

Reading the ideological subtext in André Brink's *An Instant in the Wind* and Patrick White's *A Fringe of Leaves*

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Abstract

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*From a postcolonial perspective, the simultaneous publication of André Brink's **An Instant in the Wind** and Patrick White's **A Fringe of Leaves** provides an interesting example of rewriting. Although both texts refer to the original story of Eliza Fraser that has featured in several genres, they approach the event from different historical time-frames. This article attempts to indicate that the contextual and formal similarities between the two novels are underpinned by different ideological subtexts that clearly manifest the respective authors' preoccupations and their unconscious reactions to socio-political contexts. It would seem that Brink's main concern lies with race relations, while White is more engrossed with gender issues.*

1. Introduction

The coincidental publication in 1976 of two novels with remarkable similarity in context, plot and thematic content, *An Instant in the Wind* by André Brink and *A Fringe of Leaves* by Patrick White, would probably have raised speculation about the concepts of "originality" and authenticity in literature at the time. The fact that Brink's novel was a translation of the original Afrikaans version published in 1975 under the title *Oomblik in die Wind*, would also have served as an additional point of interest in such a debate. Yet, from the present postcolonial/postmodernist perspective, the simultaneous publication of "similar" texts would rather raise questions about the relevance and significance of intertextuality in such an event; and its contribution towards the interpretation of literary texts.

In fact, the “issues of difference and similarity” seem to have attained a new dimension in contemporary postcolonial literature as Rowland Smith (2000:2) points out in his introduction to a recently published collection of papers entitled *Postcolonizing the Commonwealth*. He claims that the contributors to this collection are all concerned in some way with difference and similarity and “the re-examination of categories that appear to many to be too rigidly defined in current postcolonial practices and to concepts of sharing: experience, ideas of home and even the use of land”. It would therefore seem a worthwhile exercise to re-read and compare such ostensibly similar texts as *An Instant in the Wind* and *A Fringe of Leaves* to determine their individual *raison d'être* and significance within the contemporary literary scene.

2. Literature, history and ideology

At the time, it seemed remarkable that two writers of international repute, from different continents and socio-historical backgrounds, should have produced “similar” texts. In consideration of the mimetic quality of literature as the representation of a select reality, in this case the similarity in the natural environment and colonial experience of the two authors, such a contingency might arise. Yet when the distinctive features of the individual authors’ creative impulses and perspectives are taken into account, this ostensible similarity is effaced by the gradual emergence of a subtly intimated subtext or “element of difference” which lends credence to Gebauer and Wulf’s (1992:268) contention that

[t]he mimetic treatment of texts and writing marks itself off from imitation and simulation through an element of *difference*. The goal is not the production of the same but the generation of the similar; it makes difference possible and, with difference, productive freedom (my emphasis – MJW).

It then appears inevitable that literature from colonised countries such as South Africa and Australia should exhibit similar agendas and, to some extent, encode or challenge history and master narratives in their representation of colonial experience and power relations. Rewriting is therefore not merely confined to recent postcolonial writing but can already be perceived in earlier writings such as the above-mentioned novels. In this case it provides the necessary historical distance to address social and political problems that also feature in many other novels written during the last quarter of the twentieth century that explore the impact of colonisation through intertextual references and cross-fertilisation in various ways.

This article will explore the intertextual quality in Brink and White's novels to determine how it reflects on the interpretation of and interrelationships between texts and contexts. In deference to Derrida's concept of the mimetic character of writing and reading, Gebauer and Wulf (1992:268) provide an acceptable explanation for differences in interpretation when they assert/state that

[t]exts are never originals, always 'doubles'; they come into being through acts of collation and supplementation, through entanglements in other texts. They have no origin but rather begin in situations that are already mimetic. Every origin is a repetition. What is written can be imitated at will and is open to divergent interpretations.

Brink and White revert to the same historical event as point of reference in their respective novels. Yet, they interpret or transpose the story of Eliza Fraser, who was shipwrecked off the Australian coast in the nineteenth century, into their respective socio-political contexts. The official account of the incident (Hassall, 1987:3) relates that the Stirling Castle was wrecked off the Queensland coast in 1836; that Captain James Fraser and his pregnant wife had been among the passengers on board; that most of the passengers had died but that Mrs Fraser had survived to be taken captive by a tribe of Aborigines and kept in captivity for two and a half months before she was saved by a fugitive convict. This event, the story of Eliza Fraser, became the topic for various genres such as plays, films, novels and paintings between 1969 and 1976 (Schaffer, 1991:137). It specifically captured the imagination of the painter Sidney Nolan who completed a series of paintings in three periods from 1947 to 1963 (Schaffer, 1991:136). Nolan's enthusiasm for the subject served to inspire White (Hassall, 1987:4) and Brink (Brink, 1996:20) individually to each construct his own version of the event. The result was both the rewriting of history and the creation of another "history", thereby creating an intertextual frame of reference.

