Bosman as *Verbindingsteken*: Hybridities in the Writing of Herman Charles Bosman

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with how hybridity is created and interpreted by Herman Charles Bosman in his fiction and non-fiction. Bosman was a gifted writer and raconteur who captured the historical, socio-political context of his time by translating Afrikaans culture for the edification and pleasure of an English readership. Hennie Aucamp summed up this linguistic and cultural translation by pointing out that Bosman was a writer who acted as a "verbindingsteken" or hyphen (65) between Afrikaans and English. His texts contain many voices, and are therefore essentially hybrid.

Firstly, by drawing on aspects of postcolonial theory, the terms 'hybridity', 'culture' and 'identity', are discussed. Homi Bhabha's notion of 'hybridity' is the conceptual lens through which Bosman's texts are viewed, and aspects of Mikhail Bakhtin's cultural theory also serve the same function. Thereafter, biographies of Bosman are discussed in an effort to understand his hyphenated identity. Following this, specific attention is paid to a selection of Bosman's essays, short stories, and a novel. Scholarly opinions aid interpretation of levels of hybridity in Bosman's work.

In analysing Bosman's texts critically, it becomes clear that he believed in a united South Africa that acknowledged and accepted all races. However, analysis also reveals that there are some inconsistencies in Bosman's personal views, as expressed particularly in his essays. His short stories do not contain the same contradictions. Critical analysis of the novel *Willemsdorp* attests that cultural hybridity is not always viewed as celebratory. It can also be a painful space where identities are split, living both inside and outside their environment, and subsequently marginalized.

Bosman's texts, although published decades ago, remain relevant today in post-apartheid South Africa as much of his writing can be seen as a record of historical events. His short stories and novels capture a confluence of languages, people and cultures. His essays illustrate a deep commitment to promoting South African culture and literature. When reading Bosman one is constantly reminded that differences are not only to be acknowledged, but embraced, in what he prophetically imagined as a hybrid, post-apartheid South African society.

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List of Abbreviations

Cask – A Cask of Jerepigo

CV – Complete Voorkamer Stories

DSAE – Dictionary Unit for South African English

HCB – Herman Charles Bosman

HRHRC – Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center

MC – Makapan's Caves

MLO – My Life and Opinions

RB – Recognising Blues

SV – Starlight on the Veld

TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UD – Unto Dust (Ed. Stephen Gray)

UDOS – Unto Dust and Other Stories (Ed. Craig MacKenzie)

UE – Uncollected Essays

VS – Verborge Skatte

Contents

Introduction

Why Read Herman Charles Bosman in Post-Apartheid South Africa?

My introduction to the stories of Herman Charles Bosman occurred in the 1960s when I was a child, and our family would visit relatives in the Groot Marico where my parents had grown up on neighbouring farms. The characters depicted in Bosman's stories were similar to real people I had heard about and faces I had seen. The tales of shenanigans reminded me of snippets I overheard; scandalous whispers that drifted out from paraffin-lamp-lit kitchens while I pretended to be asleep in a bedroom further down the passage.

That was several decades ago, and South Africa now in the year 2014 is a very different country, twenty years into democracy. Nelson Mandela died, a few weeks ago, on 5 December 2013. Given these changes, why now in post-apartheid South Africa, should we still read the work of Herman Charles Bosman? For one thing, Bosman is worth reading today because his stories are good and retain their freshness and interest even decades later. Furthermore, it is worth knowing something about Bosman's historical moment and what it meant to be a South African during his time and the years about which he wrote, in order for us to understand our current society and live fully our democracy.

South Africa has seen turbulent times, several wars, the growth and demise of the apartheid policy, and changing governments, among other things. For some people much has changed, yet for others everything has remained the same.

Herman Charles Bosman lived during an interesting and unstable time in South African history. He was born in 1905, five years before the Union of South Africa was established, and died in 1951, only three years after the National Party won the general election with its apartheid policy. At the turn of the century, South Africa was still recovering from a war, and as Peter Merrington points out, the concept of Union "urg[ed] 'reconciliation' (in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War[1] of 1899-1902) between what were then considered two distinct 'races' of English-speaking and Dutch-speaking South Africans" ("Masques" 1). Nobody could have anticipated that almost a century later another form of appeasement would take place in the aftermath of apartheid through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The notion of reconciliation between the races (both between the English and Afrikaners as well as between blacks and whites) was to play out

[1] The Anglo-Boer War was later to be referred to as the "South African War".

repeatedly in Bosman's work in various ways. He was a gifted writer and raconteur, and captured his own socio-political context closely in his writing. It is useful to know something of this man's life because it inevitably sheds light on his way of thinking and what he chose to write about.

Himself an anglicized Afrikaner, Bosman was able to relate to two different cultures, and thus write in two languages with insight into both. Typically, Bosman translates Afrikaans culture for the edification of an English readership. Hennie Aucamp aptly summed up this cultural translation in his 1972 Afrikaans essay "Gekamoefleerde Afrikaans" ("Camouflaged Afrikaans"), by pointing out that Bosman was a writer who acted as a "verbindingsteken" or hyphen (65) between Afrikaans and English. In other words, through his writing, Bosman was able to straddle two cultures and bring them together, thereby articulating a specific cultural hybridity.

South Africa is a multilingual society with unique language idiosyncracies that resulted in part from wars, politics and apartheid. There have always been tensions between Afrikaans and English, and there continue to be problems related to race and language. For years after the 1976 Soweto uprising, which was sparked by disagreement over language instruction in schools, Afrikaans was regarded as the 'language of the oppressor'. More recently, however, there have been debates concerning Afrikaans as a possible language "of reconciliation, restitution and nation-building" (Alexander, "Afrikaans" 1). Certainly, if the negative idea of oppression gave way to the positive concept of reconciliation, a shift in the perception of the language itself would be possible. However, where there are different languages, there are bound to be different interpretations, particularly when such languages are translated.

Recently, the Afrikaans-language farmers' periodical *Landbouweekblad* carried a translation of Bosman's story "The Secret Agent" as "Die Geheime Agent" (6 September 2013). It is noteworthy that more than sixty years after Bosman's death, his stories are still in currency and published once more in the same type of print media, in this instance, a weekly magazine. A few weeks after the above-mentioned story appeared in *Landbouweekblad*, the letters page carried the following letter from a reader, Hanna Pretorius, under the heading "Bosman is 'Taalverraaier'":

> Ek kan nie sê ek geniet Herman Charles Bosman se stories nie. Ek het in elk geval nog net die eerste een gelees […] en was verstom om uit te vind dis uit Engels vertaal.

> Die feit dat die skrywer Afrikaans grootgeword het, maar toe sy moedertaal die rug toegekeer het om in Engels te skryf, maak hom na my mening 'n taalverraaier. […] Trots Afrikaans soos ek nog altyd was, is dit vir my 'n doring in die vlees wanneer mense hul neus vir hul moedertaal optrek. (5)

The gist of the above, roughly translated, is that the reader felt Bosman was a language traitor who had turned his back on his mother tongue by initially writing in English. This could not be further from the truth, as Bosman did much in the name of Afrikaans, as evidenced in his essays and stories, and as attested to by his readers and critics. Bosman remains relevant today, as his work is being read, and sometimes still causes controversy.

Despite this enduring popularity, existing scholarship relating to works by Herman Charles Bosman is surprisingly limited. Reasons for this are varied, not least of which being that most of the Bosman papers are not to be found in South Africa, but rather in Texas.[2] Another possible reason for the paucity of criticism on Bosman is the fact that much of his work was only published posthumously; his novel *Willemsdorp* is a case in point.

Scholarly focus thus far has been chiefly concerned with Bosman's style of writing, in particular his ironic-satirical voice. It is notable that there is little available by way of earlier scholarship that tackles the topic of hybridity in Bosman's work. South African contributions to the debate around cultural hybridity include those by Guy Butler, Leon de Kock, Mike Kirkwood and J.M. Coetzee. However, the aim here is not to focus on irony or satire in Bosman's work, nor simply to identify instances of hybridity in his stories, but to discuss how hybridity is created and interpreted in the specific texts analysed, by drawing on aspects of postcolonial theory. Furthermore, by locating Bosman's literary-cultural practice in the broader context of South African history during the first half of the twentieth century, it can be seen that his work was unique and remains relevant even today.

What is it about hybridity and Bosman that caused me to embark on this research? The argument I aim to articulate concerns Bosman's complex hybridities, including linguistic and cultural, which are partly motivated by his desire to translate Afrikaans culture for an

[2] Besides housing a selection of letters, essays and manuscripts of Olive Schreiner, William Plomer, Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer as well as J.M. Coetzee, the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (HRHRC) at the University of Texas at Austin also holds a vast amount of Bosman's papers. Documents held at the HRHRC relating to Bosman include manuscripts, correspondence and artworks. After Bosman's death, his widow Helena purchased the rights to his works, and a decade later she sold a number of his papers and artworks to the HRHRC. Further information can be found on the HRHRC website at <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/collections/guide/african/>

English audience. His stories were further motivated by a preoccupation with racism against indigenous South Africans, and by relating these stories to a growing readership, Bosman helped to shed a different light on South African history. My own interest in Bosman's oeuvre grew as a result of noticing an underlying humanity and compassion in his work, and my curiosity was piqued. Most of all, I was drawn to doing this thesis on Bosman and his work because of a shared belief in a distinctively hybrid South African culture, which has grown, and continues to grow, out of its own history.

* * * * *

In order to interpret hybridities in Bosman's texts, this thesis will first of all consider what is understood by the terms 'hybridity', 'culture' and 'identity', among other concepts. Cultural hybridity is premised upon interaction between different social groups, and in literary studies this concept focuses on how that interaction is represented or enacted in literature. Peter Burke points out that "hybridity is often, if not always, a process rather than a state" (46). In South African literature hybridity is widely represented and enacted through engagement with language practices and the processes of identity within specific political, cultural, historical and social contexts. Relevant aspects of Homi Bhabha's understanding of cultural hybridity as well as Mikhail Bakhtin's cultural theory will also be discussed, laying the foundation for later analysis of specific Bosman texts.

The bulk of Bosman's oeuvre consists of short stories, notably the Voorkamer pieces and the Oom Schalk series for which he is particularly well-known. However, he also wrote a large number of essays and journalistic pieces, as well as poetry and novels. One of the questions that will be considered relates to these different styles of writing. Is Bosman consistent, via his different genres of writing, in his own views on hybridity?

In order to arrive at an answer to the above question, in Chapter 1 I will firstly map out the theoretical components of this study, providing concepts and definitions as well as a survey of existing scholarship before articulating my own argument. Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 will focus on selected Bosman texts from specific genres. In Chapter 2, biographical material written by several scholars will offer insight, sometimes contradictory, into Bosman's own culturally hybrid identity. In Chapter 3, Bosman's essays, sketches and journalistic pieces will be analysed. Chapter 4 will focus on short stories, while Chapter 5 will deal with one of Bosman's novels. Given that this thesis cannot consider all of Bosman's work, nor his entire career, my chosen focus is on several of his short stories, some essays and a novel.

All of the above-mentioned forms of writing will be analysed with reference to how Bosman creates and interprets hybridity in his texts. I am interested in finding out whether or not Bosman's own hybridity and his philosophy come across in the same manner through his different genres of writing. In other words, I am keen to know if this sometimes contradictory man was consistent in his beliefs. Questions such as these will be considered: Does Bosman succeed in displaying different forms of hybridity in his texts, and if so, how? Is Bosman's philosophy consistent in his non-fiction? Why does Bosman hit the mark so well with the short story? Is the novel a suitable vehicle for Bosman to illustrate hybridity, and if so, how does he do so?

To answer the question posed at the beginning of this introduction, it is important to read Bosman today, because the subject matter he writes about remains topical. History, like hybridity, evolves and changes. Bosman's life and his work remain as topical today as they did nearly a century ago. The final 2013 issue of the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper carried a two-page spread with photographs of Bosman and an article by journalist Sean Christie, who researched Bosman's life story in an attempt to "set the record straight" (34). Christie found that the answers are far from clear-cut and Bosman remains as much of an enigma as ever. Therefore, the work produced by Bosman deserves to be read, performed on stage, discussed and further researched, as his remarkable body of work continues to have relevance and value for South Africa today.

Chapter 1

"Complicated Entanglement" and the Concept of Hybridities

All forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity.
(Bhabha in Rutherford 211)

1.1 Introduction: Argument and Context for Interpretations of Hybridity

As this thesis aims to illustrate, Herman Charles Bosman represented various forms of hybridity that were neither easily noticed nor fully acknowledged during his lifetime. Not only did his own lifestyle reflect a hybrid identity, as will be illustrated, but his many stories highlight the mixture of languages and cultures that was – and is – South African. Bosman's fiction served in some ways to draw attention to relationships between the English, Afrikaners and black people, yet this is an angle often neglected by Bosman scholars. However, Clive Lloyd makes the observation that "the foremost moral purpose of Bosman's fiction was to persuade Afrikaners to show black people the understanding and respect they deserved" (158). Not all Bosman scholars would agree with Lloyd's comment, and some of these different viewpoints will be investigated in more depth in later chapters.

The narrative style employed by Bosman and his narrator/s, as well as his actual stories, are further examples of a specific hybridity that embraces more than merely language and belief. It is *what* Bosman wrote about, and *how* he wrote it, that captured a confluence of cultures. Because of his humanity, his intimate awareness of people and their lives, irrespective of their skin colour or beliefs, Bosman was able to illustrate a specific nexus or binding together of different cultures that represented and contributed in part to forming a hybrid South African culture, which continues to evolve today.

This thesis will draw from postcolonial theory and criticism, mainly because of the manner in which such theory engages with how culture, hybridity and identity are represented. Bart Moore-Gilbert notes that

> postcolonial criticism has had – on the face of it at least – a major impact upon current modes of cultural analysis, bringing to the forefront of concern the interconnection of issues of race, nation, empire, migration and ethnicity with cultural production. (6)

It is these very issues of ‘race’, ‘nation’ and ‘cultural production’ that are of concern in this specific project. Theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Mikhail Bakhtin, in particular, speculate in depth regarding culture and hybridity, and this will be elaborated on in more detail in this chapter. Using the lens of postcolonial theory, through which cultural hybridity can be viewed, I will focus on how culture is represented in literature, specifically in the texts of Herman Charles Bosman.

In postcolonial literary theory, there appears to be an abundance of terms such as ‘hybridity’, ‘third space’, ‘in-betweenness’, ‘ambivalence’, ‘dialogism’ and ‘polyphony’, to name but a few. Criticism on the work of Bhabha and Bakhtin suggests that the aforementioned concepts have suffered from over-use to the extent of obscuring the ideas they initially represented. Echoing this sentiment, Jan Pieterse highlights the “polemical backlash against hybridity thinking”, referring to it as “multiculturalism lite”, but he also explains that engaging in this so-called backlash affords one the chance to consider (or perhaps to re-consider?) the concept of hybridity (221). He does not view hybridity in only a positive sense and refers to the concept of hybridity shifting from being subjective to being something objective (222). By ‘objective’, Pieterse means “as observed by outsiders”, and ‘subjective’ as “experience and self consciousness” (222). There are different interpretations on what hybridity means, and as this thesis illustrates, there is no simple, single definition. While hybridity is grounded in history, Pieterse points out that the concept has been nonetheless prone to fetishization, particularly “where the erosion of boundaries is one of the most common accounts of contemporary times and globalization” (224). The notion of boundaries will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Broadly speaking, the hybridities that will be explored in this thesis include:

- cultural hybridity, dealing specifically with cultures coming together;
- linguistic hybridity, which refers to the mixing of languages, or elements from different languages being incorporated into a particular language. This is common practice in South Africa today where for example English words are borrowed by another language such as isiXhosa and adapted for common use in that language. In similar vein there are words in English that have derived from other languages;
- literary hybridity that is specifically related to textual representations in literature;
- religious hybridity, where for example Bosman’s Afrikaners are portrayed as Calvinistic and deeply religious; and

- racial hybridity, since at the time Bosman wrote, belief in purity of 'race' was becoming controversial issue, resulting in the notion of miscegenation as a result of the mixing of races.

Hybridities beyond the scope of this study include institutional and organisational, amongst others, but will not be included here for discussion.

1.2 Background, Definitions and Theorists

In postcolonial literary studies the concept of hybridity focuses chiefly on how the interaction between cultures is represented or enacted in literature, and explores how the boundaries of those cultures are investigated. In South African literature hybridity is widely represented and enacted through engagement with different people changing and developing language practices, and the processes of identity within specific political, cultural, historical and social contexts.

Prior to 1994, the apartheid regime attempted, not always successfully, to control South African cultural identities. Cultural identities were for many years kept very separate on many levels. On other levels, however, it is evident that cultural exchange, or cultural translation,[3] could not be avoided, even though during the years when Bosman wrote, apartheid had not yet officially come into being. The fact that cultural exchange could not be avoided highlights the illogicality of apartheid. Bosman's life, covering the period between Union in 1910 and the National Party ascendancy in 1948, spanned a period of time when white South Africans (English and Afrikaner) were responsible for putting into place the beginnings of segregation and a policy of apartheid, which would later become enforced by law. Many people accepted this growing belief in separatism, but some, like Bosman, viewed such overt racism with suspicion and distaste.

Separate development, apartheid, and racism became commonly accepted for many white South Africans after 1948; yet before then Bosman was already questioning these beliefs. For him, the mixing of cultures, sharing of beliefs, identities and ideas, was important and unavoidable; hybridity was the inevitable result of cultural contact in the colonial

[3] Cultural translation in the sense of translation relating to differences between cultures, that is, translating one culture for another culture.

context. This notion of hybridity involves problematizing what happens at the very place where cultures begin to mix, where the boundaries begin to blur.

As already mentioned, some of the main concerns in this thesis relate to the notion of different hybridities, including linguistic, literary and cultural hybridity. One of the aims of this study is to engage with the broad notion of hybridity, prior to examining specific forms of hybridity which are evidenced in Herman Charles Bosman's literary-cultural practice.

