, experimental paintings related to Abstract Expressionism. Binding elements were preference for the northern emotional aspect and anti-aesthetics.

work from this period, are the *Opus Series. (FW-1)*.²

One of his studios was a wooden one on the Porte de Clignancourt, just below that of the Dutch painter Corneille³(1922-), in the Rue de Grenelle. Another studio was near to *Les Invalides*, where Napoleon was buried (Brink 1967: 29-31). Breytenbach also painted for years in the studio of Christian Boltanski(1944-), whose art concerns the concept of memory, an important theme in Breytenbach's work. Pierre Skira, whose father was an important figure in the publishing business in Paris, introduced Breytenbach to stone lithography. With Skira, he worked on a lithograph of flowers in a vase, which he would later transform, into the watercolour and gouache work, *Pink Dream (FW-2)*. At the foot of *Pink Dream* we find a row of figures which can be interrelated to the work of the Pop artist, Andy Warhol (1928?-1987). Breytenbach used the lithograph, changing it into a face (during the Sixties, lithography was an important medium in Paris). The Pop movement was incorporated in the New Realists' movement of which Breytenbach was part.

The following day we went to his most recent studio which lies on the tip of the tongue of the *Chinese Quarter*. This is an area where all the pharmacies, banks, video shops, restaurants, cafes and bric-a-brac shops are Eastern, also low East-European flats. In this living *quarter*,

2

Reproductions of the paintings and drawings are stored on CD. Each chapter is stored in a separate folder and each painting or drawing is indicated by chosen capital letters and a number. The letters representing the different chapters are as follows:

Foreword - FW

Chapter One: Fire and Water - F&W.

Chapter Two: The Movement of Bodies - MB

Chapter Three: Movement and Inscription - M&I.

Chapter Four: Memory - M.

Chapter Five: The Chameleon - C.

Chapter Six: The Mirror - BM.

3

Corneille (Cornelis Guillaume van Beverloo)

Breytenbach told us, people look after each other. He would like to grow old here.

The studio was a light-drenched space. We left immediately again, undertaking a labyrinth-like walk through China Town. Breytenbach was continually conveying information on the area's history and customs, pointing out the colours and smells of markets, where we would later have a midday meal of traditional food at a Vietnamese restaurant. Meanwhile Breytenbach, wearing his "red leather shoes of revolution" for the occasion, made certain suggestions about the menu and explained the different dishes, mentioning that sometimes they had come here for a meal with Yolande's family. During the meal, he talked about the brutality of Francis Bacon's (1909-1992) paintings, mentioning stages of personal interest. He would mention that he learnt the Buddhist way, through imitation. Breytenbach stated that his artistic "ancestors" were Pieter Bruegel (c1525-69), Hieronymous Bosch (c1450-1516), Francisco José Goya Y Lucientes (1746-1828), Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), Max Ernst (1891-1976), René Magritte (1898-1967), Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978) and Bacon. Art movements of interest were New Realism, which he and a few Dutch artists initiated, and also Surrealism.⁴

After a day's work, walking back to Saint Germaine, we returned to the studio with a view onto the low East European apartment building with gray doves walking on the roof. Our task was to catalogue and photograph more than a hundred paintings and drawings. One important space in an artist life, is his studio. In a monograph, *Notes of Bird*, Breytenbach (1984a:16-18) writes about his studio in Paris on returning to it after a period of seven-and-a-half years of incarceration:

4

Surrealism is a 20th century literary and artistic movement which (under the influence of Freudian psychology) attempts to express the workings of the subconscious: characterized by fantastic imagery and incongruous juxtaposition of subject matter. The word Freudian is derived from the Austrian physician Sigmund Freud whose notions about the impact on the "unconscious" by unresolved psychosexual conflicts revolutionized early 20th century psychology. The notion of the "unconscious" had a profound seminal influence on the art and literature of the 20th century.

Until you found these 35 square metres, perched high from where you can watch the clouds silently avoiding any collision or definition. And the space is gradually taking on its rhythm; it is starting to move. From the ceiling is suspended the plaster cast that used to encase the broken knee; and the skull – because it is vital to have the mind exteriorized and visualized and localized. Part of the skull has been cut away for new ideas to circulate. The walls have been painted white. On one shelf is the trunk, with head and two disconnected arms, of a display model who when young and varnished, must have lived in a shop-window somewhere. She is better off here – although the legs-and buttocks are standing separately on the floor; at least you don't insult her virginity by draping clothes over her. No tits. The head has a hole in it, large as a fist, its edges eaten away by the gray rotting of paper maché. Inside that there's a dark nothing. Big as the fist opened. She has stiff blue eyes (one is peeling) like those of a Saxon maiden. Her name is Joyce O' Foyles. In the corner Horse sits with patients knees, waiting for his tot of Brandywine. You have the work table (3m x 1m) which you and Loufoit went to fetch in some dead master's stilled, dust-stifled studio (it was too long to enter the workroom in one piece; you took it apart on the pavement outside and brought it upstairs to be reassembled; it fell on your foot and broke the skin; you have the obsession of playing Christ). Now it is loaded with material with possibilities. You have another, smaller table, painted red. On this you write the lines for a monograph. You have Bonhomme looking at you with his hat of blackness hiding the black hat of his blank thoughts, which are thinking the thoughts of all hats. You have the stuffed head of the green parrot, born far away in Africa, decapitated and emptied of all imitations and echoes and illusions, far away all the visions of Africa's green hills too, and put up for sale among old men's teeth and boots and coughs and mirrors and other knickknacks on some flea market. You have had it for many years now. It was always dead but never as dead as now. You unearthed it again in Loufoit's cellar in a battered suitcase (the traveller's desire) with paint-tubes that had gone dense-eyed and hard and photos of Mao and Ché, and posters in many tongues clamouring for **FREEDOM FOR NOMANDSLAND NOW**. The imitation of an eye had fallen out. The green feathers are moth-eaten. The orange beak no longer glistens it is blobbed and ungainly like a brain. It cannot stand on its own

either. You have brushes and rolls of canvas and rags and music (Mozart, Dollar Brand, Bach, Chris Bignaut, Lemmy Caution, Chopin) and a book in which the words of Master Eckhart are written: **Only the hand that effaces can write the true thing. It is also written: L'oeil était dans l'anus et regardait Cocteau. C'est cac de le dire. You don't have any idea. You don't have time. You do have the cracks and the ruptures and the knee.**

This echo-space must now secrete the paintings, which will endlessly and futilely attempt to occupy the space, to put a term to the void. Outside the window, entirely in the day, birds are going to the emptiness of trees. Clouds are sifting the light, shifting the eye.

For four days we browsed through a collection of the paintings, colourful canvases with surrealist images, sometimes lyrical and sometimes unbearably confrontational. Focussing his Zeiss lens the photographer began the mammoth task of photographing the paintings and drawings.

After three days of hard work, I took the train to Amsterdam, staying in a small hotel near the *Koninklijke Konsertgebou*, near to the *Stedelijke Museum* and within walking distance from the Galerie Espace, on the Keizergracht, where Breytenbach had exhibited for many years. I had an interview with Eva Bendien (who has since passed away) and Rutger Noordhoek Hegt, curators of the Espace. They discussed influences in Breytenbach's work and provided catalogues and newspaper clippings, and addresses of collectors of Breytenbach's work.

Galerie Espace and the long relationship with the Netherlands

In 1958 Breytenbach had enrolled at the Cape Town University's Michaelis School of Art for a course in visual arts. Work done during this period: *Man met Rooi Fles (FW-3)*, *Selfportrait (FW -4)*, *Man met Vis (Man with Fish)(FW-5)* and *Untitled (FW-6)*, depicting a labourer's cottage. In Cape Town he befriended young liberals like Marius Schoon, with whom he later shared a "flat" in the Pretoria Central Prison. He became acquainted with established writers like Jan Rabie (1920 - 2001) (his mentor), Jack Cope (1913 - 1931), Uys Krige (1910 - 1987) and, possibly, Ingrid Jonker (1933-1965). He met foreigners like Rabie's Scottish wife, Marjorie Wallace, and the Hollander, Cees de Jong. People like Michael Tapscott, Jobst Grapow and Heleen Raath introduced new and radical political thoughts to him – he later shared a house with them. Together they gave interracial parties and, in 1959, they took part in protest against legislation for separate universities. Invigorating as art school was Breytenbach was even more entranced by Cape Town itself. Evenings he spent in jazz clubs, listening to the likes of Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim), or else tracking down such luminaries of an earlier generation of Afrikaans poets. He steeped himself in Franz Kafka (1883-1924) and Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), in Frazer and Graves, but especially in the New Beat literature. Kerouac, Lawrence Ferlinghetti (1919 -), Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder (1930 -) were just emerging. Through Alan Watts one could learn about Zen Buddhism. At the end of 1959, Breytenbach boarded a Portuguese boat bound for Europe via Tangiers in Morocco and then hiked through Spain. Breytenbach writes that he spent a year bumming around, spending nights in flea-bag hotels or under bridges, rushing to London to catch up on events back home (the Sharpeville massacre), teaching English in Norway and playing street artist in Cannes. Arriving in Paris in the early sixties, Breytenbach, who probably got addresses from Schoon when commencing his world tour, had befriended black exiles, like Ezekiel Mphahlele(1919-). He began seeking out the company of more activist-orientated South African exiles (Galloway 1990:1-2).

The sixties could be seen as a decade of rejection of conventional, “straight” values; closeness, peacefulness, and trust of the hippie community; the freedom of communal nudity; expansion of consciousness through psychedelics and meditation. It marked also the awakening of political consciousness. Paris itself, meanwhile, was about to erupt in a political drama of its own. In May 1968, revolutionary students, workers and artists almost succeeded in toppling the administration of Charles de Gaulle. Militancy was rampant, some nonviolent and some less so. There were long discussions at the Science faculty at Orsay, during which the students not only analysed the Vietnam and the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, but also questioned the power structure within the university and discussed alternative, non-hierarchical structures.

In May 1968, finally, all research and teaching activities came to a complete halt when the students, led by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, extended their critique to society as a whole and sought the solidarity of the labour movement to change the entire social organisation. For about a week, the city administration, public transport, and businesses of every kind were completely paralysed by a general strike. People spent most of the time discussing politics in the streets, and the students, who had occupied the Odeon, the spacious theatre of the Comédie Française, transformed it into a twenty-four-hour “people’s parliament”. In the evening, Cohn-Bendit and others aired their highly idealistic but extremely stimulating visions of a future social order (Capra 1990:64).

The European student movement, which was largely Marxists oriented, was not able to turn its visions into realities during the sixties. But it kept its social concerns alive during the subsequent decade, during which many of its members experienced profound personal transformations. Breytenbach at this time was exhibiting in Amsterdam, a wondrous city in those days. The hippies were tourists of a new kind. They came to Amsterdam from all over Europe and the United States, not to see the Royal Palace or the paintings of Rembrandt, but to be together. A great attraction was the fact that smoking marijuana and hashish was tolerated to the extent of being virtually legal in Amsterdam, but this beautiful city’s attraction

went far beyond that. There was a genuine desire among young people to meet one another and share radically new experiences and visions of different cultures. One of the most popular meeting places was a large house called “The Milky Way”, which contained a health food restaurant and a discotheque, and also an entire floor laid out with thick carpets, lit by candles and scented with incense, where people would sit in groups, smoke and talk. The Milky Way: there you could spend hours discussing Mahayana Buddhism or the teachings of Don Juan, the mystical Yaqui sage, as described by Carlos Castaneda. Breytenbach probably chose his painter’s pseudonym, *juan breyten*, after reading Castaneda’s book (Capra:1990:65).

During 1997, the *Galerie Espace* published a commemorative book (*Galerie Espace* 1997), on the history of the gallery and the artists who exhibited there. There is a section devoted to Breytenbach. He has had a long and intense connection with the *Galerie Espace*, which is situated on the Keizersgracht between Spiegel Street and de Leidestraat, and its two curators, Bendien and Hegt. This gallery was first opened on 4 November 1960.

Felix Valk from Paris discovered Breytenbach, while exhibiting at the *Galerie 20* in 1963 in Arnheim. This first exhibition went unnoticed, but even at that stage certain controversies were surrounding his work. During December 1966, *Galerie Espace* celebrated its tenth year of existence with an exhibition of more than forty artists. The CoBrA artists and Anton Haber were the most important exhibitors, with the sculptors, Tajiri, Couzin and Perlmutter. Although the gallery had concentrated on exhibitions of the CoBrA artists, an important movement for the gallery was the issuing of an invitation to a group of young artists who reacted to abstraction and who would later become known as the *New Figuratives*. In 1964, these were Reiner Lucassen (1939 -), Pieter Holstein (1934 -) and Breytenbach, who then exhibited under the name, *juan breyten* in 1965. In 1968 he exhibited with the Belgian painters Roger Raveel (1921 -) and Etienne Elias (1936 -) . The Dutch newspaper, *De Telegraaf*, coined the term *nieuw figuratief* to describe this new generation of artists. Rederker had stated, in the *Algemene Handelsblad* (1966) that there was a definite movement

towards recognisable representations. During the same year, the term *nieuwe figuratie* was used in the catalogue at the exhibition *Nieuwe Realisten* in The Hague Community Museum: this not only included the younger generation Dutch artists, but American and British Pop Art, represented by Bacon and Willem de Kooning (1904 -).

New friendships and new influences were formed. Maryan of Polish Jewish origin, received his art training in Paris and from 1962 exhibited in New York, where he gained an international reputation. Breytenbach engaged in a conversation with other painters, like Maryan who also exhibited at the Espace, especially with Maryan's "Personage" (1972). In a private conversation with the artist in his studio in Paris, Breytenbach mentioned that he would, one day, like this gruesome death mask *Untitled (FW-7)* on his coffin.

In 1966 he worked on his second one-man exhibition at the Espace under the title *Le singe peint* and the Groningen Museum bought his self-portrait, *Old King Breyten*. Art critics in The Netherlands reacted violently and Rederker (1966) wrote:

Hij schildert de protest sang van zijn poëtisch en gevoelige hart als deel humoristische, deel beangstigende en schokkende horruurs. (He paints the protest song of his poetic and sensitive heart, partly humorous, partly anxious and filled with shocking horrors).

During 1968, Breytenbach again exhibited at the Espace. He received a great deal of attention from the newspapers for his political stance against *Apartheid*. The reception of his work reflected both repulsion and fascination by his viewers. *Elsevier Dagblad* (1968) writes that Breytenbach's imagery comprised monstrous images, growths, intestines, all leading their own life, gripping in their fever-like colours as repugnant as orchids. Although art critics were reacting against his work, it was regarded as important. The press was positive about the direction the Espace was taking; there was the fierce revolt of the CoBrA and the

Experimentals were moving in the direction of the revolutionary. Later that year, the Espace again housed one of Breytenbach's exhibitions and critics used the opportunity to compare the poet with the painter. Visser from the *Financieel Dagblad* (1972) wrote: *toon om wat de mens word aangedaan vooral in zijn vaderland; toon om de onvolwaardigheid waartoe de mens word gedoemd.* ([The work] is a reflection of the suffering of people in his country of birth). Ten years later Breytenbach was compared to Lucebert (1924-)⁵ and the reception in the newspapers thus read:

In zeker opzicht is Breytenbach te vergelijken met Lucebert. Ook Lucebert is van huis uit schilder; hij is net als Breytenbach pas op aandringen van anderen als dichter gee gaan werken. Net als Lucebert is Breytenbach een (lyrich) een wraaksuchtig auteur, een woedende schilder. Het onzichtbare geweld neemt in de gevolgen konkrete, fysieke vormen aan. Trekts een spoor van gehavende lichamen over het teken- of schrifblad. Hun werk word bevolkt door wanstaltige gedrochten, loerend misbaksels, ijzervretende heersers, bloeddorstige heren met meer dan twee vangarmen. (Breytenbach can be compared to Lucebert. Lucebert is also a painter and a poet. Like Lucebert, Breytenbach is a (lyrical) [poet] and full of revenge – an angry artist. The invisible violence takes on a physical form and mutilated bodies are drawn over the drawing paper or the canvas. Misshapen monsters, peering mis-happenings, iron-gorging rulers, and bloodthirsty gentlemen invade his work with more than two arms for catching.)

Both poets/painters confronted their contemporaries. The Forum poets of the thirties did likewise – with the old dispute of social involvement, on the one hand, and literary isolation, on the other. There is a strong involvement with the body in the work of both Lucebert and Breytenbach. Where bodilessness with Lucebert and other artists of the fifties embraces exuberance and liberation from petty bourgeoisies, however Breytenbach's strong involvement with the body is inherently in the polarity between life and death. He takes the standpoint that writing poetry and painting or drawing is comparable to a normal bodily function. He would

⁵

Lucebert (Lucebertus Jacobus Swaanswijk)

paint and draw many words in which the word *turd* [sic] would be used to deliver commentary on social realities.

Lucebert and Breytenbach likewise shared a strong involvement in Zen Buddhism and the transformation of Western aspirations. On the 23 April 1997, from the *Centre for Creative Arts*, at the University of Natal, in Durban, where they bestowed an honorary professorship on him, Breytenbach writes a contribution for the publication of a review on the history of the Espace that also provides a further picture of his involvement with the gallery:

I can't remember now when we first met Eva and Rutger. It must have been early in the 60's. In fact, according to records, I first exhibited at Galerie Espace during 1964. What a lifetime ago!

Martin Engelman was still alive. He, together with Mark Brusse and Klaas Gubbles, was one of the guides who took me over River Lethe into the grey light of Holland where the canals glint and windmills wave noiselessly at the congregation of clouds. Yolande and I were living in Paris. I had a wooden studio near the Porte de Clignancourt, just below Corneille, another friend of Espace. There I was painting impossible pictures, or at least things that were difficult to exhibit. To be more precise: crude screams and whispers that were totally impossible to sell.

At regular intervals – the list of exhibitions will show it was at least once every two years – we travelled north. Some of the trips were epic experiences, traversing Belgium in a pea-soup of coal-smudged fog, having to make detours in the night to smuggle artworks across the border, having exhibited catalogues confiscated as 'obscene material' by dim-witted customs officials, or having a breakdown with friends in an over-loaded 2CV.

In reality, we went north when there was not even the excuse of an exhibition. Espace was, and is, a magic space. We knew it from the time when it was still heated by fuel stoves right up to its present central heating system. That was the only change. The paintings and drawings and sculptures were always chosen with the same sure, timeless taste. All along Espace remained a haven for a small

number of artists – Lucebert, Heyboer, Raveel, Lucassen, Huymans, Alechinsky, and Gubbels. ... No fancy tricks. Just this friendly and right space of appreciation (the inner space made evident) with its fine light, overlooking the Keizergracht, its two fat housegods disguised as cats, its Henri Rousseau garden at the back, its hospitable kitchen with ready coffee and food and wine. My only regret was that I could never smoke there since both Eva and Rutger were tee-totallers.

One would arrive to be welcomed by the owners. We used to be accommodated upstairs from the gallery under the eaves where, when in bed, one could watch the light reflected from the canal lapping the ceiling. Rutger would make sure that we had enough guilders, maps, bus tickets, instructions, recommendations and reminders before we risked it outside on Amsterdam's wild streets.

If I had brought works, Eva would wait before looking them over at length and giving me her incisive and always true evaluation. If they were to be hung, Rutger would do so with much groaning about hammers and screws. At night there'd be a fine home-cooked meal enjoyed around the kitchen table, accompanied by erudite theological discussions on the Pope's infallibility, abandoned children, the art of writing postcards (and reproaches pertaining thereto), and the state of the Queen's household. Also literature. To be followed, perhaps, by a game of chess.

At that table we spent many an evening with good friends – Frida and Laurens van Krevelen, Adriaan van Dis who came to share the latest information about the conditions of his back, Henk van Woerden. ...

And now much time has passed. Many springs came and went away on the blackbird's call, with Eva still planning to control her garden. The canals froze over a few times. People we used to know together passed away. Fashions arose, flourished furiously, and faded. Maybe Rutger has lost a few hairs over the years.

But the two of them are still there, as generous and understanding as ever. And the gallery has remained that privileged space where aesthetics and real experiences intersect. The light comes in through the windows to enhance the quiet illumination and the need for images on the walls becomes woven into memory's cloth. Only such cloths can protect us against the cold of eternity.

For now, the Pope is still infallible. And the Queen still young.

(Juan) Breyten. Durban, April 1997

In the same book commemorating the fortieth birthday of the Espace, van Dis wrote:

My first litho. was bought from you – ‘AAP met Fez’ by BREYTEN. The painter called Juan, the one wearing red shoes. Through Breyten I got acquainted to that bastard language from far off Africa. A friendship started and you were the mediators where I met friends of Yolande and Breyten; Mazini Kunene, who propped twelve tea bags in a tea pot, only stirring it after an hour, Jobst Grapow, the wandering *Ashoop*. Africa on the canal (Galerie Espace 1997:65)

As a member of the *Sestigers*, Breyten was one of a group of writers whose influence extended the traditional “borders” of literature, so that their work became a political phenomenon. Also, in his art, Breytenbach went way beyond the traditional. Brink (1967:29) stated the following about his art:

The well-know collector, Marc Moyens, who exhibited his collection in New York, shipped five enormous canvasses by Breyten. In an interview Breyten states that he paints ‘de stoornissen rondom de communicatie, de afstomping, en de brutaliteit om door die afstomping, heen te breken. Er spreekt ang en weerzin uit de aapachtige mannetjies, de gewachtelde lichaamsdelen de organische vormen, dermachtige slinges die in holen kronkelen en ergens anders weer te voorschijn kome. Een krijtuit gezicht staart met ‘n verbrijzeld en een helder oog; er zijn zwarte scaduwen, er zijn onwezenlijke portretten tegen een psychedelische achtergrond.’ (He paints to break through the disturbing and stultifying patterns of communication, the blunting and a wish to break through the brutalities of that blunting. He conveys his anxiety and revolt by painting ape-like men, swollen bodily parts, organic forms, intestines-like loops plaited through holes, crawling through nothingness to appear again at some other hole. One shattered single eye stares from a chalk-white face, there are black shadows, there are disturbing portraits against a psychedelic background.)

The reporter was referring to the exhibition, *le Singe Peintre*, at the Galerie Claude Levin, 9 Rue du Mont – Thabor, Paris. This 1969 exhibition was host to works like *le Conquérant de Byzance*, *Singe de Mer*, *Plieurs*, *la Joie de Peintre*, *Ice-cream Monk*, *je vous aime*, *Il nous faut une certaine perspective* and *Majo desnudo sous un nuage vert* (FW:8-15). At this stage he had become part of the new realistic movement in Paris and leaned towards the derisory art of which Jean Dubuffet (1901 - ?) remains the master. In Paris, Breytenbach exhibited at The Galerie Girardon, Claude Levin, Tournesol, Lahumière, Legenre, Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Peintres du Monde, le Soleil dans la Tête and la Roue. During 1965, he participated in the Biennale de Paris.

This exhibition moved to the Galerie Espace in Amsterdam. There he uses the word obscene when commenting on the provocation of his work. From June 1966 till June 1967, one-and-a-half million black Africans were arrested in South Africa for violating the pass laws. Under such circumstances, intellectual provocation becomes obscene. It should be taken much further. His work, *Old King Breyten* (FW-16a) was quoted in newspapers to express these views.

Since the publication of the poetry, *Die ysterkoei moet sweet*, Breytenbach has confronted his readers with the fact that he is also a painter. Before that, most South Africans had to be satisfied with the unusual drawings and, later, glowing paintings, serving as text covers. “In South Africa, Breytenbach has always been known and celebrated as poet, writer and activist. Not until his first exhibition entitled “Painting the Eye” (Cape Town, December 1993 and Pretoria, February 1994), however, had he been considered as an artist as well. The South African public had largely ignored the many exhibitions of his art in Europe, the first dating back to the early sixties. Yet, the fact that he has had ten one-man exhibitions in centres such as Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, Antwerp and Stockholm, since 1983, and that some works have been selected for the state collections of France, and Belgium and the Netherlands, reflects the extent of his success. A large mural of his, *Here is the forest – like eternity*, *Guard it* (FW-16b), commissioned by the Poetry International Foundation, graces the wall of a building in

Gaffel Street, in Rotterdam” (Sienaert 1996:102).

He is also the most recent recipient of the prestigious Jacobus van Looy Award (1995), which entails a retrospective exhibition (covering thirty-five years of work) in the Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem, and the publication of a monograph of his work as an artist: *Uit de Eerste Hand* (1995) Jacobus van Looy (1855-1930) also was both writer and painter. In commemoration of his talent, they award this prize every five years to a painter-writer. In 1985, they awarded it to Armando (1929 -)⁶, in 1990 to Lucebert. The jury for the van Looy Prize for 1995 comprised Nop Maas, Cornelis Mooij, Ella Reitsma, Joost Swarte and Mabel Hoogendonk. For this occasion, they published a monograph and a retrospective exhibition of his paintings and literary work was held in *de Verweyhal*, which comes under the auspices of the Frans Hals Museum. Breytenbach was known in the Netherlands initially for his political stance as voluntary exile. Recognition of his literature and work as an artist would follow later. Numerous prizes were to be bestowed on him. From 1964 he gained the reputation of being an artist at the Galerie Espace in Amsterdam, and BBL-Galerie on the Keizerlee in Antwerp; from 1969 he published regularly in *Raster*. Breyten addressed meetings, participated in Anti-Apartheid rallies and attended the Netherlands PEN-congresses. He performed at festivals of Poetry International.

Breytenbach dedicated his first recital of poems at the Poetry International Festival to the ten thousand political prisoners in the country of his birth. By that time, he had lived ten years in exile in Paris. He was the first person to use this festival as a forum. In 1972, Breytenbach presented his own programme: Protest in Poetry. “Poets do not initiate revolution, the revolution shapes poets,” he said. A theatre group from Uruguay sang South American resistance songs, the Greek actress, Aspasia Pappathanassiou, recited poems from the work of Yannis Ritsos (1909-1990), Jorge Enrique Adoum and poems from Ecuador. Mazisi

⁶

Armando (Herman Dirk van Dodeweerd)

Kumene from South Africa, Wole Soyinka (1934 -) from Nigeria, the Palestinian Mahmoud Darwish (1942-) and Shrinivasi from Suriname, all recited resistance verses (Mooij 1974:54-59).

Van Marissing (1980) wrote in *de Volkskrant*:

De drijfveer achter hun politiek poëzie is een sociale beweging tegen de onderdrukking door een zichtbare vijand. (The driving force behind his political poems was a social movement against the oppression by a visible enemy).

A few months later, Breytenbach's volume of poetry *Skryt* (1972) was published, in which he writes:

since 1963 the following
prisoners
under surveillance of the security
police
gave birth to their death:

Bellington Mampe

Looksmart Solwandle Ngundle

Sipho James Tyita

Suliman Salojee

James Hamakwayo

Hangula Shonyeka

Leong Yum Pin

Ah Yan

Alpheus Maliba

Tubakwe

Nicodimus Kgoathe

Solomon Modipane

James Lenkoe

Caleb Mayekiso

Michael Shivute

Jacob Monakgotla

Imam Abdullah Haron

Mthayeni Cutshele...

We will remember.

Another long and intimate relationship of Breytenbach was with Poetry International. On 20 June 1994, he opened the twenty-fifth Poetry International Festival. He writes:

This room is too small to accommodate all the shades gathered here with us: ancient Chinese sages with wind in their empty robes and wine mixed with poetry on their breaths; drifters over snowy plains with frost tinkling in their beard; those living in prison and camps and forest and exile who listen to the thud of axes on wood; women through the ages shaping the heart's freedom; Dutch poets and publishers who had the grace of never taking themselves seriously; those who knew the intimate lining of night and others who could look into the sun until their eyes were black holes digesting experience; those who wrote flowers with amateur bodies; they who lived in an imaginary Europe which is now of stone, of sea and of a sensation of overwhelming exhaustion; those who spat flames and then tasted the ash of their tongues; those who made love with death so as to give birth to words; the young ones who dreamed of visiting a country so young it hadn't yet decided on its name and its flag; and those who die as figs die in autumn, shrivelled and full of themselves and sweet. We greet them all.

During one of these festivals a verse from Breytenbach's pen, *jy leef asof jy onsterflik is*, (you like as if you are immortal), was painted on a waste removal truck.

During 1977 (Breytenbach's time of incarceration) an exhibition titled *Amitié à Breyten* (To Breyten in Friendship) was first held in the Paris gallery, La Derive, before it moved to the Cultural Centre of Rotterdam, de Doelen. In this Centre, Breytenbach had participated in the *Poetry International* week during 1971, 1972, 1974 and 1975. Several European Galleries,

like Le Derive in Paris, Galerie Espace and T in Amsterdam, also Galerie Delta in Rotterdam, had exhibited works of Breytenbach's. Now, however, they exhibited his work in the international circle of his artist friends, Lucebert, Corneille, Boltanski, Delfino, Hiquily, Klink, Lindström, Sekoto and Velickovic.

A Dutch critic wrote about Breytenbach's work, saying that it was exceptional for its figures floating through the air, and its other surrealist elements. The erotic also provided a comic aspect in his paintings. In his drawing, he showed preference for boxers and wrestlers, for groups in situations filled with irrational meaning.

During 1977 a literary evening was arranged by the *Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde* – a few years earlier Breytenbach had received their important P.C. Hooft Prize. They recited his poetry, and two well-known Dutch poets, Rutger Kopland (1934 -)⁷ and H.C. ten Berge (1938-), recited their own works and dedicated it to him. Aard Nuis, treasurer of the Breytenbach Committee in the Netherlands and well-known television director and a poetry critic, stressed the importance of keeping up the public support for his work. Although he wrote in Afrikaans, Breytenbach was a pre-eminent writer on the Dutch Literary scene (Jansen 1977).⁸

7

Rutger Kopland (Rutger Hendrik van den Hoofdakken)

8

Further readings for the reception of Breyten in the Netherlands: Büch, Breytenbach. 1984. Breytenbach: een roman lukt me niet. Het Parool. 20 Juni; Dewulf, Breytenbach. 1987. Poëzie als ontsnappingspoging. de Morgen. 17 Oktober; Ety, E. 1989. De afwezige ruiter. NRC Handelsblad. 2 Juni; Holtkamp, R. 1989. Alles een paard. Leeuwarder Courant. 15 Mei; Kuipers, W. 1984. T is vol van schatten heir II. Amsterdam: de Bezige Bij; Leistra, G. 1989. Breytenbach wil de verloren tijd weer ongedaan maken. Tubantia. 27 Mei; Lucebert. 1965. Gedichten 1948-1963. Amsterdam: de Bezige Bij; Nuis, A. 1986. De Volkskrant. 21 Mei; Offermans, C. 1980. Mijn land mijn bloederige anus. de Groene Amsterdammer. Des; Oudtshoorn, M. 1985. De uitdaging van Breytenbach. De ontoereikendheid van het woord. De Nieuwe. 13 Des; Sanders, S. 1989. Sporen van de kameleon. de Groene Amsterdammer. 27 September; Sporr, C. 1989. De smaak van verbrand hout in de mond. de Tijd 20:57 26 Mei; Ten Berge, H.C. 1975. De dichter zonder taal, schilder zonder oogen. de Gids. 138(9) Tolhuis, M. 1985. Spelen in de herinnering. Vrij Nederland. 1 Junie; Van Marissing, L. 1980. Met de geheime politie door het paradijs. de Volkskrant. November; Van Montfrans, M. 1986. Oude en nieuwe teksten van

Until the dismantlement of Apartheid, Breytenbach had problems with receiving visas entering South Africa. Although independent publishers published his writing, he could, for logistic reasons, not exhibit in his country of birth. Now, in the new century, the idealistic Breytenbach is politically disillusioned with the process of transformation in South Africa. The old ways of the former government are reflected in the new government. Violence, murder, rape, the proliferation of aids, homelessness, poverty, lust for land, the exodus of whites leaving the country, are some new problems facing the present government. Peripheral vision reveals a sub strata-culture of “transparent corruption” which they daily inscribe on the South African society.

As a relentless critic of the South African society, Breytenbach, who is truly an international figure, has in a reciprocal way experienced great pain in his “new” country of birth. Although he has since 1964 been one of the most important intellectuals and has contributed to open new vistas for them, the conservative society with its preference for barbeques and sport, is deeply disturbed by his writing, dramas and painting. A cycle of repulsion and exuberant embracement has been part and parcel of Breytenbach’s long involvement with South Africa – politically and as revolutionary artist. He has received numerous prizes.

Breytenbach’s paintings and drawings were photographed in three stages. The first occasion was at the UNISA Art Gallery and the second at the Frans Hals Museum, the Verwey Halle, in Haarlem, during the retrospective exhibition of Breytenbach’s work and the presentation of the Jacobus van Looy Prize on his birthday. Literary friends, colleagues from the art world and other dignitaries attended the ceremony. His wife, Yolande and daughter, Daphné, accompanied him on the formal presentation of the prize. There were congratulatory messages and, as a reminder the presentation of a pumpkin that had forever been a motif for his birthday. Many *Pumpkin Evenings* were held by his friends back in South Africa who had celebrated his

Breytenbach. NRC Handelsblad. 9 Mei; Vanriet, J. 1989. Zie hoe het lichaam rilt van het woord. de Morgen. 12 Mei.

birthday in his absence. Henk van Woerden again presented him with a pumpkin. A second pumpkin had come from South Africa, a present from Francis Galloway. Later, back in his studio in Paris, he would paint these pumpkins, presenting them as a still life on a red table, with his lifelong studio fetish of a parrot head beside them. In this painting, tears blinded his eyes and he had lost a left hand. A third pumpkin is placed at the top of the painting accompanied by the typical writing hand and, in front, a note with a burnt corner *Untitled* (FW-17). Other pumpkin paintings would follow.

At this exhibition, he exhibited his hanging scrolls, nomadic canvasses for traversing the desert of consciousness, for the first time. A moving art film, *Visions From the Edge*, based on the painting process of these scrolls (the leitmotiv in the film was Breytenbach's two fingers wearing tiny red shoes walking across an open space), was produced and directed by Mary Stephen and, during 1997, entered for a European Art Film competition at the Pompidou Centre in Paris. Other exhibitions that were documented were Breytenbach's first solo exhibition in South Africa, *Painting the Eye* (1993), exhibited at the Metropolitan Gallery in Cape Town. Other paintings and drawings were catalogued and photographed at Breytenbach's solo exhibition in Durban, *Portraits, Prints and Paper* (1998), *Woordword* (1999) exhibited at the Metropolitan Gallery in Cape Town, *Lappesait* (2001) exhibited at the Gencor Gallery RAU and *Dancing The Dog and Other Pornographics* (2001) again at the Metropolitan Gallery in Cape Town.

A South African exhibition and an interview.

In 1994, for the first time, a one-man exhibition of Breytenbach's work, *Painting the Eye*, was shown at the Association for Visual Arts in Cape Town, and at the UNISA Art Gallery, Pretoria. A monograph was published with the support of the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the paintings were transported with the cooperation of Air France. A conversation with Francis Galloway on the exhibition resulted in a publication, an extract of which reads:

MG: Does this first South-African exhibition of Breyten Breytenbach affect you as viewer in a similar way to how it affects me? Do you experience a feeling of dejection when viewing the paintings because of a lack of understanding from your side?

FG: I would not say that I feel despondent – the playfulness and fantasy of Breytenbach’s work have always enchanted me. It is not an experience that can easily be wiped from the eyes and memory. On the one hand there is a vibration of form, texture and colour on the eye. On the other hand there is a feeling of uneasiness at not being in control, at not being able to make sense in the traditional way. One feels safer when one is in control of one’s environment.

Thus – there is an activity of looking in the holders and keys to the Breytenbach working method: Surrealism, Zen Buddhism, anormalizing, metamorphosis, transformation and the grotesque. All these point to the conception of Breytenbach’s art and could in one or another way be a key for the viewing experience.

But the overwhelming nature of the paintings, the radical shifts of the visual expectation compel one to expose and submit oneself to the process, which plays itself out in your mind. As viewer, one cannot excuse one self from the responsibility of becoming involved.

MG: What do you mean by responsibility and involvement of the viewer?

FG: In the Breytenbach context the viewer cannot detach himself from a sunrise or a painting. In *Memories of Snow and Dust*, we find a painting of words, which are actually painted.

You may think you already know all transformations of the celestial space at the break of day, but it is never true. Even if you were to isolate the elements and the components – the darkness, the stars and the planets, the blinding wreckage’s of space vehicles, the moons, the clouds, the mountains, the light, the looking eye, the looker, the faculties of the observer, his frame of mind, his pre-conceptual prejudices, his memory. Even then the variations or combinations are inexhaustible, for these can never be captured. They are eternal (whatever ‘eternal’ may mean); it always is, but the essence of that is, becoming: it is forever getting to be day. And it is only in that evanescence that you, yourself, in a state of deliquescence may

capture the essential.

This involvement of the viewer is visually embodied in the painting *le Coucher de Soleil* (FW-18). The art historian could isolate aspects like form, line, medium, colour, texture, space and codes. But the viewing eye, the viewer and his baggage, become part of the creation process.

The involvement of the reader/viewer lies on two levels, as stated in the double plea in the collection of poems in ('Yk') from the poem *Isis*.

one:

**in gods name don't leave lying so
incomplete like the deceased in my bed! or**

two:

**no rather never round me off,
build always only to the point where I stay part of you, reader**

By looking at the painting, the viewer becomes responsible for his own search for meaning. Opinion-formers, like critics, however, also have a responsibility toward other viewers. Their interpretation can serve as road pointers, without robbing these viewers of their own dialogue with the paintings.

The responsibility of the individual viewer brings us back to a process of suspending one's own meaning and conception of art. It succumbs to this; understanding comes when the "walking" process begins. The "walking" process could start at any point; Breytenbach writes about this in *Memories*.

The point is to start anywhere. To continue then in the direction opened by that start. Whatever the way may be, wherever it may lead, it is important to begin. Thus to take hold of a loose thread and to unravel the pattern – for to travel is to lengthen the road, also to destroy the wholeness of it.

Numerous strings, (word-) strings, ropes, bandages, intestines and other permutations and transformations lie embodied in the paintings themselves – like in *Yellow Dog* (FW-19),

Hovering Dog (FW-20), Monddood (FW-21), Moonlight Arab (FW-22), My life and I (FW-23)

MG: Where does this “string-feeling” lead you?

FG: ... I have selected certain memory threads from the text to walk through the exhibition.

MG: What are those threads you have used while walking through the exhibition?

FG: One of those threads is Breytenbach’s concept of “The Noble Art of Walking.” He refers to it in (*Yk*). In *Memories* he describes it as “the faculty of letting go of the so-called self within a specific environment.” That is the way one becomes aware of his relationship to the environment, because the universe does not consist of a collection of loose fragments, but is a web of interconnections.

The advantage of these threads lies in the awakening and awareness of shifting relationships, but takes one through the exhibition – in any and preferably random order.

The more direct the path you take the smaller your chance of finding something at the end of it. You must walk the long way around. The labyrinth – that’s the in thing, the name of the game. It’s the dead-end that counts!

MG: Does this walkabout not lead to a dead end?

FG: Not at all. Rather by new, unexpected vistas opened up in the process of walking, the relationship changes with each new painting and the viewer engages in a completely new dialogue with each artwork.

MG: You often talk about “remembrance” and “memory.” Is that concept important for this exhibition?

FG: Yes, in itself it is a path to take. If walking is the method, then you follow the trace of memory, because “not that which you see is of importance, but that which you remember.”

There is a layered distance between the viewer and the painting – remembrance of literary texts, his literature/art approach, and the public figure. The artist-writer is also fascinated by the process and mechanism of the transference of memory from one generation to the other
...

In *Memories* it culminates in the theme of a rite of passage. With reference to the Greek tragedies, he places emphasis on the fact that the passage forms one layer of consciousness upon another, is always accompanied by a sacrifice, a fatal choice or the denial of oneself – an insight which is embodied in the paintings.

In the painting *la Famille Sainte* (FW-24), it is the angel child who brings the sacrifice for the passage of the other – like in the story of Mano/Barnum and Meheret in *Memories*. Other painful rites of passage play themselves out if one takes the historical thread through the exhibition, through landscape and life and times of the painting painter. History for Breytenbach consists of many threads, of memory and imagination – of many stories.

Painful and personal rites of passage mark earlier works. The works from the second half of the sixties testify to the price paid by being exiled: *En Afrique* (FW-25), *la Boxeur* (FW-26) and *Wooing the angel* (FW-27). The paintings from the early seventies bear the witness to the consequences of a choice for political involvement, for instance the scapegoat image in *Voici la Saison* (FW-28) and, *My life and I* (FW-29). Then there are the ten prison drawings, the pain of the trial, torment and isolation. The world from the post incarceration period, works of self-chastisement and impediment are *Yellow Dog* (FW-30), *Yaah*, (FW-31), *Hovering Dog* (FW-32), *Monddood* (FW-21) and *Totleben* (FW-33).

MG: Does the theme of the rite of passage, the movement through different layers, have any connection with numerous self-portraits in the exhibition?

FG: I think so. The frequent use of the personal “I” in his work have been noted. Since Breytenbach’s debut as writer some scholars have been critical, others more aware of the deeper meaning of this phenomenon. It varies from a repudiation of the sickly use of the “I,” to arguments of the poet creating an entire œuvre on behalf of himself (because he is arguing in favour of socio-political change) and that the motivation for the “I” in the poetry is

conducted to the real “I.” In the literary text there is a continual play with the permutation of the BB name –, e.g., Bangai Bird.

The prevailing genre on this exhibition goes by the name of “auto portrait” with titles like *Autoportrait Masque* (FW-34), *Autoportrait “Nuit”* (FW-35) and *Autoportrait “Jour”* (FW-36). These self-portraits are a living structure, a growing body – manifested through the metamorphosis of the orifices and projecting parts of the body (eyes, nose, ears, mouth, the female cleft, fingers and the penis). Conversely, there is the closing up of the body in *L’emballage*, or a merging of different figures in other paintings (human being, ape, bird, dog, etc.) – it is a natural process in the ‘passage of consciousness’ of which Breytenbach writes in *Memories*.

The challenge is to make reparation to the painting painter (*Die ysterkoei moet sweet*) let him be several stories in one, several people, as we all are (*Memories*). To turn out the ‘real self’, is like catching fish or the moon with a forked stick, like in *le Pêcheur* (FW-37). The painted eye/I is just a Judas eye (eyelet and loophole) for the ‘I’.

The shifting ‘I’ (out or into a room) of the Autoportrait-painter spills over onto the viewer. In *Memories* Mano explains to Barnum that the *Mona Lisa* is also an auto portrait, because it is the viewer’s image and not that of Da Vinci.

Doesn’t it become you when you appropriate it that it only needs the act of taking possession, of recognizing it as a part of you . . . The more the viewer looks at the auto-portrait, the more it is robbed of its privacy, familial bonds and history . . . so would the true *Mona Lisa* [Breyten Breytenbach/I] please stand up . . . ?

MG: The bird, angel, dog, horse, hat, shoe, pen, mirror, moon – which role do they play in this rite of passage process?

F.G: The recurring codes function as marks on the landscape of the painting painter . . .

MG: Do you think that the exhibition is political?

FG: Yes. The exhibition is a transgression of the traditional barriers: between inside and

outside, private and public, human and animal, female and male (compare the androgynous code in *L'oiseau tombe* [FW-38]), painting and writing, freedom and bondage. Furthermore, it works subversively because of the infiltration into the viewer's consciousness and the resulting shifting of own views and concepts – the viewer has to continue his walking process and thus stall petrification.

This exhibition can be experienced as a refusal to conform to “the bringing of some new orthodoxy, some school of cultural terrorism, and atrophy, another power monopoly” (*Judas Eye*). This is the embodiment of anarchism.

MG: Do you think that both viewer and critics will convey a good reception of the exhibition?

FG: There will obviously be a disparate reaction to the exhibition – like the early reception of “Breytenbach as poet” debut. The obvious reason being those instances of the work could be isolated and then evaluated – the whole being so much more than the parts . . . meaning in Breytenbach's work is unlimited, totally free and never final. The viewer should engage in a flirtation with meaning, the undanced dance (Grobler & Galloway. 1994:31-36).

Three main periods regarding his art can be identified. The first period of Breytenbach's art is the discovery of the grotesque and absurd. During this time he is in dialogue with artists like Bacon and Kahlo. Work from this period is spontaneous and presented in an expressionistic way. Artwork dating from the period after incarceration is more formalized and in this time Breytenbach is engaged with a series of concepts which he expresses in his art. He is also engaged in an intense dialogue with different artists from Surrealism. During the second half of the nineties he began working on a series of scrolls. The more informal presentation of the work, gave him the opportunity to work more experimental. Work done after the Haarlem exhibition is more spontaneous and informal.

Recently Breytenbach has distanced himself from the public life and politics in South Africa. He remains, however, the relentless critic of the new government and social phenomena in his country of birth. An important contribution to the field of Art in South Africa, lies in the merging of different disciplines – Breytenbach elaborates on this in his philosophical essay, of the Middle World. Musical recording has been made of his poems and paintings, the choreography of his dramas was influenced by images from his paintings, philosophical ideas find their way into his novels, poems become part of hanging scrolls, a physical theatre production was performed at an exhibition of hanging scrolls and on a new CD Breytenbach, as Buddhist, chants to the sound of Native American music. The variety, intensity and controversy surrounding his work, has rocked the cradle of the conservative South Africans.

In the essay *Tortoise Step* (1987), written at *Can Ocells*, their home near Barcelona, Breytenbach says that he prefers to try to look at where the line runs between himself and other people, at what it consists of, what it defines or excludes. Working and interacting with Breytenbach can best be described by this view. Interaction with him places one on a thin tightrope stretched over a hovering void. The balance stick is intense involvement followed by detachment. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Breyten Breytenbach who allowed me to photograph his paintings and who introduced me to his work over a period of several years.

In a way the thesis, which stretched over a period of seven years, was subjected to a nomadic process, because it was written in Pretoria (where most of the research was done), Stellenbosch and Pringle Bay. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to:

- * Professor Alex Duffey, for his advice and encouragement.
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The protection of one's purity implies the straining of one's surroundings through a simplified eye (Breytenbach 1996:15)

Genghis Khan understood nothing: he "didn't understand" the phenomenon of the city (Deleuze & Guattari 1986:5).

Nomads have no history, they only have a geography (Deleuze & Guattari 1986:73).

The footnote—the writer's self-defensive gesture —becomes an exhausting race in which the runner never reaches the finish. Every full stop demands the status of a comma, every sentence fights for a footnote. The footnote thus becomes a multiple metaphor, for the defeat of the writer and the human being. Everything that the author has written is just a footnote to the long list of names of people who have lost their lives, families, friends, homes to the homeland which was until recently shared, a footnote to the texts written by the fascists. Terrible reality carries off the victory and the author, aware of her defeat, must accept an arbitrary end. The only thing left for her to do is to leave behind her fragile markers, dates and footnotes (Dubravka Ugrešić 1996:191).

The critic, van Bosch (2001:4), comments on the third solo exhibition, *Dancing The Dog and other Pornographies*, of Breytenbach, held in Cape Town.⁹

As usual the viewer is confronted with Breytenbach's highly metaphorical and often hidden iconography, wherein objects, birds, dogs, fish, body parts, people and therianthropes are placed in strange juxtapositions. In a most democratic way, Breytenbach does not furnish his audience with an interpretation of his work; he provides no leads for the reader or the viewer. What he asks from the individual is an awareness of response to the image or the metaphor, since these, according to Breytenbach, are the building blocks of consciousness. He asks the viewer to withhold him or herself from interpretation or understanding. The most revolutionary act the audience could engage in would be to experience the image as without meaning – at the most, perhaps an emotional reverberation toward the image. As one walks through an exhibition of his works, he or she should simply be aware of the “song-lines”¹⁰ of the self on its journey through the endless landscape across the latitudes and longitudes of consciousness. Breytenbach also talks of the “Singing Hand”, which refers to the painting painter.¹¹ This idea is derived from a quote by Miguel de Cervantes, writer of *Don Quixote* (1605) and Henri Matisse (1869-1954), who said that he will continue to work, until his hand begins to sing.

Although the viewer is confronted with fragmented images in a dreamlike situation, the work is not totally enigmatic. Breytenbach's arts portray a world characterized by obscenities, betrayal, pornography (in the wider sense), hate, contradictions, estrangement and

⁹

The exhibition consists of sixteen paintings and twenty-five drawings. The work was created in Paris, Spain and New York.

¹⁰

Bruce Chatwin wrote the nomadic novel *Songlines* which implies the traversing of a terrain (Clapp 1997:33).

¹¹

Private conversation. May 1998.

disillusionment. Breytenbach's view on life is often cynical, but not necessarily pessimistic. In this sense Breytenbach's work can be placed within the tradition of anti-tradition, of avant-garde, perhaps not always on a formal level, but definitely in concept. It is an approach of anarchical aversion toward self satisfaction and fixed bourgeois values and world views. The only correct path is the one which remains on the cutting edge.

We can situate an encompassing point of departure and description for Breytenbach's *Ars poetica* in the field of "minor art and literature," where the war machine¹² operates by moving over smooth space. Further descriptions of his *Ars poetica* can also be drawn into this field. Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Pierre-Felix Guattari (1930-1992) (1986:6) write the following about minor revolution:

But a minor, or revolutionary, literature [art] begins by expressing itself and doesn't conceptualize until afterward (I do not see the word at all, I invent it). Expression must break forms, encourage ruptures and new sprouting. When a form is broken, one must reconstruct the content that will necessarily be part of a rupture in the order of things.

Breytenbach's is an art of disruption and his poetry is driven by a strange "gear-mechanism of the war machine" which leads from one idea-image to the following. In *Katastrofe* he writes:

Die rioolpype is verstop. Vuil water stoot oor die drein se bek – 'n dooie man, hy kan nie meer sluk nie. (The drainpipe is clogged. Dirty water pushes over the drain's mouth – a dead man, he cannot swallow any more).

12

The concept of the "war machine" is derived from Deleuze & Guattari's *Nomadology: The War Machine* (1986). According to de Kock (1999:22) the "machine" is not merely the result of a process of production. The machine is a complex constellation of energies, which cannot be isolated from other machines. The machine must be seen as something seizing multiple horizons: biological, virtual, language, conscious, electronic, as well as abstract machines. It is not the key in one or other mechanistic process, but rather producing (resulting from human desires), but also creating affect.

The Hindus believe that we are now living in the *Kali Yuga*, the age of destruction. It's an irremediable process. Shiva has, once more, prevailed.¹³ The Sanscrit tells of the capital of the world is not on earth. It is a floating city called Amaravati. It is where Indra lives, the kind of gods. This city moves about in space. It never remains in one place. In the *Mahabharata*, the great Vishnuist poem in honour of Krishna who is an avatar of Vishnu, Arjuna joins Indra in a machine that is described like a rocket. It mentions "thrusts" and "vapor" and "invisible horses". It the machine of the apocalypse. Deleuze & Guattari's "war machine" reminds one of the machine in the Vishnuist poem.

As a result of this "gear-mechanism of the war machine", there is probably no beginning or end to notions or ideas or thoughts in Breytenbach's art and philosophy. There is probably just the intense rupture-like interaction with hundreds of images, metaphors, thoughts and awareness. There is probably only the knowledge of intense moments of binding and unbinding and no hierarchic piling of more or less important ideas. The argument of this thesis thus centers around two concepts which are used to describe certain conditions in society: fixity and non-fixity.

Deleuze & Guattari (1986:11) say that the State is to be defined by the perpetuation or conservation of organs of power. The concern of the State is to conserve. (This argument can also be applied to the dogma of religious institutions). The State apparatus is concerned with identity, kingdoms, mega-machines and empires. The war machine (like Breytenbach) is distinguished by the important characteristic of metamorphosis. This model is of becoming, heterogeneity and hybridity, as opposed to the stable, the eternal, the identical, the constant. It is a "paradox" to make "becoming" itself a model. In contrast to the "nomadic war machine", States tend to unleash, reconstitute, an immense war machine which displays two

13

Shiva and Vishnu are the two great divinities in India. Vishnu and Shiva, are constant rivals. One preserves the world and the other seeks to destroy it.

successive figures. Firstly, that of fascism, which makes war an unlimited movement to no other aim than itself. The post-fascist figure is that of a war machine that takes peace as its object directly, as the peace of Terror or Survival. The [State] war machine reforms a smooth [nomadic] space, claims to control and surround the entire earth. Politics is the continuation of war. The desire of the State is to enclose. This is the function of their war machine.

The term “fixity” concerns fixed societal patterns, view points, images and interpretation of reality. The state apparatus constitutes the form of interiority we habitually take as a model, or according to which we are in the habit of thinking. It is concerned with a host of related values: stable identity, integration, equilibrium, authority, stratified order, patriarchy, dogma, orthodoxy, ideology, history, power, opposites, stability, tradition, structure, fascism, uniformity, the centre, the divine irreverence of images, fixed reality, ego centrism, the rational, hegemony, monotheism, simplicity, linear thinking, normalization, one voice, the autocrat, communism, Apartheid, control, disciplinary society, conservatism and the monologue. Its image will be the bowler hat and the story of Kafka’s Wall illustrates the working of the State which is attacked by the nomadic forces of disruption. It chooses the bourgeois values of beauty and non-beauty.

Deleuze & Guattari (1986:119) say that the war machine, in this instance, the work of art, lies outside the State apparatus. It is a creative line of flight, a smooth space of displacement which leads to non-fixity. Smooth space is precisely the space of the smallest deviation and therefore it has no homogeneity, except between infinitely proximate points. The linking of proximities is affected independently of any determined path. It is a space of contact, of small tactile or manual actions of contact, rather than a visual space like Euclid’s striated space. Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. A heterogeneous, hybrid smooth space is wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity, which is non metric, acentered and consists of rhizomatic multiplicities which occupy space without “counting” it and can “only be explored by legwork”. They do not meet the visual condition of being observable from a point

in space external to them. Examples are the systems of sound, or even colours. Breytenbach operates the “war machine of his art” in the field of non-fixity, which is minor art and writing and which is characterized by hybridity. Breytenbach sides with Indra, the warrior god. Both Breytenbach and Indra can no more be reduced to one another. They are like pure and immeasurable multiplicities, the pack who erupts the ephemeral. They have the power of metamorphosis. They untie the bond just as they betray the pact. They bring furor to bear against sovereignty, a celerity against gravity, secrecy against the public, a power (*puissance*) against sovereignty, a machine against the [State] apparatus.¹⁴

Breytenbach is a “pack” in himself.¹⁵ Packs, bands, are guards of the rhizome type and oppose the arborescent type, which centers around organs of power. As a rhizomic war machine of metamorphoses, Breytenbach animates a fundamental indiscipline of the warrior, a questioning of hierarchy, perpetually blackmailing by abandonment or betrayal, and a very volatile sense of honour all of which, once again, impedes the formation of the State. As an anarchical thinker and “war machine”, Breytenbach subverts fixed values and replaces them with concepts, images and metaphors, which are related to the minor art of disruption. The work of art, which is the war machine, thus, attacks our habitual way of thinking, which is kept in place by the State apparatus. The term “non-fixity” is used to describe this condition and implies the alternative viewpoint (which instigates ruptures and the opening up of consciousness) to conditions at which society could operate. Images, Zen Buddhism, aesthetic and anarchical concepts, human conditions and alternative societal patterns used by Breytenbach are included in the latter lists.

14

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1986:22) packs in general, even those engaged in banditry or high society life, are metamorphosis of a war machine that differs formally from all State apparatus or their equivalents, which, on the contrary, structure centralized societies. Discipline becomes the characteristic required of armies when the State appropriates them. But the war machine answers to other rules.

15

Deleuze & Guattari (1986:13) remark that Eugène Sue, a man of high society and a dandy, whom legitimists reproached for frequenting the Orléans family, used to say: “I’m not on the side of the family, I side with the pack”.

Breytenbach's images, identities and conditions of non-fixity (and nomadism) are the clown, the androgynous, the hermaphrodite, the border intellectual, the bastard, the heretic, the outsider, the social critic, the revolutionary, the anarchist, the zennist, the exile, the dunce, the shaman, the cockroach, the underling, the nomad, the war machine, the pact, the mirror, the chameleon, the bird, the butterfly, the ancestor as the self, the landscape as the self, multiple realities, schism (multiple identities), movement toward decay, death and consciousness, convulsive beauty, the absurd, the grotesque, the obscene, pornography, masochism, sadism, irony, surrealism, new realism, non-representative thinking, heterogeneity, multi-culturalism, polyphony, plurality of voices, complexity, poli-theism, subversion, memory, intuition, the irrational, multiplicities, imagination, the Watercourse way¹⁶, fire consciousness (*wou-nien*) non-attachment, suchness, the void, the paradox, denial of opposites, the process, immanence, excrement, nudity, breaking of hierarchies, de-capitation, dismemberment, metamorphosis, transgression, transformation, transmutation, radicalism, disjunction, dialogue, the dunces cap and the hybrid.¹⁷

16

The Watercourse Way: The Tao is that which encompasses the whole universe and everything existing in it. It is the Watercourse Way or the Cosmic process. This view suggests that the universe consists of polarities, which are in constant interplay with each other, and this function as a process of constant transformation.

17

An important characteristic of the minor "non-fixative" art and writing is hybridity. Instead of the monological approach of (one storyline and one history) used by the State apparatus, Breytenbach's writing and art are aesthetically coded in plurality. In his writing there is no actual role like that of the hero in the bourgeois novel, plus the attending narrative functions serving to encode his purposefully directed actions. The single hero of the bourgeois novel is but figurations of the bourgeois ideology of the unified subject thought to be perfectly capable of determining its fate through acting in an easily understandable universe that can be made subservient to its purpose. If the novelist wishes to call into doubt dogmatically hardened rules of cognition and action they have to discard the notion of an innocent, transparent language. The work has to disclose more than one meaning. In a letter to his friend, Ampie Coetzee, Breytenbach (1995:200) writes about his aesthetic point of departure as "New Writing" with, as central characteristic, creative non-fiction, in which the storyteller testifies to first hand experiences. In his way of writing "there is a longing for the ghost of the moral and anti-hegemonistic centre". Such writing is non-fixative. Lateral vision is used which creates an awareness of God as the Hole (Gat) and Utopos as Continual Movement, of which thought will be nomadic. These are the characteristics of a minor literature and art.

Deleuze & Guattari (1986: 34) write about the terrain of the war machine and that of the State. The space of the State is straited. It encourages the building of conduits, pipes and embankments, which prevent turbulence, which constrain movement to go from one point to another. The model of the war machine, on the other hand, consists in being distributed by turbulence across a smooth space. It produces a movement that holds space and simultaneously affects all of its points, instead of being held in space in a local movement from one specified point to another. The concept of hybridity contains rhizomatic characteristics of this interconnectedness between different points. An image, metaphor or concept that the French philosophers, Deleuze & Guattari (1986:11) use to illustrate the idea of the spreading connections and interlacing of things is the rhizome. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* explains the rhizome as a “prostrate root-like- stem emitting roots”. One can find the rhizome, with its gaps, detours, subterranean passages, stems, openings, traits, holes, etc. on the side of the nomadic assemblages and the war machine. On the other side, the sedentary assemblages and State apparatuses affect a capture of the phylum, put the traits of expression into a form or a code, make the holes resonate together, plug up the lines of flight, subordinate the technological operation to the work model. Or impose upon the connections a whole regime of arborescent conjunctions (Deleuze & Guattari 1986:109). According to the definition of the rhizome, things like books, ideas, orders and identities, probably life itself, could be regarded as having rhizome-like connections. Used by these two philosophers as a metaphor, the rhizome points to a network of binding, a powerful web in which things cannot be caught up. It is the place where deeds, actions and thoughts are accelerated to the extreme point. What happens here is an introduction to a multiplicity of things.

Viljoen (1998:274-293), writes that Breytenbach’s oeuvre must not be seen as a whole, but as a network of intertexts or a compilation of “fan-like” discourses (where the idea of an “author” is continually undermined) and abstract conventions which lead to sites of struggles. By writing in this way, Breytenbach’s enters the areas of non-fixity and the rhizome. There is also no stable self to portray in his art but multiple identities. In the essay, *Painting and Writing*

For Africa, Breytenbach (1996:69) writes:

There is no *I*, just a series of temporary jottings, a brief bundling of being which will delineate as if along a dotted line the passage of an (eye), an ancestor, a mask.

Taking the lead from Breytenbach, this thesis is hybrid in the sense which the term “intertextuality” takes as its general point of departure. Kristeva’s (1980:15) notion that every text builds itself as a mosaic of quotations, every text is an absorption and transformation of other texts. Intertext is the other text created when two or more texts are brought into dialogue with each other. This approach is a case for non-fixity. Seen in a wider perspective, any text is an intertext consisting of different texts (or semiotic systems), crossing each other or influencing each other. They are transformed from one semiotic system to another. Such a point of departure would lead one to see any text as a web, wherein other texts, citations, anonymous formulas, language fragments or social use of language is articulated in another way (Barthes 1981:39). The thesis itself becomes an intertext. The discussion of similarities between Breytenbach’s and other artists work also, creates a vibrating intertext, which conceptualizes his place in the field of films, art, poetry, writing and music.

Worten and Still (1990:1-2) point out that texts are entered by other texts, either via the writer who, because she/he has read texts, therefore creates texts that are “inevitably shot through with references, quotations and influences of every kind, or via the reader who brings it to a reading of other texts that she/he has read.” Both axes of intertextuality are emotionally and politically charged. As they point out, the more obvious truth of intertextuality is that each intertextual quotation is inevitable a fragment and displacement [that] distorts and redefines the primary utterance by relocating it with another linguistic and cultural context (Worten & Still 1990:11). Consequently, the reader’s attention is drawn to textual functioning rather than interpretation. A quotation constitutes an “event in the text” whose full significance depends “on the activity of a reader who perceives that something is happening rather than simply being said.” The reader recognizes, Worten and Still (1990:12) argue “that each quotation is

a breach and a trace and as such demands a nonlinear reading.”

The reading of the text has to do with thought. According to Deleuze & Guattari (1986: 44) thought can be placed in an immediate relation with the outside, with the forces of the outside. It then operates on the smooth space with its hybrid and rhizomatic interconnections. To make thought a war machine, is a strange undertaking, the precise procedure of which can be found in Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) work. The aphorism, for example, is very different from the maxim, for a maxim, in the republic of letters, is like an organic State act or sovereign judgment (formal academic judgement is also part of this sovereign judgment). An aphorism always awaits its meaning from a new external force, a final force that must conquer or subjugate it or utilize it. This is counter thought. To really illustrate this point, many quotations are provided in this thesis without interpretation. They operate like the rhizome and are intricately interconnected with the text. The quotations can always be traced to different arguments on different pages. Constant interpretation of the quotations lead to fixity of meaning and will not serve the main argument. A counter dialogue, which is a function of a war machine is provided. Textual functioning is also illustrated by using quotations of Breytenbach and other writers. By actually illustrating the fact that the quotation is an event in the text, Breytenbach's important argument of "becoming" (that which leads away from fixity), is enhanced. Strings of words are also used in the thesis to illustrate Breytenbach's important notion of becoming.

An aim of this thesis is to trace and interact with the (hybrid or rhizomatic) network of connections in Breytenbach's work, display the network by creating another network of discussions: art historical, philosophical, biographical details, notes on art and writing, tracing the influence of ancestors and determining Breytenbach's place in the international art and writing scene. Breytenbach has introduced South African researchers to important new fields of thinking. The thesis is not a critical approach to his work, but rather a critical rethinking of the important body of research that has been done on his writing and poetry until now (very

little research has been done on his art and philosophical concepts), in South Africa and elsewhere. No thesis has ventured the vast task of integrating the complex scope of his art, writing, aesthetics, philosophical and revolutionary thoughts, in one study.¹⁸ The contribution of the thesis regarding the study field of Breytenbach's work, lies in the integration of all these different notions. By retaining the research done on his work, important new insights are provided. This thesis is also characterized by hybridity. A multiplicity of arguments and a host of other artists are used to illustrate the notion of hybridity. Similar to the use of multiplicities in his art and writing, the thesis writer uses multiplicities and strings of words to enhance Breytenbach's "non-fixative" point of departure.

The thesis was written from a certain viewpoint of departure, which underlines Breytenbach's way of thinking. The inclusion of Breytenbach's own writing multiplies the special network effect of the intertextual approach. By writing the thesis as an intertext, Breytenbach's own intertextual approach is enhanced. The "thesis text" in itself becomes an instrument of breaking down forms of fixity that stem from a monological approach. Breytenbach's art, writing, aesthetic notions and political points of departure are interlinked in a Tantric network of images, metaphors, deeds, and dictums. Poems and paintings and dramas are also linked to one another. Accompanied by mystic multiplicities, the various discourses and networks of intertexts (both image, metaphor and notion) form the seven crown flowers of the holy lotus of Breytenbach's oeuvre. Breytenbach's own intertextual approach undermines all forms of monological (one story, one meaning, one image) creation. The cultural forms, coming from his mind, are hybrid, mixed and impure. He is a collagist, who juxtaposes images drawn from some fantastic archive.

The probable meaning of tears in Breytenbach's art is investigated in chapter one. Tears in

18

The doctoral thesis of Francis Galloway, *Breyten Breytenbach: Die skrywer as openbare figuur* (1987) integrates the public relationship of Breytenbach with the media.

Breytenbach's work are a sign of psychic pain. It is stated that the experience of pain could lead to the dismantling of the fixed identity (the breaking up of the self). By shattering of his self, Breytenbach became more aware of life processes; this could lead to the opening up of consciousness. There are traces of masochism in Breytenbach's art. Pain has to do with masochism and sadism. This is the way of the body. Erotica could lead the way to schism. Fire consciousness is a notion which enhances the dissolution of the self or the "I". It is part of the Tao or the Watercourse Way. What is the "I" then if the stable self no longer exists? Hofstadter, Breytenbach and Dogen's (1200-1253) inquiry into the notion of the pattern might provide a possible answer. Some aspects of pattern-making are investigated. This could lead to a totally new conception of the self. There are similarities between the Watercourse Way, and the "smooth" space of the nomadic way against the "straited" space of the State. By engaging in these ways, the fixed self is dismantled. Two "nomadic" works, are discussed: Philip Glass's *Koyaanisqatsi* and Breytenbach's *le Coucher de soleil (To lie Down)*. The *Ars poetical* (non-fixative) values concerning the outsider are also discussed.

In chapter two the argument is concerned with the movement of bodies through space. According to Deleuze & Guattari (1986: 50), the nomad has a territory. He follows customary paths and goes from one point to another. He is not ignorant of points (water points, dwelling points, assembly points, etc.) The water point is reached only in order to be left behind, every point is a relay and exists only as a relay. The life of the nomad is the intermezzo. Even the elements of his dwelling are conceived in terms of the trajectory that is forever mobilizing them. The nomadic trajectory distributes people (or animals) in an open space, one that is indefinite and non communicating. It is a space without borders or enclosure. Sedentary space is enclosed by walls, enclosures and roads between enclosures, while nomad space is smooth, marked only by straits that are effaced and displaced with the trajectory. The nomad distributes himself in a smooth space, he occupies, inhabits, holds that space; that is his territorial principle. The nomad is one who does not want to depart, who clings to the smooth space left by the receding forest, where the steppe of the desert advances. The movement of the nomad deterritorializes and there is no reterritorialization afterwards. He is a vector of

deterritorialization. He adds desert to desert, steppe to steppe by a series of local operations which endlessly vary. Breytenbach is the nomadic thinker of movement away from the direction of the uniform toward the chaos machine, which undermines the instrumental intellect and fascistic grip on things. The inquiry of movement leads us to the notion of multiplicities. Multiplicities stem from a desire to create a matrix of polyphony, a plurality of voices and vestiges that reverberate in the halls of identity. When he was born, his name was Breyten Breytenbach. Nor might it be more illuminating to trace the trajectories of Panus, Elepheteira, King Fool, Don Espejuelo, Geta Wolf, Jan Blom, Vagina Jones, Lazarus, Comrade Ekx, Afrika Aap, Bangai Bird or Bién Tóng. He is also continually becoming Breytenbach. Movement in art is discussed and Bacon, William Kentridge (1955-) and Breyten Breytenbach are compared. Breytenbach's important aesthetic concept, the bodily movement toward death and decay, is an indication of temporality. He is a thinker who attempts the nearly impossible act of destroying all forms of fixity – the grey areas between things, of greyness between life and death.