Both authors use existentialist philosophy as point of orientation by subjecting their protagonists to the elemental forces of nature and exposing the limitations of human nature. In exploring the concepts of freedom and betrayal, the novels illustrate that human existence depends on a person's relationships with his/her environment and reliance on society. They conclude with the (im)possibility of choice. This context forms the background to the predicament of the white settler, his adaptation to and interpretation of the harsh realities of the former colonies that lies at the heart of both *An Instant in the Wind* and *A Fringe of Leaves*.

The significance of racial confrontation between settler and indigenous communities in both South Africa and Australia, is depicted in the captivity narratives proliferating during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the colonial world (Darian-Smith, 1996:99). These narratives or “myths”, often written and recounted by males, usually depict the rescue and sexual exploitation of white women (assumed in the case of Ellen Roxburgh) by indigenous males. Consequently, the concept of the white captive female has become associated with “multifarious cultural, racial and gendered ideologies, constituting women as both symbols of European civilization and chattels of patriarchal capitalism” (Darian-Smith, 1996:100). Women within the South African context have also been subjected to similar stereotypes. In fact, the concept of the white settler woman in South Africa as a sign or object is discussed at some length by Driver (1988) and referred to by both Adler (1996:95) and Daymond (2000:101) in their respective articles on settler women.

However, racial issues not only informed captivity narratives but evolved into social stereotypes, the “abiding myths” (Smith, 2000:2) of colonisation and the resultant ideology of apartheid in South Africa. In essence, the two novels represent the white settler’s constant struggle to determine his place on and make sense of the vast continents of Africa and Australia respectively: the struggle, as Smith (2000:3) describes it, between “the implicit claims of ‘authenticity’ from both the metropolitan centres of the colonizing power and the indigenous cultures of the autochthonous inhabitants”. In this sense Brink and White are also challenging the stereotypical perceptions of race and gender existing in the South African and Australian societies of the time.

It is the above-mentioned ideological boundaries (Darian-Smith, 1996: 104) defining these narratives with regard to race and gender, that Brink and White attempt to transcend in their novels where the protagonists venture into the “primitive” wilderness associated with the feminine psyche, away from the civilised rational world associated with the (male) coloniser residing on the peripheries of the respective continents. Brink and White then attempt to deconstruct the respective myths and “decolonise” the narrow-minded interpretations of race and sex imposed by the settlers – as well as their own contemporaries.

3. “Reading” the context

In recognition of the ideological nature of literary discourse, the contemporary reader should not only acknowledge correspondences between texts but also cultivate an awareness of subliminal or unconscious ideological levels in texts. The influence of immediate context

on the author and his product still remains a crucial factor in the interpretation of history and literature – because both are cultural constructs which relate to “the ‘social mentality’ or ideology of an age” (Eagleton, 1991:208). Therefore, the key to interpreting a text remains, as Collingwood asserted in 1946, “to understand the questions it asks, and the answers it gives” (quoted in Lerner, 1991:337). The interpretation of fiction should therefore also take the writer’s context into account: the personal, social and historical worlds/realities of the writer as well as that of the text and the reader because, as Minneke Schipper (1989:155) argues, authors are “recipients of texts (from their own and other cultures) on the one hand” and “producers of texts” on the other hand. In the case of *Instant in the Wind* and *A Fringe of Leaves*, I would like to suggest that the essential difference between the two novels is embedded in such an ideological *subtext* as referred to here, or in a general repertoire as McCormick and Waller (1987:194) refer to it. This subtext is exposed through the dynamic interaction of the various contexts, or, to put it another way, lies at the intersection of the creative and social axes.

To explore this interaction between literature and history, Lerner (1991: 335) distinguishes three dimensions of context which he relates to “its ideology, its strategies of writing, and social reality”. Though arranged on different levels, all these specific dimensions, or aspects of context, will form part of the discussion of the two novels, *An Instant in the Wind* and *A Fringe of Leaves*. By identifying a subtext, I hope to prove the unique quality and value of each novel and to “describe its bearings on present or past situations” (Hirsch, 1991:51). Although the matter of correspondence or replication will receive due consideration, the main focus will be on the covert (con)texts that define the novels and communicate the unique quality of their composition. This article is therefore an attempt to engage in a meaningful re-reading of the above-mentioned novels in order to underline their value and significance as products of the dialectic between history and fiction that informs the postcolonial literary debate.