Before unpacking an understanding of the notion of 'hybridity', the term 'culture' will be considered, in relation to ideas, beliefs, philosophy and behaviours of a group of people. There is no simple definition for the term 'culture'. It is one of the most complex words in English, and a word that has changed in meaning over the years. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines culture as "(a) the training, development and refinement of mind, tastes and manners; and (b) a particular form or type of intellectual development. Also, the civilisation, customs, artistic achievements, etc., of a people".

Culture can also relate to the achievements and identities of people as expressed in ideas, art, music, language or literature. This study will consider the connections between literature, language, culture and cultural translation in Bosman's work. It is debatable whether language and culture, though clearly interconnected, are nonetheless quite distinct from each other. For the purposes of this thesis however, it is understood that language and culture are important markers that shape identity. In the words of former South African struggle hero, Neville Alexander:[4]

> In South Africa, the major social markers of difference, i.e. "colour" or "race", language, "culture", gender, religion and region, as well as "class", have at different times played a decisive role – either alone or in some combination – as determinants of group or social identity. (141)

These various 'markers of difference' to which Alexander refers are precisely what determine identity, and it is markers such as 'colour', 'culture' and 'language' with which Bosman's work is concerned. Culture plays a role in how language is used and by whom; that is, language is determined by culture and vice versa. Liu Mingdong highlights these connections: "language and culture are closely related in the sense that language expresses and transmits culture", and that, "while culture influences language, translation can be more appropriately perceived at the level of culture than that of language" (np). This means that language is part of culture, and in order to understand another language it is necessary to

[4] Neville Alexander passed away, at the age of 75, in August 2012.

consider culture as being part of that language. When one encounters a different manner of doing something by members of another culture, it is interpreted by means of comparison, according to one's own familiar culture and language; that is to say, one culture is translated for another. Language then, being part of a culture, is not necessarily what needs translating, but the culture itself. By means of understanding another culture, by interpreting and translating it into something familiar, that culture becomes more generally accessible and understood. It is with these thoughts in mind that I will discuss the notions of hybridity generated by Bosman's writing as including the notion of cultural translation, rather than only being about language or literary hybridity. This perception is expressed succinctly by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*: "I live in a world of others' words" (143). Bakhtin's theories relevant to culture and hybridity will be dealt with later in this chapter.

Culture is about understanding and exchange; it is about shared meanings and how we make sense of them. We make sense of meanings through our understanding, via language; we express ourselves culturally by varied ways of living in different groups or societies. In this manner cultural identities are created. Identity, like culture is not fixed; it is in a continuous state of flux, and is influenced by various cultural mixes and crossovers, forming new cultural identities as explained by Stuart Hall et al.:

> Everywhere, cultural identities are emerging which are not fixed, but poised, *in transition*, between different positions; which draw on different cultural traditions at the same time; and which are the product of those complicated cross-overs and cultural mixes which are increasingly common in a globalized world. [...] People belonging to such cultures of hybridity have had to renounce the dream or ambition of rediscovering any kind of 'lost' cultural purity, or ethnic absolutism. (*Modernity and Its Futures* 310)

Thus it is evident that 'hybridity' can have something to do with culture, evidenced in the extract above, by the manner in which cultures mix globally.

What then is hybridity? It is interesting to look at its etymological roots. The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that "hybrid" is anything "derived from heterogeneous or incongruent sources" or of "mixed character". In her essay "Encounters of a heterogeneous kind: hybridity in cultural theory", Sabine Mabardi writes that

> [t]he term was borrowed from philology, where hybrids are words formed by the juxtaposition of a prefix or a suffix from one language and the stem of another. But, critics may have also been attracted by the biological definition of a hybrid which as well as meaning 'offspring of a mixed union' adds the dimension of an artificial or

> forced union, a coercive or violent contact as in the case of colonization and conquest, a connotation which makes it particularly appropriate to the study of postcolonialism. (2)

As illustrated in the quotation above, hybridity then can be seen as the result of a process, and that can sometimes even carry an added dimension to do with force or violence. By extending the biological definition, the term 'hybridity' can be used in not only the human, animal and plant context, but also to describe culture – it can also be used with reference to language, writing and literature.

The ideas of Russian philosopher and literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), are worth considering when reading Bosman's work. For a period of years before his first book was published, Bakhtin's writings were pseudonymous. Several works that were either written or inspired by him were signed by his friends VN Voloshinov and P Medvedev (Todorov xi). There is a connection here with Bosman, and that is the use of pseudonyms, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. But there is yet another echo, which is that Bakhtin sketched out a new interpretation of culture which "consists in the discourses retained by collective memory"[5] (Todorov x). Bosman's stories are in a sense just that, inspired in some way by a 'collective memory' of a group of people in the small community about which he writes. For Bakhtin language and the sciences of language were deeply connected with social relationships, which were in turn "part of broader political, ideological and economic systems" (Eagleton 117). It is these broader aspects of social relationships, this collection of different voices, which also form part of the hybridity of a culture. This idea is aptly illustrated by Clive Lloyd, who comments as follows:

> Perfectly applicable to Bosman's narratives are Mikhail Bakhtin's observations on the way Dostoevsky, abstaining from recognisable authorial control, allowed his characters to converse 'in their own voices', and thus achieve 'a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices'. Bakhtin's idea of polyphony has been applied to Joyce and it can be extended to Bosman. […] Bosman is a similarly withdrawn artist, not obviously projecting himself through his creation. (92)

[5] Collective memory is a concept advanced by Maurice Halbwachs in his book *La mémoire collective* (Paris, 1950), and relates to shared memories between several people in a group.

Bakhtin's notion of polyphony concerns diverse voices with various points of view. It is precisely the "polyphony of fully valid voices" (*Problems* 6), which is linked to the creolization of languages, which makes Bosman's work so interesting and culturally hybrid. Bosman himself is a cultural hybrid, as will be illustrated in Chapter 2. He represents cultural hybridity, and his texts, analysed in Chapters 3 and 4 are also culturally hybrid. Lloyd goes on to observe yet another of Bakhtin's concepts that is evident in Bosman's work, that of the 'Carnival' or 'carnivalesque', where the use of festivals, humour (and at times even chaos) subverts the dominant literary style. This, Lloyd explains, can be "applied to festivals such as the *nagmaals*[6] [… which] prompted what were often the only visits country people made to towns. […] [Q]uarterly nagmaals were […] the only major and regular carnival setting in rural South Africa" (100). It was at such gatherings, where alcohol flowed freely, that the local people would share their stories. The carnivalesque is also evident in much of Bosman's writing, particularly in his short stories, where a particularly subversive kind of humour is evident. In writing thus, Bosman subtly undermines small-town Afrikaner attitudes in order to comment on social strata and/or as a means of possibly bridging cultural divides. There is also evidence in Bosman's texts of Bakhtin's concepts of 'heteroglossia' or diversity of languages; 'heterophony' or diversity of (individual) voices; and 'heterology' which "arises spontaneously from social diversity" (Todorov, 56-7).

Expanding upon Bakhtin's ideas, it is Bhabha's theory of cultural difference, as seen in *The Location of Culture* (1994), which offers comment on the notion of hybridity. In this context, hybridity is seen as "both a 'product of' and a response to the colonial situation by the colonized subject" (Geesey 129). For Bhabha, hybridity is used as a term to define a process relating to how identities and cultures are created. It is a reading of hybridity that emphasizes an intermingling of cultures. As Raetzsch says, "according to Roland Barthes a 'third language' evolves that is neither the one nor the other" (n.p.). Barthes's theory relates more to semiotics (i.e. interpreting the 'signs' of a specific culture). What this means is that, while individuals maintain their own language and cultural behaviour within their own social milieu, they also employ a different kind of behaviour in order to communicate with other cultures, thus giving rise to a 'third language' by adapting various culturally hybrid signs.

Barthes's 'third language' is not unlike Bhabha's 'Third Space': in *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that "[t]hese 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating

[6] The Dutch Reformed Church quarterly celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion (Lloyd, 100).

strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (1–2).

In Bhabha's essay entitled "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences", he argues that all "cultural statements and systems" are constructed in what he calls the "Third Space":

> It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality of "purity" of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity. […] It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew. (156–7)

It is here in the Third Space, in the boundary of clashes, where colonizer and colonized conflict, that they also negotiate and create a hybrid culture. It is here that a community can exist as a cultural hybrid, and that new meanings can be read and interpreted.

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha debunks the idea of a pure culture by noting that "[c]ultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of Self to Other. […] The reason a cultural text or system of meaning cannot be sufficient unto itself is that the act of cultural enunciation – the place of utterance – is crossed by the *difference* of writing" (36). This means that the way culture is understood is always open to interpretation.

It was pointed out earlier in this chapter how Bhabha's theory has been shown to be contradictory at times, and not all critics (Jan Pieterse and anthropologist Jonathan Friedman for instance) agree with what he says. One way of tackling the problem of purity is to confront boundaries and borders, and to be aware of differences. Hybridity celebrates the change that is evident in mixed identities. As Kraidy puts it, "Hybridity is one of the emblematic notions of our era. It captures the spirit of the times with its obligatory celebration of cultural difference and fusion, and it resonates with the globalization mantra of unfettered economic exchanges and the supposedly inevitable transformation of all cultures" (1). This is patently so in today's world of globalization, in which communication between cultures happens instantly.

A succinct definition and summary of "hybridity" is provided by Monika Fludernik in the *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Narrative Theory*, where she explains how the term is used in narrative study to refer to "novels in which Western and postcolonial (native) writing

traditions creatively interact" (227). Fludernik goes on to illustrate how Bakhtin first employed the term hybridity "to characterise the novel as an inherently hybrid genre" (227–8). Christina Schäffner and Beverly Adab define a hybrid text as one "that results from a translation process. It shows features that somehow seem 'out of place'/'strange'/'unusual' for the receiving culture, i.e. the target culture" (167). While Bosman's texts are not essentially hybrid in this way, examples will be provided illustrating how some texts can be seen as hybrid or 'unusual' as a result of his translating one culture for another.

In postcolonial discourse the notion of hybridity appears often, as a result of cultural contacts between colonizer and colonized, and today, with ever-increasing globalization, hybridity is an oft-used buzzword. The concept of hybridity has not received positive support from some critics, and Anthony Easthope, for instance, in his essay entitled "Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity" highlights several problems with hybridity, including "single and unitary" identity (344), which becomes problematic, because while Bhabha is opposed to "absolute" identity, this means he has no choice but to accept it. Similarly, Easthope takes issue with Bhabha's inviting us to live in the "interstices", and be "in a state of pure hybridity" (345) since it is difficult to imagine any culture that is so pure it is not hybrid. Such a culture would imply something non-hybrid.

When commenting on the proposal for this thesis, Associate Professor in the Rhodes University Art Department, Maureen de Jager, pointed out that "if taken at face value, an inherent problem is that it [cultural hybridity] indirectly presupposes its antithesis – the possibility of cultural *purity* (as the state prior to hybridity). Pieterse made this point as follows:

> Hybridity as a point of view is meaningless *without* the prior assumption of difference, purity, fixed boundaries. Meaningless not in the sense that it would be inaccurate or untrue as a description, but that, without an existing regard for boundaries, it would not be a point worth making. Without reference to a prior cult of purity and boundaries, a pathos of hierarchy and gradient of difference, the point of hybridity would be moot. (226)

Arguably, there is no such thing as a pure (i.e. 'non-hybrid') culture: all cultures are to some extent hybrid, with the borders between them being perhaps more fluid and dynamic. Meredith (1998), Ashcroft et al. (1995) and Rutherford (1990) all make a similar claim that the purity of culture is questionable, since culture is in a constant process of change. Thus, while boundaries are useful to demarcate differences, there can be no non-hybrid 'purity'. In

other words, a ‘pure’ culture is merely a construction, a myth. A pure culture could perhaps be a minor ethnicity, such as a particular tribe of extinct Kgalagadi Khoisan that has never been in contact with the outside world. The irony, however, is that as soon as that insular culture meets others, differences would be noted, and the beginnings of hybridity would take shape, simply in that instant of contact. One could muse forever in this regard, but for the sake of clarity throughout this thesis, the writer takes all cultures to be hybrid in some form or another, thus resisting the notion of any single, pure culture.

Pieterse suggests that the missing link in anti-hybridity arguments is “historical depth” (220). To elaborate, he says:

> Thousands of years of dividing and policing of space, territorial and symbolic, stand between us and our mixed evolutionary and long-term history, or, more precisely, are interspersed with it. Thanks to boundaries, civilizations have flourished and also suffocated. Boundaries have come and gone. Been erected, fought over and then walked over. (230)

A boundary is that which separates, divides and causes clashes, and as a result of such divisions, cultures meet and exchange ideas and adapt accordingly. Bosman’s essays, stories and novels explore the boundaries between different languages, different cultures and beliefs; the boundaries that exist during, before and after war time; and the boundaries (whether visible or not) that demarcate different groups of people. Ien Ang sums up how the notion of hybridity can be understood in a positive sense:

> Hybridity then is a concept that confronts and problematises boundaries, although it does not erase them. As such hybridity always implies an unsettling of identities. It is precisely our encounters at the border – where self and other, the local and global, Asian and Western meet – that make us realise how riven with potential miscommunication and intercultural conflict these encounters can be. This tells us that hybridity, the very condition of in-betweenness, can never be a question of simple shaking hands, of harmonious merger and fusion. Hybridity is not the solution, but alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution. In other words, hybridity is a heuristic device for analysing complicated entanglement. (149–50)

The above shows that while boundaries do exist, it is that very confrontation at such borders that makes for interesting ways of understanding other cultures. It is possible to celebrate the in-betweenness and proclaim *Vive la différence!*

Cultural hybridity has been shown to be a very complex term when considering the variety of meanings of the two words that form the concept. Cultural identity, while not the

same thing, is of necessity tied up with culture. Another aspect it is related to is cultural translation, whereby one culture is translated for another. This is a translation that relates to the differences between cultures. This thesis will argue that Bosman himself performed just such a function of cultural translation.

1.3 Hybridities and Identities in the Texts of Herman Charles Bosman

Bosman situates most of his short stories within the South African War[7] period and its aftermath. Himself an anglicized Afrikaner, Bosman was able to relate to two (and sometimes even more) different cultures, and thus write in two languages (English and Afrikaans) with insight into both cultures. In this sense, Bosman translates one culture for the edification of another. Hennie Aucamp aptly sums this up in his 1972 Afrikaans essay "Gekamoefleerde Afrikaans" ("Camouflaged Afrikaans") by pointing out that Bosman is a writer who acts as 'verbindingsteken' ('hyphen') between Afrikaans and English. In other words, through his writing, Bosman was able to straddle or traverse two cultures and bring them together. Bosman himself can be regarded as inhabiting a hybrid, hyphenated identity. Having the ability to translate both language and culture, Bosman was able therefore to bring about a meeting of cultures, and this is evident in his wide-ranging oeuvre.

On the one hand, Bosman was not simply creating or enacting cultural hybridity in his stories, but, more importantly, he was in fact representing hybridity for a specific purpose. Was it a particular history that sparked his brand of fiction? It is the hybridity *within* cultures that is of particular interest, where one sees how different cultures influence the translation from one culture to another. Cultural hybridity in Bosman's work is particularly interesting because this is a theme that seems to recur in a number of his stories. Many of Bosman's stories relate interactions between different cultures. For instance, "A Tale Writ in Water" illustrates African influence on Afrikaner culture; "Marico Scandal" is about a man's racist behaviour that has an adverse effect on him; and "Birth Certificate" concerns an Afrikaner boy raised by baboons and a white boy adopted by a coloured family. "Graven Image", which tells the story of how a young woman casts voodoo on her fiancé in order to escape an

[7] The South African War (1899–1902), a conflict between Boer and Briton which included black South Africans, was formerly known as the Anglo-Boer War.

arranged marriage, is an example of Bosman's critique of race issues, while the story "Dying Race" is a satire of white concepts of indigenous San people. The hybridity with which Bosman engaged in his stories was more than just cultural (i.e. between the English, Afrikaners and Blacks), it was also linguistic (i.e. English and Afrikaans), and also literary or textual (as in a hybrid genre). As many of these Bosman's texts illustrate, albeit subtly, Bosman was not a supporter of racism in any form; and to this end he criticized racist behaviour and the South African War in his stories, sometimes by means of satire and irony. Cuthbertson elaborates:

> [Bosman] sees the contradictions of war, its pathos, the war weariness which set in after years of fighting, and he manages to capture the violence of military action without writing much about guns and assegais, or blood and corpses. He is more concerned about relationships, religious hypocrisy – mainly the schizophrenia of Calvinism versus life on the African veld among the Boers (cf. *Willemsdorp*), and race relations at a human, more than political or ideological, level, including love across the colour bar (cf. "Marico Scandal"). He manages to fathom life and death in the midst of war in the fashion of recent cultural historians. (158)

Human relationships, and the meeting and mingling of different cultures, are what bring Bosman's stories alive and give them real depth. It is the relationships between people and cultures, as mentioned in the quotation above, that interests Bosman. Bosman was a romantic humanist, contradictory in his thinking at times, yet concerned about the hypocrisy of human beings when placed in situations of contact with others.

It is also worth considering Bosman's non-fiction in some depth. His essays and journalistic pieces reflect his own philosophical viewpoint. Does the overarching form of hybridity the reader encounters in Bosman's non-fiction tally with what he portrays in the fiction? The lived experiences, beliefs and identity of this great writer cannot be divorced from his work. In the introduction to *Verborge Skatte*, Leon de Kock discusses "biographical and cultural questions" in relation to Bosman, and notes that "[o]ver the years there has been discernible confusion over the question of Bosman's cultural identity" (197). Despite being an Afrikaner who spoke a form of Dutch, Bosman grew up Anglicized as a result of being surrounded by English-speaking relatives and friends. This obviously had some bearing on the life of this man who straddled several cultures and who experienced a prolific bilingual period which, although unexpectedly brief (1948–1951), included stories such as "Die Voorval by Ijzerspruit" / "The Affair at Ysterspruit", "Tot Stof" / "Unto Dust", "Die

Kaffirtamboer" / "The Kaffir Drum", and "My Eerste Liefde" / "My First Love", some of which will be analysed in Chapter 4.