Chapter three deals with the notion of an inscription. Deleuze & Guattari (1986:42) again provide a model by which the inscription of the State could be understood. It inscribes thought on its inhabitants. Thought defines the goals and paths, conduits, channels, organs, and entire *organon* for the State. The classic image of thought is a free republic of free spirits whose prince would be the idea of the Supreme being. Only thought is capable of inventing the fiction of a State that is universal by right, elevating the State to the level of the universal of law. The modern State defines itself in principle as “the rational and reasonable organization of a community.” The State gives thought a form of interiority, and thought gives that interiority a form of universality. The goal of worldwide organizations is the satisfaction of reasonable individuals within particular free States. The poet in the archaic imperial State was able to play the role of image trainer. Today, noology studies the images of thought and their historicity. However, Deleuze & Guattari (1986:44) state that thought has never had anything but laughable gravity and that we should not take it seriously. This is a paradoxical statement because the less people take thought seriously, the more they think in conformity with what

the State wants. Noology is confronted by counter-thoughts, which are violent in their acts and discontinuous in their appearances. These are the acts of the private thinkers, as opposed to the public professor: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Counter-thought, which belongs to the war machine is not another image in opposition to the image inspired by the State apparatus. It is a force that destroys both the image and its copies, the model and its reproductions. It is again an exterior form. It is the relation between brother and sister, the becoming-women of the thinker, the becoming-thought of the woman: the *Gemüt* that refuses to be controlled (Deleuze & Guattari 1986:70). It operates by relays instead of forming a fixed image. In this section the investigation starts off with the inscription of the patriarchy, Calvinism and Apartheid on Breytenbach's body. His body would become a horizon of the strife between inscriptions and desires for freedom. Breytenbach left the tribe and deployed his life in some horizonless milieu that is a smooth space, steppe, desert or sea. All that is left is to engage himself in the continual movement more than a thousand plateaus (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Breytenbach was concerned with the notion of movement since the sixties. After the period of incarceration (1975-1982) he refined this aesthetic concept to that of nomadism. The political body and the landscape of revolution (the way against all forms of fixity) are discussed. Like Genghis Kahn(c.1162-?), he (Breytenbach), does not understand the phenomenon of the city and thus he is discussed as a social critic and the carnival-goer. These are the counter-thoughts of the war machine. Lastly, Breytenbach's formulates the notion of the Middle World, in which he places certain people (war machines in their own right). They have left all forms of fixity behind. Many of them are exiles where memory in itself can become a war machine. All of the thought is a becoming, a double becoming, rather than the attribute of a Subject and the representation of a Whole.

Artistic movement can be a potential war machine, to the precise extent that it traces a creative line of flight, a smooth space of displacement (Deleuze & Guattari 1986:121). It is not the nomad who defines this constellation of characteristics, it is this constellation which defines the nomad, and at the same time the essence of the war machine. If guerilla warfare, minority warfare, revolutionary and popular war, are in conformity with the essence, it is because they

take war as an object. They can make war only on the condition that they simultaneously create something else, if only new non-organic social relations. The line of flight that it creates turns into lines of destruction. The plane of consistencies that constitutes them, even piece by piece, turns into some planes of organizations and dominations. When Breytenbach entered South Africa with an illegal passport in 1974, he left the smooth nomad space and entered the terrain of the stratified space with its laws and regulations. Breytenbach was incarcerated. Memory as a notion has interested Breytenbach over a long period of time and has been the theme of novels, poems, paintings, dramas and essays. Memory in itself has the potential of a war machine. In chapter four, and using the concept of memory, Breytenbach's period of incarceration is looked into. Breytenbach has been engaged in a livelong conversation with Kafka. It is thus apt to turn to Kafka's story of *The Great Wall* to investigate the difference between the stratified memory system, the stratified space of prison and the poetics of space and memory as imagination which Breytenbach experienced while he was imprisoned. Breytenbach uses memory as an aesthetic and revolutionary concept, embracing the constant changing nature of reality. Arising out of the artist's fantastic journey through the landscape of consciousness and memory, are the images of the prison drawings. His drawings are the war machines that are in conflict with the stratified order's notion of "good art." Goya's art (during the Inquisition in Spain) is investigated and compared to that of Breytenbach.

In chapter five the question is asked how does one experience reality, when the self is deliberately, continually lost or shattered? "Sharding" (schizophrenia, schizoid and shaman) then stand for life, instinct, freedom of nomad thought, compared with the mind (of the normal) which provokes oppressive self-consciousness, the illusion of logic and the belief in self-control. The selflessness of Buddhism is looked into. The conventional idea of identity is based on the existence of structure, which remains more or less the same throughout life. Breytenbach's playing with his identity, takes on more exteriorized forms. This becomes evident from his creating other names which he sees to consider appropriate for defining the various circumstances in which he finds him. Creoleness and bastardness are words that hang

about Breytenbach like a cloak. He sides with Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) who said: “I have always been of an inferior race . . . /I am of an inferior race for all eternity . . . /There I am on the Breton shore . . . / I am a beast, a nigger . . . /I am of a distant race: my ancestors were Norseman”. Aspects of the shaman, the exile, the border intellectual and the nomad are investigated. The important aspect of the other and Frantz Fanon’s (1925-1961) role in the creation of the Black Consciousness movement is considered.

In chapter six Breytenbach’s work is an inquiry into the nature of reality. Zen Buddhism profoundly influenced Breytenbach’s thoughts. It is a way of attaining direct experience of reality, leading to a life unmediated by words or ideas. He embraces the notion of the Middle Way in his interpretation of reality. The second aspect which is looked into is the realities of utopia. Breytenbach’s involvement with Marxism (the dialectics), is investigated. His point of departure does not embrace one stable view of reality. This is radicalism. The simulacrum is the third aspect which is investigated. Mirroring is an all-encompassing metaphor and image of the simulacrum. The simulacrum of the theater sheds light on the relationship between Breytenbach and Klossowski. The art movement which Breytenbach is part of, New Realism, is concerned with the reflection of new realities, the absurd, the grotesque and the gruesome. Breytenbach also has strong connections with the Surrealist art movement, which is interested in the reality of a super-rational world, imagination and the dream. With Breytenbach the modern reality of a single origin is replaced with a play of multiple meanings. The last aspect, is the utopia of memory and forgetting that distorts the nature of reality.

There is no possibility of providing a “biography” of Breytenbach. Such a monological approach will not enhance the argument of this thesis. Once again Breytenbach’s “Self” which is his life as art work is investigated. Deleuze & Guattari (1986:4) say that Luc de Heush analyzed a Bantu myth.

Nkongolo, an indigenous emperor and administrator of public works, gives his half-sister to the hunter Mbidi, who assists him, and then leaves. Mbidi's son, a man of secrecy, joins up with his father, only to return from the outside with that inconceivable thing, an army. He kills Nkongolo, and proceeds to build a new State..."

Between the magical-despotic State and the juridical State containing a military institution, we see that flash of the war machine, arriving from without. From the standpoint of the State, the originality of the man of war, his eccentricity, necessarily appears in a negative form: stupidity, deformity, madness, illegitimacy, usurpation and sin. Breytenbach's work consists of an invented and fictionalized "Self" which is a war machine. The Self has its own rhythm which flows into endless successions of catatonic episodes or fainting spells, and flashes or rushes. For Deleuze & Guattari (1986:9) catatonia is: "This affect is too strong for me," and a flash is: "the power of this affect sweeps me away," so that the Self (*Moi*) is now nothing more than a character whose actions and emotions are de-subjectified, perhaps even to the point of death. There is much of the East in Breytenbach: the Japanese fighter, interminable still, who then makes a move too quick to see. This is the Go player. The most uncanny modernity lies with Breytenbach. It is because his self, which is his art work, is presented in secrecy, speed and affect. With Breytenbach, the secret is no longer a content held within a form of interiority. It becomes a form, identified with the form of exteriority which is always external to itself. Feelings become uprooted from the interior of a "subject", to be projected violently outward into a milieu of pure exteriority that lends them an incredible velocity, a catapulting force of love or hate. They are no longer feelings, but affects. With Breytenbach the self becomes a deterritorialized velocity of affects which unleashes itself. The Self surfaces in relays, intermezzos and resurgence. The Self is a rhizome and a war machine.

CHAPTER ONE: FIRE AND WATER.

1.1. Tears in Breytenbach's work.

Breytenbach, the painter and writer of pain (which often leads to tears), wrote this prophetic poem, *breyten prays for himself* in 1964. It is as if he already knew that he would endure great pain in his life. In this poem Breytenbach seems to be aware that the pain of politics would enter his life and that this would be one of the ways to become more conscious and aware of his own processes.

breyten prays for himself

That pain exists is unnecessary Lord

We can live without pain

A flower does not have teeth

Death is the only fulfilment

But let our flesh remain fresh like cabbage

Make us firm like a fish's pink body

Let us charm each other with eye deep butterflies

Favour our mouths our guts our brain

Let us taste the evening air frequently

Swim in tepid seas, may sleep with the sun

Unhurried the shiny Sundays ride on bicycles

And gradually we will rot like old ships or trees

But keep pain far from me my Lord

That others may bear it

Be taken into custody, Shattered

Stones

Hanged
Lashed
Used
Tortured
Crucified
Interrogated
Placed under house arrest
Made to slave their guts out

banished to obscure islands till the end of their days

Wasting in damp pits down to slimy green imploring bones

Worms in their stomachs full of nails

But no *Me*

Never give us pain or complain *Die ysterkoei moet sweet* (1964).

Galloway (1990:41) writes that as early as 1968, Breytenbach wrote poetry [and painted art works] to break down the hierarchical value system. The poet/painter prefers an open and full life compared to the fulfilled and fixed life of the bourgeoisie. The preference of this kind of life is accompanied by pain and death while the bourgeois ideal is characterized by the need not to experience pain. The bourgeois tries to stabilize their way of life and are against change. While they prefer remaining in the status quo, the human being who prefers a life of growth is subject to change. By being disruptive, the poet/painter can bring about change in society. He must challenge fixed values. This is the way of pain and tears.

The poem was written in 1964. Forty-four years later Breytenbach writes of his country of birth in the memory book, *Dog Heart* (1998:9):

But no, when I look into the mirror I know that the child born here is dead. It has been devoured by the dog. The dog looks back at me and he smiles. His teeth are wet with blood. It has always been a violent country.

Breytenbach, who had chosen to be the “war machine” right from the start of his mission as artist, engages in a dialogue with the whole legacy of art and art history. Jacques Derrida’s (1930 -) book of tears, *Memoirs of the Blind* (1993), is a moving reflection on the (in) visibility of things, the inability of the eye to see, blind eyes, eyes whose ability to see is concealed by tears. Antoine Coypole’s (1661-1722) work, *Study of the Blind*, is concerned with blind men. Like all men, they must advance or commit themselves, that is, expose themselves, risk themselves to run through space. They are apprehensive about space. They apprehend it with their groping, wandering hands; they draw in this space in a way that is at once cautious and bold. Yet, it would seem that most of these blind men do not lose themselves in absolute wandering (Derrida 1991:5).

There is the history of Christ healing the blind. Fredrico Zuccaro (1543-1609) drew *Christ Healing a Blind Man*. There is *Tobias Healing his Father’s Blindness* attributed to Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (1606-69), the moving painting of Odilon Redon’s (1840-1916) *With Closed Eyes*, and Gustave Courbet’s (1819-77) *Self-portrait* called *The Wounded Man* (these works are all in the Louvre). In *Memoirs of the Blind*, Derrida (1990:5) writes in his book of tears, that deep, deep down, inside, the eye would be destined not to see, but to weep. Weeping is the pathos that appears in Breytenbach’s art. What else is he doing other than continually trying to wipe away his tears? What is he concerned with, other than eye-centeredness related to the weeping “I”?

Breytenbach has no sense of belonging to the Afrikaans society when he leaves his country of birth. Sensitive and informed, he also has no illusions of living in a paradise on earth. He works and lives in Paris, a city, at this time, permeated with the thoughts of the Existentialist, Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) – a city seeped in notions of Albert Camus (1913-1960). And the country is at war with Algeria. Breytenbach is one of those *angry young men*, who echo the outsider’s experience of the Absurd. He is already an “islander” who has departed from the fixity of the mainland when he paints blind men: *le Conquérant de Byzance* (F&W-1), the

man with the hydrocephalic head, and others. He does not live in society but has acquired spectator status or operates as a “pack”. He is alienated and exteriorized from the world he lives in. In *Portrait of a Colleague* (F&W-2), he begins to shift the eye deliberately around the canvas, probably a commentary on the shiftiness of the “I” – or the pain experienced by the outsider (nomad) who is not from society, which is fragmented. Camus and Sartre create the characters, *Meursault and Roquentin*. As prophetic nomadic outsider, Breytenbach creates the blinded self in *Self-portrait with a White Ear* (F&W-3). Like the Russian ballet dancer, Vaslav Nijinsky (1890-1950), Breytenbach is the outsider of the body. Like the writer, Kafka, Breytenbach is the outsider of the mind. And like the painter Bacon, Breytenbach is the outsider of emotions. In *Horse Gallops on Post-haste* (F&W-4), from *All One Horse* (1990a), he presents the weeping horse of the self and the blindfolded man treads on the head without a body.

There are the drawings of incarceration: *espèce de (the Specie)* (F&W-5) and *dans une (Within)* (F&W-6), where the prisoner is blinded by isolation. The art object, *The Buddhist Fly* (F&W-7), a blinded doll, is cradled in a wooden coffin with a grotesque penis between the legs, maggots scattered over the wooden lid of the box. In Montagu, during a personal conversation with Breytenbach, in his studio, located next to the house *Paradys*, a construction similar to the low-roofed white-washed houses of Central Africa and overlooking a dry but reeded riverbed with the backdrop of a magnificent mountain range, he mentioned that the work had been made in anticipation of a period of probable incarceration.

Breytenbach (1990a:101) writes a fictional piece called *Bathed in Tears* and selects a painting, *Personnages avec oiseau (Figures with bird)* (F&W-8), a work depicting three figures, to accompany it. There is the eyeless figure with a bird perched on his shoulder, folding his small vulnerable bird-clawed-hands on its breast. The figure on the right has protruding eyes and the third figure on the left is the blinded one, the one with multiple ears.

We leave. We go to the airport. There is an old wind in the empty trees. The flight is announced. ‘Oohh’ my mother moans. ‘Bebebebe ... Don’t leave me. ...’ But she doesn’t recognise me. Her old black face is bathed in tears (Breytenbach 1989:101).

The eyes (‘I’) of Breytenbach are filled with tears. Tears blind them. He paints the three-blinded men, *Untitled* (F&W-9).

1.2. The dog of pain: *Dog Heart*.

Painting tears is one step away from writing about and painting the *Dog of Pain*. If Breytenbach conveys carnivalesque moments in his art, his images also point to the tragic moments in human life, that side of us testifying to our vulnerability in the face of traumatic events. Choosing Kahlo’s and Nietzsche’s “Dog”, or the embodiment of pain, as his constant companion, he paints and draws Dog.

In 1966 Breytenbach painted *La joie de Peindre (Joy of Paintinh)*(FW-10), the “dog-man” lying next to a man who is sitting in an arm chair, a figure which is repeated in a similar ‘dog-man’ lying on a mat in front of the bed of another “dog-man” posture, lying on a bed. The image in this watercolour is taken up again in *All One Horse* (1990a:44). In *T/14* (F&W-11), in which Dog is standing in front of prison bars with the two-bodied rooster, one decapitated, we have a reminder of the place of incarceration. The rooster is holding the noose of the gallows in his hand. In *Yellow Dog* (F&W-12) an emaciated Dog is part of a studio still-life with a mannequin.

In *Hovering Dog* (F&W-13) a painting of pain and movement through water, the viewer sees a basset-hound hanging on two strings in front of a swimming figure, and a white black-

masked man seated with a black white-masked woman on his lap. Both figures have blue tongues. The masked figures can be interpreted as interplay with the novel *Black Skin, White Mask* (1967) of Fanon's, the father of the Black Consciousness Movement and one of the *un-citizens* (outsiders or nomads or the pact, etc.) living in Breytenbach's Middleworld (the place for the outsider). The senseless "word-strings" written on the canvas are an excruciating inscription of pain. Pain can also become senseless; thus, it cannot be expressed in words.

Words written on the left string read:

"woordstring tjestjies tussen sou 'n getjieswoorde tussen jou en my naelstringetjies woorde soms moet jy die woorde kak soms moet jy hom baie ver gaan haal en dan moet jy hom soos ei ver gaan haal soos vlieë wat orals bly kakkies tussen jou enmy ook sal daard ei woorde vlieë wat oral by kak met 'n kleinwit kwassie daar isaa woordstringetjies tussen jou."[sic]

Words written on the right string read:

"soms moet jy daardie ding ver gaan haal jy daardie dig ver".[sic]

And words written on the dog:

"met klein kwassi offerhande goete te skrywe ksê tjom met klein wit kwassie allerhande goete te skrywe van die worrd stingetjies tussen jou en my wat jy soms baie ver moet jy die woordstin es baie gaan haal om werklikheid aan te verkeer kleinwit kwassies die ding tjom"[sic].¹⁹

In the prison drawing, with the inscription, *par ses mouvements (kali) redonne la vie au cadavre de Shiva/Shava – d'après une pienture tantrique du dix-huitième siècle de Kangra, (The movement of Kali on the cadaver of Shiva/Shava – a Tantric painting ...)*(F&W-14), we have the dog howling at the decapitated head which Kali holds in her hand. In *les gens de la rose noire (People of the black rose)*(F&W-15), we find the big fat dog of pain and also in the graphic work, *in dog we thrust* (F&W-16). In *le Pêcheur (The angler)*(F&W-17), the

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The words on canvas of this art work are misspelt. This can be interpreted as a challenge of the "stratified space" of the linguist, who experiences the correctness of words as "holy".

masked carnival figure fishes for an image in the moonlight, while a dog is wandering through the universe. *Autoportrait masqué (Self portrait with mask) (F&W-18)* is a self-portrait of Breytenbach as the artist, holding a palette while a masked woman flies through the window. Again he has included the snarling dog of pain.²⁰

1.3. The consciousness of masochism: *The Bat (F&W-19)*.

Consciousness is the go-between, the begetter, and the matter of consciousness is image or metaphor (Breytenbach 1996a:46).

Nietzsche's view that man finds himself somewhere between good and evil has far-reaching moral implications. One cannot expect correctness, truth or total lies, badness from anyone in the position of the in-between. Man is the halfway house (between heaven and hell) who is caught in the tyrannical in-between position. But the problem of the outsider is in essence a problem of consciousness. For the outsider there is a constant interaction between consciousness and unconsciousness. He is aware of being different and knows why he is different. The outsider is intensely aware of the tragedy. Each situation in itself carries the alternative. Outsider consciousness is terminal and this results from the collective experience of the tragic. The outsider becomes terminally ill, three times ill. Because he is aware of occupying the regions outside society, the outsider recognizes the possibility of the recurrence of the tragedy. There is a close link between Camus' notion of the Absurd and the Tragic. For Camus existence ends in a series of endlessly recurring events. Then the question arises – why? At that moment consciousness becomes terminally ill – two options remain, suicide or

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Sienaert (2001:80) states that the mask as archetypal African image has also become synonymous with Breytenbach's work. For him the concept of identity is closely linked to the concept of masking: not only does it embody identity as something which cannot be fully revealed or understood, it also suggests a constantly transforming "I" – a perpetual shedding of identities which evoke the mysteriousness of being. This is indeed the traditional African point of view, exemplified in the initiation masks from Mali with which Breytenbach is familiar. The more secret the association of the initiate, and the deeper the knowledge involved, the more ambiguous, abstract and metaphoric the visual language of the masks becomes. The unfamiliar effect of a ceremonial masks glimpsed in semi-darkness conveys fathomless depths of being (Sienaert 2001:80).

an investment in a deed of belief (Schoeman 2000:150-163).

If Breytenbach's work is typified by an abundant play of images both on the canvas and in his drawings, it is at the same time a focus on the traumatic, characterized by the experience of vulnerability, fragility and of transience. The backdrop of his work illuminates emotions of loss, shock and experiences of mourning that cannot be silenced. These are also the grotesque moments.

In the essay *The Long March* read in New York during 1990, Breytenbach (1996a:49) quotes Deleuze.

An individual only properly acquires his own name after a severe exercise in depersonalization, when he or she lays himself or herself open to multiplicities and the intensities which may run through him or her. ... You become – have become—collection of singularities cut loose, of names and pronouns and fingernail and things and animals and small happenings: the opposite of a star or an expert or a preacher.

Breytenbach is then also the masochist. The masochist is the one who has left “mainland,” which is inhabited by the star, the expert and the preacher. Through the act of depersonalization, Breytenbach uncovers the image captured in the painting, *The Bat*. Opening himself up to pain and thus becoming more conscious, enables Breytenbach to produce the image of the mutilated man.

There are instances of masochism in Breytenbach's work: dismemberment, decapitation, fragmenting and wounding. The painting, *The Bat*, which is housed in the collection of the *Nationale de France Musée de Dôle*, is an expression of mutilation in the extreme. The naked

emasculated man is placed in an empty space. A crumpled pair of trousers and a dildo has been painted on the floor. The hand of the left arm is an iron claw. In the midst of its extreme vulnerability, this work reveals elements of masochism and could be an opening up of consciousness to the identity of erotica.

Then there is the meaning of the dildo, the instrument of transgression, that the viewer has to take note of. Here one moves to the field of sadism. Lo Duco (1992:4) writes about the ecstasy of the great sadists, Gilles de Rais (1404-1440) who is connected with Bluebeard, Erzsébet Báthory de Nassady, Doña Catalina de los Rios and the flagellates of Christ as witnessed in traditional paintings and sculptures (Luis Borrassa [d.c.1425], Hans Holbein [1497-1543], and the Breton Calvaries). In short, he writes about the permanent taste of the crowd for the cruellest spectacles of death – the Circus, the Crucifixion, Place de Grève, Red Square, or Nuremberg. The dildo is the sadistic instrument of domination over the female psyche. Its violence, power, sadism and its slogans, typify the Western ego-aggression: Hillman (1983:15-17), the American Psychotherapist (who actually opposes psychotherapy) writes:

Go ahead, get ahead, do it. It's only when that breaks down, when depression comes in and you can't get up and do it. When you feel beaten, oppressed, knocked back ... then something moves and you begin to feel yourself as a soul. You don't feel yourself as a soul when you're making it and doing it. Where violence and power and domination begins to crumble, where the psyche itself undermines, and where fantasy begins to show. When you're in the middle of domination, you don't feel yourself in a *fantasy* of domination. When there's failure, dejection, and you are cast down thrown back on yourself, left alone, wet, in one way or another – then you are cast down, thrown back on yourself, left alone, then you begin to feel. That is the great Western Will.

Masochism is also a sort of destruction from the inside, like irony. In a sense masochism

could be an ironic mode of reflection. This is something that a modern contemporary theater, shows. One needs masochism, a masochistic touch, for deepening – it is a mode of deepening into one's pain, which is almost mystical. Which doesn't mean that one is in any way sadistic. Awareness itself hurts. There's a joy in that hurting, because the insight hurts and makes you more sensitive. You have to be masochistic to become aware. The other aspect of the masochism of consciousness is that it enjoys becoming conscious through pain. It is usually thought that masochism is the opposite of sadism but, in line with Breytenbach's sense of obliterating pairs of opposites, masochism can be seen as having a world of its own. We could then speak of the masochism of consciousness. In the story of Eros and Psyche, Psyche suffers terrible torments. At the same time she has a child in her belly called Voluptus and she is the servant of Venus. Pleasure and pain can be very complicated, very intertwined (Hillman 1983:18). Georges Bataille (1897-1962) (1992:6)²¹ knew that the pleasure of going beyond oneself through self-annihilation is a masochistic pleasure par excellence, and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) (1953:50) wrote the following:

When there is physical pain, a high degree of what may be termed narcissistic cathexis of the painful place occurs; this cathexis continues to increase and tends, as it were, to 'empty' the ego.

Breytenbach extends this argument of experiencing awareness. It is one of the building blocks of consciousness, which leads to an exceptional relationship with both life and death. Thus it becomes the dialectical and constant movement between life (the future) and death (the conversation with the ancestors). By donning the shoe of the nomad, and by constantly carrying the mirror in his hand, he shapes the opportunity to reach out to the Other and to the storehouse of the unexpected. By looking into the mirror, he captures fragments of moments flowing between life and death. These are set down as an image or a poem, and by looking and reading we recognize ourselves. In *Cold Turkey* (1992) Breytenbach (1996a:94) writes:

21

Georges Bataille was a French philosopher and novelist with enormous influence on Post Structuralist thought.

Part of the civic poet's responsibility is to recognize the interstices - to be the thin wedge that could split the cracks to seize the distaff elements and the moment of disequilibrium.

This is frontier consciousness, or recognition of the fragmentation of the moment. Pain is the deepening into vulnerability and the opening up of the process of awareness, which is the mirroring of (un) reality. Pain is a rite of passage into the deeper layers of a consciousness of the void, of the self and society.

1.3.1. A critical comparison between Donatien Alphonso François de Sade (1740-1814) and Breytenbach.

The Marquis de Sade, the greatest creator of pornography and the one who gave his name to “sadism”, was born in 1740 in Paris and died in 1814 in the asylum Charenton, in Paris. He was incarcerated for nearly thirty of his seventy-four years. He landed in jail on account of his mother-in-law, who pulled some strings, which landed him in prison for thirteen years. There was no trial.

After Napoleon was crowned, and after he read de Sade's work, he banned *Justine*.²² De Sade was taken up in Charenton, where he spent the last thirteen years of his life. According to Aireksinen (1995:26-46) de Sade was not involved with pornography. It was his aim to please the reader. His style was that of a police report (according to the French writer, Bataille, de Sade's work reminds of prayer books rather than amusement literature), wherein he on grounds of own experience of cruel behaviour, portrays the human as one focusing on violent

22

According to Aireksinen (1995: 101) de Sade published his novel *Justine* as well as *Juliette*, in ten sections. These works were published after the French Revolution. Even during the sixties, de Sade's work was kept behind locks and could only be read with special permission. France banned these works, also *Hundred and twenty years of Sodom*. De Sade used utmost forms of obscenity, blasphemy and received sexual delight from any sort of cruelty.

gratifying of lust. De Sade was in collaboration with the most prudent moralist. De Sade did not succeed in advocating amoral erotica; his resistance was merely a reflection of the church's morality. De Sade was not concerned with challenging the high priests of morality. His main aim was the shifting of barriers, sexual, spiritual and political matters. He was interested in delving into his own psyche. If there were no borders, there could be no meaning.

The film which deals with De Sade's life, *Quills* directed by Philip Kaufman (director of the film *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* based on the book of Milan Kundera [1929-]), portrays de Sade, who sees dying as the crossing of the utmost barrier. Breytenbach sees death as a continuation or passing over to another state. According to Bataille (1992:105), de Sade's intention was to show that death could only be confronted after the screen of lust has been completed. This viewpoint concerns the reckoning with the self. This is a death wish. Breytenbach's artistic work on the other hand is a continual interplay between Eros and Thanatos. His numerous love poems for Yolande are juxtaposed by his constant writing on aspects of death and dying. Only a few of his early drawings and paintings transgress to de Sade's level. In *Untitled (F&W-20)*, two women use a shoe to masturbate. This is a depiction of a violent act of erotica.

Both Breytenbach and de Sade are interested in the paradoxical qualities of language. On the one side is the unrestricted possibility "language", but on the other side it is also a demonstration of the soul-destroying pathlessness of language and a way of living which loses control. In the film, *Quills*, de Sade actually mutilates himself by cutting his fingers with broken glass and then uses the blood to write erotic details on his clothes. The clothes on his body, become the book. After being subjected to cruel torture and lying in chains, naked and raving, he used his own feces to write words on the walls.

Breytenbach at one stage chastised the South African Prime Minister, Balthazar Johannes

Vorster (1915-1983) by publishing a defamatory poem, *Letter from abroad to butcher*, in *Skryt* (1972:26-28). In one stanza, the poem adopted the agonistic viewpoint of a political prisoner, but in the next poem the poet addressed the Prime Minister directly:

**You who are entrusted with the security of the state
What do you think of when the night reveals her
framework
and the first babbling shriek is squeezed out
of the prisoner
as in a birth
with the fluids of parturition?
does your heart also stiffen in your throat
when you touch the extinguished limbs
with the same hands that will fondle your wife's
mysteries?**

In later art works like *Lappesait* (2000-2001)(a series of ten scrolls with images and poems), Breytenbach's involvement with the canvas and the act of writing, borders on the fetishizing of death. He expresses himself by writing on the canvas and describing it as a "winding death sheet"²³. On another "death sheet" he actually writes a poem, informing a woman that he is already dead. In contrast to de Sade, Breytenbach's entering into forbidden areas of erotica is subtle. He uses the fetish to deepen, carry libidinal energy and express his sexual awareness (Moore-Gilbert: 1998:118).²⁴ The fetish is a deeper transgression than the normal sexual deed and could release deeply seated psychic energy (Breytenbach's image "*bird*" is also a fetish).²⁵

²³

Scroll ten.

²⁴

For Freud the fetish is a means of expressing and containing severely conflictual feelings.

²⁵

Baudrillard (cited in Pirsig 1994:300) considers the void between the image and reality and comes to the conclusion that images are stronger than reality.

De Sade deepened and transgressed the accepted norms of erotica. Evil became transparent. His imagining of violent sexual deeds shattered his identity and thereby moved into deeper layers of consciousness. One could say that this is a horizontal deepening. With Breytenbach this is a vertical expanding of self-awareness. It is also the Watercourse way of the Tao and the nomadic way. Breytenbach's self-awareness comes "through the traversing of a thousand plateaux."²⁶ This is the smooth way of the nomad who is the pact and the war machine.

De Sade and Breytenbach's shattering of the self (the schism) which leads to a deepening of consciousness cannot be compared. The way they go about their tasks in a different way. Different ways cannot be judged. The phenomena that concern them take respective places in a world consisting of multiplicities.

1.4. Schism and the watery basis of things.

De Kock submitted his doctoral thesis, *'n Ondersoek na die nomadies-politieke moment: 'n Filosofiese lesing van Breyten Breytenbach* in 1999. In the thesis he reads Breytenbach's works as nomadic and political. The work provides a slot which introduces us to the void one should enter in order to become more conscious. Consciousness operates like a field of lightning in this void. Through sudden bursts and ruptures parameters are shifted and new insights are gained. De Kock has shown that the terrain of Breytenbach's thought has a watery basis, which gives it the smooth characteristics of the nomadic trail described by Deleuze & Guattari. For Breytenbach the movement of becoming more conscious, implies crossing the borders of that which is fixed. In order to become nomadic, many selves have to cross many plateaux.

²⁶

These words are the implication of Deleuze & Guattari's views in the book, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987).

In the section of pain we have noted the implications of being depersonalized. To be depersonalized is to split. Schism means cleaving, cutting like a cleaver, the knife, severing. Consequently, it is bad for integration, for it is hardly a whole-making thing, favouring growth and synthesis and those other goals at which the psychologist looks. According to Hillman (1975:82-97) when we think of schism, especially that with theological interest, our minds reverberate with the great schism of Christianity. Our first thought of schism is in terms of religion, and that is how the word has come into usage. “Schizoid” and “schizophrenia” are much later, and weaker, terms. A schism may have to do with one God or three, with Protest of Popery, with Christ as man or Christ as God, with national or international communes, with kinds and times of baptism, or theories of the libido, of art, cosmology, education and economics. If we continue within our theological fantasy, then the word “schism” does, as the dictionary says, appear mainly in context of Christian thought. Schism reflects the inherent capacity any unified doctrine reinforced by a monotheistic vision to fragment, to reveal the many that are potentially in the one. Employing the psychiatric fantasy, schism means a latent psychosis (schizophrenia), reflecting the psyche’s potential for splitting into inherent components, losing its coherence and modes of communication between parts, ending the rule of a strongly ordered self. Within mythological fantasy schism refers to the absence of “Hermes-Mercury”, or his concretization. The interpenetrating of archetypal perspectives terminates, or has become concretized into self-isolating units, each promulgating its own doctrine.

In Christianity the word schism receives value not usual in earlier Greek philosophers, whose polytheistic psychology allowed them to take it as a fact of natural life, e.g., Plato (427-347 BC). According to *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (710), Plato’s work *Phaedo* (101), was the first dialogue in which Plato decisively posited the existence of the abstract objects that he called “Forms” or “Ideas”. Forms are eternal and changeless. Aristotle’s (384-322 BC) *History of Animals* is a comparative study of generic features of animals. He noted the cleavage of the hoof. Schism is not a threat, not an abnormality, when roads divide or hoofs are cleft, but within the cosmos of unity (that which is fixed) schism is indeed a

passionate dangerous issue, the very worse that can happen. In the early Church, the controversies of schism endangered the authority of the Bishop, Eucharist and sacraments as well as the role of Rome. The ghost of polytheistic paganism lurked in these disputes.

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) sees schism in terms of multiplicity (Hillman: 1975:100). For Jung psychic structures are poly-centric. This schism can be compared to a field of many lights and sparks. Metaphorically spoken, the schizoid personality's energies scatter into constellations. Venturing into the deeper layers of consciousness becomes the representative of multiplicity, who splits and sows division, thereby reminding us of the complex of the totality. The reality of our wholeness is therefore not to be confused with the fixed singleness, or unity or a monotheistic description of totalities. We have to remember that the polycentricity of the psyche (its many constellations with their many *foci*), was once represented by a polytheistic pantheon and by the animation of nature through the personification of nymphs, heroes and daemons. Deleuze & Guattari (1986) refer to this complexity of the single person as "the pact". Breytenbach is the complex "pact" who has left the regions of fixed values, fixed borders, fixed ideas etc. behind in order to move to the "smooth" desert of consciousness.

Should we take a standpoint exclusively from any single one of these configurations and behave metrically to only one pattern, that is, should we act monotheistically, we have already performed an excommunication by cleaving ourselves off from communicating with the many forms. The goddesses in their variety, epitomized by the promiscuity of Aphrodite, insisting on plurality, embroil in situations in which other standpoints must be recognized, creating doctrinal divisions we refer to, after the events, as schisms. The quarrel concerning God is not about schism. But in any system whose stress is one unity, as the Church within some creed and one God (even in three persons), schism remains within the monolith.

By insisting on clarity of borders, proper definitions, we make divisions. When we insist upon concrete, literalistic enactment of the myth to which we happen to be standing closest, then, by choosing one pattern in our enactment, we become one-sided. We become psychologically monotheistic. This one-side choice can occur even in polytheistic religion, where it is called henoteism. One vision dominates systems of plurality. One concern should, however, integrate and allow many. In contrast, polytheistic attitudes recognize the polyvalent psychic structure, where borders are ill defined, so that connection between the consciousness and imagery stay open where imagination speculates rather than fix concepts. Borders dissolve into water. It is better to recognize a reality that consists of a multiplicity of things.

De Sade's deepening into the self and consciousness through the violence of erotica, and Breytenbach's fetizising of death belongs to the areas of schism which opens up into the cosmos of multiplicities. When things, signs, or actions are freed from their respective ideas, concepts, essences, values, points of reference, origins and aims, they embark upon an endless process of self-reproductions. This is not one identity, but many facets of the self, heading for the Watercourse way. Breytenbach (1983:5) has the following to say in this regard:

Speculation: And would [self] consciousness be possible without exception and entrenchment? Is [self] consciousness *reduction ad*? And is [self] consciousness the result of such a process or does it imply the anterieur existence of an entity (anima), a necessary defining?

Nothing is watertight. It is the route, the Tao. Not the royal highway but precisely the low road. The recognition which comes when the limits are swept away.²⁷

27

Translation by M. Grobler.

1.4.1. The Watercourse Way.

As the Zen outsider of many voices, Breytenbach is aware of the contingent character of things one is confronted with. In order to become more conscious, man is constantly doomed to reflection and structuring. He wrote a piece named *geraas by die venster* (noise at the window), where he describes the senses as interior decorators sorting out myriads' of impulses. He writes:

You put a strait jacket on your senses and although you try to restrict your participation to a manageable, controlling, exclusive so-named nuclear-ego, the sorting out thus also becomes written, coiling and cracking black flashes of light. We know that suppression gorges on the edge of our arbitrary consciousness (so also our desperate order), it seeps in, which anarchists are undermining and ridiculing the state. Nothing is water tight. We actually live in the without time explosion. On the slip-slide of the earth. The clamour always has to be eliminated again. And repression takes its toll. Ground is shifting continually, the delimitation relative, because we all try so desperately to absolutize it. We have to go with the unknown over and ever-changing landscape (Breytenbach 1996a)

According to de Kock (!999: 15- 22) that which changes, that which flows, or which falls into decay, the ever-changing landscape through which one moves, is unsettling. This writer and painter, a thinker of movement, of the chaos machine, is undermining the instrumental reason of the stratified order and its fascistic grip on “reality”, which it manipulates to suit its needs. It is this way of thinking that underlies the Zen consciousness concerning the temporality of life and its transient nature. Breytenbach writes the following poem:

Report (extract)

**I have also heard cocks crowing and
the call of trains and voices in my
bed and gods on the roof and I have seen
dragons in the zoo and the beards
of friends and I have smelt the sun
snow in winter and grapes in summer
but I no longer remember much of that ...**

The ever-changing terrain, on which Breytenbach reflects, does not leave the impression of a loss of control, but rather it implies being on the cutting edge of things. The poem or the painting are instances of this. Such is the poem, *Ver slag (Rapport 1964a:5)* where Breytenbach depicts the haziness of memory.

1.5. Fire Consciousness.

It was Jan Provost (c.1465-1529) who painted *Sacred Allegory*, the third eye of insight, or the eye of God hovering over a landscape of two figures. In this work, the wounded Christ is holding a sword in his right hand and the Mother Mary, has an open box on her lap, while a dove hovers over the box. A lamb is standing on the clouds and, on the left, in the same position, is an open Bible. To contemplate this picture, the gaze must become Christian. This is a gaze of a man or woman who has been converted to Christianity and is searching for a revelation of the divine condition. At the bottom of the painting is an eye painted between two folded hands, which are lifted up imploringly in a gesture of surrender and resurrection. By blinding oneself to vision, by veiling one's own sight, through the act of imploring, one does something with one's eyes and conversion begins.

In a self-portrait, reflecting a slick, red-lipped man, titled *Vanité (Vanity)*(F&W-21), Breytenbach depicts his familiar mole between the eyes, which one could compare to a third eye. In a paradoxical way the French word, *vanité* implies conceit and emptiness. Thus, instead of the Christian veiling of sight, we find a veiling through the desires of the self. The Buddhist notion of non-attachment, where the gaze of desire is shut off in order to attain the realms of meditation leading to the experience of the void, might not be entered into when one succumbs to vanity.

Nevertheless, the self-portrait could lead one to contemplation of one of the pillars of the Sixth Zen Patriarch, Hou Neng's concept of *wou-nien*. *Vanité* is a shadow in the Jungian sense, an example of *wou nien*. During the time of his incarceration Breytenbach wrote a poem concerning *wou-nien* which enlightens Breytenbach's (1983:37-38) conception of this notion.

Wash with words wou-nien

(" I am become Death/ The shatterer of worlds")

**then (time sharpens/ time fades away)
when the chilly winter was outside
did I with nibbly hand take a bar of soap
of the everyday patent handed out by the state
both for hygienic ablution of the body
and to drive the louse from the clothes
weaker than sunlight, green and slightly fatty, opaline
like general experience of insignificant quality
cooked and pressed together in more or less opaque
standard size brains
to carve (out something) from it with the fingers
a question? a fish?
busy with *hsin-tsung*, or the tuition of the Intellect**

I cut a manikin in and out of one rib
with the straight back
the hands cupped and the legs knotted in *mokusho*;
to sit desireless but like an open pomegranate for ecstasy of
fulfilment

to sit, so said Hui-neng, when no thought
comes to bother the intellect, is merely to sit (*za*)

also thus

and to reflect on the inside of your 'own' nature is meditation (*zen*),
violent disintegration movement – is

the promise of the fish

not to be allowed to piss one with the water,
the question to melt still with the silence?

Beware! Chao-Chou's states a statue:
when all things towards the One where
does that One return to?

my green manikin, the insight of a lifetime
(even if the head was like a clumsy cranium)

I made sit on the bed cabinet next to books filled with wisdom
until, inspection on hand, the officer with a stiff back
and the stiffer blue eye handles the 'thing'.

"you know of course this is a charge ... damage
to state property?" (aside to the Boer: "make work of it")

"seeing that soap is issued to wash yourself
and not to make dolls of ..."

(the state)" (besides: and you will have no other
images before my countenance)

let that now be a deeper lesson, Brother Bebe –
if the old monk could cast a precious Buddha statuette
in the fire to provide warmth against the winter's

worst bite

dare you not probably fruitful also with imagination

rinse the fish hands
and let your metaphor bloom to One completion: foam
and the wearing down of individual features
in due course to a somewhat sweet-smelling cleansing, provisionally
how wholly otherwise are you going to solve the question in/
till/ the sit movement passes to/no thought/anymore...?

how not said, now or later?:

there's water!

In the process of becoming conscious which is the arising in timeless nothingness, Breytenbach (1987:103) stipulates the words posture, structure and texture. Posture – awareness, transformation and bastardization – is the *wou-nien* of Zen: non-thought, non-attachment or fire-consciousness. One of the pillars of Hou-Neng's teaching as the Sixth Zen patriarch (as if there could be pillars in the void) was the concept of *wou-nien*. *Wou* in Chinese terminology is said to mean "not to exist" or "not to have". The ideogram doesn't indicate "heart", however, but literally stands for "fire". *Nien* signifies "to think of", "to remember", better still: "present or actual thought". *Wou-nien* is thus rendered as "non-attachment". The word-picture of the sign is "fire-consciousness". How does a flame think of itself? How does thought burn: as the fiery heart?

In the essay *The Long March* (1990), Breytenbach (1996a:38) writes: "By *wou-nien* the unconscious is penetrated. And where does one find the unconscious? It is to see all things as they are and not to be attached to any of them. It is only maintaining the perfect freedom to come and go. This form of consciousness is not the consciousness of an "I" (the "I" dissolves in it)." Breytenbach (1992), during a radio interview expressed himself on the selflessness of the "I" in art and poetry; the fact that the "I" was merely a filter for observation as follows:

... an element of Zen that comes into poetry and painting [...] is the dissolution of the so-called “self”, the “I”. The “I” becomes an observation point, a point of passage, through which the images and the perceptions move. You become part of your work, the way the archer and target and the arrow eventually become one. Because, underlying Zen Buddhism, there is this notion of the non-being of the “I”, the non-exclusivity of the “I”. The fact that one is a changing collection of elements, and that what you strive towards, is to move through the exploration, through the deepening of perceptions, to the dissolution of that. To stop being, and be for always, as it were.

1.5.1. Suchness (*thahata*).

Dogen (1200-1253) (1992:95) writes the following:

Bodhidharma said, “Each mind is like wood and stone”. Mind here spoken of is the *suchness of mind* (or *mind of objective reality*), it is the mind of the whole earth; therefore it is the mind of self and other. Each mind, of all the people of earth, as well as the enlightened ones in all worlds, the celestial and dragons and so on, is *wood and stone*. There is no other mind outside of this.

Koft (Molino 1998:273-304) says the meaning of this becomes clear when Dogen sees the mind as a shared condition of all entities, of the self and the other. Suchness is not only a shared condition, more specifically is it embedded in the essence of things. The distinction between inside and outside, self and the other are raised probably at that moment when a thought or experience rises from the unconscious and gets caught up in the instant in which things are seen as they are.

Suchness is the highest possible concept. This concept is the *Sunyata*²⁸ and it must be seen in the light of temporality. All life is temporally, fleeting and changeable. Temporality in Buddhist and Zen literature moves in the direction of an experience of that which is called *anatma* (the non-substantiality of the self). Breytenbach (1977:75) wrote the following poem:

**in the trees above the rain trembles
and outside the wind pours
its heart out
in the wind
listen to the sound of sound**

The experience of the suchness of things suggests the nature of things as they are, without any interpretation or seeking of deeper meaning or scientific analysis. Accordingly, one has to listen to the sound of sound, and then one will experience sound as it is. When looking into the concept of suchness, one comes to a realization that there is no interest in conditions of fixity.

An experience of the world built on representative impressions and projections are formulated according to the categories of “inside” and “outside” (of the subject). There are numerous examples of paintings by Breytenbach which are related to this concept. Suchness also implies an inherent movement between one and another. The movement over borders between the “I” and the world also implies the entering of a dynamic field of tension and becoming. Here, there is no place for the fixity of ideologies, dogmas, state organizations or the comfort of the bourgeois way of life. In *Dog Heart*, Breytenbach (1998d:4) writes:

**When I’m young I woosh on a bicycle from the one town to the other ... When he
is small his mother chucks him and his brother away. ... The world doesn’t really**

28

Emptiness

have a past and a future; we live in a continuum (and a continuant) where there cannot be room for both guilt and expiation. ... When he is young he spends long periods in the desert, painting and drawing the Bushmen, but with the passing years, or maybe due to inattention at the last moment, because of a momentary lapse, one forgets to die. When he is dead the colour fades for a while the birds do not return to the garden.

These are examples of immediacy of past, present and future. Breytenbach's writing gives an important indication of the way we can think about the suchness of things: one is merely a knot, which constantly, through memory, mediates experiences. Projection toward the future is being brought into an unfolding presence.

De Kock (1999: 73) says that Jean-Luc Nancy in his book, *The Birth to Presence*, (1993:1) directs his thoughts in the direction of the grains of representation and how those are flushed out and inundated by the arrival and the birth of things. He says:

The characteristic of representational thought is to represent, for itself, both itself and its outside, outside of its limit. To cut out a form upon the fundament, and to cut out a form of the fundament. Thereafter, nothing more can come, nothing more can come forth or be born from any fundament.

The condition of existence is a process of constant unfolding. This flowing process that which is seen as watery²⁹, implies the flow obliterates any hope of fixity, any sense of representation. What one must be aware of, is the radical otherness which it suggests, a suggestion which places things and humans in the path of non-substantiality and flow, in other words of the

29

Breytenbach's thoughts can be read as a movement over a constant changing terrain. The terrain thus does not deal with the fixity. According to him the 'I' is an open order, terrain shifting entity, the movement between life and death. It is a non-static world view and implies a nomadic consciousness. His work also points to temporality and a mutating consciousness. There are numerous images and metaphors of water in his art work. Water is a metaphor of non-fixity. It is in this light that his thought is described as having a watery basis.

presence announced by a continual process of birth. In the collection of poetry, *Soos die So* (1990b:53), Breytenbach wrote a watery poem and painted a water colour.

1 February 1974.

**Looking back over the thus far-verses drifting-verse
it is as clear as a sextant reading
that a continual motif is that of ‘going on a journey’
but that the chap could not set the sails properly
to arse waltz beautifully like a ship
from the oily harbour
(from reality thus, the embargoing) –
therefore I have decided rather to follow
the sotto voce motif as compass needle
to lift the anchor once and for all
to drift over the ocean to a dream-break
and to wiggle these words like oars
in the water: where a boat moves
a wind might come close in due course
and I lurch ashore.**

The experience of temporality, the rhythmic coming-and-going of things, can also be seen as a nomadic movement. Fleeting and intense is all experience: no more organisms will come forth this summer (even if it is still summer) and the birth of the nomadic is when you sit upright, trembling in silence with eyes hovering toward the skyline. Then we find the eluding skyline of the nomad: a shifting perspective, which day by day becomes more uncertain and less easy to pin point (de Kock 1999:43).

This rhizomatic potential, which flows from non-representative thinking, has various political implications. Fixed identities, social, economic and political, which are used to structure and

give meaning to reality, give way in the face of the “watery consciousness”, which proposes that things, thought, the human being and the world can only be seen as temporal knots in a network of constant birth and becoming.

If one sees things in terms of their suchness (*thahata*), one will experience them in terms of their essence. Suchness and temporality lead to a certain experience of the world beyond all dualities, beyond a need for permanence. The reflection of this statement implies a state of living in flowing or watery space. This moment of awareness is an absolute present, the point of intersection of time and timelessness, of the conscious and the unconscious. The moment of intersection, which is the rising moment of an *ekacittakshang*, that is, the moment of no-mind or no-thought, refuses to be expressed in language, in words of the mouth (Humphreys 1949: 148-149 & Cheng 1991:121).

1.6. Water and fire as an essence of the void.

This section will deal with the aspect of the void. For Breytenbach the labouring of the void is important. He also provides certain concepts with which the void can be laboured. He writes:

When I look at my own journeys, I can see that I have been walking in circles but guided by “*the book of mutations*” I have, over the last few millennia, devised a motto. I subscribe to only one: walk on! And to one task only: *laboring the void* (Breytenbach 2000).

The beauty Hoang Lien asks what this lecture is going to be about. Traveling, I say, to get out of this town where everybody is waiting for a murderer or a rapist called Godot. It will itself be a journey and the reflection will be in the passing landscape, thought will be its own illustration. But it cannot be a lecture in the proper, coherent sense; I intend to stop at some tents along the way of migration. Many memories, notions, concepts, echoes ... present themselves during these stopovers. They insist upon sponsorship, or more humbly ask if they may wash

my car.

Creativeness, transgression, transcendence, transformation, responsibility, metamorphosis, bastardization, light. Creolization, hybridization, identity, hegemony, centre, extinction, nomadism, settlers, language, ethics, the landscape of memory, dialectics, motherland (as opposed to fatherland), chaos, humanism, posture, empty and full, belonging, possession, compassion, revolution, poetry, harmony, pictures, borders, breaks and ruptures, creativity, wind ... [Or the void].³⁰

Ah, wind, she says. It sounds like it. Hot air. Haven't you spoken about all those things already in the Middleworld? You are repeating yourself (Breytenbach 1996a: 70).

To understand the nature of the void, we have to begin with the Tao. The *Tao* is that which encompasses the whole universe and everything existing in it. It is the Watercourse Way or the cosmic process. This view suggests that the universe consist of polarities, which are in constant interplay with each other, and thus function as a process of constant transformation.

... seen as a whole the universe is a harmony or symbiosis of patterns, which cannot exist without each other (Watts 1957:51).

Molino (1998:100) says that the harmony of the Tao as creative power comes from the balanced interaction of the Yin/Yang polarities, which are inherent in the Tao. Verse forty of the *Tao-te-Ching* (Book of reason and virtue), the only written document of Taoism – the path, the right way of life, the source of the universe – is examined. It is attributed to the legendary philosopher, Lao Tsze (604 BC) reads:

All things in the world come from being

All being comes from non-being

30

This list includes notions of non-fixity and fixity.

Here we find the main characteristic of Taoism: the universal source of life is not an entity, but non-being. The Tao is also the enormous empty space in which things come to life, interact and then die. The void is static though endlessly re-sounding.

As spaciousness, the Tao is undifferentiated, but the two together – that is, the space on the one hand, and the collection of the ten thousand things interacting on the other – are the world process (Molino 1998:44)³¹

Sienaert (1993:25-45) states that it is as a result of the human effort to conceptualize and the nature of language that the world is experienced as unchanging or permanent.

For the Taoist³² the universe (or the Way, the Middle Way) is not an entity, but rather non-being and some world-process. The self and the world also interact with each other: there is a transitional relationship between our consciousness and the universe in the way they create each other. In the Taoists' way of life three principals are interconnected: *wou-wei* (no action); *wou-hsin* (no intellectual debating) and *tzu-jan* (spontaneity). Flowing water is mostly used as the metaphor to describe this point of departure. Life goes its own way and it is believed that the Tao is inherently positive and harmonious. The numerous water-related images in Breytenbach's paintings and poetry relate to the flowing power of the Tao: that is the *droomstroom* (dream-stream) of creativity (Breytenbach 1983:3,4, &134). Flowing water is the central metaphor used for the Tao as flowing and positive force. This aspect of the Tao

31

In this regard Breytenbach in *Buffalo Bill* (1984) writes the following:

en dat ons 'n kennis van die stad had
waarvan niemand anders wis
dat die in waarheid/een aaneengevlegte ritme is

and that we have a knowledge of the city
that no one knows of
that this in reality/ is one intertwined rhythm

32

Taoism is one of three religions of China, together with Confucianism and Buddhism; founded upon the doctrine of the Chinese philosopher, Lao Tsze.

is essential for understanding Zen. For the truth, in Zen-terms, is that all is one and simultaneously separate, a totality, which in human terms is continuously fragmented. This interlinking dependency and solidarity of all life is known as *jiji muge hokkai* (Breytenbach 1987:73). A beautiful Zen-image (one that is constantly used in *Memory of Snow and of Dust*) is that of the moon and water: without the moon its reflection would not have been possible; without water, nothing could be reflected in it. In this regard consider the following quote by Breytenbach from his book, *Memories of Snow and of Dust*.

(Where I, Barnum, put myself in Meheret's position to write a reflection called 'A Touch of the Moon'.)

I think I've written this scene before, but I'll write it once again. In a boat, midway upon a lake, sits a man and a woman. High above in the dark sky stands the moon. The night is still and warm, just right for this dreamy love adventure. Is the man in the boat an abductor? Is the woman the happy, enchanted victim? This we don't know; we only see how they both kiss each other. The dark mountain lies like a giant on the glistening water. On the shore lies a castle or country house with a lighted window. No noise, no sound. Everything is wrapped in a black, sweet silence. The stars tremble high above in the sky and also upward from far below out of the sky, which lies on the surface of the water. The water is the friend of the moon, it had pulled it down to itself, and now they kiss the water and the moon, like boyfriend and girlfriend. The beautiful moon has sunk into the water like a daring young prince into a flood of peril. He is reflected in the water like a beautiful affectionate soul reflected in another love-thirsty soul. It's marvelous how the moon resembles the lover drowned in pleasure, and how the water resembles the happy mistress hugging and embracing her kingly love. In the boat, the man and woman are completely still. A long kiss holds them captive. The oars lie lazily on the water. Are they happy, will they be happy, the two here in the boat, the two who kiss one another, the two upon whom the moon shines, the two who are in love? They are happy. The light in the window of the country house has been switched off. It's marvelous how the lover resembles the moon drowned in pleasure and the

mistress is like water lapping around the thighs of her kingly love. The bed is a boat midway through the night. No noise, no sound. A long kiss holds them captive. Their limbs lie lazily on the sheets as white as the blood on the moon. I think I've written this scene before, but I'll write it once again. 'Are you afraid?' the lover asks his mistress. Everything is wrapped in a black, sweet silence. Her lips tremble in the dark space above him and also upward from far below where an oar has penetrated the water. It is like putting the moon to the sword. The moon has impaled her trembling on the oar. The oar is the friend of the moon, it has pulled itself down, and now they kiss the boyfriend and the girlfriend, like moon and water. Water flows from her mouth. Slowly the boat of the bed is rocked into motion until moonlight drips from the oar. The dark pleasure lies like a giant on the glistening water. In the boat, the man and woman are completely still. High above the moon has been swallowed by the dark sky. Are they happy, will they be happy for ever, the two here in the bed, the ones who kiss one another, the two who have eaten the dark and soft moon of love? This we don't know; we only see how they both kiss each other. When they wake in the morning it is still drizzling outside. The empty boat floats on the mirror. Down by the lake rubber-clothed policemen are dredging the dark depths for the sodden corpse of the moon' Breytenbach (1989:30-31).

Abe (Molino 1998:92) describes emptiness as follows: In the Indian *Mayahâna*, Buddhism is *Sunyata* or emptiness.³³ Emptiness can be experienced through meditation. It implies that the "I" cannot be experienced as a separate, identifiable entity. The universe must be seen as a process and is in continual movement. Nothing holds from the one moment to the next. According to the *Sunyata*, each thing that exists, also contains a vast universe. By interpretation, every single thing is itself, a single limited thing, and each other thing besides, as well as the sum total of all. This is a paradoxical statement, which expresses the dialectical

33

Mahayana Buddhism is literally "The great vehicle". One of the two main branches of Buddhism, the other being Hinayama. It arose as a reaction against the austerity and individualism of early Buddhism, and emphasizes universal salvation.

and dynamic structure of *Sunyata*³⁴ in which Emptiness is Fullness and Fullness Emptiness.³⁵ Breytenbach (1983: ix) expressed it as follows: “That which is form that is emptiness. That which is emptiness that is form.”³⁶

1.6.1. Notes on the fire-like basis of consciousness.

During 1992 Breytenbach painted an aquarelle, *Brandende Hond (Burning Dog) (F&W-21b)*, a depiction of the burning dog of pain moving over the landscape in the direction of an ever-receding horizon. As early as 1965, Breytenbach had written in his debut volume of poetry, *Die ysterkoei moet sweet*: “Om die Groot Niet te vertrap moet die ysterkoei kan sweet”. (To trample the Gaping Void the iron-cow must be able to sweat). For him this became the essential aspect of the creative act. He writes:

As a *nadaist*³⁷ and a nomad I have been luckier than most writers . . . You have to work through the layering of painting to attain the nakedness of non-being (Breytenbach 1996a:8).

³⁴

Sunyata is the Void; the concept of the essential emptiness of all things, and of ultimate reality as a void beyond wordily phenomena.

³⁵

The Chinese Tao and Indian Mahayâna Buddhism flow together in Zen (from the Sanskrit *dhyana* meaning ‘meditation’). The subject matter of Zen is *satori* – enlightenment or illumination, which is obtained (at least in the Soto school to which Breytenbach belongs, founded by the philosopher and poet Dogen through meditation, the process of *zazen* – the sitting with crossed legs. *Satori* is non-verbal and alogical; one does not reach it through words or concepts. The experience of the togetherness of man and the world, the things outside, in their essence their such-ness (*thahata*), this does not lie in the realm of the word. The whole purpose of the practice of Zen, in order to obtain enlightenment, is to obliterate polarities: (above/ beneath, beautiful/ugly, life/death, holy/profane). Zen is characterised by the paradoxical, by dialectics and contradictions.

³⁶

Translation by M. Grobler.

³⁷

The word is derived from the Spanish word, *nada*, which means “Nothing”.

This view could be linked to an important facet of *Sunyata*. It is compared to fire and Breytenbach formulates it as fire-consciousness (Viljoen 1998: 274-293). Again Breytenbach (1996a:28) writes:

The work interacts with society. What we see, however, is not so much a thing isolated in time and cut off from the flow of cause and effect, but rather a depiction of the process of burning (maybe *thing* is also movement if we look closely enough).

Like fire, it has continuity, but part of it has no permanence or identity. The words, “Om te lewe is om te brand” (To live is to burn), was chosen as a title by the poet for the closing poem in *Eklips*. In this poem Breytenbach uses the concept “fire-consciousness” and transforms it to an appropriate metaphor. Merely by living one becomes part of fire-consciousness.

to live is to burn – Andrei Voznesenski.

**altogether luminous and altogether still: to live is to be
digested like this summers-day of splendour; ever
and again to praise the rolling by of the globe, the sultry leafage
of thickets, water-slips, tongues of stone, the feathered ones' heart-chips
little chains linking the silence to silence; how altogether rich
is the mountain, bright and naked – only one plume showing white already
where in the evening the wind will bulge slender organ-sounds
and streamers; and it is completed, spiraling the cycle of seasons
has pushed out old wrinkles like worms from the lap –
but look, we are ourselves the coachman of oblivion, sitting up straight
with blanched hands round death-cart's reins. Prayer by prayer
our way is cocked, cool, a skeleton chalice in day-dress of flesh ...**

burn, burn with me, love – to hell with decay!

to be alive is to live, is living life to die.

31.12.79

In order to experience the Void, different techniques, like the *koan* (the noise of one hand clapping), are used to dissolve categories. To burn holy icons, or to tear them apart, to ridicule those of importance or to carnivalize them, to laugh at fixed views or ideas or the stratified society, becomes a Zen way of transcending ideologies and thus obtain enlightenment. In Breytenbach's paintings, flowers and dogs, excrements and entrails, banality and loftiness are all part of the mystic Void. Labouring the void could also be a conversation with the self on a thousand landscapes.

1.7. But who is the "I" then? Network and pattern making.

The emphasis on the personal story on a deeper level, is already a form of being aside: no two stories are going to be the same. Engler (1985:471) writes that according to Wilson, the last encompassing theory concerned itself with the individual, Existentialism, as well as the experiences accompanying it, is not dead. It has never been. Rollo May (Engler 1985:471) is concerned with the diminishing space of consciousness and our efforts to use technology to fill and exorcize the vacuum that developed. Those who are not involved with modern networks are already on their own. That same technology or cyberspace disembodies man or woman. It limits that which is conscious and stands in contrast to the outsider who experiences himself as not being part of society. Breytenbach is also deeply conscious of his own bodily senses and his deliverance to static societal patterns. As the outsider, Breytenbach is acutely aware of the prison of surfaces, consensual lies and generalizations in which he continually finds himself. In society, repetitive patterns are the order of the day (Schoeman 2000:153).

When Breytenbach attended a performance of the Wupperthal Tanztheatre, directed by Tina Bausch, and wrote about it, his description echoed the words of Nietzsche as *he* was walking along Lake Silvaplana and writing on a piece of paper. Breytenbach writes:

What was striking (of the production we saw) was that the performers were formed and informed by a discipline, *dancing*, which they then did not make use of. It was the invisible matrix. It showed – or shone through – in absolute control of small movements. ... It left the spectator paradoxically in a total space. In such fashion was the alienating effect brought about. And that forced participation. Which is why the theatregoers became hostile. ... These are some of the techniques by which the results were obtained: the apparently senseless repetition and thus the making of patterns and thus a re-evaluation of ‘normal’ rhythms and meaning. The decomposition of the context. ... Increased awareness (Awareness staged). Breaking of pattern. The more patterns you make, the more you destroy pattern ... never does one listen as creatively as when one doesn’t understand the other. ... Contemporary sensibility moves into spaces unknown to the ancestors. It is now more and more a *looped* consciousness, dizzying, stripped of the skin of referential security which may be identified as ‘priorities’, ‘systems’, ‘judgements’, ‘ideologies’, etc. This consciousness doesn’t even want to be funny ... a man will draw on his cigarette, turn to face the audience, and let a nonchalant plume of smoke escape from his fly. ...

I conclude – that perception is a point of departure

that space is essentially paradoxical

or that the essence of paradox is space

which is why we fix (on) the surface

to exorcize space by the rituals of movement

that perfect pattern is the no-line

and meaning is (a) light.

(Also that one shouldn’t look at paintings: one risks losing part of oneself there.)(Breytenbach 1984a:158)

In the letter written at *Can Ocells* and addressed to Dr Alex Boraine, *Upon being Invited to a Conference* (1994), Breytenbach (1996:155) writes about prison and the static patterns he experienced during his time of incarceration. Breytenbach (1984:11) takes the event of

outsider-ship³⁸ even further when he writes about pattern forming, his experience in prison and the lifting of the self from static patterns. In this regard he states:

In prison I found that man, like other animals, is a product and a spinner of habits. We live by smells, by the return to known places and patterns of reassurance, of not knowing, and we need to repeat the doodles. Our habits are obsessive, like mating and picking the nose and clinging to superstitions (and our morality and, also whistling in the dark while crossing the fingers); even our madness is but the need for *situating* and recognizing where we belong gone haywire (and being recognized, and our supplication for consolation), where obsessional habit-repetition can no longer hold the essential desolation flowing from our awareness of being.

Dogen and Breytenbach have one thing in common namely, the potential of welcoming the “Other” and the disclosing of that which could previously have been the self. For Breytenbach the self is another aspect, where the notion of static patterns can be investigated. The self is a mixture of memories and sense-impressions: it is like a pot of soup or a small universe. He writes:

But is experience then not a question of memory? A sorting out and a classification and therefore a choice? You travel through mirrors of previous journeys; you experience reflections of earlier experiences – and future ones too, because no experience is completed. A ‘you’ becomes, mutates, *mutatis mutandis*, according to the scorching and flourishing of previous and subsequent cutting points. This is the ego’s empty subjectivity. The objectivity is the life in the mirrors itself (Breytenbach 1987:12).

If there is an interest in the concept of Breytenbach’s prolific use of mutation, the concept of

38

The outsider becomes the “pact” when he exteriorizes himself. Breytenbach entered the fields of the stratified order when he entered the country without a legal passport. In this regard he was not fulfilling the true function of the nomad or the pact or the outsider.

the rhizome can enlighten the immense and powerful process-like network of transformations. The connection between things, the movement and changeability, introduces a network of becoming. Breytenbach's referral to the "ever changing landscape" in the poem *inleiding* (1993b:3) could be compared to the concept of the rhizome. There are also the innumerable mutations of the self-depicted in his art, which illustrate the concept of the rhizome. The horse as in *Portrait de Breyten* (F&W-22), the cow as in *The essence of his teaching* (F&W-23), the ape as in *Old King Breyten* (F&W-24), the parrot man as in *Epitaphe* (F&W-25), the bird-man as in *autoportrait pour plus tard (self portrait with turd)*(F&W-26), the insect man in *Head and Fish* (F&W-27) and the fish-man in *Hommage au Pinceau Décédé (Homage to the Paintbrush of the Deceased)*(F&W-28).

But now the self is not only a space of becoming, consisting of plateaux or an unleashing identity, which continually connects to a new machine of becoming, it is also an indication of his growing awareness of the importance of patterns. To Breytenbach stultified societal patterns are the embodiments of mediocrity. Breytenbach is satisfied with his discomfort when experiencing these fixed patterns.

The writer, Douglas R. Hofstadter, is a Professor of Cognitive Science and Computer Science at Indiana University. Hofstadter, is concerned with formation of the self. He wrote the book *Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid* (GEB)(1993), in the manner of Lewis Carroll. The work is a metaphorical fugue on minds and machines. Certain connection might be found between the Tao and some of Hofstadter's views.

The Tao is that which encompasses the whole universe and everything existing in it. It is the Way or the cosmic process. This view implies that the universe consists of polarities that are in constant interplay with each other and thus functions as a process of constant

transformation. According to Melino (1998:311) Dogen said the following:

Seen as a whole the universe is a harmony of symbiosis of patterns that cannot exist without each other.³⁹

GEB (the acronym for *Gödel, Escher and Bach*) asks questions about the self, and how it evolves from stuff as selfless as a stone or a puddle. It approaches these questions by slowly building up an analogy that likens inanimate molecules to meaningless symbols, and further likens selves (or the “I” or “soul”) to certain special swirling, twisting, vortex-like, meaningful patterns that arise only in a particular system of meaningless symbols. These strange, twisting patterns that the book is concerned with, are filled with mystery. Hofstadter calls them “strange loops”, and he provides commentaries on such patterns in the work of the mathematician, Kurt Gödel (1906-1978), the musician, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) and the artist, Maurice Cornelius Escher (1898-1972).

Escher’s art is an illustration of strange loops. He drew them in a variety of contexts, all wonderful and disorientating. The creator of some of the most intellectually stimulating drawings of all time, many of Etchers work have their origin in paradox, illusion, or double meaning. But there is much more to a typical Escher drawing than just symmetry or pattern; there is often an underlying idea, a realization in artistic form. There’s the work, *Drawing Hands*, in which the one hand draws the other. The work, *Ascending and Descending*, in which the monks trudge forever in loops, is the best version of Escher’s work, since it involves so many steps before the starting point is regained. In the work *Print Gallery*, a picture of a picture, which contains it, is depicted. Or is it a picture of a gallery, which contains itself? Or of a town which contains itself? Or a young man who contains himself?

39

According to Melino (1998:307), in the essay entitled, *The Fertile Mind*, the writer Bobrow explains Dogen’s view of the self with the following words: “To Study the Way is to study the self. To Study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things of the universe.”