The idea of an ideological subtext is derived from Marxist criticism that distinguishes two levels of discourse, the general and the literary. The interaction of the general (social) and the literary has since been adjusted and expanded in various ways by critics such as Bakhtin and Kristeva (see Bakhtin, 1981 and Kristeva, 1980). It also forms the basis of the reading strategies developed by McCormick and Waller (1987) and Friedman (1993) whose concept provides the framework for the analysis presented here. Although McCormick and Waller (1987) focus on the reader, text and ideological influences, they seem to regard the

author as an implicit component of the text, whereas Friedman's (1993) approach also draws attention to the author's (un)conscious role.

4. The spatialization of narrative

To grasp the significance of various interrelationships at work, Friedman (1993:20) proposes a reading strategy intended to foreground the subtext. It is called the "spatialization of narrative" that provides "a systematic way of approaching the various forms of narrative dialogism and of (re)connecting the text with its writer and the world" (Friedman, 1993:20). This approach was developed from "Kristeva's adaptations of Bakhtin's spatial tropes" called "spatialization". She (Friedman, 1993:12) suggests that the reading process generates meaning at the intersection of two axes: a horizontal axis that represents the dialogic interplay between the writing subject and the addressee (character or reader) expressed through the various elements of fiction and literary conventions, and a vertical axis that relates to the interaction between the text and exterior texts and/or contexts. We are therefore confronted with a story within a story which can only be perceived in the interaction of the two axes but not on one of them alone (Friedman, 1993:20). Friedman (1993:16) explains: "... every horizontal narrative has an embedded vertical dimension that is more or less visible and that must be traced by the reader because it has no narrator of its own". This dimension, the author's unconscious ideological "baggage", forms the focal point of this comparative study.

4.1 The horizontal axis

The horizontal axis, representing the conventional literary aspects of analysis considered in the reading process such as plot, characterisation and structure, evinces the overt correspondences between *An Instant in the Wind* and *A Fringe of Leaves*. To illustrate the similarity in the plots and structures of the two novels, I shall give a brief outline of each novel.

- ***An Instant in the Wind*¹**

The female protagonist of *An Instant in the Wind*, Elisabeth Larsson, marries a Swedish naturalist and accompanies him on an expedition to the South African interior. On their journey inland, their Hottentot bearers desert them, their possessions get stolen and finally Larsson disappears leaving Elisabeth bereft. The runaway slave, Adam Mantoor, who has

1 Page numbers in this section of the article refer to Brink (1979).

been following the expedition for some time, finds her. His appearance saves her from certain death and their proximity leads to an intimate relationship and enforced recognition of the other: "This terrible space surrounding us creates the silence in which, so rarely, preciously, I dare to recognise you and be recognised by you" (199). In their daily struggle for survival, they are stripped of all the commodities of civilisation such as clothes and maps (16). They gradually realise the insignificance of exterior appearances and differences in skin colour: "A skeleton is what one should be allowed to be, clean and bare, bones. Discovering it in the veld you can't even tell whether it was man or woman. It's pure bone-being; human thing" (65). However, they cannot exist in a vacuum (91), as Adam realised when he followed the expedition earlier on, and they decide to return to the Cape and civilisation.

On the long trip southwards, they are exposed to hardship and deprivation. As they draw near to the Cape, synonymous with society and civilisation, they approach a farmhouse for shelter. Their reception, or at least the racist reception Adam receives from the white farmer, once again emphasises the harsh realities of a racist society (220) and the first seeds of doubt are sown with regard to the success of their venture and the survival of their personal relationship. When they reach the Cape, Elisabeth leaves Adam to arrange for his pardon but she fails to return and Adam is taken prisoner again. Her betrayal seems inexcusable until the reader refers back to the "historical documentation" mentioned at the exposition of the novel (11) and realises that perhaps Elisabeth had no choice because she was expecting a child. Within the context of the Victorian/racist-oriented society of the time, the implications of this fact are far-reaching and play a crucial role in further decisions and actions (233-234). In such a society, the shame of an unmarried mother would have been daunting enough without the additional complication of perhaps giving birth to a child of mixed race. According to "documentation", Elizabeth marries a white farmer soon afterwards and bears him a son. However, if Adam had been the father, her betrayal would assume a totally different character as she would have had no choice but to betray Adam for the sake of their son's future freedom (outside the bondage of slavery and racial discrimination). The conclusion is then partially explained by the introduction and echoes the circular structure introduced by the concept of seasonal cycles in nature. Elizabeth also echoes this theme when she urges that they should return to the Cape because they've "got to complete the circle" (146).