1.4 Straddling Two Cultures: Bosman as *Verbindingsteken*

Where scholarship has engaged with linguistic hybridity in Bosman's work, it has focused mainly on English-Afrikaans bilingualism. Previous work relating to this topic includes research by Irmgard Schopen (1991), Leon de Kock (2001), Margaret Lenta (2003), and Salomé Snyman (2003). Extending this existing body of scholarship, this project will, in addition to examining Bosman's writing as an enactment of English-Afrikaans co-mingling, go a step further to demonstrate that Bosman's hybridity also included cultural translation and indigenous cultural practices, and that this more complex cultural hybridity continues to evolve in South Africa. Whether or not this is extensively the case in Bosman's non-fiction and perhaps limited in his fiction will be considered in greater depth in the following chapters.

South African contributions to the debate about hybridity, such as those by Leon de Kock and Stephen Gray, will be considered. These interpretations will inform an understanding of the various hybridities evident in Bosman's texts. The aim here is to locate Bosman's literary-cultural practice in the broader context of South African literature during the first half of the twentieth century.

Irmgard Schopen makes the point that Bosman's stories "attempted to embrace two aspects of South African culture", which indicated "a shift in how he conceived his role as a writer, to an expanded awareness of his 'South Africanness', not limited or defined by language" (*The Rooinek* 29). This shift became evident in Bosman's particular style of writing. It is specifically his role as a writer that comes across particularly strongly in Bosman's journalistic pieces.

Over the last decade, Leon de Kock has commented in depth on the subject of bilingual and multilingual South African literature. De Kock notes that such literature "has shown many different faces but has seldom been regarded in its totality as an integrated field by all practitioners" (*Global Imaginary* 267). He identifies four levels of stratification: Afrikaans writers, white English-speaking South Africans, African-language writers and exiled writers. It is not, however, this clear-cut, as there is an additional divide between so-

called ‘white’ and ‘coloured’ Afrikaans writers, and between ‘black’ and ‘white’ English writers. Contrary to de Kock’s formulation, it can be seen that Bosman actually straddles various languages and cultures, and, on closer inspection, he may even be considered a mixture of white-Afrikaner-English-speaking-African. It is well worth noting, as Lloyd does, that Bosman “was the first to put the South African English vernacular on the literary map and to write primarily for a South African readership” (II). De Kock notes, in this regard, that Bosman’s contemporary, Ehrhardt Planjé, who was editor of the bilingual publication, *On Parade*, “shared Bosman’s advocacy of a more cosmopolitan and bilingual South African culture”, and that they both felt that “real Afrikaners were meant to be broadly South African and bilingual” (*Verborge* 192). In the introduction to *Verborge Skatte,* Leon de Kock observes that:

> Bosman was an outsider with regard to prevailing cultural beliefs – he often protested against Eurocentrism, in both English and Afrikaans, and against other forms of incipient apartheid. Instead, he proposed a sort of ‘Malay’ earthiness and a working class idiom. […] For Bosman, as for Pieter-Dirk Uys after him, English and Afrikaans needed to become less ‘pure ’and get to know each other better. (201)

This idea of a non-pure, hybrid culture appears in page after page in Bosman’s stories, despite the fact that at the time he wrote, this way of thinking was not acceptable to most Afrikaans-speaking people. Indeed, Bosman was certainly ahead of his time. This is not only evidenced in his own lifestyle and way of thinking but also in the body of work that he left behind. His stories inscribe a variety of different South African cultures.

Corinne Sandwith wrote about the meaning of South African culture and Bosman’s ideas on hybridity as follows:

> Herman Charles Bosman located the problem in a disconcerting cultural hybridity: English South African writing was ‘neither European nor African’, but rather a ‘mongrel product’ with little ‘survival value as a culture’ (*S.A. Opinion* April 1944: 25). Using an image which was congenial to many participants in this discussion, he argued that South African literature should be ‘rooted’ in the South African soil or, in his words, ‘torn from the stark womb of the earth’, its ‘roots deeply entangled with the dark purple of the raw tissue of the life that is at hand’ (*S.A. Opinion* April 1944 25-26). (*Cultural Criticism* 52)

The ‘problem’ referred to above was concerned with English writers of South African literature not adequately identifying what was specifically South African. Sandwith’s article goes on to examine what is meant by “South African-ness” and the “notion of a ‘truly

indigenous' South African culture", with reference to discussions in the *S.A. Opinion* in the mid- to late-1940s, very productive years for Bosman.

Reference was made earlier to Neville Alexander, who believed that it was important to encourage and help people learn one another's languages (143), and he aptly summed up this idea as follows:

> It is essential that we conceptualise the existing and evolving language communities as tributaries of a Gariep nation constituted by many other tributaries that originate in linguistic, religious and other cultural and regional catchment areas. All together constitute the mainstream of the South African or Azanian nation. (*Language Politics* 145)

The point Alexander makes above is that all the languages of the nation are equally necessary in the creation of a hybrid nation such as South Africa. By likening the evolving languages and their communities to tributaries of a river, Alexander emphasizes unity of people and a flow of movement that allows for ongoing change and developmental growth. Similarly, as will be seen in this thesis, Bosman believed in a growing South African polyglot society.

1.5 Conclusion: A Newly Awakened Culture

This thesis sets out to describe a range of hybridities (including linguistic, textual and cultural) evinced in Bosman's texts, based upon the theoretical definitions provided thus far. Of particular concern, however, is that during Bosman's time English-Afrikaans bilingualism and the hybridity it represented was to a large extent exclusionary. In other words, it referred to a white culture only. However, Bosman's stories reveal empathy for the oppressed indigenous peoples and include their cultural practices, thus inscribing a more multi-layered hybridity. Therefore a key goal is to articulate an argument about Bosman's complex hybridity, which is partly motivated by a desire to translate Afrikaans culture for an English audience, and also, significantly, is motivated by a preoccupation with racism against indigenous South Africans.

Every culture is a hybrid of sorts. Bhabha's theory of cultural difference and his notion of the 'Third Space', as well as Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony, heteroglossia and the carnivalesque, are pertinent to an examination of specific Bosman texts. The ideas of such theorists assist in interpreting notions of hybridity, cultural and other. By means of interweaving a discussion of several of Bosman's texts, a culturally hybrid mix will be

evident. Through a reading of the selected texts, several forms of hybridity become evident: the use of language (a mixture of languages and translation); heteroglossia (the diversity of languages); the literary strategy of cultural translation (for instance writing one culture for another).The argument therefore is that, through highlighting the theme of cultural hybridity in his texts, Bosman manages to some extent to counter the racist discourses of his time. Bosman's stories highlight South African culture, not merely English and Afrikaans, not merely language, but also various traditional African beliefs and ways of communicating that extend beyond language.

Throughout the analysis of the selected Bosman texts in the next few chapters, I shall keep in mind, and expand upon, the thought of postcolonial theorists already mentioned, as well as drawing from South African critics and scholars de Kock and Craig MacKenzie, among others. It will be argued herein that the significance of various hybridities is that these allow for a greater understanding between, and an intermingling of, various cultures.

Chapter 2

"The Insider's Outsideness": Cultural Identity and a Sense of Belonging

2.1 Introduction: Herman Charles Bosman's Hyphenated Identity

In the introduction to *The Location of Culture,* Homi Bhabha refers to a character who is a coloured woman, saying that she defines "a boundary that is at once inside and outside, the insider's outsideness" (14). This in-betweenness illustrates hybridity in identity. In similar vein Salman Rushdie, speaking of exiled Indian writers living in the West, notes that they are "capable of writing from a kind of double perspective: because they [and indeed Rushdie himself] … are at one and the same time insiders and outsiders in this society" (19). Bhabha's insider's outsideness and Rushdie's outsider's insideness are one and the same, displaying a duality and inter-connectedness of identity that will also be evident in Bosman's life and his writing.

Bosman, as an outsider, protested strongly against Eurocentrism and other apartheid-isms. He seemed to lament the purity of cultures, and instead he espoused the mixing of cultures, suggesting that for instance English and Afrikaans speakers mix with one another more and understand one another better (*Verborge* 201). Bosman's own views on hybridity will be considered in order to later ascertain whether his fiction and non-fiction express a similar viewpoint or whether there are perhaps contradictions that surface in his writing.

Identity is subject to change, and comprises language and culture, and in the words of Stuart Hall "identities are constructed through, not outside, difference […] [and] can function as points of identification and attachment only *because* of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside', abjected. Every identity has at its 'margin' an excess, something more" (*Who Needs 'Identity'?* 4–5). Taking this into consideration, and if Bosman is 'outside' the 'inside', what then is his identity? Where does he belong? He was an Afrikaner who lived as an English-speaking South African, had close connections with Communists and Jews, and spent time in prison on death row. In one sense, Bosman lived on the margins of society, clutching at odd bits of culture to help shape his ever-changing identity. His identity comprised diverse aspects, which emphasized the hybridity of his being, of his character and personality, of his lived experiences.

As a basis for this chapter, the arguments of Bhabha and Bakhtin, referred to in the first chapter, will be drawn on in order to explore the notion of identity and the idea of cultural difference in a postcolonial context. For Bhabha, hybridity is a term defining the continuous process relating to how identities and cultures are created: "all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity" (in Rutherford 211). Since some of the main concerns in this thesis relate to the notion of hybridity, and to the concepts of language and culture, the focus in this chapter will be on examining the various forms of hybridity that are evidenced in Bosman's life and his literary-cultural practice. This thesis will argue that Bosman's hybridity, both of identity and as evidenced in his works, is partly due to his own fractured state; and what he observed of the people around him as evidenced in the kinds of characters he depicts in his stories.

This chapter aims to respond to the following: Who was Herman Charles Bosman and how did he view identity, culture and hybridity during his lifetime? Bosman's way of thinking and his manner of living greatly influenced his style of writing, and while this is true of most writers and is somewhat obvious, it will be evident that Bosman lived a very chequered, difficult and contradictory life, and that this clearly impacted on his creative work. For instance, it was as a result of his few short months teaching in the Groot Marico that he was inspired to write his *Oom Schalk* and *Voorkamer* stories. It was his years spent in jail that provided him with the autobiographical material that served as the fabric and detail of *Cold Stone Jug*. The work of several biographers and scholars will be referred to in this chapter as a means of describing an enigmatic man. While it is quite impossible to gain a complete picture of such a man, these biographical impressions will help to illustrate the very complexity, as well as the contrariness of Bosman.

2.2 A Man of Profound Contradictions

> You can tell if a man is a poet by the things he writes. But you can tell far better if a man is a poet by the things he lives. ("What is Poetry?" *A Cask of Jerepigo* 61)

In order to gain an understanding of Bosman's ideological views, one can read his journalistic pieces as a fairly accurate observation of the world he saw around him. However, there is no real way of knowing for sure that what Bosman wrote in his non-fiction is

genuinely how he felt. In an article entitled “Bosman’s Genius: The Roles and the Riddles”, Lionel Abrahams writes about

> a Bosman who in unpredictable sequence or simultaneity took on the roles of entertainer and clown, philosopher of art, mocking prankster, imperious priest of a demonic aestheticism, salary hack, romantic rebel, patriot, perilous creature of unguarded passion and aberration, whose revulsions could make him contemptuous and cruel, who could invite such labels as extortionist, blasphemer and abortionist, idiosyncratic admirer of Jesus and of the simplest people, convict for murder, man of immeasurable geniality and tenderness, lover, friend, husband and teacher. (269)

Abrahams offers here a description of the chameleon-like quality of this fascinating man of contradictions (for example cruelty/tenderness; blasphemer/admirer of Jesus), a complex character who cannot be placed neatly in a box. Bosman was a man who was definitely noticed and he seemed to purposefully make attempts at being in the public eye. As much as he was the loud entertainer, he was also a seriously contemplative and quiet personality. He made his own personal views known and was not afraid of non-conformity. From other accounts that will be offered later in this chapter, it will be evident that Bosman was not a simple character to understand. These contradictions echo a notion of hybridity that was certainly not the norm with many of Bosman’s contemporaries, and this adds yet another dimension to Bosman’s identity as an author.

Hennie Aucamp used the word “*verbindingsteken*” (65), literally meaning “hyphen”, to illustrate the blend of Englishman and Afrikaner that was Bosman. A hybrid man, linguistically and culturally, Bosman was partly motivated by a desire to translate Afrikaans culture for an English audience. Of Bosman’s identity, de Kock notes the following:

> He could be an Afrikaner and a South African. He could be an English-speaking author and an Afrikaans writer. He could comment on Afrikaans letters as an English-speaker, and he could assume the guise of an insider-figure and comment on Afrikaans writing in Afrikaans. (*VS* 204)

As de Kock’s words indicate, Bosman straddled two cultures with ease, identifying with both English and Afrikaans, translating one for another, passing himself off now as English, now as Afrikaans, and promoting a non-exclusive, hybrid identity that he clearly lived. This sounds more simple and straightforward than it actually was, Bosman being sometimes inside one culture and outside another, yet often bridging the two different cultures. The Italian proverb *“Tradurre e tradire”* literally means “translation is betrayal”, which is worth considering when reading Bosman’s work, which offers many examples not only of the

translation of languages, but also of cultural translation as well. It is often a compromise to translate, because it is limited to an individual's language skills, and translation involves a form of cultural interpretation. However if, as the proverb suggests, translation is betrayal, then could betrayal be an act of translation?[8] In Chapter 4 some of Bosman's translated short stories will be discussed with this question in mind.

As a South African modernist and a romantic realist, Bosman was "one continuing personality in which many paradoxes [were] somehow reconciled" (Abrahams, *Protégé's Memoir* 11). The hybrid term 'romantic realism' might sound like a paradox, but as Fanger points out, it "can be made to seem one only by forgetting the historical relation between the terms – the fact that nineteenth century realism evolved out of romanticism" (xvii). The words 'romanticism' and 'realism' are not necessarily opposed to each other, as romantic realism represents reality with feeling.

Bakhtin noted that "[i]t is precisely the Romantics who in the very reality they depict give direct expression to their own artistic sympathies and evaluations, all the while objectifying and turning into a material thing all they cannot mark with the accent of their own voice" (*Problems* 12). While Romanticism espoused authentic freedom of the imagination, it engendered a deep sentimentality. Evolving out of this, realism replaced sentimentalism. Bosman married these different doctrines in a modernist fashion, as was evident in his life and work. His work was informed by different aesthetic movements and philosophical positions. For example, the contradictory qualities of his personality and the way he lived spilled over into the quality of Bosman's writing.

Herman Charles Bosman's short life (1905–1951) spanned a number of interesting years in the history of South Africa. Events in the country just prior to Bosman's birth and during his first few years in particular are worth noting as they earmark conflicting events pertaining to that era. The timeline provided in Appendix B is a chronological history covering those years and beyond, highlighting important events that link to Bosman's life and work.

Who then was this person known as Herman Charles Bosman? He was certainly a colourful character who led an interesting life, as several biographers attest. Biographies offer not only in-depth descriptions of a person's life, but also of how a person experiences their

[8] In his 2001 essay "South Africa in the Global Imaginary: An Introduction", de Kock discusses Simon Lewis's "*Tradurre e Tradire*: The Treason and Translation of Breyten Breytenbach", which argues that Breytenbach's use of the English language in his prison memoir was no less than an act of treason.

life. But biography is much more than that, as is evident when Backscheider asserts that Bakhtin's definition of the novel also applies to biography:

> Bakhtin begins 'Epic and Novel': 'The novel is the sole genre that continues to develop, that is yet uncompleted […] the birth and development of the novel as a genre takes place in the full light of the historical day' … These things – with the same kinds of literary, cultural, and social ramifications – are equally true of biography. (Backscheider in Viljoen 71)

This interpretation suggests that in as much as the novel is viewed by Bakhtin as developing and incomplete, so too can biography be regarded as incomplete and subject to different interpretations. Evidence of this is obvious in the biographies of Bosman, as none of the biographers seem to offer a complete picture of this complex man, and thus Bosman's life story never seems to be complete.

Scholars who have written either complete biographies or biographical pieces on Bosman include Valerie Rosenberg (*Sunflower to the Sun* (1976), revised more recently under the title *Herman Charles Bosman – Between the Lines* (2005)); Bernard Sachs[9] (*Herman Charles Bosman As I Knew Him* (1971)); Aegidius Jean Blignaut (*My Friend Herman Charles Bosman* (1981)*;* Lionel Abrahams ("A protégé's memoir" (2001)) and Stephen Gray (*Life Sentence - A Biography of Herman Charles Bosman* (2005)). Rosenberg's 1976 biography was "critically reviled" (Davis 1) due to lack of references, and Sachs's biography was rejected by Bosman's widow, Helena Lake, as a result of what she considered to be several inaccuracies (Andersen, "Forth into the Dawn" 143). These various biographies offer different accounts of Bosman's life, sometimes contradictory and ambiguous. This is not unlike hybridity, as the term itself can be ambiguous and "resists definition" and that resistance is what draws attention to it (Kapchan and Strong 240). It is precisely because of the conflicting data available on Bosman's life, that this becomes more interesting and suggests how his hyphenated identity relates to hybridity.

Viljoen points out the following regarding biography:

> the connections he [Holroyd] asks the biographer "to chart" are presumed, as the word implies, to be mappings between separate domains, between "life" and "work". These domains could instead be seen as inextricably entangled and in constant tension,

[9] Bernard Sachs was the "less famous brother of radical trade unionist Solly Sachs" (Sandwith, *Work of Cultural Criticism* 38).

> underpinned by the co-existence of hiatus and contraries and marked by the dialectics within and between these modes of existence. (66)

This suggests then that the often separate domains of 'life' and 'work', while quite clearly interlinked, are also in a state of tension. In the case of Bosman, this is certainly true: his life did in fact affect his work, and therefore it is worth examining his life in order to obtain an idea of exactly how it affected his work. Bosman's life events provided inspiration for his stories, and his beliefs shaped how he wrote, yet there remained a "constant tension", as will be evidenced in the analysis of some of Bosman's lengthier works such as *Willemsdorp*. By neglecting to understand where a person comes from, an interpretation of their work might not be as complete as it otherwise could be. While biographies make it clear that Bosman's life reflects a man of complex contradictions, borne out of times of hardship, his humanism shows through in his writing.