Linking the extraordinary phenomena of strange loops with consciousness (of the self), Hofstadter (1999:3) states:

As a matter of fact, there are still quite a few philosophers, scientists and so forth who believe that patterns of symbols *per se* (such as books or movies or libraries or CD-ROM's or computer programs, no matter how complex or dynamic) never have meaning on their own, but that meaning instead, in some most mysterious manner, springs only from the organic chemistry, or perhaps the quantum mechanics, of processes that take place in carbon-based biological brains. Such people feel that some kind of 'semantic magic' takes place only inside our 'teetering bulbs', somewhere behind pairs of eyeballs, even though they can never quite put their finger on how or why this is so; moreover they believe that this semantic magic is what is responsible for the existence of human selves, souls, consciousness, 'I'. ...

As I see it, the only way of overcoming this magical view of what 'I' and consciousness are is to keep reminding oneself, unpleasant though it may seem, that the 'teetering bulb of dread and dream' that nestles safely inside one's own cranium is a purely physical object made up of completely sterile and inanimate components, all of which embody exactly the same law as those that govern all the rest of the universe, such as pieces of text, or CD-ROM's, or computers. Only if one keeps on bashing up against this disturbing fact can one slowly begin to develop a feel for the way out of this mystery of consciousness: that the key is not the *stuff* out of which brains are made, but the *patterns* that can come to exist inside the stuff of a brain.

This is a liberating shift, because it allows one to move to a different level of considering what brains are: as *media* that support complex patterns that mirror, albeit far from perfectly, the world, of which, needless to say, those brains are themselves denizens – and it is in the inevitable self-mirroring that arises, however impartial or imperfect it may be, that the strange loops of consciousness start to swirl.

GEB was inspired by Hofstadter's long-held conviction that the "strange loop" notion holds

the key to unraveling the mystery that we conscious beings call “being” or “consciousness”. He was first struck by this idea when, as a teenager, he found himself obsessively pondering the quintessentially strange loop that lies at the core of the proof of Gödel’s famous incompleteness theorem in mathematical logic. In this regard he remarked:

A rather arcane place, one might well think, to stumble across the secret behind the nature of selves and the ‘I’. The Gödelian strange loop that arises in formal systems in mathematics (i.e., collections of rules for churning out an endless series of mathematical truths solely by mechanical symbol-shunting without any regard to meanings or ideas hidden in the shapes being manipulated) is a loop that allows such a system to ‘perceive itself’, to talk about itself, to become ‘self-aware’, and in a sense it would not be going too far to say that by virtue of having such a loop, a formal system *acquires a self* (Hofstadter 1999:104).

Dogen, Hofstadter and Breytenbach have the following to say about patterns and consciousness. For Dogen the landscape, which is actually the universe, is a harmony of patterns, which cannot exist without each other. Breytenbach confuses the reader when he writes the following remarks about patterns. He says: “The perfect line is the no-line. Or perhaps these patterns are merely mirror-writings.” For the poet/artist these patterns are the riddles of consciousness. He extends his views by remarking that images and metaphors are the building blocks of consciousness. Hofstadter again, views these patterns as strange loops; concerning the self and when pondering on the riddle of the self states that meaningless images and metaphors acquire meaning despite themselves. The inquiry there: what is the self or the “I”, the vessel carrying and forming strange loops. Meaningless metaphors and images – that which give rise to meaningful patterns (strange loops). Breytenbach continues – he talks about jumps and starts and fuck-ups. For him not all jumps from matter to pattern give rise to consciousness or soul or self. The pattern is the telltale mark of a *self*. Comparing Breytenbach’s notion of patterns, one could take it a step further and link it to Hofstadter’s views that “patterns” are indeed strange loop. Furthermore, when and only when such a loop arises in a brain or in any other substrate, a person – a unique new “I” – is brought into being.

Moreover, the more self-referentially rich such a loop is, the more conscious is the self to which it gives rise. Consciousness is not an on/off phenomenon, but admits of degrees, grades, and shades. Strange loops are an abstract structure that crops up in various media and in varying degrees of richness (Hofstadter 1993:4).

Breytenbach's work is in essence a proposal of strange loops (patterns) of metaphors and images and how selfhood originates, a metaphor/image by which to begin to grab hold of just what it is that makes the "I" seem, at one and the same time, so terribly real and tangible to its possessor, and yet so vague and so impenetrable, so deeply elusive. Strange loops with their philosophical importance, but also their aesthetic charm.

Meaning enters in despite one's best efforts to keep images and metaphors meaningless. When a system of "meaningless" images and metaphors have patterns in them that accurately track, or mirror, various phenomena in the world, then that tracking or mirroring imbues them with some degree of meaning. Indeed, such tracking or mirroring is no less and no more than what meaning is. Depending on how complex and subtle and reliable the tracking is, different degrees of meaningfulness arise. Consciousness during this process becomes richer and more varied.

Patterns from Breytenbach's work have been selected here (arising from consciousness, represented by the images of fire and water). Patterns of consciousness like the mirror, death and decay, movement, mutations, erotic, or the mandala of the self. But there are also numerous instances of paintings and drawings which are self-referential and thus form a "strange loop", or patterns which could imply the formation of a self.

1.8 . The (watery) nomadic way: Koyaanisqatsi and *Le Coucher de Soleil* (F&W-29)

Introductory works on postmodernism inform us that the era of the “great story” is no longer with us. The individual, fragmented story now addresses us. The outsider’s thought processes are fragmented and he or she is aware of his or her fragmented self. They find themselves in an outsider position. This, however, does lead to nihilism, or a blunting of creativity. In contrast to the burgher who builds his house on the rocks of the stratified order’s land or the one who lives according to the majority’s wish for reality, the outsider develops a sensitivity that results in a form of asceticism. This asceticism, however, will grow into a unique life in society. The outsider has creative and imaginative instincts, which turns against the boredom of ordinary life. The outsider in his artwork chooses an alternative. He is possessed by a will to something different. And the solution for the outsider lies in a life of the extreme, life on the border and a choice for the nomadic self of walking the nomadic way. The choice of this way of life is a most important critique launched by the outsider against the stratified order.

A comparison by de Kock (1999:250-260), between one of Breytenbach’s artworks and the music of the American composer, Philip Glass, reveals interesting aspects (de Kock 1999: 25-260). Breytenbach’s painting, *Le Coucher de soleil (To lie)*, reveals a red Buddha-like figure sitting in the *zazen* position on a landing with steps leading to it. The figure has a vaginal split reminiscent of that in other works, like *le Cheval (The Horse)* (F&W-30), in which the split appears on the back. The figure in this work is probably entering the void by concentrating on an endless range of mountains. The painter has put a cross in the middle of the landscape with the following words written on it:

On the cross going from left (down) to right (up):

mmo tasso bhagavatto arahato samasambhuddasa nam.

And on the side moving from right (down) to left (up):

sa nammo tasso arahatto.

On the side of the cross the following words:

bhagava samasam bhudda.

It is possible to say that the figure painted in this work of art is engaged in counter-thought. True counter-thought attests to an absolute solitude. It is however an extremely populous solitude, like the desert itself. It is a solitude that is already interlaced with people to come. This solitude invokes and awaits people. This thought is like a vampire. In the smooth space of Zen, the arrow does not go from one point to another, but it is taken up at any point, to be sent to any other point, and tends to permute with the archer and the target. The sound of Glass's music embodies the smooth nomadic space of the desert. This is the space that these two art works share. As one listens to the inter-rhythmic and polytonal nature of Philip Glass's music which accompanies the film called, *Koyaanisqatsi*, (1998),⁴⁰ by Godfrey Reggio, one should imagine you crossing the endless desert of consciousness. The image of crossing the endless desert of consciousness serves as a description of the nomadic way. The music is the acoustic embodiment or metaphor of the nomadic process. The film, *Koyaanisqatsi* has proved the most influential product of the cinema and music since *Fantasia* in 1940. It could serve as an example of Breytenbach's own "song-lines".

The 87-minute film is completely non-narrative, without a single identifiable character or a word of dialogue. A cavalcade of potent visions represented by clouds chasing across a new Mexican desert, the mass dynamiting of a failed housing project in St. Louis, hives of people swarming in and out of Grand Central Station, hectic traffic swapping lanes on the Los Angeles freeway and finally it evolved into a vast cinematic ballet, music and motion forever interweaving and intertwined. Both the music and the film were intended, at least in part, as an indictment of late-20th century Western society.

40

(Ko. Yaa.nis.qatsi – from the Hopi language, meaning, "life is in disarray")

Koyaanisqatsi: the disarray of thoughts and ideas of both artists, stretches out as a horizon of meaning, opening to places that one not only recognizes as becoming, but also as the shifting of consciousness. It appears, disappears and slips away only to be captured at another point whereas the sonic horizons, the spaces of music and the network of interventions, are experienced through the ear. Breytenbach's images and metaphors, however, represent them through the weeping or blinded eye ('I'). The eyes of the "I", who does not accept at face value the interpretation of reality by the majority order, must be full of tears in order to open the third eye or the eye of awareness which continually peels off the layers of consciousness. Entering the void as he contemplates the mountain scenery while sitting in the zazen position blinds the Buddhist figure's eyes.

Both the images of Breytenbach and the music of Glass evoke rituals, rich textures of consciousness, which are from the in-between space of the Middleworld⁴¹ or the Void. We return to Deleuze & Guattari's (1996:4) image of the "war machine". The images and metaphors and music of Breytenbach and Glass can be described as disruptive war machines producing nomadic results. The inter-rhythmic aspect of their work can be picked up at any point, and the series spread out over a horizontal space, where it is bundled together in rhythmic forms and repetitive units. One has to seek for the hidden beauty and complexity beneath the seeming simplicity of some of Breytenbach's images and Glass's music. Not only the art work, *le Coucher de Soleil*, but all Breytenbach's paintings and dramas and poetry, are part of the coming into being of a nomadic-political movement for the artist, the viewer and the reader, which could lead to such issues as ruptures in the socially unstable order of being an Afrikaner. These works of art are a resistance against fixity in some superstrata, order or state. They are social machines and energetic bindings into which man, woman and child are bound; whose limit is not attrition, but rather misfiring, operating by fits and starts, by grinding and breaking down, in a spasm of minor explosions. Paradoxically, this dysfunction is also

41

The concept of the Middleworld is based on an essay written by Breytenbach.

an essential element of the stratified order. It's very ability to function depends on them (Deleuze & Guattari 1996:151).

1.9. *Ars poetica* – values of the outsider.

For Breytenbach the most individual creative act is certainly an attempt to shift the frontiers of consciousness and with becoming aware of fixed structures in society. By becoming increasingly aware, the writer/painter can become a consciousness-expanding agent. Breytenbach takes on the task to introduce society to deeper levels of consciousness. Breytenbach (1996a:44) writes:

The individual creative act is certainly to make consciousness.

This must be the greatest form of self-expression and can only be achieved by men or women who are supremely alone. In an essential adult world Breytenbach – intellectual, prophet and “new realist” who writes and paints looks forward toward death. The outsider, on an intellectual and spiritual level, is cut off from the general shared communal life of those around him. Outsiders are usually not fully represented in what they do, but consciously expose the fixed values, endless repetitive behaviour and ordinary life of the burgher. The outsider's life stands in the sign of the exile; he exists in the margins of the societal text. Breytenbach, as the outsider, disclosed exile behaviour. According to him “an individual only properly acquires his own name after a severe exercise in depersonalization, when he or she lays himself or herself open to multiplicity's and the intensities which may run through him or her” (Breytenbach 1996:48). According to him, the average man or woman follows the agreeing majority's viewpoint. They drift aimlessly through life, rather than living it fully. His world-without-values consist of ethics which are derived from aesthetics. In the essay,

*Tortoise Step*⁴² Breytenbach (1996:14) writes:

Writing [painting], paradoxically, is not solitary creation. Of course it is finally the sound made by one hand clapping, but always the expression of a *lived* experience (even when in appearance the life of the mind only), of attitudes and positions and the absence of these, shared inevitably with at least part of the community. One may say that every writer lays his own egg but it is never a unique act. The hen is the consciousness, the conscience, the history (thus the experience); the egg is the product, the creation, the writing (thus the consciousness). And who is to say which came first?

1.10. Summary.

In chapter one we have looked at the aspect of becoming more conscious and started off by the way Breytenbach depicts tears. Breytenbach is the writer and painter of pain. He experiences pain because he prefers to follow the way against fixity. Bourgeois values and options lead to a secure life and avoidance of pain. In contrast, Breytenbach exposes himself to an open life. The pain that he experiences during this process leads to an unfolding of consciousness. There are, however, tendencies of masochism in such an approach. Breytenbach was compared to de Sade. Masochism belongs to the regions of non-fixity. There is, however, not only a deepening into consciousness but also a process which leads to schism of the personality. It is the deterritorialization of the stable and secure self. Breytenbach is a practicing Zen Buddhist which is not part of the fixed dogma of the Church. He does not only delve into consciousness through exposure, but also through entering the void. This is fire-consciousness.

⁴²

'Tortoise Step' was a paper presented at an International PEN meeting in Lugano, Switzerland, in May 1987.

By reading Breytenbach one becomes aware of a watery basis. This is the characteristic of the nomadic consciousness. In the introduction we introduced the reader to the notion of smoothness. Breytenbach's consciousness is that of the "pact", which operates outside the stratified space of the State. An alternative model for the deterritorialized Self is investigated. Two art works are discussed to explain the aspect of counter thought. The *Ars poetica* of the outsider was also discussed. Breytenbach's world-without-values consist of ethics which are derived from aesthetics.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MOVEMENT OF BODIES

Breytenbach's more metaphysical depiction of movement is found in the image of the angel. In this instance the intertext is the alchemy. Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, the brother of Pierre Klossowski (1905 -), wrote the *Book of Alchemy*. Alchemical texts are obscure: they constitute a challenge to the heroic nature of those who seek to "innerstand". Like Theseus, the enquirer confronts the labyrinth. This labyrinth is a defiance of linear logic, which in this context is totally useless. The assault on the logical sense is made by the Minotaur of the absurd, who will promptly rout the would-be hero who cannot withstand his attack. Only through reliance on inspired intuition, the golden thread of Ariadne, will the puzzle fall into place and light replace darkness. Zen masters, for instance, use the koan, a kind of riddle, which, while unbalancing the intellect, may suddenly trigger satori or enlightenment.

The pictorial language, in which not a single detail is ever meaningless, the alchemical image exerts a deep fascination on the sensitive beholder. This fascination does not even necessarily depend upon understanding. If the viewer contemplates these images, or goes beyond their surface, he or she will often conceive that they correspond to another timeless dimension which we all may find deep within ourselves. These profoundly haunting pictures have polyvalent symbolism, and lend themselves therefore to various interpretations. In alchemy the depiction of the two lovers, represent the perfect solution of the (solar and lunar) opposites in the first water – the central event of the First Work. In a further image the conjunction is repeated, with the two bodies in a volatile state (hence the wings); this is what is known as the fermentation (Klossowski de Rola 1973:8-9).

In the watercolour, *Remnants of my Story (MB-1)*, Breytenbach depicts the alchemical image of two figures engaged in the movement of lovemaking. Two figures embrace each other on an orange platform while a third figure is "swimming" through an endless green landscape.

Movement (MB-2) once more depicts two love-birds. The seagull as the strong *male* figure is hovering over the slender female bird with human arms instead of wings. In *Sheltering Sky (MB-3)* the alchemical image is extended and enriched by placing the lovers on a tropical beach, with the words, *The sky is the limit*, written on the backdrop of a palm tree. A masked back peacock-like figure with rich plumage is hovering over the white woman on the beach.

A further reworking of this theme by Breytenbach, presents a depiction of Yolande and himself in *Engelpaar (MB-4)*. The images of bondage, the box and the fish, are included in this work. Both are naked, and the alchemical theme of fermentation of decay is depicted – the angels have black feet. The Breytenbach angel-figure is androgynous. Both of them are wearing the dunce cap. The scroll, *Stompengel (MB-5)*, is again a transformation of the alchemical theme: here Breytenbach has painted the menacing angel in a night landscape and walking over a hilltop in the direction of the female figure lying on the ground. Other angel figures are *Head and Fish (MB-6)*, *autoportrait pour plus tard (MB-7)* and *You Can't Go Home Again (MB-8)*. The angel-figure is chosen to carry many meanings.

2.1. Movement and the landscape of the eluding horizon

In the watercolour, *Jade or Alabaster (MB-9)*, two figures are leaping over a hilltop. The first figure is holding on to a rope which extends to the moon. In *Dead at Last (MB-10)*, the angel-figure is hovering in the air. Three black birds share the space of the picture with him. The main black bird is crying. In *The Bobbing Lights of the Harbour (MB-11)*, a seagull flies over a yellow plain, over a masked suspended figure with crossed legs. Flames are extending from the third eye and the heart chakra. *Nature morte (MB-12)*, is an ecstatic artwork of movement. The landscape with its cypress trees is probably that of Spain. The galloping male angel is embracing its own wing over which a snake is curled. In the foreground Breytenbach has placed a still-life of two fish and a hat.

Movement has constantly been an important aesthetic concept in Breytenbach's work. In three unpublished public lectures given by him in The Netherlands and South Africa during 1996 notions of the process, or different notions of movement were continually seen as an important creative principle. In *Cadavre Exquis*, (presented as a Vincent van Gogh lecture at 's-Hertogenbosch in June 1996 – unpublished) for instance, movement, whether in the form of transformation or as the vanishing of the borders of time, space and the ego, is seen as an important prerequisite for creative writing or painting. The two Pessoa unpublished lectures (Durban, November 1996) are titled *The Writer as the Bastard* (1996d) and *Foreword Travelling towards an Identity (Notes from the Middleworld)* (1996d). In both these texts, the travel motif is important (likewise in *Seisoen in die Paradys, Return to Paradise* and certain essays from *The Memory of Birds in Times of Revolution*), metaphorical movement is explicitly linked to the identity of the writer/painter. Breytenbach (1996a:101) writes about movement by saying:

The dichotomy is between observation and narration between breathing and thinking, between what you see and what you invent – because the two cannot be separated: we never proceed from no-where, and yet there can only be movement (breathing) because there is the void, both inside and outside us. Words are slippery stepping stones across the frothing river of consciousness. Two constants remain, process (which is change, movement incorporating jumps and ruptures) and the temporariness of self (which is movement, change incorporating ruptures and jumps)

He also writes about the noble art of walking in his novel, *Memory of Snow and of Dust* (1989:94):

It is dark, pitch, black, blind, blunt. With hand-palms one may stroke the darkness, fur-staining skin. In this big ship we move up river, in land, deeper, not knowing. Neither knowing where we are or what the where looks like. We bend, grope, and pick up any loose object on the deck: wrench, bar, bolt, grape, grass, monkey, gullet, stone, brass. Which we cast in silence on the banks to hear

the sound be it muffled or sharp or impact. The echo, the distance, the ultimate direction, the substance. We do wish to remember where we are. To establish. To make contact. To be circumscribed by rejection. To hit the darkness and limit it. To find what we are. Also becoming. ‘And consciousness when it doesn’t clearly understand what to live for, what to die for, can only abuse and ridicule itself.’

No man’s land could be interpreted as being a land where the inhabitants have not yet ripened to consciousness. In his wish to become conscious, or to leave the darkness or the blind, blunt groping on the ship’s deck behind, in his wish to understand what to live for and what to die for, his wish to bring light to the dark landscape, Breytenbach takes up his pen and writes in a language charged with metaphors or takes up a brush and paints images which are the building blocks of consciousness. Breytenbach could be thought of as an artist, writer, philosopher and social critic of movement, as the above quotation shows. “Noble art of Walking”, in *Memories of Snow and of Dust*, can be seen as “the faculty of letting go of the called self within a specific environment”. It is the way one becomes aware of one’s relationship with one’s environment. The universe is not a collection of loose fragments, but a web of interconnected relationships. The more direct the path one takes the smaller is one’s chance of finding something at the end of it. One has to walk the long way round.

In the essay *Tortoise Step* (1987) Breytenbach (1996a:10) also uses the Zen code to stress his point. In this regard he writes:

Somewhere during my time inside I came across the remnants of a verse written by the Buddhist philosopher Maitreya. He lived during the fourth century. The lines, translated this way and that, are probably partly eaten by time and frequently transcribed:

It is not suggested
That all the elements are unreality;
Not that they are all reality;

Because there is being
And also non-being
And (again) being:
This is the Middle Way!

What strikes me about the innovation of the Middle Way, the way I understand it at least, is that it embodies the necessity of movement; it is a line along which you *go*. Not a *fuite en avant* circumventing and obscuring irreconcilable contradictions, running away ahead so as to run out of road as it were – but, rather, a suspension of the extremes, admitting that all is possible and so is nothing, and then recognizing the practical reality that you have to move along, that it would be futile to sink into the static stance of waiting for the opposites to be resolved, that only the new shoot escapes the duality of the bean's two lobes, that clarity of mind is a peristaltic practice and not contemplation – the way the finger writing the moon is not a satellite of the earth and the word 'moon' on paper can never shine since paper is not light-fracturing infinity but born of trees. That life can finally only be lived. Let me add before leaving the track – it is also said: if you can lose it you never had it, and, unless you can laugh at it, it is not the way.

According to Suzuki (Melino:1998:31) the movement on the Middle Way is to have no-mind in all circumstances that is to say, not to be determined by any condition, and yet not to have any affections or hankerings. That is to face all objective conditions, and yet to be eternally free from any form of stirring. This is a living experience in its deepest sense.

Breytenbach describes some of these conditions in an unpublished lecture, *Travelling toward identity*, (1996b). This movement becomes a form of creation, by moving you make. The identity is crystallized or reshaped by confrontation and change. The Other may be flushed out or seen in a new light, the point of view shifts, you bring something more to the landscape, and you rewrite the world. The writer/painter is recognized by his mobility, not so much physical mobility but in terms of his psychic and intellectual pliancy. According to

Breytenbach there is no landscape that is a reflection of another. It is the reflected landscape we must remember. The place within the place. Here, already, is his chance to move over the landscape. But the process of painting/writing is the opening out of the non-landscape, which immediately closes behind one again. With every movement, Breytenbach displaces a frontier and another body or image crops up. A new concept or another mutation. Nothing can be bound forever. He lifts an arm and violates a new space. He turns his head or risks a step forward and is no longer in the same space. In this sense, Breytenbach sees the past of all movement as a memory of death.

2.1.1. Notes on *Totleben* (MB-13).

According to Galloway (1994) it is dangerous to search for a definite interpretation of Breytenbach's work. Confronted by the painting, *Totleben*, in the Pretoria Art Museum, the viewer will not be assisted in interpretation of the work by a popular book on symbols. A particular kind of looking is at stake when one views his paintings and drawings. The role of the viewer is a painful one, because all the deceptive certainties of the visual regime we are used to are challenged. All the modes of relationship between looking and what (we think) we see, all constructs of reality as we know them are questioned.

The painter is far more interested in the process of creating possibilities than in so-called truth or fixed meaning. In an interview (Dimitriu 1996:90) Breytenbach states that he thinks that South Africa, particularly, suffers from an addiction to orthodoxy. This is the case because of the diversity of the country and the horror of the past. Somebody said that the past is a horrible place to visit. There is a tremendous pressure on people to be good. Breytenbach notes that generally, control implies being "good", being on a "good" side. He thinks that one of the results of this attitude is that people have become very vulnerable to the imposition of orthodoxy, of hegemonies. According to Breytenbach (Dimitriu 1996:90-101), orthodoxy

stifles creativity. He goes on to say:

What I do is to subvert the orthodoxy, the going conventions, the accepted norms, as they exist here at the moment. ... I'm intuitively attracted to the clash of the unexpected, to the break, to the jump, to discontinuity, to the rupture. ... It's way of trying to explode the little illusion of order and security that's imposed by the capacity for using words correctly, in a certain order.

Breytenbach is the thinker of movement away from the direction of the uniform toward that which is the chaos-machine. That which undermines the instrumental intellect and the fascistic grip on things. The demarcating of a stratified space or the fixation of the body as the stereotype is an act of egoistic control. Kundera (1988:151) discusses this fixation of the body as the stereotype in his work, *The Art of the Novel* (1988:151). He writes the following on this aspect:

The Land-Surveyor K. is engaged not in a search for brotherhood but in a desperate search for a uni-form. Without that uni-form, without the uniform of the employee, he cannot 'keep up with what is real,' he 'gives the impression of being something unreal'. Kafka was the first to grasp this shift in this situation. Since Kafka's time, because of the great systems that quantify and plan life, the uniformization of the world has made enormous advances. But when a phenomenon becomes universal and omnipresent – we no longer notice it. In the euphoria of their uni-form lives, people no longer see the uniform they wear.

The self, as painted in *Totleben*, is an expression of movement away from fixity of a self, such as one would find in the desire toward uni-formity shown by Kafka's characters. There are, however, a few clues regarding Breytenbach's working method, which can be unravelled from his work and which can be of assistance in one's progress through his landscape. Certain metaphors or motifs in his other works are also found in *Totleben*: the butterfly associated with metamorphosis; the candle implying the paradoxical coexistence of light and darkness; the string around the candlestick suggesting wholeness and unravelling; hands in an attitude

of prayer, like growths from the body, have an own life, an own dynamic – allowing the “I” to grow and blossom. The titles of his paintings are often just as strong a code as the visual images themselves. The title, *Totleben*, is strongly reminiscent of the collection of poetry, *Kouevuur*, and indeed contains the same elements of the paradoxical coexistence of opposites, which is his central theme: death is the laboratory of life. Viewers’ reactions to the painting will differ and Breytenbach would prefer it so, believing the viewer to be an accomplice in what he sees. His own expectations, preconception and memories tint each person’s view. On the one hand, there will be discomfort and a lack of peace, especially when no fixed meaning can be attached and the viewer feels estranged. Awaiting the viewer is an adventure for those who have the courage to submit to an eternity of possibilities of meanings and the “stuff that dreams are made of” as Hamlet said.

In *Totleben* we are also confronted with decay already setting into the face of the self. Thus, we are confronted with temporalities. In this instance, the painting deals with the difficulty of knotting the border between life and death. In dealing with life itself, the convulsive movements are bound to end in death. And after that decay sets in. The image is thus the endowment with a movement on a fold, on the fold where life and death are bound in solidarity, which is the token of a seam of shamelessness, where the shift from the one to the other is indistinguishable, irretraceable, smooth and unpredictable. A painting, however, needs form and line to give expression to the notions of the artists. Breytenbach (1987:157) writes in an imaginative way about form, line, movement and expression. He says:

Beyond the eye in the labyrinth where everything has existed since all time – dogs and Minotaurs and lovers and emptiness and moon and handkerchiefs and blood and howling and Africa and freedom and laughing trees and eclipses and memorized imagination which is imagined memory – a form is struggling to take shape. Form cannot exist without expression. Expression flows from movement. Movement gives birth to stillness. Stillness suggests absent movement. A line is born: the navel-string of decay is written in leads. Coffins are lined with black

lead, writing the environment, which eventually digests the contents.⁴³

During his imaginative process (movement), Breytenbach ends with a description of coffins. By interacting with one's environment, one actually digests it. It is a complicated view of the creative process. By viewing the painting, the viewer also shares the borders, ruptures and shifting spaces of life. There is an awareness of shifting boundaries. It is in this moment that Breytenbach will declare that life is doggedness, transformation; death perhaps the raw extension. By continually defining himself through resemblance, probably the face of death, thus in a paradoxical way, the artist captures your face or the Spanish landscape or the red stool in his studio or the tree-sitting grandfather in the images presented on the canvas. *Totleben* is a resemblance and is part of the vast interconnection between the "songlines" of selves trodden on the desert of consciousness.

2.2. The Zennist

According to tradition, The Buddha (Siddhārta Gotama Buddha [c 563-c. 483 B.C.]) had passed through many previous existences before reaching the human stage at which he could achieve enlightenment. The stories of this existence (*Jatakas*) are perhaps the commonest material of Buddhist narrative art, representing the Buddha in both animal and human incarnations. This progress serves as the pattern for the ordinary Buddhist's search for release. The human life of the Buddha is also a fertile subject for art. It is often compressed into a series of canonical incidents; conception, birth, first meditation, enlightenment, first sermons, incidents of his mendicant life, and death.

Following the Indian belief in endless cycles of self-repeating time, reason suggested that

43

Translated by M. Grobler.

historical uniqueness should not be attributed to our historical Buddha, who died as an old man C. 480. The Buddha's were therefore postulated, both past and future. They often appear in art as a group of five to seven. Later Buddhism of the Mahayana schools employed one or all Buddha's in its system of figurative expression. The "Buddha-principle", being in essence one, was simultaneously infinitely divisible. This concept is illustrated by the "Thousand Buddha" icons, and the figures of the Buddha in the aureole of icons of Vairocana, for example. Bodhisattvas are beings partaking of the Buddha-nature, who because of their unlimited compassion remain in contact with the world of everyday existence to help suffering humanity. They appear alone, or as supporters or interlocutors of the Buddha, and are usually dressed in royal regalia of jewels and crowns.

According to Osborne (1979:170-172) theory recognizes three bodies of the Buddha: the *Dharma* body, ineffable and beyond representation; the *Nirmanakaya*, the human individualized envelope, substantially irrelevant; and the *Sambhogakaya*, the glorious body constituted of symbolic characteristics following ancient astrological and medical theories. The last is the bodily form represented in Buddhist icons. Golden colour, a head-protuberance (*ushnisha*), tufts of hair, appearing between the brows of the Buddha, webbed fingers and long arms are among the canonical established characteristics.

Zen is not a religion or a philosophy, but an all-encompassing way of experience. Our ordinary ways of thinking are linear, separating all things into categories: we give names to things and work with separate ideas. The Zen, however, does not separate the world and the "I" from each other and everything is experienced in its relation to the other. (The reflection of the moon in a pool of water is neither the moon nor the water, but a combination of both and each is the result of the other.) Zen tries not to judge, but transform the spirit to a space through which the birds can fly without leaving a trace. All things together are the big and wonderful Body of the Buddha. Therefore, we must, in order to discover suchness, the *thahata*, of all things, tilts us toward the whole. We must submerge ourselves in the whole.

For Breytenbach, each poem or painting can be seen as a small moment of awakening (*satori*), wherein the essential relation of aspects of the world is discovered. The Body of the Buddha is not something, but is Nothingness: it encompasses all polarities – light and dark, birth and death, creation and destruction, inside and outside. This is one step away from Breytenbach's *ars poetical* viewpoints.

The poetry and painting of Breytenbach point to the scatological, the obsession with destruction, decay and excretion. Yet these aspects, in a paradoxical way, imply life, growth, birth and becoming. Decay can thus very easily be seen as a sign of life. The poem, *Populous death*, illustrates this aspect of Breytenbach's (1969:83) work where he says:

come
green jeroen:
give me –/a wormy kiss

This is the kiss of death (compare Bosch's painting, *The Paradise of Earthly Delights*), but it is also the kiss of inspiration, a life-giving kiss (green is both the colour of decay, gangrene, cold fire and new life).

2.3. Movement through multiplicity and repetition (the shifting 'I' and the landscape of mirrors)

According to Hardt (1991:119-122) multiplicities (like the Buddha's) suggest things that change their dimensions and magnitudes by altering or expanding their relations. This qualitative transformation of the multiplicity is referred to as assemblage. It is a multiplicity that escapes structural normalization and hermeneutic interpretation. In the paper, *Fragments from a Growing Awareness of Unfinished Truths* read at the University of Stellenbosch in 1990

Breytenbach (1996a:24) uses multiplicities in the following way:

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the police, the security police, National Intelligence, Military Intelligence, Civil Co-operation Bureau, Special Operations, Municipal security, spies, agents, infiltrators, grasses, grey shirts and grey shirts, moles, operators, hitmen, handlers, car bomb artists, paymasters, broederbonders, and other intriguers and plotters and schemers and wangers limited, inner-sanctum strategist, public saints and private sinners, deeply troubled intellectuals, Total Responders, ex-torturers, inquisitors, confidential advisors, stable-lads, courtiers and courtesans, frustrated functionaries and jacks-in-office, future élite of the people, fellow-travellers, deserters, runaways, movement groupies, hangers-on, henchmen, musketbearers, quitters, hand-uppers, scabs and scally-wags, blue-eyed boys, moral reamers of the National Party, federated Afrikaner culture carriers and cultural crust and cultural workers and vultures, blithering bell-goats, lapel nibblers, anus suckers, traitors, backstabbers, masters of gossip and character assassination, agitators, trouble-makers, floor-cloths, scenario constructors, yuppies and buppies and immaculate yooof generation, rugby players, dog-catchers, helminths, bar-room heavies, hemeralopic hermaphrodites, haemorrhoid heroes and smelly snails, reporters, negotiators, patriots, undertakers, resurrectionists, sacristans, beadles, clerks and cowboys and choralists, contact cultivators, informers, closet revolutionaries, wankers and voyeurs and aesthetes and gourmets, leaks, facilitators, unidentified sources, co-opted and structured flunkeys, canaries and converted consensus-seekers, professors and doctors and eggheads and go-betweenes and bathroom toughs and teat-tutors, stupidity stirrers and Stellenbosch students and star athletes and midnight streakers and hysterical halleluya-singers and highway whores, high cockalorums and gibberish gobblers and cocyz cognoscenti and coitus cohorts and capped wheateaters, witch doctors and lay preachers and divinity students and alligators, seedsocks of the nation, hedonists and heathens and anarchists and kitchen communists and Bolshies and fish hawkers and green fanatics and faint fighters and objectors and heavy hearts and hail-fellows-well-met and bum steers, buddies and mates and chums and chinass and ministers and other poophole pilots, companions and comrades and ex-convicts, brothers and

sisters – in short (because I don't wish to be ill-behaved toward anybody), my dearly beloved fellow South Africans.

How and why did Breytenbach develop his own aesthetics for representing multiplicity and difference? This stemmed from a desire to create a matrix of polyphony, a plurality of voices and vestiges that reverberate in the halls of identity. One might perceive the emphasis placed on this act of splintering the One voice into a choir as a way of opening up new spaces in the prison-house of language and representation. Postmodernism, in its common drive to resist the authority of a hegemonic voice allows the muted to speak out. The comparison lies between metaphysics of origin and the aesthetics of pluralism; Breytenbach has opted for aesthetics of pluralism and hybridization. Consciousness will be multiple. Consciousness, even when it is centred, is multiple. He will create multiplicities, but non-duality.

There are similarities between the way Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), the Argentine poet, essayist and short story writer and Breytenbach conceptualize things. Breytenbach and Borges share metaphors of the labyrinth, mirrors and books of shifting silk-like sand in a nomansland. In a Chinese encyclopedia, mentioned by a certain Doctor Franz Kühn in one of Borges' short stories, the cataloguer, who demolished the comfortable, ordered scheme, confronts us with the fallibility of reality and overturns the neat boxes in which we live, ordering our lives by concepts and beliefs. In his book *Labarinths*, Borges says:

A certain Chinese encyclopedia in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed and tame (c) sucking pigs (d) sirens (e) fabulous (f) stray dogs (g) included in the present classification (h) frenzied (i) innumerable (j) drawn with a very fine camel hair brush (k) etceteras (l) having just broken the water pitcher (m) that which from a long way off look like flies.

There is something in Kühn's encyclopedic approach resembling the breathtaking heterogeneity in Breytenbach's work. Breytenbach (1995a:335) is the inhabitant of emptiness, icon with pipe and beard, the bard, co-navigator of the Titanic of Western eschatology,

bastard, fetisher of the parrot, wearer of the dildo, zennist with the bitter laughter of words searching for fragrance, the “I” as a hollow resonance chamber, a Chinese shadow in a poem,⁴⁴ the angel-man, the devil-man, the Tantric-man, the chameleon-man, the ape-man, the cattle-man, the fish-man, the horse-man, the goat-man, the body embracing the insect, the bird-man, the destroyer of fixed concepts (as in the drawing *Distribution méthodique des Oyseaux par le Bec et par les Pates* – MB-14). This list does not only point to Breytenbach’s movement between different personas, but points to the fracturing of the stable identity. There is a complex movement between different identities, all housed under the name of Breyten Breytenbach and where the body becomes organ or vegetation, and the body metamorphoses to continue life in a Kafka-like state of being. Breytenbach’s paintings and drawings are an inquiry into death, decapitation, the mouth, vulnerability, transformation and metamorphosis, the intestines and shit, grotesques, transgression, the androgynous, movement, power, not seeing, the mask, the prisoner, the other, the body as a collage, dismemberment of the body, crucifixion, posture, the boxer, the fornicating body, the doppelgänger, the painter, body in the position of *zazen*, the blind one who carries the pumpkin, the bard with dunces’ cap, the one donning the dildo and the body in the landscape. This list is part of the concept of multiplicity. In *Cold Turkey* (1992), a paper read in Saint Louis, Missouri, 1992, Breytenbach (1996a:94) says that these are his brothers and sisters, as well as his ancestors. This heterogeneity is, in itself, the revolution, which is the negation of “the art of the possible”, in contrast to politics which is the arcane craft of disempowerment of the population.

Multiplicity is a concept⁴⁵ and rejects prevailing centres, unities and rigid strata where the

44

Die ek is h holte, h weerklank-kamer, h chinese skaduwee binne die gedig.

45

Deleuze, & Guattari (1995:19-121) identify three basic characteristics of a concept. First: each concept will refer to other concepts, these will not only be concepts in the history of concepts, but also those in the process of becoming. Secondly; what is distinctive about the concept is that it renders the consistency of the concept, its endo-consistency. Concepts are distinct, heterogenous, and yet not separable. The point is that each partially overlaps, has a zone of neighbourhood, or a threshold or indiscernibility, with others. Thirdly: a concept is a point of condensation or an accumulation of “own” components.

subject is an “entity” or thing, or a relation between mind (interior) and body (exterior). Multiplicity instead, it must be understood as a series of flows, energies, movements and capacities, a series of fragments or segments capable of being linked together in ways other than those that congeal it into an identity. The process is the linkage between fragments – fragments of bodies and of objects. Desire does not create permanent multiplicities, which would produce what is stable, self-identical, the same. Deleuze & Guattari (1987:8) writes:

It is only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, ‘multiplicity’, that it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual, reality, image and world. ... Multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature.

But repetition is not a repeat of the same, there is always the process of becoming, which implies moving, a transgression of the initial form.⁴⁶

2.4. The nadaist:

This chapter is a study of the fragmented self in nine different landscapes. Movement embraces everything, and according to Breytenbach there is no place for a subject that is not in motion: the relative horizon recedes when the subject advances, but on the plain of immanence we are always and already on the absolute horizon. A coming and going define infinite movement. It does not advance toward a destination without already having turned back on itself. The needle also becomes the pole. An infinite network of binding and

46

What must be kept sight of is that Deleuze’s concept of “difference” is essentially an anti-transcendental one; he is trying to preserve the integrity of surfaces of difference from any reduction to a unifying principle lying outside of all planes of immanence (May cited in Boundas & Olkowski 1994:41)

becoming present them on the plain of immanence: movements, streams and energies are set free in an endless spell (Deleuze & Guattari 1996:37).

The philosophies of immanence⁴⁷ deny all appeals to transcendent causes, essences and universal and unchanging principles. Instead, they emphasize the ways we are part of the world that we experience, and the ways we construct, interpret, and change it in order to make new and different things, interpretations, and experiences possible. For these philosophers, change is inherent in the immanent world. Certainly Epicures, Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677), Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883) and Nietzsche are early voices of this tradition. To these we can add Breytenbach and Deleuze & Guattari.

As in philosophy, there is a movement away from transcendentalism to immanence, so also in art. While high modernists sought the eternal and immutable in abstract form, so-called postmodernists, turn from the ideal to the ephemeral, the fugitive, and the contingent. The shift from the transcendent to the immanent is not, however, simply a movement away from the religious to the secular. On the contrary, the return of repressed figuration, which disfigures the purity of the abstract work of art, coincides with the death of the transcendent God, who reappears as radically incarnate in natural and, more important, cultural processes (Taylor 1992:145). The movement over the plains of immanence (The Way) requires the dismantling of orthodoxy. Here, the inquiry concerning the field of reference is the absolute plain on which thought or philosophy or art or the nadaist, the zennist, the un-citizen, the nomad, the revolutionary, the insect, the exile or the carnival-goer gestates. And this is Nietzsche's dance on the clouds of chaos.⁴⁸ The dance is also the corporeal image of a given process, or of becoming, or of the passage of time.

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⁴⁸Indwelling, inherent (*in*); (of God) permanently pervading the universe.

Nietzsche's dance – that dynamic response to “the spirit of gravity” – that which does not become stuck in any one viewpoint and yet stops short of flight by keeping in touch with the ground. The dance is most understood as a wandering, a mode of cultural nomadism (Parks 1993: 585-590)

The concept and the philosophy circulate on the field of immanence. For our purpose it is important to note that an aspect like intuition, a very important facet in Breytenbach's way of thinking, functions in the field of immanence. Concepts, in Breytenbach's work, for instance, the concept of inside/outside, disclose intensive characteristics and intentions. The concept of inside/outside suggests movement. In the same instance, it also becomes a network of rhizomatic becoming. Concepts, metaphors and images of a given reality are knotted in a process of decay, but paradoxically also by constant rebirth (de Kock 1999:19).

Movement in art can now be discussed. It was the same sense of arbitrary possibilities that drove the work of Eadwaerd Muybridge (1830-1904),⁴⁹ one of the pioneers of the shifting image. In 1880, this English-born photographer began to develop the "zopraxiscope", which would eventually enable him to project his images at speed to simulate the appearance of continuous motion. Muybridge's subjects were humans performing a variety of athletic and everyday actions, a naked man running or throwing a javelin or descending a staircase, a naked woman picking up a jug or a cloth or climbing into bed, each sequence revealed the essential instants of these deeds. There are the twenty-four pictures from three different angles of a naked woman throwing cold water over her naked female companion, forty-four pictures from four different angles of the naked Muybridge walking a short poll, twenty-four pictures from three different angles of an obese woman lifting her stomach off the ground. It is a telling example of all those highly equivocal human attempts, from Newton to Linnaeus, from Messerschmidt to Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and of every historian and scholar you can think of, to record, order and try to make sense of the variety of the different forms of human chaos.

49

English photographer important for his pioneering work in photographic studies of motion and in motion-picture projection.

According to Peppiat (1996), who wrote a biography on Bacon, he was probably the first twentieth-century artist to consistently use blurring to suggest mobility. He seemed to proceed from the assumption that the model moved while the picture was being taken; but the effect sought would not have existed, had Bacon not seen Muybridge's work.

Breytenbach and a group of fellow Dutch artists⁵⁰ chose to break away from abstraction in art, turning to the example of New Realism, as presented by Bacon. Two of the many works of Bacon in which movements are illustrated are *Seated Figure* (1974) and *Figure with Meat* (1954). The squirting or contorted human meat/paint creates the illusion of movement.⁵¹ What we find here is tension between the figure and the concept, which is movement. Here Breytenbach differs from Bacon in the undoing of the faces of his bodies. The surge from the head beneath the face he depicts, is the metamorphosis of the self toward the animal, whereas the figure of Bacon is that of the body, specifically a body in the process of a full and violent becoming, racked by spasms, wrenching cries, vibrant thrusts of transmuting flesh. When painting the notion of becoming the animal (becoming-animal is a major line of flight from identity), Breytenbach delves straight into the animal-like figure and the sensation of the movement of paint becomes the lifelong commitment to the metamorphosis of the body.

A series of Breytenbach's paintings that suggest the sensation of movement was exhibited at the *Galerie Espace* in Amsterdam. Examples of these are, *O die maan skyn so helder op my poephol* (MB-15) and *Les roses blanche (The white rose)*(MB-16). It was his intention to go beyond the surface fixities of a culture and find those forces, those energies, those fluxes,

50

Private conversation with Breytenbach. February 1998. Paris.

51

There is the need for an art of painterly disfiguration as it opposes the limitations of photographic cliché. If we delve in the dustbins of history, we will find that photography's chemical reproduction of images disregard the desire for realism.

and those sensations which specific socio-historical inscriptions have blocked and reified into social etiquette and stultifying patterns of representation.

In *Nature morte* (MB-17), the body gallops in a landscape toward the always-fading horizon, probably illustrating the small dance of death between chaos and complexity. *Passing Through* (MB-18) is a conversation with Goya's *perro se mi hundedo* – *Sunken Dog*. Both paintings point to pathetic powerlessness. Movement is also the main topic of the disquieting work, *The Dancing Warthog* (MB-19), Breytenbach depicts three swimming figures diving, swimming and climbing through a room; a pig dancing on a small block with innards trailing from a toilet (reminiscent of Bacon's toilet). This is also a painting concerning the movement between inside and outside.

Movement in the art films of the South African artist, William Kentridge, takes on other dimensions. In his predominantly handmade films, *Memo*, *Felix in Exile*, *Hotel*, *Weighing ... and Wanting*, *What a Friend We have In Jesus* and *Stereoscope*, Kentridge has developed a small cast of characters which, at first glance, seem to represent a fairly insular field of reference: Soho Eckstein, a Johannesburg real estate developer, Mrs. Eckstein, his dissatisfied wife and Felix Teitlebaum, the poetic dreamers, who yearn to make Mrs. Eckstein's dreams come true. Each of the three is also an alter ego of the artist himself. In his drawing, Kentridge has become a master of finding the single gesture that sums up an entire personality. He consistently provides unexpected insight into how a single person can become the repository of an entire culture's ideas and history, and how this can be transmitted in turn through the audience's instinctual responses to a character's behaviour, bypassing temporally the ideological basis for the beliefs underlying that behaviour (Kentridge 1999:43).

A comparison between the art of Breytenbach and that of Kentridge reveals the following: Both are concerned with the body and both work with a variety of mediums – Breytenbach

with poetry and novels, paintings and drawings and drama; Kentridge with short films, drawing and theatre productions. With Kentridge we do not have a veritable echo chamber of voices interfering with each other. Although his work is multimedia, its mirror is monological and thus does not leave the viewer with the sense of intense discomfort that he or she experiences when viewing the work of Breytenbach, with its inherent estrangement and funky-up (a word used by Breytenbach to express a certain emotion, a certain feeling regarding his interaction with society...) disruptive and transgressive bodies. In Kentridge we do not find the aspect of the surrealist convulsive beauty. Breytenbach's work is dialogical, and to use Bakhtin's (1979:251) terms. Kentridge, in the portrayal of his own body and his alter egos, manages to establish a sense of selfhood, while with Breytenbach this does not happen; through paradoxical desires of his consciousness there is a disruption of a fixed, stable identity. His paintings and drawings of bodies are Chinese boxlike affairs, where the voices of the real, implied and explicit protagonists, accompanied by those of the various, strange other embodiments, are bound to create a multiplicity of body-images, within other body-images, forming an almost endless regress to become the alternative body.

Kentridge, is very much concerned with movement in his art. He deliberately exploits this in his depictions of the body, using animation, theatre and short films. Breytenbach again in his art, writing, aesthetics, philosophical discourse and social criticism, is engaged in a discussion concerning the movement of consciousness. This is an instance of structuring or the small dance of death, which is the poem or the drawing or painting of the body, or the travelogue or the concept. Kentridge provides meaning by referring to known personae, like Faustus and Ulysses, who finds himself in an exposed and vulnerable position and projects himself into the returning hero. *Il Ritorno D'Ulisse* becomes a journey or a longing for a journey. It is a journey through time: from the South African 20th Century, to the Italian 17th Century and from there again to Classical Greece. The imagery is set. Ulysses is addressed and they bring all the mediation of this figure into play (Kentridge 1999). Breytenbach's portrayal of bodies opens a dynamic and constant flux, where things are presented momentarily within an unfolding order. That which comes to the fore leaves the previous horizon of meaning behind.

2.5. The bodily movement towards death and decay:

Death is not an end. Rather, it is part of the process, a mere station on the nomad's itinerary Al-Hallaj. The well known Sufi poet-martyr (Jouay Mohamed 1994:10)

The observation of the movement of the self (the body) towards death and decay is what Breytenbach is exploring. Here temporalities confront us. In *Die ysterkoei moet sweet* (1964a), he writes the poem, *Death sets in at the feet*. This poem is very important, for already then, Breytenbach introduces us to the notion that dominates his art and thinking for the years to come. The whole process of dying is compared with asters that are rotting, stinking carnations and a rose which already has a “deeper bloom on its skin”. He describes the process of dying, which begins at the feet and writes:

Death sets in at the feet

One should simply drift off

**(but they say that for 48 hours at least the consciousness
keeps beating against the steamed-up windows of the skull**

like a fish in a basket

or a space traveller in his space capsule beyond control

or a jew under a pyramid of jews

or a kaffir (lover) in a cell)

with a prickling of pins that begins in the soles.

But is it?

This giddiness as the floor tilts

and a membrane of water comes over the trees

and a zealous hand clutches the throat more tightly

And what a farce, this fumbling for images.

Last week's asters are already rotted away

on their stems the green veins now perished rubber pipes;

The one-time yapping parrots
are now limp and shriveled wigs.

The day before yesterday's carnations stink,
slumped old women.
Yesterday's red rose already has a deeper bloom on its skin,
disjointed fists.

People usually die flat on their backs
with feet cold and erect like petrified rabbits
blossoms on a branch
with a prickling of pins that begins in the soles.

My feet are hostile towards me and I must appease them
swaddle them in cloth, because I am not yet ready
because I must still learn how to die
because I must still decide about the way

Because now I look through a mirror into a riddle
but tomorrow it will be face to face

Breytenbach is interested in conveying the complexity of things during the time of *suchness* (temporality). He also points to the inevitable movement of things, the crossing of the border between life and death. What we have to keep in mind is that this movement in the direction of death must simultaneously be read as the self, which is in a constant state of becoming. Or one could even see it as the 'self' which is in a constant state of loss. Breytenbach (1993a:65) writes:

This goes without saying. I suppose people continue living because they don't know what else to do. In my family, as far back as we can reach, people have died so often that death itself in time becomes hereditary. No matter how you twist and shout, death is the last-dance partner; you might as well enjoy her flesh

and her wily charms. And whereas everything that goes up must come down, it doesn't necessarily follow that which has fallen will rise again.

Breytenbach's work creates an intense awareness of the energetic flow of things. He is the thinker who attempts the nearly impossible act of destroying all forms of fixity, of the grey areas between things, of greyness between life and death. The constant birth to the present is inherent in his thinking. What it infers is the abolition of borders, the absence of borders between things and then also between life and death. What we know and experience as death is that moment in which things are set free. Breytenbach's viewpoint regarding life and death infers a nomadic movement over the plains of immanence. It is the in-between-movement, or constant transformation – that which can be called life.

Breytenbach conceptualizes a viewpoint of no division between life and death. No one, however, is more keenly aware of the ubiquity and immanence of death than Breytenbach. He writes about himself as a nadaist (or the disillusioned self) who is the observer of this movement towards death. Death is what constantly preoccupies Breytenbach. He thinks about it and talks about it. In the art film made by Mary Stephen, *Vision from the Edge*, Breytenbach mentions that he would someday like to lie down under a tree and die. Breytenbach depicts it in the recurrent *cadavre exquis* theme.

2.5.1 Notes on *cadavre exquis*.⁵²

In an unpublished essay, *Cadavre Exquis*, Breytenbach (1996c) writes the following about the parlour game, which the Parisian surrealist called *cadavre exquis*.

52

Cadavre Exquis is a Surrealist game based purely on chance. The first player draws an image and folds the paper in such a way that the second player cannot see what has been drawn. Each player adds to the drawing and folds the paper over it before passing it on to the next player. At the end, the paper is unfolded to reveal a (usually grotesque) figure or object assembled purely by chance

It consists of several people sitting down with a sheet of paper folded in strips. The first person starts a drawing (without letting the others see), permitting a few lines to slip over his fold of the shared fields for the next person to start drawing from, and so until the sheet is unfolded, you could say unclothed. You could say that the 'exquisite corpses' resulting in this fashion, are the fruit of shared instinctive inventiveness, maybe the subconscious.

In 1926, André Breton (1896-1966), Yves Tanguy (1900-55), Marcel Duhamel (1900-1977) and Max Morise (1903-?) drew the *Exquisite Corpse*, a colour crayon work, during an experiment in products of a collective unconscious. They showed (like the drawings of lunatics and mediums) that painting, and poetry, can be made by all. This work depicts a central box, inferring a drawing of a clock, with a tail-like extension growing from it. The figure, growing out of the box, resembles an elephant with a vaginal split on its tummy, a breast beneath the left arm, which ends in an umbrella and two testicles sprouting from the trunk (Picon 1995:87).

According to Durham (1993:17-33) the realm of imagery, *The Exquisite Corpse* produced remarkable and unexpected poetic associations, which could not have been obtained in any other way. Associations that still elude analyses and increase in value in the same way as do mental disease. The image of the *Exquisite Corpse* echoes the anthropomorphic stage and the haunting notion of metamorphosis in animate life. *The Exquisite Corpse* cares not for order, or how we fit in, or what we should like. It disorients, devalues the singular imagination and is anti-establishment in the crudest sense and exults in the anti-sentimental, the anti-individual, and the anti-logical.

In 1969, Breytenbach painted a sensitive watercolour painting capturing some elements of the *Exquisite Corpse*. This work, *Wooing the Angel and testing for immortality (MB-19b)* depicts an angel in a *tutu* doing a ballet step. Already we have the obliteration of genders in

this work. Later he would develop this visual idea into a strongly androgynous theme in his depiction of the self and other bodies.⁵³

However, other more prominent drawings have developed around the *Cadavre Exquis* theme. Breytenbach extended the notion of the Parisian *Cadavre Exquis* by incorporating it in his depictions of death. Important to note here is the drawing: *cadavre exquis* (MB-20), with the emblems of the maggot, the bird of movement, the drawing hand, and the eye ('I') of an old man, at the top of the drawing. The genderless body of Breytenbach is lying in a coffin, his feet already in a state of decay. In another drawing, the hand, which writes the words *blanc* and *noir* (MB-21), is also on the verge of being infested by maggots. Decay has already set in and the hands are black. The implication of this drawing might be found in the obliteration of borders between white and black.⁵⁴

2.5.2. Notes on the death of George Dyer.

The artist Bacon also wondered out aloud how he would die and whether he wanted to be buried or cremated. He saw death constantly at work, in the shaving mirror, in the ticking wristwatch, even in shadows, which he painted like emblems of mortality, seeping out of his figures. During the last few days of October 1971, when Paris basked in an Indian summer, Bacon entered the cultural Pantheon of Paris through what the French call *le grand porte*. An exhibition of his work was held in the Grand Palais and President George Pompidou (1911-

53

A further similarity between Breytenbach's œuvre and this drawing is the portrayal of the vaginal split, although in this respect he might have been taking up a conversation with Klossowski.

54

Marthinus Basson also made use of the *cadavre exquis* theme in the play, *Boklied*, using the body in the coffin as a prominent prop for the depicting of death.

1974), a keen collector of contemporary art, had decided to open it in person, by that turning the event into a state occasion. Bacon was waiting in the entrance to accompany the president round his exhibition. One may only guess at what the artist was feeling. They had brought the news to him the day before that his lover, George Dyer, had been found dead, apparently of an overdose of drink and drugs, in their hotel bedroom. After attempting to vomit a surfeit of alcohol and pills into the sink, Dyer had slumped back on the lavatory seat in the hotel bathroom and died.

Bacon became preoccupied with how to convey, in a modern painting, a fact as “definite” as the death of George Dyer. *Triptych: May-June 1973* was his last and most moving memorial to death. In the first panel, Dyer is in the locked bedroom of the Hôtel des Saint-Pères. He is depicted as a figure vomiting into a washbasin; blood streaming from his nose, he attempts at regaining life. The basin, the lavatory and the waste pipe all drain away blood, excrement and vomit. It is only by going too far that one can hope to break the mould and do something new. As Bacon said: “Art is a question of going too far”.

Breytenbach used the image of a toilet in his work for a considerable period in what is an obvious conversation with Bacon. The work, *le Cheval (MB-22)*, is a mixture of the Surrealist *exquisite corpse*, the tail-like extensions coming from a body with a toilet head, and Breytenbach (probably) with a five-fingered penis, touching the vaginal split of the woman in the drawing. The work, *Doué Vicenté (Gifted Vicenté)(MB-23)* also depicts the Bacon-like toilet.

Body-like experience, like the depiction of the turd, is also an emblem of the waste, which embodies life. The work *Femme (Woman)(MB-24)* a disturbing androgynous figure with bodily organs exposed in the fashion of the work of Kahlo, simultaneously masturbating and leaving a turd on a square box. The hand is depicted as a bird-like claw. Although shocking, this painting does convey vulnerability.

2.6. Breytenbach and Bacon's cry

Bacon's figures are one of the most marvellous responses to the question: how to render "visible", invisible forces. As for the particular role of the cry as a special strategy with Bacon: what does he see in the cry that he makes it one foremost subject of his painting? It has been suggested that the cry has a spiritual function. What are the forces that make the cry, that convulsion of the body, arrive at the mouth? To read the Baconian cry as a mere expression of horror is to be stuck in a representational frame of mind (Polan in Boundas & Olkowsi 1994:229-254). Bacon's portrayal of the mouth must be read against Pablo Picasso's (1881-1973) most disquieting image namely the combination of the sex and the mouth, or "vagina dentata" as the Surrealist named it. This metaphor of confusion, anger, and fear would dominate Bacon's work for two decades.

Bacon's cry is the process by which the entire body escapes through the mouth. The oval becomes a hole, an openness towards which the figure directs itself as if it has found a vanishing point. Breytenbach (1984) writes about Bacon's cry:

It has been pointed out that the black-mouth paintings of Francis Bacon are not particularly innovative, neither technically nor intrinsically – 'Life doesn't make sense', he said, "only our existence gives it some" – and that his pictorial grammar is quite classical, not really narrative or expressionist as we think at first shock. But the 'stitching' together of sumptuous and elegant backgrounds and squirting or contorted human meat/paint, this is unsettling. This tears a gap. This "un-natural" joining opens a wound, which sucks in our complacent convictions of understanding. It is like an unwelcome fall into the mirror.

Breytenbach too has made several of these open mouth drawings: *Black Scream* (MB-25) and *White Cry* (MB-26) are examples. A disturbing graphic work, done, by Breytenbach is *Chatte* (MB-27). In this work the female sex has been superimposed over the mouth of a man and

the recurring maggot is spread over the forehead of the living man, a man who has already engaged in a conversation with death and decay.

Bataille (1989:12) wrote that during intense moments in human life, bestiality is concentrated around the mouth. Anger causes one to gnash one's teeth, fear and atrocious suffering changes the mouth into an organ and terrain of cries. The fearful subject draws his strong neck and back into a position so that the mouth can be pulled back as far as possible; the spine is lengthened and man becomes an animal. The man/animal imagery of Breytenbach, Bacon and Bataille, is the direction in which the Surrealists has moved.

Bacon and Breytenbach in their art erected unbeatable figures – unbeatable in their instance, in their presence. At the very moment, where they “represent” horror, mutilation, and prosthesis: (the fall or failure) they give life a new power of laughter that is extremely direct.

In Breytenbach's unpublished essay *Cadavre Exquis* (1996c), which is true to his paradoxical approach to art and life, he quotes a beautiful Zen citation regarding the mouth:

In Dogen Zenki's *Shōbōgenzō* it is written:

The entire body is the mouth, hanging in the air (emptiness)

It does not matter from what direction the wind blows

– north, south, east, or west –

The wind-bell always makes the sound of *prajā*

– rin,rin,rin.

(In this context *prajā* would be supreme wisdom.)

In Breytenbach's, *Die Toneelstuk*, a drama performed at *Die Klein Karoo Nasionale*

Kunstfees in April 2001, the character opens the performance by screaming. There are echoes of Edvard Munch's (1863-1944) art work, *The Scream* and Sergei Mikhaylovich Eisenstein's (1898-1948) the screaming nurse on the Odessa Steppe from the film, *Battleship of the Potemkim* (1925). In *Die ysterkoei moet sweet* (1964), in the poem, *behinds windows*, Breytenbach presents his wife and readers with an immortal line: *the mouth is too secret not to feel pain*. This line is echoed in *Die Toneelstuk* when the character Hond says: *of the pudenda only the mouth will remain*. In Breytenbach's exhibition, *Dancing The Dog and other Pornographies* (April 2001), at the Metropolitan Gallery in Cape Town, Breytenbach uses the female sex in a very confronting and explicit manner in works like ***The Bearded Mouth (MB-28)*** and ***The Profile (MB-29)*** (Grobler Littnet 2001).

It is Breytenbach's depiction of these images in theatre, art and writing, which attributes to shift the parameters of consciousness. This is an essential tool of Breytenbach as the "war machine" and as consciousness shifter.

2.7. Fragments and other bodily pieces.

Dead birds litter the streets. Ants, small and black like words, are busy deconstructing the body's mouthful, remembering through dismemberment
(Breytenbach 1996: 163)

Bosch, who lived in s'Hertogenbosch, died in 1516. Together with Bosch we get the seminal figure of Martin Luther whose central message of Christianity was that earthly things must be shunned. With Luther, however, we find a separation between the Scholasticism and the irrational Mysticism of the Gothic period, an event that led to the Reformation. The doctrine of the Reformation centred on the notion of the human body as being in a constant process of decomposition. Mysticism has never been espoused in the Roman Catholic Church so that Scholasticism, with its emphasis on human reason, gained the upper hand. But St. Anselm

(1033-1109)⁵⁵, Meister Eckhart (c.1260-1328)⁵⁶, St. Bernard Clairvaux (1115-?)⁵⁷ and Jakob Boehme (1575-1624)⁵⁸ believed that human reason was not sufficient. They emphasised that all people had an emotional bondage with God. In Flanders a movement known as the *Devotia Moderna* with its celebration of the body, combined with traditions of fasting, flagellation and martyrdom, started to flourish. The artworks of Bosch were based on the dogmas of this movement.

Throughout his œuvre, Breytenbach has continued his conversation with Bosch. He discovered Bosch when hitch-hiking through Spain. He visited the Prado Museum in Madrid during that first important trip after leaving South Africa at the end of 1959. Breytenbach even presents us with a painting, *Untitled (MB-30)* which is essentially a replica of Bosch's work, *The Conjuror*, a small oil painting, housed in the Saint-Germain-en-Laye Municipal Museum, which could probably be within walking distance from where Breytenbach now lives.

Throughout his œuvre, Bosch presents us with mutilated and grotesque bodies. Bosch the painter of the fragmented body was a source of inspiration to the Surrealists. In his work bodily parts appear to be drifting across the canvas. There is a constant mutation of bodies into animal-like apparitions and birds and dogs, all of which would later become important themes in Breytenbach's work. The grotesque apparitions drawn by Breytenbach in the volume of poetry *Skryt*, could probably also be seen as conversations with Bosch.

⁵⁵

St Anselm was the Italian-born English philosopher and theologian.

⁵⁶

Meister Eckhart was a German mystic, theologian and preacher. He emphasized on the soul's attaining 'emptiness' so as to give birth to God.

⁵⁷

St. Bernard Clairvaux was the mystic who founded the Abbey of Clairvaux, which became the centre of the Cistercian order.

⁵⁸

Jakob Boehme was a German Protestant speculative mystic.

Although the artist, Breytenbach, may not be aware of it, his work reflects some themes of the Reformation, namely the disregard for the body. With Breytenbach, however, the mutilation of the body opens up to the fugitive pieces of the self and the “sharding” of a fixed identity. One could compare it with the writing of a poem. In an interview, he states that moving with a poem is unconditional. It makes one vulnerable, and it probably moves one beyond the borderlines of conventional control and behaviour (Breytenbach in Dimitriu 1996:90-101).

2.7.1 The Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge and BREYTEN 68.

The moving graphic work, **BREYTEN 68 (MB-31)**, is a depiction of a man with a penis growth instead of an ear. The mouth and chin become part of the innards that sprout across the inside of the body, innards replace shoulder muscles, the right arm can be seen as a leg, sprouting a hand, and the left arm-leg rests on grotesque entrails, trailing out of the body like a chimney. The legs are crossed and the penis changes into another growth, hanging from the creature’s body. This body has been mutilated beyond recognition. It is enlightening to make a comparison between this depiction and the *Notesbooks* by Malte Laurids Brigge, who like Breytenbach suffers from fragmentation of the self.

During the period June 1976 to July 1977, while he was in Maximum-prison in Pretoria, Breytenbach wrote the volume of prison poetry entitled, *Buffalo Bill*. In this work Breytenbach (1984b: endnote) reflects on the aspect of not knowing the self and he writes about Malte Laurids Brigge:

Ons ontdek dat ons nie ons rol ken nie: ons soek na ‘n spieël; ons wil die grimering verwyder en dit wat vals is afhaal en wêrklik wees. Maar iewers bly kleef ‘n stukkie van die vermomming wat ons vergeet het aan ons. ‘n Vegie oordrywing bly agter in die wenkbroue; ons bemerk nie dat ons mondhoeke

gekrul is nie. En so loop ons rond, 'n bespotting en slegs 'n halwe: syn het ons nie bereik nie, nóg is ons spelers. (We discover that we do not know our role: we search for a mirror; we want to remove the make-up, that which is false and be true to ourselves. But somewhere remains a piece of the forgotten masking. A trace of exaggeration remains in the eyebrows; we do not notice that the mouth corners are curled up. And so we walk about, a piece of mockery and only a half: being that we have not yet reached: we are still actors).⁵⁹

The way Breytenbach paints and writes about the self, reminds us of Rainier Maria Rilke's (1875-1926) character, Malte, from the book, *Notebook*. Like Breytenbach, Malte, the 28-year-old aristocratic Dane, came to Paris with artistic and intellectual aspirations and began to record his life crises in his notebooks; those of ego-loss, de-individualisation and alienation. Often his disintegration of the ego was attributed to Malte's city experiences alone and his childhood, which also features dissolutions of self, resulting in the haunting imagery of the body, Malte's own body and the bodies of the members of the Paris lower class as they collide with him in the streets. The text is obsessively littered with descriptions of body parts (the hands, the abscesses, and the torn-off face of the poor woman, the second head, and the big thing) and of bodily sections. Such images of threatening body fragments, which take on a life of their own, are parallel to descriptions of people (the patients at the Salpêtrière hospital, the woman on the streetcar) that focus almost in a fetishist way on separated body organs. Every time, the imagined unity of the body surface is disrupted.

Neither Breytenbach nor Rilke's fictional character sees holistically. Their portrayal of the body is fragmented, and this bodily fragmentation causes anxieties. Anxieties concerning bodily organs grow out of bounds to explode inside the body and to blast it open. This entails the swelling of the body beyond recognition and the laceration or destruction of its surface unity. These are anxieties of excess, of overflowing, of unstable bodily boundaries.

⁵⁹

Translated by M. Grobler.

Significantly, these anxieties are often followed by a sensation of a total dissolution of boundaries, a merging of inside and outside that is also experienced by Malte and Breytenbach as threatening and invasive. Breytenbach has painted many works about the concept of the inside/outside.

Breytenbach and Rilke's constant use of the imagery of disease and filth, violence and death clearly point in a different direction. We face the paradox that these visions of bodily excess are simultaneously experiences of loss. It is a totalling loss, wiping out of identity, a voiding of a sense of self. After his experience with an epileptic on the Pont Neuf, Malte states: "What sense would there have been in going anywhere: I was empty. Like a blank piece of paper, I drifted along past the houses, up the boulevard again". The nothing that begins to think, the blank piece of paper that, it seems, is waiting to be written on, suggests a connection between the voiding of self and writing.