- ***A Fringe of Leaves*²**

2 Page numbers in this section of the article refer to White (1983).

In *A Fringe of Leaves*, the female protagonist is an English country girl, Ellen Gluyas, who marries the affluent Austin Roxburgh. He is a sickly, cold and repressed man who shows her little affection, but the marriage presents her with a passport to a better life. They travel to Australia to visit Austin's brother and on the return journey from Van Diemen's Land they are shipwrecked. Ellen is pregnant (probably by Garnet Roxburgh, Austin's brother) but she loses her husband and the baby as well. She is taken on as a slave by a tribe of Aborigines and stripped of all her clothes and affectations of respectability (224); she also suffers incredible hardships and near starvation: "Tonight again, the prisoner was offered no more than scraps: a bone to gnaw, a fragment of the beast's scorched hide to chew or suck" (227). Ellen is released from her social isolation when she encounters the escaped convict, Jack Chance, on one of the Aborigine tribe's nomadic wanderings. She starts a relationship with him and asks him to return to civilisation with her.

They set out on the return journey. When they finally reach a farmhouse after many trials, Ellen decides to rejoin "civilisation" without hesitation, but Jack decides to return to the bush because he has no faith in the justice of the country nor in Ellen's powers of persuasion to arrange for his pardon. Ellen consequently returns to society but leaves her spiritual self behind in the bush – the natural instinct repressed by social conventions – to adapt once more the strait-laced society of the time. Eventually, she returns to England and marries a gentleman whom she meets on board ship. The novel then begins with a sea voyage and ends with one, emulating the circular structure of *An Instant in the Wind*. The two novels also correlate with regard to the male and female protagonists, the idea of a journey of self-discovery and the exploration of concepts such as civilisation and betrayal. Both titles evoke a larger frame of reference than the local by referring to the brevity of human time as an "instant" and the sparse protection of human civilisation as a "fringe" respectively. The context of wilderness and the symbolism of seasonal cycles also evoke biblical allusions to Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden and the Fall.

4.2 The vertical axis

Yet, despite these remarkable similarities in characterisation, theme and structure, there is a subtle difference in emphasis that could be related to cultural contexts and ideological influences located on the vertical axis. This axis contains the subtext relating to generic codes, the historic/social order and the psychic dimension (Friedman, 1993:17). The first two aspects relate to intertextuality – other texts in interaction with the horizontal narrative – with regard to genre and the socio-historic context

which Friedman (1993:17) defines as the “larger social order of the writer, text, and reader”.

As far as genre and historical relevance are concerned, the two novels show close correlations. The two white “colonisers”, Brink and White, experience similar perceptions of colonial enterprise but choose to translate them into explorer narratives from different ideological frameworks. This subgenre, or mode of writing, provides them with a metaphor for a journey of self-discovery that simultaneously translates into a physical exploration of the respective countries as well as a metaphysical journey for the protagonists. It also provides the opportunity of interrogating and deconstructing the limited parameters of settler myths. In her definition of the historical dimension located on the vertical axis, Friedman (1993:17) explains that it could refer to a specific historic incident reconstructed in the text or “political resonances”, or ideological positions that “reproduce, subvert, and otherwise engage with the dominant and marginalized cultural scripts of the social order”. In Fredric Jameson’s terms this would feature as the “political unconscious” (Friedman, 1993:17).

The fact that both Brink and White use the Mrs. Fraser story that occurred in the nineteenth century as point of departure, presents an interesting perspective on variations of interpretation emanating from a single incident. This aspect, together with the defined geographical spaces traversed, provide them with credibility. However, Brink reinforces the historical perspective when he also incorporates local South African historical “documentation” in the form of a letter discovered in the Cape Archives (10) and Elizabeth Larsson’s Memoir (11-12) – which she presumably wrote to provide her son with a personal history.