Rosenberg's vision of Bosman as presented in both *Sunflower to the Sun* (1976) and in her revised biography almost three decades later entitled *Herman Charles Bosman – Between the Lines* (2005) depicts him largely as a madman, a criminal and generally not a very likeable character. In a review of Rosenberg's biography on Bosman, Cherry Clayton begins thus:

> Herman Charles Bosman was born in 1905 and died in 1951; he wrote a number of very good short stories, some middling to good essays and many bad poems.
> He killed his stepbrother, at least three or four, but probably more, unborn children, left his second wife dying in hospital after aborting twins, accused her of causing trouble when she ran away from the hospital to seek him out, and possibly was responsible for the death of his first wife after yet another abortion.
> He was also a liar, sometimes using reports of being dead or dying to extract money from his family, so that his 'favourite' uncle died grieving for his lost nephew. (in Gray, *Herman Charles Bosman* 75)

Clayton's summary is a harsh rendering of Bosman's life, although it makes for interesting reading. The presence of death appeared to be constant in the life of a man who did not purposely seek it out. In Bosman's case, the influence of death produced not melancholia, but creativity, and this is partly what gave rise to the abundance of stories written by him. It is worth noting here that Rosenberg's claims are however not well supported by facts – for instance there is no bibliography at the end of her biography, and the 2005 version has merely one-and-a-half pages of sources comprising mainly taped interviews, a simple list of

newspapers and periodicals (without dates) and several companies or institutions consulted. Thus scholars wishing to verify Rosenberg's claims might encounter difficulty doing so. Such inconclusiveness, however, is not surprising when researching the life of Bosman: his is a life story that remains incomplete and still leaves us with many questions.

Bosman's former classmate and life-long friend Bernard Sachs wrote a full-length biography entitled *Herman Charles Bosman As I Knew Him.* Describing Bosman, Sachs writes of "[e]yes that looked into regions beyond" illustrating that "Bosman just couldn't fit into a uniform or into straight line" (21). He goes on to say that "Edgar Allan Poe was the greatest influence on Bosman spiritually" (24) and that "[f]light was the dominant theme in Bosman's life. Flight from reality" (25). Sachs explains that it was "through a series of unfortunate circumstances, [that Bosman was] fated to be thrust for a long number of years behind prison bars of real, cold steel, into the very nadir and apotheosis of realism" (25). The lowest and highest points would often recur in Bosman's life. Sachs portrays Bosman as a romantic realist, and he goes on to illustrate how this impacted on the writer's work:

> The essential quality of Bosman's short stories is their humanity and lightness of touch […] he did not like human beings, but he loved humanity in the abstract – a schizophrenic phenomenon common to artists […] That humanity which he possessed, and which he could not direct into society, flowed with marvellous profusion into his short stories. The dagga-smoking kaffirs, rooineks, seducers and plain crooks all glow with warmth as they are touched by his humanity. And his humanity also carried him well over the racial chasm. (63)

An important clue regarding Bosman's own hybridity lies in the humanity shown towards the characters he created, which indicates that he did not judge people, no matter their background, and he was anything but racist or a cultural snob. Bosman resisted and challenged the dominant status quo by his subtle critique of Afrikaner racism. If Sachs's view above is considered, it appears then that Bosman's humanism was expressed much more easily in his writing than it was in his life. However, other biographers and friends of Bosman's have had different things to say.

Literary mentor of Bosman, Lionel Abrahams was a writer, critic and editor, as well as a great admirer of the man, and wrote a detailed biographical piece on him which appeared in 1957 as an introduction to *A Cask of Jerepigo*. Abrahams's appreciative introduction entitled "A Man Who Never Unmasked" is according to Gray "brilliant and tantalising" and is "the basis of all future biographical endeavours" (*Life Sentence* 16). Echoing Sachs's depiction of Bosman as a romantic, Abrahams wrote that

> events of Bosman's life were only fuel to the triple-flames fire of his imagination …. he was a romantic, he was a humourist, he was a rebel against many of the commonly accepted values. […] Bosman had a way of seeing life which was very much out of the ordinary – perhaps uniquely his own. (*A Man who Never Unmasked* 7)

Bosman the romantic, humourist and rebel was also a humanist writer, as noted earlier by Sachs. All the different aspects of this man's self connect to his writing. At the same time, however, it was this unique way of seeing and interpreting life which perhaps made Bosman almost too adventurous, earning for himself, as Abrahams put it, a "reputation for wildness" (*A Man* 8), and a tendency to act boldly, which resulted in the unexpected incident of the killing of his step-brother (9). As will be detailed later in this chapter, Bosman wrote under several pseudonyms, and after his imprisonment he chose to write as Herman Malan, perhaps so that people did not connect him to the crime for which he had been sentenced. In his biography, Abrahams makes an important comment related to this: "Bosman and Herman Malan are not two separate men with contradictory qualities and attitudes who replace each other as time passes, but one continuing personality in which many paradoxes are somehow reconciled" (*A Man* 11). Once again, Bosman (aka Malan) appears to be a man of profound contradictions, and Abrahams's take on the reconciliation of the paradoxes is not convincing. While not perhaps 'reconciled', Bosman's cheeky wildness was balanced with a deep tenderness, as observed by Abrahams in the following manner:

> And the benign and tender spirit of that [humanity] was to be felt in all of Bosman's human intercourse while I knew him – in fact in his dealings with all living things, human, animal and even vegetable. And with it all, making it into sweetness, went laughter: the hugest laughter and the hugest things to laugh at were always in process in Bosman's presence. So that we cannot think of him without thinking of laughter. (*A Man* 16)

Once more humanism is evident, which helps to explain Bosman's cultural sensitivity. This is ironic given Sachs's comment earlier that Bosman "did not like human beings". However, Bosman was not a misanthrope as suggested by Sachs; rather it is more likely that his behaviour stemmed not from a dislike of others, but rather from social ineptness and the difficulty he had in relating to people in real life. This would help to explain that what humanity and tenderness Bosman could not direct into society, he could actually direct into his work, as many writers do. Sachs wrote much more harshly about Bosman than did Abrahams, which is worth considering when putting together a picture of Bosman's life. Some forty years after writing the above in the introduction to the 1957 edition of *A Cask of*

Jerepigo, in "A Protégé's Memoir of Herman Charles Bosman" (2001) Abrahams revisited the laughter of his mentor with tenderness and love: "As I grew familiar with him over the following months, it was Mr Bosman's laughter that came to seem perhaps the most extraordinary thing about him. Though hearty and free, it somehow carried all sorts of serious implications. Like a bolt of lightning or a ceremony, it illuminated and altered what it touched" (14). This very same laughter was remembered by Bosman's friend, George Howard, who remarked in "A Portrait from Memory" that:

> he usually showed a magnificent gift for hiding any personal grief in merry, infectious, warming laughter. His tears were secret, always hidden in a fine courage that helped countless others who came to him for solace, and for the grace of a Bosman perspective on their particular troubles. […] He threaded his personal rages with a splendid kind of laughter that was always spiritual medicine to the heavily burdened. He was a life-line to the despairing, perhaps much in the way that Charlie Chaplin always was in Charlie's broader fields. (*Remembering Bosman* 36)

This offers a completely different perspective to that of Sachs who, as seen earlier, wrote that Bosman "did not like human beings" (63). Howard describes a Bosman who cared deeply for his fellow human beings, and whose opinions were much valued by his friends. Contrary to what Sachs had said, Bosman could indeed relate to other human beings. When life proved too difficult for him to do so, perhaps, then Bosman still had his creative outlets:

> It was in the nature of Bosman's creativity […] that he trusted to chance and ran great risks. […] [W]ith him it was energy, impulse, careless expenditure, subliminal flickerings, instinctive cunning rather than calculation, dreams rather than solutions, flashes of insight rather than philosophy, the sweeping pronouncements of excitement rather than the balanced accounts or analysis of circumspection. (Abrahams, *Bosman's Genius* 267)

This illustrates how Bosman managed to channel his energies into his creative writing. Abrahams's description above suggests a man who was constantly creating, always thinking ahead of ways of doing things.

A thorough biography on Bosman is that by Stephen Gray, entitled *Life Sentence – A Biography of Herman Charles Bosman* (2005), but unlike Rosenberg he includes detailed references and sources. Unlike Abrahams, Gray's view of Bosman is not one of admiration, and the reader of this biography might detect the slight distaste Gray seems to have for Bosman, as the following extract indicates:

> instead of coming clean and making something of himself, he grew more criminal by

> the day […] Blignaut, egging him on, was the worst compadre he could have chosen; and there was Ella to come, surely an appalling wife. (164)

Instead of remaining objective, at times it appears that Gray's own personal judgements intrude in the text. That aside, Gray corroborates his facts throughout (unlike Rosenberg, as was noted earlier) and his biography remains a well-researched and excellent record of Bosman's life.

This recent Gray biography is interesting in that the reader is offered an opportunity of seeing Bosman for what he was: a sensitive, unpredictable man of many contradictions who was at the same time an excellent writer and raconteur. In a review of Gray's biography, Soldati-Kahimbaara notes that this "portrayal of Bosman as a man caught 'betwixt and in between' recurs in relation to his dual identity, which resulted in his being a balanced bilingual in English and Afrikaans" (245). English was the language medium Bosman chose for most of his work, and this was a conscious choice for a number of reasons as will be seen in more detail in Chapter 4. Gray's biography shows the reader that Bosman's "Life Sentence" was indeed his gift of writing.

Not all of the aforementioned Bosman biographies offer a complete view of this contradictory, hybrid man. Contradictions in Bosman the man range from Sachs's view of Bosman as misanthrope, to Howard describing how friends depended on Bosman for help and advice. Incongruities in Bosman's personality fluctuated between quiet and calm moods, to loud and excessive rage. Despite these inconsistencies in both Bosman himself as well as in the biographies, there was a common enough sense of a man, a writer, capable of understanding people regardless of their backgrounds, their cultural roots.

What then do all these biographies focus on in Bosman's life? Major events included Bosman's three marriages and his time in jail for murder: events that clearly provided inspiration for much of his writing. Bosman's first marriage, at the age of twenty, to Vera Sawyer, was never consummated, as the newlyweds never even lived together. Shortly after they were married Bosman accepted a teaching post in the Groot Marico district, while his bride remained behind in Johannesburg. When months later Bosman went to jail, the marriage was annulled, yet Vera remained forever loyal to Bosman through his prison years and his next two marriages (Sachs 52). It was, however, those six months of teaching in the bushveld that were to provide Bosman with much inspiration for his series of short stories. Bosman's second wife, Ella Manson, had a passionate yet difficult temperament which

matched Bosman's own wild bohemian lifestyle. It was his third wife, Helena Lake (then Helena Stegmann), who wrote, many years after Bosman's death: "It was Herman's belief that the human spirit should be creative at all times; that art should form a daily part of our existence" (174). This was certainly true of Bosman, who lived by and for his craft, and it was his work, his craft, that shaped his identity. He might have been a contradictory personality, as his biographers attest, yet the one constant in Bosman's life was his writing. Thus, although his identity grounded his writing, it cannot be doubted that his writing shaped his identity.

In the words of Stuart Hall, "identity is a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself" (Hall in Grossberg, 89). What is referred to here is the construction of the self in relation to the other. This suggests that identity is characterized by a tension between self and others. Bosman's identity is created in this way by means of his writing. Confirming this to his wife Helena, Bosman says "I'm a ghost; people see me as a ghost. They look through me. The only contact I have with human beings is through my writing. Through my writing I reach them and they reach me. Therefore I must write – or go mad" (Gray *Life Sentence* 332).

Furthermore, this polarity echoes the contradictions discussed earlier: a Bosman who "did not like human beings" (Sachs 63), but who "was a life-line to the despairing" (Howard in Gray, *Remembering Bosman* 36). Bosman too can in this sense be seen to define "a boundary that is at once inside and outside, the insider's outsideness" (Bhabha *Location* 14), belonging to both as well as to neither. Identities are thus multi-dimensional, and moreover are always changing; they are "always relational and incomplete" (Grossberg 89). Hybridity of identity is determined by markers of difference such as language and culture, and in Bosman there was a mix of languages and cultures.

As a bilingual South African, Bosman often vacillated between two cultures (English and Afrikaans), carrying beliefs from one into the other, and vice versa. The mix that created a hyphenated Bosman was not stable and was prone to change, always growing into something else. In the previous chapter, de Kock's (*Verborge* 197) remark about the confusion regarding Bosman's cultural identity was noted. De Kock elaborated on possible reasons for the hybridisation of a bilingual person such as Bosman, who was an anglicised Afrikaner. De Kock highlights Bosman's apparent distaste for the idea of "cultural exclusivity" (193) and the idea that "real Afrikaners" (like Bosman) "were meant to be

broadly South African and bilingual" (193). This way of thinking was novel in a country where English and Afrikaans-speaking groups did not normally mix much at that time.

As will be evident in the discussion of selected Bosman texts, the "hybrid identity" of Bosman and his work is "fluid" and "transforming" itself constantly. For instance, Bosman wrote under various names throughout his career: during his juvenile years, it is clear that the choice of names reflected his quirky and cheeky sense of humour (e.g. "Ridens", Latin for "laughing"; "Will-o'-the-Wisp"; "Ben Eath" and "Ben Africa"). At the time when the young Bosman was imprisoned, convicts were forbidden to publish behind bars, and thus such pseudonyms flourished as manuscripts were smuggled out of prison and published under different names.

Much of Bosman's poetry was written under the name of "Herman Malan", particularly after his imprisonment. Using this name in the 1930s was "possibly to claim kinship with the more illustrious Malan clan, and also to distance himself from Herman Bosman the murderer" (MacKenzie and Sandham 139). Lionel Abrahams claims that the pseudonym Herman Malan was "a *nom de plume* which, it seems, served equally as a *nom de guerre* in the belligerent phase following [Bosman's] emergence from prison" (*Protégé's Memoir* 27). Indeed, Bosman came out fighting, and so a *nom de guerre*, literally a name used during war, was rather apt, as he was not only hiding from his past, but he was also fighting his present.

"Herbert Charles Boswell" was the false name he gave to his first wife Vera, and having that on his marriage certificate, Rosenberg suggests, "permitted him to enter into a Freudian marriage that wasn't a real marriage to him" (*Between the Lines* 35). Then he reverted to writing as "Herman Bosman", and in 1934 in *The South African Opinion* a poem "Reveille" was signed by H C B, as was the poem "Carthaginian Sandals". Oddly, the story "Veld Maiden" was ascribed to "P. de Beer"; whilst various Oom Schalk stories were by HC Bosman. The pseudonymity did not end there: "Bozzie" was the nickname given him by Bernard Sachs. Craig MacKenzie and Tim Sandham, in *A Bosman Companion*, list several other interesting and humorous pseudonyms employed by Bosman: "Lenin Tolstoi", "Ferdinand Fandango", "Vere de Vere Tornado", and "Pedagogue". And there was "Dowager Lady Raglan, leader of the Women of the Empire for Peace" (Lloyd 38), a mouthful of a name reflecting Bosman's sardonic sense of humour.

This variety of pseudonyms suggests not only a sense of humour, given the inevitable touches of Bosman's irony, but also Bosman's hybrid identity. Having many different names

or pseudonyms is in some sense similar to having many facets to one's personality. Bosman, as testified by various biographers, was not just one persona, he was many, and some would even go so far as to say that he had schizophrenic tendencies. This is hybridity of identity in the sense that Bosman himself displayed a multiplicity or mixture of personalities. In other words, while this in itself does not represent cultural hybridity, it does however show the hybrid identity of an individual.

How then does identity relate to culture? Bosman's own identity, and particularly his writerly identity, was variously influenced by his own history and the dominant ideology. South Africa was experiencing major changes at the beginning of the century, with the establishment of Union in 1910. The national culture at the time was white-dominant and even amongs English and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans there was discord. It was a time referred to by Corinne Sandwith as "a moment of acute cultural anxiety – the efforts of the English-speaking South Africans to forge a 'national culture' and the associated struggle to define an indigenous South African 'essence' or 'geist'" (*Cultural Criticism* 38).

Although Bosman did not subscribe to any particular political party, his friends, such as editor friend Bernard Sachs, were involved in the Communist Party, and Bosman was once caught daubing Communist Party slogans on the lecture room walls of the Teachers' Training College in 1926.[10] Parallel with the changes in the country from 1910 onwards was the growth of what was soon to become known as apartheid. It is apparent through his work, when layers of irony are removed, that Bosman rejected racism, and particular stories that reveal empathy for the oppressed indigenous peoples and their cultural practices thus inscribe a more inclusive sense of national culture and identity.

Somewhat different to the typical white South African at the time, Bosman considered himself an "African" in the sense that he identified with Africa as home, as suggested in his long poem entitled "Africa". For Bosman it is clear that, although a white, English-Afrikaner, he belonged to the African soil, as an outsider inside. Just as the "hyphenated ethnographer" might be "considered to be in a state of in-betweenness" (Kapchan and Strong 245), so too was Bosman a "verbindingsteken" (Aucamp 65), hyphenating cultures.

On the other hand, given his English roots, Bosman responded to and admired the works of writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and O. Henry (pen name of American writer William Sydney Porter) amongst others, due to the "local colour and irony they incorporated

[10] <http://www.uct.ac.za/usr/calendar/2012/A_Teacher_in_the_Bushveld.pdf>

in their works" and the fact that these were writers instrumental in "pioneering and establishing the solid foundations of a literary canon that reflected their national culture and identity" (Lloyd 64). In a similar fashion, Bosman's own work reflects his "national culture and identity". This is especially evident in his essays and journalistic pieces.