Throughout Breytenbach's work, the dissolution of boundaries affects the boundary between the body and things, the animate and the inanimate. His portrayal of himself is rooted in the phantasm of the dying and fragmented body. The poem, *Menace of the Sick*, illustrates the connection between Breytenbach and Malte's experience regarding the sick body of Paris in which they find themselves. In an opening poem in *Die ysterkoei moet sweet* (1964a), Breytenbach writes a poem, *Threat of the Sick*, which reminds one of Malte's experience of the sick body of Paris. Breytenbach writes:

Threat of the Sick

(for B. Breytenbach)

*Ladies and Gentleman, allow me to introduce you to Breyten Breytenbach
the lean man in the green sweater; he is devout and braces and hammers his oblong head
to fabricate a poem for you* *for example:*

I am scared to close my eyes
I don't want to live in the dark *and* see what goes on
the hospitals of Paris are crammed with pale people
who stand at the windows and gesture threateningly
like the angels in the furnace
it's raining the streets slaughtered and slippery

my eyes are starched
on a wet day like this they/you will bury me
when the sods are raw black flesh
and the leaves and jaded flowers are stained and snapped with wetness
before the light can gnaw at them,
the sky sweats white blood
but I shall refuse to coop up my eyes

pluck off my bony wings
the mouth is too secretive not to feel pain
wear boots to my funeral so I can hear the mud
kissing your feet
the starlings tilt their smooth leaking heads like black blossoms
the green trees are muttering monks

plant me on a hill near a pool under snapdragons
let the sly bitter ducks crap on my grave
in the rain
the souls of crazed yet cunning women move into cats
fears fears fears with drenched colourless heads
and I shall refuse to comfort (soothe) my black tongue
Look he is harmless, have mercy on him yet.

2.8. Notes on decapitation and the intellect.

The bleeding beheaded, organ-less phantom bodies of Breytenbach's canvases weep for their lost organs and bodily parts. The untouched body has no memory, because only the pain of dismemberment is remembered. The loss of a bodily part is traumatic and both the body (the physical component) and the mind (the spiritual component), have to come to terms with the new bodily image that has to be formed. This confronts us with the Zen notion of the paradoxical. In this sense there is the desire for disembodiment that has meaning only in the untouched body. The two spheres are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the one is a prerequisite for the other. When engaged in *zazen*, the body is not negated. In contrast to this, are the excessive misuse and overindulgence of the intellect (the head). – This notion is depicted in a work like *Le Conquérant de Byzance (the Conqueror of Byzance) (MB-32)*, where Breytenbach portrays a man with a hydrocephalic head. In extreme scenarios of new technology, specifically movement through virtual space and not acknowledging the fragile web of energies seated in the human body, hyper-technology literally sucks the 'head' further down the tunnel of looming future.

In the art work, *My Life and I (MB-33)*, the disembowelled body trailing its entrails through space. This body is at odds with the social body and life. It could reflect the stultifying ideology of a nation, where ideas concerning engineering of human lives have gained the upper hand over the matters of the heart.

The interest in decapitation has been a continual thread in the history of humanity. Prominent examples can be postulated: Salome brought John the Baptist's head to Herod. Klossowski's *Roberte* is being made love to by the Colossus, the beheaded man. Goya paints a scene of beheading while Danielle Ricciardelli (of Volterra), Saint John the Baptist and Lucas Cranach (1472-1553) paints Judith and the Head of Holofernes. Bataille's *Acéphale* Group and Julia

Kristeva are also interested in decapitation. The *Acépehale* Group was active between 1936 and 1939. This group met in secret and wanted to revive old myths and rites. The *Acépehale* group inscribed the idea of a headless figure into their banner. It is a figure that echoes certain Gnostic figures, but especially Dionysis, the god of ecstasy and derangement. For them the headless figure was the celebration of the irrational so that they absolutized headlessness (du Preez 1999:149-158).

Du Preez (1999:149-158) sites the example of Kristeva (1998: 3-4) who wrote a lament for a head in a mystery novel, *Possessions*, which begins with a decapitated body. She describes the headless body:

Nothing is heavier than a dead body. And it weighs even more when the head's missing. A face – whether peaceful, purple, or distorted by death – gives meaning to a corpse and so makes it lighter. ... but without eyes or mouth, head or hair, a corpse is no more than a hump of butcher's meat ... deprived of a death mask's baleful exuberance, the dead are dead twice over. It's not that the victim has lost his or her humanity or even personality; on the contrary, humanity and personality both survive, minutely present even in the headless trunk. ... But the madness that is the mark of what is human, and that is revealed in the face, becomes literally invisible when that vital clue is missing.

In contrast to René Descartes (1596-1650), who placed the intellect (in the head), as an indivisible entity loose from the body, Kristeva sees the head as part of the body – a headless body is lamentable. She sees madness and the irrational (which traditionally is described as female) seated in the head. Breytenbach also shows interest in decapitation.

For Breytenbach (1996a:102), exile has been dismemberment from the social body of his country of origin. In his poetry, travelogues, novels and philosophical essays, he constantly writes about this phenomenon. When the head has been severed from the body and placed on

a table, as in the painting, *Untitled (MB-34)*, imagination pours from the head in an irrational and never-ending stream. In this work, the bird-man left the streets and the carnival and sat at the table to lift a fork and knife in a gesture of consuming food. The severed head on the table is a metaphoric pointer that intellect has gained the upper hand in Western society. The lament is directed at cyber theorists, who disregard wholeness, and pursue the bodiless head.

2.8.1. The intellect.

In the prison book of aesthetics *Boek Deel Een* (1987:15), Breytenbach stated that everything represented, is digestion. Intellect is a plaint of entrails or flight cells. Before being incarcerated, Breytenbach worked on this theme in his paintings. The notion of entrails was conceptualized as early as 1965. *En Afrique (MB-35)*, has as intertext, the catacombs of Palermo. Images of the fly, entrails and the dog, are placed in the resting place of the mummies. In the foreground we find the grotesque image of an anthropomorphic figure. Words written beneath the figure read as follows: *en Afrique mêmes le mouches sont contents*. *My Life and I (MB-36)* is another work depicting the entrail-theme.

2.9. *Ars poetica*

In the first hand-story or working notes, Breytenbach (1993c:60) remarks that “the hand is a whore endlessly trying to please all fantasies”. Breytenbach also comments on the relation between the song and the hand. He writes:

The remembering and the opening up, and then the creation of the world is a road that has to be sung, as relation between imagination and fulfilment
(Breytenbach 1996a:34)

Cervantes describes a painter whom when asked what he was painting, answered: ‘That which will come from my brush.’ Matisse said: ‘ I continue working until my hand sings’ (Breytenbach 1996a:20)

The movement of the viewer’s eyes throughout Breytenbach’s œuvre reveals the important position of the hand. Not only the singing hand holding a paintbrush before an empty canvas in *Paysage Intérieur* (MB-37), but also the hand of vulnerability in *Mortait* (MB-38). In memory of the prison notion there is the bird like claws in *Personnages avec oiseau* (MB-39) The hands clutching a lamb in *Voici la Saison* (MB-40) reminds one of Breytenbach feeling of being a “political” lamb led to be slaughtered. The hands folded above the penis in *L’emballage* (MB-41) is an image of vulnerability. Then there is a hand self-consciously becoming a still-life and holder of a signature in *Songe de sept ans et demi déjà* (MB-42). A hand is interacting with the hat of power and the pen in *T/15* (MB-43). The multiplicity of hand-feet mutations of the rooster in prison *T/14* (MB-44), carries the important notion of multiplicity. The shackled hands in *Portait de famille* (MB-45) reminds one of Breytenbach’s time of incarceration. A hand giving the two beloved an orange peel, reminiscent of the prison orange, in *T/17* (MB-46). The hand writing on the wall in *T/16* (MB-47) carries Breytenbach’s views of the interconnectedness between writing and painting. Here the hand is also a trace of the history of art, echoing the hands of Ernst’s *At the First Clear Word* (1923), where the cross-fingered hand of a woman is positioned in one of two square openings in a wall. The hand holds onto a little red ball, which is linked by string to a long insect-like form. Breytenbach has painted hands holding onto a mask and a strange object in *De vogelspinvrouw* (MB-48). A hand with the painted eye (‘I’) in *Ein Gespräch über Sehen* (MB-49) points to a questioning of identity. The masturbating hand in *Femme* (MB-50) carries Breytenbach’s strong erotic feelings. The five-fingered penis growth in *le Cheval* (MB-51) is a further transgressive erotic emblem. The red hands in *Totleben* (MB-52) are the hands of revolution. Then there are the hands of the multi-armed man in *The Arm Man* (MB-53), the fetishising hand in *Mirror of Fire* (MB-54), hands clutching the fish in *Gorée Fish* (MB-55), and also the red hands of revolutionary pain in *F.G.* (MB-56). A hand is holding onto the mirror in *Hommage au Miroir* (MB-57) The hand in *blanc* (MB-58), carries the

notion of decay. Further examples are the hand writing the name in *I have been rediscovering the joys of painting* (MB-59), a hand taking an oath before God in *juré pistolero* (MB-60), praying hands in *Pieter l' Angenouille* (MB-61)(prison drawing). This interplay of hands reveals numerous themes, emotions, obsessions and biographical details in Breytenbach's work. It is also the hand that begins to sing when the painter takes up his brush to paint.

Breytenbach is a collagist, juxtaposing images drawn from some fantastic archive, tracing erudite coincidental narrative within his collection of books, bringing together these narratives with Buddhism and Borges and Bataille and Bacon in a bizarre collection of eroticism. He throws ideas around like confetti, ideas that are both about painterliness and French intellectualism. There is unashamed political and extravagantly bold sexual-imagery, fierce images of chthonic potency, and a concentration of painting as endless repainting, in the grips of mortality. Each body, mostly his own, is perpetually on the verge of metamorphosis. There is a need to create taxonomies of disruption. And the movement of decay in his work is a step further than the movement of figures in the Muybridge photographs, also a step further than the convulsive figures of Bacon.

Borg, a character in the television series, *Star Trek The Next Generation*, sees death as irrelevant. In contrast there is the smell of death on Breytenbach's breath as he thinks of life. There are scenes of decapitation strewn all over his canvases. This is the conscious movement over the immanent landscape in the direction of the hovering horizon and an energetic flow; the discomfort at the chaos of the flow of things. Nomadic consciousness creates the possibility of inhabiting the immanent border of life and death and the insights gained while in this intermediate position, become important.

2.10. Summary

Chapter two dealt with movement against fixity. The argument started with two quotations, one from Breytenbach's novel, *Memories of Snow and Dust* (1989) and another from the essay, *Travelling Toward Identity* (1996b). In the essay Breytenbach wrote about the process which is change, the movement which incorporates jumps and ruptures. In the introduction we have stated that Breytenbach's art is one of disruption and a strange "gear-mechanism of the war machine" drives his poetry. There is the movement from the one idea-image to the following.

We have investigated the notion of movement (which is always the movement against fixity). One of Breytenbach's important notions against fixity is that of "death and decay". By being in a constant process of dying there is no possibility of stultifying. Death occurs from one moment to the other and even the act of lovemaking is one of experiencing the small death.

The notion of multiplicities and repetition works against all forms of fixity (Oneness and wholeness). We have mentioned that Breytenbach sees himself as the bastard who has different strands and different nationalities running through his blood. His mind and body is a host to many images, metaphors and identities. There is no resemblance to a stable and whole identity.

The acceptance of the notion of immanence introduced us again to movement. Movement in art was thus discussed. Breytenbach presents us with a depiction of a fragmented body in his paintings. This is an important argument against fixity.

CHAPTER THREE: MOVEMENT AND INSCRIPTION

(The inscription of revolution on the landscape)

3.1. On inscription and identity (the exile and the landscape of the mountain pass)

Three photographs from different times in Breytenbach's life assist us to trace his path of inscription (or becoming).

3.1.1. The first photograph (M&I-1)

The *Boom-Boer* lives in a district where several old men squat among the leaves, perhaps with an ancient memory of disastrous floods. It is Breytenbach's task to bring him his early morning mug of coffee. He will already be staring in the direction of the cemetery in the dark embrace of a nearby hill, untouched by sunlight. Later Breytenbach stands between the legs of his grandfather, the *Boom-Boer*, who is seated on a chair, to have a photograph taken. In the background, there is a closed gate, which opens onto a stark landscape. Although not in the photograph, there is a cemetery in the vicinity. The young child's hair is still that of a toddler and have the small features centred in a big face; the hands resting on the grandfather's knees are an indication of extreme vulnerability.

Later, Breytenbach would discover the fetish of writing on the body of the dusky-skinned Other. Now it is his own throat, rib cage, nape to coccyx, belly, penis and scrotum, chest, back, left buttock, torso, hips, back and front of arms, upper back, small of the back, right buttock, face, mole between the eyes, head, eyelid, fingers, scalp, inside leg, scrotum, lips and tongue written on. All are receiving the inscription of the section of society he finds himself in: Calvinism, the *nuendos* of the patriarch, Afrikaner nationalism and possession of the

ground, the madness of the *Jerusalem-gangers* and the impetus of the late Victorian period. Already the body is preparing itself for fragmentation. Now, however, the little boy, standing between the knees of the *Boom-Boer*, is unaware of the treacherous subterranean tracts being laid down in the landscape. He finds himself in *Apartheid*, the labyrinth of solitude that the individual, and the nation, insistently, perpetually and deceptively wove around themselves.

Breytenbach (1998d: 19) wrote a beautiful passage “of memory” on his grandfather the *Boom Boer* which appears in many of his works.

(My grandfather)

My grandfather spends his later days in an ancient pepper tree planted long before my time, and his, not far from the humble abode in which he and my grandmother live out their twilight years. Ouma Annie is his second spouse, the mother of my father and his two siblings. Grandpa’s first wife, Tant Tina’s mother dies after being bitten by a snake in the woodpile. Everybody in the family pretends that it is perfectly normal to perch on a branch some ten feet above the ground. He is not the only one either; in the district several more old men squat among the leaves, perhaps with an ancient memory of the disastrous flood, or further back, the war against the imperialist British. *Boom-Boere* they are called. It is my task to bring him his early morning mug of coffee. He will already be staring in the direction of the cemetery in the dark embrace of a nearby hill untouched by sunlight. Only once, when I ask him what he is waiting for, does he mutter: that snake is coming back. As he grows more frail my father has the tree chopped down out of concern for grandpa’s safety. We don’t want him to break a leg, or worse. My grandfather never leaves his bed after that and within a week he is dead.

3.1.2. The second photograph (M&I-2)

The exile, on a short visit to the country of his birth, wearing only a pair of shorts with a leather belt and standing against the backdrop of a mountain pass. The valley and rifts fall away into the distance and a hazy mountain ends in clouds. His hair and beard are black and his eyes closed against the sharpness of the Karoo light. The dusky-skinned woman's windblown hair fans out over his chest. When the wind subsides, the hair falls back. The writer/painter of the Bonnievale-Kafferskuilrivier-Wellington region, in a country he names *Paradise*. While still in Paris, he had already begun this writing on the body of his Vietnamese wife, Lotus – on the mouth, the eyes, the throat, the breasts, the body, the hands, the heart.

The marriage to Yolande led to the fading of the stratified order's branding on the man's body. Similar to the photo of Breytenbach set against the pass with its shifting horizon. The surface of Breytenbach's body becomes a horizon falling back onto the landscape, where experiences circulate. If we look at the photograph in the book, *Seisoen in die Paradys (Season in Paradise)*, the body reflects the same changing domain one experiences coming up the winding road. Likewise, during long years of painting the body, new vistas present themselves with every twist and turn of the road on which Breytenbach's spirit took him. The body becomes a horizon of the strife between inscription, circulation, desire, control and the desire for freedom. The body must be considered not only as a surface on which the inscriptions of a territorialized order can be found, but also as constantly on the edge or border. It embodies fractures of a contingent relationship with the becoming self. When Breytenbach enters a process of opening of consciousness, either through intensities or other deliberate revolutionary acts leading to the dismantling of identity, constant transformation and mutations of the body become a central characteristic. The body becomes a free horizon, a place of constant displacement on which different experiences proliferate. The erasure of the systemic relationships branded on the body is discarded. The body enters a plane of constant movement, beyond the territorialized inscriptions towards an endless network of becoming.

Then the body becomes a terrain – a shifting-landscape, or the revolutionary landscapes, where rhythms, forms, colours and intensities become part of the dance of chaos.

3.1.3. The third photograph (M&I-3)

According to Galloway (1990) attention focussed on Breytenbach at his second appearance in court during his incarceration. This time they accused him of conspiracy and plans of disruption, to overthrow the government. The man stands outside the Magistrate's Court on the 13th of May 1977. They extended the trial till June, when he would appear in the Pretoria Supreme Court.

Between 1970 and 1975 efforts to infiltrate South Africa took the form of couriers, who came in with false passports or identity documents shown at official control points. The most notorious case was that of Breytenbach, who was not a member of the ANC (African National Congress) and even took a critical stance towards the influence of the SACP (South African Communist Party) in that organisation. His political activities gathered momentum in 1972, when at the request of John Makhatini, the leader of the ANC for North Africa and Europe, he became a member of the forbidden anti-South African organisation *Okhela*. His subsequent illegal entering the land of his birth led to a sentence of nine years imprisonment. The tasks and the inscriptions of the stratified order are to control, to enclose and to restrain. The task of Breytenbach was to discard that inscription by moving deliberately towards an understanding of the society from which he came.

3.2. The social body and the nomad – *L’oiseau tombé* (*The fallen bird*)(M&I-4)

For Laumonier (1997:20-25) true nomads, having no relationship with the transcendent, only appear when the importance of the transcendent falls away (the nomad functions on the plains of immanence). The Spanish proverb, “*el camino se hace al andar*”, translates as: “the road is only made in the process of walking”. Or putting it differently: only the road creates meaning. Don Quixote is the perfect illustration of the modern nomad, alone and without God.⁶⁰ The modern nomad, too, must cross the landscape. This landscape is not a place, however, but a state of consciousness.

Between *Don Quixote* of Cervantes and *The Castle* of Kafka, the nomadic personality experienced a change. His space of development becomes an inner personal one, not necessarily requiring the movement of walking, but no less painful. The plain of immanence as a nomadic concept (the one the nadaist moves across on his way to death) is an image of thought. It is the image where thought encapsulates itself in terms of that which thought means. It is not opinion on thought, or results, or notions, or forms of thought. According to this idea, thought initiates movement, which can be borne into eternity. This movement is not that of an object with a fixed point of reference: to orient oneself in thought infers no fixed point of reference.

60

Reflections about place, where everything is submitted to transcendence, are characteristic of the Middle Ages. The Middle Age man is the *homo viator*, who crosses the world in his search of the true Place, which cannot be found on earth but somewhere above. And the pilgrimage is the strongest symbol of this journey that ends only in death where, in a certain way, God becomes the substitute for the Place. The nomadism of Quixote lies neither in the imitation of the chevalier of the Middle Age, nor in the repetition of heroic gestures, as discovered in the chevalier romance. Rather, as Foucault states in his *Les mots et les choses*, it lies in the fact that he, in his never-ending search for analogies, despite his reading about another world in his books, never succeeds in escaping the well-known space and restrictions of his own province. He crosses the space endlessly, without ever crossing borders or reaching the heart of identity.

As Breytenbach's work, *L'oiseau tombé*, hits the public eye in an Art Gallery in Pretoria, the pain inflicted in this initiation rite (Breytenbach's bodies are the scars on the social body and the coupling for the viewing eye ["I"] is of pain), the markings on the minds of the viewers become similar to those of primitive nomadic society. A poetic and emotive description of the initiation rights in primitive societies would read as follows.

In primitive societies the eye is coupled with pain. As the young Massai maiden is being scarified, the thorn inserted again and again to raise welts in regular patterns across her back, down her thighs, throughout the afternoon the others watch eyes like flies feasting on the pain. Savage inscriptions cut into living flesh; the markings, perforations, incisions, circumcisions, clitoridectomies are painful. The markings are made during long public feasts. Like the initiation rites of the primitive societies, which are public and theatrical: one watches, the eye does not circumscribe, survey, comprehend; it winces, it senses the pain. The boy's first ejaculation and the girl's menarche are highly significant, coded, public events. In Western societies, the flow of pubescent semen and blood are decoded, deterritorialized, privatised; they are supposed to take place behind locked doors, at night. No one is supposed to see the evidence of wet dreams on the sheets. Nietzsche, in the second essay of *The Genealogy of Morals*, speaks of the excitement that pain affords the spectator. The eye is a crystal ball, where the pain suffered is transfigured into pleasure received. The public eye, when feasting on the image of the suspended man, recaptures those historical moments captured by Goya's *Cannibals* and the horror and eroticism of Yi dam and his Çakti from the Tibetan art (Boundas & Olkowski 1994: 101).

On occasion of Breytenbach's first exhibition in Pretoria, in February 1994, *Painting the Eye*, at the UNISA Art Gallery, the curator requested Francis Galloway and me to conduct a walkabout, attended by art critics, lecturers and members of the public. That encounter generated very specific questions and reactions, which were expressed in terms of discomfort and pain. In the painting, *L'oiseau tombé*, the body is suspended on the dark glowing canvas reminiscent of Christ's Crucifixion. The green high-heeled shoes reflect an element of the

transvestite. This painting portrays above all a case of “fucked-up-ness”[sic], to which Breytenbach so often refers. What the painting is depicting, is an inscription of “disruption”; that which not only links it to the vast network of primitive societies, but also to twentieth-century’s artists and ideas and other instances. As one questions and experiences the image, certain disruptive nomadic energies are set into motion and the stable and stultified viewpoints of more dogmatic viewers and critics are upset.

The dove, falling from the erect blue penis, is an exchange with Ernst’s painting, *la parole – femme-oiseau*, (the word – she bird), in which Ernst painted a decapitated woman clutching a bird between the upper thighs, another under the arm. Both Breytenbach and Ernst have an obsession with birds.

Loplop, a motif that first appeared in Ernst’s work in the late twenties and became important in his collages of the thirties, has been defined as both the alter ego and a personal totem of Ernst. The use of bird imagery in his art resulted, it seems, not only from a personal event in his childhood, but from his awareness of birds in Easter Islands imagery, North American Indian Art and their meaning and role in shamanistic literature. Ernst’s *Loplop* and the American Indian “rain bird” serve as vehicles for the idea that any artwork might be viewed as a revelation of personal feelings or subjective truths. *Loplop* is a master of disguise. Indeed, his fluctuating identity (often masked or bird-headed) corresponds with Ernst’s shamanistic identification with birds and other animals. In certain incarnations, *Loplop* possesses pronounced androgynous characteristics, further reinforcing the sense of the alchemical. Ernst also uses bird imagery throughout his œuvre: as for example in the following works: *la parole – femme-oiseau* (1921); *Vögel -Vögel, Fisch-Schlange-Vogelshreck* (c. 1921); *les hommes ne le sauront jamais* (c.1921) and *La belle jardinière* (c.1921/22).

Breytenbach began his use of bird imagery through the fetishism of an old, stuffed parrot that he keeps in his studio, as represented in the work, *T/3 (M&I-5)*. The parrot is placed on a fetus like figure that is probably a commentary on Breytenbach's period of incarceration. From the fetishism of the studio parrot, he continued, developing the bird motive into many directions. During his period of incarceration his *œuvre* is scattered throughout with bird imagery. With *Vogelspinnenvrouw* (1989) and *L'oiseau tombé* (1990) the conversation continues. The position of the bird in relation to the body infers certain similarities with Ernst's *la parole – femme-oiseau*. The image of the bird is positioned across the left arm and between the two legs, near the sexual organs. In Breytenbach's work, *L'oiseau tombé*, the bird falls from the androgynous figure's penis.

The theatre producer, Marthinus Basson, also used Breytenbach's bird imagery in his interpretation of the two dramas, *Boklied* and *The Life and Times of Johnny Cockroach*. The enduring image of the bird is one step away from the body metamorphosing into an angel. The body with wings is the angel and there are many references to angels and flying in his work. In Breytenbach's painting, *Nature morte (M&I-6)*, we find the angel man galloping over the mountainous landscape, accompanied by a bird. A work like *Épitaphe no 8918 (M&I-7)* is much more complex. There is a reference to the painter's prison number and a parrot, echoing the studio parrot, harnessing the body of the prisoner to fly him out of prison. In Breytenbach's paintings and drawings, the bird in flight, or the angel, or the image of a figure performing swimming motions, often in the air, is the emblem of the true nomad.

3.2.1. The Nomads.

The hollow-eyed nomads are graphic societies. They inscribe the earth with their paths, their dances; they inscribe the walls of their caves or huts. They inscribe their bodies. They cut twigs to mark their paths, weave patterns into baskets and clothing. Their marks do not

express ideas they express myths, which are encompassing ideas or meaningful forms, but reveal the dexterity of hands. They do not relate their inscription to speech and they develop no alphabet or ideograms. Hands learn skills, not being explained the meaning and methods of handling and manipulating, not by their being shown the diagram or the method, but instead by immediate induction: the hands of the child imitate the movements of hands of the men and women. As in Zen archery, there are no manuals, no discussions with the master: the master holds and tightens his bow; the pupil does the same, repeatedly (Lingis 1994:301).

One has to understand that there is no blueprint or plan for how social organisations will be constructed. In this sense what is meant by organisation one must understand as a continual process of composition and decomposition, through social encounters on an immanent field of forces. The skyline of society is perfectly flat, perfectly horizontal, in the sense that social organisation continues without any predetermined design based on the interaction of innate forces. It can thus, in principle, be thrust back anytime. The horizontal society is the open site that fosters practical creation and composition, and destruction and decomposition. The model of this constitution is the general assembly. During social assemblage, the borders of social bodies are continually subject to change, as certain relationships are decomposed, others are composing. This is Marx's way of grasping the living force of society that continually emerges from the dead forces of the social order; living labour that refuses to be sucked dry by the vampires set in flight by capitalism. This quality of living is defined both by the power to act and to be affected (Lingis 1994:305).

The nomadic notion is a movement of variations, a territorial idea, and a deed, where the body also becomes a terrain-shifting landscape. In nomadic art, the fixed point – here the body – is subordinated to the movement and the space through which it shifts. What we are confronted by is a political consciousness that grows from this network of becoming, which is the nomadically inspired smooth space. Herein the nomadic art and the aesthetic range of perception take up an anarchical stance against the stratified order. Deleuze & Guattari

(1987:494) describe nomadic art in the following way:

... the twisted animals have no land beneath them; the ground constantly changes direction, as in aerial acrobatics; the paws point in the opposite direction from the head, the hind part of the body is turned upside down; the ‘nomadological’ points of view can be interlinked only on a nomad space; the whole and the parts give the eye that beholds them a function that is haptic rather than optical.

From this we must gather that the nomadic-aesthetic consciousness is an emotive quality, which uproots fixity from the ground (earth), air and horizon, and the body. The image leaps through the air. In Breytenbach’s work we also find that he paints images floating or swimming through the air. Movement is a continual and enduring motif of his paintings of which *Dancing Warthog* is an example. This painting contains three “moving” figures in an enclosed room with a window. The sexless one glides through the window, while the naked male swimmer performs free style movement through the air, the third three-legged image, performs acts like an insect hovering against the wall, wears a swimsuit. Like the twisted “nomadic” animals, they have no ground beneath them. A fourth figure resembles an alien. It is lamenting against a wall, which reflects its image. The Bacon toilet is placed on a red floor with entrails dangling from it in a movement towards a block on which is a dancing warthog.

3.3. The political body and the landscape of revolution.

A photographic copy of the revolutionary painting of Breytenbach, *Le menage militaire (The military housekeeping)(M&I-8)*, is reproduced in the catalogue. The menacing red body extends an arm, which serves as a perch for the yellow monkey, which may be an embodiment of the absurdity of South-African society. The torn off leg of this creature is clutched in the

revolutionary hand. An explicit sexual slit hovers between the legs. This is the revolutionary body, which is pulled from the earth, from the burial ground of Che Guavara, Steve Biko(1946-1977), and ... red becomes a deeper red, colour becomes colour. “The goal of revolution is transformation”, says Snyder⁶¹, the Cold Mountain poet (Breytenbach 1972:60). In order to metamorphosis that which the bodily changes represent, Breytenbach comments that:

...one must learn the slow art of revolutionary patience. One has to explore subterranean tracks, the hidden rivers surfacing as eyes elsewhere. The writer/painter must acquire frontier-consciousness (Breytenbach 1996:83).

A cultural attaché in France, well informed about cultural affairs in Paris, mentioned that Breytenbach was the only painter of the past two decades who had succeeded in shocking the Parisian art world. In the beginning, most of Breytenbach’s works were large in size, easily six by eight feet. He had also exhibited a canvas, two volumes’ high, in the Paris Museum of Modern Art. According to Brink (1967:29), he possesses a singular combination of fiery imagination, capacity for meticulous observation, moral passion and intellectual gaiety, with a talent at once pungent and distinguished, ironical and incandescent. He creates the “ideology” of systematic revolutionary agitation. Like other young painters, Breytenbach broke free from the current tendencies in art. The term *New Realism* was used to describe the awareness of a series of new realities being experienced. There was an expectation that anything could happen at anytime and often it was something terrible. The motto in his volume of poetry, *Katastrofes*, reads as follows: “*Ons is soos diere oorval deur katastrofes*” (Like animals, we are overtaken by catastrophes).

Breytenbach (1996a:136) describes this resonance with the following words:

⁶¹ Snyder is a poet from the United States of America and is identified with the Beat movement. He received the Pulitzer prize for Poetry in 1975.

The Image: unclothed by understanding or even meaning, it cannot be fixed. It moves against the dullness of information, it is movement. It is metaphor. It is detonation. The aim is not to survive, but to keep one jump ahead of the deadening hand of the state of reasonable understanding ... to keep moving the image must set off resonance.

Breytenbach ends his drama *Die Toneelstuk* (2001:44) with the words, “Alles is toelaatbaar”(Everything is allowed). The metaphor and the image are important aspects for the argument of non-fixity. In contrast to the scientific method with its fixed point of departure, the metaphor and image are the tools that Breytenbach uses to interact with society. They rely on non-fixity. The metaphor and image have multiple meanings. The interaction with the metaphor and the image is individual. Breytenbach’s metaphors and images operate in a similar way as Counter-thought. The metaphor and the image are instruments of the revolution. He writes the poem, *The revolution*, in which he uses poetic metaphors to describe the revolution.

the revolution

**I have drawn three cards
but only one was of death
the cursing skeleton with ash in eye sockets**

**for freedom my hands are pomegranate
transparent pips and bloody juice
cigarette in the teeth in front of the firing squad**

**incarnate the firmament
hurrah for the revolution
for freedom my hands are pomegranate**

**doves in the tormentors drawers
the bride rode in a donkey cart**

transparent pips and bloody juice

an elephant gave weight to my dreams
his teeth crumble the dungeons to ruins
and wonderful was the population in streets

mustered against the idol of the state
not for the leader nor for
party bureaucrats who prompt meetings

but for freedom my hands are pomegranate
my heart with its way tell places my love
for the bride in black on the elephant's back

fruit for the workers and farmers
the dead warriors of the ragged-proletariat
for this my eyes paled like snow

cigarette between the teeth in front of the firing squad
the cursing skeleton with ash in eye sockets
incarnate the firmament

read this discourse aloud, brother
two were donkey carts filled with bread and wine
for the poor conquered at dawn

for true freedom my hands are prepared
hurrah for the revolution
conquered for the poor by daybreak (Breytenbach 1993b:130)

3.4. Social criticism: art as social criticism.

Marx was born as a Jew, he was converted to a Christian but that did not prevent him from becoming Communist (Degenaar in van Vuuren 2001:11).

Camus, who received the Noble Prize for Literature in 1957, had been involved with the FLNA (National Liberation Front) in Algeria, from the beginning of this revolt in 1954. Camus wrote *The Myth of Sisyphus* in 1955, in which he elaborated on the philosophical consequences of the absurd. Breytenbach in an informal talk with Hennie Serfontein stated that he took note of the execution of an Algerian in Paris, and painted *Three Heads (M&I-9)*. The work recording his response to this incident was completed within three days. Two of the heads were done on one day, the third on the last day. An execution that took place in France on 13 March 1963 inspired him. Firing squads executed one of the men attempting an assassination on the life of De Gaulle. His name was Bastian T. Although Breytenbach was not in sympathy with the man; the execution horrified him. Evidently, Breytenbach was aware of the conflict between France and Algeria. He must have read the works of Camus. Breytenbach takes up the concept of Camus' absurd, commenting on an exhibition at the Espace, and compares his work *Old King Breyten, (M&I-10)* to the absurd political situation in South Africa.

Sartre was writing in 1965, very much in the shadow of the Algerian war, arguing that the only way to learn to say “no” to one’s fellow citizens was through a perpetual self-criticism. The life of a social critic must begin with the rejection of his own socialisation, the denial of society-in-himself. More simply, he must consult the moral map and cross the border that separates oppressors like himself from the mass of the oppressed. In the early sixties Breytenbach absorbed the viewpoints of the existentialist⁶² In fact, the lessons received from Sartre, especially the existential enquiry of the “Self” has remained with Breytenbach and forms the basis of his aesthetic point of departure.

⁶²

Informal conversation with van Zyl Slabbert (February 2000)

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), a founder of the Italian Communist Party, was imprisoned by the Fascists in 1926, when he was only thirty-five years old, and died in a prison hospital eleven years later, in 1937, in the middle of the Moscow trials. He left his *Prison Notebooks* behind. Gramsci's great discovery was the density and complexity, the sheer sturdiness of bourgeois civil society. The real bastion of bourgeois power is ordinary life. It is in everyday actions and relations, and, more important, in the ideas and attitudes that lie behind these, that the hegemony of social class is revealed.

Socrates (c. 380-c.450) (cited in van Vuuren 2001:11) said that an unexamined life was not worthwhile. Breytenbach has constantly posed difficult questions to those that sanctify the power structures and accept ideology in an uncritical way. Breytenbach accepts and emphasises personal freedom and responsibility. One must constantly fight for that right. Breytenbach can engage in the movement of knowing and accept responsibility, which is part of this struggle. He had already accepted the early views of Marx in the sixties. He also strives to embody the Marxist idea that knowledge (to know really), leads to conscience. Conscience is awakened when Breytenbach, through his art, addresses the field of "unhuman" estrangement. Because he has chosen to carry the mirror, he reflects this estrangement in his art.

The process of reciprocal effect between conscience and knowledge is notably necessary for the development of both, but also forms the basis of a (self) responsible life, where the human being does not charter his freedom by the uncritical acceptance of final answers and closed meanings of ideological thought.

The unexamined life belongs to the practitioners of ideology. It is a life of abstractions that does not relate to concrete reality, is raised to eternal answers and is a life, which does not allow critical questioning. In the politics it is embodied as the life lived through sanctified

In his politics of alienation, Michel Paul Foucault (1926-1984) (Merquior 1985:141) referred to political events, like the student demonstrations of May 1968, which Breytenbach took part in, or the French prison revolts of the early 1970s or the Iranian Revolution of 1979. What he said is that we cannot understand our own society unless we look long and hard at this kind of power and at these people: not state or class or corporate power, not the proletariat or the people of the toiling masses, but hospitals, asylums, prisons, armies, schools, factories; patients, lunatics, criminals, conscripts, children and factory hands. We must study the sites where power is physically administered and physically endured or resisted. Foucault seems to see a grand alternative. The complete dismantling of the disciplinary system, the fall of the enclosed city, not revolution, but abolition. It is therefore that Foucault's politics are commonly called "anarchical" and anarchy certainly has its moments in his thoughts. When Foucault is an anarchist, he is a moral and a political anarchist. For him, morality and politics go together.

Walzer (1988:223) places Breytenbach in the category of social critics. It is to these dissidents that he has been compared. Foucault's "disciplinary society", was Breytenbach's refuge from a really disciplinary society: a South African prison. From 1983, Breytenbach has been a naturalised French citizen, living in Paris, grateful for France's tolerance and political dissidence, free to travel wherever he likes, free to write as he pleases, even to castigate his adopted *patria* if the need arises. Mostly, however, he has continued to castigate his native South Africa. He has become the most brilliant of social critics. What must the critic-in-exile do? According to Breytenbach he must force himself to maintain a dialogue with the inside.

⁶³

Van Vuuren (2001:11) wrote an article in commemoration of the philosopher, Johan Degenaar, where he explained the difference between the liberating dialectic of conscience and knowledge. Degenaar and Breytenbach are concerned with the same questions.

... He must bark all along the borders.

Dissidence is characterised by political persecution; the inability to publish, exile, or taking a political stance other than that of the regime in one's country. Political subversion is global. Dissidence or political subversion that operates in the areas of non-fixity, does not only attach itself to incarceration, but to the idea itself. Breytenbach's scrutiny of politics is an absolute, an unconditional distance, that of unbelief from which, unlike others, there is no return. In the unpublished lecture, *Foreword. Travelling Towards Identity* (1996b), he says that the writer/painter is a social bastard – unpredictable, untrustworthy, politician of a party of one, feeding words (images) to the monsters, metamorphosis, essential for transformation, a traitor to the pure and the true and patriotic. These ideas are important arguments for Breytenbach's encompassing journey against fixity.

Formulating his radicalism, Breytenbach, the dissident is constantly and continually transforming his body into that of the Buddha. In the paper read at Stellenbosch in 1990, entitled *Fragments From a Growing Awareness*, Breytenbach (1996a:36) said:

An ancient Japanese poet, Daigu – meaning 'Big Fool' – wrote:

Buddha is your mind

And the way goes nowhere.

Don't look for anything but this.

If you point your cart north

When you want to go south,

How will you arrive?

Buddha helped me understand Marx; First: there can be no Buddhism, only Buddha's. I am Buddha, and so are you, and you, and you. All of us, together or separately, are potential or actual Buddha's. Second: if you encounter Buddha, kill him! Third: my radicalism (working with or looking for roots) cannot be encapsulated in a dogma or school or party.

In this essay Breytenbach arguments against fixity. He starts by stating that the Buddha (in contrast to Christian belief in one God) is multiple. He also says that his radicalism is not part of a party, which is fixed. He again pleas for movement on the Middle Way and stresses the dialectics. He also speaks of the dissolutions of the self and a movement away from homo-centrism. For him the essence of harmony is radical change. In Breytenbach's art, this radical change is embodied in its many transformations and transgressions.

3.5. Commentary on interiors and bodies: de Sade, Goya, Bacon and Breytenbach.

A radical change took place in eighteenth-century libertine France. The erotica of the sixteenth century had been abandoned; it went along with frenzied sadism, as in the work of Antione Caron (c.1520-c.1600). François Boucher (1703-70) shifted in the direction of lightness. Lightness might have made an appearance then only to open the way for heaviness. The eroticism of those times knew nothing of the horrors to which it was merely the prelude. Boucher probably never knew de Sade. Whatever excesses of horror may have obsessed him throughout his life (making up the fierce tales of his books), de Sade knew how to laugh. De Sade was completely drained by witnessing an execution of aristocrats before his very eyes during a brief stopover on the way from the prison at Madelonnettes to the one at Picpus. His Thermidorian reaction saved his own life and death at the scaffold. De Sade himself spent thirty years of his life in prison, but, more than that, he peopled his solitude with innumerable dreams: dreams of terrible screams and bloodied bodies. De Sade endured this life, and endured it only by imagining the intolerable.

De Sade and Goya lived simultaneously. De Sade locked up in his prisons, sometimes at the extreme edge of madness. Goya deaf for thirty-six years, locked up in a prison of absolute non-hearing. The French Revolution awakened hope in both of them. Both men had a pathological loathing for any regime founded on religion. Nevertheless, more than anything

else, an obsession with excessive pain united them. Goya, unlike de Sade, did not associate pain with sensuous pleasure. His obsession with death and pain contained a convulsive violence that approximated to eroticism. However, the transgression of eroticism is, in a sense, an outlet, an infamous outlet for horror. Goya's nightmares, like his deafness, imprisoned him. He reached a state of total aberration in his engravings, his drawings, and his paintings (Bataille 1985:103).

In 1929 Luis Buñuel (1900-1983)⁶⁴ and Salvador Dalí (1904 - 1989) made the film *Un Chien Andalou*. Buñuel's ability to jolt the senses and create an atmosphere of a threat fascinated Bacon. A guiding principle for Bacon is disguise and transformation. He had a lifelong preference for dressing up in female underwear. He also embedded disguise in his painting, that Bacon had seen how the Surrealists equated the desire to express something new with the need to shock. Curiously, it is as if in his search for a subject that would satisfy his needs as a painter, Bacon had begun by defining the background. It is the interior in which he would later set his drama of mid-century man caught in an animal awareness of his own futility and despair.

In *SKRYT*, Breytenbach had also begun exploring the human body in this way. The devastating dramas, emotions and awareness of the mind are portrayed in human figures set in different interiors. There are instances of vaginal bleeding, a figure propped in a corner of a room in 'ça va?' 'ça va, ça va; et toi, ça va?' 'ça va' and a landscape of decapitated female torsos with hands pleading which could be compared with the worst nightmares of de Sade, Goya or Bacon. In these drawings Breytenbach's lifelong companion, *Dog*, also takes shape. The cover inscription for a later collection of poetry also evolved from the drawings in *SKRYT* – the images of the anthill metamorphosed into a title of a volume of poetry:

64

Spanish director and film-maker noted especially for his early Surrealist films and for his work in the Mexican commercial cinema.

Die miernes swel op ja die fox-terrier kry 'n weekend en ander byna vergete katastrofes en fragmente uit 'n ou manuskrip van Breyten Breytenbach (1980).

The visual works of Breytenbach are inherently paradoxical. The drawings of aberration and transformation or metamorphosis illustrates the process and movement, which enhance change. The grotesque is expressed in forms of reduction, expansion, distortion, animation, excess and estrangement. The depiction of the grotesque is a process of continual metamorphosis in which new forms are continually projected. Not only does the grotesque contain the products of various kinds of transformation, but very often also the processes of transformation themselves. For the same reason, elements already grotesque in themselves often engage in further transformations before the viewer's eyes.

A particular kind of looking is at stake here and the role of the viewer is a painful one: all the deceptive certainties of the visual tradition we are used to are challenged, all the relationships between looking, all the positive constructions of bits of reality are questioned.

3.5.1. SKRYT

Breytenbach wrote *SKRYT* (1972) during and after a visit to Tanzania. In this volume of poetry Breytenbach manages to marry his own aesthetics with social involvement. The poem, *Life in the ground*, is an example of his dedication to criticize the fixed views of Apartheid and the effect it had on a certain section of society. Breytenbach writes:

Life in the ground

**blessed are the children of Dimbaza
of Welcome Valley, Limehill and Stinkwater**

dying

of sickness, under feeding, poverty –
because they clean the boss' field of vision,
because they escape hell
because they vacate the territory of the boer
– the Boer and his God –
– the hand of the God –
because for them life is spared,
because to live black is a political crime
because you who are black live
in the country of blood
and the pass and the insult and the dog,
you stain the earth of the Boer
blessed are the children of Dimbaza,
of Welcome Valley, Limehill and Stinkwater
thrown away
in pits, festive places for ants,
the black toothed smiles –
because they receive toys and empty milk bottles
to please the graves,
toys and cellophane which rustles in the wind
milk bottles – empty tits – from which the wind
can suck sounds
to lure moles nearer
– because meat is scarce–
so that the little ones might forget
that they are dead
blessed are the dead of Dimbaza,
of Welcome Valley, Limehill and Stinkwater
gorged
by the earth, because their coming and their going
is discrete between mouth and spoon
without leaving stains before the sun

blessed benediction and holy are the moles
and the worms and the ants
in the country of sunshine
in the country of the Boer
in the country which the Lord has given him,
because they keep the sods clean and fertile
so that the person can flourish and thrive
grow his plants and breed his stock
and can become pretty and strong and white
in honour of his God.

The task of the stratified state is control, enclosure and control. In free action, what counts is the way in which the element of the body escapes gravitation to occupy absolutely a non-punctuated space. According to Deleuze & Guattari (1986:79) fascism has an unlimited movement with no aim other than itself. It has been stated in the introduction that the post-fascist body of Breytenbach's oeuvre is that of a war machine. What this means is that bodies as an artistic endeavour of movement can be a potential war machine, a creative line of flight, a smooth space of displacement. The art works echo political dissonance. The unfolding of this way of thinking resembles a journey through a landscape of many rhythms, chaotic forms and strange art-like connections, between disparate elements.

The first part of *SKRYT* (1972) is a serious, logical *Ars poetica* on the poetical way of political involvement. Does the poet have to prophesy or withdraw? The answer lies in the paradoxes. Coetzee (Breytenbach 1977: introduction) mentions that according to Breytenbach, one has to entrench oneself in poetry. Poetry can be compared with a windowless waiting room, where one has to live and by that gather the dead yesterdays. New life evolves from this. There are fourteen grotesque drawings in *SKRYT*. The title of this volume of poetry infers that the motions of taking in and excreting is typified in one word. This is the physical reaction to psychic impotence. Emotions of longing, anger, love and nostalgia, all are spat out. The drawing, *les filles de Laocoön* (M&I-11), refers to the style of Andy Warhol. The sprawling

and blood-spurting woman (M&I-12) refer to Kahlo's *My Birth* (1932). The inner room comes from Bacon. Magritte's *The Rape* (1934) is echoed in *Now, really Mr. Jones-Ferguson!* (M&I-13). Breytenbach's interaction with the body in these drawings reflects the shapes depicted by Victor Brauner in *The Morphology of Man* (1934).

3.6. The carnival-goer (the one wearing the dunce's cap and the landscape of the carnival).

The notion of the carnival may be used as an analytical tool for exploring the paintings and drawings of Breytenbach. Thus conversation is taken up with Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975)⁶⁵, whose writings on the carnival have had a long and lasting influence on the contemporary practice of literary and cultural studies. Bakhtin presents carnival as a festive world. It is brimful with exuberance and ambivalent laughter. The carnival figure is grotesque and embodies corpulent excess. The carnival figure represents ever-renewing becoming and is against all forms of fixity. Bakhtin's emphasis on the heterogeneous, multivalent and *heteroglossic* characteristics of the carnivalesque have inspired many contemporary theorists who are interested in the notion's transgressive and subversive potentials.⁶⁶

Metaphorically speaking, the carnival is a gigantic mask behind which a multiplicity of other masks hides (Bakhtin 1968:102). The term "carnival" is iconoclastic by nature because no dogma nor coercion and no narrow-minded seriousness can coexist with Rabelais' images that

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Bakhtin was a Russian philosopher and cultural theorist whose influence extends to today.

⁶⁶

There is now a large and increasing body of writing which sees the carnival not simply as a ritual feature of European culture, but as a mode of understanding. For the film critic, Robert Stam, the notion of the carnival "is a potentially indispensable instrument for the analysis not only of literary and filmic text, but also for cultural politics in general" (Tsu-Chung Su. 1996:28:2 & Stam 1989:47).

are so deeply opposed to all that is complete and polished (thus fixity). Carnival is opposed to all pomposity and to every ready-made solution. Carnival occupies an ambivalent space of in-between-ness like a mid-zone. It belongs to the non-fixative borderline between art and life. In reality, it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain pattern of play. All spectators are simultaneously participants, taking part in the carnival, simultaneously undergoing metamorphosis. It is the strategy used to fight all that are elevated, abstract, transcendental, and it offers the option to laugh. Laughter kills the spirit of gravity by action directed downward. Coming down to earth and shifting the gaze to the lower stratum of the body through convulsive laughter of the body is, in Bakhtin's view, always a positive gesture conceiving, regenerating and giving birth. In this context Bakhtin (1968:110) writes:

To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly, and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth.

3.6.1. The carnival mask.

Breytenbach, during his intense conversation with the self, uses various masks. Examples would be the book as a mask in *la Famille Sainte* (M&I-13b) and the bird and wolf mask in *Songe de sept ans et demi* (Seven and a half dreams) (M&I-14) Then there is the white masks in *T/15* (M&I-15) and in *Homme devant la fenêtre* (Man in front of a window)(M&I-16), *Hovering dog* (M&I-17) and the interplay of black and white masks, reminiscent of Fanon's search for black consciousness, in *Black Skin, White Masks*. The bird mask features again in *L'Arbe aux oiseaux* (The tree with birds)(M&I-18) and the eye mask in *Monddood* (Mouthdead) (M&I-19). A masked Breytenbach embracing the praying mantis appears in *praying mantis* (M&I-20) and finally there is the dog mask in *Nuit à Gorée* (Gorée

Night)(M&I-21).

The fascination with the carnival mask, whether we call it paradox, illusion, ambiguity, or ambivalence, lies in the interplay of multiple identities, both real and imaginary, that are simultaneously revealed or concealed by the mask. To play with masks is to shift roles, rather than to stick to a unique identity, a stiff facade or a monolithic truth. What lurks behind the mask of the grotesque is not a terrible vacuum, or nothingness, but an inexhaustible flux of identities (Bakhtin 1968:40).

One can catalogue some of these identities of Breytenbach, such as the parodies and caricatures in *Hommage au Pinceau Décédé* (Homage to deceased paintbrush)(M&I-22), *Woord* (M&I-23) or grimaces in *King breyten 6* (M&I-24) and eccentric postures in *Dakhaas* (M&I-25). He also uses the comic gesture as in *les oeufs de d'été* (Summer eggs)(M&I-26). The self becomes the buffoon, the fool, the one wearing the dunce's cap in *DA/2* (M&I-27), *Judges Kiss* (M&I-28), *Circus Angel* (M&I-29). There is the clown fishing for an image in *Le Pêcheur* (The Angler)(M&I-30). Breytenbach uses the photocopy to repeat the bird masked figures in *Gorée Memory* (M&I-31). Further examples are the *doppelgänger* in *El rey doble* (M&I-32) and the schizo depiction in *Bird* (M&I-33). There is depiction of the copulating figures in *le noeud* (The knot)(M&I-34). Also the defecating *Femme* (Woman)(M&I-35) and an example of growth in *Siamesen koppe* (M&I-36). Lastly, Breytenbach depicts the dying body in the work, *cadavre exquis* (M&I-37). This is the focus of Breytenbach's imagery. According to Derrida (1978:xvi) the carnival, as a force for transgression that moves against fixity, is an *aporia* in the fabric of the official culture. It is an excess that they cannot construct within the rules of logic, for they can only conceive the excess as neither this nor that, or both simultaneously. It is therefore a departure from all rules of logic.

3.7. Borders (un-citizen and the landscape of Mor).

“If you feel the pain of thresholds, it is because you are not a tourist; the thoroughfare can thus take place”, writes Peter Handke (in Laumonier 1997:87-94) in *Images of Renewal*. In the work, *Chinese of suffering*, Andreas Loser defines him as the “seeker of thresholds”. In his free time, cleaning the thresholds of antique villas, he contemplates the role of places of thoroughfares, which can only be defined in their relation to a centre. Handke sharpens his intellect on this aspect of in-between spaces. In his book, *My year in nobody’s window with a view*, he sees the idea that the suburb is the true centre, the true place. In the thoughts of Breytenbach, the un-citizen finds him/herself in the in-between space.

The space that Breytenbach (1996e) is describing here is not of the Centre though, since it is by definition peripheral, it is the other, living in the margins, on the edges of life.

Mor. I like the sound: the land of Mor. To be first of the Moricans.

.... how do you draw the map of Mor? Wherever its un-citizens are, there the Middleworld is ... Alexandria was Middleworld territory and so was Beirut once upon a time; Sarajevo belonged, before the pigs slaughtered it to ‘purity’. Hong Kong is an outpost (the poet P.K. Leung writes – in an admirable volume called ‘City at the End of Time’, in which I found much comfort and inspiration – ironically, Hong Kong was a colony that provided an alternative space for Chinese people and culture to exist, a hybrid for one to reflect upon the problems of a ‘pure’ and ‘original’ state); Paris used to be a section of Mor when it still had a proletariat, many of whom were of foreign origin, living within the walls (by the way, the Middleworld has nothing to do with riches or urban sophistication); Cuba may be of the Middleworld despite its best efforts not to; Berlin, still, although it is now becoming ‘normalised as the pan-Germinal capital’. Jerusalem could have been, were it not for the fanatic exclusivism of the Israeli’s; South Africa went through the birth pain, it was close to understanding a cardinal Middleworld law – that you can only survive and move forward by

continuing to invent yourself – but then became a majority-led democracy instead; New York might have been, but is too close to America; I have heard tales of tolerance and centre-insouciance from a town once known as Mogador, now Estaouria; Tangier, where I celebrated my twenty-first birthday (bird-day) wrapped in a burnus, despite the closed warren of its casbah, was a refuge; Haiti, and the other Caribbean islands as well, belong – most islands tend to be natural outcrops of Mor, Gorée, Zanzibar ...; Palestine most certainly – ‘exodus’ can be a high road taken to the Middleworld, and what is now named the Territories (an euphemism for ghettos and ‘bantustan’, subjected to Apartheid) will breed a new generation of un-citizens.

For Breytenbach to become the un-citizen required a break with rigid patterns inscribed on the body and mind by the stratified society from which he came. His revolutionary interaction with the body of South African society, his political stance, art, writing and practice of Zen place him on the radical plain of immanence. He cannot be pinned down, the closer one gets to him, the more likely he is to turn, slipping from one situation into another, or one social level to another, and being many things to many people. The enigma that he still seeks in his work surrounds him like a protective cloak, allowing him repeatedly to break the mould of accepted thought and behaviour. He weaves a rich account of the world we live in, an account committed to forwarding notions of plurality, temporality, flux and change, and to show the diverse ways in which human existence and its experiences are created.

For the un-citizen, thought has no eternal value. It is bound in a network of temporalities with other entities. As un-citizen, painting and writing have made Breytenbach aware of the essence of things. He writes about the disruptive function of the metaphor and the image. Meaning is built in a dialectical interplay through involvement of the reader/ viewer that creates an illusion of movement. This is a process or thing as process and not as product. These are the areas of non-fixity and of democracy, pattern, space, reference, harmony, dissonance, rhythms, repetitions, concealment, under colour, texture, structure, leap, rapture, “fuck-up”[sic] and radicalism. These aspects cannot be encapsulated in a dogma, or school,

or party. Breytenbach's radicalism is the choice of non-fixative alternatives. These alternatives could also be paintings, drawings, poems and concepts and these works are instances of knotting in the sediments of consciousness. The formation of a new pattern of consciousness is required. Bach achieved this. His manifestation of consciousness is the fugue. Escher's, revolutionary depiction of the pattern is the spiralling staircase. Gödel questioned patterns through his mathematical equations.

The Middleworld person will be obliged to create concepts. The security of repetition of the known is forbidden to him, and this is why all fundamentalists will want to outcast him and will want to spit on his very name. Breytenbach's pattern of consciousness is based on a continual play of concepts. Death, decay and movement are interlinked. The un-citizen will inhabit *nada* and will have a lifelong intimate dialogue with death. In the act of seeing, the viewer of these paintings, the reader of the poems and the one acknowledging and internalising the various concepts Breytenbach works will enter the immanent field of consciousness. Then he or she will hover on the threshold of Mor. Accompanying the painter, he or she will trace the footsteps of the un-citizen. In the act of viewing, artworks vibrate and set free energies, which could initiate certain actions for the viewer. One could say that Breytenbach's images and metaphors join a curve near many and different singularities. This becomes a movement towards the always eluding un-citizenship, which embodies the "dogging" pain of constant change. A network of endless connection and becoming arrive on the plains of Mor and, if the viewer so wishes, a process of choosing alternatives could become part of his or her daily life. For the viewer, this could also serve as one of numerous ways of becoming conscious.

As a young man, Breytenbach left the country of his birth to cross the threshold to the now formulated Middleworld, joining forces with other un-citizen's like:

Kundera, Nureyev, Naipul, Rushdie – neither East nor West, Homi Babha - 'we now locate the question of culture in the realm of the beyond'. Pei, the

international architect, Gaudi, Juan Goytisolo, Erik von Stroheim, but somehow neither Chaplin nor Dietrich; Edward Said, intermittently, Bei Dao, Samuel Beckett, who staged the workrooms of *Middleworldness*, Pessoa, who populated his head with multiplication of alienated explorers of the self, that slippery slope to damnation, Jean-Marie Le Clezio, Henri Michaux, Rimbaud – both as poet and trader, Victor Segalen, Han Shan and the Cold Mountain poet Gary Snyder, his disciple; the Andalusian explorers, and historians: Franz Fanon and Franz Kafka: Carlos Fuentes, (but not Octavio Paz); Frida Kahlo (but not Diego Riviera); the Zapatistas of Chiapas but not the Shining Path Guerillas; Pasolini (but not Fellini); Ryszard Kapushinski: Gauguin, maybe Degas, probably Bacon with the raw meat of his thinking, Goya and Matisse, certainly neither Picasso nor Cézanne ... was Nietzsche one? Of his descendants he included Foucault, who had the baldness and the loud taste in attire so typically un-citizen and perhaps also Deleuze (Breytenbach 1996e).

3.8. On consciousness (insect lament and the landscape of the theatre).

I end where I started: with a call for total subversion; not for exercising an Alternative Culture, but to cultivate alternatives; not to be different, but to be – knowingly, fully, with all your aches and pains; to tie through the specific a navel-string to the universal. If we had time, we could have spoken about the law (*dhamma*) and the Way (Tao), and how the Law can be annulled or abrogated only by walking the Way. The responsibility of the writer (painter) is not so much one of literal meaning but of social and moral implications (Breytenbach 1996e).

The word “orthodoxy” conjures up a world in which people have reached a final stage of defining themselves. In voicing a new generation’s view on being the ultimate alternative, Norman Galloway (1999) writes about the visual poem, *Life and Times of Johnny Cockroach*,

directed by Marthinus Basson and performed at the Grahamstown Festival and at the Nico Malan in Cape Town (1999/2000):

All traditional structures have been abandoned and everything simply flows across a wide plane. You are permitted to enter and exit the narrative at your will. There is no attempt to ‘grasp’ or involve the viewer; you as witness must chose to enter a work, which will have you question every ideology you have ever clung to. ... You are ultimately drawn in, not because of the structure or narrative, but by the challenge to become a participant in active confrontation of what you had always considered as your ‘self’. The ‘I’ is the target. ⁶⁷

To be blindly dedicated to a single ideology or point of view or even points of departure is the ultimate “evil”. To deny change of every ideology (“safe” or otherwise) is to deny what makes us human. ... Johnny Cockroach is the true alternative, without labelling himself/herself that is the one character that realised that there are no absolute right and wrong. Any single ideology set of laws, or whatever will not muzzle the Cockroach. Johnny sits with hollow laughter in his throat, bearing a witness to fools realising their own shortsightedness. ... Johnny wants to die; Johnny can’t bear to be a witness any longer. ... You may be able to hide from authoritarian powers, or underneath a mound of words and rational justifications, but your memory will follow you to the grave. And when all of memory returns, the folly of you own blind dedication to any single ideology/orthodoxy will be revealed. ... Beginning, Middle, End? Forget it. Do not approach this work with any expectation of traditional form. Life itself is without neat compartments. The compartments we create are merely conveniences. We can never identify the specific point at which an issue is resolved or concluded ... take note. A

67

Galloway (1999) writes: ‘I use the word “alternative” tentatively. To be different for the sake of being different is just as much a straightjacket on human nature as anything else. The word “alternative” in the context is used to describe those who search for fundamental truths. Once they stumble across one they are willing to abandon it once again. All of us are alternative. Most of us are unconscious of this. The alternative is the person who is committed to the eternal search – the search will continue until we are released from the constraints of both physical and false truths created by identity and mind. In a sense all truths are false. As soon as the answer is found ,it is no longer the answer. Those who are conscious of this are the alternatives...’

deeper confrontation, waiting in the wings, wants to be heard. Have the courage to confront yourself in the mirror.

In a Press interview with Marthinus Basson, *Johnny Cockroach* is described as one-fourth rant, three-fourths vision.

It is a sermon, lecture, tract, philosophical dialogue and ineffable poetry rolled into one. It is an imaginative riot, a breeding ground of ideas. An entire century's worth of ideologies, a ragbag of discarded slogans are used and catch phrases, TS Eliot's "heap of broken images".

The debate concerns freedom, history, the artist's role, race, violence—but there are absolutely no answers, no instant solutions. It is also a romanticising of Afrikaner history. The great theme of *Johnny Cockroach* is freedom, debated across time and place by a bewildering variety of speakers, for the elucidation of a cockroach witness who has watched aeons of human squalor and travail. The ambiguity of the text reflects disillusionment with the powers that be, as well as with the Twentieth Century as a disastrous phase in human history.

The cockroach of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* in which man becomes an insect, is reversed. As limbs, torso, head, eyes, feelers and wings grow, as consciousness becomes richer in context until the hermaphrodite body comes to life. Here, two cockroaches, the truly immortal creatures, ask God to let them become human so they can die, so they stop watching humans' century after century. Who then is Johnny Cockroach? He is a litmus paper for humanity (Willoughby & Basson 2000:5).

Involvement with the body concerns reterritorialisation. At the moment of becoming, the ultimate Cockroach body asks for a new form, a new earth and a new nation, which are not yet

in existence. Becoming is that which distinguishes itself from the fixed majority who subscribes to dogmatism, patriarchy and so forth. The race requested by the un-citizen Cockroach consist of the bastard, the inferior, the anarchistic and nomadic. The Cockroach becomes Afrikaans, so the Afrikaners themselves may become something other and tear away from their suffering. The different portrayals of this body bear within themselves numerous instances of suffering, which beckon in the direction of a new nation. And what they have in common is to resist submissiveness, the unbearable, the shame and the present. Thus, deterritorialization and reterritorialization meet each other in a process of double becoming. And the beckoning Cockroach transforms its body into a mirror of the future.

3.9. *Ars poetica.*

The process of becoming the un-citizen, cockroach, nomad, nadaist, the carnival-goer, the exile or the revolutionary is one of shifting realities and intense bindings and knots of thought which cross life, an inquiry without anxious acts and grasps for a fixed point. Mutations of the body and the alienation that follow will open the way by which vast instances of political principles, as well as art aesthetic principles, desire and Buddhist thinking, call up that which is temporary, instances where fixed, limited and expressed realities are constantly overthrown. By mutating into what is momentary and that which is constantly becoming. The body does not become an isolated instance or a measurement of personally becoming, but one that mutates with the cadence of all other orders, the desiring economy, art aesthetic principles, political discourse, languages, state structures and memory systems. In the process of becoming, the image of metaphor or concept is captured in the image of a shifting net of knotted realities. The plane of becoming is the existential landscape, which does not allow closed horizons of introspection.

3.10. Summary:

The chapter, Movement and Inscription, enlightens important issues regarding the argument of being against fixity. Breytenbach is described as the person who received the social inscription of dogmatism and patriarchy during the first twenty years of his life. When he left the country, he chose a more open life.

It has previously been noted that movement is the important notion that opposes that which is fixed. A comment is made on the impact which the painting, *L'oiseau tombé*, has on the viewer. It is a painful impact. This viewing process is compared with inscription rites that are found with primitive, nomadic societies. The effect of this painting on the viewer is disruptive. As one questions and experiences the image, certain disruptive nomadic energies are set into motion and the stable and stultified viewpoints of more dogmatic viewers and critics are upset.

The nomadic concept is one of movement which works against fixity. A comparison was made between Deleuze & Guattari's view of nomadic art and Breytenbach's painting, *Dancing Warthog*. The art movement in which Breytenbach's work, *New Realism* upsets the stable bourgeois viewpoints of art as beautiful and ugly. *New Realism* has its own internal dialogue and confronts society with that it does not want to see or hear. Breytenbach is the social critic. He is a dissident, who continually castigates his native South Africans. He barks all along the borders of that which is fixed. Breytenbach's volume of poetry, *SKRYT*, was just as eruptive as his latest drama, *Die Toneelstuk*.

The carnival is an important notion that works against fixity. When Breytenbach relies heavily on grotesque depictions in his art, writings and dramas, he enters the regions of the aesthetics

of the carnival. The carnival mask, like the dunce's cap, is an important image in Breytenbach's work. The mask is also a pointer that directs us in the direction of multiple identities. It is thus an instrument which works against fixity.

Breytenbach formulated the important notions of the un-citizen in his essay on the Middleworld. The un-citizen is that person who has left the fixed parameters of the mainland behind. He may be an exile. The cardinal Middleworld notion is to invent yourself constantly. There is no fixed identity, but only the constant movement towards identity, which is dismantled when it is fixed. Breytenbach's image of the double bodied Johnny Cockroach is not a specific body. The two bodies are connected with a navel-string to the universal. Johnny Cockroach depicts a human condition. This chapter deals with the process of becoming which is the constant movement against fixity.

CHAPTER FOUR: MEMORY.

4.1. An introduction.

Twilight is that moment of the day that foreshadows the night of forgetting, but that seems to slow time itself, and the in-between state in which the last light of day may still play out its ultimate marvels. It is memory's privileged time (Huysen 1995:65).

In memory of Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Nagasaki, Hiroshima, Vietnam, Cambodia, Korea, Angola, Biafra, Uganda, Mozambique, Eritrea, Somalia, Liberia, the Congo, Rwanda, Yugoslavia, Kalashinokov, Anna, a character from the chorus in Breytenbach's mortality play, *Life and Times of Johnny Cockroach*, comments on the nineteenth century. Breytenbach (1999c) writes: "Sixteen men in the latrine of some garage rape a teenage girl, the whole night long. Children comb the rubbish heap outside a big city in India. Others live in the glass towers of prosperity. In the play, Anna says: "See the oil rigs, see the burn-offs, see the nuclear plants, see the charred forests, see the oceans choked with plastic, see the zoos, see the palaces and the senate and the congresses and parliaments and the stock markets. Visit New York; buy yourself a Vincent van Gogh. ... See the torture rooms. See the snot and the shit and the blood. Smell it". And Scweik, a soldier in a dirty, bloodstained, early 20th - century uniform, carrying an ancient rifle with a fixed bayonet, answers 'It is time to bury this century' ". Events in the twentieth century have been horrific. When twilight settles around the memories of this century and their carriers, with the memories of Apartheid being the most salient example in the public mind of South Africa, the revolutionary poet/painter, who was incarcerated will be remembered.

4.1.1. Notes on memory, writing, imagination and death.

In contrast to the realistic recording of history, memory deals with imagination. Memory moves into the region that is against fixity. The process of remembering is the filter of events. Memory has been an important and enduring concept in Breytenbach's work. He writes about memory in the following way:

To write is to make memory visible, and this memory uncovers a new landscape. ... Distance is chronology and memory is imagination. It is a given, constant near, a breathing space, a veritable heartland: a lung of time singing our movement towards death, and maybe even making it possible. Just as you cannot survive without dreams, you cannot move on without the memory of where you come from, even if that journey is fictitious. Is what we call identity not that situation made up of the bits and pieces which one remembers from previous encounters, events and situations? Is memory not hanging from the branches?

With time some images will fade away, only because memory territory, like a ship's wake or a bird's cage, is circumscribed. There cannot be room for everything. The catchment area, the observations field, becomes saturated. The tree groans under its weight. One may say the road finishes when one can no longer see the peaks and the twists, when the land of sleeping becomes barren and bread is changed to stone. Now I am dead, the distance and scape will be dust. Memory will be emptied like a glass held to lifeless lips.

And imagination? It must be the discovery of new possibilities to dress of memory, like going back on my tracks to explore another direction, an option of resituating myself before that which happened in the meantime's screwed up my choices. Death is the birth of imagination Breytenbach (1998d).

In the lecture *The Long March* held in New York during 1990, Breytenbach (1996a:38) said that memory and imagination are biological necessities. These two actions are the breathing space of the creative mind. Breytenbach writes:

The individual creative act is certainly an attempt to make consciousness. This implies drawing upon memory. Memory, whether apocryphal or not, provides the feeding ground or the requisite space for the outlining of imagination. Imagination is a biological necessity for inventing a future.

4.1.2. Notes on memory, writing and creativity.

Writing is the mould of memory, or its image. Without memory there is no possibility of imagination, or imagined memory. Without imagination space becomes stratified and stifled. When we are deprived of creativity, we end up in a state of emergency, in the convulsions and convolutions of a “total strategy”, and then we have state totalitarians.⁶⁸

4.1.3. Notes on memory and revolution.

During a paper, *The Memory of Bird in Times of Revolution*, delivered in Berlin (1989) Breytenbach (1996a:166-167) equals memory to revolution. Both actions lead to events opposed to fixity. Breytenbach said:

A revolution cannot be thought. And when it is imagined it will only be as the

68

Coetzee & Polley (1988:80). From 9 to 12 July 1987, a group of mainly Afrikaans-speaking academics met a delegation from the African National Congress in Dakar, Senegal. The Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South African (IDASA) arranged and hosted the meeting. Most of the people invited were writers, and Afrikaans. The Afrikaner writer had been part of the cultural hegemony on which the ruling class built its political regime. Since the sixties writers had, however, been resisting Apartheid and national party authoritarianism; but as the ANC had been banned and demonised by the ideological state apparatus since the sixties, these progressive voices were left without a means of discourse. For the writers of that decade and their literary descendants to meet writers in exile and ANC political workers became a opportunity for them to be more actively involved in a solution for South Africa to realise that this country can have a future separate from *Apartheid* and violence.

memory of birds. Birds don't have to invent flying (Breytenbach implies that painting is not the servant of the revolution and its life and memory cannot be encapsulated.)