It is in the historical cum ideological aspect that the significance of the different interpretations rendered by Brink and White becomes apparent. In this dimension, the power of history to shape human experience, as well as the influence of human experience on history, is illustrated. In her discussion of intertextuality, Du Plooy (1990:7) points out that one of the main features of intertextuality is the assumption that the subject producing the text is him/herself a combination of intertexts, in a linguistic, cultural or ideological sense. The text itself, however, also has a voice and participates in the dialogical intertextual discourse. Thus the socio-cultural preoccupations of the time are also reflected in the subtext: Brink is still grappling with predominantly racist issues and attempting to forge an identity within the South African paradigm (Brink, 1996:20) while White is burdened by the Victorian repression of sexuality that influences his whole life as a homosexual and affects his concept of identity.

The psychic dimension of the subtext is created by the interaction between conscious and unconscious ideas. Friedman (1993:17) explains this dimension in terms of a dream or, as the “result of a negotiation in which the desire to express and the need to repress force a compromise that takes the form of disguised speech. The text, then, can be read as a site of repression and insistent return”. This dimension is often characterised by a dialectic between binary oppositions, the symbolic representation of ideological concepts and social conventions, and intertextuality. Both novels illustrate the basic conflict between instinct and “civilisation” through stereotypical roles moulded and imposed by society in various ways as Dorothy Driver (1988) also points out. Elizabeth loses her racist ideas to become a true “mate” to Adam, and Ellen Roxburgh reverts back to her uncomplicated self, Ellen Gluyas, in the wilderness (Stratton, 1990:149; Harris, 1996:133/135; Bunn, 1988:7). The conflict is not only restricted to individuals but also relates to the relationship between men as rational and women as emotional creatures, and to the contrast between the hypocritical society on the coast and the primitive society of the bush.

Brink sketches a personal relationship against the historical/political reality of racial discrimination in South Africa (a subtext present in most South African literary texts during the latter half of this century). In *An Instant in the Wind*, the relationship between Adam Mantoor, the coloured run-away slave and Elisabeth, the white woman from the Cape, highlights all the complexities and incongruities of the apartheid era. This idea is expressed by Elisabeth on their arrival back at the Cape when she reflects bitterly on the fact that “All this time we’ve been nothing but man and woman, two people alone in the wilderness. From now on the Cape will try its best to make us white and black” (248). Elisabeth and Adam discover the essence of being human and realise the insignificance of superficial differences. Yet their individual perceptions of civilisation and their different interpretations of the deed of betrayal prove to be worlds apart. Elisabeth ironically emphasises their different perspectives when, at the conclusion, she refers to Adam’s previous claim that “One has to learn to live with betrayal” (252). The Cape spells civilisation to Elisabeth while Adam perceives it as a place of bondage. If Elisabeth had been pregnant, she would have been forced to find some kind of protection for her unborn child. Within this context, one would be able to interpret Elisabeth’s betrayal of Adam as a deed of unselfish sacrifice, because to be accepted by this hypocritical society means living a lie and denying the self – a fact that Ellen is also forced to accept.

In *An Instant in the Wind* Brink relies on historical distance, the reader's perceptions of basic morality and Christian principles. In an attempt to re-write history, he identifies the hypocritical stance of South African society towards their fellow humans despite their professed observance of religious beliefs. On the other hand, White is more concerned with social issues of gender as expressed in male and female relationships and in the debate of civilisation/colonisation versus barbarism/nature. The relegation of women to nature and instinct and men to rational thought and cultural pursuits is also mentioned by Schaffer (1991:142). Like *Pygmalion*, Ellen Roxburgh, the protagonist, is the creation of her upper class, repressed and frustrated husband. Originally a simple farm girl, she learns to repress all spontaneity in order to be a good wife and respectable lady. It is only when she is shipwrecked and confronted by primitive forces and deprivation that her natural sexuality emerges. Stripped of the veneer of civilisation, she reverts back to primitive instincts – she even commits an implied act of cannibalism when she stumbles “upon the performance of rites she was not intended to witness” (243) and afterwards acknowledges that she has “come to terms with darkness” (246).

Her relationship with the convict Jack Chance is natural and uncomplicated. However, when faced with the choice of repressed and artificial civilisation as opposed to a primitive and natural existence in the bush, she consciously chooses the former. Yet when she remarks to Chance that he could benefit from the reward offered for her safe return (299), one cannot be certain whether she is exposing her own mercenary personality or whether she is anticipating such a reaction from Chance. Elfenbein (1993:42) attributes Ellen with a sense of “self-consciousness that transcends the categories of civilization” and argues that her sense of identity and insight alienate her from society. In fact, he (Elfenbein, 1993:48) compares her with White himself as an outsider, an individual with no proper place in the society of his time. Although Ellen's choice also involves betrayal of her lover, it is perhaps much more elemental as it entails a choice between progress and regression, “civilisation” and primitivism (Harris, 1996:136). Yet, White insinuates in a very subtle way that the progressive society is essentially hypocritical and has in fact less to offer than an honest life in the bush. One could also attribute Chance with true human affection for her which does not seem to be reciprocated and causes him to return to the bush in disillusionment. *A Fringe of Leaves* can be considered a plea for the celebration of instinct as opposed to the sterility and monotony of a repressed society that is ruled by man-made conventions and located on the “fringes” of that large continent, Australia.