2.3 A Paradoxical Doubleness: Bosman's South African English

Lloyd encapsulates Bosman's desire to bring together various aspects of the South African polyglot society as follows:

> Bosman's lifelong ambition as a writer was to encourage and inaugurate the production of a literature that was quintessentially and indivisibly South African: one that was not, unlike the vast majority of his country's literature to date, easily or necessarily compartmentalised – segregated – into such categories as 'Afrikaans', 'colonial' English, 'Malay', or 'Black' literature. He believed that *South African* English (which he usually referred to as 'English South African') was the most likely of many local languages to become a *lingua franca* that all South Africans would understand and appreciate. He therefore encouraged its use (rather than that of his first language, Afrikaans) as the medium for the country's national literature. (Lloyd 83)

Lloyd goes on to elaborate that Bosman believed it was important for South African writers and artists to include "what was distinctly African" (84) in their work, and Bosman argued this not only in his fiction but also in his non-fiction essays. The South Africanisms that are used in Bosman's texts are numerous, but as claimed by Lloyd in 1997:

> as yet no objective data have been given to indicate how linguistically important Bosman's contribution has been to South African culture: to the consolidation and improved status of South African English as the country's multiracial national and literary lingua franca. Examined whilst trying to provide such data for this study, were the citations given to substantiate definitions of words and phrases in the Oxford University Press's authoritative *Dictionary of South African English*. (94)

Now, some sixteen years since the above was written, it still remains difficult to measure Bosman's linguistic contribution to South African culture. Upon my request, the Dictionary Unit for South African English (DSAE) produced a list of citations of the sort Lloyd refers to above. The list is a compilation by a researcher who read through a number of Bosman resources highlighting South Africanisms which then made it into a dictionary entry as evidence. The DSAE list contains 215 South African English headword records which appear in quotations from Bosman texts. Not all of these words would have been used for the first

time by Bosman himself; they could have been in oral use beforehand, or used by other writers as well. Unfortunately it is not possible to quantify Bosman's contribution to South African English with accuracy as a result of "too few researchers and too short span of research" (interview with lexicographer Van Niekerk).

However, given Bosman's contribution to South African English, some consideration should be given to linguistic hybridity. This refers to various aspects of different languages that enter a particular language. As a result of British and Dutch colonialism, during the time that Bosman was writing, English was considered to be the main language in South Africa, with Afrikaans or Dutch coming a close second. Various other African languages were at that time hardly given any attention aside from words that entered everyday language as a kind of pidgin English. As Bosman's life and work strongly indicate, it is clear that he wished to bring together South African languages, creating a hybrid South African English.

A good deal has been written about English–Afrikaans bilingualism in South Africa over the past century, especially since the 1930s. This bilingualism was, however, exclusionary since it related to English and Afrikaans only and excluded other African languages. As noted by Douglas Young, "the *taalstryd* (language struggle), lasting well into the 1960s, had its roots in the period following the Anglo–Boer war" (414). This took place alongside limited debate about African language development that was largely ignored by whites, both Afrikaans and English. Bosman, exhibiting "the insider's outsideness", brought together the various languages in the country, incorporating a mixture of borrowings.

While English-Afrikaans bilingualism is a facet of Bosman's hybridity, it is not possible to explore this facet in much depth here. It has been dealt with in detail in the work of both Schopen and Snyman. Schopen suggests that Bosman's imprisonment might have been one reason for him not being fully involved in the changes taking place in Afrikaans literature (*The Rooinek* 25-27). Snyman points out that Bosman's most prolific bilingual period occurred after his marriage to Helena, an Afrikaans teacher (*Locating Bosman* 7), and his Afrikaans corpus, she says, "gives an entirely new twist to questions of culture, identity and language in his short story oeuvre" (5). Bilingual Bosman belonged to two different worlds, two different cultures, and his life and work illustrate a bringing together of English and Afrikaans culture and language.

2.4 Bosman as Bohemian, Jo'burg Man and Modern Romantic Realist

As an 'insider', one has a view of things that an 'outsider' might not have. Straddling both the inside and outside world, Bosman belonged to both and to neither, "neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between" (Bhabha, *Location* 219). In what ways did Bosman succeed at belonging to both the English and Afrikaans worlds? An educated and highly cultured man, Bosman was well-read and multilingual; and he was inspired by international writers, particularly American, British and French, which reflects his desire to embrace various cultures.

One of the writers Bosman admired greatly was Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), the French renegade poet who lived on the fringes of society. Baudelaire is credited with coining the term "modernity" (*modernité*): "By modernity I mean the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent which make up one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immutable" (13). Baudelaire's view of modernism, originally published in 1863, is perhaps different to the twentieth-century modernism that suggests an improved, more desirable school of thought following on earlier realism and naturalism.

Baudelaire is known for his poetry, essays and criticism that suggested a new way of life. His personal life pushed him to be self-destructive, yet he was very much a part of the modern, creative and intellectual life of Paris. This inconsistency, that highlights both destructive and creative aspects, reflects the paradoxical times during which Baudelaire lived. Modernity is ever-changing, reflecting life as it is lived day by day. Art, in whatever form, is able to capture that fleeting experience, to pin it down in a manner that might be understood more easily.

A century later, Baudelaire was to be an inspiration to Bosman, not only because of his artistic, creative mind, but perhaps also because of his modernist vision and lifestyle. Ahead of his time, Bosman too was arguably culturally vanguardist, even a South African modernist, as events in his life flung him so often into difficulty. His was not an ordinary, even-keeled journey, and he was often forced to adapt to changing circumstances at short notice. The following definition of modernism is useful with reference to Bosman:

> To be modern … is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish,

> ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air. To be a modern*ist* is to make oneself somehow at home in the maelstrom, to make its rhythms one's own, to move within its currents in search of reality, of beauty, of justice, that its fervid and perilous flow allows. (Berman in Hyslop 2)

This definition aptly relates to a bohemian Bosman in South Africa's Johannesburg during the 1920s to 1940s. Bosman was a city man of contradictions, both absorbing and dispersing the difficulties that manifested in his path throughout his life. In many ways it appears that Bosman thrived when flung into a personal maelstrom; for instance by the manner in which he took advantage of unusual or difficult situations, using them as inspiration for his writing. His seminal semi-autobiographical prison memoir *Cold Stone Jug* is an example of this, albeit that it was only written many years after his imprisonment.

Bosman's chequered life is what has made his identity as author all the more interesting, especially whilst living during a period of contradictions. In the early 1900s South Africa was suspended between two wars (1899–1902 Second Anglo-Boer War and 1914–18 First World War), the Union was established (1910), and it was also a period in which the policy of apartheid was growing and being named. Political and racial contradictions, while not glaring, were undercurrents that were being felt at the time. Bosman lived and breathed his surroundings, as though he was addicted, absorbing happenings and events, pinning them down in his mind, reshaping them and then allowing them to flow out in a typed-up manuscript on paper. This acutely-tuned way of being is illustrated by Margaret Lenta as follows:

> Bosman was determined to be a bohemian, in the late nineteenth-century sense of the term: one whose sensibilities were sharpened and extended by a greater variety of experience than convention, or the understanding of South African society in the 1940s of an original and creative temperament, would allow. (*White South African* 112)

Indeed, Bosman's "sensibilities were sharpened" by his acute observations of the landscape and people that surrounded him. It was through this that Bosman was painstakingly aware of the various identities and cultures in South Africa, as well as the similarities and conflicts that were evident in a place that was slowly becoming more culturally hybrid. Not everybody shared Bosman's view, however, as much of white South Africa at the time felt quite differently:

> Attempting to define himself in terms of his disengagement from the codes, religious, social and political, to which South African whites in the first half of the twentieth

> century subscribed, Bosman might himself have chosen the term 'bohemian'. (Lenta, *White South African* 113)

As is evident in Lenta's statement, Bosman chose not to subscribe to the general order of the day; that is, he did not agree with the injustice created by racial difference. He rarely abided by the rules, whether or not he agreed with such rules, and chose instead to live his life somewhat differently to others.

The insider's outsideness of Bosman can also be witnessed in the manner in which he observed, both from the outside and the inside, the city of Johannesburg. This once more brings Baudelaire to mind, referred to as a *flâneur*, wandering the city streets and absorbing images therefrom. It was Walter Benjamin who, in 1929, developed the notion of the flâneur or city stroller by drawing on Baudelaire's poetry. In the words of Heather Acott, "[a]s a literary construct, the flâneur owes its origins to the Parisian prowler of Baudelaire … an anonymous consumer of spectacle who looks without touching but who retains some sympathy for the outcasts of the city; part detective, part sociologist, part journalist, part rogue male free from domestic constraints" (n.p.).

A well-known photograph (see Appendix A) that shows Herman Charles Bosman in characteristic pose walking the streets of Johannesburg is described thus in Chris Thurman's words:

> Here we have Bosman the flâneur, walking idly through the streets of early twentieth-century Johannesburg, observing its shifting urban geography and encountering its curious characters. Here we have Bosman the maudlin drunk, lurching from a frenzy of energetic lyricism to melancholia and wry commentary on his personal misfortune. Here we have Bosman the dagga-smoking surrealist, sketching tales about cannibalism or imitating the dark fantasies of Edgar Allan Poe. Here we have Bosman the modern Africanist, declaring that mine dumps are no less authentic an expression of Africa than the pyramids, and that cities like Jo'burg are as much a manifestation of the African spirit as the landscapes of the Kalahari. ("Review" n.p.)

The image of Bosman as flâneur is striking in this description, and highlights the disparate nature of this bohemian personality. Interesting too is the mention of another flâneur, Edgar Allan Poe, whom Bosman idolised not only for the contribution he made to the short story genre, but also for his bohemian lifestyle (MacKenzie and Sandham 175–6). Bosman's fascination with Poe is particularly intriguing as he used him as a literary model, although Poe's influence in Africa "remains undocumented" (Schopen 82). More about Poe's literary contribution will be discussed when Bosman's short stories are analysed in Chapter 4, while in the next chapter, Bosman's essay "Edgar Allan Poe" will also be considered.

Thurman's description in the extract quoted earlier also brings to mind a story by American writer O. Henry, whom Bosman greatly admired for his wit and clever story twists, entitled "Man About Town". The story is about a man who walks the city in search of the elusive Man About Town, asking questions related thereto of the people he meets. The protagonist wakes up in hospital to discover that he himself is the very Man About Town for whom he had been searching.

Once again this relates to Bhabha's concept of "the insider's outsideness": it is interesting that this Man About Town, this urban Bosman who knew the city streets of Johannesburg so well, was at the same time able to write about a remote rural area such as the Groot Marico. The contradictions are evident; the polarities suggest difference, inside-outness and in-betweenness, yet there is a mingling, a kind of hybridity that brings these aspects together.

How then does the notion of the flâneur relate to the concept of hybridity? Baudelaire described the in-between and the ebb and flow experienced by the flâneur as follows:

> For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world – impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. (10)

Being away from home and yet still feeling at home, as evinced in the above description, allows the city stroller both a distance as well as a proximity to those others in that world. In Bosman's perambulating, it was his own mixed identity that allowed him the vantage point of viewing different cultures without judging. His casual strolling afforded him a living space that accommodated diversity, a space that allowed him to be both inside and outside.

2.5 Conclusion: The Good, the Bad and Bosman

Herman Charles Bosman, it has been argued, could be both cruel and tender; he could be at the same time a blasphemer and an admirer of Jesus; he could be liberal or a racist; or quiet and calm; or excessively loud. The biographers quoted in this chapter have put forward sometimes opposing views on the life of a colourful and contrary person, and all seem to have written about a different man. Bosman was a man of contradictions as is evident in that

he “did not like human beings” (Sachs 63) yet he “was a life-line to the despairing” (Howard in Gray, *Remembering Bosman* 36).

Straddling two cultures of Englishman and Afrikaner, Bosman’s identity can be viewed as hybrid in several ways, particularly linguistic and cultural. The fact that he embodied a mixture of romanticism, realism and modernism further highlights the notion of a hybrid being. The chapter that follows will illustrate still further just how much these hybridities impacted upon Bosman’s view of the world.

Chapter 3

"Glorious Bastardization": Life and Philosophy in Bosman's Non-Fiction

3.1 Introduction: Bosman's Opinions on Life

> I am essentially apolitical. I can see life only as a whole. And the moment I come across anybody trying to interpret life in terms of any political, sociological, racial or ideological theory I can feel about that person only that he is a lost soul. Life to me is all one thing, incredible in its contrasts, in its paradoxes; and in its squalor and magnificence.
>
> (Bosman, *My Life and Opinions* 9)

Bosman's life was full of paradoxes and contrasts, and he himself was an enigma. He knew poverty and hardship and yet he also experienced times of satisfaction and completeness. Nothing was constant in his life, and magnificence could at any time turn to absolute squalor. Ironically, Bosman survived in both extremes equally well. After his release from gaol, Bosman, who refused to be pinned down to any particular ideology, as is evident from the statement quoted above, went on to become the "*enfant terrible* of early 1930s Joburg journalism" (Hyslop 12). His journalistic pieces and editorials, which appeared mainly in the 1940s, were collected and edited by Lionel Abrahams in 1957 and later by Stephen Gray (*A Cask of Jerepigo* (2002) and *My Life and Opinions* (2003)). These sketches and essays offer the reader some insight into Bosman's identity, personality and his beliefs. In a *Cask of Jerepigo* (*Cask*) it is evident that Bosman had "settled down into becoming the man about town of South African cultural journalism" (Gray, *Cask* 9). Most of the essays and sketches in Gray's collection were originally written for *The South African Opinion* and *Trek*. Similarly, *My Life and Opinions* (*MLO*) is a collection of Bosman's autobiographical sketches as well as other short pieces, which as a whole illustrate his life history and his views. Several pieces from these two collections will be discussed in this chapter, with special focus on how identity, belonging and hybridity are at work in these texts.

Markers of difference such as culture, belief and language are noticeable in Bosman's texts, both fiction and non-fiction. It was noted in the first chapter that language is an integral part of culture and that Bakhtin's idea of culture consisted of the discourses retained by a "collective memory" (Todorov x). Collective memory relates to memories shared by a common culture, and Bosman's novels and short stories were, amongst other things, inspired by a "collective memory" of the group or groups of people about whom he writes. This

chapter questions whether such a cultural collective memory is, in fact, evident in Bosman's journalistic non-fictional work.

The essay form is a short piece of opinion writing; it is a personal reflection of the author that offers observations based on daily life. Generally non-fiction, the essay form is well suited to journalistic writing. Collectively, Bosman's non-fiction writing displays a form of intellectual inconsistency: at times this writing is most profound, yet at other times it appears to be a superficial replication of the status quo. The vacillations of character in Bosman's life are, I argue, echoed in some of the contradictions that appear in his non-fiction writing.

How does Bosman's own cultural identity influence his writing, or how is that identity reflected in his writing? Is Bosman's writing the main evidence for his hybridity? It was argued in the previous chapter that Bosman's life inspired his writing and therefore both his life and his works offer ample evidence for the various hybridities examined here. Many (though not all) of Bosman's texts evince a cultural and linguistic hybridity that he also espoused in his own life. As was discussed in the previous sections, Bosman was considered socially unconventional in many ways, and was, as an author, an extremely complex character. He did nonetheless have a strong sense of his own identity and a connection to his familial and ancestral roots. His country and the land itself also played a role in Bosman's identity formation as a white English-speaking Afrikaner from South Africa.

In a column for *The South African Jewish Times* Bosman wrote: "As everybody knows, I have great faith in Africa's future. I can see Africa once again leading the world in point of culture and civilisation" (*MLO* 15). When last did Africa lead the world? Perhaps Bosman was referring to an ancient time in history when Egypt was ahead of other cultures and civilisations? However, Bosman's view of "Africa", as some of his critics suggest, was perhaps a somewhat narrow one. Gray explains that for Bosman "Africa" meant Johannesburg, and more specifically the "capital of advanced culture; and by 'culture' he meant the largely Jewish-inspired variety of the burgeoning arts and sciences" (*MLO* 15). While Bosman supported the Jewish community, it was however not the sole cultural connection in his life. Bosman often refers to a number of cultures in South Africa including English, Afrikaans, and the many African cultures. How Bosman viewed this "Africa", this "culture" is evident in his many essays and journalistic pieces that appeared in local newspapers, reviews and magazines, yet at times some of his views seemed to conflict with each other. This chapter will illustrate possible reasons why that might have been the case.

A national monthly review, *The South African Opinion (S.A. Opinion)*, appeared in two series (1934–37 and 1944–51), and in 1946 merged with *Trek.*[11] Showcasing politics, arts and cultural issues, the mainly English-medium left-liberal monthly made it quite clear that it was against the colour bar. This magazine also served as a launch pad for the short stories of Bosman and other writers including Doris Lessing and Nadine Gordimer. According to Bernard Sachs, "the single biggest achievement of *S.A. Opinion–Trek* was to have first published the bulk of the work of Herman Bosman" (5). Bosman's role was "to cultivate South African nativism in the field of the arts" (Gray, *Cask* 17), and the pieces analysed here such as "An Indigenous South African Culture is Unfolding" illustrate this amply.

3.2 Inscribing an Indigenous South African Culture

Bosman's commitment to promoting South African literature was part of his life mission, and his non-fiction writing is a good example of his belief in a growing indigenous literature. His essays and journalistic pieces are examples of modernist realist writing, and they are quite different to his works of fiction. Recalling the definition of modernism provided earlier, Bosman as a man of contradictions thrived in the maelstrom in search of reality, and his non-fiction reflects a sometimes harsh realism that depicted contemporary life.

A sense of Bosman's own life can be gathered from his nostalgic pieces such as "Home Town" (*MLO* 33) where Bosman revisits his birthplace Kuils River, and "Jeppe High Revisited" (*MLO* 36) which relates a return to his school days. "A Teacher in the Bushveld" (*MLO* 48) is Bosman's account of his first time in the Marico, where he was sent to teach after qualifying as a teacher. Although he only spent six months in the Marico area, it was a place that would capture Bosman's imagination for the rest of his life:

[11] *The South African Opinion*, which first launched in 1934 under the editorship of Bosman's friend, Bernard Sachs, merged in 1947 with *Trek*, a "bi-monthly review also with a left-liberal inclination" (MacKenzie and Sandham 211). During the 1930s, Bosman lived a bohemian life in London, writing stories which he sent home to South Africa. When he returned to South Africa, it was for *Trek* that Bosman wrote pieces including art criticism, reviews and essays. *Trek* began in 1936 as *The South African Wool and Produce Review*, then in Cape Town became *The Independent* before moving to Johannesburg from 1939 when it became known as *Trek* (Gray, *Cask* 22).