4.1.4. Notes on memory, prison and death.

In an unpublished lecture, *Foreword. Travelling towards identity (a digressive itinerario)* written at Thekwini during 1996(b), Breytenbach writes about his experience while he was incarcerated. He describes the unchanging(fixed) parameters of the prison which is in contrast to what happens when events are remembered. Memories are like dreams. In our dreams the sequences of events are dramatized and strange. When remembering the same can happen. Like in a dream Breytenbach merges his memories of his father with prison events. A totally new reality is created and thus there has been a movement against fixity.

In prison I was introduced into the traumatic but vibrant *milieu* of gangs, pimps, lifelike criminals and male women and other innocent – all innocent – specimens of what was then an incarcerated lumped proletariat.

Such a crossing nearly always means a break with the known references of the past. It provokes a double vision – new impressions and habits are imprinted on the unquestioned landscape of your youth. This double-track of perception makes you more acutely aware of the places of memory and of the interaction between memory and exploration. Memory becomes a resonance, a gland secreting the digestive fluids of comprehension. Utopia, you could say, reveals itself as the unchanging past. It is further more the lost past – or, at least, the past from which you have been expelled. The nomad knows he is not going to a better world. This accentuates what one could call a certain schizophrenia: you are living perpetual change against a backdrop of the unchanging. You continue travelling so to keep one step ahead of the Dancer, *La Chingada*, the fucked One, and Death....

Your father came stumbling from the burning house, clad only in his pyjamas. Because it was still night and since smoke was blurring the scene's outlines except for your father silhouetted against a backdrop of flames, you assumed at first that the dark stains on his night-clothes must be scorch marks. But when he came closer, so near that you could distinguish his grey hair and make out the white anguish of his eyes, when he fell repeatedly and struggled to his feet again with great difficulty, and when the sombre blotches spread wider and started glistening like black snake skin, then you knew it was blood. Blood also bubbled over his lips, dribbled down his chin and neck and dirtied his jacket even more. You called out loud but he probably couldn't hear you against the crackle and hiss and whoosh of the raging background. Still he kept on trying to move in your direction. You wanted to go towards him but the warders were gripping your arms very tightly just above the elbows.

In an interview with van Bosch (1999:4) Breytenbach mentions that he does recognise the notion of memory as operative in his artistic endeavours and is aware that it is presented in his art as the repetition of themes and images. Some paintings or drawings are even memories of themselves. He returns too, to older works and echoes of these are invoked in the new ones. There are also memories of other artists and writers and revolutionaries as portraits. In the space of memory, everything is both itself and something else. The image coming from the mind is also a memory.

Nevertheless, memories and representation go hand in hand. Certain forms of representation, whether in language, narrative, image or recorded sound, is based on memory. Representation always comes after the memory of an event although the media will try to give us the delusion of pure presence. The past is not simply there in memory, but it must be articulated to become memory. The fissure that opens between experiencing an event and remembering it in representation is unavoidable. Rather than lamenting or ignoring it, this split should be understood as a powerful stimulant for cultural and artistic creativity. The "twilight of

memory”⁶⁹ is given in the very structures of representation itself the obsession with memory in contemporary culture, must be read about the double problematic (Huysen 1995:66). And for Breytenbach the image without language coming between is much more powerful and direct.

The Swiss cinematographer, Richard Dindo, who made the documentary, *A Season in Paradise*, based on events leading to Breytenbach’s imprisonment, the court hearings, scenes in the prison and his cell, concentrates on the portrayal of revolutionary figures. For both Breytenbach and Dindo “memory” is the crucial factor and the motor of their work. For Dindo, whom Marcel Proust (1871-1922) influenced, creative work and memory are interdependent. From Proust Dindo got the idea that a work of art concerns the reconstruction of things past. For him film is always reconstruction.

Dindo’s work has frequently been classified as “political cinema”, his choice of subjects being anti-fascism, Switzerland in the Second World War or the Zurich youth revolts. Thus, because of his anargical stance against the facsim of Apartheid, the obvious choice of Breytenbach. It is not easy to forget the recapturing of the scene in the film, *A Season in Paradise*, where Yolande broke down in the courtroom in Pretoria or the memory of her shaking her hair and letting the reflected movement flow with the rippling water of a stream near the house where Breytenbach was born. Forgetting the image of the cell near death row where Breytenbach was kept in solitary confinement is not easy. There are also reels containing images of the area of his birth and a moving sequence where he and Yolande meet each other in a suburb of Cape Town after a long period of separation.

When Dindo made *A Season in Paradise*, everything about the film, the way it was composed,

⁶⁹

The twilight of memory implies uncertainty. When light fades away, objects are not easy to delineate.

the way it was shot, the way the protagonists spoke, served as a reconstruction of memory. For Dindo it has nothing do with nostalgia or *passé*-ism. In his films one watches people remembering. In *A Season in Paradise* Breytenbach is meticulously reconstructing events in his own life for the cinemagoers.

Breytenbach chooses the realities of life as the aesthetic point of departure for his art, events of his life and himself. Dindo does likewise. Dindo says he is working on a long story that weaves through all his films. All the characters he portrays, belongs to his family and his to theirs. The fighters in Spain are his fathers and mothers. Max Frisch (1911-1991), is a father figure, Rimbaud and Breytenbach are his brothers. Dindo tries to see the world through their eyes, and to speak with their voices. The symbiosis with his characters is so strong that he does not need to make a conscious effort to include himself. Breytenbach also says that everything painted by him is related to him. When he paints the landscape, he paints himself. Every portrait is in some way, a self-portrait.

There seems to be some resemblance between the art movement, *New Realism*, which Breytenbach follows and Dindo's views that film is the medium best suited to getting close to the truth of a human being. Dindo understands the word "truth" in Rimbaud's sense of the word, as illumination. He feels that film can be understood literally as the art of biography. A documentary film can present eyewitness reports, show documentation and places, use voices and music. A documentary allows you to entice a person, to get close to him and express the complexity of his truth in a variety of ways. Although they are drenched with imaginative passages, Breytenbach's travelogues can be compared with the documentary medium used by Dindo. For Dindo human intelligence is essentially nothing other than memory and forgetting is a form of unconsciousness and cowardice. Only people, who would rather not know, forget. They are afraid of themselves. Wanting to remember is a form of resistance. Dindo wants to make people unforgettable and imperishable. In this way his films are also imperishable (Küng & Dindo 1992:5-35).

4.2. The Wall

In this section history as the memory of the stratified order as illustrated by Kafka's story, *The Great Wall*, will be highlighted. Since Breytenbach is engaged in a lifelong conversation with Kafka, turning to Kafka's writing will be apt, to illuminate Breytenbach's confrontation with the stratified aspects of society. The power of the stratified memory system and the stratified space must be understood before one can understand the poetics of space and memory as imagination as drawings. A reading of the power structure is required because non-corporal punishment, the abstract and anonymous mechanism of the punitive system, has shifted emphasis from body to soul.

The stratification and binding of the order of Chinese society were caused by the transformation of the Chinese educational system. It was put in place fifty years before the building of the Great Wall when it was decided that architecture and the act of building construction were the most important forms of knowledge. The idea of a border, limitation or control, as manifested in the activities of the state memory system, is well illustrated in Kafka's short story, *The Great Wall of China*. When he wants to introduce us to the Great Wall (symbolising the stratified order) Kafka (1988:248) writes :

The news of the building of the wall had penetrated into this world – late, too, some thirty years after its announcement. The boy was standing with his father on the riverbank holding his hand. An unknown boatman – the boy knew all those who usually passed by, but this one was a stranger – had just told him that a great wall was being built to protect the Emperor. For it seemed that an infidel tribe, among them demons, often assembled before the imperial palace and shot their black arrows at the Emperor.

The Wall was built from the southeast and the southwest it came up in two sections that finally converged there. This principal of piecemeal construction was also applied on a smaller scale by both of the two great armies of labour, the eastern and the western. Gangs of some twenty workers were formed to accomplish a length, say, of five hundred yards of wall, while a similar gang built another stretch of the same length to meet the first. However, after the junction had been made, the construction of the wall was not carried on from the point, let us say, where this thousand yards ended; instead the two gangs of workers were transferred to begin building again in quite different neighbourhoods (Kafka 1988:235-247).

These blocks of wall left standing in deserted regions could be easily pulled down repeatedly by the nomads, especially as the nomad tribes, rendered apprehensively by the building operations, kept changing their encampment with incredible rapidity, like locusts, and so perhaps had a better general view of the progress of the wall than we, the builders.

In this story, Kafka indirectly criticises all forms of boundaries and control. The Chinese initiated the project of the Great Wall to protect them from the people from the north. In the story, they emphasise the aspect of being broken and they thus describe the building of the wall as a project that unfolds in a peculiar way that is never completed; the building of the wall thus becomes irrelevant. It is the resultant territorial demarcation that becomes all significant. This phenomenon is not unique to China. All states participate in such processes, some even taking it further by territorialisation of ideas to form a certain memory system. On an abstract level, the Wall illustrates the inherent necessity for the territorialisation of national unity, to sustain a memory system, which facilitates the navigation of the order. The memory system, as well as the order, which builds it, symbolises the ideal of closure. For China, the building of the Wall illustrates the closure (de Kock 1999:40).

The Maximum Section of the Central Prison in Pretoria is a surrounding ring wall, five to six metres high, with an inside court, and within that court the prison is situated. In the gate of the ring wall is a double gate. Two heavy steel gates on rollers, are electronically operated to prevent both opening simultaneously. This is controlled from the gate room. In the inner courtyard against the ring wall are the watchtowers that are manned day and night. Not coming from any particular spot, the light beams from these towers spreading along the surface of things, onto the prison and across the stonework of the walls. It is like a coating or a very faint film, but clear nevertheless, like an active resistance against the dark. In the absence of the full moon, spray lights are used to lighten up the courtyard. The building itself has a wood and iron door. Through the peephole, which Breytenbach often calls “the Judas eye” in this door, the warder peers out, before opening the latch. It is here that one passes through the entrance wall. There is a steel gate, a similar opening and another steel gate before one ascends a few steps to a higher level to be faced by yet another steel gate. When one has passed through the fourth gate, one finds oneself in section C. To enter the small side passage one has to pass through yet another locked gate. This makes six locks between the prisoner and the main courtyard. When one reaches Section C, the doors of the cell open into a passage. A window also opens onto this passage. There are vertical steel rods, with louvre slips between – a structure almost one metre above the walkway, and rising one metre high.

Some most important writings concerning incarceration came from Foucault’s pen. When he died of AIDS-related complaints in 1984 Foucault had become the most influential French philosopher since the Second World War. Foucault is the archaeologist of thought, a genealogist of power/knowledge and historian of the present and with his anatomical gaze he scrutinises madness, sexuality and power (Merquior 1985:2). His vividly readable studies of the origins of modern medicine, prisons, psychiatry and methods of classification have influenced contemporary historians, critics, and novelist. He attempted to identify the systems of power that we make to entrap ourselves. His important book, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, was published in 1977. Herein Foucault considers power. By reaching into the very grain of individuals, power touches their bodies and inserts itself into actions and

attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday life. Power, which can also be considered as a complex stratified memory system, is web-like. One can neither identify with it nor control its direction, nor ultimately can one impact on it any more than one can find the beginning and end of a spider's web. The analysis and questioning of the bowler-hatted society, and the struggle between power structures and negotiated freedom, are the continuous and permanent political tasks inherent in our way of living. The multiplicity of relations of force exercised within the fabric of society, is what Foucault sees as power. Everyone has a measure of power and the *locus* of this power is the human body. This is the actual reason for Foucault's interest in penology, the asylum and sexuality. For Foucault, genealogy is the unconditional analysis of the production and exercise of power. Power in the contemporary world is agent-less as it does not flow from one person, institution or sociological realm to another. This view would be too linear and too constricted. Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplication of relations of force immanent in the sphere in which they operate which constitute their own organisation. These are kept in place by sets of stratified memory.

In contrast with this idea of boundaries and control, as manifested in Kafka's short story and in the state memory system, Breytenbach uses memory as an aesthetic and revolutionary concept, embracing the constantly changing or moving spaces of reality. In the face of this pliant and imaginative reality the possibility of fixing, bordering and controlling seems to be out of the question.

The images of his prison drawings arise out of the artist's fantastic journey through the landscape of consciousness and memory. These images are placed in a space. It is a space of becoming, not only of the images, but also of the artist himself. This also includes the "reality" which encompasses him and the political and the social climate in which he finds himself. By using memory as an aesthetic concept, the images of incarceration convey a reality where things are intertwined. They become a binding of desire. Wings of insects, a

dead praying mantis and even snakes on corpses are linked together in a breathtaking process, nodding backwards in the direction of a complex process of becoming and desires the dismantlement of Apartheid.

The grotesque drawings, like the corpses in the coffin, infer elements of decay and the moments of the creative annihilation of the institutionalised memory system. The artist's position as revolutionary implies a sense of torment excited by the memory system built through the superstate, or the state, of a given order; it moves rather in the direction of the energetic flow of actions.

Breytenbach has painted many works depicting the hat. *T/15 (M-1)* depicts an exchange of different hats. *Ein Gespräch über Sehen (M-2)*, depicts the bowler hat. In *la Famille Sainte (M-3)* the hat hovers above the head of the black woman. In *les Poids (M-4)*, the painter's hat is burning.

The question that one has to ask is how to rid the world, not only of the people in the bowler hats,⁷⁰ but all other hats. Not those worn by Charlie Chaplin (1889-1977) or Laurel and Hardy, or those depicted by Magritte representing the questioning of modern consciousness, nor the hat worn by Sabina in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Kundera's novel (1984), but the soft tailored hats worn by Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) or Mussolini. Those worn by the politicians in the regime of South Africa. The question we have to ask is in what way, can we free our ways of speaking and our actions, our hearts from the memory of the fixity of fascism?

70

These hats are in fact chosen to explode the myth of power and its "uniform" dress.

4.3. Space between Walls: the labyrinth, the cell, the poetics of space and the void.

In the charting of societies that institutionalize prisons and in his “cratology” (Foucault’s theory of power) Foucault (1977:141) calls the legal system “expansionistic”. He is referring to the gradual and persistent invasion of the individual’s privacy and sense of identity in prison, where they carry out a routinised and systematic depersonalisation of the victim. Here the will to control life is understood as the will to freeze it to a point at which it becomes a petrified structure having its own life. The place of incarceration is the mechanistic structure where meaning is inserted through abstract dogmas, stratified memory systems and ideologies, which had called it into being in the first place. By that the mind of the incarcerated is subjected to the labyrinth. According to Dimitriu (1992:10), the labyrinth is a comprehensive, polyvalent symbol, associated with caves, tunnels, anthills and, at a deeper level, with the innards of living beings, monstrous, devouring stomachs or the womb, where digestion and gestations are permanently overshadowed by the risk of death. It is therefore, not fundamentally the physical reality of the place of confinement that appears to be inimical to the prisoner’s sense of identity; what is inimical is the psychological terror that is imposed on him. Albeit through the coercive structure of the prison enclosure itself.

4.3.1. Notes on the labyrinth.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1954), written by James Joyce (1882-1941), Stephan Daedalus is placed at the centre of the labyrinth, evoking the Greek myth of Daedalus, builder of the labyrinth for the Minotaur that escaped from it. Joyce’s character attempts to free himself from the bondage of the church, his country, his family and his loved ones. They imprisoned Breytenbach in two South African prisons for seven and a half years under the terms of the Terrorist Act, from 25 November 1975 to 20 December 1983. His prison drawings, poetry and memoirs appear not only to propose both radical restructuring, but also

to contain the quiet consolation of Buddhism or Taoism, which seems to mesh easily with a refined existential despair. In his cell, he rediscovered the complexity of the spirit as an aesthetic category and through contemplation, which he practiced in the zazen position, aspects, which seemed irrelevant, gained significance. Through this awareness he was able to feed his soul.

In the cell, Breytenbach or his alter self, which is called Don Espejeulo, the black one with the illusionary face, Panus, the one with broken wings, Jan Blom, the one with dead flowers in his headband, Lazarus, the white one in a winding-sheet and Bird, the guilty one, defending the very centre his own selfhood as he finds himself in the labyrinth (Viljoen 1993:46).

The measurement of Breytenbach's cell was approximately four metres wide and seven deep. Against the opposite wall was a built-in bench with a mattress. In some cells, his included, there was a lavatory. He moved away from the toilet and walked to a shining surface that served as a mirror on the opposite wall. As in Jean Cocteau's (1889-1963) *Orpheus Filius*, the shining surface became a further opening or entrance into another world. It could be seen as one revolutionary shard of identity of the man born somewhere between the hills on the road winding from Barrydale to Ladysmith from Amaliensteyn to Calitzdorp. Then the man, whom they stripped of his clothes when he entered the jail, emerged from the depth of the mirror, donned the head of the parade horse. This image that would later be captured in a painting can be compared with the Trojan horse, the Minotaur or the mirror of a Taurus, the figure of death living at the centre of the labyrinth of the place of abhorrence. To understand this place is something one does best once one has been declared a terrorist. Breytenbach wrote a poem to capture his experience in prison.

**When you are handed a bar of soap
and the warder with the fetid breath
tells you to wash your face**

then it is the late night
too many expressions and gestures of loved ones
from the nothingness
the light is snow
when the hangman looks at you
through the judas-eye
then the day breaks from night's belly
and your right wrist is tied to your left ankle
and you are taken down the corridor
of lost footfalls
like a crab on a leash
already a dead hat
to the yellow room
where neither light nor sound ever penetrates
just the articulation of flies
then the white sheet and a pencil
here with the final word scape
the noose from the pole and the shit hole in the floor
the howl dies a black flower in the mouth
oh people, death is but an anus
secreting life (Breytenbach 1996a:60)

Breytenbach later recaptured some of his emotions in an artwork used as band cover on *Mouir* (1983) (M-5). This work is a piece of visual paradox, executed in the seventies, during the ethos of Apartheid and terrorism. It positively bristles with terror foreshadowed with a sense of darkness already present. The Minotaur is an ancient figure deep in the consciousness of humanity. Out of the depths of our past, it had reemerged on the stage of memory. Half-man, half-bull. In the mind of Breytenbach it dominated the landscape of the place of incarceration. The Minotaur was out of its lair. It is the enigma at the heart of the modern age. For Camus, the Minotaur is a boredom that devours the vitality of the young. For Breytenbach it manifests itself rather as an image of incarceration. In modern times the roles have been reversed and the Minotaur is striking back. Because we have failed to transform

the animal inside our own labyrinth, the animal within is conquering us. Vengeance is unleashed. Breytenbach captures this process in the awesomeness of the Minotaur reflected in the frenzied contortions of the horseman, while three androgynous figures, having lost their senses, form the backdrop.

4.3.2. The poetics of memory-space (or the outcome of the labyrinth)

In analysing the effects of space on the artistic imagination, Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) (1996:10), uses two basic concepts, namely incarcerated space and the possibility of the poetics of that space. In this sense the space in the prison cell may be transformed into a metaphysical cell, where human atoms seek to become part of the vast interstellar space. Whereas the “habitable space”, which nourishes poetic creativity, the “hostile spaces” of hatred and bitterness stifle imagination by gradually destroying it and reducing it to nothingness. Being hostile and fixed in its very nature. The prison space offers extremely difficult conditions for the incarcerated imagination to unfold by itself. The prison-house is an aberration, because of its mechanistic structures. It is given meaning by the abstract body of doctrines, ideologies and memory systems that called it into being in the first place. Yet there are hostile implications of emptiness in a space which is, at the same time, “crowded with voices of the condemned singing their death songs, mingled with the interrogators’ voices whispering, ‘write’” (Breytenbach 1984d).

It was in his cell that Breytenbach first experienced the infinite possibilities of limited space. The presence of one person crowded the room. Two choked it. He found it extraordinary, even in the midst of his experience, to feel his feet swinging from the bed to the ground or to fill his lungs expanding and contracting with the air he breathes. He found it extraordinary that on some mornings, just after he had woken up, as he bent down to tie his shoe, he was flooded with happiness so intense, happiness so naturally and harmoniously at one with his

world, that he could feel himself alive in the present. He experienced the complexity of his environment as an aesthetic quality.

Then the void of Breytenbach's penal universe teems with life, with images large and small. The prisoner's concentration on natural minutiae is one of his strategies for coping with incarceration. The poetic miniature that haunts his hostile space is that of the ant. The prison house (or the anthill of the living) is not only inhabited by real ants, moths and other insects, but also by other (human) ants, who are anonymously carrying on their hopeless lives, while faced with their own deaths, both physical and spiritual. There is a strong will to invest the meaningless with meaning and to give meaning to suffering. Another significance may be attached to the concept of ordinariness. It possesses its own aesthetic implications. Here, the aesthetics of ugliness is transfigured, because, through a sense of heightened awareness within the enclosed space, Breytenbach rediscovers the complexity of the ordinary as an aesthetic category. In a state of disciplined meditation cultivated while in prison, Breytenbach could perceive unsuspected significance in things that, as a rule, no one gives any importance, but regard as part of the banality of everyday life. He learnt that, if the prisoner can "feed his soul" on the rediscovered complexity of his apparently denuded environment, he managed to survive. In making this "discovery", he succeeded in moving beyond suffering, and this became a springboard for new awareness. It became a coping mechanism in its own right. In the essay, *Painting and Writing for Africa* (1991), Breytenbach (1996a:63) comments on this with the words: "Creation is the making of death ... there is a difference between exploring the void and adding to the emptiness".

4.3.3. The Void.

Meditating on the number of years he had to spend in prison need not be a constant reminder

of slaughtered time only. It might have recalled the nine years that the first Zen patriarch had spent freely facing the wall of a cave. The number nine has magical connotations for Breytenbach. It denotes Buddhist infinity. It is also the number of years of Bodhidharma's iconoclastic encounter with the Chinese Emperor, Wy Wu, whose merits he denied when he held the First principle of Buddhism as vast emptiness. This is the true spiritual space, the Zen acceptance of the void, which rises to the diurnal breathing exercise.

The concept of the void, which embraces both the philosophies of the carnal and the spiritual, plays an important role in Zen Buddhism. It implies such notions as stillness and emptiness (*thahata* – suchness). A complex reading of the notion of *thahata* helps one to understand the prison space. It is the empty space as one in which the perception of prison as damnation is coupled with its very opposites. In the void, the *thahata* or such-ness of things are discovered. This state of flux leads to an experience of the world in which one move beyond dualities, past a need for permanence and structuring. In this state of being, the human becomes a mere knot or a connection. Through memory, he might project certain perceptions into the future. For a paraphrase of *thahata* one could look at a proposal by Dogen (1992:95).

Bodhidharma said: 'Each mind is like wood and stone'. Mind here spoken of is the such-ness of mind, it is the mind of the whole earth; therefore it is the mind of self and other. Each mind, of all people on earth, as well as the enlightened ones in all worlds, and the celestial and dragons and so on, is *wood and stone*. There is no other mind outside of this.

The meaning of this becomes apparent when Dogen calls such-ness a shared condition of all entities, of the self and others. This is the intrinsic nature of things to which Breytenbach (1984d:99) refers. In prison, the very notion of emptiness is sublimated. Emptiness becomes a very rich heritage from the sea, a habitable space full of possibilities, such as a "memory of sky" lying hidden in an empty inkwell. Death becomes harmless "just a continuation or a slight modified rhythm, a deeper space". The very notion of emptiness is thus sublimated in

which “the very rich heritage from the sea and death itself becomes harmless”(Breytenbach 1984d:300). This is the space of what one might call the spiritual realm, the Zen acceptance of the void. The prisoner Breytenbach is inhaling and exhaling the flow of emptiness during the daily yoga breathing exercise, thus taming emptiness itself. (1984d:297).

The void teems with sounds of life. There are sounds, images, birds, wind and the multiplication of nothingness. Breytenbach is familiar with the creative potential of “centripetal emptiness and its organic insecurities”. There is no solidity in this structure, not even a rearrangement or dismantlement. Thus true structure awakes and here no boundaries exist. Everything is in process as moments of thought and this process is the floating form of life. The absence of structure serves as an indication of inner freedom and the acceptance of the uncertainties of life as part of freedom. What one must be aware of is the radical otherness that this infers. It is an implication that places one on the track of the non-substantial (non-fixity), which is defined through a continual process of birth.

In the surrealist fictional piece, *Between the Legs*, Breytenbach (1990a:11) writes about the death of God. According to him the death is caused by thoughtless manhandling by humans and their lack of attention to him. In this regard Breytenbach writes: “... People didn’t look after him, to the extent that he might have been no more than an image in People’s mouths”. In this piece Breytenbach illustrates a certain image of presence. The story continues:

I ask People what he did with God’s corpse. We spirited it away into the earth so as to beef up the subsoil, he says. Does it make the plants grow, I ask? No, the ground in these parts has a weird white taste but there is a sweet-water fountain not far off. People is wont come here to be reminded that there’s something he ought to remember. Then he has a sip of water and promptly forgets himself in the clear liquid. I tell People not to worry, that there is no sense in thinking about what has been forgotten, that there may have been Nothing to remember in the

first place (which naturally sends the mind frantically fumbling for presence), and anyway that the subconscious is quite old enough to take care of itself. I also point out that water is the soul of the mirror.

That the people come to drink of the water to remember points to the fact that there might be nothing to remember and that the intellect grabs on to some form of presence in which we are interested. What this implies is that man, in the face of nothingness or the void, tries to grasp an image or a form that he can invoke to remember his own presence.

4.4. Space in the prison drawings, the drawings as war machines.

Remembering the Czech writer, Kundera (1980:3) we note that the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting. Memory can become a category of existence and an anarchical act to disable power. Breytenbach spent two years in solitary confinement, without suffering severe intellectual or emotional scars or experiencing spiritual disintegration. Thoroughly aware of the spiritual dangers confronting the self, he disciplined mind and soul. He embodied the pervasive fear that he was subject to. The essence of this was presented as drawings of memory, poems or confessions, which are not only narratives of persecution, interrogation and incarceration, but also a meta-fictional excursion into the internal exile of the artist. Much of the impact of Breytenbach's drawings lies in its graphic confirmation of the prisoner losing his identity.⁷¹

During the time of incarceration the pressure Breytenbach felt from within to paint or to create images, at least became almost overwhelming. He managed finally to create and smuggle out

71

The writer and artist Klossowski, is convinced that Foucault's goal was, like that of their mutual friend Gilles Deleuze, "the liquidation of the principle of identity". This implicates the de-centering of the Postmodern subject' (Macey 1993:xv).

to his wife, in Paris, about a dozen drawings, small, intimate drawings. They were counter-memories. These imaginative drawings (tools of the region of non-fixity) opposed the memory system of the stratified order. There were a few letters between Paris and Pretoria smuggled out and posted by the young warder, Groenewalt. Breytenbach wrote a moving letter to his wife:

Daar's hy Kleintjie,

Deur 'n indirekte roete het ek die moontlikheid — hoop ek — om 'n woordjie by jou te kry. As jy dit ontvang, sal ek graag daarvan wil weet. As jy in 'n volgende brief enige verwysing na die man van my tandarts (my kollega) kan inwerk, sal ek weet dat jy dit ontvang het. Maar moet niks verder sê nie.

Ek het ook die broer gevra om vir jou 'n paar krabbeltjies te laat kry — van hulle kan jy ook praat al sou dit gaan om dié van die man van my tandarts, dan sal ek weet hulle het veilig aangekom. Jy moet drie, of een uit vyf, neem vir jou versameling vir jou verjaarsdag. Ek soen jou baie sterk vir dié verjaarsdag, met die hoop dat ek self daar sal wees om dit te doen by die volgende een. Moenie dat hierdie tekeninge uitmekaar gaan nie. As ek uitkom sal ek graag, as hulle die moeite werd is, 'n boek daarvan wil maak. Jy mag natuurlik aan 'n paar mense wys, op voorwaarde dat daar nie gesê word waar hulle gemaak is nie. Jy mag ook, deur noukeurig daaruit te kies, die boekvertaling waarvan ek gepraat het, illustreer. As jy hulle verkoop, sal ons minstens 500 frank elk wil hê, en hulle behoort vir ons beskikbaar te bly vir reproduksies. Wys hul ten minste vir die vriend Mouffeteur (die Switserse teringlyer wat so swak skaak speel) en die vriend in die land van die koeie (Welz 1977:50).

His prison images were the products of solitude. Breytenbach's images work like memory. Images spill out of him at the speed of thought, each image coming from a different source. Sometimes a thousand images clamoured inside him at once. The din of the different images echoing through the maze of cells and corridors. These were portrayed in images of decapitation, copulation, mutilation and confinement. Others, almost as if in compensation, may be exercises in minute observation: a scuffed shoe, a folded blanket, a draped jacket, a

burnt note and an extinguished match. Somehow these modest images seemed more affecting than the more imaginary ones. Birds, too, were depicted, these being frequent self-tropes in his poetry. There were birds of passage. Birds of prey, lovebirds, birds unhindered in movement, birds in migration, caged birds, and jailbirds.

He set the dramatic situation, then selected the actors. He wrote the words *jouant aux quilles* (*life is not a game*) (M-6) at the top of the drawing paper. Breytenbach drew an old man, squatting, probably his grandfather, with the revolutionary three-finger sex. Wearing a bowler hat, the old man transports the viewer to the forbidden, which is the transgression of the identity of power. Repeatedly Breytenbach drew the three-finger sex, a repetition that manifests itself as memory. Standing next to the old man, is someone like a Boer general, displaying the vulnerability of his own sexuality.

In another drawing *Cadavre Equis. Memoirs Ce Pise/Campo Santo (Exquisite Cadaver. Memories of Pisa/Campo Santo)*(M-7), he depicts the darkness of bones and a woman with a swollen belly lying in a coffin (in Traini's fresco it is a man). Next to her, another coffin and a skeleton who, in the moments of decay are being metamorphosed into a bird. This drawing is based on the famous fresco, *The Triumph of Death*, by Francesco Traini (c1321-1363) at the Camposanto in Pisa. Elegantly costumed men and women on horseback have suddenly come upon three decaying corpses in open coffins and are shocked. In still another drawing Ettiene le Roux is sitting with crossed legs in a box (M-8).

Breytenbach is in conversation with the ancestors and draws Napoleon, (M-9) D.H. Lawrence at the billiard table, (M-10) and Charles de Gaulle (M-11). Daily he talks with his companion, the dog of pain. Breytenbach depicts himself holding onto his own decapitated head. Accompanying him are the hatted man, two dwarfs, a woman with bared breasts and the execution of a hooded prisoner. The drawing carries all the innuendoes of a complex drama.

(M-12). Nevertheless, it is on the subconscious level that the lessons he has assimilated from Goya surfaces, through his own *Los Caprichos*.

During 1984, Adriaan van Dis, the Dutch writer, had an interview with Breytenbach in Amsterdam in which Breytenbach said the following:

Als Yolande, mijn vrouw mij in de gevangenis kwam opzoeken, trok zij altijd bonte kleren aan. Rode, groene en gele bloempatronen, criante shawls and flonkerende kettingen. Zij wist dat haar kleurrijk bezoek een lavenis voor mijn ook zou zijn. Woorden door een spreekvervormende buis waren dan even overbodig. Het werd een stil opslurpen van kleuren achter glas. Een half uur extase van tinten.

'n Selwoner ken twee maniere van droom. Hallusinasie of kopvreet, 'n verskynsel wat die legionnaires in Noord-Afrika ook geken het. *Le cafard* – 'n soort woestijn gekheid. Dit oorval mens tussen de grens van wakker word en slaap. Kleur het dikwels deur hierdie drome gebreek. Ik zag eruit als een pasgeboren kameleon, die dieren zijn doorsigtig bij hun geboorte (Van Dis & Breytenbach 1984:22).

(When my wife, Yolande came to visit me in prison she always wore colourful clothes. Red, green and yellow flowery patterns, silk shawls and bright chains. She knew that her colourful visit would be refreshing. Words through a speaking-tube would then be unnecessary. It became lapping up of colours behind glass. One half hour of ecstatic tints.

A cell inhabitant knows two ways of dreaming. Hallucination or mind-gorging as the *légionnaires* in North-Africa knew it. *Le cafard* – a sort of desert madness. It overtakes you on the border between being awake and falling asleep. Colour often broke through.

The place of incarceration is deeply connected to graphic depictions. There might even be the wish to leave a mark of his individuality of the walls of his cell. The *memoir* or prison

drawing might also be part of this wish. In prison they did not allow Breytenbach to paint. The prison authorities did not allow Breytenbach to see colours and he fled into a nightmare world of monochrome greys and browns. *Caca d'Oi* (goose-shit)[sic] is the French word for the overriding colour of the incarcerated. His wish to make images became overwhelming. In his despair to remember an image, he placed the imaginative image on the tip of his tongue. He depicted this act in the drawing of an insect man, double bodied and multi-legged, doing a gig in the mouth opening (**M-13**). In the nightmare universe of grey and brown and *caca d'oi* he imagined crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. He saw a whale washed-out on a beach. Breytenbach often transcended the small space of the cell by an imaginative trip on the back of a bird. Then again he returned to the realities of his surroundings and drew men lifting weights in the courtyard of the prison (**M-14**).

4.4.1. Space in the prison drawings.

In some prison drawings we find a space that is surrealistic, as if Breytenbach is remembering the lessons of de Chirico, who emptied objects themselves of their usual associations and set them in new and mysterious relations (Picon 1995:77). To empty the objects of his compositions of their natural emotional significance, de Chirico painted tailors' dummies as human beings, and used statues, plaster heads, rubber gloves and the like, depending entirely on juxta position and the formal qualities of his picture space to create the disturbing qualities, which belong to certain dream situations (Osborne 1979:237).

Breytenbach draws a landscape containing de Chirico's pillars and sets a billiard table in their midst, with three (possible) convicts standing around it. One is balancing a cockroach (reminding us of the "Metamorphosis" of Kafka) on the palm of his hand, the other standing by. The third is playing the game with a *sambok* and focus on shooting a dead cockroach. Another cockroach is scurrying away to the corner of the table (**M-15**). As an indication of

the deprivation of their surroundings, the convicts are drawn with closed eyes.

In the prison drawings, Breytenbach continually works with the closing of the orifices, thereby inferring the loss of the senses. *Espèce de (the species)*(M-16) is an example of such work. Other works like, *ek was ook hier vir niks (I was also here for nothing)* (M-17), depicts erotic encounters. The most disturbing commentary on space is probably to be found in the drawing *der Beobacher (The viewer)* (M-18), where the place of incarceration is contained in a square box covered by a dome with insects crawling all over it. The numbers of the cells have been put on the sides of the square and the man with the soft tailored hat is, as always, present. A small dog of “pain” is entering the space and moving in the direction of the man, while another is lurking around the corner.

These are the subliminal lessons of alienation and the impersonal that Breytenbach transposes from de Chirico into his own paintings and drawings, leaving his viewers with the uneasy sense of not being able to explain what they are seeing. With his paradoxical approach to life, Breytenbach is able to take both the transgression of Dada,⁷² and the metaphysical approach to space found in de Chirico, the work of the true precursor of Surrealism, and transform an own sense of space into his work. De Chirico’s influence is diametrically opposed to that of Dada. There is nothing here of the aggressiveness of anti-art, nothing of the unbounded demands of Marchel Duchamp (1887-1968). As a tribute to de Chirico’s technical innovations, his degree of intelligence and his dreamworld, Breytenbach transforms his cell into a metaphysical place and thus imagines a way of not becoming part of the vast interstellar space. Breytenbach conjures up a dream style of his own.

Breytenbach is in conversation with the spectrum of Surrealism, not only with de Chirico but also with Magritte. Magritte refuses to follow the path of automatism, advocated by Breton

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Dadaism is an European artistic and literary movement (1916-1923) flouting conventional aesthetic and cultural values by producing works marked by nonsensical and incongruous features.

among other of the Surrealists, which was designed to librate imagery from the unconscious by the suppression of rational control. This point of departure of the Surrealist is yet another argument against fixity. Over the years Breytenbach has meticulously chosen to associate with movements that oppose fixity.

4.4.2. The war machine:

The philosophical map of Deleuze and Guattari give us a conceptual point of departure regarding the prison drawings as war machines. The war machine seems irreducible to the State apparatus, to be outside its sovereignty and before its law. It comes from elsewhere. The State can only have a war machine of its own through the erection of a military power, which can stand in stressful relationship with the State. Could it be that it is at the moment the war machine ceases to exist, conquered by the State, that it displays to the utmost its irreducibility, that it scatters into thinking, loving, dying, or creating machines, which have at their disposal vital or revolutionary powers capable of challenging the conquering State?

Breytenbach's disruptive prison drawings are concerned with exposing the energy dispersed by the State. The war-machine-prison-drawings are a manifestation of mutant co-ordinates in society. Co-ordinates are the strata of society, which cannot be bound into the memory system of the State.

In an attempt to control these "machines of desire", intensified attempts by the State to induce ordering and stratification are introduced. The aim is the ultimate creation of a perfectly administered memory system to serve the order. Countering this, Breytenbach's prison drawings infer disruption. This applies not only for the viewer, who as servant of the state carries the seeds of fascism and judgementalism in his mind, but also for the State itself. It

must be remembered that they did not allow Breytenbach to draw or paint in prison. He was, however, allowed to write.

Scenes of decapitation, maiming, incarceration and coupling, a tattered shoe (M-19), a folded blanket (M-20), a draped jacket (M-21), a burnt note (M-22) and a composition of an empty packet of *Gauloises* cigarettes (M-23), an apple (M-24) or an orange (M-25), and a used match (M-26) provide a network of bindings, and unbindings from which an extended view of society comes forth. All these carry within themselves that which undermines the fixed memories of a given society. In his cell Breytenbach draws a dog (M-27). Breytenbach has his own association and system for drawing the dog. It does not carry the conventional meaning of loyalty and vigilance. For him dogs are synonymous with pain.

As in the case of Goya, who created his *Los Caprichos*, Breytenbach makes his own series of prison drawings in which political injustices of nightmare quality overshadow the satirical content. Goya's drawings show us how prostitutes and fools, pimps and nincompoops, burglars and numskulls interact with each other, with malevolent birds and animals as spectators. Breytenbach's depictions are scenes of decapitation, copulation, death and a woman prostrate on a pig and, as always, the bowler hat. The drama goes to the *denouement*. Breytenbach's own "*Los Caprichos*" are part of a process of deterritorialization, is a process of looking back in the direction of a complex process of becoming. The hellish space of the cell is transformed into a metaphysical space where he practises his observance lest he become part of vast interstellar space. The movement from desire to disruption to the next idea-image, this is the tactic Breytenbach uses constantly and his viewer is propelled by means of a mechanism of unsettlement in which views and perceptions are shaken. The act of drawing is the unfurling of an unknown landscape that closes immediately behind the viewer. Through the process of repetitions, the prison drawings become a journey to an unknown landscape; a metamorphosis of consciousness.

4.5. In memory of the ancestor:

During 1994, Breytenbach (1996a:162) gave a lecture in Rotterdam. He said:

If you listen carefully you will hear, even in the movement of my hand, quotes and snippets of sighs and cries from the ancestors as from contemporaries.

The process of territorial demarcation was not unique to countries like China. All states participate in this process. In the case of Breytenbach, the Apartheid state, the institutionalized memory system of the Afrikaner, had taken on appalling proportions. In Goya's Spain, with the support of the absolute monarchy, the Roman Catholic Church, seriously shaken in every part of Europe, owing to the religious reforms (Lutheran, Calvinist), consolidated its power. Its gates locked against Protestantism or any other forms of spiritual worship, Spain, for a long period, became the stronghold of the most ferocious Jesuitism. It represented a kingdom of intolerance, oppression and superstition, in which, under the sinister threat of the Inquisition, one of the most bloody dramas of people played itself out. Many intellectuals were called before the Tribunal of the Inquisition, their heads covered by the caps worn by those burnt at the stake. Holding green candles in their hands, which were considered symbols of hope, they put them to death for the offence of having read the books of the Encyclopaedist. Spain felt the need of a Dante Alighieri(1265-1321), as Italy had once done, of a Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536) of Rotterdam, as the Netherlands, had once done. Spain ultimately required a Voltaire (1694-1778),⁷³ a Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78)⁷⁴, to help rid itself of the Witches' Sabbath that had dragged it back to the Middle Ages. However, as it had done none of these, as a Cervantes, the one-armed man from Lepanto, who had created the sad story of "The Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance" had come too early, Spain created

73

Voltaire was a French philosopher and writer.

74

Rousseau was a Swiss-born French philosopher, essayist, novelist and musician best known for his theories on social freedom and societal rights, education and religion.

Francisco José Goya y Lucientes. Goya, the great revolutionary of painting and an ancestor of the main trends in modern art, whose soul broke loose, after he became deaf (Florea 1975:16). By 1792, the illness that Goya suffered from had reached a turning point. In some of his self-portraits there is a look of Beethoven. However, deafness played a part in his life, which makes it comparable to that of Jonathan Swift (1667-1745). Goya too, turned to satire, and satire led him to a vein of fantasy altogether deeper and more terrible than any satirical reference ever recorded. His head was filled with deep abysses, peopled with dim noises and fearful fantasies. Deaf, and with his mind haunted by hellish visions, it was only now that Goya discovered the real face of Spain. He was living in *Quinta del Sordo* (*The House of The Deaf*).

In Goya's terrible isolation, a nightmarish universe began to take shape, peopled by phantasmagoric creatures, monsters, witches, a universe in which man was the victim. The body of works that resulted consists of eighty plates, each a combination of etching and aquatint. In them are traces of Bosch, Bruegel even Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), and certainly Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-78). Right through the Middle Ages minds were haunted by fantastic imaginings and very often art and literature reflected such frames of mind. The chimeras in the Gothic cathedrals, the processions of monster and hellish creatures in the universe rendered by Bosch, the grotesqueness and obtrusiveness of Bruegel's engravings, the bizarre oddity of certain engravings such as *Melancholy* by Dürer, the scenes of the Northern Walpurgis Night by Hans Baldung Grien (1484/5-1545). All are evidence of a hyperbolic interpretation of reality and of an emphasis on the absurd side of life in which the fantastic plays a part. The fantastic is that which opposes the dogma that is fixed.

Breytenbach was introduced to the work of Goya and Bosch in The Prado in Madrid on a first visit to Spain after he left South Africa as a young man. By 1967 Breytenbach had written *Die Huis van die Dowe*. Even in the late sixties, by using gross metaphors and images, he realized that resistance in the form of poetry could be regarded as an obscene intellectual challenge.

For Goya and Breytenbach himself, the whole of experience, right down to the lowest and most private level of all, became equally pressing and equalling the subject of art. From the start of his artistic development, Breytenbach chose to nurture his imagination with lessons from both these painters, to which he added his experience the French intellectual world. He took up his stance with fellow painters like Reiner Lucassen, Pieter Holstein, Roger Raveel, Ettiene Elias and Spike Huismans against abstraction and he moved into the grotesque world of New Realism (Galerie Espace 1996:29). Fired with revolutionary ideals, he steeped his mind in Marxism. The concepts of decay and the birth of life arising from decomposition, resulted from this involvement. He also began an intense dialogue with Bacon, becoming involved in the whole series of spasms. These are the aspect of love, vomiting and excrement. The body always tries to escape through one of its organs to rejoin the flat surface, the material structure and the cry. Breytenbach held dialogue with the Existentialists, like Sartre, in their involvement with the Algerian question and the birth of Black Consciousness, under the influence of Fanon. He practiced Zen Buddhism, forming from it certain aesthetic concepts that emerged in his revolutionary political thinking and in his *Ars poetica*. And he becomes the artist who is constantly involved with movements of images through landscapes erected by consciousness.

4.6. (Zen) memory-mirror and its reflection of life and death during incarceration:

These two are intimately linked, the mirror and memory and both can operate simultaneously (Breytenbach 1986:14).

In a lecture, *A Reading of Place*, delivered in Paris during 1994, Breytenbach (1996a:161) said:

Arrested during a clandestine visit to paradise and sentenced for ‘terrorism’, I entered South Africa’s prison world as if traversing a mirror. This as the true heart of the country, the belly of the beast, a parallel universe complete with its own colours, smells, sights and sighs, myths, stories, dreams, relationships. The

language was both hackneyed and in constant metamorphosis. Death House, the Abattoir – all these walled cities of incarceration became blurred and concentrated in my mind as *The Place*. *The Place* also grew on the page. Not as if there were any such things as exorcism. Prison is the crucible of unmaking. *The Place* taught me the cold and splendid lesson that survival comes at the price of feeding small morsels of oneself to death.

In the T'ang dynasty, at the close of the seventh century by Western reckoning, Fa Tsang was invited to the palace of Empress Wu to expound the doctrines of Hiva Yen Buddhism. This he did through a demonstration involving a room, whose floor, ceiling and walls were completely lined with mirrors, in the centre of which he places a statue of Buddha. In each mirror an image of Buddha was projected together with the images in every other mirror. Holding a small crystal ball in his hand, Fa Tsang illustrated how all the mirrors and their images were thrown back, each in turn being reflected in each of the mirrors, ad infinitum. Not only was he attempting to illustrate the reciprocal inter-fusion of all things, but he wished to evoke a sense of the dependent co-origination of each object in turn.

This mutual-arising⁷⁵ provides a further ground for disregarding the isolation of causes, a view expressed in the art, literature and philosophy of Breytenbach “everything may be transformed into anything else, since nothing is, in reality, anything. Language is history which looks at herself in the mirror” (Breytenbach 1995:335). That which alights on the surface of the memory-mirror gives the space for the “knotting” of an image, a thought or a becoming which is gathered in that brief second. The knotting is an endless network, where succession of metamorphoses and concepts are in constant communication with each other. The memory-mirror is a radical space of sensation, which encloses a space of energetic relations between things, indicating that a chair, table, roof, mountain, cloud, as well as oneself, are elements of an own spirit. In this way, things serve as mirrors imaging and reflecting one another. The

75

A “trans-actional” view of the world according to which our consciousness “produces” the universe which, in turn, brings about our consciousness.

central question opened up by this line of thought is the problemization of reality. The mirror must be thought of as part of a constantly changing landscape. Images, intensities of awareness and political activities should be seen as changing and metamorphosing deeds, caught in the multiplicity of reality. This free-flowing process implies that any hope of a stasis will be destroyed.

In contrast to the stratified order that stultifies memory into a system of remembering, Breytenbach experiences memory as imagination. Memory as imagination is a recapturing of events that requires reinterpretation. What is important here is to note the radical difference being suggested. It is a proposal which places the human being and the things that surround him on the plain of non-substantiality, like that which floats. In other words that which alights on the surface of the memory-mirror is subject to a constant process of birth (de Kock 1999:106).

During incarceration, daily, at a fixed time, Breytenbach would go on his knees to start his Sisyphean task. This entailed the making of his floor into a mirror, which could capture and return his face and which would immediately be walked over and sunk back into greyness. He invented an *alter ego*, Don Espejuelo, literally meaning, “the little lark of the mirror”, who became his closest companion in the cell. In a disparate attempt of memorization, he drew a mirror and placed a depiction of the decapitated head of Yolande on the dressing table. It is difficult to remember the beloved during the time of incarceration. The bowler-hatted man is reflected in the mirror. Another faceless one peers through the bars at the intimate scene in the cell, where the nude Breytenbach is bending down to fasten a shoe (M-28).

The prisoners in the cells at the main entrance of Section C exercised daily for a few hours in the walled-in exercise yard in the form of a small courtyard without lawn or flowers. More or less ten yards further down the passage was the gallows room. Breytenbach’s cell was next

to this place of execution. The place of execution or of the rope songs, lies more or less ten yards further on. Every time Breytenbach went out to exercise in the courtyard, he took his memories with him and, in his absence, his cell emptied. On returning, he had to reinitiate the process from the beginning. It required true spiritual discipline to stabilize his equilibrium. In that moment the door opened, in that moment that he had to regain control over the void, his spirit fluttered around in wordless panic. On entering the cell he stepped into another dimension. It was as if he was taking an endless journey into the labyrinth, to the very heart of the dark labyrinth, where the condemned, all through the night until sunrise, when they are led to the gallows, sing the “rope songs”.

In an interview with the Dutch newspaper, *NRC Handelsblad*, Breytenbach remarked to the interviewer, Herman de Conick (1983:44) that one execution took place once a week. There were always seven days between the executions. December and January are quiet times, but the rest of the year saw about two hundred executions, up to seven persons being hanged at one time. Seven days before an execution the condemned start singing the “rope songs”, endlessly, day and night.

It is significant that the restless chant of the condemned prisoners moved Breytenbach to compassion, but also to intensely self-reflective speculation on what it might be like to be hanged. Together with this, a feeling of guilt at participating, if only by listening to the slam of the trapdoor, in the execution. He was so disturbed that he pleaded to be distanced from the chanting – “my nights are populated and punctuated by the terrible outpourings in songs of the so-called ‘condemned’ or ‘ropes’. I wrote one day a desperate plea ... going in my words on my knees, asking to be removed elsewhere because I couldn’t stand this stench of death” (Breytenbach 1984:46).

Like a mandala or a nimbus, the rhythmic repetition of decay would form patterns, which

would hover over his head. And the decayed began walking again. They became more human than phantoms and they began sweating in their very humanness. Like one of the dying, the sweat streamed from Breytenbach's skin as he slept. He woke dripping and his dreams were filled with sickly repetitions, which placed themselves in front of his narrow bed. He remembered and drew the image of the kneeling, imploring Bruegel (**M-29**), receiving arrows in his back. While the rope songs are being sung: *We are the wind and we are the birds and the singing of weighted ropes*, there was a constant dripping of images of delusion into his memory. To listen to these songs is to recognize the patterns and repetitions and, through the patterns, repetitions and clustering of themes, the images appear on the horizon. It is in the absence of God, in this house of aberration, in a moment of wordless fear, that the inmate started drawing.

And when the outlines of the phantom world inhabiting Breytenbach's apocalyptic cell began again, in the same order, to the same rhythm, their breathless steps appear on the horizon. He drew a grotesque image of a figure; he sorted through the lines as a bird does seeds in its gizzard. Every line must be perfect and he formed the image with his saliva, finally, spitting from his mouth Shiva/ Shava, wearing a rosary of skulls around her neck, indicating a release from the worldly. In her one hand she is holding a decapitated head and in the other a sword. The howling dog of pain lifts its head and howls at the skull, serving as a bird perch. Shiva is preparing to dance the dance of life and death on the two corpses depicted in the drawing of his beloved lying in a bed of tree branches (**M-30**).

"The Place taught me the cold and splendid lesson that survival comes at the price of feeding small morsels of oneself to death," Breytenbach wrote. Life and death are recurrent motifs in Breytenbach's writing. It is a notion which constantly alights itself on the memory-mirror of his mind. One of the images he uses in his drawings to address death is the dance of Shiva (**M-31**) In *The Double Dying of an Ordinary Criminal*, Breytenbach (1984e:24-26) writes about the sea kaffirs [sic]:

Here and there among the rippling and sharply whispering sugarcane they erected rudimentary single-roomed temples for their gods, the inner walls decorated with bright representations: often the swarthy mother god, Kali, she who also at times assumes the aspects of Parvati or Sarasvati on the winged throne of a swan, or that of Shakti – the bird, companion and *alter ego* of Shiva the destroyer.

Shiva's "be not afraid" gesture could be interpreted as pointing out that the apparition, the world as experienced through the senses, is another form of Maya, one of the "million masks" of God. Why should incarceration as one of the "million masks" of this deceptive existence be feared? Spiritual observance and highly creative acts could transform the death-in-life experience to life-in-death (Buscop 1993; Zimmer 1946 and Douglas & Slinger 1989:374). Breytenbach invokes Sarasvati, the goddess of wisdom in 1984 with the following words:

I invoke thee, I concentrate on thee, I salute thee,
Come onto my tongue and never leave me again
may my intellectual faculties never go astray
may my errors not weigh unduly on my becoming
Give that I be freed from the vicissitudes of life
In time of peril, may my spirit not go mad
may my intelligence function without obstacles.

In remembrance of "Kali dancing on Shiva/Shava," he draws Shiva/Shava. The words at the top of the drawing read: "*par ses mouvements Durga (Kali) redonne la vie au cadavre de Shiva/Shava – d'après une peinture tantrique du dixhuitième siècle, de Kangra*". Freely translated, this would mean: "through her movements Durga (Kali) restores life to the corps of Shiva/Shava." According to a Tantric drawing of Kangra dating back to the eighteenth century, "Shiva/Shava" is the juxtaposition of the opposing figures, Shiva and Sarasvati. "Shava" means "death" or "corpse"; and "Shiva" ruler over "death" and "life".

4.6.1. The Dance:

The dance implies that there is nothing static, nothing abiding, but only the flow of a relentless process, with everything originating, growing, decaying and vanishing. This wholly dynamic view of life of the individual and of the universe is one of the fundamental conceptions of Hinduism.

Death is neither static nor limited. It is a movement against fixity. Death is a process. The mutual parts and hollows of the body serving as the holder or point of reference for life, these start fermenting, disintegrating into richer possibilities. The possibilities become boundless, resolving into limitless degeneration. Death, which is concealed, should not be confused with life and slides away. It is set free; if we could anthropomorphize it as a bird, for instance, then we might say that it could now stretch its wings and glide off, where and how it wished. In the place of incarceration we find the folds of life and death are interwoven. This coherence is a sign of the seamlessness, in which the smooth and treacherous shifting from life to death are concealed. Breytenbach a thinker, writer and painter of movement, is at home in this treacherous state of flux.

4.7. Fragments of identity:

“Breytenbach’s determination to refuse a specific identity reveals just how dependent regimes are on fixed identities, on reliable, identifiable (and manageable) civil subjects. Breytenbach survives, or, in his terms ‘un survives’ his experience of imprisonment and interrogation, both by paradoxically accepting his captive’s insistence upon his stable identity during the experience and by radically refusing such an identity in his subsequent written accounts. In South Africa, the entire political and legal system, aided and abetted by the police and prison authorities, was engaged in playing the ‘reality game’ of constituting a just and democratic society, where everyone abides by the rule of law and where individuals with intact identities

can lead fulfilled lives, though this was blatantly not so” (Rechwitz 1988:205-213). This conventional idea of identity is based on the existence of a structure, which remains more or less the same throughout life. This teleological structure of the self and life is generally shattered by the prison experience and is thus proven not to be illusory.

To emphasize the utter destruction of his own selfhood from the very moment he was put in prison and had his personal belongings taken away from him, one simple phrase from Breytenbach was enough: “I was dead” (Breytenbach 1984d:13). Throughout *Confessions*, prison is referred to as “a place of death” and it never allows the reader to forget that the purpose of detaining and grilling and convicting people and then holding them, is to disorientate them, to destroy their sense of self. The solutions lay, to all intents and purposes, in the fact that in prison he, the narrator, gained a new insight into the nature of identity, of life, and of structures in general. What constitutes life for Breytenbach at that level, is both a deeper and humbler: rhythms, routines, elements of this understanding and experience of himself and the environment; moments of life which make one weaker but, as always, within the weakness the strength lies.

Having always played a game of shifting identities, which deterritorialize the fixed structures of society, the “terrorist” becomes intensely aware of the multitude of personae lying hidden in his identity. In his schizoid role as “an albino in a white country,” an instance that reveals himself lies in the following passage: When a warden asked him who he in actual fact was, Breytenbach pretended not to be quite sure. A metaphysical question admittedly, but he took the risk of saying “yes” to one of the identities. The irony is explicitly directed at the warden’s unquestioning and complacent belief in labeling. There is, however, also an implicit mockery on Breytenbach’s part of his own programmatic internal questioning of the “skin-encapsulated self,” as if it were a real problem for the Zen Buddhist who knows that the ego is but an illusion.

Breytenbach became an expert at surviving in prison. He bartered a ration of tobacco in exchange for fresh fruit, pinches pen and paper from the accountant's office, and thus managed to write in order to keep his mind occupied, learnt to steer clear of quarrels between prisoners and to read the signs when to expect a shakedown by the authorities.

Playing with his own identity could also take on more exteriorized forms. That became evident from his listing of all the other names he seemed to consider appropriate for defining the various circumstance he found himself in. Also that which called forth the different frames of mind he had experienced. Thus Breytenbach may refer to his own person as Dick, Antoine, Heryé, all of which represents various political aliases adopted by him in other contexts. Jean-Marc Galaska is the name under which he returned to South Africa in 1975; it is under this name that he finally got caught. Upon removal to prison he became Mr. Bird, the representative of all jailbirds. While in prison, he came to be known by various other names, such as Bangai Bird, the Professor, Professor Bird, these latter names being the forms according to which his less educated inmates addressed him. After his hair had been cut and his head shaven by the prison barber, so that he came to resemble a billiard ball, he called himself Billiard Ball. There was also a Jan Blom, an earlier poet-mask of his, as well as Don Espejeulo, "the knight of the mirror," who was responsibly for the metaphysical meditations of the prison book. All these personae had their common denominator in the trickster, whose taste for nominal transformations seems to point to the conclusion that there is no one person that can be named and in the process of naming be fixed for all eternity (Breytenbach 1984d:28).

In trying to escape labeling, Breytenbach actually fights for the freedom to be a heretic. And, in using these terms, he in fact issues a challenge to those conformists whom, complacent in their unquestioning acceptance of the prevailing outlook, would view such ascriptions as simply derogatory.

4.8. Memories of Yolande

Breytenbach, in the paper, *The Invisible Guest*, presented in Rotterdam during 1996(1996a:162), says:

Every poem is the memory of all poetry. Similarly, a site of creation (of transmission and transgression) is also always one of remembering.

Memory as a notion becomes utopian as it has to lead us from violence to better places, even a site as disparate as imagination. The creative act of memory is important. For the artists it is the way of survival. Writing poetry and remembering past events also became a way of survival for Breytenbach during the period of incarceration. In the collection of prison poetry, *Lewendood* (1985:21), in the poem, *Bubi/jy is die tussenganger*, he remembers Yolande and carries her in his throat during the night. When he forgets the beloved, he sketches a gruesome image of his Milady, as one with half-a-breast full of pox scars. For eight months she dies in his dreams. There are rumours that she is training to receive the rope of the gallows. For this event she will wear a waterproof panty and the seam of her dress will be caught at her knees as to catch the vulva, the womb and the ovaries. He hears the hammer on the coffin lid. It resembled the wing-beat of an owl, caught in light. In ('YK')(1984c:121) in *Ryliedjie van 'n bruidegom*, Breytenbach's memories of his wife become an imaginative poem, where he will know her by the *kohl* around her eyes, the carmine on her cheeks. He addresses her as his little desert buck, asking her to be a prop for his tent. He remembers being intimate with her and imagines stripping her wedding clothes revealing her sweet tattoos, then riding astride through the cleft toward heaven. During more clear moments he recalls a journey through Italy.

hey there

you with your smile in my ear

I should take you again, my nearly-French love,
all along the outlines of a Sung-period poem
along the misty slopes above Chamonix's ski-huts and abbeys
through the eleven-and-a-half kilometre long
tunnel beneath Mont Blanc
and out in a cascade of sunlight
on the crown of the world above the Val d'Aoste

and down the mountain zigzagging down the mountain
as far as the greened nearly eastern shades of Turin
for a hollow plate of anti paste and a carafe of wine
and then further with the Autostrade del Sol
with the sun a spot for the arrows in the rice fields
the cemeteries shining from the framed heroes
as far as old ox blood and ocher Bologna
build around the spider-hive of pillars
and the shadow-splattered gardens
to overnight with Bill and Patti and to celebrate the night
where a speckled antelope guard the green courtyard

further over smoke red Firenze and the spiraling hills of Sienna
as far as Rome of the ruins and the palms of dust
to drown in a cup of coffee
with a blood-red mouth
wonderful small and black like a wound
on the Piazza Santa Maria in Tratevere beneath
the bell tower next to the water-moon fountain

tell me, cara,

will we again call out *Thalassa* tomorrow and
will I again see your black eyes tomorrow
where the mirror nostrum message
see me laughing
on a free beach other side Ostia?

Breytenbach chose the name “Lotus” for his dusky-skinned Vietnamese wife, Ngo Thi Hoang Lien (Yolande), when he was writing a volume of poetry as “Lotus”. Their complex relationship reminds one of intimate relationships between other artists and lovers or of similar situations in which one’s love partner became an art object in the other’s artistic oeuvre. Kahlo and Diego Rivera (1886-1957) are one such example.

Artistically, Breytenbach has been continually engaged in dialogue with Kahlo. He refers to her in many essays, writings and paintings. Frida’s husband, Rivera, was world-famous in his lifetime. Largely thanks to feminism and multiculturalism, Kahlo has recently become a cult figure. They encouraged legendary status, Kahlo by playing the role of a heroic sufferer and by playing beauty to Rivera’s beast – Diego Rivera (1886-1957) by his mania for publicity and his talent as a teller of fabulous tales. He loved to talk while he painted, to entertain groups of admirers with tall stories. He tells about the time he fought in the Russian Revolution alongside Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov Lenin (1870-1924). Or in another instance he ate female flesh wrapped in a tortilla – “It is like the tenderest young pig”, he said (Herrera 1996:119-135). The writer, Carlos Fuentes(1928-) wrote an intimate self-portrait of her (as introduction to her dairy that they published). He saw Kahlo for the first time when he was attending a concert in the Palacio de Bellas Artes, the Palace of Fine Art in the centre of Mexico City:

As Kahlo entered her box in the second tier of the theatre, the jangling of her jewellery drowned to the sounds of the orchestra. But something beyond mere noise forced them all to look upwards and discover the apparition that announced herself with an incredible throb of metallic rhythms. It was the entrance of an Aztec

goddess, perhaps Coatlicue, the mother deity wrapped in her skirt of serpents, exhibiting her own lacerated, bloody hands the way other woman sport a brooch. Frida Kahlo was more like a broken Cleopatra, hiding her tortured body, her shrivelled leg, her broken foot, her orthopaedic corsets, under the spectacular finery of the peasant women of Mexico, who for centuries jealously kept the ancient jewels hidden away, protected from poverty, to be displayed only at the great fiestas of the agrarian communities. The laces, the ribbons, the skirts, the rustling petticoats, the braids, the moonlike headrests opening up her face like the wings of a dark butterfly: Frida Kahlo, showing them all that suffering could not wither, nor sickness stale, her infinite variety (Fuentes 1995:7-24).

In March of 2000, during the *Karoo National Arts Festival*, Breytenbach's collection of love poetry, dedicated to his "First Lady", was introduced to the public. The hall, housing an exhibition of Naspers Publications, was packed, when Breytenbach and Lotus entered. She plaited her hair in a single long plait and she wore a red Chinese embroidered dress, tightfitting and above the knee. Echoes of the brutal Vietnamese War, G.I.'s hanging around in smoky bars with women on their arms, became for that moment part of the Klein Karoo town of Oudtshoorn. Breytenbach, wearing an elaborate shirt, was about to read poems from the new collection and had brought a French-speaking friend to translate some Afrikaans love poems.

Breytenbach and his wife, Lotus, had become icons in South Africa. The tenderness of his love poems (an admission of vulnerability) is paradoxical when contrasted with the "war machine" of radical metaphors and images that he constantly uses to bombard the stratified order and all other forms of power mechanisms. Yolande plays an important role in the administration of Breytenbach's busy schedule. She also documents their lives and interaction with other people photographically and, in times when he is absent, devotes her time to writing a book on African beadwork. Although Breytenbach has chosen to write openly about their lives, they are intensely private. They share a love for their homes. Breytenbach, whose whole (private and public) life is artwork, in the essay, *The Lines have Fallen Unto Me In Beautiful*

Places, writes about the houses in the following way.

There are small shards of paradise left in this shattered world – this house is one, so is Gorée Island, and Timbuktu with its mouth full of sand, there’s a *finca* in Spain called Can Ocells and the village of Poble Nou in the Ebro delta with palm trees set humming by mosquitoes, there’s an oasis in some russet mountains with a walled-in garden called Wildedruif, there’s a town on the brown Mekon there’s a tower in Paris from where you can observe the hurrying clouds (Breytenbach 1996a:110).

In Paris, in 1962, Breytenbach met and married “Lotus” (as he came to refer to her in most of his writings), the nineteen-year-old daughter of a Vietnamese widow, who had brought her entire family to that city soon after the Second World War, so that they could benefit from a classic French education. Four then, and like Breytenbach, the middle child in a swarm of siblings, her family was among the first Vietnamese to live in the capital. When she and Breytenbach met, she was still living at home. On the streets of Paris and in the classrooms of Sorbonne, her life was entirely French and cosmopolitan, while at home it was entirely Vietnamese and traditional.

The couple moved into a tiny two-roomed flat, Room no. 5 in the Rue du Sommerard, in the Fifth District of Paris. Sometimes, during the evening, Breytenbach would play pinball in *Malebranche*. He was also the owner of a red Citroen (Brink 1971:5). Here, in Paris, he experienced the city as a menacing place. In this space of place his crises or questioning concerning identity was instigated. Paris was the place he lived with illegally because his papers were not in order. He had a temporary visa he continually had to renew. He used to join the Queue at six in the morning and waiting for the prefecture. He dogged the police during the Algerian War. It was a dangerous place and one where power games were played out. Breytenbach feels that one has to think formalistic or even conceptual to survive in Paris.

Throughout Breytenbach's life, Yolande has been the subject of many love poems, although she does not read Afrikaans. During the years of exile, she was his country, his family and his language. Later, during his incarceration, a time when she lost her hearing because of extreme stress, it was she who became the one who would become the prime mover behind his release. He writes that her efforts for him throughout his incarceration were tireless. In Paris, she ran a small boutique near the Beaubourg, specialising in antique clothing. Twice a year, she closed her little operation and flew to South Africa, staying with Breytenbach's parents or with Ampie Coetzee or with other friends, visiting her husband in prison, and endlessly lobbying journalists, cultural figures and government officials. "She even got in to talk to some top cabinet people", Breytenbach said, "the police and justice ministers, big tough men towering over her, despising her for being coloured and, since she was Vietnamese, obviously a Communist, and my wife to boot – where she found the bloody guts to do it, "I will never know". This is among other things, a love story. During the last years of her crusade on her husband's behalf, Yolande obtained a powerful ally in Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert, who had shared the platform with him in 1973 at the Cape Town *Sestigers* conference. Slabbert who had shortly after that entered politics, and had quickly risen to become the head of the otherwise "English"-dominated Progressive Party's parliamentary caucus, which was the regime's principle legitimate anti-Apartheid opposition. As such, he regularly locked horns, sometimes ferociously, with the new Prime Minister, Pieter Willem Botha (1916-). Slabbert and the prime minister had barely exchanged a civil word in weeks, though they were required to sit next to each other every day in the parliament, when suddenly, one evening, in the midst of a particularly florid debate, Botha leaned over across the aisle and whispered to him, "Afrikaans is a beautiful language, is it not?" Slabbert replied that it certainly was, and then a few days later took advantage of this momentary outbreak of peace between them to raise the question of Breytenbach's status.