Although both women are presented with a choice that involves sacrifice, Elizabeth's choice seems less selfish in comparison with Ellen's. The concepts of betrayal that feature in both texts could, to a large extent, be associated with racial politics in *An Instant in the Wind*, and the dynamics of gender relations and basic natural instincts in *A Fringe of Leaves*. This difference in motivation and interpretation prepares the reader for the respective conclusions of the texts. Hassall (1987:10) claims that Brink sees betrayal as inevitable within the South African context with its image of imprisonment and that White's vision is less polarised. From an existentialist perspective, this would be acceptable because despite Brink's glimpse, "an instant in the wind", of a different scenario to race relations, he implies that the time is not yet ripe. Consequently, the novel concludes with Adam's desertion: he is left without a choice but also without a voice. White, however, also addresses the issues of freedom and betrayal but Jack Chance has a choice because he can return to the bush.

Yet, one could argue from a feminist perspective, that both the female protagonists also feel imprisoned and betrayed by their circumstances. Elisabeth has to assert herself as a woman in a man's world and suffer the additional unhappiness of being trapped within an unhappy marriage, while Ellen can only find relief from poverty and all that it entails by contracting a good marriage but an unfulfilled relationship.

5. Conclusion

Brink and White's oeuvre read like a vertical text. Through their texts and in interaction with their respective contexts, they construct an autobiographical tableau of artistic and personal evolution. Meintjes (1996:4) refers to Brink's work as a "transtextual web" and furthermore claims that "every novel in the Brink oeuvre forms part of a general critique of domination and every voice registered in the corpus of texts becomes part of a massive chorus raging against oppression in its manifold guises" (Meintjes, 1996:8). On the other hand, Patrick White's work explores the forces of nature and human nature; the role of the artist as visionary in society and his concern with identity and survival in a hostile and hypocritical environment. To summarise, his work contributes to a "composite text" (Friedman, 1993:18) on the human condition. In both novels, human experience is shaped by confrontation with natural forces but it is the interpretation and resolution of these experiences that define the "ideological subtext" of the novels. To put it more explicitly, the similarities in the contexts of "wilderness", the experiences of the male/female protagonists and exploration of the themes of civilisation and betrayal, acquire different dimensions in their eventual conceptualisation.

It is through the actions and reactions of the characters that various interpretations of civilisation and betrayal emerge.

A postcolonial reading of the above-mentioned texts therefore reveals shared spiritual and elemental struggles but basic differences in the interpretation of civilisation and betrayal due to the disparate vantage points and historical circumstances of the authors. Sharing a colonial past constitutes a common point of departure but also illustrates essential differences in coming to terms with the respective realities. Finally, both novels prove to be relevant to the contemporary literary debate as they provide a glimpse into the diachronic process of historical rewriting and highlight the significance of intertextuality in the interpretation of novels. Brink, as the only writer still alive, has contributed still further to this constant recombination of intertexts to create new meanings. He has consciously incorporated intertextuality as a component, or device, in the construction of his more recent novels, such as *Imaginings of Sand* (1997) and *Devil's Valley* (1998). In this sense he attempts to "neutralise" ideological influences by situating his narrative within a broader frame of reference that allows comparison and the recognition of differences and similarities with one's own personal and collective consciousness. It would perhaps be wise to heed Brink's final warning in the conclusion to *An Instant in the Wind* and to remember that

[t]he land which happened inside us no one can take from us again, not even ourselves. But God, such a long journey ahead for you and me. Not a question of imagination, but of faith.

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Key concepts:

André Brink: *An Instant in the Wind*

colonialism and ideology

difference and similarity

history and literature

Patrick White: *A Fringe of Leaves*

race and gender

Kernbegrippe:

André Brink: *An Instant in the Wind*

geskiedenis en letterkunde

kolonialisme en ideologie

Patrick White: *A Fringe of Leaves*

ras en geslag

verskil en gelykheid