> It is only after sunset that the place becomes invested with a certain modified lure and enchantment. For sometimes, at night, when the world is very still, a soft wind comes sweeping across the veld. Then, if you are outside and listen very carefully, you can hear the story it has to tell. (*MLO* 51)

Here a romanticized, sentimental view of the veld is evident, and Bosman's interpretation of the land recurs in some of his other non-fiction pieces. Paradoxically, this view is not in keeping with the term 'modern realist', and again this reflects Bosman's contradictory beliefs. Indeed, Bosman would continue to listen to the wind and go on telling stories, mainly set in the Marico, for the rest of his life. "A Cold Night" (*MLO* 52) and "Marico Revisited" (*MLO* 142) are accounts of Bosman returning some twenty years later to the Marico area. Both pieces are steeped in poetic, romantic nostalgia:

> There is no other place I know that is so heavy with atmosphere, so strangely and darkly impregnated with that stuff of life that bears the authentic stamp of South Africa. (*MLO* 145)

It is clear even in Bosman's later writing, and through the romantic style he employs, that the Marico area would always remain deeply embedded in his psyche. In the background of most of his stories is the veld, beautiful yet harsh, nurturing yet also destructive. In this sense, laden with paradox, Bosman's form of romanticism can be considered modern realist.

The influence of the American romantic, Edgar Allan Poe, was noted in the previous chapter, and the fact that Bosman adopted Poe as a literary model is evident in his essay "Edgar Allan Poe" (*UE* 94) first published in the July 1948 issue of *Trek.* Irmgard Schopen has written extensively on Bosman's use of Poe as a source and influence[12] and she claims that "it is possible to trace Bosman's development as a writer through the various ways in which he used Poe" (*Poe on the Veld* 83). Schopen makes a fascinating point here and certainly much of Bosman's work provides ample evidence of this intertextual connection. Stylistically, while his journalistic pieces are different, many of Bosman's short stories retain echoes of Poe, as will be seen in Chapter 4.

Others too have commented on Poe's significance in Bosman's life and work. In his biography on Bosman, Bernard Sachs observes that "Edgar Allan Poe was the greatest influence on Herman spiritually. It was with the utmost reverence that he would pronounce his name" (24). Sachs went on to note that "[h]ere is a chord out of the Poe canon, the death-

[12] These works include a 1988 thesis entitled "From Amontillado to Jerepigo: Herman Charles Bosman's Use of Edgar Allan Poe as a Source and Influence."

wish which is a seminal component of romanticism and which helps to explain much of Herman's conduct in later life" (27). The death-wish, while evident in Bosman's short stories, is not so obvious in Bosman's essay on Poe, and Rosenberg in a later, updated (2005) biography suspects that Bosman omitted certain observations in his "Edgar Allan Poe" essay. Rosenberg illustrates how elsewhere, via an introductory passage to an undated, unpublished story, Bosman wrote about Poe with much more feeling:

> Edgar Allan Poe, poet and plagiarist, charlatan and genius – whose genius I place next to Shakespeare's – has haunted my mind from my earliest youth, as he has ghostlike frequented the brains of men of letters and music and coloured pictures from Baudelaire down to the present day. […] Recognise him I did. […] I knew that I could never know him. Schizophrenic, paranoiac, fraud and liar: these were the things that went to bejewel his genius […] In my early adolescence I encountered and recognised Edgar Allan Poe. (in Rosenberg, *Between the Lines* 230–1)

What Bosman says of Poe being schizophrenic, a fraudster and a liar could well apply to Bosman himself. In the previous chapter, Bosman's contrariness was seen to be much a part of his character, and this is similar to Poe's schizophrenia. Bosman made the following (at the time poignant, yet decades later somewhat ironic) observation: "I am willing to believe that many years will go by before Edgar Allan Poe's true stature in the world of literature is recognised" (*UE* 95).

It is indeed ironic that Bosman, like Poe, is better known now, decades after his passing, than he was when he was alive. During Bosman's lifetime, only three of his books were published, yet today, over sixty years since his death, there are many edited collections that feature his work. Bosman elaborated on the relevance of Poe for writers in South Africa thus:

> Where I feel that Edgar Allan Poe has more than ordinary significance for us writing in South Africa is in regard to the struggle he put up to get American literature on the map. He was fated to arrive on the scene at the beginning of the creation of an authentically American literature, just as we in this generation find ourselves at the same literary crossroads in respect of South African literature. Writing in English in this country, are we going to write English or are we going to write South African? (*UE* 97)

Bosman, like Poe, strove to get his own country's literature on the map. There is a sense that Bosman considered South African literature to be dominated by a feeling of inferiority, of colonial dependency and he intended to change that. The adulterated, postcolonial mindset

(specific to the white subject at the time) was, according to Bosman, dominated by American and British colonial literatures:

> In the development of our own young culture, England and America, with their great literary traditions, can be a source of tremendous inspiration to us. On the other hand, England and America […] can just as readily make monkeys of those of us who get our values mixed. (*UE* 98)

Just as Poe strove for American literature to be noticed world-wide, so too did Bosman wish to have South African literature noticed internationally. Schopen notes that both Poe and Bosman wrote "within and against a literary context which was either hostile or indifferent to the establishment of a local literature" (*Poe on the Veld* 85). Although writing a hundred years apart, both Bosman and Poe tackled ways to enable their own local literature to be noticed for what it was in an international milieu.

Local South African literature and national culture come under the spotlight in a stirring article entitled "An Indigenous South African Culture is Unfolding" (April 1944). Here, Bosman sets the scene for an understanding of cultural hybridity by posing the question:

> Up to the moment, up to these opening months of the year 1944, has there appeared, written in English, any book or any piece of verse or prose that is *distinctively South African*, native of the soil, and that can be classed as great literature? (*Cask* 46, emphasis mine)

This suggests that Bosman hoped for South African writers to move away from perceived Eurocentric tendencies, and rather celebrate their own "distinctively South African" characteristics. What exactly does he mean by this? He compares South African literature to American and English literature and seeks to identify what sets South African literature apart. For Bosman, identity had much to do with a connection to the soil; an identity formed from living in this country. Bosman's own cultural orientation leant towards being African, not Eurocentric. But what is this identity and what exactly does it mean to connect to the soil? Bosman's writing suggests that this so-called unique identity is born and bred in South Africa; it is an identity premised on romanticized notions of Africa and its myriad indigenous and settler cultures. Identity thus, for him, is physically located and deeply grounded, or rooted in culture. This suggests romantic notions of wanting to belong in a physical and cultural sense. These tendencies suggest that Bosman is at times intellectually inconsistent, indicating that he himself struggled to come to terms with hybridity. As Sandwith argues:

> The notion of a 'truly indigenous' South African culture – and the definitions of 'South African-ness' with which it was inevitably associated – was a multivalent and contradictory idea which simultaneously encompassed a range of political-aesthetic requirements, including, for example, a demand for national identification, the requirement that literature engage with concrete socio-political realities and the privileging of the aesthetics of realism over the romantic, sentimental or exotic. For the most part, however, the version of indigeneity to which most commentators appealed was the far more mystical requirement that literature convey a particular South African 'atmosphere' or 'spirit'. (*Work of Cultural Criticism* 52)

As far as Bosman's work is concerned, it certainly does convey the 'atmosphere' or 'spirit' that Sandwith mentions. It is the atmosphere created in his texts, together with Bosman's small-town Afrikaner characters, that give the reader a deep sense of what is uniquely South African. This can be seen to a much larger degree in Bosman's fiction than in his non-fiction however. It was his fiction, in particular Bosman's short stories, that was to win him the reputation he gained, albeit posthumously.

Bosman lived and wrote during the period prior to the formal introduction of apartheid. In seeking reasons why great literature had not been published in South Africa in the English language at that stage, he stated as follows:

> The trouble is psychological. Spiritual, if you like … It has got everything to do with our false conceptions of the *true nature of culture*. Consciously or unconsciously, any person in this country who sits down to write a book is concerned with the book gaining acceptance overseas – be it in England or America. […] The writer can't help himself. The result is that what is turned out is colonial literature – it is neither African nor European. It is a *mongrel* product that may have many outstanding merits, including brilliance. But the one thing it hasn't got is survival value *as culture*. … The essential soul of a *culture* is that it must be indigenous. (*Cask* 48, emphases mine)

The above extract is disconcerting at first glance, as it appears that Bosman was disparaging of a "mongrel product", or hybrid literature. Bhabha's view that hybridity results from cultural collisions can be applied to Bosman's own cultural collisions: "[t]he trace of what is disavowed is not represented but repeated as something *different* – a mutation, a hybrid" (*Location* 111) and is relevant here. Ellis argues that this hybrid trace "contradicts both the attempt to fix and control indigenous cultures and the illusion of cultural isolation or purity" (196). It appears that Bosman felt the essence of a culture had to be indigenous, yet he accepted the fact that cultures naturally would meet and merge. Culture is a dynamic structure in constant flux and so a "truly indigenous" South African culture is indeed a contradiction, as such a culture can only form by merging, mixing, meeting on the border.

This brings to mind de Kock's article on South African literature where he notes that "South Africa … was a country that was neither here nor there, neither this nor that but a place, in Breyten Breytenbach's words, of 'glorious bastardization'" (*Does SA Lit Still Exist?* 72). This is not exactly the same usage of the term 'bastard' as per Foley, who claims that 'bastard' implies "someone cut off from any cultural and moral heritage and acting out of sheer self-interest" (15), yet the implication is nonetheless a negative one. Glorifying bastardy is indeed a different interpretation to the norm.

While Bosman was not against hybrid literature per se, he wished to encourage an 'indigenous' culture. But what then did Bosman mean exactly by this complex and sometimes contradictory concept? Ironically, Bosman's idea of an 'indigenous' culture is in fact a 'hybrid' culture, with its roots in indigeneity – be that English, Afrikaans, Dutch, Jewish, Malay, African, European or even colonial. Through this apparent contradiction, Bosman seems to imply that writing purely for an overseas market was a cop-out, and therefore it would appear that he did not support such a hybrid literature. While Bosman states that the "soul of a culture […] must be indigenous," it can still be hybrid in its entirety; that is, the indigenous "soul" is more specific than, yet part of, the hybrid whole.

At times Bosman appears confused and contradicts himself when he uses the term "indigenous". For Bosman the "essential soul" is the "organic life force" (48) of man. According to what he wrote in this particular essay, he believed that South African literature could be hybrid, so long as its dominant features were "indigenous". Bosman's idea of "indigenous" suggests the concept of purity, which, as argued in Chapter 1, is not possible, as there is inevitably a mingling of cultures. Bosman regarded not only black, but also white, South Africans as being indigenous South Africans. It is this idea that seems to get him talking in circles and contradicting himself when he speaks of a "mongrel product". This results in apparent confusion and ambivalence as Bosman attempts to come to grips with what he terms an "indigenous South African culture".

For several years before writing "An Indigenous South African Culture is Unfolding", Bosman lived with his wife Ella in England until the Second World War broke out. Ironically, his own identity was highly influenced by European culture, and his literary tastes had an American flavour. Bosman himself could be considered a mongrel South African, created according to his own standards:

> And the time has come for the rending, for the tearing forth bloodily from the soil of a great South African literature that will form a living part of those unchanging

> splendours that constitute *true culture*. […] We are busy creating our own standards. […] we should be unduly exultant in our *newfound cultural independence*.
>
> *A common culture*, virile with the warmth and mystery of the earth, is the strongest bond there is for knitting the heterogeneous elements composing a nation in to a strong united whole. The love for a common intellectual heritage, sprung from the one soil, is the greatest single unifying influence in a nation: it is a chain whose links do not grow tarnished with the centuries. (*Cask* 49, emphases mine)

Bosman's vision of what comprises "the greatest single unifying influence" may be somewhat simplistic if one considers the various races that make up South African culture. Do all South Africans display this "love for a common intellectual heritage [that is] sprung from one soil"? Bosman's reaction to Empire is strongly apparent in that he celebrates South Africa's independence from Empire and he wishes for this to be reflected in South African literature. Ironically he seems to forget that English culture is one of the bases for South African culture, since South Africa is made up of settlers from Europe, the rest of Africa and elsewhere.

When cultures meet, hybridity is the result, yet this can be negative or uncomfortable. When one is a hybrid individual, as is Bosman himself, there can be a pulling in different directions. Finding an authentic identity can, under such circumstances, be extremely confusing. As postcolonial scholars suggest, an identity is that which distinguishes an individual or a social group and includes a number of distinct characteristics. Forming an identity is dependent on how an individual relates to others. Bosman, Englishman and Afrikaner, with all his complexities and contradictions, perhaps suffered from a type of schizophrenia in seeking his own "indigenous" identity, an identity beyond its colonial roots. However, Bosman's dual identity, when in balance, and with the differences reconciled, also had a positive outcome. Bosman was a writer who was hybrid in many ways, and who, despite his own disquiet about being pulled in different directions, wished to be a champion of South African literature. South Africa's independence from Empire, which was celebrated by Bosman in his essays, suggests a particular brand of nationalism that is closely linked to Romanticism. The link between nationalism and Romanticism can be seen through the folklore, literature and art, amongst other things, of a nation. This resonates very well with Bosman's own romantic ideals, many of which surface in his writing.

More of Bosman's romantic ideals can be seen in other essays such as "Aspects of South African Literature", which first appeared in *Trek* in September 1948 (*MLO* 168) and is Bosman's continued effort at defining a South African English literature. Bosman was

writing ahead of his time, as even today this is topical. He writes not only about English-speaking South Africans, but also the Afrikaner and the "Bantu":

> The Afrikaner accepts himself as part of Africa. Out of his own traditions and history and background, out of the stones and the soil and the red guts of Africa, he is fashioning a literature that has not reached a very high inspirational level … but that has struck an authentic note, somehow, and that you can *feel* has got a power in it that must become an enduring part of the Afrikaner's national heritage. (*MLO* 168–9)

As illustrated above, the Afrikaner is, to Bosman's mind, one with other cultures and inhabitants of South Africa. Bosman passes comment here on the type of literature the Afrikaner creates and, while not belittling it directly, he does seem to be making a somewhat backhanded compliment. The Afrikaner, Bosman says, also draws inspiration from the very same "soil and guts of Africa" as do other peoples of Africa:

> The Bantu has got a marvellous world of knowledge and experience right here in the city of Johannesburg that he should be able to pour into the mould of great literature. But then he mustn't follow in the footsteps of a lot of these semi-educated half-baked Natives who embark on literary careers with the idea that producing fiction is no more complicated a matter than turning out Left sociological treatises. (*MLO* 169)

If written today, the above lines would definitely be met with a strong form of attack or defensive response. However, it must be remembered that Bosman writes with touches of irony and sarcasm. He himself was not being racist, but rather he was usually pointing a finger at those who were. Bosman goes on to offer his own views on how black writing could possibly develop and grow in the future:

> this is material only for the Bantu artist. The white man must keep away from it. We have stolen enough from the kaffir. Don't let us have the cheek to go and try to poach on the preserves of his life's bitternesses as well, without having shared them. In any case, how can a white man get into a black man's skin – and vice versa? That sort of thing is a presumption, and can produce only falseness in art. No, *they must write their literature. We must write ours*. Only thus will we be able to meet each other in honesty, as fellow artists, on a footing of equality. (*MLO* 170, emphasis mine)

This is a rather unexpected contradiction, because on the one hand Bosman advocates a combined, blended, syncretised South African literature, yet on the other hand he suggests that each race write its own. He is perhaps suggesting that whites should not act patronisingly towards blacks, but rather that each should allow the other to write what they themselves know. In addition to this, Bosman does not exclude the possibility of change occurring in South African writing. The point he emphasizes is that writing must be authentic and that

writers, irrespective of their cultural background, must be true to their own voices. To have an authentic voice is the ground on which a true hybridity rests. Such authenticity draws on the fusion of different ideas and systems of belief. During Bosman's time his own particular views were considered to be politically progressive, although to some it might not seem so almost a century later.

Leon de Kock refers to South Africa as "a place in which one repeatedly encounters the marks of cultural difference and riven identity despite all attempts to step back from the scene of bastardization" (*SA in the Global Imaginery* 266). Bosman often alludes to these marks of cultural difference, which make up a uniquely South African literature. There are however contradictions in Bosman's philosophy, as noted earlier. On the one hand he wished to promote a unique, indigenous South African literature, yet on the other hand he wanted different race groups to write their separate literatures. Then again, Bosman himself attempted to write about other cultures. What does that make him? While this might seem to suggest that Bosman is inauthentic, it is more likely that the tensions within made him uncomfortable and he found it difficult to reconcile those differences entirely. Bosman's non-fiction writing attests to these tensions, as he strives over the years to come to some kind of understanding of culture and identity. Bosman wrote using the white, English-speaking male South African as his default subject. This then was his subject position and was thus the lens through which everything was viewed.

How could white writers possibly even begin to capture an African experience? This is what Bosman wonders, yet he expresses a view that was novel for most South Africans at the time. It is clear that Bosman was of the opinion that only by writing one's own culture could there be understanding between people, and yet, ironically, he himself performs cultural translation in his own work. Writing half a century later, Malvern van Wyk Smith argues that "South African writers, until relatively recently, have […] deliberately [kept] their distance from cultures other than their own" (83). This is a valid point about cultural apartheid, because, over time, people and attitudes change. Anti- and post-apartheid literature existed even before there was such a consciousness.

Bosman had his own opinions on how to bring cultures together in order for people to gain a closer understanding of one another. In the following extract, he suggests, in a rather roundabout fashion, that pride and dignity be retained:

> [I]f I were a Native, and I had acquired a certain amount of culture, I wouldn't want to call myself a Bantu or a Native or a negro or an African. No, I would demand to be

> recognised and accepted as a plain *kaffir*. I would receive from the hand of the white man nothing less. I would never allow them to take away from me *a name so rich in legend, sorrow, and so heavy with the drama of Africa*. (*MLO* 170, emphases mine)

Although Bosman uses the word "kaffir" throughout his texts, the term was not employed in a negative way. The inconsistencies that are evident in Bosman's non-fiction include his use of this word. Bosman felt this word to have a special cultural meaning, and he gives it a praiseworthy status, which contradicts the general understanding of the word. Although considered an offensive word that carries a derogatory meaning, at the time when Bosman wrote, the word was commonly used to refer to black South Africans, and Gray refers to Bosman's use of the word "kaffir" as being "historically correct" (*Life Sentence* 36). Certainly during the first half of the twentieth century the K-word was widely used and not considered offensive. MacKenzie and Sandham note that the widespread occurrence of the word "kaffir" in Bosman's works met with objection during the 1960s and 1970s, and substitute words such as "black" or "Pedi" were used, which prompted an outcry from a number of people (including black academics) because substituting the word was considered to be "tampering with the rich cultural and linguistic history of SA" (117). Language is something that changes over time, and given the context in which Bosman wrote, it is clear that the word was used by him inoffensively, despite it being a word loaded with extremely derogatory colonial sentiments about black Africans.