Things began to move thanks to a fresh offensive by the sympathetic local press, in part thanks to the ascension to power of François Mitterrand's new government with all its cultural pretensions and so a renewed interest in the fate of the martyred poet and quasi-citizen of

France. Breytenbach's legal team thought that they might be getting ready to revisit the whole question of the regime's apparent double-dealing at the time of his initial sentencing. This was early December 1982. Yolande was in the country, with a few days left on her current visa. When release, again, was beginning to look unlikely after all, Breytenbach took to consoling himself that he would be getting his Christmas cake in a few weeks' time. In his interview to Weschler, Breytenbach remarked:

Every year they allowed us to order five hundred grams of cake for Christmas,' he explained, ' but we had to put our order in early, sometimes late October. And that year, I had put in for a *forêt-noir* – fantastic, marvellous cake. And so then on the second of December, I got called in to the prison superintendent's office and was told very brusquely that I was now free, I was being released immediately. And my first thought – the very thing that flashed through my mind – was, "Damn it all to hell, there goes my cake!"

He was handed his various manuscripts – everything in immaculate order – and asked to sign for them. They handed him himself over to an Afrikaans - literature Professor, a regime man, who had been visiting him on occasion over the years to discuss his poetry, and who, they now informed him, would be serving as his protector over the next several days. The professor lent him the fifty Rand to pay off his outstanding fine. They asked him to avoid publicity. The regime would be announcing his release in a few days but had not yet figured out precisely how to do so, and want to keep things quiet until then. With that, they showed him to the gate. The minder drove him to the house of some friends, with whom Yolande was staying. Upon answering the man's knock, Yolande emerged from the house to find her husband standing by the car. Ever sensible, her first words were "What are *you* doing *here*?" As Breytenbach said, "That, of course, was a long story" (Weschler 1993: 78-91 & 1998:181-182).

4.9. *Ars poetic* -the carnival and the grotesque.

Under the regime of Stalin, Bakhtin, a highly gifted theoretical critic, voiced his concepts of the grotesque and the carnival; concepts filled with change, rebirth and with a sense of relativizing the authoritarian power of rulers. Both Breytenbach and Bakhtin use the carnivalesque interpretation as a strategy of survival or a means to implode the state memory system. One could make a comparison between physical incarceration and the very traumatic experience and spiritual incarceration by the suppressive ideology and fixity of Communism. Bakhtin survived the most appalling days of Stalin's rule, a time of total incarceration and political restriction, all of which caused him to draw an analogy with another time and place. It was the sixteenth-century of Rabelais and the method of the carnivalesque that he used to avoid confrontation with the rulers of that day. Bakhtin's work, as with that of Breytenbach emerges from a time of ideological totalitarianism, the South African gallows-humour and the Russian carnivalesque both pointing to the potential of laughter to destroy the monolithic gravity of the authorities.

Throughout history, the aim and scope of carnival festivities, the *festum stultorum* has largely been one of mimicking serious rituals and important events and, in so doing, gaining some inner freedom from official authority and oppressive official truths. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, of change and renewal. It was hostile to all that was seen as immortal and complete.

The trails of Breytenbach stirred considerable interest at the time of their occurrence. The tragic-comic register informing the autobiographer's description of the trails corresponds, to a large extent, to the ironic methods employed by the press at the time. Thus, Peter Dreyer, (Galloway 1990:244) describe the first trail in the following terms: "the public scarcely knew whether it was being presented as a Greek tragedy, a James Bond farce or an Agatha Christie thriller".

Although he was painfully aware of the destructive elements of his incarceration, Breytenbach could think of it as a game with its own rules. At the end of *Mouiroir* he refers to the entire experience as “this macabre dance, this fatal game”. But he keeps one step ahead of the Dancer, “*la Chingada*, the fucked (sic) One, Death”.

Kafka was interested in the aspect of the grotesque. He writes:

As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect. He was lying on his hard, as it was armour-plated, back and when he lifted his head a little he could see his brown belly divided into stiff arched segments on top of which the bed quilt could hardly keep in position and was about to slide off completely. His numerous legs, which were pitifully thin compared to the rest of his bulk, waved helplessly before his eyes (Kafka 1988:89-13).

Involvements with the grotesque as presented by Gregor Samsa, implies a tradition that is characterized by highly exaggerated situations, frequent mixing of categories, subject and style, an amorphous style of writing, a tendency towards puns and plays on sound. The object transgresses its own confines and falls into decay.

Breytenbach's four prison volumes of poetry, *Lewendood*, *Buffalo Bill*, *Eklips* and ('Yk'), are given the title of *Die ongedanste dans* (The undanced dance). For the Zen Buddhist, the *undanced dance* animates all existence, pervading through all things. It is the inconceivable plenitude of existence itself, with all its infinite possibilities (Herrigel 1960:53). The *undanced dance* suggests a dance of unrestricted growth, meaning and creativity. What one must be aware of at the moment of creating, is the element of decay. The moment of decay is present in the very moment that the concept is first called up as an image. We find, as the basis of the grotesque imagery, a special concept of the body, as a whole, and the limits of the

whole. In the grotesque, meaning can never be repeated, it is there only momentarily. But his image is not one of fullness or completion; it is not only the initial idea or concept which causes the disintegration, or the spattering different directions; the grotesque Surrealist drawing is a process of creative destruction. The aesthetics of the grotesque are transformed through a heightened sense of perception. By using imagination as faculty of memory those disparate things, which have no connection one with the other, are bound through process of transformation and metamorphosis. In this movement new rhythms and new lines are interwoven. By interacting with that which is grotesque, the viewer is subjected to more or less the same process, namely one of opening up. Nothing is subjected to anything else and one enters onto a slipway or movement from one image to another. The grotesque drawings are parts of a journey to an unknown landscape. By entering one's own space of memory, events or images or sounds are transformed through a process of vision. This process is nothing more than the dislodging or purging of one image or another. The viewing process is the opening up of the non-landscape, which closes immediately behind one (Buscop 1993).

4.10. Summary:

Chapter Four, which concern itself with Memory, has paradoxical qualities, concerning the argument of Breytenbach's views and art which opposes all forms of fixity. Cope (1982:173) indicated that Breytenbach's "mere presence implied total rejection of racial domination by Whites in his hated/adored country".

After being set free Breytenbach (1984a:59) again declared that:

I believe, more than ever, that the system existing in South Africa is against the grain of everything that is beautiful and hopeful and dignified in human history; that it is a denial of humanity, not only of the majority being oppressed but of the minority associated with that oppression; that it is profoundly unjust; that it is totally corrupted and corrupting; that it is a system with which nobody ought to be allowed to live.

Brink (1983:86), has the following to say about Breytenbach:

He is indeed one of the greatest poets that Afrikaans literature has yet produced; but what makes him politically relevant is that to an overwhelming majority of people who have never read a single line of his verse, he has become a symbol of resistance to oppression. To many Africans Coloureds and Indians, he has given new hope: because of his marriage and because of his convictions. As a result, every line of poetry he writes – acquires political implications.

According to Galloway (1990) Breytenbach began campaigning against Apartheid as early as 1965. He advocated his views in his poetry and art, and also in his views concerning the task of the writer. He became involved in revolutionary politics when he visited South Africa in 1973. He initiated the secret organization, Atlas/Okhele. Okhele was formed in a tandem with Biko's Black Consciousness Movement. The formation of Okhele would provide a vehicle for white militants, who were barred from the Black Consciousness Movement and who could not engage in counter actions against Apartheid, which was the big institute of fixity. By 1974 Breytenbach entered South Africa under a false passport and was subsequently arrested and incarcerated.

Breytenbach's period in prison was mainly an effort to transcend the fixed structures of the place of incarceration. Memory belongs to the area of non-fixity and was chosen to interpret this period in Breytenbach's life. Kafka's short story, *The Great Wall*, embodies the history of fixity and movement (that which opposes the stable structure). From this story it is one step towards reaching the walls of the Pretoria Central Prison (the labyrinth) and the cell (the void), where Breytenbach spent two years in solitary confinement. Breytenbach was not allowed to paint during this time, but he made a series of prison drawings which can be considered as war machines. The aim of the State is to create the ultimate creation of a perfectly administered memory system that will serve the order. Breytenbach's prison drawings have a disruptive function. They are "war machines" of counter memory that deterritorialized the State.

The aesthetic point of departure of these drawings lies in the notions of the grotesque and the carnival. These notions are the carriers of laughter, which have the potential to destroy the monolithic gravity of the authorities. The novelist, Kundera described the function of laughter as a “war machine” by which the authority of Communism could be confronted within the country of his birth, Czechoslovakia.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CHAMELEON.

The heading for this chapter is derived from Erhard Rechwitz from the English Department at the University of Essen. Rechwitz, who is interested in Breytenbach's enquiry into identity, writes:

Where identity is never stable, 'the law of metamorphosis' is the only generalisation that can be arrived at: the chameleon, the mythical *animal semper mutabile*, is the apt metaphor or image for that ever-changing quality of human identity (Rechwitz 1993:138)

Breytenbach recognises the image of the chameleon as one of transformation. He captured this notion in the watercolour, *Mot (Word)(C-1)*. For Breytenbach (1993:60) the watercolour is perhaps his favourite though they demand a limitless attention. For him there is something metaphysical and astounding in their slow marriage with water, and the excitement when a wash suddenly coagulates in an edged line. Similar to his preference for multiple identities, Breytenbach subjects his artistic endeavours to different mediums and methods. With him there is not a fixed recognizable style that is endlessly repeated. His artwork is rather the recognition of a constantly changing blue print. One could thus also regard Breytenbach's identity as a changing blue print.

Breytenbach's whole enquiry concerning the notion of identity is a very strong argument for his wish to move against fixed structures, dogmas, ideas and so forth. A list of some names that he has given himself read as follows:

Bullebach
Braakinpag
BB breitenbog
Prenten Prentenbach
Breipen Breytenbach
Panus
Elephantiá
King Fool
Don Espejuelo
Geta Wof
Jan Blom
Vagina Jones
BB Lazarus
Comrade Elix
Afrika Aap
Bangai Bird
Buffalo Bill
Bién Tóng
Juan Breyten
Christian Jean-Marc Galaska
Kamiljoen
Ganesji Galp
Tuchverderber
Fremkörper
Galgenvogel
Negesj
Maruphy
Bibberbek
Bewebek
Buitendag

The chameleon is surely the apt image and metaphor to represent the notion that Breytenbach's art, writing and thinking are that of movement and change. The movement and change that the chameleon represents are one of being against fixity. To show that his own identity is not fixed, Breytenbach constantly subjects his own name to change. Some of these names represent identification with historical figures like Camiljoen. Others, like Comrade Elix, refer to his involvement in the revolution. Bangai Bird, Buffalo Bill, Galgenvogel refers to the time of incarceration. Bién Tóng is the Chinese name for Breyten Breytenbach, which if translated into English would mean, Broad River. "Bach" is the German name for river. This is an example of the interconnectedness of everything in Breytenbach's work and life. Breytenbach has a sharded self.

5.1. The sharded self

The image of the chameleon that Breytenbach uses, leads us to the concept of the sharding of the self. In the poem, *pogonological self-portrait*, Breytenbach (1984:109) writes:

**"i" am and remain as monument of a process
the turd in the saucepan**

The meaning of these lines embodies paradoxical qualities. Although Breytenbach refers to the "I", he acknowledges that he is part of a process. He also writes in a derogatory way and calls himself the "turd" in the saucepan. The process of change to which the self is subjected is obviously painful.

From relations between multiple identities, we now move on to explore the shards of the self, by looking at images Breytenbach presents in his painting. Viewing his work hurt. It causes pain. Formulating what the paintings are about is often difficult and also what aspect causes

pain. This inability to reflect upon what touches one most may be caused by a momentary loss of self. Breytenbach's paintings and drawings appear to be about self-loss. His work hits the nervous system. This is precisely what seems to happen in the paintings. It explains the distortion of bodies and faces, dissolutions of boundaries, mouths opened as if screaming, agonies, paralyses, dismemberment, the confrontation with death. This is the crisis of the masculine. The figures appear, as nervous systems lain bare.

Breytenbach's paintings transform viewing to a painful experience; they render viewers speechless. Breytenbach (1993c:63) writes about his view on aesthetics and says:

To look at a painting with conceptions of beauty and harmony (*etcetera*) in the head is to prance a cock which has been taught how to crow the song of the times while being oblivious of the flesh-knowledge of being promised for the pot. It is a scratching of the surface. You have to strip yourself (you have to close the eyes) to allow for the confrontation with the naked mirror which knows no aesthetic hierarchy.

Breytenbach has used the metaphor of the mirror to convey his aesthetic point of departure. For Breytenbach (1993c:66) the metaphor is an explosive device. The image, however, is the slow fuse. Fixing meaning to an image is much more difficult. The image is the "groping for the cracks by plastering an image (itself an illusion of coherence) over the abyss" (Breytenbach 1993c:66). In this way Breytenbach's conception of the image can be compared with his notion of identity and the way he depicts it. This explains the failure of his critics to analyse, rather than to describe or applaud, his work. A particular kind of looking is at stake. The role of the viewer is a painful one and there is no escape through conventional routes. All the deceptive certainties of the visual regime we are used to are challenged; all the relationships between looking, and what (we think) we see, are cancelled; and all the construction of bits of reality is questioned, wiped out.

The self constructs itself through the gaze of the other. The paintings constitute such a gaze. But, rather than benignly bestowing form upon the viewer's self, rather than providing that sense of wholeness, for which the self depends on the gaze of the other, the paintings expose their mortifying power to withhold the wholeness one so badly needs.

How does one experience reality when the self is deliberately, continually lost or shattered? How does one experience the self when it becomes disembodied or figuratively “becomes Brahman inhaling and exhaling the Afrikaans society”? How does one experience a painting done by a “sharded” self and when Breytenbach declares himself king of nothingness? Or when he declares himself to be a *nadaist*⁷⁶ as in the acrylic painting, *El rey de nada (C-2)*. For Breytenbach (1993c:60) the acrylic is a bastard [sic]. He says “that” they will lend themselves to any surface and will pass themselves off as easily for fish as for fowl, but they are ultimately difficult to know. In this sense, Breytenbach could be compared with acrylic paint as knowing him is virtually impossible.

However, the loss of the self does not develop from a weakening of the observing ego or a lowering of consciousness, but to the contrary, from attentive self-reflective awareness. The loss of self may be embedded in modes of consciousness that are not “primitive” or “infantile”, but that is extremely self-reflective. It is derived not from lowering but from a widening of consciousness (Sass 1987:1-34).

From the anti psychiatric perspective, this state is preferred to the mature condition of self-control. Unrestrained desire can characterise it. “Sharding” or schizophrenia, schizoid, and the shaman, stand for life, instinct and the freedom of “nomad thought”. In comparison to the schizoid, the mind of the normal provokes oppressive self-consciousness, the illusion of logic,

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Nadaist is derived from the Spanish word *el nada* – meaning nothingness.

and the beliefs of self-control (Hillman 1983:15).

Breytenbach's paintings and drawings undermine the most basic assumptions we hold. That is the conscious or unconscious reassuring effect of representation as a stronghold against inevitable death. The image of the subject, who has to die, is at least eternalized. Breytenbach deprives us of such illusion because he declares himself king of death. In the letter to his friend, Ampie Coetzee, *Een-been te perd in die saagselkring met die mond 'n dooie spieël: 'n brief* (One-leg on horseback in the sawdust-circle with the mouth a dead mirror: a letter), Breytenbach (1995a:334) describes himself as death's blue-eyed boy. How do we read his poetry when he describes an anthology as a *dessecador*, meaning a place for drying out to which they bring the deceased for embalming? He is describing the catacomb in the honey nest of the caves under Palermo. It is in Poble Gran, near the hill where he and Yolande stayed. There the monks cared for dead bodies for two years and then presented them, clothed in the vestments of the order and exhibited for the neighbours to see.

Representation is not life; instead life is shown to be sheer representation. Representation, then, cannot preserve life, but only expose its undoing. Nor can representation reveal the essence of life. Representation, which attempts to uncover life, to find its true essence, can only reveal death or nothingness. In a paradoxical way the only life is in the representation; because representation is all there is. So, Breytenbach's figures are represented as lacking substance. They are either overflowing or hollowed out, skinless and shapeless. For the viewer, there is no escape by means of the conventional catharsis. The viewer cannot sympathise with the threatened victim of violence, and then breathe again once the execution has taken place. The suspense of looking, the excitement of looking behind the curtain of representation, is not relaxed, but violently brought to an end. The viewer realises that there is ultimately nothing. This although there is a strong connection between the narrative and the visual in Breytenbach's work as he has recently incorporated poems on the "nomadic" canvas-scroll. In the works, *Hoe treurig. Helemaal helder (C-3)*, *Die Woordenaar (C-4)* and

Stompengel (C-5), the homely boundaries of a story are refused. What is suggested, however, is the purposeful interplay of image and text as regard representation of self.

The figures are isolated in their space by the fact that they have been painted differently. Except certain works depicting himself as a caricature, like in *Woord (Ik ben zo fucking [sic] alleen)* (C-6) and a depiction in *Hommage au Pinceau Décédé* (C-7), he himself and figures of the group-portrait never becomes fully characters. The figural events never explained and never embedded in a sequence of events. The figures, even when they interact, are distanced from each other and their environment and they are often placed in boxes and closed rooms. An important aspect for Breytenbach, however, is that poetry and painting are the prolongation of one to the other. Breytenbach's conception of identity can be compared with the relation between art and poetry. It is a process of metamorphosis or an infusion.

In *Judas Eye*, he writes about the "sharding" of the self into bits of onion, vibrant thoughts, rolling hills, scattering shadow, holes in the ground, the ant, God. He cannot write [paint] about himself, he can only write [paint] the "I". Breytenbach writes about his multiple identities. He comments on the problems one counters when writing or painting an unstable self. Breytenbach says:

Worse, I am still creating it and I may stop at any moment. Why is it unpleasant then? Because consciousness is open-ended and subject to constant change and it is frightening, if not perilous, to keep on caressing the unknowable I. The hidden nature of awareness is that it cannot be stilled for long enough to be defined, not even temporarily like the dead person. If I do thus write about some id or other oddment it must be dead. Therefore I cannot write [paint] about me; I could only write [paint] I. And immediately the writing is blanched, staunched. Becomes *it*. The fly in amber. God in his grave. The ants will not go hungry. Writing as a weak form of awareness, a minute manifestation of movement. It would be more illuminating to trace the trajectories of Panus, Elephteríá, King

Fool, Don Espejeulo, Geta Wof, Jan Blom, Vagina Jones, Lazarus, Comrade Ekx, Afrika Aap, or Bangai Bird (Breytenbach 1988:123).

There is a kind of nomadism, a perpetual displacement in the intensities designated by proper names, intensities that a single body experiences. Schizophrenic laughter or revolutionary joy, this is what emerges from this body carrying the different names (Deleuze 1983:166).

5.2. Selflessness and Buddhism

According to Sienaert (1993:139-155) it is well known that Zen Buddhism forms a primary inter-text of Breytenbach's art and writing and that without at least some knowledge of Buddhism in general, his work often remains largely inaccessible or misunderstood.⁷⁷ In *Painting the Eye*, Breytenbach (1993c:74) refers to Dogen and uses a quotation from this work:

To learn the Buddhist Way is to learn about oneself. To learn about oneself is to forget oneself. To forget oneself is to perceive oneself as all things. To realise this is to cast off the body and mind of self and other. When you have reached this stage you will be detached even from enlightenment but will practice it continually without thinking about it.

It was Dogen who experienced the nature of sitting in the *zazen* position, entering the void and reached selflessness. Japanese Zen (C'han in China) is a combination of the ancient Chinese Taoist philosophy and Indian Mayahana Buddhism. It retains as essential principle the Tao's Yin-Yang relativity, and the Mayahana ideal of selflessness. As embodiment of the cosmic

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In a personal conversation with Breytenbach, he stated that the book of Dogen Zenji, *Sjōbōgenzo*, is the most important book he has ever read.

process, the Tao designate that which constitutes the entire universe. It is in perpetual flux and represents a constant process of transformation. As illustrated in the Sanskrit word *Tantra* (to weave), the universe is experienced as a network, a harmony or symbiosis of patterns, which cannot exist without each other (Watts 1997:51). This concept abounds in the work of Breytenbach. Breytenbach (1988:87) writes:

**and our grasp of the city
no one else could know
that was in reality
a rhythmic intertwining flow**

Studying his paintings one is indeed struck by the frequency of the artist's own face in the pictures. "As elsewhere in both his art and writing, these images of interchangeability and metamorphosis persistently foreground the question of identity. In an unpublished manuscript, *The Shattered Dream*, Breytenbach (1991) writes that according to the Buddhist philosophy, which informs his way of life, (for art in his case is a way of living), the notion of shifting or constantly transforming identity can be understood as the compassionate projection of the self into the other" (Sienaert, 2001:68). So Breytenbach's claim that every portrait, landscape or other depiction, is a self-portrait. According to Sienaert (1998:43-46) such (Buddhist) dissolutions of ego and subsequent fusion with the depicted objects as *Other* are playfully expressed in the many images of half man, half beast. There is also the fish with human face in *Hommage au Pinceau Décédé (C-7b)* as well as the copulating or numerous androgynous figures, which absorb and dissolve the notion of opposites contained in "I" and "Other". The series of *mirror angles (C-8)* are further illustrations of this notion (Sienaert 1998:43).

It would, however, be a misconception to construe this as narcissism, just as it would be off the mark to interpret the continuing references to the "I" in his poetry as egocentrism. This "I" do not refer to Breytenbach as individual, separate being, but rather to the ideal of being in a permanent state of interrelatedness with all in the universe. The fixed and stable entity

becomes a “vessel of humanity” (Sienaert 1993:145). In this regard Breytenbach (1988:46) writes:

**what for? All over man
is death and dust
and only in others will he reverberate.**

Breytenbach’s *Mouiroir* (1983a) is an example of constant transgression between different levels of the text. Author, a character and dream personage, fuses only to separate again, and the conventional boundaries between fiction, reality and dream are completely abolished (Botha 1988: 404-416). This is perfectly embodied in the last line of the book, which translates as “form is emptiness and emptiness is form”. It is taken from the Prajnaparamita-sutra,⁷⁸ the whole of which is translated by Breytenbach in the beginning of the prison poems (‘*Yk*’). This notion is important as it equates two seemingly paradoxical concepts implying that nothing [also identity] can be fixed (Sienaert 1993:145).

According to Buddhism, our grasping intellect, which subdivides the universe into individual, fixed concepts, presents a major obstacle for the attainment of Enlightenment. Differentiation of objects, which includes the constitution of a separate individual ego, is considered an illusion, the result of our analytical perception of the world and our intrinsic inability to experience reality fully. The concept of a separate and individual ego resulting from the differentiation of objects is “the enemy to be overcome” (Versfelt 1991:16).

For Lankava-tava (1988:45) the undermining of conceptual thinking, however, often leads to the misconception, particularly in the West, of Zen being irrational or anti-intellectual.

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In Sanskrit literature, a short mnemonic rule in grammar, law, or philosophy, requiring expansion by means of commentary.

Buddhism does not deny the value of the intellect, but only stresses that it has to be transcended. Analytical thought should be taken to its full potential as this is the only way intuitive knowledge, as ultimate value, can be attained.⁷⁹ In Chapter One the watery basis of things was described. This is differential Zen, where there can be no centre. The Buddha-nature is differential and not centric, not a focus or stasis. Differential Zen disclaims “centred” experience of any kind. Magliola (1984:95-101) points to the difference between “centric Zen” and “differential Zen”. Centric Zen is logo-centric and aims to transcend *logos* understood as the language of *is* and *not is*, and to achieve the undifferentiated centre. This is mirrored in contemporary interpretation, where the meaning of a text is never final or “fixed”. Interpretation is always infinite. When Breytenbach (1984d:13) asks, “What did you look like before you or your father or your mother were born?”, it becomes clear there can be no “I”, nor an identity nor any fixed reality [truth]. And in *End Papers* (1986:79), Breytenbach as Zen Buddhist writes about this aspect in the following way:

There is in fact no Truth. We are too fragile and volatile for that; we work with too many uncertainties. There is rather the continual shaping of something resembling poorly, provisionally ‘truth’.

Within the Zen tradition, “the intuitive knowledge thus acquired by the realisation of the inadequacy of conceptual thinking is often compared with the opening of a third eye, which is a prerequisite for creative experience. Until one had a third eye opened to see into the inmost secret of things; you cannot be in the company of the ancient sages (Suzuki 1957:62). This immediately calls to mind the self-portrait of Breytenbach on the back book cover of (‘Yk’), a volume of poetry written while he was in prison, where the gaping wound on the forehead expresses the desire for intuitive knowledge, which leads to true creativity“(Sienaert 1993:143). *Man With Beard (C-9)*, exhibited at the Metropolitan Gallery during 2001, also

79

According to Lankava-tave (1988:45) the transcendental intelligence rises when the intellectual mind reaches its limit and when things are to be realized in their true essence, its processes must be transcended by an appeal to some higher faculty of cognition. There is such a faculty in the intuitive mind which is the link between the intellectual mind and the universal mind.

carries this third eye. This work overclouds the question of identity with its hint of pornographic details. Breytenbach used a collage of the female sex to form the mouth. The beard in this work is a substitute for female pubic hair. For Breytenbach the collage in itself is a method of breaking down the hierarchy of “values”. In *Painting The Eye* (1993c:67) Breytenbach writes:

The importance of the *collage* lies in the displacement of agreed-upon painterly conventions, thereby extending the reach of references, breaking down the hierarchy of “values” to bring us closer (in the juxtaposition of dead or re-cycled images and nascent areas of paint) to the flitting flow of impressions provoked by the oddity, the breaks in surface texture and in expectations, the sleight of mind, perhaps the “happy accident”, all of which –re-ordered or disordered–becomes the matter of consciousness.

Man With Beard is a graphic drawing where Breytenbach used the pencil. Of the pencil Breytenbach (1993c:60) has the following to say:

Using pencil is for me to be speaking Afrikaans – it is a private language which lends itself to instinctive expression.

The way Breytenbach speaks about using a pencil and comparing it with his feeling of speaking Afrikaans, is an important example of Breytenbach’s preference for crossing borders. Again this is one step away from looking at Breytenbach’s awareness of multiple identities within himself.

5.3. Multiple identities

During the period before the dismantlement of Apartheid Breytenbach (1993c:70) wrote that if he wants to jot down on the public noticeboard as a cliché the capacities he aspires to, one

will find the words, *anarchist, communist and cynic*. For him anarchism is the understanding of the causes and mechanisms of injustice and the belief in the necessity of the transformational potential of the struggle. The birth of parties lays down the line of power by the so-called correct interpretation of reality. For Breytenbach this ended in the “shit-house” [sic] of bureaucrats. Breytenbach chooses the early Marxist’s views. Those views that existed before the “killing machines of the Communist Parties”.

Breytenbach (1993c:72) is a cynic and writes about the cynic in the following way.

A cynic (which is Greek for ‘dog’) in the tradition of outspokenness, shamelessness, unconventionality, idealised anarchy, anti-materialism and identification with the poor.

In the exhibition *Dancing the Dog and other Pornographics*, Breytenbach exposes the viewer to the image of a snarling dog. In *Self Portrait as a Dog (C-10)* Breytenbach again uses a collage of the reproduced image of the female sex, which are in this instance, the dog’s ears. The howling dog of pain or the image of Breytenbach as the cynic is provided with the traditional third eye that we find in Christian iconography. Breytenbach is the cynic dog who digests and defecates an awareness of being thus to imagine knowing whom he is (Breytenbach 1993c:72). For him the “I” is a border crossing between inside and outside.

5.3.1. Relations

In a footnote in poetry, *Voetskrif* (1976:55), which appeared during his incarceration, Breytenbach comments on the nature of his poetry. He writes:

Terugskouend: byna al my verspogings (geflapper) gaan om verhoudinge; skep

selfs verhoudings waar dit tot dusver nie bestaan het nie. (Looking back: nearly all my verse-efforts (flapping) are about relations; creating relations even where they do not yet exist.)

From *Bedreiging van die siekes* (*Menace of the ill*), the first poem in the first collection of poetry, *Die ysterkoei moet sweet*, published in 1964 up to *Die woorde teen die wolke* (*The words against the clouds*), in *Skryt* published in 1972, Breytenbach was continually occupied with being a poet, the nature of verse as the form for that which cannot be said, and with the relationship between the poet, the poem and reality. The poet has to look at reality with the cutting edge of vision. If there were a reality, which compels the poet to write, it would be the restrictive political system (Coetzee 1977:introduction).

Relations in Breytenbach's (1987:170) poetry is between the poem and anti-poem, between the word and the silence, via the sentence, between the said and the unsaid, via the overlapping, relation between the reality and a-reality. Relations concerning the process of writing (painting) can be traced from his "self-portrait" in *Judas Eye* (1988). Here Breytenbach poses the dichotomies of I/Other; Black/White; African/European; Interior/Exile; Clarity/Consciousness; Responsibility/Subversive; To Be/or Not to Be and Free/Unfree. His exile, despite the entire trauma it encompasses, provides a new relationship with the world. He is the foreign observer, who is depending on himself. Breytenbach (1988:123-134) writes about this condition and says:

Or you turn in upon yourself, turn yourself over, and observe the albino insects scurrying away from the light. And you taste distaste, bloated as the tongue in its orifice of saying.

Freedom, because that is where you're at, is a nasty taskmaster. You have so much more to learn. You are conscious of the *éstrangeté* of life, and your senses are sharpened to needles with which you skewer the grey flesh of dull daily acceptances. You head to be crammed with clichés and stereotypes, but at least you recognise them for what they are – in several languages! For better or for worse you are the outsider.

More than in relationships embedded in writing or painting, there is also the aspect of relations between different identities. Breytenbach's painful experience of the shattering of the self intensified when he re-entered life after the period of incarceration. Pressure from constant public demand by giving lectures in Europe and the United States and exhibiting in various countries; publishing in South Africa, France, The Netherlands, England; drawing the attention of journalists on an international level; managing a constant flux of projects involving himself and his creative work by other people. He initiated projects like the "Poetry Caravan" at Gorée Island, which travelled from Dakar to Timbuktu. Another venture is the "Poetry Africa" initiative at the Creative Centre of the University of Natal. Intense involvement with taking on professorships in Creative Writing at the University of Natal, the University of Cape Town and the New York School of Creative Writing; living in different countries and travelling constantly; and speaking many languages complicate his life and transforms him into the walker of the Global Village or the knight of the naked star. Being writer, poet, painter, philosopher, public figure, political dissident, exile, intellectual, nomad, *nadaist*, Zenist, friend, the brother of his brothers and sister, father to a daughter and husband to a Vietnamese wife all lead to an awareness of multiple personalities harboured in himself and others.

According to Coetzee (1994:8) Breytenbach had been dragged into the factionalism, intrigue and backstabbing of exile politics, he has made himself part of the anti-Apartheid circuit, attending conferences, giving speeches and reading. Breytenbach asserts that his role in the future will be as it was in the past. He will be against the norm, orthodoxy, the canon, hegemony, politics, the State, power.

In both his writing and his art this is embodied in the use of the "I". Critics, since his first debut as writer, have noted the frequent use of the "I". Some scholars were critical, while others are more aware of the deeper meaning of this phenomenon. Criticism varied from a repudiation of the sickly use of the "I", to arguments about the poet's creating an entire oeuvre on the behalf of himself.

Many of his exhibitions go under the prevailing genre of the name of *autoportrait* with titles like *Autoportrait Masque (C-11)*, *Autoportrait "Nuit" (C-12)* and *Autoportrait "Jour" (C-13)*. The self-portrait/I is a living structure, a growing body, which is manifested through the metamorphosis of the orifices and projecting parts of the body. These are the eyes, the nose, the ears, the mouth, the fingers, the female sex slit and the penis. Conversely the body closes in *L'emballage (C-14)*. There is a merging of different figures in other paintings, which metamorphosised the human being into an ape, a bird, a horse, a dog, etc. This is a natural process in the "passage of consciousness" of which Breytenbach writes in *Memories*.

Continually Breytenbach shows us how he takes the "eye" from a subject, as in *J.E. Liotard (C-15)*. In this work, the painter whose hands are placed at the bottom of the painting, have taken out the eye of Liotard.⁸⁰

In the work, *Like a Whiplash (C-16)* Breytenbach extended the "eye"-theme by removing the painter's right eye. A tear falls from the empty eye socket. He paints a self-portrait of the removed "eye" weeping blood. The painter inserts the brush into the painted subject's mouth and there it takes on the function of a cigar or pipe. An all-seeing "weeping third eye" has been painted at the top of the painting, but instead of using eyelids he has placed the eye between two lips. This "parable" on the "eye" could serve as a pointer that could lead one to acknowledge the complexity of the "I". The painted eye ("I") is just a Judas eye (eyelet and loophole) for the "I".

80

Jean Etienne Liotard (1702-90), a Swiss pastel painter and engraver, who lived in Geneva, travelled widely in Europe and the Near East and painted fashionable sitters in eastern costume (Osborne 1979:663).

5.3.2. The Hybrid

According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* the word “hybrid” is the offspring of two animals or plants of different species or varieties. It is also a person of mixed nationality. It is also things composed of incongruous elements. The Hybrid, Creoleness and bastardnesses are words that hang about Breytenbach like a cloak. He experiences himself as a bastard having a bastard language, Afrikaans, as his mother tongue. Breytenbach (1999:3) has opted for aesthetics of a pluralism and hybridness. Never again will a single story be told as though it were the only one. His oeuvre takes on a mongrel form when he writes poems across his canvases. He writes that culturally he is a bastard. He prefers, however, the description, *The Afrikaner*, which claims to be of a Creole nature. As the bastard, Breytenbach is European of different sources, Dutch, German, French, African, through interbreeding and rape of the indigenous Khoisan people. Blood of the black probably flows through his veins by the importing from slaves and craftsmen from the east. A part of him could also be Malgasse.

Mercer (1990:49) states that Berbabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, three Caribbean authors, wrote in their *Egole de la creolité* of 1989: “The world is moving towards the condition of Creoleness. Old national crispations are giving way before the advance of federations, which will perhaps not exist for long.” This move towards Creoleness is not because certain transnationals try to transform the planet into one immense market, but because cultures are working to think of themselves as relations. People, languages, histories, cultures, nations are touching another and traverse each other. They traverse each other in an infinity of networks which “national flags” know nothing about. The world is resonating wholly in each of its particular places.

According to Bhabha (1990:24), Creoleness speaks, writes, thinks and proclaims, and performs the certainty that nations are narrations. These narratives are also what makes it possible to

reinvent a community where there can no longer be a border, but an infinite zone of diversalism. This community is at once unique and diverse, but also displaced. Nevertheless, more important, our Creoleness of thought and process will keep in mind the ethics of the relational, which is the ethics of the Other.

In an interview, Breytenbach talks about multiple identities and Creolenesses:

For a start, let me say that we are, obviously, all far more of multiple personalities than we like to admit we are. We may all agree with the notion that one of the fundamental tasks of any form of creative or intellectual activity is to show things in their complexity, that is, beyond their bare simplicity. But we still prefer to simplify; we want to handle things sequentially and on a one-on-one-basis. We want to know exactly whom it is that we are dealing with. We are not comfortable dealing with the whole host of shifting people in us. But remember that the notion of self or identity is liable to change.

We are obliged by our times, with their breaking of orthodoxy, the disappearance of ideologies and the phenomenon of banning and exile, nomadism, and globalisation to – perhaps for the first time in mankind’s history – become far more acutely aware of the multiplicity that we have in us. In other words, this is a form of the need to compartmentalise, to develop to its fullest capacity the various characters, the various persons that one has within oneself.

One of the most fascinating things that is starting to happen more clearly in our times is perhaps our growing realisation that our wholeness is terminally fragmented. That our perception is fragmented too. That we work far more in shards and in notes and in torn-up pieces, that we are far more collaged than we are willing to accept. Another aspect, which is very important and is becoming increasingly clear to us, is that even our morals have become relational. What we live through is a stronger awareness of the relationships between the various parts that we are. And other things, which, I think, have become very important, are that we are far more aware of the transitions, the breaks, the moving from one part to the other part. Metamorphoses has become an integral part of our understanding, and perhaps even of our being; we are being metamorphosed into new beings all the time. But we develop, as in the case of any form of

hybridisation, a more acute awareness of the shifting components and of the moments of juncture, the moments of rupture. So, I would suggest that one way to attain a semblance or a season of coherent sanity would be to accrue, to deepen the processes of awareness, the actual awareness of what is happening to the extent that you are consciously aware of what is happening to you. Another way in which one tries to keep some form of coherence, perhaps, is by keeping alive what I would call a ghost centre. The ghost centre is like having had two legs, one of which is now amputated. They say you keep on feeling that one which is gone. It's still there, it's a ghost presence.

But we develop, as in the case of any form of hybridisation, a more acute awareness of the shifting components and of the moments of juncture, the moments of rupture (Breytenbach in Dimitriu 1997:72).

Breytenbach's views on identity have never been put more clearly than in this quotation and is a cardinal argument for the important argument of this thesis that Breytenbach's line of thinking moves against all forms of fixity. The self is in a constant process of change and our wholeness is fragmented. The notion of metamorphosis provides the key to understand human life, which is now engaged in a process of flux and transition.

5.4. The mouth is too secret not to feel pain

Although Breytenbach has suffered numerous incidents of wounding in his life, he has endured exile, incarceration, his intense involvement with the South African society has been a constant source of pain. Certain of his art works, (here the sticking out of the tongue) points to shamanistic instances. He has, however, never openly stated that he has taken the task of the "wounded healer" on himself. His "healing" of society is one of the constantly opening unknown avenues through his writing, painting and as social critic. His way is one of *fuck-ups* [sic], ruptures and shape shifting. He never tones down this dissection of society, but constantly inserts the "pen-brush" knife and the "metaphor- image" scalpel deeper and deeper

into the Afrikaner's wounds.

Breytenbach (1995a) is aware that he has a certain shape shifting (trickster) role to play in society. He writes:

Die ek is 'n holte, 'n weeklankkamer, 'n Chinese shaduwee binne die gedig. Jy laat jou in by ander se verwagtings, al is dit ook 'n skynswangerskap. Die 'historiese' ek-figuur, sê nou maar die ikoon met pyp en baard, word 'n gegewe, 'n karakter, die hand vol vere, die hanswors met 'n 'uitgeleende' been (soos SV, Utrillo se ma, wat nie net skilder was nie maar ook model en *mâtresse*) waarmee jy speel in die sirkus. (The I is a hollow, an echo chamber, a Chinese shadow in a poem. You let yourself into others' expectations, even if it is a mock pregnancy. The 'historical' I figure, say the icon with the pipe and beard, become a given, a character, the handful of feathers, the clown with the 'borrowed' leg (like SV, Utrillo's mother, who was not only a painter, but also model and *mâtresse*) with which you play in the circus.)

Breytenbach is painter, writer and thinker about death. Although his descent to the realm of the dead, home of deceased spirits, speaks of the fundamental helplessness of humanity, he sees it as a continuation of life. In the shamanist world, the encounters in the depths are with ravenous spirits that instruct as they destroy. The shaman's receptivity to the world of creatures opens after he or she has surrendered to a first death.

A comparison could be made between Breytenbach's works with the protruding tongue and a wooden mask of the Shaman Seton Tlingit of the Northwest Coast, which has a startled expression. The mask-image's eyes are open wide, yet expressionless, as though the "wits" have been frightened out of the subject and the extruded tongue tastes the wisdom of those who inhabit the wilderness realms. This transmission process is the "kiss of knowledge" when the shaman partakes of the raw nectar of the world of creatures.

The mouth carries the tongue and the lips the protruding tongue. *Mortrait (C-17)* is a self-portrait of Breytenbach sitting with folded hands (a sign of vulnerability), the eyes closed and the tongue protruding. The work is sombre and atonal. In the *King Breyten Series-4, (C-18)* Breytenbach depicts himself as Chinese. Although the tone of this work is light, we again have the protruding tongue.

Raw death and non-dualistic, amoral universes are revealed here. There is no morality in the stare of the hawk, nor morality in death. By wearing this mask, the shaman reminds the people of this fundamental condition of existence. The life way of the shaman is nearly as old as human consciousness itself, predating the earliest recorded civilisations by thousands of years. Through the ages, the practice of shamanism has remained vital, adapting itself to the ways of all the worlds' cultures. Today the role of the shaman takes many forms. He is the healer, who conducts ceremonials, the judge, the sacred politician and the artist, to name but a few. The shaman is at the very heart of some cultures, while living on the shadowy fringe of others. Nevertheless, a common thread seems to connect all shamans across the planet. This is the awakening to other orders of reality, the experience of ecstasy, and an opening of visionary realms from the essence of the shamanic mission.

The steps of the journey of shamanist initiation seem to have a patterned course. The call to power requires a separation from the mundane world: the neophyte turns away from the secular life, voluntarily, ritually, or spontaneously through sickness, and turns inward towards the unknown, the *mysterium*. Breytenbach had a good, working knowledge of the dismemberment, which is the gateway to the mystery, long before his incarceration. His shamanistic initiation started in his dismemberment from his Afrikaans community and his relationship with Yolande, who is Vietnamese. They willed and sought the incarceration after immolation. It was a deciding episode, but not the beginning at all. This change of direction can be accomplished only through obedience to awareness. Only through the development of discipline will the shaman's habitual ways of seeing and behaving dissolve, and the visionary

realms open. Thus, the initial calls of power takes the shaman to the realm of chaos, the *limen*, where power exists in a free and untransformed state (Halifax 1982:32).

Breytenbach had, throughout his artistic life, had an enduring relationship with death. A recent book, *Woordwerk*, and recent love poems written to Yolande in *Lady One*, constantly refers to death. It is as if death, which has enticed him his whole life, is gradually taking on “embodiment”. The deepest structures within the psyche are found in the themes of descent to the realm of death, where there is the confrontation with demonic forces, dismemberment, trial by fire, communion with the world of spirits, and creatures. There is also the assimilation of the elemental forces and an ascension via the World Tree and/or the Cosmic Bird. Further important aspects are the realisation of a solar identity, and return to the Middleworld, the world of human affairs. The shaman, however, has a social, rather than a personal reason for opening the psyche as he or she is concerned with the community and its well-being. Sacred action, then, is directed towards the creation of order out of chaos.

The shaman can tap into a “network of power”. The realization of power occurs most frequently in the midst of an ordeal, a crisis involving an encounter with death. It comes suddenly, in an instant. In many ways, the descriptions by shamans of their confrontation with power are comparable to accounts by yogis of the awakening of Kundalini and by Zen masters of their experience of enlightenment. The entrance to the other world occurs through the experiences of total disruption. The neophytes surrender to the realm of chaos, frequently using the experience of fear and dread to amplify the intensity of the situation. The neophyte underworld-voyager learns the battlefield that he or she will enter on the behalf of others in the future. Here, the shaman finds direct knowledge from awakening of empathy in the healer.

5.5. Exile

Since the publication of Breytenbach's first volume, his poetry can be typified as a portrayal of decay. The prose work *Om Te Vlieg* also figures forth a world of decay. In Zen Buddhism, things are dependent on the aspect of decay: decay in the sense of diverting-from-the-ordinary. The poetry, *Kouevuur*, centres on themes of decay and exile. Decay is not just on a physical, but also on a metaphysical level. As such, it can be linked to the theme of exile. Gangrene sets in, because there is no blood flow. The spirit of the exiled one rots, because there is no flow of blood between him and his country of birth. Exile and its resulting spiritual decay are the main themes in *Kouevuur*. To travel is to engage in spatial decay. The continual movement of the journey can be linked with the Zen aspect of change and the watery basis of consciousness (Vorster 1973).

Breytenbach has continually written poems about his longing for his country of birth, while in exile. The following most moving poem, *Die Hand Vol Vere*, from *Kouevuur* (1969) was written for his parents:

The Hand Full of Feathers

mommie

**I've been thinking
if I ever come home one day
it will be without warning towards daybreak
with years of hoarded treasure
on the backs of iron cows**

**there's still a blueness on the world
hush – softly I open the back-yard gate
old Wagter growls**

but then his tail stirs in memory
Fritz Kreisler will play sweetly on his violin
ma knows
a few Viennese waltzes of course
and the startled windows start listening
people whom I don't know at all
or as yet from far
lean out in nightrobes full of smiles and elbows
people on whose laps I peed when small
inside ma's heart is standing still
(and where are the spectacles ?)
pa awakes confusedly
but mommie is already outside
in dressing gown and red cheeks

and I'm standing there large as life
on the lawn next to the small cement pond
where the new outhouses have been added on
somewhat worn by the long journey
wearing a top hat
a smart suit
carnation in the jacket
new Italian shoes for the occasion
my hands full of presents
a song for my ma a bit of pride for my own pa
but mommie knows it's me all the same
and behind me my caravan
as befits an overseas traveller
my wife and children dressed up in bow-ties
each with three Boland words in their mouths
my musicians
the rifle bearers
friends comrades

political advisors
and road-managers
a debtor or two

just this side of the vineyard there grows a tame rose
goodness but the air is crisp
there comes pa too what's up
just like that on an empty stomach
the mountains have turned grey
the oak trees have thickened
but never mind
mommie
I've been thinking I'll be there anyway
like a coloured choir on Christmas morning
mommie
I've been thinking how we'll cry then
and drink tea

it seems blind Wagter couldn't wait
he's dead, apparently
perhaps Fritz Kreisler won't take to such a long trip ...
but if he can't come
I'll hire Paganini ...
sleep soundly, one ear cocked:
unlike old Might-have-Been
wherever I plant a little feather
a squawking chicken sprouts up!

Exile or a “hiding-place”, as Breytenbach states in a letter to his friend, Ampie Coetzee, is not a movement in time, but a return to a form of origin of the self, which one only appreciates when it is experienced as irretrievably lost. When Breytenbach ponders on exile, he involuntarily thinks of the relativity of time and space. He uses the example of the Famadihana ceremony in Madagascar, where the remains of the deceased are brought up once a year for

a festive family meal and a waltz or the dancing of the bones! He also painted a beautiful work to commemorate this feast celebration, which he names *Moonlight Arab* (C-19). Sienaert (2001:80) writes of another instance where the remains of the dead are brought up – the annual festival in Ethiopia to honour the dead:

This sinisterly beautiful work was inspired by an annual festival in Ethiopia to honour the ancestors, when bodies are exhumed, garlanded and fêted for a day and a night, to be buried again with the rising sun.

Exile altered his perception of time and space. Time, he learned “can be stilled, warped, coloured, preserved, killed, suddenly speeded up, and sometimes it can be immaterial”. Space, he found out, “can be provisional or hostile or vibrant and textured and tactile” (Renders 1988:67).

According to Laumonier (1997:87-94) exiled memory is the slow art of forgetting and the colour of fire. Exile is as old as a desert map. In his reflections on exile, Breytenbach (1996a:42) in the essay, *The Long March*, (1990) wrote the following:

In the beginning there is the hearth, the ancestral fire, and you are a native of the flames. You belong there and therefore it belongs to you. Comes exile, the break, the destitution, the initiation the maiming which – I think – gives access to a deeper sight, provides a path into consciousness through the mimicry of thinking you as part of your environment. Now you can never again entirely relax the belly muscles. You learn, if you’re lucky, the chameleon art of adaptation, and how to modulate your laughter. You learn to use your lips properly. Henceforth you are at home nowhere and by that token everywhere. You learn to live with the flies, and how to slide from death into a dream. You learn about creation – because you must compensate for not fitting in naturally with the environment – and thus transformation and metamorphosis, although you also come to realise that everything is since all time and creation may only be a reordering of existent images.

He continues by saying that the exiled person is probably marked by a loss that he or she does not want to let go of, especially when this is occasioned by a political situation. One can replace the word “exile” by “refugee, misfit, stranger, renegade, drifter, squatter, foreigner, clandestine, heretic, stranger”. All these descriptions imply non-fixity regarding the Self.

Exile has provided Breytenbach with panoply of lessons. It has shown him, “like a flasher”, the mechanism of survival. He says: “It made my mother tongue into a homeland”. Exile gave him motifs for his work “silence, death, transformation, shadows, ink, games, the void, dreams, immobility, interchangeability, essence, breaks...” (Breytenbach 1996a:42).

One could become a master of dreams, since you had to recreate loss and articulate the void. He understands that to reflect on the act of writing is to follow the courses of consciousness and not be discoursing on the nature of the real. For him it is not possible to reconstruct the real, as the very process of memory becomes reality. Again in *The Long March* (1990) Breytenbach (1996a:39) writes about the conditions of exile. He says:

Exile is never the state of being satisfied, placid, or secure. ... Exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentred, and contrapuntal; but no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts anew....

Exile has stimulated my obsession with *métissage*, transformation, and metamorphosis.

Exile has brought it home to me that I’m African. If I live in Europe most of the time, it is not as a participant but as an observer, and underground activist for Africa. My pale skin and my Western garb make it possible for me to ‘pass for white’. But my heart beats with the secret rhythms of that continent which seems to have sunk below the perception horizon of the North ... the dip and veer of swallows at nightfall over the Niger river, the depth of the seeing without judging in an old man’s eye, the fly-embroidered smile of a child, the musky woman-smell of the locquout flower. ...

In the paper delivered at the Press Club, Cape Town (1990), Breytenbach (1991a) says that exile liberates one from the illusion of even being able to become the other, or something else, or to be integrated (adaptation is not the same as integration). The removal of the reasons for exile destroys the mummified vision of the self and the self becomes the dead foetus one carried in oneself all these years. Exile perpetuates the illusion of motion.

Edward Said (1935-), whom Breytenbach mentions in *Notes from The Middleworld* (1996e) and who is noted with Breytenbach in Tucker's dictionary of literary exiles, was born in Jerusalem, Palestine, then under rule of the British Mandate and now lives in New York. He sees Palestinians not as "disembodied presence of Sorrow of Homelessness", but as finding their truest reality in the way they cross from one place to another. They are migrants and perhaps hybrids. Being Palestinian often entails mastery without domination, pleasure without injury to others. Palestine Palestinians, he claims, live in a protracted not-yet.

Said (1993:161) views exile as a condition of permanent duality; we are only in a country, never exclusively of it. Life as an exile is less seasonal or settled than at home. One's life, hopes and aspirations become bound to the inherent duality of being an exile. An exile must make connections and linkages with the multidimensional world he or she inhabits.

If true exile is a condition of terminal loss, why has that loss transformed so easily into potent, even enriching, motifs of modern culture? One reason is that we have become accustomed to thinking of the modern period itself as spiritually orphaned and alienated. This is supposedly the age of anxiety and of the lonely crowd. Nietzsche taught us to feel uncomfortable with tradition, and Freud to regard domestic intimacy as the polite face painted on patricidal and incestuous rage. According to Said, the critic, George Steiner, once proposed that a whole genre of twentieth-century Western literature, a literature by and about exiles, among them Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977), and Pound,

reflects on “the age of a refugee”. Exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentred, and contrapuntal; no sooner one gets accustomed to it, when its unsettling force erupts anew. Exile is not a movement in time, but a return to a form of the one and only treasure, when it is irretrievably lost. Exile, unlike nationalism, is fundamentally a discontinued state of being (Hovesejian 1992:5). Salman Rushdie (1947-) in his book, *Imaginary Homelands* (1991:10), writes:

We will create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands and ideas for the mind. More defacement and face making, more disfiguration than identity formation.

Said (1986:44-64) is interested in how ideas and theories are transformed when they cross borders. He asks the question: How can one situate one self on the border? What kind of space characterises it? Effectively, in practice, borders are neither inside nor outside the territory. They are not really spaces at all: as the sites of difference between interior and exterior, they are points of infinite regression.

A poetic equivalent for the exile is the figure of crossing over. The fact of migration is extraordinarily impressive: that movement from the precision and concreteness of one form of life transmuted or imported into the other. Then you get to the crossing over, and the whole problematic of exile enters it. People simply do not belong in any culture and lead to that great modern, or, if you like, postmodern fact of standing outside cultural boundaries.

5.5.1. The border intellectual – the Afrikaner Dante

Breytenbach’s Afrikaner “self”-identity was deeply tied up in an almost idolatrous glorification and exaltation of the Afrikaans language itself, as distinct from both English and

the surrounding African tongues. According to Brink, Breytenbach is obviously the greatest poet of his generation, taking the Afrikaans language to places it had never been, breaking it down, breaking it open, opening it out. Ryk Hatting, a writer of the next generation, characterised Breytenbach as the Afrikaner Dante. Dante did the same thing: as a political exile he undermined the home regime by hijacking its vernacular, its very language (Weschler 1998:137-193).

As Afrikaner intellectual, Breytenbach has shared the platform with men like Bram Fisher and Beyers Naude. Early in his political involvement (before his incarceration), Breytenbach was convinced that the Afrikaner intellectual had an important role to play in the black liberation movement. In a letter written to Brink (1976:5) in 1963, he asked why the Afrikaner-intellectual was not taking on more militant or political stances. In the period after incarceration, Breytenbach again took up the task of a social critic and dissident intellectual. In an introduction to *End Papers* (1986:32) he writes:

I must keep hold of Adriane's thin inky thread, even with the tongue-taste of defeat in the mouth, because every little effort may just contribute towards destroying the old labyrinth. I must hang there, hoping to help set off some alarms somewhere, and at least to add to the quality of the selection, to keep some options open by keeping some cells alive.

By the middle of the eighties, Breytenbach (1986:99), in the essay, *The Writer and Responsibility* (1983) writes the following about the place of the writer in his society:

He is a questioner and the implacable critic of the mores and attitudes and myths of his society, but he is also the exponent of the aspirations of his people. ... From these contradictory responsibilities come the dichotomies of the writer's existence giving rise to so much tension and ambiguity.

Breytenbach (1986:184-194) in the essay, *On the ethics of resistance as a writer in a totalitarian state* (1985) writes that to be a witness, to be a revolutionary or a subversive or a heretic or a sceptic, to be a spokesperson, or a dreamer, or an interpreter: any or several of these roles may be necessary for the writer who is essential at a given moment, marginal or optional at another, depending of course on the history and the condition of the society he is part of. Always, however, the writer is a communicator. He always interacts with society.

The essence of an artwork for Breytenbach (including scepticism, irony, and doubt and questioning) is of resistance and struggle; revolt against clichés and lies of the community. If there were a moralising aspect in art, it would be in the formulation and the expression of the ethics and the aesthetics of resistance. In *Judas Eye* (1988:123-134), in the endnote, *Selfportrait/deathwatch. A note on autobiography*, Breytenbach writes:

Aesthetics flow into ethics, which leads to action. An act of beauty is a political statement.

This is living on the border and being the border intellectual. How can one situate oneself on the border? What kind of space characterises it? Borders are neither inside nor outside territory, but simply designate the difference between the two. They are not really spaces at all: as the sites of difference between interior and exterior, they are points of infinite regression. Thus, intellectuals on this site are not, so to speak, “sitting” on the border; rather they are forced to constitute themselves *as* the border, to coalesce around it as a point of infinite regression (Jouay Mohamed 1994:98).

Breytenbach (1986:128) is not only a dissident intellectual in South Africa. He is a border intellectual in Paris, New York, Amsterdam, Berlin, Essen, Stockholm, Mexico City and Africa. Of this continent he writes:

Africa, the continent where the reality of metamorphosis is paramount, where you have the chance of seeing the simplest object transformed into a votive symbol or a still point for magic; where there is a humbleness traversed by flashes of extravagant glory like flowers suddenly bursting upon an arid landscape, and the innate knack of life on the zero horizon of survival.

As border intellectual a new but more and more predominant branch of Breytenbach's work, concerns the philosophical essay, many of which are written for and in the context of the activities of the Gorée Institute. According to Sienaert (2001:82) "this Institute was set up in the early eighties when a group of influential Afrikaners met with a delegation from the then banned African National Congress in the city of Dakar. Breytenbach as instrumental in negotiating the establishment of a Pan African Institute on nearby Gorée, the small island and last foothold of slaves exported to the new world. It is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Gorée Institute operates as a think-tank for democracy, culture and development in Africa, and has since its inception been pivotal in forging links between West and South Africa, and between Zanzibar and the Centre Rimbaud in Djibouti".

5.6. The nomadic novel: *A Season in Paradise* and *Return to Paradise*. A dialogic approach

Multiculturalism is not the difference between cultures. But the difference within the same culture - within every self Think T. Mink-ha –Vietnamese-born, French-educated, Californian filmmaker (Said 1986:44)

The self-conscious and self-reflective work of Breytenbach's style of "New Writing"(1995:339), with the central characteristic creative nonfiction, where the teller testifies of firsthand experience, where there is a longing for the ghost of a moral centre (based on non-hegemonic reading) and where lateral vision operates, which sees God as "Die Gat" (The Hole) and Utopos as Continual Movement, is typified by nomadic thought.

It can also be defined in terms of decentring, collage and deterritorialization. The Nomad's itinerary is one, which knows neither a beginning nor end. All this implies a new conception of identity, namely one, which is displaced, plural, heterogeneous, unstable and reconciled to the other, metaphor for a travelling identity, sliding through boundaries and roaming the world freely. Thus the self in its endless manifestation becomes open to the other, easily reconciled to strangers. This can happen when the self becomes a stranger to itself. An appeal must be made to the poetic idea of nomads, for visualising a never-ending motion in space that is defining some elusive sense of identity in the midst of its very centre. It is this nomadic, floating, even anarchic, senses that we should understand the multiple acts of renaming, a rebirth, becoming the animal, becoming a tree that populates the world of Breytenbach's paintings.

A Season in Paradise and *Return to Paradise* are autobiographical travelogues in which Breytenbach records the places he visited and the events and the people he encountered in his 1973 and 1991-visit to South Africa. His self-conception and self-presentation, as a nomad traversing different continents physically and linguistically, is played out in the autobiographical discourse of each text. He invents himself as the text, writing about his relation to its locale. The Afrikaans people and a dying culture to which he is still deeply attached gave him his poetic voice and his became an African experience. "To be an African is not a choice, but a condition" (Breytenbach in Rizkalla 1994: 141-143).

Breytenbach's journey, however, becomes a search for the other, so that he can position himself in terms of what has been left out. He cannot relate to South Africa and its history as it stands, so he replaced his South African mask within a map that notices the other. In doing so, he translates and integrates the other back into South Africa. The autobiographical act of writing a fictionalised travelogue of a journey through South Africa was a way for Breytenbach to confront his South African Self. The autobiographical "I" in the text, is divided into a projection of self (the mask or image), which undergoes the influence of the community (Squire 1996:8-12).

5.6.1. Notes on A Season in Paradise

“Post-structuralism has opened our eyes to the strange non-presence of all seemingly positive terms and to the concept of identity. The travelogue, *A Season in Paradise*, serves as an allegory. As Derrida (1988:84) says: “it constantly says something other than what it actually does say”. This work is a bold re-assemblage of an irremediably shattered, highly complex reality a linguistic experiment for arriving at new and startling visions of the world. In truly artistic fashion, the text removes itself from the ordinary circuit of communication because the language game it takes part in is clearly not the information-giving one. The self-exploration and literary stylisation of Breytenbach’s ego is deliberately artistic and self-reflective to the extent that the text can justifiably rank as an autobiographical novel. The novel goes against the grain of our habitualized linguistic articulation of reality so that it fulfils the dual purpose of being both referential inscription and imaginative invention of a world.

A childhood reminiscence bearing the bizarre title, *Scenes from a first death in the houses of the morning*, describes his various deaths in the following manner: in a car accident he is catapulted out of the still-moving vehicle into a field, where he gets in the way of a plough drawn by a team of donkeys. The following (an early dream of shamanism) happens:

First [the donkeys] trample me and the ploughshares sliced me up all over the place on my body, but particularly through my neck, so that my head is left lying there loose to one side thus my blood soaked little body was decapitated lifelessly.

This grotesquely bizarre childhood reminiscence can also be explained semiotically, whereby it becomes an indexical sign pointing like a signpost to a fragmented, deeply disturbed memory of the “I” speaking. Such mental state, it seems, is typical of the émigré who, along with his language, is also deprived of his past. In keeping with this, Breytenbach writes of “the castration which exile is”, and because of this he regards himself as “the disintegrating seer”

equipped with “a broken vision”.

Breytenbach’s schizophrenic identification with, and dissociation from South Africa finally reaches its climax in a visit to what used to be his parents’ farm. The “I”, completely losing itself in its memories of days long past, evoke intact images of childhood from a variety of aspects. The remembrance of things past occasionally becomes so vivid as to bridge the gap, fusing the now and the then in one precious moment of wholeness at which point the two temporal dimensions coalesce:

I hear the beating of my heart, and then I listen carefully, for beyond those beats of a heart attached beat by beat to the heart of long ago, lie orchards, people, worlds, I. Then all that still exists.

At such moments Breytenbach experiences a deep feeling of affinity with “Afrikanerdom”. On the socio-political side, he is confronted with the darker side of South Africa that, he feels, is “screaming hell”. On a visit to Robert Sobukwe, a leading figure of the banned Pan-African Congress, he gets into conflict with the powers of the law. Though he is only briefly detained for interrogation and eventually let off with a caution by officers of the Bureau of State Security, the “dark angels” guarding South Africa’s hellish paradise, he is seriously frightened. The sudden realisation that the security police are recklessly omnipotent, which BOSS really does constitute the effective rulers of the South African police state and that a mere executive branches, and the legislative and the judiciary rolled into one. This caused Breytenbach to feel so utterly helpless and alienated from himself that he quite literally lost his sense of identity. He turned into a truncated, Kafkaesque abbreviation of himself, namely Breytenbach, who talks of himself in the third person:

Well, Breytenbach was quaking in his boots. In spite of his big mouth, he had but little experience at this kind of game. Had the angels decided to hack their victim to bits right then and there – who would have been the wiser? For there is no law to curb the angels.

“Identity: because of the problematic nature of Afrikanerdom, personal and collective, can never be a pre expressive or preexistent entity that is just “there”, but it must continually be made anew in acts of literary creation where the author wrests a precarious, even fluid sense of himself. That the literary projections of self should be neither coherent nor unequivocal is not surprising, in view of an ego, which conceives of itself as an “I-conoclast”. If the ego, in its autobiographical self-assessment, were to stick to one coherent level of discourse, it would, against its own intention, get ensnared in a fixed identity because of the simple pragmatic rule that an identifiable speech act requires an equally identifiable subject of utterance conforming to certain discursive rules. An ego, however, that can define itself only in the measure of its distance from its Afrikaner-identity is forced to work against such a definite absorption into the social institution of language (which, of course, it cannot quite escape) by seeking refuge in the maze-like complexity of a text where it can assume most discursive roles without reaching some final anchoring point. The ego’s consciousness, through being made to shift from one subject position to another, such as that of the poet, the narrator, the social analyst, the seer, the prodigal son, the political activist, the Afrikaner patriot, to name but a few, becomes a highly complex and elusive affair” (Rechwitz1993b: 1-23).

5.6.2. Notes on Return to Paradise

In this travelogue, which echoes Fanon’s notion of “white superiority versus black inferiority”, the aphoria of his fellow South Africans has been expressed in very strong terms by Breytenbach (1986:60). He writes that the protection of one’s purity implies the straining of one’s surroundings through a simplifying eye. By defacing others, we deface ourselves, which leads to a loss of white identity. A central chapter of the text contains his now famous address, *A View from Outside*, given at the University of Cape Town. This shows him to be one of the first white South African writers to have realised how fatal the repercussions of this faulty perception of the other will be for the whites themselves.

The problems of South African reality rooted in the *Apartheid* ideology of a mythical superiority by the whites, in the sense of a Barthean “ultra-signification” (Barthes 1957:90), are dealt with only implicitly. This means that the deformity of human identity we are confronted within the text dealt with here refers, almost, to the absurdities of this situation in South Africa, where the formation of a viable white identity is rendered almost impossible, because the identity of the other has been systematically negated right from the start.

The necessity of discarding the white monologue in South Africa in favour of an open or dialogical relationship with all other racial groups thus finds its aesthetic equivalent in a type of novel that is truly dialogical, to use Bakhtin’s terminology. Only through multiplying the numbers of questions and answers such unabashedly polymorphous novels can generate diction (a manner of uttering) upon the reader. A particular aesthetic attitude is then both the identification with, and distance from the fictional universe. Its characters coexist, side by side. It is this dual “set” that gives the readers’ egos the opportunity ‘to realise, through the reading process, the otherness of the alien one, by that experiencing in turn the own ego as enriched’(Robert 1984:75).

In the monologic novel, where the ego is capable of identifying with what is already known and where no vistas of the unknown or unknowable are opened, this opportunity simply does not exist because the reader remains within the safe confines of his own “normal” identity and the ideology supporting it.

In the polymorphous novel there are increasingly felt fluidity, and temporality of experience that results in an open future and the experience of historical existence as non-synchronous or discontinuous the multitude of different perspectives this causes. This is where memory is set into motion and this obliterates the fixed conception of history. Finally with the realisation of living in a state of transition it becomes more difficult to reconcile the traditions handed down with the innovations that are becoming necessary (Rechwitz1993b: 1-23).

5.7. Other spaces

Who are you? Even when you know the answer, it is not an easy question.

(Leon Wieseltier. *Against Identity* in Said 1984:161)

According to Laumonier (1997:20), the nomad in his search for a satisfactory place finds it in a very specific space, namely the “in-between-space”. This in-between-space will be between two worlds. It is a fact that nomadism is a “matter of the border”. They expelled Ovid for instance to the frontier between the Empire and the Barbarians. Nomadism will thus be the thoroughfare of the in-between, in the sense of “between two”.

Handke (Laumonier 1997:21) writes about the *Images of Re-taking*. In the *Chinese of Suffering*, Andreas Loser (Laumonier 1997:22) defines himself as the “seeker of a threshold”. He uses his free time to clean the thresholds of antique villas during which he considers the role of these places of a thoroughfare, which cannot be defined in any another way than in relation to the centre. On the threshold, experience is different. If you feel the pain of thresholds, it is not because you are a tourist. The experience of pain is a necessary thoroughfare to the Place.

The stroller, from Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) to Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) past Louis Aragon (1897-1982) and Leon-Paul Fargue (1976-1947), encompasses the journey in the nearby, known and ordinary worlds, a precise scouting of the ordinary banality of life. It is only when the wandering nomad is freed from communal walking that he or she can experience the real world. It is probably at the end of the nineteenth century’s strolling (*flanering*) that modern walking (nomadism), started. This is a Eurocentric condition. Breytenbach’s nomadism is not an anthropological enterprise (except in drama). Nevertheless, the other traditions are there, waiting in the wings.

The Romantic wanderer traversed through a stormy landscape to recover his own inner space. The main motif relating to the postmodern nomad (wanderer) however brings us to the notion of the outside. In this “idea world of the outside”, one has to distinguish between the subject and the “world place for the self”, probably Breytenbach’s land of MOR, which in itself is a border. The self is usually divided into two, the inside and the outside, but the nomad is not at home in either one of these spaces. Beckett (Laumonier 1997:23) testifies to this painful situation. In *The Unmentionable*, he describes the outside and an inside, and the self in the middle. All modern wandering or nomadism, from Baudelaire to Handke, rests on this notion of the outside and the subject and the self, which has become the in-between-space (Laumonier 1997:20-5).

There are many paintings in which Breytenbach conveys this concept of inside and outside. This is a transgression of traditional barriers between inside and outside. There is *The Albino (C-20)*, *Painting the eye (C-24)*, *Autoportrait (C-22)* and *Hommage devant la fenêtre (C-23)*. In these works all barriers between private and public, human and animal, female and male (compare the androgynous code in *L’oiseau tombe*), painting and writing, freedom and bondage, have been removed. The removal of barriers is also a political statement. It works subversively, because of the infiltration into the viewer’s consciousness and the resultant shifting of his or her views and concepts. In this way, a petrification of thought is held at bay. In *Judas Eye* (1988), Breytenbach writes “there is a refusal to the bringing of some new orthodoxy, some school of cultural terrorist and atrophy, another power monopoly”. This is the embodiment of anarchy.

Derrida (1995:89) writes about the *khôra*, a space that cannot be pinned down. It becomes a space for new discourses. *Khôra* is not a name. It becomes the placeholder of a space. It is not a non-place, but rather a slipping space. He writes about it in the following way:

What is this place? It is nameable? And wouldn’t it have some impossible relation

to the possibility of naming? Is there something to think there, as I have just so hastily said, and to think according to necessity?

Instead of leaving the space empty, as Derrida and Laumonier do, Breytenbach embodies a space he calls the Middleworld. The conceptualisation of this notion probably began in the early nineties, when Breytenbach and Rushdie – who was at that stage under Moslem “fatwa” instigated by the Ajatola Ghumeni for his blasphemous writing regarding Mohammed in “Satanic Verses” – were chosen to chair and co-chair the *Writer’s Parliament* which once gathered in Portugal. At that meeting the *Writer’s Parliament* considered the possibility of the idea of shelter cities, which were willing to take in writers and poets who were persecuted for expressing imaginative and factual states of their relevant societies. Here, in the shelter cities, it was thought they can write and live in a more normal way. This was one step away from the notion of the Middleworld as conceptualised by Breytenbach for the *Fernando Pessoa* lecture at the University of Natal.

Breytenbach wrote this essay at Thekwini in Natal and used it to contain his thoughts of a space where politics of the identity could be conceptualised. Ideas about art, consciousness, the watery basis of things, and political options are also aired. Although he seeks the creative moment of becoming in the spaces of consciousness and walks the nomadic way, he chooses to embody a place – the Middleworld. The space differs from Derrida’s empty *khôra* and Laumonier as endless wanderer. Fluctuations in identity, identity unravelling, tumbling national states, global capital processes are taken into account, as Breytenbach embodies a definite space (de Kock 1999:181-194). How does the painter/writer/revolutionary “philosopher” thus see consciousness as that shifting transforming event, which leads to a self that is a constantly open-ended process? The danger exists that the Middleworld itself might become a power base of the exiled or and utopia, where exiles can experience a sense of belonging. Breytenbach in the unpublished lecture (1996e) describes exiles thus –

In a recent piece of writing, typically dense and brilliant – Jacques Derrida speaks of ‘the first evil’, the night from which so many anonymous people are

struggling to emerge. Derrida goes back to Hannah Arendt's description of the *Heimatlosen*, the stateless ones, the nations of 'minorities' and the peoples without a state, and her analyses and how the principles of human rights have deteriorated. He decries the erosion of 'universal hospitality', that axiom which Kant had considered a 'cosmopolitan law'. But perhaps the situation is worse now. Derrida goes on in Walter Benjamin's words to illustrate how, in civilised states, police violence has become faceless and all-pervasive (*gestaltlos* and *nirgend fassbar*), like phantoms directing life from the shadows. ... He draws attention to the present situation in France, for instance, where there is now talk of a new legal dispensation to be called 'Thighbones law' (after Jacques Toubon, the Minister of Justice), in terms of which hospitality offered to 'illegal foreigners' (*étranger en situation irrégulière*) or simply 'without papers' (*les sans-papiers*) will be decreed a 'terrorist action'. The purpose of Derrida's text, called *Cosmopolites de tous les pays un effort!* (Cosmopolitans of the world, try one more!) is to explain and extol the proposal of 'shelter cities' (*villes-refuges*), as in Biblical times or during the Middle Ages, and to argue for their application.'

In terms of the question regarding the identity of the un-citizen, Breytenbach writes the following:

The un-citizen (Morican) will bristle with contradictions. He will have a conflictual relationship to identity – mourning perhaps the loss of it while multiplying the acquisition of other facets.

Culturally, such a person will be a hybrid. 'Purity is the opposite of integrity' (Wieseltier). This is both a precondition and a consequence. Is the hybrid (or the bastard) more tolerant? Not sure. There will be a greater understanding, yes – because he ought to have a 'natural access' to the different strains of his make-up. But often the hybrid can be very discriminating, pernickety in the itemisation of the grades of distinction.

The Middleworld person will have a vivid consciousness of being the Other, and probably be proud of it.

He will more than likely be the practitioner of nomadic thinking; at heart, most probably, he will be a nomad even if he doesn't move around much. The best

seasoned nomads are those who never travel.

In any given country he or she will be a Southerner.

If he is a writer or artist or warrior, he will practise an inventive and transformative reporting of fact, using the *self* (the 'identity') as a transient and mutating guest in his work.

He will be obliged to create concepts – the security of repetition is forbidden to him, and this is why fundamentalists of all stripes will abhor him and will want to expectorate on the very name.

He will *have a fascination for metamorphosis*: James Joyce ended up living in Mor.

He is superstitious: all gods need to be placated and survival is a matter of nurtured luck.

For him culture is a matter (the matter) of food, markets, street life, drinking parties, and he has a keen interest in clothes; he is less attracted to concert halls and to academies.

He will assiduously practise the necessary art of being invisible among the poor, but he will have nearly no patience with bureaucrats. He will have no loyalty to the state, although he may sometimes pretend to be loyal to the state, although he may sometimes pretend to be loyal to embarrass the authorities of the day. He will be attracted to fetishes. The chameleon and the parrot are emblems.

To him (her) the form – more correctly, the *posture* – is as important as the contents: He will learn the Oriental way, by imitation.

A role-playing may be significant. We can say that consideration of 'bourgeois honesty' is secondary. Appearances matter a lot. When you're blind, you don't know what 'straight ahead' means.

Consciousness, even when it is centred, is multiple.

He may be considered a criminal, and the world of thievery and pride may be his environment or predilection – as happened to Jean Genet, a prime protagonist of Middleworld un-citizenship.

He will inhabit the *nada*, and have a lifelong intimate dialogue with death. He will recognise affinities with other Middleworlders; there will be a code of sharing.

5.8. Post-colonialism

In the sky there is no east nor west. We make these distinctions in the mind, then believe them to be true (The Buddha *Lankavatara Sutra* in Molino 1988:46)

According to Welchman (1998:16-18), the sixties are regarded as the watershed in the discourse of the nomadic other, which is part of decolonization. During these years Breytenbach became involved with the quest for liberation and became familiar with feelings of displacement, peripherality and isolation. During the Apartheid years of South Africa, a further extremely crude simplifying of the other compounded the inevitable self-simplification necessary for the formation of any social system. This failure led to the system's becoming alienated from itself. The first step would be losing one's own carefully constructed identity. The paradoxical result is a sense-making operation that is increasingly uncertain about what the elements are. Negated elements are bound to become nonsensical (Rechwitz 1993:1-23).

In recognition of this strong connection Breytenbach later made a graphic work of Biko. The drawing *Untitled (C-24)*, depicts the strong persistent theme of the gallows-rope of Breytenbach's post incarceration period. It stretches behind the freedom martyr, the decapitated Biko, who had blood dripping from his neck. The drawing was used as a poster for the exhibition, *Självporträtt och andra förfäder*, (Self-portrait and other ancestors) at the Kulturhuset in Stockholm, Studio 1, which ran from 26 January to 17 March 1991. This drawing not only shows Breytenbach's excellence as portrait/self-portrait, drawer and painter, but is also a pointer to his long involvement with "the Other" and with freedom..

After Breytenbach's period of incarceration came a new alternative: the chance to root peripherality, isolation and silence in the action of resistance, to abandon all fixed ideas of settled identity and culturally authorised definitions. Breytenbach shares with the Post-Structuralists, Derrida, Jacques Lacan (1901-) and Foucault, a disappointment in the politics

of liberation: narrative, which posits an enabling *arché* and indicating *telos*, is no longer an adequate mode for plotting the human trajectory in society. Said, whom Breytenbach selects as un-citizen in the *Middleworld* essay, writes in a disillusioned way about the whole process of decolonisation. After years of support for the anti-colonial struggles in places like Algeria, Cuba, Vietnam, Palestine, Iran, that came to represent for the Western Left, their deepest engagement in the politics of philosophy of decolonisation, a moment of exhaustion and disappointment was reached. This is when one began to hear and read accounts of how futile it was to support revolutions, how barbaric the new regimes that came to power were, how much to the benefit of Moscow decolonisation had been.

With Gayatri Spivak (1942 -) and Homi Bhabha the need arose to enable a radical re-conceptualisation of the relationship between nation, culture and ethnicity. This is the soul-searching quest for identity and coming to terms with the “Other”. As Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (1930), Spivak’s *The Last Colonial Critic* (1990) and *Outside the Teaching Machine* (1993) and Bhabha’s⁸¹ *Nation and Narration* (1990) and *Location of Culture* (1994) appeared, so the debate about identity, politics, purpose and status have grown. Precursors were Breytenbach, Du Bois and the South African, Sol Plaatje (1932-1977). There was the Haarlem Renaissance of World War One (1920) and the Negritude movement of the 1940s and 1950s. Such a history would experience the need to address figures as geographically, ideologically and culturally varying as the Trinidadian C.L.R. James, who lived much of his life in London; Fanon, whom Breytenbach selected as un-citizen, was originally from Martinique but became a revolutionary activist in Algeria; African critics as differing as Chinua Achebe (1930 -) and Anta Diop and Ranajit Guha, the Indian historiographer, long based in Australia and involved with the break of the colonist rule. There is a “multiplicity of margins”, which perhaps inevitably accompanies the “coming to voice” of increasing numbers and kinds of national linguistic, religious and ethnic groups and communities on subcultures in the contemporary era (Moore-Gilbert 1998: 1-33).

81

Homi Bhabha is also included in Breytenbach’s selection of probable un-citizens.

One thinks of Faiz Ahmed Faiz in Pakistan, or Nguni wa Thiong'o in Kenya, both major artists, whose suffering did not impede the clearness of their thought, nor inhibit the severity of their punishment. In their work, a trajectory, which mimics Europe's aggrandisement of space and its penetration into Africa, is staged by the passage of a steamboat making its way into the recalcitrant interior.

Breytenbach's post-colonial concern is with perceptions of Africa and his country, South Africa. He wrote an essay, *Africa on my Mind* (Island Notes), at Gorée in March 1993. According to Sienaert (2001:80), the presence of Africa to the north of his homeland escalates in his work, as in the haunting novel *Memories of Snow and of Dust* that unfolds mostly in Ethiopia. *Return to Paradise* is similarly situated in North and West Africa, mostly in Senegal. His poetry also became imbued with themes and images from that part of the world. His paintings, too, assume a starkly brightness, displaying the warm, clear colours of Africa, and lacking all signs of the foggy greys and murky green shades that characterise his earlier European work. However, these linkages with the African soil are more than a superficial presence on the level of themes or images. He has strong views of the discourses concerning Africa. To write about Africa is to go on a journey, to be confronted by the endlessly unfolding conjugations of an elusive reality.

For Breytenbach to be in Africa, is to travel into a mythical world of invisible forces, to be among miracles, taboos and "drum-talk and water spirits and court singers and magicians unrolling before one the seamless cloth of witchcraft and "reality". The ancestors are important. For Sienaert, they have had a "profound effect on Breytenbach's understanding of the creative act of writing and paintings, and in particular on the sense of self constituted through this process. Breytenbach identifies with the African concept of ancestors and its role in ancient and contemporary forms of worship. As tribal peoples relate to their world through the prism of kinship, so Breytenbach refers to the act of writing or painting as "a dancing of the bones", thus recalling how art practices in Africa traditionally serve to confirm one's links

with the ancestors. Creative practice thus has a specific function: through one's art, a return to the ancestor creates a sense of belonging and becomes an opportunity, to renew the relationship with oneself and the world".

For him there is the discourse concerning Africa and until recently the dominant opinion in Europe was that African is the mysterious, but a well-worn link between animal and man. In the essay *Cold Turkey* (1992) Breytenbach (1996a:99) mentions the writing of Olfert Dapper and writes:

Or let us consider Africa. A few months ago I finished an African journal. In the process of writing I came across some old documents – including ‘The Large Illustrated Description of Africa’ by Olfert Dapper, publishers in Amsterdam in 1668. In it are to be found the most outlandish descriptions of exotic animals, like the unicorn, or another with the body of a wolf and a man's legs, and of tribes who walk on their heads with their feet in the air, as also others with their mouths and eyes in their bellies. The thought struck me that to the world at large Africa has always been a dark hinterland of the psyche, perforce unexplored, a sunken continent of the unknown or the subconscious upon which to project all the delicious phantasies of magic and death. An updated variation of this fabulation is, to the outside world, the depictions of present-day Africa as a continent where dying is a mass pastime, best left alone to its starvation, desertification, tribal wars, AIDS, and the implosion of its social structures.

Sienaert (2001:84) states that “when Africa is enriched and not dispersed by its inherent diversity, it mirrors the identity Breytenbach aspires too through the creative act of writing or painting. As suggested by the image of the nomad or chameleon, the diversity of Africa evokes our potential to change, and by implication to grow. It highlights the polyphony of voices in a poem or painting which offers no reassuring sense of closure, but a wealth of possible readings. It is a subject position that recalls the right of the individual to seek out different possibilities and to transform. Whilst acknowledging our inability to define the

ultimate (social or aesthetic) Utopia, this African diversity offers a form of identity which promotes the “Middel Way”: an awareness of the world”.

We continue our post-colonial discourse and return to the great representative of the process of awareness of the “the other”, Fanon.

5.8.1. The Other

To love the Other is to speak of the lost space of memory.

The real revolutionary question is What about the Other? To hold onto one of the essential frontiers, the navel-string running between you and me, this quotation from Leopoldo Maria Panero in *El País* of 25 April 1987: ‘Here then already the perception of other is a question of life and death’. We must avoid the pitfall of one unique reality where the other is nothing more than a symptom of nothingness (*la nada*). Thus, when a man is cured, he pretends to have forgotten. Freud, on the contrary, wrote “Wo es war, soll ich werden” – there where it was, I shall become. ... Which means to say that I’m neither mad nor cured but rather a man who, like Jonah comes naked and frightened from the chemical whale, carried as a memory to all the people I know. (Breytenbach 1996:117)

One of the founders of the Black Liberation Movement was Fanon. He continues to play an important role in the expression of ideals by black intellectuals. The current President of the South African Republic, Thabo Mbeki’s (1942-) address, given on the occasion of the *Oliver Tambo Memorial Lecture*, in March 2000, testifies to this. His lecture, which is a plea for the development of black intellectualism during the current Renaissance Mission in Africa, is based on Fanon’s work and thought.

Breytenbach shares this respect for Fanon with Thabo Mbeki. As philosopher and psychoanalyst, revolutionary and writer, Fanon is regarded as the voice of the Third World.

He dedicated his short but eventful life to freedom, being one of the twentieth-century's most important social philosophers. The following important stadia can be identified in his work. Firstly, the search for black identity in *Black Skin, White Masks*, where he makes an analysis of racism, while studying psychiatry in France. Secondly, the struggle against colonialism as explained in *A Dying Colonialism* and *Toward the African Revolution*, essays Fanon produced when he was actively engaged in Algeria's War of Independence. And thirdly, the process of decolonisation is analysed in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The book extends insights gained in Algeria to Africa and the Third World (Wyrich 1998).

Those remembering Fanon invests him with mythical status. Since his death he either has been regarded as a prophetic voice of the Third World or reviled as an exterminating angel, the inspiration to violence in the Black Power Movement. The future will show if the persona of Breytenbach takes on similar mythical and archetypal meaning in the mind of the Afrikaner.

The work and concepts of neither Breytenbach nor Fanon can be allocated to one political movement or moment nor can they easily be placed in the seamless narrative of the freedom movement. Both Breytenbach and Fanon, in their perception of external alienation of the individual have come up with a restless urgency in their writing and a search for a conceptual form that is appropriate to the social antagonism of the colonial relation, as suggested by Benjamin (Wyrich 1998:101). For both Breytenbach and Fanon it is not the exception but the rule; the language spoken is the revolutionary awareness of the state of emergency, in which the alienated, those who have to live under the surveillance of a sign of identity and fantasy, have to live under circumstances that denies their difference. For both of them memory is a process of disorientation; it is the putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present. It is the memory of the history of race and racism, colonialism and the question concerning cultural identity. By shifting the focus of cultural racism and politics of nationalism to the politics of the other, Breytenbach and Fanon cross a border, which causes a subversive slippage of identity and authority. Nowhere is this slippage more visible than in their works.

Reading Fanon, as with the reading and viewing of Breytenbach's work and paintings is to experience the sense of division that prefigure and fissures any sense of identity. With both men we find the emergence of a truly radical thought that never dawns without casting an uncertain shadow. For Fanon, man and society is fundamentally undermined in the colonial situation, where everyday life exhibits a "constellation of delirium" that mediates the normal social relations of its subjects. The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man by his superiority; both behave according to a neurotic orientation.

Fanon's psychiatric method involves curing the inhabitant to experience himself as a stranger in his own country. The Arab, living as an alien in Algeria, which has been, colonised by the French, experiences a continual state of depersonalisation. For Fanon there is a certain condition that underlie an understanding of the process of identification in the analytic of desire. Identities are never an *a priori*, nor a finished product. They are only the problematic processes of access to an "image of totality".

Breytenbach's art illustrates this problematic of the image of totality. Both Fanon and Breytenbach use the image of the mask to convey the complexities of identity. Breytenbach adds the image of the mirror. As elsewhere in both his art and writing, these images of interchangeability and metamorphosis persistently foreground the question of identity. The theme of the androgynous also absorbs and dissolves the notion of opposites contained in *Other and I*. The series of *mirror angles* testify to this.

For Breytenbach identity has become transposable and is in every way just as problematic as Fanon's quest for understanding the white "I" and the dark "Other". Fanon's questioning of identity opened the way to a much more complicated network of questions regarding post-colonial identity. "When Breytenbach paints his *king breyten* series (C25-28), the nomadic aspect of the painter is fore-grounded. The series forms a unit because of the similarity of size

and the medium (watercolour on board), but as suggested by the portrayal of masks, the different headgear worn in each portrait underlines the idea of a shifting persona, or the way in which identity can be assumed and then again discarded. Although all five portraits bear the same title, none of the facial features portrayed here, are recognisably those of the artist” (Sienaert 2001:70). All of them, however, are “king”. All are superior and there is no hierarchical placing. They are the fugitive *nadaists* and nomads on their way to keep their appointment with death.

There is a constant fascination with the “Other”: in women, ethnicity which represents modern European thought (the Jewish and the Blacks) and the non Western world, instances of the repressed languages. The whole issue of the Afrikaners’ language, which has become a minority issue, is an example of this. Voices, which are never heard in the mainstream of the Western modernising process, are becoming important. Public discourse is constantly represented by the “Other” or confronted with the “Other”. These new discourses that are post Nietzschean, point to the end of traditional critique. The new alternative stems from a communal point of departure. It is almost unnecessary to mention that Breytenbach has a lifelong commitment to “the hermeneutics of suspicion” and to unmasking perceptions of reality. Breytenbach is continually becoming the post-colonial intellectual, for whom Orwell’s division of the intellectual’s place in society into “inside and outside” the whale, no longer applies. Post colonial “reality” for Breytenbach can best be described in Rushdie’s terms of “whale ness”, meaning that he now finds himself in a world without quiet corners, where there can be no escape from history, from the hullabaloo, from terrible, unquiet fuss. Rushdie (1947-)(1986:51-52) writes about being “outside the whale”:

Outside the whale is the unceasing storm, the continual quarrel, and the dialectic of history. Outside the whale there is a genuine need for political fiction, for books that draw new and better maps of reality, and make new languages with which we can understand the world. Outside the whale we see that we are all irradiated by history, we are radioactive with history and politics; we see that is

can be as false to create a political free fictional universe as to create one in which nobody needs to work or eat or love or sleep. Outside the whale it becomes necessary and even exhilarating to grapple with the special problems created by the incorporation of political material, because politics is by turns farce and tragedy, and sometimes both at once. Outside the whale the writer is obliged to accept that he or she is part of the crowd, part of the ocean, part of the storm, so that objectivity becomes a real dream, like perfection, an unattainable goal for which one must struggle in spite of the impossibility of success. Outside the whale is the world of Samuel Beckett's famous formula: *I can't go on, I'll go on.*

It is from the position of being “outside the whale” that Breytenbach for his “exhibition of selves” at the Durban Art Gallery in 1998, paints/writes a poem written in a circular form that recalls the shape of both a hand-held mirror and a fingerprint. “It thus poses the question of identity to the poet-as-artist and to the viewer (*head fish - C-29*). The recurring image of the mirror used with mirror writing is exemplary in this regard. The notion of mirroring is essential to Breytenbach's perception of creative practice. In both writing and painting, whatever one depicts or describe becomes a mirror of the self, it reflects who and what one is, that which one has consciously recognised and assimilated (Breytenbach 1991:76). Like the recurring image of the mask, the mirror persistently problematised the question of identity as it arises through art practice; it is an image that evokes the ultimate mysteriousness of being, and the absurdity of trying to establish the sense of a fixed ‘I’” (Sienaert 2001:69).

“In a similar vein, *self times six (C-30)* is divided by lines of mirror writing into two equal parts, each containing three separate and nonidentical self-portraits. The side view of a bird head in the top left corner is clearly self-referential, as it not only caricatures Breytenbach's own profile, but also evokes the “Mr Bird” he often uses to refer to himself. The lines of mirror writing in this work replace the pictorial image of the looking glass; they literally function as a mirror to reflect the various portrayals of self to each other” (Sienaert 1998:43).

“With Breytenbach, self-representation exploits the process and questions the way in which *self* relates to *other*. In the etching, *Dr Livingstone, I presume (C-31)*, opposition between the two figures facing each other is pre-empted by the fact that both are half-white and half black (and hairy), thus each contain a part of the other. The white mask on the black face and the ‘savage’ darker mask on the white face stress the same point. The “I” is contained in the other, similar to the way in which the moon is contained within the sun floating above the two figures. In Breytenbach’s work, cognition has always required this play of opposites, the *other* acts as the necessary opposite through which *I* can know myself. The mirror-writing in the lower half the work underscores the understanding that in the constitution of self we are not only mirrors of each other, but also act as mirrors *for* each other. We constitute each other and the world. No single person is an autonomous entity” (Sienaert 1998:44).

5.9. *Ars poetica*

In this chapter, the inter-textual “events” of the hybridist, the exile, the un-citizen, the nomad and the nadaist are called Breytenbach. The aspect of Zen Buddhism, which he embraces, must not be forgotten, as it is one of the important organising principles of the dialectical process. According to this notion the “I” is also not the “I”, nothing is everything, death is life, love is hate and black is white. In *Lotus* (1970b), Breytenbach describes this nothing that flows over as “the eruption of light/which brings darkness”. Furthermore, every work he wrote and painted constitutes a number of “gestures” in his quest for exploring an identity in a history he has lost. Fragments of his own numerous identities are placed in a palimpsest of images, where they become fugitive pieces. Just as Kierkegaard’s as aesthete flourish on fragmentation, so does Breytenbach. There is no way he will allow the ticket of identity to be hung around his neck. His memories are contingent and a provisional record, and his longing are for Africa. The “memoir” of his life can no longer construct a full portrait of its biographical subjects and his country of birth. Already he has settled in the utopia of the Land of Mor. Never does he write or paint about a coherent identity. Said (1994: xxix) has argued

that identity is too static and centripetal a concept to accommodate the merging of cultures in the post-colonial world. Partly because of an empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure. All are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinary, differentiated and unmonolithic. Cultural forms are hybrid, mixed, impure.

Any linear narrative leading to closure would falsify the combination of cultural discourse. Mongrel subject, mongrel text and mongrel paintings are mutually constitutive. The mirror and the image and the metaphor, become the vessel, which accommodates “the Other”. Lastly, a post-colonial epistemological approach to Breytenbach’s *œuvre* could be summed up in the epigraph Michael Ondaatje (1943-) chooses for his novel, *In the Skin of the Lion* (1988).

Never again will a single story be told as though it were the only one.

For Breytenbach (1996a: 166) in *The Memories of Birds in Times of Revolution* (1989),

We are split personalities – sequentially, often simultaneously. We may turn our back in disgust on previous selves, but they hang around our neck like lovesick shadows. Like Rwandese attempting to walk away from disappearance. Like Cuban *balseros* paddling towards Babylon’s shore of neon-lit illusions.

What I call ‘self’ can only be the thread stitching change to change. And death is no ending, it is the final self. The end product when light at last falls short.

In other words, what one brings forth from the self – which is change incarnated – is death. The words exhaled constitute the breath of death. ‘Life’ is anyway only the illumination of the infinite variations, nuances, explorations, back tracking, and slowness of dying.

5.10. Summary

Breytenbach portrays his “sharded self in his paintings. He does not depict the stable self. “Sharding” stands for nomad life and growth. A self that is not fixed, multiplies. Multiplicities enhance Breytenbach’s point of departure of being against fixity.

Zen Buddhism forms a primary inter-text in Breytenbach’s work. According to Buddhism, our grasping intellect, which subdivides the universe into individual, fixed concepts, presents a major obstacle for the attainment of Enlightenment. Differentiation of an object, which includes the constitution of a separate individual ego, is considered to be an illusion and an enemy to overcome. Within the Zen tradition, the intuitive knowledge is often compared to the opening of a third eye. Numerous paintings and drawings of Breytenbach depict the third eye.

Breytenbach refused to accept a specific identity during the time he was imprisoned. This caused utter confusion for the warders. However, it revealed how dependent regimes are on fixed identities. The conventional idea of identity is based on the existence of a structure, which remains more or less the same throughout life. The teleological structure of the self and of life was shattered by Breytenbach’s prison experience. He had to rely on rhythms and routines to understand his experience. Numerous alter figures and aliases were developed to give voice to his experience. Breytenbach plays with the notion of the eye in his paintings. He uses it to refer to his own transposable identity.

The notion of an unstable identity is currently an important point of debate in art, literature, politics, cultural studies, and is voiced by the words hybridity, Creoleness and bastardness. Breytenbach opts for an aesthetics of pluralism and hybridness. His oeuvre takes on a mongrel

form and he writes that culturally he is a bastard. All these notions imply mixed breeding. According to this point of departure there is no such thing as a pure race. The concept of purity cannot be applied to Breytenbach's aesthetic outlook.

Breytenbach is the painter, writer and thinker about death. The deepest structures of the psyche are found in the themes of descent to the realm of death. In old societies it was the shaman who descended to these regions in order to heal the psychic malaise of his people. Although Breytenbach seldom refers to the shaman, he is aware that he has a certain trickster role to play. The trickster can be associated with the clown. The image of the androgynous clown is one which Breytenbach is continually portraying. Breytenbach is addressing the question of fixity by depicting this emblem as both male and female.

As an exile it has provided Breytenbach with numerous working motifs of which memory is perhaps the most important. Exile perpetuates the illusion of motion and destroys the mummified vision of the self. Exile is life led outside the habitual order. It is nomadic, de-centered and contrapuntal. Exile, unlike nationalism, is fundamentally a discontinued state of being. To be in exile implies crossing the border. Breytenbach is not only a dissident intellectual in South Africa. He is a border intellectual in Paris, New York, Amsterdam, Berlin, Essen, Stockholm, Mexico City and Africa.

Breytenbach conceptualized an important space for those who have left fixed and comfortable zones behind. He refers to this space as MOR. This is the Middleworld. The Middleworld person is usually an exile who bristles with contradictions and has a problematic relationship with identity. He is a hybrid who is the practitioner of nomadic thinking. He often uses the self as a transient and mutating guest in his work. He has a fascination with metamorphosis.

Breytenbach's post-colonial concern is with the perceptions of Africa, and his country. Also, his relationship with the "other". In his essay on Middleworld people, Breytenbach refers to Fanon, one of the founders of the Black Liberation Movement. For Fanon, man and society is fundamentally under minded in the colonial situation, where everyday life exhibits a "constellation of delirium" that mediates the normal social relations of its subjects. The Negro is enslaved by his inferiority and the white man by his superiority. They behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation. Identities are never a finished product. They are only engaged in the problematic processes of access to an "image of totality". Breytenbach's art illustrates this problematic of the image of totality (fixity). Breytenbach sees the self as a thread stitching change to change.

CHAPTER SIX: THE MIRROR.

Poetry is like leaving a pebble outside your front door to mark your residence and when you return in the evening you find a stone. And isn't the moon a stone (Breytenbach 1996a:14)

6.1. Reality and consciousness.

I repeat – and now I'm precisely talking about frontiers: the writer works with the essential and incomprehensible protomatter: awareness. He is consciousness - expanding agent (Breytenbach 1996a:70).

Both Breytenbach and Kitarō Nishida(1870-1945), the Japanese philosopher, are concerned with writing and thinking about reality. Both of them agree that reality is harboured in consciousness. There is, however, a degree of difference between these two thinkers. Nishida (1990: 20-27), when entering philosophical discourse limits himself to a single notion of reality as it presents itself in consciousness, while Breytenbach is concerned with many realities that are all aspects of consciousness. In an address in New York, *The Long March from Hearth to Heart* during 1990, Breytenbach (1996a:38-49) writes:

My minimum definition of the writer would be: he or she who creates written things transformed into, as many realities as there are readers. Writing then is also the making of mirrors, the forging of hopes, the depository and deposition of memory, the insistence upon a guideline, iconoclasm, the making of prototypes from stereotypes, a grave game fraught with consequences, the small talks of sorrow, inventing sunsets, the sacred gluttony for the mother tongue, a way to redistribute differences, a flight of fancy. True, it is at the same time a glacialisation of guilt, and often the dream gets chucked out with the dirty water of art, and writing can be a plagiarism of thinking or silence made of bangs and snorts, and no poetry has ever allowed a paralytic to walk (except with the truth of the mind). But the white fire exists.

Nishida (1990:44) states that the Eastern way of thinking is qualitatively different from the Western, with its emphasis on verbal and conceptual expression. This separation from language and rational thought is typically found in Zen, which conveys its basic standpoint with the statement: “Non-reliance on words or letters; a special transmission apart from doctrinal teaching”. The same attitude appears in Confucius (551 BC.) (Molino 1998:34), who claimed: “Clever talk and pretentious manner are seldom found in the Good”. We encounter it in ink drawings that negate form and colour, *Noh* Theatre with its negation of direct or external expression, and in Japanese *wake* and *haiku* poetry. The Eastern approach must be sought in non-thinking beyond thinking and non-thinking.

To generate a creative synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophy, one must include, but also go beyond, the demonstrative thinking that is characteristic of the West, both arriving at un-objectifiable ultimate reality and giving it a logical articulation by conceptually expressing the inexpressible. Normally, we believe that two types of experiential facts exist, phenomena of consciousness and phenomena of matter, but there is only phenomena of consciousness.

Breytenbach who is very much concerned with the notion of memory who sees images and metaphors as the building blocks of consciousness, says in *The Long March* that one should not discourse on the nature of the real. That, in fact, reconstructing the real is not possible, as the very process of re-memberment becomes reality. He also knows that dreams have a meaning, because their field of reference is the charted area of experience, “however warped the mirror”. He has become “hooked on the inner logic of dreams”. Dreams for him draw the outside border, a “means of *dépassement*” (overtaking) (Breytenbach 1996a:46).

For Nishida reality is established by means of that which opposes it, but opposition here does not come from other things. It comes from within reality itself. As it has been said before, reality is the activity of consciousness. According to the usual view, however, the activities

of consciousness appear only at particular times and then suddenly disappear, making it impossible for the same activities of consciousness of being eternally linked together. Reality comes into being through interrelationships and the universe is the sole activity of the sole reality. Virtue of unity establishes consciousness within a certain sphere. Many people do not believe that such a unity exists outside that particular sphere. For instance, some believe that consciousness is totally independent and that there is only a single instance of consciousness.

6.2. Zen and the direct pointing to reality.

Zen Buddhism profoundly influenced Breytenbach's thoughts regarding aesthetics and living in the world. In a volume of prose, *Die miernes swel op ja die fox-terrier kry 'n weekend en ander byna vergete katastrofes en fragmente uit 'n ou manuskrip van Breyten Breytenbach* (1980), Breytenbach states that reality is in itself the way of experiencing, of seeing. His way of writing is *New Writing*, his way of painting and drawing is *New Realism* and his way of social criticism is *New Criticism* (not to be confused with the literary movement of the *New Criticism*). He accepts pain as an integral part of the realities of life and sees life as a "shit-sandwich [sic] that is interesting". Yet the dreams of other worlds on the one side and the distortion or de-realisation of "reality" on the other, a Zen Buddhist dialectical principle, point to the intermingling of reality and fiction in Breytenbach's work.

Buddhism is the way of attaining a direct realisation of the truth. Based on the highest teaching of the Buddha, it was taken in the sixth century AD from India to China, where it became known as "direct pointing to the heart of man". This direct pointing is to the living experience of reality, to a life unmediated by words or ideas. Zen points to a specific state of awareness in which the mystery and beauty of life at this very moment are perceived wholly and directly and with pure objectivity. It is also a metaphysical path, but expresses reality. It does not offer theological explanations, but finds its notions of truth regarding reality in

everyday conversation. Advice is also important. On how to act to reality, Ummom (Molino 1998:67) says:

**When walking just walk,
When sitting just sit,
Above all, do not wobble.**

The age-old problem of how to live in the world and yet find liberation, is dealt within this fashion: Bokaju's disciples once asked: "We have to dress and eat every day, and how can we escape from all that?"

The master replied, "We dress; we eat".

"We do not understand".

"If you do not understand, put on your clothes and eat your food".

The usual conceptual mode of thinking is upset by the apparently unsatisfactory advice given in this last statement. The logical mind has nothing to feed on. Intellect and imagination are told to come to a halt, so that eating and dressing can be experienced as it really is.

6.2.1. Paradox.

Bancroft (1979:22) states that because Zen wants to loose us from the grip of concepts (also regarding reality), to shatter the rigid thought-forms in which we seek to possess life, it also uses contradiction and paradox. When Joshy, a great Zen master, was asked what he would give a poverty-stricken man who came to him, he replied, "What is his need?" When he was asked once, "When a man comes to you with nothing, what would you say to him?" His instant reply was, "Throw it away!" Our intellect may make little of this, but our innate sense of being, which is what Zen is trying to awaken, will recognise immediately that this man is presenting "nothing" as personal belonging.

Tortoise Step was a paper presented by Breytenbach at an International PEN meeting in Lugano, Switzerland, in May 1987. In this address, Breytenbach (1996a: 10-19), embraces the notion of the Middle Way in his interpretation of reality. In his reflection about the nature of reality and the paradoxical aspects of the world, he thinks back to the time of incarceration and a verse written by a Buddhist philosopher, Maitreya. He writes the following:

**It is not suggested
That all the elements are unreal,
Nor that they are all reality;
Because there is being
And also non-being
And (again) being:
This is the Middle Way!**

He also writes that one should read these lines in the context of arguments on the nature of reality. He also asks if this is not the inquiry of our flow of awareness, this need to apprehend, explore and define reality? What strikes him about the Middle Way, the way he at least understands it, is the necessity of movement; it is a line along which one should *go*.

6.2.2. The denial of opposites.

ThPi-Mo, a noted master of the tenth century, used to carry a forked *chu-pi* and, whenever a monk came up to him and made a bow, he would put the stick to the neck of the monk and say, “What devil taught you to be a homeless monk. What devil taught you to walk about? Whether you can say something or whether you cannot, just the same you must die under my fork: speak, speak, and be quick!” This “Speak, speak!” (used by many masters) is again an attempt to awaken the true person. Most of our days are spent responding to the world in ways, we think it expects of us. We have a number of characteristics adding up to a “personality”, but no acquired aspect of ourselves has a chance to respond to the peremptory,

“Speak, speak!” Only the person who confronts reality has a chance of survival here (Bancroft 1979).

In these ways, Zen denies all attempts to rationalise it, make sense of it, or turn it into a philosophy. It compares man’s desire to grasp life intellectually to a finger pointing at the moon. The finger is continually being mistaken for the moon itself. Breytenbach has used this metaphor countless times. He also made an enchanting painting *le Pêcheur (The Angler)*(BM-1), in recognition of the moon and the finger image he often uses. Zen shows an amused indifference to the worldly goals of men. The Zen outlook has it that all is equally whole. Even straw mats and horse dung. To distinguish one of life’s aspects from another and make it more important is to fall into dualistic error rather than reality. A famous Zen poem reads:

**The perfect way knows no difficulties
except that it refuses to make preferences:
Only when it is freed from hate and love
it reveals itself fully and without disguise:
A tenth of an inch’s difference,
A tenth of heaven and earth are set apart.
If you wish to see it with your own eyes
have no fixed thought either for or against it.**

The classic instance of such an attitude is the arrival in China of Bodhidharma, a renowned Indian Buddha of the sixth century that came to teach Zen and stayed to become China’s First Zen Patriarch. On arrival, the Emperor Wu, a Buddhist convert, received him and related all that he had done in the way of building temples, translating the scripture, and converting men and women to monastic life. He asked Bodhidharma what merit this would bring him and was very put out by that uncompromising monk’s reply: “None whatever. A true deed of merit comes straight from the heart and is not concerned with worldly achievement”.

“What is this holy religion all about?” Asked the Emperor.

“Vast emptiness, and there is nothing holy in it”.

Such an answer is of the same nature as the one given to the novice who made a respectful remark about the Buddha. To one who practices Zen any such notion as “holy” or “Buddha” is a trap, implying the reality of such things when in fact they only exist as notions in the mind. The Zen way of teaching is to show reality rather than talk about it, and is always to be taken seriously. When Buddhism came to China, it brought with it strands of its own cultural background. The Buddha was an Indian prince of the sixth century BC, and Indian religion has always been characterised by the quest to find the one behind many, the absolute reality of the universe beyond all opposites. In ordinary life all things and experiences have opposites – life is opposed to death, night to day, pleasure to pain, light to darkness. However, in Hindu religion reality has no opposites, it is non-dual, and man is delivered from suffering and death, when he realises his identity with reality (Bancroft 1979).

In the poetry, *Die ysterkoei moet sweet* (1964a), Breytenbach wrote a beautiful poem *blomme vir boeddha* (flowers for Buddha), where he described the act of breathing in the void that leads to tranquillity. It reads as follows:

flowers for buddha

**(I) breathe in (I) breathe
out (I) breathe the all
in
and
out
and smell the clusters of minosa moons
yellow like summer
and the quiet quietness
before your forehead
like summer in the midday hour

(I) breathe in a summer of quietness
and the fragrance of clusters of minosa moons**

an all

in

and

out

and

in

6.2.3. Thahata (such- ness) and sunyata (the void):

In the second chapter of this thesis, Breytenbach's interaction with *thahata* and *sunyata* and the presentation of these notions in his art and writings were discussed. In this chapter however, seeing how the above notions interact with reality is important.

To speak about reality at all, Mahajana used the notions, *thahata* and *sunyata*, to describe emptiness as a dynamic living void-ness, ungraspable and timeless, the true nature of which is unknown. He sensed the such-ness of life, not by thought, and when apprehending it realised its voided nature. This state of non-grasping and freedom from craving is both spiritual and psychological (Bancroft 1979).

To enter the void implies eating up the "I", a notion on which Breytenbach wrote this poem:

nirvana

then the guatama buddha sat under a tree
and said: I
will not get up from here
before I have
eaten up my 'I'
and by the evening of the umpteenth day
the bodhi tree was covered with red figs

and he got up and made love to the sky
and stuck flowers in the earth's hair
and kissed the water and
laughed at the reflection of his face
so that his cheeks were wet

Only when the reality of the "I", the ego, personality and form have been eaten up, can the living entity experience, the reality of the moment laden with beauty. This was the secret of Breytenbach's experience of the prison void.

6.2.4. Satori⁸² and zazen⁸³.

Zen came into being through the merging of essential reality of life (that the essential reality of life can be discovered through non-attachment to any of its particular forms) and the Taoist view that achievement of harmony of life can be realised by letting go of it. Life should be free to be itself. The aim of Zen training is to attain the state of consciousness, which occurs when the individual ego is completely emptied of itself and identified with the infinite reality of all things. This experience, known by its Japanese name of *satori*, is the state of consciousness in which noble wisdom realises its own inner nature. Noble wisdom is an immediate seeing into the nature of things instead of the usual understanding through analysis and logic. The miracle of *satori* harmonises all contradiction, and the experience involves the whole person and is not a mere psychological insight or highly charged ecstasy.

82

Enlightenment; the moment of truth; of the realization that truth can not be known – unless in the implied duality of "truth-untruth": but this is impossible because duality is exactly that which is transcended by Satori

83

"Sitting cross-legged in meditation" (Japanese). The body is immobilized in the traditional Lotus Posture, breathing is regulated, and all thinking, desires, attachments and judgments are suspended. Dogen, the 13th Century Zen master and founder of the Soto sect in Japan, considered *zazen* not only to be a method of moving towards Enlightenment, but ideally to constitute Enlightenment itself.

Strictly speaking Zen does not believe that any method can awaken the mind to reality, because this infers a self-conscious attempt to grasp something that is already present, and methods are considered as misleading as “putting legs on a snake”. On the other hand, the technique of *zazen* has emerged over the centuries, particularly in Japan, as a successful (many would say necessary) discipline that enables the mind to settle into itself in a way realised, yet attentive, free and yet concentrated.

In *zazen*, the usual stance of the pupil in the yoga position is crossing the legs while sitting on the floor. Slow, rhythmic breathing (sometime counting the breath is used as an aid) is required as he or she brings his mind to a state free from ideas and chatter (Bancroft 1979).

Breytenbach has made many art works where he depicts himself in the *zazen* position. In *Voice la saison (Here is the season) (BM-2)*, where he wrote the following words on the canvas:

*voici la saison où ceux qui doivent mourir mourront et les autres qui vivent encore
ont vivre une peau continuera (here the season is the one who has to die ...)*

He painted himself in the typical *zazen* position. In this work Breytenbach is the androgynous figure carrying the sacrificial lamb in his arms. By using the biblical metaphor of Christ the Lamb, bringing forgiveness for mankind’s sins by sacrificing his own body, he infers his own role in the South African society. Another work in which the typical *zazen* position is assumed is the collage, *L’emballage (The wrapping) (BM-3)*, a nude male figure which suggests the artist’s vulnerability.

Zen is not concerned with the idea of the Buddha or God, but with the reality of the human being. The true human being is not concerned with what he can get out of life, but with what life is in itself, and he lives according to his knowledge.

6.3. Realities of utopia

Like art, utopian thought has always survived its premature burials and, at times, it has staged quite spectacular resurrection from the no-place, the no-where's on the maps of social and cultural life. In our century, the discourse of the end of utopia is endemic to the utopian imagination as versions of other worlds, other times, and other states of mind. Utopian thought survived the declaration in the *Communist Manifesto*. It survived its withering away in scientific Marxism, only to return within the Marxism of the Twentieth century, in the work of Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno (1903-1969), Jean-Richard Bloch (1884-1947) and Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) among others (Huysen 1995: 50-60).

According to Galloway (1990) Breytenbach had an enduring interest in Marxism. During the sixties, he denounced capitalism as economic ideology and set himself against Afrikaner-Nationalism (as manifested in the Apartheid system) as political ideology. He identified himself with socialism and often by implication with Marxist political views in a broader sense. He stated, however, that he was not a member of the banned South African Communist Party. On the surface it seems as if his political statements and views on the function of art were not a systematic part of the orthodox Marxist-Leninist thought, but rather an eclectic gathering of the more basic points of departure of the young Marx before the interpretation by Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) and Lenin.⁸⁴ Tendencies in modern European Marxist theory, characteristic of the libertine-socialistic Anarchism and Maoism. Central codes in creative and political texts can probably be linked to the early Marx of human-directed and involved with relationships (dialectics). A further aspect is the annulment of the oppositions – tangible/intangible and spirit/body. There is the focus on the condition of estrangement and the debouching in the mutilated state of human existence; the materialistic view of history.

84

Lenin in his work "On proletarian Culture", states that the art work should be imbued with the spirit of the class struggle being waged by the proletariat for the successful achievement of the aims for its dictatorship, i.e, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the abolition of classes and the elimination of all forms of exploitation of man by man.

Of the European Marxist theories, it is specifically the Marxist-humanistic views and themes that Breytenbach embraces. This points to an involvement with the character of consciousness and the view of man as a historical agent. Although he is unable to transform history according to his wishes, he remains the creator of social, political and economic instances. Secondly, there are the themes of estrangement, man in his relationship to nature and human suppression, as well as the role of those who regard aware-making as their mission.

Galloway (1990:44) also writes that Breytenbach is constant revolting against establishment and all its caretakers namely the rulers, masters, the rich, academics, critics, cultural leaders and other opinion makers. He is also against all tormentors, suppressers and exploiters of man. These he describes as members of the State, politicians, officials, soldiers, police, wardens, enquiring officials and “sharp judges” echoes the intrinsic characteristics of anarchism.

In light of his exploration and identification with Eastern philosophy, Zen Buddhism and Taoism, Breytenbach is receptive to the influence of the Maoist revolutionary movement with its religious inclination and strong conception of being involved with cultural phenomena. In some of his political texts, he writes about Mao Tse-tung.

Breytenbach (1984d:62) spoke and wrote against the Moscow variant of Marxism and against Stalinism. He was also very critical of the South African Communist Party–faction in the ANC that he saw as one of the most rigid and loyal followers of the foreign policies of Moscow.

Stalinism, in this sense, means to be doctrinaire; always to follow ‘Mother’s line, however often it may be revised or changed; and to be bureaucratic in the extreme. Also to be non-democratic by means of the astute formula of centralised democracy.

Breytenbach, who as young poet, writer, painter and political activist had high hopes of changing societies through art, has become disillusioned. When Breytenbach recalls the movements of a century in the play, *Life and Times of Johnny Cockroach*, he addresses some ideological stances and the main protagonist's disillusionment with these strong views, which shaped this century's history and its misery. In an address at Capri during 1994, "Writing the Darkening Mirror", (1996a:7) Breytenbach writes:

As the ground of received wisdom gives way under your feet you become more painfully aware of inconsistencies in that made-up individual discerned in the mirror, the presentable one that you tried to memorise and project as the historical first person singular. We have been deceived by the big picture held up by prophets and charlatans – communism, fascism, nationalism, liberalism, democracy: this conspiracy of ideologies ostensibly imposing a pattern upon history. The big kill intended to confer a purpose upon small deaths.

I do know now that my painting and writing could not have made much difference to the struggle: you can neither sublimate nor console others in the rawness of their lives. Artistic creations do not reflect life, they are *lifelike* – and constitute a life of their own. I'd love to think that I participated in the making of dreams. The tracing of the true movements of the heart, though, is the drawing of a broken and twisted line of existence.

In a conversation with Anton Basson after a lecture, *A Partial Reading of South Africa*, on 23 August 1990, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Breytenbach (Basson 1990:6-9) said that, in Spain, in the late Thirties, there was a strong, structured movement with a strong ideological basis, relatively near to the Communism of that time, but still quite separate. He was talking about anarchism. If he could identify in a way with anarchism it would be with older unions, labour unions that were working for political parties. In a sense, Duruti, one of the Spanish leaders during the civil war on the Republican side, tried to preserve certain desperate notions of purity. He and others could not allow themselves to be corrupted by compromise. They were interested in power and they never let go of their convictions. Nevertheless, he does not see himself as an anarchist. Basson wanted to know in which way Breytenbach reconciled the

flux of the Zen approach with the relative stability expected from policy making? The language of politics tries to contain reality while Zen questions this kind of action. Breytenbach answered that Zen tries to cut the roots as deep as possible.⁸⁵ Zen also appears as the “Mahajana-Buddhism”. Mahajana is a splitting of the whole Buddhist world. “Mahayana” is what Tibetan Buddhism calls the Tantra. In the “Mahayana” one remains part of normal life. All of us are the Buddha. In other words, there is no Marxism, but only a way of understanding such as Marx had. Zen is total commitment, which gives one a certain distance. In the interview with Basson, Breytenbach says:

When you meet Buddha, kill him – in other words – there is no teacher. The same would be for anarchism. In the necessity of surviving, you are always called back to your own wisdom. The creative tension comes from the contradiction of the self – it allows you to go a certain distance because it is pure dialectic.⁸⁶

Coming back to the question of reality: in an essay dedicated to Tsitsi Mashanini, called *Fragments from a Growing Awareness of Unfinished Truths*, read at Stellenbosch in 1990, Breytenbach (1996:24-37) uses a quotation from Artaud:

I have no consolation and I reek of contradiction.

Breytenbach identifies closely with this stance. He does not embrace one stable view of reality. This is radicalism. Likewise when one enters the Zen Buddhist void, or works with

85

Zen Buddhism is a unique tradition within Mahayana Buddhism resulting from the meeting of India's tradition and doctrine of Sunyata with the Chinese Taoist tradition, and brought to a high artistic expression in the culture of Japan. Although not against philosophical understanding, the study of Sutras, or the development of liturgy, it is quick to reject these as soon as they become objects of desire and thence obstacles to the one essential of Zen: achieving Enlightenment.

86

Dialectic: in general an argumentative method that systematically weighs contradictory facts of ideas with a view to resolving or transcending them.. Hegelian-Marxist dialectics refers to the notion, shared by the German philosophers Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and Marx, that truth can be arrived at by means of a continuing dialectic, the exchange of logical arguments; change is achieved through the conflict of opposing forces; thesis and antithesis, opposing each other, finally leading to synthesis.

or looks for roots, or when one questions reality. They cannot encapsulate these in a dogma or school or party. All that remains for Breytenbach is a deep commitment to the conscious-making process.

The way he follows is the Middle Way. For him this is the dialectic encompassing continual movement and engagement, for one can be neutral and unattached only if one is completely part of the process. This does not mean that one can while away time in the fig tree's shade. Liberty must be realised, and this requires method, discipline, and application with the urgency of a death-struggle. The guidelines remain, even when they sound paradoxical, the solution or dissolution of self and the total respect for the Other. His advice is to let go, normally, naturally, with humour and tenderness, without clinging, not even to the letting go. Breytenbach believes that time will teach, if one is ready, receptive and humble enough to learn. This is how he deals with the realities of life.

6.4. The simulacrum and simulations (resemblance, double, twin, doppelgänger, or images, representation, icon, depiction, portrayal, reflection, photograph.)

In the graphic work, *ghazal alors un beau matin le miroir s'est foutu de mon teint : non mais des fois pour qui tu te proues – breyten breytenbain ?* (BM-4). Breytenbach introduced us to the mirror, which he uses as an image in his painting and metaphor in his writing and poetry to reflect societal conditions. He is very aware of the illusions that we are subjected to.

We are always dealing in illusions: we're illusion junkies, as it was. In fact, reality is a perception. It is important to do the shift in perception, to see the attempt of making others believe that the illusion is a real thing. It is this sudden shift that interests me. Besides, I also believe that we're lazy, essentially. I know it for myself. We don't recognise it; rather we don't know we recognise it. We don't discover, we remember, we go by the familiar. We move with the known. We don't like to be

confronted with the unknown; it may be painful to uncover the known. And I think that if one can have these disruptions these breaks, these discontinuities, it will be like extracting yourself from the security of the continued discourse. If you can do that, I think you have a better chance of coming into contact with, or coming within viewing sight of, what one could call “reality”; the real, the unknown face of the real, to be more exact. And, of course, then quite simply, the discontinuities, the ruptures, the breaks, the jumps can sometimes be very beautiful.

Che Guevara said that revolution is when the extraordinary becomes ordinary. And there’s a poet who said that poetry is when the normal becomes the extraordinary. I think they are essentially saying the same thing. But it’s an interesting correlation it’s an interesting shift (Breytenbach in Dimitriu 1996:90-101).

The mirroring of reality developed as a concept, as well as confrontation with the mirror image, is not strange about Breytenbach’s oeuvre. The important conversation with “Don Espejuelo”, the Knight of the Little Mirror, started while of incarceration. The mirror is taken up in the title of the prose *Mouiroir* dedicated to his old cell-mate and master, Don Espejuelo. This dark-mirror-brother “I” also figure in *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*. (This work is the first definite indication in the post-prison period of the shift from Europe to a renewed and healing groundedness in Africa. Although here the narrator writes from Sicily and thus strictly speaking still from Europe, he is acutely aware of the way in which the light around him evokes the colour and quality of the African soil). In *Eklips* (1983b) there is a letter to Don Espejuelo and in *Boek* (1987), Breytenbach writes the following:

And in the meantime I have acquainted Don Espejuelo who helped me to see further, on the one side to experience the demarcation between inside and outside (between the personal-historical inside, the mirror and the outside ‘I’ or historical society) and otherwise to see that the two mirror each other and that demarcation melts together.⁸⁷

87

Translation by M. Grobler.

Breytenbach subsequently wrote a prison prose titled *Mouiroir*. In French, the word *Mouiroir*, means “hospice” or “home for the elderly”, a place where people await on death. The word is also a compilation of *mourir* – to die, and *Miroir* – mirror.

Within each text are messages, codes of the prison situation (*Mouiroir* situation), written texts friends, and testators, delivered for safekeeping and decoding; the book as a whole is handed over to the archetypal French prison. This is Victor Hugo’s *Jean Valjean*. The text is a labyrinth of mirrors, and reading the book, *Mouiroir*, is like seeing through a mirror, the riddle. The book is a mirror image of reality leading to the imagination. The doppelgänger here is Don Espejuelo, to whom everything is dedicated. The mirror is also death. The reflection of images is repeated in the echo of sounds, names, lines, adjectives, and situations returning repeatedly. One of the most moving echoes is when the prisoner calls out to his father “Oubaas! Oubaas!” with the echo returning – “Ou haas! Ou haas!” There is no sense of reality and thus everything that remains is signs, images, shadows and metamorphosis. Gregor Samsa from Kafka’s, *Metamorphosis*, is the figure treading his way through the labyrinth of mirrors.

The relationship between incarceration and the liberating word comes to a climax in the section *Boek (Book)*. It is a mirror of storytelling. The visit of Samsa and his wife Elefteria “Vryheid” leads to the discovery of the moths’ room, incarcerated winged insects, a loss of self, and an experience of such-ness, *thahata* that is the void. ... This is depicted on the front cover of the collection of poetry, (*Yk*); the prisoner, hair shaven, eyes closed by the moth resting on them. On the back cover, the prisoner is depicted with his beard and hair, the moth again resting on his eyes, a wound on the forehead.

Many paintings and drawings containing the emblem of the mirror would follow the period of incarceration like *Hommage au Mirroir (BM-5)*, where the impossibility of the reflection of reality is depicted. The bird-man is looking into a mirror, but the image caught up in the mirror differs from the image holding the mirror up to his face.

The finest allegory of mirroring is to be found in the Borges tale, where the cartographer of the Empire draws a map so detailed that it ends exactly covering the territory. With the decline of Borges's Empire, the map becomes frayed and finally ruined, a few shreds still discernible in the deserts. The metaphysical beauty of this ruined abstraction, bearing the witness to an imperial pride and rotting like a carcass, as it returns to the substance of the soil, rather as an ageing double ends up being confused with the real thing (Baudrillard 1992:166-284).

Another allegory of mirroring is to be found in a book of fictions and images, *All One Horse*, written by Breytenbach (1990:75-79) where two tales that mirror each other: *Brother* and *Mirror*. As he enters the landscape of the story, Brother is cruising on his ancestral motorcycle on which he has, in flowing white lines over the petrol tank, painted *Pegasus*. The road between Uzbar and the capital has been closed. Squatters are on the march again and flags and drums and fifes and kids cartwheeling and ululating. Brother had to come "the Garg way". The storyteller meets his brother and the main conversation concern nicknames that Brother had painted on his official passport. Van Dood Graf, Garbman Abdul, de Graaf Reinier, Hermes, Horse, fathelp, Eklô, mumble Mfowethu, Watsenaam Babe, Watsenaam Brother, Watsenaam Chuch Huntingdon, Watsenaam Nascimento – to name a few. Then Brother hands his brother a notice of execution, which he has, according to the blank spaces left on the official form, to fill in. Brother gives his regards to the mirror, which is the horizon for further, or perhaps a continued reflection, on consciousness and identity.

Holding a mirror in his hand, Breytenbach enters the landscape of the desert - the landscape that is left of the frayed maps of deserts in the fable of Borges. One which opens a field of emotions; the function of the eye is to scan this unfolding landscape where illusions are called up. Abstraction today is no longer that of the map or Brother and the art of Motorcycle maintenance or that of the map of the Empire, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulations are no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality, a hyper-real. The real, and not the

map, or Brother on the motorbike covering the territory, whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map, whose fragments subsist here and there, in the desert that are no longer those of the Empires, but our own. *The desert of the real itself.*

In *And this Mirror*, the writer introduces the reader to his twin brother who lives in Urbos. His favourite painting is the *Mona Lisa* or *la Gioconda* as some people think they know it. Brother says the *Mona Lisa* is a portrait of himself. “Why do you like that one best?” I ask. “Because it is a self-portrait”, he answers. “More precisely: because it is a painting of myself. I mean it. You smile? Look at my smile and then try to remember. Isn’t it exactly the same? And the trees and the rocks in the background, the dead fish light all over – are they not elements of my mind?” Some people claim that the thing was done by Leonardo painting himself without a beard. Leonardo is a figment of the communal imagination. One can no longer see the painting because it has become invisible and too many people with framed expectation have looked at it. When a thing is looked at too often, it loses its reality. Too many eyes kill the light and fade the pigment. In this way it has become a mirror. The original black mirror. The mirror (*speculum*) opens a space of feeling, which reflects the constant tension between the original image and that, which is the depiction or mirrored image.

Breytenbach holds up a mirror to the stratified society. This is a life long task, to cultivate an awareness of illusions. He is the one whose image the mirror has clouded, and who is pointing to a concept of reality where images, events and political experiences must be seen as changing and mutating acts caught up in a multiple reality, that which we could call inter-rhythmic reality. Things and events are not merely interwoven. There is a nearly impossible network of connecting images, which could be interpreted as reality. This is a rhizomatic reality. The functional spaces of the mirror are not just found in a conventional utility – things of the world, stones, paintings, your ancestors, friends or enemies become a mirror. Through reflection on the simulacra, our interpretation of the things of the world is placed on the cutting edge of today’s conception of reality. Breytenbach writes in *No Longer*.

Then there is the description of the man and his image. The man has a mirror in which he tries to locate and capture the sun. It is the other. The mirror is black, but as the man leans forward to think, he imagines seeing in its depths the mythical beast always at the back of his mind. The White horse.

That which is supposed to be the reality only becomes reality when connections and impossible relationships are uncovered – this is the moment at which the theme of the mirror recurves and becomes black – it is then that poets bend under their heartbreak and cast their sorrows on paper.

These verses too are the clods of secret soul-eruptions, still warm and wet, at times consisting solely of an ooh or an aah. They would watch the undigested truths hit the black mirror like so many sobs, to sink into eternal oblivion, leaving neither phosphorous wake nor echoing ripple nor flip nor fin. In effect, joining the other disappearance.

This is the nomadic way, where the poetry of the map and the charm of twin-brother, the magic of the concept of the mirror, the exquisiteness of the real and the cartographer's mad project have not disappeared. Here metaphysics remain.

In the *desert of the real* itself, where hyper-reality is the order of the day, there is no more mirroring of being and appearance, of the real and its concept. The real produced from matrices, memory banks and command models no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. It is nothing more than operational. In fact, since it is no longer enveloped by an imaginary, it is not longer real at all. It is hyper real: the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a cyberspace without atmosphere. A hyper-real from now on sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and the simulated generation of difference (Baudrillard 1992:67).

6.5. The simulacrum⁸⁸ of the theatre – Breytenbach and Klossowski.

Both Breytenbach's paintings and drawings and the drawings of Klossowski have a certain feel of a theatrical setting about them. There are elements of the stage, lights, and intense debate and indecent stories frozen in motion, as if posing for photographs to be taken after the show. The viewer, who has witnessed the production, knows that his life has changed, that metamorphoses has begun, which will lead the "self" out onto the desert.

Klossowski was born in Paris in 1905 into a family of aristocratic and artistic Polish émigrés. He is the elder brother of the painter Balthus, or Balthasar Klossowski de Rola. His long career brought him into contact with an extraordinary range of people. He was at various times an associate of Gertrude Stein, Bataille, Masson and Walter Benjamin, and is one of the very few people to have been close to both Gide and Foucault. Klossowski's career was a curious one. Immediately before the Second World War, his quest for a religious life led him to begin a noviciate with the Benedictines and then the Dominicans, but he left the community after only three months. In 1947, having abandoned his religious quest, he married Denise Marie Roberte Morin Sinclair, a war widow whom they had deported to Ravensbrück because of her resistance activities. From now on, all his work would be dominated by and dedicated to her haunting beauty. She is the "Roberte" who figures in his novels and so many of his delicate drawings.

Klossowski's novels and drawings have a theatrical sense of humiliating encounters between Roberte and characters from a threatening *commedia del'arte*. Roberte becomes an object of exchange, circulating endlessly in an erotic economy. She is raped and assaulted, is seduced

88

According to the Webster Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, simulacrum is an effigy, image, or representation

and seduces, and takes on many different identities, but remains un-possessed, inviolable. Like the *tableaux vivants* imagined and staged by de Sade's libertines, Klossowski's words and images betray an obsession with representation itself: representations of plays, of drawings (Macey 1993). In an interview with Rémy Zaugg, Klossowski emphasised his taste for the enigmatic and the unexpected (Lascault 1988).

Although Breytenbach never refers to him, there is a certain feeling, especially in *le Cheval (The horse) (BM-6)*, suggesting a similarity between their art (Klossowski's work, *Roberte and Gulliver* were done in 1980) (Fleck 1986:100-101). A correspondence between their work can be found in the sense of theatrical staging of the painterly scenery. There is a profusion of these in Breytenbach's paintings and drawings. They are theatres of simulacra in which everything is represented, nothing real. Both Breytenbach and Klossowski captured the experience of the double, of the exterior of simulacra, of the theatrical and demented multiplication of the ego.

The drama and stage director, Marthinus Basson, recognising certain aspects in Breytenbach's work, transformed and used these in the three-dimensional theatre space of both *Boklied* and *Life and Times of Johnny Cockroach*. The prison drawing, *Les gens de la rose noire (The people and the black rose window) (BM-7)* is a simulacrum of protagonists in a theatre production doing the curtain bow. Other examples are *Three Figures (BM-8)*, where three naked men are staged in a theatrical stage-like setting. Stage props are the traditional "bowler hat of power" and the communist sickle. One figure is wearing a nun's cap. Likewise, the drawing *dis trouens hoekom te aarde so veel vlieë is* (that is why there are so many flies on earth) where Breytenbach, while sitting at a table, wears the dunce cap while conversing with another masked figure.

In the court dramas of Shakespeare, the dunce⁸⁹ or the bard, the wearer of motley, was the one who enjoyed a very special relationship with the king. He was the only one in the court who could openly talk to the king and criticise him without being afraid of extermination. It was his role to inform the king of things that he did not want to hear. This could be Breytenbach, *die lappiesman*, (the rag-man), as he refers to himself, or the keeper of the colours, the one who tells the Afrikaners and others in South Africa, what they do not want to hear. He paints himself as the one wearing the dunce cap. *Untitled (BM-9)* is a depiction of himself as a white-faced dunce, the one wearing the cap, clutching another figure. The figure in *El Rey de nada (BM-10)*, is the one wearing the dunce cap, or the clown's or the carnival-goer's hat. In the acrylic work, *Judges Kiss (BM-11)*, two men in carnival clothes are embracing each other. In the background Breytenbach has painted the typical Spanish cypress tree of Can Ocells. In *Untitled (BM-12)*, we find the portrait resembling a former South Africa, State President, F.W. de Klerk (1936 -). Instead of painting him with the typical bowler hat of power, the de Klerk-figure is depicted with a carnival hat. He is sitting in front of a table, clutching its edges and staring away from the green object that is resting on a cross. There is a trace of red that could imply blood. Freely interpreted, this work might mean that to vote for this political candidate by drawing a cross, the sign used by those who are not able to write, might lead to disaster.

The true role of the clown in the ritual, is one of identifying irregularities in society and then playing it out in public (Grobler 1998:45). Clown performances of the Zuni Pueblo in New Mexico, during the previous century, encompassed the drinking of each other's urine and eating of faeces, also the eating of live rats. In this instance, the clown personified revolting and inhuman behaviour (Gills 1982:95).

89

Dunce: One slow at learning. The word is derived from the middle name of John Duns Scotus, Schulman, who died in 1308 and whose followers were ridiculed by 16th century Humanists and Reformers as enemies of learning. Depicted on the Shakespearean stage as a figure wearing the dunce cap.

When confronted with the loathsome aspect of the clown's role, we begin to get a better indication of his original ritual and religious role, and his potential to bring more than just comic relief. The clown is the one who crossed the border and entering the perilous terrain of the psyche and has the power to bring the death wish of a society in the open. Previous societies regarded the clown as an important figure, which could bring spiritual balance, both collective and individual. The domain of the clown is the unconscious, negative impulses of the human spirit.

In this sense the clown could be compared with the shaman. However, the clown does not enter the trance space. He also does not meet the gods in heaven. The clown is the one who reaches the death wish that lies in the underworld or the unconscious. This is one small step away from Breytenbach's own death wish. In South African society, Breytenbach often plays the role of the jester – it is an integral part of his public appearance. The dunce or the bard is the one who criticises the king's conception of reality. The clown or the jester or the carnival-goer, is the one who ridicules the fixed conceptions (realities) of a society.

There is a profusion of masked figures in both Breytenbach's drawings and paintings. An interpretation could be that of the carnival, another would be to see it about the theatre. The theatre is the space *par excellence* of transformation and simulacra. All transformations are invested with something at once of profound mystery and of the shameful, since anything that is so modified to become "something else" while remaining the thing that it was, must inevitably be productive of ambiguity and equivocation. Therefore, metamorphoses must be hidden from view and thence the need for the mask. Secrecy tends towards transfiguration: it helps what one is to become what-one-would-like-to-be. This is what constitutes its magic character, present in both the Greek theatrical mask and in the religious masks of Africa or Oceania (Cirlot 1981:205). The transformative interpretation is a very viable one in terms of Breytenbach's use of masks.

6.6. The divine irreverence of images.

According to May (Boundas & Olkowski 1994:102) favoured terrains of simulation go back to religion and the simulacrum of divinity: “I forbade any simulacrum in the temples because the divine that breathes life into nature cannot be represented.” ... But what becomes of divinity when it reveals itself in icons, when it is multiplied in simulacra? Does it remain the supreme authorities, simply incarnated in images as a visible theology? Or is it volatilised into simulacra, which alone deploy their pomp and power of fascination – the visible machinery of icons being substituted for the pure and intelligible Idea of God. This is precisely what the Iconoclasts, whose millennial quarrel is still with us today, feared. Their rage to destroy images rose precisely because they sensed this omnipotence of simulacra, this facility they have of erasing God from the consciousness of people, and the overwhelmingly, destructive truth that they suggest, that ultimately there has never been any God – that only icons (simulacra) exist. Indeed that God himself has only ever been his own simulacrum. ... But their metaphysical despair came from the idea that the images concealed nothing at all, and that in fact they were not images, such as the original model would have made them, but perfect simulacra forever radiant with their own fascination. But this death of the referential divine had to be exorcised at all costs.⁹⁰

New Realism, the art movement that Breytenbach was part of, is an act of irreverence towards images traditionally condoned by the bourgeoisie and the stratified order with their particular taste and aesthetic inclination for beauty and non-beauty. New Realism is a post apocalyptic

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According to May (Boundas & Olkowski 1994:110) it was the iconolaters, who saw in the icons only reflections and were content to venerate God at one remove. The iconolaters possessed the most modern and adventurous minds, since, underneath the idea of the apparition of God in the mirror of images, they already enacted his death and his disappearance in the epiphany of his representation (which they perhaps knew no longer represented anything, and was purely a game, but that this was precisely the greatest game – knowing also that it is dangerous to unmask images, since they dissimulate the fact that there is nothing behind them.)

art movement, which indirectly expressed the horrors of Dachau, Korea, Tibet, the Congo, Biafra and Vietnam. Therefore, it is an art of the grotesque and the gruesome. Nevertheless, the artist is also interested in expressing the other, paradoxical side of the human being as vulnerable and tender (Brink 1971). Breytenbach in an interview with Sienaert (2001:106) says the following about [new] realism:

...we have to employ words and letters and also images and sounds) if we wish to move beyond the ordinary conditions of being human. The task of realism is pursuing reality beyond metaphor, which will always have to be accompanied by endless battles against metaphor fought through metaphors.