While it would be politically incorrect to use the word "kaffir" today, not everyone feels that Bosman's use of the word was offensive. For instance, Phaswane Mpe, author of *Welcome to our Hillbrow*, while being interviewed by Andie Miller, quite freely quoted Bosman out loud, without cringing at his use of the word "kaffir". He made the following point concerning Bosman's use of the word: "I don't think words in themselves are bad […] I'm more interested in how those words get used. We need to distinguish between insults and ironies" (Mpe in Miller 44). Clearly Mpe, who was introduced to Bosman's work as a teenager, appreciated his subtle irony and sense of humour, and his point about *how* words are used is a valid one. During the same interview, Mpe remarked: "I think what I particularly like about Bosman is the way he captures the complexity of the rural mentality. The prejudices and gems of wisdom" (in Miller 47). Indeed, Bosman wrote in a manner that allowed him to comment, with a sense of humour, on rural prejudices. The truth is often couched in comic utterances, and Bosman ends off this essay with the following wittily observant paragraph:

> Incidentally, the etymologists' tame derivation of the word 'kaffir' from the Arabic for 'unbeliever' must be rejected by anybody with a feeling for the significance of words. It is a strong, florid word, broad as the African veld, and in its disyllabic vehemence is a depth of contumely that I am sure no Arab would ever be able to think up. (*MLO* 170)

The complexity of the K-word was certainly not lost on Bosman, and he acknowledges the "depth of contumely", the insulting potential laden in such a term. On first reading, the above extract suggests that Bosman is insulting Arabs, yet on a deeper reading it appears that he was elevating the Arabs by remarking that they would never stoop so low as to use insulting language. Once again, Bosman brings in a connection to the soil, the "African veld", which reminds the reader of deep cultural roots, which is part of the collective memory.

South African literature is many things for Bosman, but is particularly a literature connected to the earth, as his writing suggests. For Bosman identity was closely connected to an individual's roots, and for him those roots were deep within the African soil, no matter the colonial European pull. An individual's relationship with the environment was something that gave shape to a sense of identity in that person. For Bosman the connection between a person and the earth was profound. For him, a white South African of European descent, Africa remained his home. He was proud to be South African, and wished to be known as a South African writer. Lionel Abrahams, for a long time after Bosman's death, and despite opposition from some quarters (for example Bosman's rival Lewis Sowden [*Cask* 23]), kept promoting his hero as one of the South African greats. He was successful in that by 1960 when David Wright edited Abrahams's anthology of *South African Stories*, he "considered that South African Literature, properly speaking, *began* with Bosman and no other" (Gray, *Cask* 24).

3.3 Squalor and Magnificence

In the essay entitled "South African Slang" (*Cask* 134), which first appeared in the June 1946 edition of the *South African Opinion,* and subsequently in the anniversary collection *A Cask of Jerepigo,* Bosman offers his thoughts on the use of slang and the making of a slang dictionary. "Slang, if it is alive, is the twin brother to poetry" (*Cask* 134) writes Bosman, thus giving the language a romanticized, elevated status. MacKenzie and Sandham note that this essay is both a "rare oblique reference by Bosman to his imprisonment" as well as a "glimpse

of the language of a subculture" (211). Indeed, Bosman's time in gaol afforded him the perfect opportunity to collect a lengthy list of slang words and expressions. "Living slang is the true basis of great literature" (*Cask* 134), says Bosman, before citing several examples of words, including rhyming slang. He then adds that the "Afrikaners have contributed a set of colloquialisms that is intrinsically their own: alas, they refer, in most cases, to dagga-smoking or burglary" (136). Whether Bosman says this matter-of-factly or tongue-in-cheek due to his quirky sense of humour is up to the reader to decide, but it is worth remembering that he writes often about dagga-smoking, not only in this piece but also elsewhere.[13] By means of offering the following slang to describe the practice of smoking dagga, Bosman humorously highlights an interesting form of linguistic hybridity:

> A practice indulged in by every unregenerate South African criminal – white, native, coloured, Indian – is that of smoking dagga or 'boom.' I recommend it to Mr Partridge's notice. (Not the practice of smoking it, of course, but the word for it.) Boom is the most common word for the narcotic weed that is known as Indian hemp or, scientifically, as Cannabis indica, and that is smoked by the criminal classes of all the above-mentioned races in this country, including the Portuguese. Another word for boom is 'Nellie.' Or 'slaai.' Or 'American Navy cut.' Or 'the queer.' But it's dagga, in the end. (*Cask* 136–37)

In the above passage, Bosman provides several words that refer to the same thing, and he makes the point in a straightforward manner that no racial prejudice applies through such usage. Bosman makes his readers aware of the contributions made to the development of South African slang by other local languages, such as Afrikaans and the various indigenous African languages spoken in the country. He goes on to make light of his own prison experience as he ends off the piece as follows:

> I have been afforded unexceptional facilities for studying South African prison slang at first hand, and rather extensively. And I believe that in this tarnished word currency, which starkly illumines the mode of life of a little known and rather terrible world, we have something that comes very near to the earthy side of real poetry. (*Cask* 137)

Just how much of an opportunity Bosman had for "studying South African prison slang" becomes evident a few years later with the 1949 publication of his semi-autobiographical prison memoir, *Cold Stone Jug*. In his memoir, Bosman relates certain prison reminiscences

[13] *Cold Stone Jug* contains many references to dagga-smoking in prison, and Bosman's essay entitled "Do Professors Smoke Dagga?" gives quite a different angle on the subject, while his story "The Recognising Blues" is written with a humorous touch.

in a gaolbird vernacular. The prisoners' language captured on the page by Bosman consists largely of slang and cussing, and can also be considered to be a strange, hybrid language. This language is unique and specific to prison culture.

In keeping with his theme of South African culture, Bosman wrote "The Artist in South Africa", which appeared in the *South African Democrat* in July 1942. In this essay Bosman expresses his concern that the South African artist is not well understood. "The view of Africa that has gained universal acceptance", he says, "is the view of those who have acquired physical ownership of Africa" (*UE* 33). The bohemian flâneur that is Bosman is once more evident in the following lines:

> Johannesburg is merely another manifestation of the mystery of the soul of Africa. Johannesburg is as startling and yet as intelligible an African whim as is the Kalahari. If the buildings in Eloff Street appear, at first sight, to deny this truth, the mine-dumps do not bother to deny anything. The mine-dumps are no less authentic an expression of Africa than are the Pyramids, and they are more of a mystery than the Pyramids. The mine-dumps have no entrance. (*UE* 35)

By describing Johannesburg as a manifestation of the "mystery of the soul of Africa", Bosman comes across as shockingly naïve. Johannesburg in the 1940s was representative of white fortune and black misfortune, and could hardly be seen in this light. Yet the mine-dumps illustrate what people wanted to believe, and most white South Africans at the time saw them to represent progress and wealth. Most white South Africans then did not bother to think of the migrant mine workers slaving underground. The "soul of Africa" was surely within the lived reality of the peoples who inhabited its new cities? However, Bosman as an inner city flâneur would remain enamoured with Johannesburg, and continue to describe it in a romantic fashion, as is evident in this piece. Perhaps one of the reasons that Bosman romanticized Johannesburg in this way was because he believed in a vibrant, young city that represented a growing, new nation. Bosman's romantic rendering of the pioneer city was one that ignored its divisions and inequalities, and in a present day reading this could be problematic.

As observed earlier in the analysis of "An Indigenous South African Culture is Unfolding", Bosman seemed to be on the threshold of defining a new South African culture that shows an authenticity of voice. In his preoccupation with a "true South African culture" he states:

> When we accept this view, and no longer regard the activities of any particular race on any particular portion of this continent as a series of isolated phenomena, but as a natural mode of African imagining, we arrive at a stage which marks *the beginning of a true South African culture.* It is the commencement of great art.
>
> During the past three centuries South Africa has been extensively settled by foreigners from Europe. But this circumstance should not be given undue importance. Africa has had barbarians before. What is of significance is that we can all learn. And Africa has much to teach us – of thought, that it is *created in sand and ceremony, and that life is an ancient ritual*. (*UE* 35, emphases mine)

This passage highlights the manner in which Bosman believes culture to be deeply connected to place and behaviour ("sand and ceremony") and societal practices ("ancient ritual"). What is of interest in the above extract is that Bosman says that all races are part of the same single continent, and the behaviour of those races is not isolated but rather all regarded as one. This is but one of Bosman's visions of hybridity: various cultures and races living together in harmony while sharing their cultural heritage with each other. This is not a view that Bosman has expressed consistently in all of his non-fiction, although it is something which he does espouse. He was a very contradictory person in his life, and this quasi-schizophrenic tendency is evident in his writing, particularly in several of the non-fiction pieces.

In order to understand Bosman's philosophy as expressed in his non-fiction, it is worth considering another essay of his that also relates to the city, entitled "Johannesburg". This piece illustrates clearly Bosman's love of place, in particular the ever-changing city of Johannesburg:

> And talking about culture, I believe that Johannesburg has got all those attributes, mainly the form of very raw material as yet, which will enable it eventually to occupy a leading place in the world of art and letters. (*Cask* 79)

Bosman the flâneur, who walked the streets of Johannesburg observing closely the people passing by, knew very well that Johannesburg was a growing cultural centre that would perhaps one day gain recognition in the world.

> You can learn all the technique you like from Europe. […] But I believe that this is only a passing phase with South African artists. They are not trying to meet Europe on her own ground – which in itself would be an impossible enough task – but they are actually trying to copy Europe on her own ground. And this is pure clownishness. But this stage will pass. And I believe that after that South Africa […] will find itself in an era of inspired creation […] when we shall produce art that will reach heights of real grandeur because the note it strikes is authentic, and whose beauty will endure because it is our own. (*Cask* 80)

Bosman could not have known when he wrote this quite how prophetic his words would be. South African art and culture would in time leave a mark on the rest of the world, highlighting the uniqueness that is South African, not imitation European. Certainly these days, in a post-apartheid country, much South African art, for instance, is recognisable by the mix of different cultural philosophies that are embodied in the artworks. In the above extract it is evident that Bosman was concerned with South Africa as a post-colony, and he was clearly obsessed with South Africa's relationship with the British Empire. Bosman envisaged a future time where South Africa would forge her own culture independent from that of the former colonizer. As the young country was finding its own identity, with Johannesburg as its cultural heartbeat, Bosman was coming to terms with what this new, independent, multicultural society might mean to various inhabitants. His own view, however, tended to be more romantic than realist, as is implied when he writes that "[he believes] that it is possible to see Johannesburg as it really is only when we view it as a place of mystery and romance, as a city wrapped in mist" (*Cask* 80). Certainly, the city of Johannesburg meant different things to different individuals at the time. For Bosman, who lived and worked in the city of Johannesburg, it was akin to the lifeblood of Africa. The newness of the city was mysteriously compelling for Bosman, and it symbolised independence from Empire. Despite inequalities in society, the city for Bosman represented a unique multiculturalism.

In several other essays Bosman elaborates on his feelings for the city, as in "Johannesburg Riots: The Lighter Side" (*Cask* 96). The times were interesting, and changing rapidly, when Bosman walked the streets of Johannesburg, and he "knew that no orthodoxy, no one-eyed nationalism would in the end contain the energies of the metropolis" (Hyslop 12). Here lies an echo of Bosman's romanticising of Johannesburg. In this essay, a light-hearted look at a serious incident, Bosman sets off on his way to listen to a speech by DF Malan before he became prime minister.[14] He goes on to describe an "outwardly tranquil" atmosphere (*Cask* 97) that soon gets out of hand as enraged protesters start throwing things around:

> A shower of bottles and half-bricks and pieces of masonry hurtled out of the eerie shadows of the trees in President Street and thundered against the policemen's helmets. I breathed a sigh of relief. It was only the spirit of Johannesburg once more

[14] Afrikaner Nationalist politician, who would, only a mere three years after Bosman wrote this piece, become Prime Minister. Malan was instrumental in initiating the policy of apartheid (Hyslop 12).

> asserting itself. The undying spirit of the mining town, born of large freedoms and given to flamboyant forms of expression. (*Cask* 97)

Bosman's personification of the city of Johannesburg is apt for a hybrid city "born of large freedoms" and he goes on to describe in hilarious detail how he eventually never does make it into the City Hall, despite his efforts, to hear Dr Malan (*Cask* 97). While the tragi-comic mix in this piece is an example of textual hybridity, it is also an example of Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque, where the atmosphere of carnival is rendered in literary form. The clever brand of humour, for which Bosman is so well-known, keeps the reader entertained for the next few paragraphs before he becomes more sentimental. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Bosman's humanism is evident in much of his work, and this piece is no exception, when, after the former light-heartedness, the mood changes and Bosman writes that "Johannesburg is tremendous in its humanity. And you can know nothing about human nature if you can see in it only the superficial side of beauty, if you can't see also […] that side of it that is just plain terrible" (*Cask* 98). Towards the end, Bosman describes, subtly tongue-in-cheek, the essence of the spirit of Johannesburg and its people:

> They are trying to make Joburg respectable. They are trying to make snobs of us, making us forget who our ancestors were. They are trying to make us lose our pride in the fact that our forebears were a lot of roughnecks who knew nothing about culture and who came here to look for gold. We who are of Johannesburg know this spirit that is inside of us, and we don't resent the efforts which are being made to put a collar and tie on this city. Because we know that every so often, when things seem to be going very smoothly on the surface, something will stir in the raw depths of Johannesburg, like the awakening of an old and half-forgotten memory and the brickbats hurtling down Market Street will be thrown with the same lack of accuracy as when the pioneers of the mining camp did the throwing. (*Cask* 99)

The people to whom Bosman refers above are specifically white settler people. His description is not inclusive of other races, which reflects the shallow mindset of many white South Africans at the time. Bosman seems to be struggling to draw a clear portrait of Johannesburg as a South African or African city partly because the changes that will set it apart are changes that many did not welcome at the time. The white settlers who came to Johannesburg during the gold rush were "roughnecks who knew nothing about culture" and are, arguably, still alive and well in the city of Johannesburg today, more than half a century after this piece was written. The cultural hybridity that Bosman envisages in the city of Johannesburg was not yet evident during his time. With apartheid having come and gone

since Bosman passed on, South African society is now largely cosmopolitan and culturally hybrid. But, as Bhabha wonders, "How does one write the nation's modernity as the event of the everyday and the advent of the epochal?" (*Location* 141).

Johannesburg in the 1940s held promise of great things to come and the city offered many opportunities. Being actively involved in the newspaper scene of Johannesburg, Bosman was afforded the opportunity of mixing with journalists and editors from various places. Bernard Sachs, Bosman's friend of many years, introduced him to Leon Feldberg (editor of the South African *Jewish Times*) in 1943, and subsequently Bosman became involved in the resuscitation of *The South African Opinion.* His involvement with the Jewish community was yet another indicator of Bosman's cultural mix. An article he wrote "by an Afrikaner" appeared in the April 1944 edition of *The South African Opinion* under the title: "Boer and Jew: The Need for Closer Understanding". Gray suggests that Bosman was more extensively involved "in the propaganda exercise against anti-Semitism" than is generally known (*MLO* 14). Evidence of this might be gleaned in part from the following:

> Fundamentally the Afrikaner is not anti-Jewish. On the contrary, there is in the Afrikaner spirit a fine tradition of tolerance in respect both of other races and of other religions. Whoever sees in the Afrikaner spirit only bigotry and narrowness misses entirely that other quality that goes with narrowness, and that is depth. The writer feels that there is not much wrong with the Afrikaner's rigid Calvinism, with the Afrikaner being as narrow as he likes, whether it is on the backveld or in the city, provided that he retains the quality of human depth which is the only soil in which the really big conceptions of life can take root. (*MLO* 171)

Bosman reminds the reader of the traditional qualities of the Afrikaner, and the above extract reads like a defence of the Afrikaner. Why did he feel the need to do this? Perhaps Bosman was returning to his Afrikaner roots and coming to terms with his hybrid identity of Englishman and Afrikaner. It is worth noting that at the time this piece was published, Bosman had just married his third wife, Helena, who retaught him Afrikaans, since she herself was an Afrikaner. Interestingly, the years spent with Helena turned out to be Bosman's most productive years, and he also wrote several short stories in Afrikaans during this period (MacKenzie and Sandham 215).

Almost concurrent with its appearance in *The South African Opinion,* this piece was reprinted in *The Jewish Times* on 13 April, 1944, which evoked an outraged response that it

was unacceptable for an Afrikaans gentile to speak for the Jews.[15] Bosman saw it differently however and he expresses a form of cultural hybridity when he writes the following:

> What is important is that we have a large number of diverse races living in South Africa, and of these races two that are not of least interest or of least importance as far as this country is concerned are the Afrikaners and the Jews. They are two peoples that have a great deal in common, in the same way that there is also a great deal between them that is divergent, and it is essential for the future of the nation that these two races should get to understand each other. (*MLO* 172)

Indeed, these "two peoples that have a great deal in common" were in Bosman's view equipped to understand one another, particularly as a result of qualities he presumed both groups to possess:

> Both Jews and Afrikaners will find in each other a quality of human warmth which quite possibly neither had hitherto suspected the other of having. (*MLO* 173)

Bosman goes on to explain that both Afrikaner and Jew were oppressed peoples who arrived in the country for different reasons. Certainly both groupings were subject to oppression themselves and the rooting of their identities as groups coincided historically (1948 being the founding of Israel and the birth of entrenched Afrikaner nationalism or the apartheid system). Once again, despite the sobriety of such a topic, Bosman's humanity shines through as he notes the things the two groups have in common – a sense of humour, for instance. He concludes that the Jews and Afrikaners will discover one another as races because "life didn't just dump them down here together for nothing" (175).