New Realism also reflects the absurdity of reality as one finds in the work of Camus and the Existentialists. Writing in 1965, very much in the shadow of the Algerian war, Sartre, argued that the only way to learn to say “no” to one’s fellow citizen was through “a perpetual self-criticism” (Walzer 1988:140). The life of a social critic must begin with the rejection of his own socialisation, the refusal of society-in-himself.

In 1939, the young Camus visited the Kabyle Mountain and wrote (for a socialist newspaper in Algiers) a series of articles on the suffering of the Berbers and the indifference of the colonial regime. The article, the most important of which are reprinted in *Actuelles III*, constituted a powerful piece of social criticism, and led, a year later, to Camus’s exile from Algeria. His cry of indignation made him a suspect in the eyes of the authorities (Walzer 1988).

Breytenbach’s brother, Cloete Breytenbach, a photographer for *Time/Life* reported on the war in Angola and the heart transplant by Chris Barnard. A South-African newspaper contacted Breytenbach to discuss his opinion of the transplant. He answered that the acts of heart transplants were obscene in a country where the mortality rates of children were the highest

in the world. He also referred to this statistic and again using the word “obscene” when reporters questioned him on the provocative nature of his work. Further examples he cited were that from June 1966 to June 1967 half a million black Africans were arrested for breaking the Pass Laws. In such circumstances intellectual provocation used the obscene image and metaphor (Huf 1968.3). Paintings of obscene and grotesque nature became an enduring *Ars poetica* and are still visible in recent works like *Taalmonument – Doodsberig (BM-13)*.

The work is a political commentary, not only on the holy phallus-like icon of the Afrikaners built on the mountain of the Boland town of Paarl, historically the site of the First Afrikaans Language Movement, but also a troubled expression of the rights of Afrikaans as a minority language, which are not respected by the ANC Government.

It comprises five sections (a collage of four postcards and a watercolour) with the monument erupting and gradually changing into a phallus. The following words are written on the watercolour.

**You are invited to the dying of a language
the whole country is dressed up in nakedness
burn over the paper the hand turns to charcoal
the corpse in the mountain bound to a pole**

In a similar way as in *Old King Breyten*, painted in the earlier sixties Breytenbach, in *Taalmonument* depicts obscenity through the phallus. True to his paradoxical nature, the phallus could also be a sign of male vulnerability.

6.7. The utopia of sur-reality and the nomadic unreality

Brink (1971), when describing Breytenbach poetry, says that it plays back to the Surrealism of Paul Eluard, the association art of Bert Schierbeeck and the mysticism of the Zen Buddhism. The Surrealists wanted to break the ordinary, learned, conventional structures and norms of reason by discovering the natural connection between things, like one would experience it in dreams.

Breytenbach's imagery and depiction of space, changed after the time of incarceration. He lost a sense of spontaneity with which he used his paint and his work became more hard-edged and more typical of the traditional Surrealists. He subsequently engaged in effacing the borderline between dream and reality, between conscious and unconscious, wrote violent explosive manifestos, and art of otherness, the dream style of the way of Ernst – the magnificent lure of lust, Ernst's renewal of the collage process, the lifelike and mysterious world of Magritte and the lifelike and a mysterious world in which reality is questioned.

The "Sur Realists" are interested in the reality of a super-rational world, in the notion of imagination as formulated by Guillaume Apollinaire(1880-1918). Breytenbach (1989:33) writes continually about this notion in his aesthetic views, in poems, travelogues, novels, and interviews with the media and philosophical essays. When he writes about memory as an act of imagination or as a prerequisite to a truer reality of the conscious, he turns to "imagination as a necessity for inventing a future". The Surrealists are interested in the dream and imagination and the New Realists in finding the most gruesome reality within the self and by that portraying some facets of society. These are modes of art, which place us against the interminable silence of things.

Although he dips his wings into modernism, Breytenbach in his questioning of reality is a postmodernist. Confining the word Postmodern to one meaning is difficult. This term does not imply a certain philosophical stream, nor is it a thought system, but rather a specific way in which man currently experiences his life, and how he embodies his experience with reality. While the modernists returned to the origin, exploring the self, the postmodern approach encompasses the falling away of the centre, leading to a life of multiplicities. There is an awareness of a multitude of possible realities.

The main aim of the modernist search for a new beginning was to liberate vision from conventional ways of seeing and to free the mind from fixed conceptions about reality. With the Surrealists we find the discovery of the “authentic” self that requires a mystical backward-looking return to the source and produces static conceptions of origin, turned into ritual. Fantasy often accompanies the Surrealist notions of origin, which complicates the whole modernist discourse of origin.

God of the Middle Ages was the centre of the universe. The man who sees himself as a free subject making his own choices replaced this position. Nevertheless, Nietzsche formulated the falling away of the centre, with his significant statement: “God is dead”. This was not a triumphant outcry, but rather a voicing of a state of collapse of the human being. The human being no longer having a centre outside himself that makes sense of what he does and feels or provides an explanation for the way things happen. Nor has man become the centre. No comfort of a centre exists anymore. There is only a terrifying chaotic movement of powers, which call upon and oppose each other.

Thus, a disseminating play of multiple meanings replaces the reality of single origin. The search for origin turns against itself and reveals its humble beginnings. From art history we know that different Surrealists turned to different sources of origin. In contrast to today

interpretations of history, which teach us to laugh at the solemnities of the origin, de Chirico's works depicted the world as "an immense museum of strangeness", to reveal the mystery in insignificant things. Clearly his *topos* are estrangement of repression that reveals itself in the enigma, an enigma that he once called the great question one has always asked oneself – why was this world created, why are we born to live and die. His metaphysical terms are thus riddled with questions about origins. From de Chirico, Breytenbach does not take the lesson of returning to the origin, but a borrowing of the typical small heads and mannequins that he depicts in works like *T/17* (BM-14).

L'Amour fou, André Breton's (1896-1966) surrealist views and art are a grid inscribed with "letters of desire".⁹¹ Implicitly the artist does not invent new forms so much as he retraces the phantasmagoria. The *L'Amour fou* metaphor also suggests a "tracing" of trauma, which Breton so typically projects from the past to the future. Castration complex, to which the Surrealist typically responds with scenarios –fetishist, voyeuristic, and/or sadistic in import (Foster 1991)⁹². Breytenbach shares these facets with the Surrealists. A work in which masochism and dismemberment is found, is *The Bat*, also the fetish of the African green parrot.

Breytenbach took Yves Tanguy's (1900 - 1955) world. The work *T/9* (BM-15) testifies to this. It is the mind-scape of consciousness, which spans time and place. Breytenbach painted the space of the unreal and fabulous, a floating word, antecedent to birth postulating death. In this

91

Freud distinguished three primal fantasies. (*Urphantasier*): that of seduction, the primal scene proper (where the child witnesses parental sex) and that of castration.

92

Adorno, no friend of Surrealism, once argued that images are object-fetishes on which the subjective, the libido, was once fixated. The process does not occur through self-submersion but the images bring back childhood fetishism.

space he placed two embryonic forms hugging and sucking each other down to the pit of one incident. They merge to become one and thus grow into a new body. The knotting is momentarily for soon they will be on their way to the ever-receding horizon.

Both artists share the notion of memory, which becomes an abiding thread running through their work and an awareness of death and willingness to enter the process of movement that takes one from one landscape to another. Tanguy's mind-scapes are unquestionably pervaded with childhood memories of his native Brittany; its *erode dé breid* may even allude to the submerged ruins of the legendary Breton town of Ys. Nowhere has memory been more tellingly merged with imagination or with presentiments. In these subliminal depths, the autonomies of Euclidean space are overcome. With Tanguy the horizon line is always nearly there, but it does not stand divisively between two distinct elements like earth and air: it floats amid the shifting interacting levels of a single original element.

An uncertainty of inside and outside, psychic and perceptual, is fundamental to the talismanic notion of Surrealism. The distinctive character of surrealist art may reside in the different ways that it works through psychic trauma in scenes that register as both internal and external, endogenous and exogenous, fantastic and real - in a world that is surreal. In Breytenbach's work there is a constant transgression of traditional borders: between inside and outside, private and public, human and animal, female and male, painting and writing, freedom and bondage.

A play of multiple meanings replaces the modern reality of a single origin in Breytenbach's work. As nomad he seeks a line of flight from all totalizing notions of reality. What this infers is a new conception of reality, namely one, which is displaced, plural, heterogeneous, unstable and reconciled to the other. We need to make an appeal to the poetic idea of the nomad for visualising a never-ending motion in space that is defining some elusive sense of

reality. It is in this sense that one should understand multiple acts of renaming, rebirth, becoming an animal, becoming three that populates the worlds of Breytenbach's art and thoughts. He adopts new names and personae and by that the names themselves lose their codifying and confining power. If the stratified space is broken up, then it becomes possible for the fixed realities to collapse into each other, to see difference as part and parcel of what is called the shifting reality. Nomadology is celebrated because it tends to break up the system and free things from the notion of essence, hierarchy and/or reification. It is an acceptance of displacement as a way of life, a chronic displacement that we now call nomadism. For the nomad the island becomes the place of utopia, as Breytenbach (1993b) writes of Gorée Island.

island (1)

that island then, hills shine where wind
stretches out blue ribbons, the tongues continue the
peeling of olive trees a thousand years old
planted by the Arabians
or Carthaginians or Phoenicians, seafarers
and merchants, invaders over the horizon

for ages generations struck trees and pressed oil
for a long while now its not longer profitable
and fruit remains cover the ground like gray molar teeth
– the image must become pith – like sanded
phenomena or eye sockets dried out from looking

the wind cultivates the landscape permanently
wind is not dependent on water of day butterflies
the mountains are dark shimmering mirrors
for always reflecting the silver wind's invocation again
and sand of eons have filled the stones
to the engraving of repetition
a rhythmic pattern of speech defect

de-humanized, empty: here you sometimes see
a black salamander sly like a scar-drawing lefthand
the sun shines and where the airline becomes vision
a forgotten earth god lips through the breathing space
between calling and the memory of going further
a blind Bacchus, an infertile Pan, a mouldy Ga

long ago travellers here knew of perishing
and of clinging to the shell of life
or a decaying mask
the black knife, it was insight with which the priest
could cut a long wound in the side
to remove the cadaver's inner works
and to stop the cavities with a learned mixture
of honey, bees wax, aromatic plants
mumbled prayers a rhythmic speech defect
to still the shadows

each one coaxes the landscape in himself
in interaction with the reasons for shadow and rest
layer upon layer of what the eye has caressed
a life-line through the priest's pulse
mouthed out in the restless mumbling
of tides, spaces, birdsong which never dims
and death alone then an island
where it is no longer worth the effort
to tie water down, and you can give yourself over
to de-bowling, an eclipse of time

you! you! where you walk you are a guide
I see your movement along the slope of shimmering hilltops
and when the light dies your hair becomes black
but more: I follow you with the movements

heart and search for all the cadences
where I can encounter you
that is how the sun is going to be made
and freed in the dark
how a shining hand might catch the black salamander

Through the act of imagination, the reader and the poet can experience the island as a utopian space, where both are free from confrontation with realities. Reading and writing this nomadic poem becomes a place of rest.

According to Sienaert (2001:82) Breytenbach's overriding connectedness with Africa has also influenced his views of reality. In tribal context, and in African art, there are a blurring between subject and object. This infers that in Africa, art – whether as an object, music or dance – is not seen as separate from the person who experiences it. Breytenbach similarly insists that the act of painting or writing become both the approximation (or reflection) of reality and the energy that brings it into being. It represents a single process through which the subject-object dichotomy of the artist (or observer) and image dissolves. This vision of reality requires the active participation of an observer and can metaphorically be seen as a kind of confrontation: an interaction between object and viewer that challenges conventional perception and leads to its transformation or renewal. The notion of art as constitutive of the subject rather than constituted by the subject offers a Eurocentric theoretical counterpart to this tribal assumption of art practice.

6.8. The utopia of memory and forgetting: Memory of Snow and of Dust.

“Remembrance” or “memory” is an important concept in Breytenbach's writing, painting and philosophical discourse. The artist-writer is also fascinated by the process and mechanism of the transference of memory from one generation to the other. In *Memories*, it culminates in

the theme of a rite of passage. Concerning the Greek tragedies, he places emphasis on the fact that the passage from one layer of consciousness to another is always accompanied by a sacrifice, a fatal choice or the denial of one self – an insight embodied in his paintings.

The only thing that can be done is to give an account of the rite of passage of the self. Anything else is an abuse of power. Anything else is a lie. The past happens. Once events fail to take firm root and can be expunged from memory; the past thus perpetually threatens to dissolve beneath the heel of the present. Memory is a kind of research that has one principle subject “existence”.

In *Memories* it is shown that reality is never accessible as such because of the conventions of cognition imposed by the powerful social institution of language. It is an eminently social function of literature to undermine semantic and syntactic procedures involved in processing material. What is at stake here is not *mimesis* but semiotics, not a passive rendering but an active production and therefore transformation of the world. This is precisely what Breytenbach has in mind when he states:

I tried writing subversively ... What I could and did try to do ... was on the one hand to undermine the petrified position the cultural stratagems and institutions, the retarded conceptions of the dominant Afrikaans culture, and on the other hand to sharpen the knowledge of the implication of the South African regime (Breytenbach cited in Coetzee 1990:192-193).

Reality is obviously not the “real” real. In *Memory*, Breytenbach (1989:86) repeatedly castigates European society for being besotted by a mass-communication that ends in a misinformation:

We have entered the age of instant amnesia. No more information only staged propaganda and commentary from postmodernist city rats.

This Baudrillardian analysis of a grotesquely alienated reality applies even more to South Africa. Here the entire political and legal system, and the police and prison authorities, are engaged in playing the “reality” game (Breytenbach 1984d:199). A just and democratic society where due process of law is the rule everyone abides by and where individuals with intact identities can lead fulfilled lives, is advocated while this is blatantly not so.

Against the fiction of reality that is typically embodied in the discourse of the classic realist novel, reconstructive art sets itself up as anti-fiction, as an instrument for unmasking it to the dialogical sham it is, or as Breytenbach puts it.

Language is blindness. Form is a limitation, a construction of our basic condition of laziness. It is tradition made concrete.... The tongue looks for the familiar, for the taste of wood. Normally we don't see; we recognise. Seeing should be rupture. The eye, to survive intact, must break (Breytenbach 1986:151-152).

It is in this light that we look at art works, like *les oeufs de d'été (summer eggs)* (BM-16) where Breytenbach has painted two brown male figures positioned under a tree, one in a suit, sticking out his tongue to the naked male. In *Dakhaas* (BM-17), a black male in a suit in a squatting position, with the now familiar female cleft between the legs is depicted. We experience a rupture (early works done in the mid sixties). The female clefts became an enduring memory, which Breytenbach frequently reexamines. The memory of this “self” conscious “art devise” recurs in the late nineties again in the *Angel fish* series.

If “ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality”, then the writer must break with language and art conventions to established literary forms (de Man 1982:355-371). Though he cannot entirely get away from the constraints imposed by language, he can at least twist the iron bars of its prison. To gain a certain degree of freedom, he created his own “textual and intra-textual and infra-textual contexts” where new configurations triumph over

outworn meanings (Breytenbach 1986:185). Coetzee has summed up Breytenbach's anti-ideological meta-approach to both literature and reality as follows.

Hy het nie veel oor politieke sake geskryf nie; meestal bespiegelend oor die wyse van produksie van 'n teks, en of die vraag of skryf enige funksie het binne 'n onderdrukkende stelsel. (He had not written much about political matters; mostly speculated over the way of production of a text and over the question if writing has any function within the suppressive regime.)

Of course, Breytenbach is far too sceptical, as had been evident by his writings, about the ability of the human memory to supply a precise and reliable remembrance of things past. After having lived in Paris for such a long time, thus consciously or unconsciously absorbing the influence of the French *maîtres-penseurs* of our times. He no longer subscribes to the European *cognito*-tradition culminating in Husserl's idea of "*Erinnerung als Selbsterkenntnis*" (Sommer 1990:204). Following this tradition, human beings always remember and present their lives, as Umberto Eco (1932-) has shown, as a conventional, unified story from which all accidental and distracting elements have been removed. Accordingly, *Memory of Snow and of Dust* cites this tradition by constantly referring to the novelistic qualities of autobiographies: "Each life is a novel". If, therefore, "memory is a faculty of the imagination", as Mano observes, if "people invent themselves", human beings must have an almost inbuilt tendency to delete from their past lives everything that does not conform to what later in their lives they have come to conceive of as the essence of themselves (Rechwitz 1993:138).

Breytenbach obviously involves this tradition to play it off against more recent insights into the problematic nature of memorising one's life. Since Freud we have come to realise that memory has its own ways of systematically suppressing certain events or facts, thus revealing a subconscious intentionality, which transcends everything of which the conscious mind may be cognisant.

In the utopian memory, we find the same tendency. From Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" to the realisation of the May '68 graffiti proclaiming *l'imagination au pouvoir* (power to the imagination), the sixty's concept of utopia has led to a cultural environment of disillusionment. One would have to ask oneself the question whether the utopian imagination has been transformed in recent decades, reemerging in formerly unpredictable places such as the new social movements of the seventies and eighties and being articulated from a new and different subjective position.

4.2. The power of reality

Utopian thought survived the declaration in the *Communist Manifesto* and it survived its withering away in scientific Marxism. It returned fiercely within Marxism itself in the twentieth century, notable in the work of Bloch, Adorno, Benjamin and Marcuse. In the essay *Tortoise Step* (1987) Breytenbach (1996a:17) writes:

The responsibility of the writer is not so much one of literal *meaning* but of social and moral implications. Do we still remember how moved we were by the incendiary of a Mailer or a Marcuse? We justified our stance or our cowardly dance in the light of such writings. They wrote and we lit the fires. Some of us waved Mao's little red thoughts about our heads as excuses for not thinking.

It does not require much theoretical sophistication to see that all representation, whether in language, narrative, image or recorded sound, is based on memory. However, rather than leading us to some authentic origin or giving us verifiable access to the real, memory, even and especially in its belatedness, is itself based on representation. The past is not simply there in memory. It must be articulated to become memory. The fissure that opens between experiencing an event and remembering it in representation is unavoidable. Rather than lamenting or ignoring it, this split should be understood as a powerful stimulant for cultural and artistic creativity. It is the tenuous fissure between past and present that constitutes memory, making it powerfully alive and distinct from the archive or any other mere system of storage and retrieval. The twilight memory, then is not merely the result of genealogical

forgetting that could be counteracted through some form of a more reliable representation. It is given in the very structures of representation itself.

Twilight is that moment of the day that foreshadows the night of forgetting, but seems to slow time itself, an in-between state in which the last light of day may still play out its ultimate marvels. It is memory's privileged time. In the political realm, the issues of memory and forgetting, memory and repression, memory and displacement resurface. How do we understand this newest obsession with memory? How do we evaluate the paradox that novelty in our culture is ever more associated with memory and the past, rather than with future expectations? There is a shift from history to memory but this time, memory as a concept. Instead it is a sign of the crisis of that structure of a temporality that marked the age of modernity with its celebration of the new as utopian, as radically and irreducibly other. Memory represents the attempt to slow information processing, to resist the dissolution outside the universe of simulation and fast speed information and cable networks. It wants to claim some anchoring space in a world of puzzling and often threatening heterogeneity, non-synchronicity and information overload (Huysen 1995:50).

6.9. *Ars poetica* of reality.

Nietzsche saw society as a "hall of distorting mirrors". Pirsig⁹³(1994:297&418) in his book, *Lila - an Inquiry into Morals* reflects on the outsider's estrangement from society and others and writes about mirrors in the following way:

Maybe all you ever see are reflections. Writers, painters – maybe it's their jobs to hold up mirrors. But what controls all these mirrors is culture ... if you run

⁹³

Writer of the book, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

afoul of the culture, it will start throwing up reflections that try to destroy you, or it will withdraw the mirrors and try to destroy you that way ... Mirrors take over and soon you don't know who you are.

The mirror in Breytenbach's work does not point to reality. As speculation on the nature of things and realities, the mirror leads to a search in areas where things become mirrors in themselves. It is also a symbol reflecting Breytenbach's nomadic consciousness. The mirror is not representative of things, ideas or the concrete mirror itself. The mirror is the knot in a network of ideas. Things of the world, stones, paintings, your mother or father, friend or foe – the landscape – all become mirrors reflecting realities.

6.10. Summary

Breytenbach's image of the mirror again introduces the notion that there is no fixed reality and thus also no fixed meaning of structure. This chapter is an inquiry into the nature of reality. A comparison has been made between Breytenbach and Nishida. Both of them agree that reality is harboured in consciousness. There is a difference between the two thinkers. While Breytenbach is concerned with many realities that are all aspects of consciousness, Nishida, limits himself to a single notion of reality as it is presented in consciousness.

Breytenbach as a Zen Buddhist subscribes to Zen's direct pointing to reality. Breytenbach embraces the notion of the Middle Way in its interpretation of reality. What strikes Breytenbach about the Middle Way is the necessity of movement. It is a line along which one should go.

Utopian thinking is part of the Marxist thinking with which Breytenbach identifies. Breytenbach also states that Buddhism led him to understand the dialectics of Marxism. All

of us are the Buddha. In other words, there is no Marxism, but only a way of understanding such as Marx had. Zen is total commitment, which gives one a certain distance. Because Breytenbach does not embrace one stable view of reality he is radical. When one questions reality, one realizes that there is no fixed reality, which can be encapsulated in a dogma or school or party. All that remains for Breytenbach is a deep commitment to the consciousness-making process.

The mirroring of reality developed as a concept, and confrontation with the mirror image, is not strange about Breytenbach's oeuvre. The notion of the mirror was developed while Breytenbach was incarcerated. The mirror became a very important aesthetic and artistic notion that Breytenbach uses to confront the South African society with their own distortions of reality that they accept as an unmoveable truth.

Over the last few years, Breytenbach has written three disparate dramas in which he revealed a hidden talent for the space of the theatre. Over the years Breytenbach, however, has dramatized some of his paintings and drawings. Both Breytenbach and Klossowski share this insight to portray the dramatic situation.

New Realism, the art movement that Breytenbach is involved in, is an act of irreverence towards images traditionally condoned by the bourgeoisie and the stratified order with their particular taste and aesthetic inclination for beauty and the non beautiful.

CONCLUSION

A play and interview with Breytenbach as a study for the argument against fixity

7.1. The Interview - *Reflections on identity*.⁹⁴

There must be meaning. And meaning, of course, will be simple. We believe we are entitled to simple and meaningful ‘truths’. The dissident, he/she who brings doubt, must be ignored, ridiculed or chased away. (Breyten Breytenbach in Sienaert 2000:104).

The main argument of this thesis is one of Breytenbach’s stance against fixity. The research involved notions of creativity, social and other forms of consciousness, Zen Buddhism, identity, reality and other aspects.

In the above-mentioned interview with Sienaert (2001:107), Breytenbach states that “the creative act, as displacement or extension of consciousness always has social resonances”. He elaborates on this notion by stating that, the creative act, or extension of consciousness, “relates to the rhythms, the flow and the breaks of the primordial movements and spaces, the need to placate and exorcise and escape and imitate, underlying human consciousness.”

Breytenbach comments on the attitude of fixity prevailing in South Africa that is historically, politically and culturally a construct. In this context the word “construct” infers closure.

⁹⁴

Interview with Breyten Breytenbach by Marilet Sienaert (Sienaert 2001:104-109). The reception by the public was oozed by remarks of not understanding the play. Breytenbach delivers a moving plea against meaning in *Reflection on Identity*. The constant search for meaning by the South African public, leads to the areas of non-fixity where bourgeois values wield the sceptre.

Breytenbach pleads for an understanding that it is in the cultural terrain, by means of creative acts, that the *deep* questions can be identified. Notions such as identity, memory, responsibility, hybridity, adversity, inclusive tolerance and the function of imagination, are part and parcel of the fluid terrain of non fixity. For Breytenbach, the fluidness of the creative act, is ideally, ethical. It is naked, and as close as possible to “truth” in experience and observation to carry its recognition and acceptance of responsibility. It does not conform to the constructs and discourses of public morality. In this case, stratified morality. “In fact,” Breytenbach says, “to be effective (heightening the awareness of texture) it will probably challenge those comforts.”

The thesis-argument furthermore involves the notion of the contingent nature of reality. Again in the above-mentioned interview, Breytenbach states that poetry and Zen are “faced with a similar conundrum: they try to convey the essence of reality directly (or experience)”(Sienaert:2001:106). He states that “in poetry, as in Zen, we doubt metaphor, possibly because it is so often only an approximation”. Zen philosophy emphasizes the inadequacy of language, and yet Zen endlessly produces verses of truth. Breytenbach further explains that “The task of realism [or New Realism or New Writing], in pursuing reality beyond metaphor will always be accompanied by endless battles against metaphor fought through metaphors.” What this infers is that even the metaphor must remain within the realms of that which is contingent.⁹⁵

About the contingent nature of identity and consciousness, Breytenbach states that identity is the result of the process of awareness. “‘It’ comes into being through consciousness. For a person involved in the transformation and expansion of awareness, it is consciousness that matters, **the flow**...– not the successive stops and crutches and snatches of I”. Awareness is thus the important tool to obliterate the borders of fixity. Breytenbach says: “The awareness

⁹⁵ Contingency, uncertainty and that which is random, belong to the argument against fixity.

of the changing, making and unmaking of ‘self’ is the dilation of emptiness. Putting it differently, one is always becoming death.” The thesis was seriously involved with the notion of the movement towards death. In contrast to Breytenbach’s view of the self which is the movement towards death, the stratified self is a way of being and of behaving. Identity for the stratified order is a mask imagined by communal traditions, conventions and expectations [notions of fixity].

7.2. The play - *Die Toneelstuk*⁹⁶

The purpose of the theatre is to shake people out of their bourgeois complacency.

Dieter Reibler

During April 2001, Breyten Breytenbach’s war machine, *Die Toneelstuk*, was produced by Marthinus Basson. The master text is the South African society and the sub text is Breytenbach’s experience of being incarcerated. As previously in *Boklied* and *The Life and Times of Johnny Cockroach*, Breytenbach overturns traditional theatre conventions. According to Hambidge (Litnet 2001), the text is written as many of Federico Fellini’s (1920-1993) films, as film making-in-action. The theatregoer is reminded that *Die Toneelstuk* has never been written and in an introduction Breytenbach states that he lost the text. The reader of the published text and the theatergoer, thus walks around in the writer’s workshop of dreams.

If writing is the casting of a shadow, then Breytenbach becomes the metaphor of the great tree throwing his shadow over the “primitive” and parochial South African society. Breytenbach’s first volume of poetry, *Die ysterkoei moet sweet* (1964), threw a bludgeon against the public

⁹⁶

Die Toneelstuk by Breyten Breytenbach. Produced by Marthinus Basson. Players: Jan Ellis, Antoinette Kellerman, Chan Marti, Anton Smuts, Albert Martiz, Rob van Vuuren and Christopher Gxalaba.

genealogic tree. Nearly forty years later, during the devastating public reception of *Die Toneelstuk*, the continual key role played by Breytenbach in internal system polarization, was again highlighted. Since the Sixties Breytenbach has been shifting cultural and social political borders (Du Toit & Galloway Litnet: 2001).

According to Galloway (Litnet 2001) *Die Burger* sanctioned a national poll, after the performance of *Die Toneelstuk* at the *Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees*. The participants had the option of voting for the estrangement of Breytenbach. The artist, who does not play the correct political game, but chooses to confront the Afrikaner with his/her own dark side, is experienced as destabilizing the stratified order. The strategy chosen by the guardians of the stratified order to stabilize society are played out between the elimination of disturbers (through stereotypes and exile) and efforts to tolerate them. Over the past forty years a whole arsenal of preventive and stabilizing mechanisms have been put in place around Breytenbach as border-shifter and intellectual. Breytenbach adds to Galloway's insight regarding his role in society by identifying the twin notions of a scapegoat/icon. By experiencing and projecting stereotyped, in this case fixed, roles on the artist who chooses the ethical point of departure of presenting reality, a certain (fixed) portion of society, is banned to archetypal and inhuman terrains of unbearable tension.

Sienaert (2001:106- 108) in an interview with Breytenbach poses the question of scapegoat identity that he persistently emphasises in his recent work. Sienaert writes:

Traditionally, of course, the scapegoat had a deceptive salutary role in society as it acted as receptacle for all our projected fears and hatred which could then seemingly be destroyed.

To this argument, Breytenbach answers in the following way:

so we embellish the cult of ‘the strong man’ – as leader, prophet, saviour, he who can give *meaning* and show the way forward. There *must be meaning*. And meaning, of course, will be simple. We believe we are entitled to simple and meaningful ‘truths’. The dissident, he/she who brings doubt, must be ignored, ridiculed or chased away. The effect of this macho mumbo-jumbo is a brutalisation of public awareness, a dumbing down of shared intelligence, a reinforcement of our traditional patriarchal and hierarchical social structures, a confirmation of religious orthodoxies and political barbarism and cultural hegemonies, a renunciation of personal responsibility, an impediment to the development of vigorous civil societies, a repression of the creative power of hybridisation, a flourishing of hypocrisy. The other side of the ‘scapegoat’ coin is the ‘icon’. If I may add a personal note: finding myself in the scapegoat/icon configuration, I notice that the possible area of perception of my work is putrid and poisoned, obliterating a critical reading and focussing in a pathological way on the person behind the work.

Breytenbach’s answer to Sienaert’s question is a strong argument condemning all forms of fixity.

Deleuze & Guattari (1986:15) stated that the war machine, and for our purpose, *Die Toneelstuk*, operates outside the control of the State order. It is a creative flight-line, a smooth space of displacement that leads to non-fixity. Smooth small and large deviations characterize space. There is no homogeneity between two indefinite random points. The example of Anna as Mama Jesus, illustrates the point of the argument. Chan Marti interprets both roles – she transforms from the one figure, the “corset-wearing” little whore to the Bride of Christ dressed in a white wedding dress. For the theatregoers who grew up in a patriarchal society where the female aspects (anima) of Christ were not acknowledged, it must have been shocking to experience and view this scene. This detail illustrates the working of the gear mechanism of the war machine that ruptures and which drives the imagination of the nomadic artist/dramatist. The war machine, for example Breytenbach’s *Die Toneelstuk* is characterized by the important feature of metamorphosis. Characters change into other characters. Dawid

becomes the Inquisitor, Anna becomes Mamma Jesus, the warder becomes Ivan and the Dog becomes *Alyosha*. In the play, Breytenbach subverts fixed values and replaces them with concepts, images and metaphors, related to the minor art of disruption.

Die Toneelstuk, is heterogeneous and hybrid if compared with the stable, the identical and constant which one finds in a play such as *The American Popess*⁹⁷ of the German dramatist, Esther Vilar. Vilar wrote this futuristic work in the seventies. It deals with the first woman who in 2033, was democratically chosen as Pope in the Roman Catholic Church. Du Toit (Litnet 2001) notes that in the new millennium the Roman Catholic Church has changed beyond recognition. After centuries the Church dogma and ritual were in disarray. One after the other enlightened Popes have sanctioned homosexuality, divorce, abortion and birth control. Even priestly marriages were allowed. It became a history of cosmic change and re-creation and modernization by which the Roman Catholic Church tried to remain actual. However, power has been constantly evolved in more subtle ways. The Popess completes the circle by reinstating the original power symbols. They reinitiated the absolute authority of the Pope. In the light of her own disbelief, Pope Joan II engages in a Messianic sacrifice. She relentlessly calls the Church to order and delivers an argumentative, worldwide television message. Pope Joan II dissects the collapse of the Church against the background of human fallibility and belief that cannot be negotiated. Without structure, freedom has no meaning.

In *Die Toneelstuk*, Breytenbach and the character, Dostoevsky, questions the aspect of human freedom, a burden which God has placed on man. In contrast to Vilar, Breytenbach's way of working is anarchical and revolutionary. Breytenbach creates images, identities and conditions of nomadic non-fixity in his work. The theatre is *par excellence* the medium for social commentary. It is also the task of *Die Toneelstuk*. One has to take into account that

97

The American Popess by Esther Vilar. Produced by Opdrag Produksies. Directed by Mark Graham. Players Jana Celliers and Galeboe Moabi.

Breytenbach has been involved as conscious-maker, and as Marxist, with issues about social functioning. *Die Toneelstuk* is a shorthand approach that operates far outside the borders of the well-known bourgeois-reality. It is the theatre of the absurd, the grotesque (grotesque in the sense that it is about guilt and confession, tyranny of religious institutions and the Christian Church, for instance, the Inquisition), as well as the carnivalesque with its function of estrangement. Breytenbach's art, writing, dramas, aesthetics, revolutionary and other concepts, are enhanced by the images and notions of the *Tarot*, butterfly and *koan* in *Die Toneelstuk*.

After dreaming of him, Breytenbach introduced the audience to the naked twenty-first century's black Dostoevsky, who comes from the underground to perform as a character in a play. He comments in Xhosa on circumstances in South Africa. The confusion caused by the language, complicates matters for the theatergoer. For those operating the "war machine", there are no clear answers. We are living in the "underground" and the doorway to the underground is the mirror. Dostoevsky, mocks and confronts a Christian (stratified) audience with the *Tarot* card of the crucified Christ, the "nail-man" who died for their sins. According to Hambidge (Litnet 2001) Breytenbach refers to *le Pendu* or "the Hanged Man". It is a complex card and if drawn upside down refers to a state of imprisonment within a psyche or body. The *Tarot* and the twenty-three major arcana (Swords, Coins, Sticks and Cups) represent spiritual development from total innocence to spiritual maturity. Many speculations are regarding the origin of the *Tarot*. For the nineteenth century mystic, Eliphas Levi, it is possible to understand the complete universe even while in a state of solitary confinement. The world can be understood by reading the cards. At the outset, only the rich could afford the lovely hand-crafted cards. Some cards were available in woodcuts. Later, when it became more popular, the appearance of the cards changed. The cups became hearts, the swords, the knave of spades and queen of spades; the pentacles, diamonds and batons were changed to clubs.

In 2001 Breytenbach as dramatist used the events in the life of Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), his novel *The Brothers Karamazov* and possibly, the figure of the underling or the underground man from *Notes from the Underground*, as intertext. According to Steiner (1980:200), these works are brilliant, semi-deranged monologues and dialogues, where man dances around his own soul and the writer creates an occult ecstasy coming from life created through language. In *Notes from the Underground*, Dostoevsky (Steiner 1980:301) writes:

Gentlemen, I would like to tell you why I could not become an insect. I hereby state that I would like to become an insect, but that I could never realize my dream.

Dostoevsky's insect metaphor carries the seed of Kafka's metamorphosis that Breytenbach used in his drama, *Life and Times of Johnny Cockroach*. The old metaphor connected man with worms and maggots, representing mortality. In William Shakespeare's (baptised 1564-1616) *King Lear*, the mass deaths of flies are portrayed. Both Dostoevsky en Breytenbach transform this view to psychological realities and conditions of thought. The tragedy of the underling is that he literally turns his back on his own masculinity. The underling embodies the mystery of the absurd, long before the Existentialists voiced their views. The underling is the one cast out from society. In his sense of estrangement, the underling constantly talks to himself, even sees the "other" when looking into the mirror. The underling is necessary because he reminds us of our own mortality. He is the androgynous clown who talks about the truth and as painter Breytenbach portrays him as the one wearing the dunce's cap. The French poet, François Villon (1431-1463), Breytenbach's partner from his prison days, was the first voice from the underground. The "shitting", vomiting, grotesque character, (Breytenbach) who orders all the characters in *Die Toneelstuk* around in the first part, is the true underling.

In *Die Toneelstuk*, Breytenbach refers to butterflies. This insect is the metaphor that represents metamorphosis. It introduces the theatregoer to a new process, namely the interaction between

the audience and the production. On the cover of the prison poetry (*Yk*), the fourth volume of the “undanced dance” (1984), Breytenbach depicts the prisoner with a shaven head and a moth covering his eyes. The insect functions during the night, when vision is limited. Bangai Bird’s vision is limited. In the self-portrait on the back cover, the prisoner who is Breytenbach, presents himself with a butterfly over his eyes. The wound on his forehead indicates the presence of the third eye, which is the eye looking inward. He is now looking through this eye. The butterfly in *Die Toneelstuk*, invites the theatregoer to extend his/her limited views of things.

According to du Toit (Litnet 2001), the *koan*⁹⁸ is a paradoxical statement, which cannot be explained logically through language. It is a riddle given by the Zen-master to his pupil: engagement with a struggle for meaning, leads to enlightenment. Because the *koan* and for the argument of the thesis, *Die Toneelstuk* cannot be explained logically, thus avoiding the conscious reason, easing radical shifts in the unconscious is possible. Deep inner transformations are set aside by trying to find meaning for an artwork like *Die Toneelstuk*. The Westerner experiences unbearable uncomfot if he/she does not immediately understand art, drama, the novel and other life experiences. The stratified order operates through fixed notions. When those who belong to the order do not understand something, it is immediately rejected. What is rejected, is the mirror casting the riddle towards each of us.

Sienaert (2001:80) mentions that when Breytenbach writes, paints, and thinks, he does not turn to the traditional ancestor - although he wrote in an imaginative way about his grandfather, the *Boom Boer* (Tree Farmer). Breytenbach’s ancestors are Bosch, Breugel and Goya in the arts and Villon and Camiljoen in poetry. In *Lappesait Ten (BC-1)*, Breytenbach writes and paints

98

The koan is an enigmatic riddle, characteristic of the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism, whereby abrupt awakening is achieved. A common example of a koan asks about the sound made by one hand clapping. The effort involved to “solve” a koan is intended to exhaust the analytical intellect and the egoistic will, preparing the mind to respond on the intuitive level.

the ancestor Kafka, and addresses him as father. In *Die Toneelstuk*, Dostoevsky is the ancestor. Both Dostoevsky and Breytenbach are endowed with exceptional strength, perseverance, and an animal hardiness. Both of them endured incarceration and created art in the aftermath. Both of them had to transform pain, imprisonment, rejection and exile by their relevant societies, turning it into art where reality, patterns and chaos are intensified through their thoughts. Paradoxically their vision penetrates chaos and the essential depth of contemporary experience in their relevant societies. Politics intrigues both writers.

During 1992 Breytenbach made a pencil drawing with collage, which for him represents fragmentation and disintegration. In the artwork of Dostoevsky, he places him in Africa. Dostoevsky is depicted in a flowered shirt. His small hands, which is Breytenbach's image of vulnerability, is already exposed to the process of decay. In the foreground, the artist depicts two African elephants using their trunks to embrace each other (BC-2). This work now belongs to Georges-Marie Lory, who translated Breytenbach's poetry in French.

Dostoevsky is regarded as one of the great Russian writers of the 19th century. According to Steiner (1980:204) his talent can be regarded as uncontrollable. He was born in a hospital for the poor in a slum outside Moscow. He began his career as military engineer, but left his chosen profession to write. His first novella, *Poor People*, was a success, but the reception of the following work was not good. He became interested in radical politics and was arrested together with the Petrefski-Ring in 1849. After a mock execution, he was condemned as prisoner and later as soldier to Siberia. Eight years of imprisonment left him with epileptic fits. He also developed compulsive gambling problems. His sensitivity for the extreme of human experience, the psychology of criminal behaviour and a growing insight for Pan Slavic Christianity, was explored in *The House of the Deaf*, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamasov*.

“God-ridden” Russian thought confronted Dostoevsky. During this time there was the view that Russia had to play an important role in the threatening apocalypse. Dostoevsky met Christ in detrimental circumstances in a prison in Omsk. He made several studies for the depiction of Christ – Alexei Fyodorovich (Alyosha, Alyoshka, Alyoshenka, Alyoshechka, Alexeichic, Lyosha, Lyoshenka⁹⁹) Karamasov, represented the canonical and traditional. The only depiction of Christ by Dostoevsky is in the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor. The Inquisitor questions violence and paradox on behalf of mankind. He opposes Christ, who cannot relate to mankind’s failure to deal with the excruciating pain of freedom. During 2001, Breytenbach as dramatist, used events in Dostoevsky’s life and his book, *The Brothers Karamasov*. This novel deals with collective - as opposed to individual guilt.

In the interview with Sienaert (2001:106), Breytenbach explains his views of guilt as follows:

‘Collective guilt’, however, is an a-historical enterprise (one may even suggest that it is a-moral) to retro-actively impose a morality on the past in the light of present-day convictions and hypocrisies. Not only is it a self-indulgent effort to simplify complex processes, but this accusation of group guilt is a flimsy camouflaged power play), preferably addressed to those of another tribe and thus it becomes racist), is also intended to paint those of us on ‘the right side’ a paler shade of snow. ‘Collective guilt’ promotes amnesia; it obfuscates the understanding of how and why oppressive systems and regimes came about; it obliterates the demarcation between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ because the criminally responsible actors can now be seen as products of group characteristics; it takes away personal responsibility. Consciousness is thought and action, at least potentially. As a conscious human being making my own decision, I reject the notion of shared guilt, and this the need to confess and retribute, defined and confined solely by a share colour and culture.

⁹⁹

According to the Russian tradition, these are all diminutives of the name Alexei. Breytenbach uses the diminutive, Alyosha in *Die Toneelstuk*.

In *Die Toneelstuk* Breytenbach rejected the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He also rejects group guilt as moral fascism and refuses to see himself as a victim. Breytenbach's country has rot in his guts and he experiences a deep inner bleeding. Everything he believed in (also freedom), was an illusion.

Die Toneelstuk is a memory-work, and a prison ritual that should bring healing. The actors recite the words as if they are partaking in a ritual – movement by the actors seem absurd and without meaning. The repetition of the drama is played out in a prison with the political prisoner, Dawid as central figure and the woman Anna, as co-player. Baba Halfjan ridicules the writer – Breytenbach in his own way has been ridiculing the role of the writer for years. The ritualistic nature of Breytenbach's play, probably echoes certain aspects of the Russian Orthodox Church to which Dostoevsky belonged.

In *The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche ponders on the audiences' excitement when confronted by pain. The public eye is the crystal ball where pain and suffering are transformed to sadistic pleasure. The fixed eye ('I') has become used to everything. It has become nearly impossible to extend the barrier because the worse that can happen has already been seen. The production of *Die Toneelstuk* by Marthinus Basson and the players – Jan Ellis (Dawid/Grand Inquisitor), Antoinette Kellerman (Martiens), Chan Marti (Anna/Mamma Jesus), Anton Smuts (Baba Halfjan), Albert Marits (Warder/Ivan), Rob van Vuuren (*Dog/Alyosha*) en Christopher Gxalaba (Dostoevsky) became the war machine that disrupts the safe, fixed order of society. Dissonant energies are set free. The Dog of Pain is the important (invisible) character in this play. He lifts his head and howls when listening to the "gallows-songs" of those passing Breytenbach's cell next to the place of execution.

The howl of the main character at the end of the play, is the cry of one who has seen and experienced too much. Breytenbach as war machine refuses to become the integrated well-

balanced citizen of the stratified order. With the epiphanic Dostoevsky, he shares the ability to experience pain.

The thesis – **Against fixity: a hybrid reading of Breyten Breytenbach’s art, poetry, writing, aesthetics and philosophy**, is a comparative study, which revealed the artist/writer’s constant stance against the stratification of societies and that of South Africa in particular. It is not a critical study, but comparative. Breytenbach seems to be consequent in his arguments against fixity.

In conclusion some very important suggestions with regards to further research on Breytenbach’s work must be suggested. In the first place a critical evaluation of his work might be done in the field of gender studies. An interesting aspect to look into would be Breytenbach’s welcoming the woman as the Other.

A further suggestion lies in the section of philosophical studies. A comparative study could be made between Breytenbach as a thinker of concepts and similar notions by Deleuze & Guattari.

In Art History a comparative study could be made between Breytenbach as *New Realist* and the *Nouveau Realisme* or the Fluxus movements. The artist, Johan Cage, Henry Flynt and the composer, George Maciunas are important. Concepts and practices of postwar avant-garde, for example concrete art, conceptual art, and the promoting of art and aesthetics as anti-art, can be examined.

8. PRINCIPAL DATES REGARDING BREYTENBACH'S ART AND WRITING.

16.9.1939: Birth of Breyten Breytenbach in South Africa under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Rabbit.

22.5.1942: Birth of Ngo Thi Huang Lien (Yolande) in Saigon, Vietnam under the Chinese Zodiac sign of the Horse.

1962 First exhibition of paintings at the Edinburgh Paperback Gallery.

Exhibitions at Galerie Girardon, Paris; Galerie Espace, Amsterdam; Galerie 20, Arnhem.

Participated in group exhibitions at Galerie Legendre, Galerie Laumiere and Galerie Claude Levin, Musée d'Art Moderne, all in Paris.

1964 Solo exhibitions: Galerie Claude Levin, Galerie Girardon and Galerie Tournesol, Paris; Galerie Espace, Amsterdam; Galerie 20, Arnhem. Group exhibitions: Salon de la Jeune Peinture; Galerie la Roue, Rotterdam Galerie Delta, Salon der Comparisons, Galerie Lahumière, Galerie Legendre and Galerie Claude Levin, Paris. Biennale de Paris.

Publication of *Die Ysterkoei moet sweet. (The Iron-Cow Must Sweat)*. Johannesburg. (Poetry)

Publication of *Katastrofes. (Catastrophes)*. Johannesburg. (Stories).

Awarded the Afrikaanse Pers Beperk (Afrikaans Press Corporation) Prize for *Die ysterkoei moet sweet en Katastrofes*.

1965. Solo Exhibitions: Galerie Claude Levin and Galerie Tournesol, Paris; Galerie Espace, Amsterdam. Galerie Contour, Brussels; Galerie Waalkens, Groningen

– Finsterwolde. Group exhibitions: Salon de la jeune Peinture; Galerie la Roue, Rotterdam; Galerie Delta, Galerie Peintres du Monde, Galerie le Soleil dans la Tête, Paris. Galerie Espace: Breytenbach, Heyboer, Huismans and Lucebert.

1966 Solo exhibition: *Le Singe peint*, Galerie Espace. Amsterdam; *Le Singe peint*, 12-31/10. Galerie Claude Levin, Galerie Tournesol (drawings) Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Galerie la Roue (with Lacoste and Skira), Paris; Galerie Delta, Rotterdam. Group exhibition: Galerie Espace: Breytenbach, Corneille, Constant, Diederer, Heyboer, Lucebert, Perlmutter and Raveel. Paris Museum of Modern Art (exhibits a work the length of two stories)

1967 Solo exhibition: Europa-Center, Berlin. Group exhibition: Biennial de Paris. 'Hommage Jeroen Bosch'. Bois-de-Duc. Galerie Espace – Breytenbach, Francisco da Silva, Carel Visser, Fred Zeiger, Appel, Corneille, Diederer, Els de Haas, Lucebert and Raveel.

Publications of *Die Huis van die Dowe*. (*The House of the Deaf*). Cape Town. (Poetry)

Awarded the South African Central News Agency Prize.

1968 Solo exhibition: Galerie COOC, Maastricht

Awarded the Reina Prinsen Geerlig Prize for *Die Huis van die Dowe*. The Netherlands.

1969 Group exhibition: Galerie Espace. Breytenbach, Lucassen, Raveel, Tajiri, Appel and Elias.

Publication of *Kouevuur*. (*Cold Fire*). Cape Town. (Poems)

1970 Solo exhibition: *Bellfires*. De Schouwzaal Hapert. 14/3-11/4.

Group exhibitions: Galerie Espace. Breytenbach, Lucassen, Roeland, Rudy van de Wint, Appel, Heyboer, Lucebert, Raveel and Niki de Saint Phalle. Galerie Espace. 14/11-31/12. Breytenbach – drawing from Rome and Lucebert from Java. Amsterdam.

Publication of *Lotus*. Cape Town. (Poetry, written under the pseudonym of Jan Blom)

Publications of *Oorblyfsels uit die Pelgrim se Verse na 'n Tydelike. (Remnants. From the Pilgrim's Verses towards a Temporary)*. Cape Town. (Poetry)

1971. Group exhibition: Galerie Espace – Breytenbach, Klaas Gubbels, Appel, Constant and Lucebert. Amsterdam.

Publication of *Om Te Vlieg. 'n Opstel in Vyf Ledemate en 'n Ode. (In Order to Fly. An essay in Five Members and an Ode)*. Cape Town. (Prose)

1972 Solo Exhibition: Galerie Espace. Amsterdam.

Publication of *Skryt. Om 'n sinkende skip blou te verf. (Cry/Write. To paint a sinking ship blue)*. Amsterdam. (Poetry)

Awarded the Dutch C.P. Van der Hoogt Prize for *Lotus*.

1973. Publication of *Met ander woorde. Vrugte van die Droom van Stilte. (In other words. Fruit of the Dream of Silence)*. Cape Town. (Poetry) Translated into Dutch in 1977.

1962. Solo exhibition: Galerie Espace, Amsterdam.

Publication of *De Boom Achter de Maan. (The Tree Behind the Moon)*. Amsterdam. (Short stories). Translated into Dutch by Adriaan van Dis and Jan Lonter.

1975. Group exhibition: Galerie Espace: *Depouille d'ange* (paintings, drawings and objects) with Breytenbach, Bennink and Heyboer. Amsterdam.

Publication of *Met Ander Woorden. (In Other Words)*. Including the complete contents of *Lotus; Oorblyfsels, Skryt; Met Ander Woorde*, and all other poems published up to the end of 1975. Amsterdam.

Breytenbach sentenced to nine years imprisonment in Pretoria.

1976. Retrospective exhibition at Galerie Espace, Amsterdam. *Twelve Years – Breyten Breytenbach* at De Doelen, Poetry International. Rotterdam.

Publication of *Voetskrif. (Foot script)*. Johannesburg. (Poetry)

Awarded a prize by the Perskor Newspaper Group for this volume of poetry written during the time of incarceration.

Publication of *'n Seisoen in die Paradys. (A Season in Paradise)*. Johannesburg. (A Travelogue)

Publication of *Het Huis van de Dove. (The House of the Deaf)*. Including the complete contents of *Die ysterkoei moet sweet; Die Huis van die Dowe; Kouevuur*. Amsterdam. (Poetry)

Publications of Skryt with Dutch translation by Adriaan van Dis. Amsterdam.

(Poetry)

Publication of *Feu froid (Cold fire)* Paris. (Poems) Translated into French by Georges-Marie Lory.)

Publication of *Moos* London. (A novel)

1977. Solo exhibitions: la Dérive, Paris; Rotterdam Arts Foundation, Rotterdam.

Publication of *Spreekwoord* (Proverb) English by Peter de Vries)

Publication of *Blomskryf. (Flower Writing)* Emmarentia. (Selected poems with an introduction by A.J. Coetzee.)

Publication of *Blomskryf* (Flower Writing) Emmarentia. (Selected poems)

Publication of *Sinking Ship Blues*. Ontario. (Poems translated into English by André P. Brink, Denis Hirson and Ria Leigh-Loohuizen)

1978. Group exhibition: 25/5 - 22/6: Galerie Espace. Breytenbach, Lucassen, Maryan and Raveel. July - August: Galerie Espace. Breytenbach, Alexhinsky, Lucassen, Gubbels, Lucebert, Tajiri, Rogge, van der Kraan and Miró. Amsterdam.

1980. Publication of *Vingermaan*. Amsterdam. Prison drawings with contributions by Lucebert, Gerrit Kouwenaar, Rutger Kopland, Bert Schierbeek and H.C. Ten Berge.

Publication of *A Season in Paradise*. London. (A travelogue)

Publication of: *Die miernes swel op ja die fox-terrier kry 'n weekend en ander byna vergete katastrofes en fragmente uit 'n ou manuskrip van Breyten Breytenbach*. Emmarentia. (Prosa) (The anthill swells and yes the fox-terrier gets a weekend and other nearly forgotten fragments and catastrophes from an old manuscript of Breyten Breytenbach.) (Prose)

Publication of *In Africa, even the Flies are Happy*. London. (Selected poems translated by Denis Hirson)

International Publishers Prize (*Prix des Septs*) given to German poet Erich Fried; Breytenbach given a special award, in terms of which his poetry will be translated into Spanish, Portuguese, German, further translated into French, Dutch. The book, *In Africa, even the Flies are Happy*, contains the English translation.

1982. Group exhibition: Galerie Espace. 18-21/3. Kunst Manifestatie de Nieuwe Kerk, Breytenbach, Alechinsky, Gubbels, Guntenaar, Heyboer, Holstein, Lucassen and Lucebert. Amsterdam.

5/12/1982. **Breytenbach set free from prison**

1983. Publication of *Mourior* (*Bespieëlde notas van 'n roman*) Emmarentia. (A novel)

Publication of Mouroir. *Mirror notes of a novel*. London / New York.

Publication of *Spiegel dood*. (Translated from English by Gerrit de Blaauw) Amsterdam.

Publication of *Eklips*. *Die derde bundel van die ongedanste dans*. (Eclipse. The third volume of the un-danced dance). Emmarentia. (Poetry)

Publication of ('Yk') *Die vierde bundel van die ongedanste dans*. ('Yk'). The fourth volume of the un-danced dance). Emmarentia. (Poetry)

Awarded the Jan Campert Prize for Literature in The Netherlands.

1984. Publication of *Notes of Bird*. Amsterdam (Monograph).

Exhibition: *I have been rediscovering the joys of painting*. Galerie Espace. Amsterdam.

Group exhibition: 25/5-30/6. Galerie Espace: Amsterdam. Breytenbach, Alechinsky, Klaas Gubbels, Lucebert, Raveel and Rooskens.

Publication of: *Buffalo Bill – panem et circences, 'n binne met oneindige veel buite gelap*, die tweede bundel van die *ongedanste dans*. (*Buffalo Bill – panem et circences, an inside with infinitely much patched on the outside*, the second volume of the undanced dance). Emmarentia. (Poetry)

Publication of *True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist. A Memoir*. London/ New York.

Publication of *De ware betekenis van een witte terrorist*. Translated by Gerrit de Blaau and Adriaan van Dis. Amsterdam. (An autobiographical document)

Awarded the Hertzog Prize. Breytenbach does not accept the prize.

Received the CNA Prize for ('Yk')

1985. Publication of: *Lewendood – kantlyn karteling by 'n digbundel*, die eerste bundel van die *ongedanste dans*. (*Living Dead*) Emmarentia. (Poetry)

Publication of *de Ander kant van de vrijheid*. Amsterdam.

Publication of *End Papers*. London. (Essays)

1986. Received the Rapport Prize for Literature for ('Yk'), South Africa.

Received the Pier Paul Pasolini Prize for Literature. Rome.

Exhibition: Galerie BBL (The Bank Brussels Lambert). 28/2-29/3. Introduction by Frans Boenders. Antwerp. Galerie Pieters. Rotterdam.

Group Jubiliun Exhibition: Galerie Espace. Amsterdam. Breytenbach, Alechinsky, Appel, Chapon, Ebeling Koning, Gubbels, Guntenaar, Haanstra, Holbein, Huismans, van der Kraan, Lucassen, Lucebert, Niermeijer, Postma, Roeland, Westerik, van Woerden, Heyboer and Corneille.

Publication of *Breyten Breytenbach*, revolver 13,3/4, Antwerp. (Monograph)

1987. Retrospective Exhibition: Galerie de la Ville. Montreuil. (*Catalogue*)

Publication of *Boek (deel een)*. (*Book. Part One*). Emmarentia. (Prose)

Receives an Honorary Doctorate of Literature (Doctor Literarium) from the University of Western Cape.

1988. *Judas Eye and Self-Portrait/Deathwatch*. London. (Collection of poetry)

1989. Publication of *Memory of Snow and of Dust*. London/New York. (Novel)

Publication of *Sporen van de kameleon*. Translated by Mea Flothuis. Amsterdam.

Publication of *Alles één paard*, Amsterdam. (Fictions and Images)

Publication of *All one Horse*, London. (Fictions and Images)

Exhibition: Galerie Springer, Berlin. Galerie Espace: *All One Horse*. Group Exhibition: Galerie Espace: 25/2-8/4. Amsterdam. Breytenbach, Brusse and Gubbels.

1990. Publication of *Soos die So. (Like the Such)*. Emmarentia. (Poetry)

Awarded the CNA Prize for *Memory of Snow and of Dust*.

1991. Publication of *Self-portrait and Other Ancestors*. (Monograph)

Solo exhibition: Studio 1, Kulturhuset. Stockholm. Municipal Gallery, Enschede.

Group Exhibition: 9-23/10. Galerie Espace. Breytenbach, Brusse and Gubbels.

Publication of *Terugkeer na het Paradijs*. Amsterdam. (A travelogue)

Publication of *Hart-Lam. (Dearest-Heart)*. Bramley. (Essays)

1992. Publication of *Return to Paradise. An African Journal*. London/ New York.

1993. First one-man exhibition in South Africa. Association for Visual Arts, Cape Town.

Publication of *Painting the Eye*. Cape Town.

Group Exhibition: 12/5-19/6. Galerie Espace. Amsterdam. Breytenbach (watercolours) and Klaas Gubbels. Exhibition: Centrum Elzenveld. Antwerp. NCRV- Studio. Hilversum.

Publication of *Nege landskappe van ons tye bemaak aan 'n beminde*
(*Nine landscapes of our times bequeathed to a beloved*). Cape Town. (Poetry)

Premiere of the film, *A Season in Paradise*, by Richard Dindo in Johannesburg.

1994. Exhibition: UNISA Art Gallery, 10/2-2/3. Exhibition opened by her Excellency
Mme Joelle Bourgois, the Ambassador of France. Pretoria.

Publication of *Plakboek*. Groenkloof. (Monograph)

Awarded the Alan Paton Prize for Non Fiction – *Return to Paradise*.

Receive Honorary Doctorate in Literature (Doctor Literarium) from the
University of Natal.

1995. Retrospective exhibition of paintings and drawing in the Verwey-Hall of the
Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem.

Group exhibition: Breyten, Heyboer and Hannes Postma at the Galerie Espace.
3/9-21/10. Amsterdam.

Publication *Uit de Eerste Hand*. Amsterdam. (A Monograph)

Vision from the Edge. Art film of Breytenbach painted scrolls for the
exhibition in Haarlem by Mary Stephen. Entered for an Art Film Competition
at the Pompidou Centre, Paris; readings and translation of Breytenbach's
poetry by the Chinese poet in exile, Bei Dao included.

Awarded the Jacobus van Looy Prize for poetry and painting. The Netherlands.

Publication of *Landschappen van onze tijd, bemaakt aan een beminde*.
Amsterdam.

Publication of *Die Hand Vol Vere. (The Hand Filled with Feathers)*. Cape
Town. (A selection of poetry compiled by A.J. Coetzee)

1996. Publication of *The Memory of Birds in Times of Revolution*. London. (Essays)

Awarded the Malaparte Prize for Literature. Capri.

Awarded the Helgaard Steyn Prize for *nege landskappe van ons tye bemaak
aan 'n beminde*.

1995-1997.

Appointed for a period of three years as Associate Professor at the Centre for
Creative Arts, University of Natal, Durban. South Africa.

1996 Appointed as visiting professor in the Creative Writer's Centre of Princeton
University (USA).

1998. *Portraits, Prints and Paper*. Solo exhibition in the Durban Art Gallery. Durban.

Performance of the drama, *Boklied* and directed by Marthinus Basson and
performed at the SANW Auditorium, Oudtshoorn (Klein Karoo Kunstefees),
Roodepoort Civic Theatre and Civic Theatre Bloemfontein.

Awarded the *Herrie* Prize for a debut work on the Klein Karoo Nasionale
Kunstefees.

Publication of *Papierblom* by Jan Afrika. (*Paperflower*). Cape Town. (Poetry)

Publication of *Oorblyfels: 'n roudig. (Remains: a poem of mourning)*. Cape Town. (Poetry)

Publication of *Dog Heart*. (A Travel Memoir) Cape Town.

Publication of *Boklied.*'n Vermaakliheid in drie bedrywe. (*Goatsong* – An entertainment in three acts) Cape Town.

1999. *Johnny Cockroach*. A drama directed by Marthinus Basson and performed at the Grahamstown Arts Festival. July.

Woordword: An exhibition of paintings at the Metropolitan Gallery. Association of Visual Arts. Cape Town.

Publication of: *Woordwerk. (Wordwork)*. Cape Town. (A Travelogue)

Awarded the Hertzog Prize for *Oorblyfel: 'n Roudig*.

1999-

Appointed as lecture in the graduate program for Creative Writing at New York University.

2000 - 2003

Appointed for a period of three years as Associate Professor in the Graduate School for Humanities at the University of Cape Town.

2000 *Life and Times of Johnny Cockroach*. A drama directed by Marthinus Basson. performed at the Nico Malan Theatre. Cape Town.

Om te Breyten C.D.

2001. Exhibition: Lappesait at the Gemcor Gallery. RAU. Johannesburg.

Exhibition: Lappesait. Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees.

Lappesait CD: Poems by Breytenbach and compositions by Eugenie Grobler & Pedro Kruger.

Exhibition: Dancing Dog and other Pornographics. Metropolitan Gallery. Association for Visual Arts. Cape Town.

Mondstuk CD. Poems read by Breyten Breytenbach.

Die Toneelstuk. A drama performed at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees.

2002. Publication of Lady One (English translations of poems by Breytenbach) New York.

Appointed as Director at the Gorée Institute.

Prizes: Prix des Sept Internationally & Commandeur des Arts et Lettres in France.

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10. SUMMARY

As seen in the title of this thesis, the main argument is the stance taken by Breytenbach against fixity in societal and other structures. This point of departure is entrenched in his art, poetry, writing, aesthetics and philosophy. In order to cover the diversity of Breytenbach's work and thinking, a hybrid approach has been adopted and this often complicates the writing and reading of the thesis. Aspects in Breytenbach's work investigated, are his views on the notion of consciousness, the movement of the body, social inscription and power, his time of incarceration, identity, and the nature of reality. Breytenbach's concern with flux, is emphasized. In the process of unfolding these diverse arguments, the thoughts of Deleuze & Guattari form the main backdrop of the discussion of Breytenbach's abhorrence with stratified orders and ways of thinking. Critical and anarchical thinkers such as Hillman, who works in the anti-psychiatric tradition, and Hofstadter, with his views of consciousness, are compared with Breytenbach's views on patterns, the self and consciousness. The movement of the body is discussed against the background of Deleuze & Guattari's philosophical inquiry into the notions of multiplicities which play off on the field of immanence. The notion stemming from the Surrealist game of *Cadavre Exquis* had an important influence on the work of Breytenbach. Theoretical points of departure by the Surrealist are discussed. There are numerous images of decapitation in Breytenbach's art. Thus, Bataille's *Acéphale Group* and Kristeva's interest in decapitation are looked into. Descartes' view regarding the intellect, are also discussed. The role of the social critic is investigated. Therefore, Sartre, Camus, Gramsci and Breytenbach are discussed in relation to Walzer's theories about the social critic. The theoretical view of Bakhtin regarding the carnival and the grotesque, are discussed. Breytenbach's time of incarceration is discussed against Foucault's views on power. Bachelard's and Breytenbach's inquiry regarding space, as well as the Zen Buddhist view regarding the void are discussed. About the question of Breytenbach's concern with identity, the theoretical view of Said, Bhabha, Spivak, and Fanon are discussed. The eminent Japanese thinker, Nishida is concerned with the nature of reality. Both Nishida and Breytenbach propose that all artificial divisions between what is seen as thought and the world, or between art and politics should be removed as obstructions in the way of creative involvement in the

ongoing process of creation of differential worlds. The similarities between Breytenbach's views of reality and those of the Zen Buddhist masters are looked into. Marxism and its views concerning reality, which is utopian, are discussed. Baudrillard is the theorist who is concerned with the simulacrum. His work is compared to that of Breytenbach. The theoretical points of departure of New Realism are investigated, also that of Surrealism as found in the work of Breton. Breytenbach's use of ideas in his art, writing, aesthetics and thinking are compared with European writers, film-makers and artists who follow a similar approach. Valuable research into Breytenbach's involvement in the art scene in The Netherlands provides information regarding his career as an artist.

List of Key Terms:

Surrealism, New Realism, Zen Buddhism, Consciousness, Memory, Identity, Nomadology, Social Critic.

OPSOMMING.

Soos blyk uit die titel van hierdie verhandeling, neem Breytenbach standpunt in teenoor gevestigde strukture in die samelewing. Hierdie vertrekpunt is ingebed in sy kuns, digkuns, skryfwerk, esteties en filosofie. Ten einde die wye omvang van Breytenbach se werk te dek, word daar gebruik gemaak van 'n hibriediese benadering wat moontlik die lees van die tesis kompliseer. Aspekte van Breytenbach se werk wat ondersoek word, is sy siening oor die idee van bewussyn, beweging van die liggaam, sosiale inskripsie en mag, sy tydperk van gevangenisskap, identiteit en die aard van realiteit. Die denke van Deleuze & Guattari vorm die hoof vertrekpunt vir die bespreking van Breytenbach se afkeur teenoor gestratifiseerde ordes en denke. Kritiese en anargistiese denkers soos Hillman, wat 'n anti-psigiatriese benadering volg, en Hofstadter met sy sieninge van bewussyn, word vergelyk met Breytenbach se vertrekpunt ten opsigte van patrone, die self en bewussyn. Die beweging van die liggaam word bespreek teen die agtergrond van Deleuze & Guattari se filosofiese ondersoek van die idee van meervoudigheid wat afspeel op die terrein van immanensie. Die idee wat voortspruit uit die Surrealistiese spel, *Cadavre Exquis*, het 'n belangrike invloed gehad op Breytenbach se werk. Teoretiese vertrepunte van die Surrealiste word bespreek. Daar is veelvoudige uitbeeldings van onthoofding in Breytenbach se kuns. Bataille se *Acépehale Groep* en Kristeva se belangstelling in onthoofding word met hierdie verskynsel in Breytenbach se kuns vergelyk. Descartes se siening betreffende die intellek, word ook bespreek. Die rol van die sosiale kritikus word ondersoek en Sartre, Camus, Gramsci en Breytenbach word bespreek na aanleiding van Walzer se idees oor die sosiale kritikus. Die teoretiese siening van Bakhtin betreffende die karnaval en die groteske, word bespreek. Breytenbach se tydperk van gevangenisskap en die kuns wat daaruit voortgespruit het word ondersoek. Foucault se siening oor mag is hier belangrik. Bachelard en Breytenbach se navraag na ruimte en die Zen-Buddhistiese siening van niksheid word bespreek. Breytenbach se siening ten opsigte van identiteit word vergelyk met die teoretiese idees van Said, Bhabha, Spivak en Fanon. Die belangrike Japanse denker, Nishida is gemoeid met die aard van realiteit. Beide Nishida en Breytenbach stel voor dat alle kunsmatige skeidings tussen denke en die wêreld, of tussen kuns en politiek verwyder moet word – hierdie skeiding verhoed 'n kreatiewe betrokkenheid in die

deurlopende proses van skepping van differensiële wêrelde. Die ooreenkomste tussen Breytenbach se siening van realiteit en dié van die Zen Buddhitiese leermeesters word ondersoek. Die Marxistiese beweging en sy sieninge van realiteit, wat utopies is, word ook bespreek. Baudrillard is die teoretikus wat gemoed is met die simulacrum. Sy werk word met dié van Breytenbach bespreek. Die teoretiese vertrekpunte van die Nuwe Realisme word ondersoek, ook Breton en die Surrealiste se siening oor die aard van realiteit. Breytenbach se gebruik van konsepte in sy kuns, skryfwerk, esteties en denke word vergelyk met Europese skrywers, filmmakers, en kunstenaars wat dieselfde benadering volg. Belangrike navorsing in Breytenbach se betrokkenheid in die Nederlandse kunswêreld verskaf inligting van sy loopbaan as kunstenaar.

Lys van sleutel terme.

Surrealism, Nuwe Realism, Zen Buddhisme, Bewussyn, Herinnering, Identiteit, Nomadologie, Sosiale Kritikus.

Declaration before the Commissioner of Oaths.

"I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Doctor of History of Art at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university".

Witzgen
.....

Name.

11 Maart 2002
.....

Date.

Sworn before me at *Stellenbosch* on this *11th* day of March 2002.

W Groenewaldt
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