3.4 Conclusion: Philosophy of a Cultured Mongrel

The essays and sketches discussed here, in particular those that appeared in *A Cask of Jerepigo*, were written over a period of many years in the 1930s and 1940s, and it is worth noting that as Bosman's attitudes changed over time, so too did his writing style. Gray points out that "as [Bosman] becomes all the more angry with the way his country is going, his touch gets lighter and lighter" (*Cask* 15). Furthermore, Gray observes that Bosman's

[15] In the introduction to *My Life and Opinions*, Stephen Gray notes that this piece elicited outrage from JM Sherman who responded to it in the November 1944 edition of *The South African Opinion* annoyed that "this 'Gentile', and an 'Afrikaner' to boot, should presume to stump on behalf of the genuine spokesmen of his own race" (15).

"attitudes change from the Colonial cringer before his years overseas to the assertive African ironist on his return, while some things for him never change: his sympathy for convicts, his fascination with complicated words […], his teasing buffoonery over all the figures of speech he so enjoys" (15). Bosman the buffoon, with his light tone, continues to captivate readers even today.

Bosman's non-fiction pieces display a vacillating philosophy, and at times it appears that he is desperately seeking a cause. His often changeable views, evident in the pieces discussed in this chapter, do not offer a simple clear-cut ideology. As Davis put it, "so inconsistent was Bosman in his tackling of certain themes in his journalistic work […] that [it] is sometimes very difficult to pin down what may be regarded as his fixed, sincere opinion on a matter" (26). It is as though he were a rebel without a cause. Furthermore, over the years the viewpoints expressed in Bosman's non-fiction seemed to fluctuate between liberal and conservative, and this is often complicated by the fact that the average reader is never completely certain when the mercurial Bosman is being serious or simply being ironic.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Bhabha's definition of hybridity is used as a term to define a process relating to how identities and cultures are created. Bosman's own cultural identity was formed by his historical background: growing up as both Afrikaner and Englishman, and carrying aspects of both cultures with him throughout his life. This same cultural identity is evident mainly in his fiction, but not so much in his non-fiction. The essays discussed in this chapter explored various notions of hybridity and identity. The pieces suggest that Bosman's own position on hybridity in the South African context is one that embraces some of Bhabha's notions. If hybridity relates to a process of cultural creation then Bosman documented this in an ample manner, as illustrated for example in "An Indigenous South African Culture is Unfolding".

This chapter has offered insight into Bosman's own complex identity, and analysis of his non-fiction works showed how he positioned himself and identified culturally in South African society, as both an insider and an outsider. The contradictory nature of Bosman and the ambiguities relating to his cultural beliefs are evident in his non-fiction pieces which are sometimes light-hearted or even offensive. This is partly because of his confusion and his trying to reconcile different beliefs: Bosman comes across as a confused mongrel desperately trying to figure out his own contradictory personality. Much like his idol, Edgar Allan Poe, whom he regarded as a schizophrenic genius, Bosman's own behaviour was also irrational at times. As has been illustrated, by means of interpreting the specific texts in this chapter, it

can be seen that Bosman vacillated in his beliefs, sometimes espousing altogether contradictory notions regarding identity and culture. In the next chapter a selection of Bosman's short stories will be interpreted, once again with the aim of exploring hybridity. Furthermore, it will be interesting to consider whether the beliefs advocated in Bosman's non-fiction correlate with those of his fiction, and whether or not his works and his lived philosophy tell the same story regarding various forms of hybridity.

Chapter 4

Dual Explorations of One Experience: Bosman's Short Stories

Almost all things South African were tawdry and third rate, except notional noble savages and maybe Herman Charles Bosman, who wrote witty short stories about simple backcountry Boers.
(Rian Malan, *My Traitor's Heart* 41)

4.1 Introduction: Bilingual Bosman in a Polyglot South Africa

It is *what* Bosman wrote about and *how* he wrote it that captured a confluence of languages, people and cultures. The concept of cultural hybridity, in postcolonial theory, considers the interaction between cultures and how that is represented in literature. Thus far Bosman's philosophy and his non-fiction work have been explored within the framework of the postcolonial model of hybridity, drawing on some of the "complex strategies of cultural identification" (*DissemiNation* 140) formulated by Bhabha. In this chapter, further aspects related to hybridity, such as Bhabha's translation theory and Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia and polyglossia, will also be discussed. Bhabha refers to the notion of translation as follows:

> the act of cultural translation [...] denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture [...] hybridity is to me the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge [...] the importance of hybridity is that it bears the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it, just like a translation so that hybridity puts together the traces of certain other meanings or discourses. (in Rutherford 211)

For Bhabha, translation is connected to hybridity in that translation involves other cultures, other languages, other meanings. Hybridity can therefore also be seen to include the translation of cultural meanings. "Translation", says Sakamoto, "creates a hybrid identity" and is, according to Bhabha

> a way of imitating, but in a mischievous, displacing sense – imitating an original in such a way that the priority of the original is not reinforced but by the very fact that it can be simulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum. (in Sakamoto 115)

Hybridity thus is foregrounded as a translation of the difference between cultures: similarities exist yet they are not quite the same. Many things influence difference, including history and language. Bakhtin's concept of "heteroglossia" as explained in "Discourse in the Novel"

(*Dialogic* 263) illustrates the relationship between the author and language, and the diversity of languages. He talks of a hybrid blending of views through language, and the different speech of author, character, narrator and reader. Heteroglossia involves a combination of multiple voices of particular cultures as well as different languages. Heteroglossia can be the inclusion in the text of different forms of speech or ways of speaking in the same language rather than different kinds of language. In the introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination*, the editor notes that Bakhtin's term "heteroglossia" is a "master trope at the heart of all his other projects, one more fundamental than such other categories associated with his thought as 'polyphony' or 'carnivalization'" (xix). While Bakhtin's "Discourse in the Novel" relates primarily to the novel genre, this concept of heteroglossia also relates to other forms of writing as well.

The many different voices of author, narrator and characters in Bosman's short stories are also examples of heteroglossia, as will be illustrated by means of analysis of the short stories selected in this chapter. Heteroglossia in previous incarnations was parodic, performed "on the stages of local fairs and at buffoon spectacles" and it "aimed sharply and polemically against the official languages of its given time" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 273). This is often recognizable in Bosman's short stories which are parodies and relate strongly to the politics of the South African official languages.

While heteroglossia implies other-languagedness, polyphony is many-voicedness, and polyglossia refers to many languages. The editor's glossary in Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination* provides the following definition of 'polyglossia': "The simultaneous presence of two or more languages interacting within a single cultural system" (431). This is precisely what is evident in Bosman's stories, where English and Afrikaans are both present within white South African culture.

In general, writers use the language with which they feel most comfortable, and that is usually their home language. While Bosman was Afrikaans, he grew up bilingual, educated in and with a preference for, the English language. Aegidius Jean Blignaut, scoundrel friend of Bosman, wrote that "Herman chose to write in English, not because he despised his mother tongue, which he thought a fine language, or was incompetent in it, but because he had an uncanny feeling for English. He had been nurtured on incomparable writers in it" (*My Friend* 109). So there are various influences at play, which dictate Bosman's preference for English, and it is the social and political climate, amongst other things, that also dictates the language

of choice.[16] Recalling the opinion of the *Landbouweekblad* reader referred to in the introduction of this thesis (that Bosman was a traitor for writing in English), it is worth remembering that Bosman's choice of language use was influenced by the socio-political and economic milieu in which he found himself. As a non-exclusive, hybrid identity, Bosman was able to straddle various cultures, translating one for another, now English, now Afrikaans.

During the early 1900s, Afrikaans, still in its infancy, was snubbed as the language of the lower classes, and not generally permitted to be spoken in schools. English was considered to be the language of opportunity and culture. However, it is worth noting that Bosman's English, though European, had become Africanized in his writing. The mixture of languages, English and Afrikaans, used by Bosman, with an African flavour, is a good example of polyglossia, and also an example of what Bosman meant by an indigenous South African culture. Bosman's writing attests to his knowledge of different languages. Moreover, it is the subject matter and the manner of telling his stories that gives Bosman's English its own particular South African flavour.

In an article published in *Die Brandwag* (28 February 1947) on the state of Afrikaans poetry, Bosman wrote lyrically that:

> Hoe meer ek Afrikaans bestudeer (die spraak van sowel die blanke as die nie-blanke, en die taal in sy literê vorm, in boeke en tydskrifte), hoe meer kom ek onder die indruk van die sluimerende moontlikhede van hierdie taal wat so ryk aan ronde klinkers is […] Ek beskou Afrikaans as die taal wat met slegs een doel geskep is – om die poësie van die vasteland van Afrika te interpreteer. (in Burger, "Afrika en Afrikaans" 24)

As can be seen above, Bosman acknowledges Afrikaans to be the language of both 'whites and non-whites', with the chief purpose of 'interpreting the poetry of Africa'. Bosman's romantic vision of the Afrikaans language is that it is a multicultural, non-racist language of the African soil. Often Bosman links language and landscape, as illustrated in some of the essays discussed in Chapter 3, and this is usually more evident in his non-fiction work than in the short fiction. For Bosman, Afrikaans is in effect a very mixed language that continues to evolve. This hybrid language that Bosman so loved is referred to in his essay entitled "Malay Contribution to African Culture" where he writes the following:

[16] From the formation of Union in 1910 until 1925, both Dutch and English were the official languages of South Africa, and in 1925 Afrikaans was included as part of Dutch, only to replace it completely in 1961 when South Africa became a republic. Today South Africa has eleven official languages. < http://www.sahistory.org.za/liberation-struggle-south-africa/constructing-union-south-africa-negotiations-and-contestations-1902>

> It is possible that one day, also, due recognition will be accorded the far-reaching influence exercised by the Malays and the Hottentots in the shaping of the language that we know today as Afrikaans. The pride which the Afrikaner feels for his language is something which the Malay and the Hottentot can share with the intimacy of blood and spirit. It is a language in the making of which these two peoples played an important role. (*VS* 140)

Bosman's view of Afrikaans as being shaped by Malay and "Hottentot" influence is important because it shows that Bosman appreciated a blending of cultures in the creation of a language. Bosman lived what he felt about language, and he went on to write for periodicals that shared his viewpoint of bringing together the two languages of English and Afrikaans. He was not for cultural or language exclusivity, but rather embraced a living bilingualism, such as the polyglossia Bakhtin propounds, and supported such periodicals as the bilingual *On Parade* which brought together both English and Afrikaans cultures. Bosman wrote regularly for this periodical, submitting a number of stories alternatively in Afrikaans and then English, thus bringing the two cultures together.

4.2 Textured Hybridity: Bosman's Short Stories

In Bosman's stories he brought together two, and sometimes more, distinct languages and cultures, mainly English and Afrikaans. These two predominantly white, European cultures he shows up against black Southern African cultures. In the first chapter, reference was made to the idea that "the foremost moral purpose of Bosman's fiction was to persuade Afrikaners to show black people the understanding and respect they deserved" (Lloyd 158). This is only partly true. It was indeed Bosman's intention to encourage stereotypical narrow-minded Afrikaners to be less judgmental, yet there was more to it than that. Although Bosman himself was anti-establishment, perhaps the political climate at the time provided the shove that was needed to provoke him. Did censorship or perhaps even self-censorship have anything to do with this?

André Brink suggests that there are both negative and positive factors relating to censorship, and points to the positive by saying that it is by "turning to English [that one can] complement the experience lived in Afrikaans; and using the Afrikaans expression to complement the English. It becomes a dual exploration of a single experience – that of living in (South) Africa" (39). This in many ways sums up how Bosman was a *verbindingsteken*: his

texts are “dual explorations” of one experience, explorations as experienced by different cultures. Bosman’s short stories, it will be seen, bring together both hybrid identities as well as hybrid writing practices.

What exactly is a hybrid text and what is meant by hybrid genre? Some scholarly definitions to be considered follow below:

> Hybrid texts […] result from cultures and languages being in contact. […] A provisional definition of a hybrid text is “a text that results from a translation process and shows features that somehow seem ‘out of place’/ ‘strange’/ ‘unusual’ for the receiving culture, i.e. the target culture.” (Trosborg 146)

The languages that are “in contact” in Bosman’s texts are English and Afrikaans, and in many instances these are “hybrid texts” in that they result from a translation process mentioned in the quotation above. Short stories such as “The Red Coat” and “The Rooinek” do in fact refer to the strange or unusual habits or beliefs of the English, according to the Boers.

Closely connected to hybrid texts is the hybrid genre:

> By transgressing genre boundaries, hybrid genres aim at distancing themselves from the homogeneous, one-voiced, and ‘one-discoursed’ worldview conventional narratives seem to suggest […] hybrid genres are intricately linked to the notion of a hybrid identity, which is fluid, unstable, incessantly in search of and transforming itself. (Galster 227)

This definition illustrates a particular meaning of a hybrid genre in relation to a work of art. What sets these apart from others is that hybrid genres break out of the mould and allow for a more varied combination of genres without boundaries.

Bosman’s works are definitely “hybrid texts”, but can they also be considered “hybrid genres”? The merging of genres such as discursive and fictional is evident in the metafictional aspects of some of Bosman’s writing where he re-works old stories while nonetheless acknowledging that all stories have already been told at some stage.

Gray and MacKenzie note that Bosman was “heir to a venerable tradition of yarnspinning that stretches back to the South African hunting tale of the mid-nineteenth century, which he knew, admired and collected” (16). These oral-style, white colonial campfire stories were perfected by Bosman in a manner that has allowed his narratives to live on in the South African psyche, long after the fireside tale had lost its following. Besides the oral-style features of a “narrator, a conversational narrative style, an appropriate milieu and an implied audience”, continue Gray and MacKenzie, Bosman’s short stories also include

modern elements of "economy, irony, structural tautness and social critique" (18). The irony and social critique mentioned here often appear under the guise of humour in Bosman's work.

Humour is present in many of Bosman's short stories, sometimes blatantly and at other times disguised as satire. In a piece entitled "Humour and Wit", Bosman compares American humour (emotion) and British wit (intellect), offering an idea of how necessary humour is in his work. "In the world's cultural development humour came on the scene very late" writes Bosman, but humour is "one of mankind's most treasured possessions, one of the world's richest cultural jewels" (*RB* 15). Many of Bosman's stories are not as simple as they seem at first sight, providing a sometimes uncomfortable tragicomic mix. This mixture of tragic and comic recalls Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque. Folk laughter and folk humour are cultural expressions of freedom, and the mixing of tragic and comic can thus be potentially anarchic. As mentioned earlier, this particular use of humour is subversive, and Bosman's stories illustrate that things are not always as they seem.

Parody and satire in Bosman's work allow for a light-hearted manner of looking at more serious issues. Bosman's stories sometimes mock authority or legislation, even at times religion. His hilarious, well-known Voorkamer story entitled "A Bekkersdal Marathon", about a church minister who in a sleepy trance has the entire congregation sing all 176 verses of Psalm 119 is an example of this. The Afrikaner in Bosman's time was deeply religious and strictly Calvinistic and in this story laughter provides a release from the solemn context of the church. Other Voorkamer stories as well as the Oom Schalk stories instigate laughter by means of irony, satire and parody while carefully making comment on the society of the time.

Out of over 140 bushveld stories, there are around 50–70 which are from the Oom Schalk Lourens sequence. The storyteller figure, Oom Schalk, is the first-person narrator in these stories; he is a storyteller who has already heard the story told by someone else, and relays the story to another party. It is interesting that Bosman chooses the respectful Afrikaans title "Oom" instead of "Uncle" in these English stories, as this implies a connection between two different linguistic communities. The reader only gets the story third-hand, so to speak, after Oom Schalk has told it to someone else. As MacKenzie explains, "the 'you' mentioned by Oom Schalk is an implied interlocutor (not the reader) who exists on the same ontological plane as the fictional narrator" (*Skaz Narrative* 5). This illustrates how Bosman acted as a 'verbindingsteken' by connecting the reader closely with the implied interlocutor and with the narrator. Furthermore, Oom Schalk's audience is

Afrikaans-speaking, whereas Bosman's readers were mainly English-speaking. Bosman's readers in the 1930s would have been around a generation or two later and not as familiar with the events of that earlier time in the previous century. It is evident that the past impacts on the present, and Bosman, fully aware of this, cleverly played this to his advantage. Even today, much of what Bosman writes about still has relevance in some way because of historical value.

The Voorkamer stories were pieces Bosman wrote to a weekly deadline for the *Forum* between April 1950 and October 1951 (the month before he died). Comprising about 80 pieces, they are not exactly 'stories' in the traditional sense, since the narrative is not very strong; thus it is more correct to refer to them as 'conversation pieces'. With fewer than 2000 words a piece, these works take for their setting the voorkamer of district postmaster Jurie Steyn. This is where the farmers gather when they collect their mail, as it doubles as the local post office.

The pieces were written as part of a series, set in the actual week in which they appeared in print, effectively providing the news of the day. These individual pieces are all connected, forming part of a cycle, and while they can, and do, stand on their own, they are not entirely complete on their own. Forrest Ingram defines the short story cycle as "a set of stories so linked to one another that the reader's experience of each one is modified by his experience of the others" (in MacKenzie, "Bosman's 'Voorkamer' Stories" 81). With this definition in mind, then, it is hard to view the Voorkamer stories as individual pieces without any connection to what came before or what happens afterwards. In this thesis however, only a small selection of Voorkamer pieces are discussed, but it is worth bearing in mind that they remain portions of a larger whole.

Both the Oom Schalk stories and the Voorkamer pieces have in common the Marico setting and characters, and the stories, while mostly written in English, are specifically about the Afrikaner people.

4.3 Dual Explorations: Textual Analyses

The textual analyses of the selected stories from Bosman's fiction serve to further the argument that several forms of hybridity are evident: polyglossia or a mixture of languages (English, Afrikaans and South African English); heteroglossia or the diversity of languages or

viewpoints; the literary strategy of cultural translation (for instance writing one culture for another).The stories that follow illustrate these concepts at work, as Bosman includes multiple languages and viewpoints in his stories that highlight racial and cultural difference.

Many of Bosman's short stories abound with humour, and Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque is useful in understanding how Bosman's use of humour is subversive. The stories selected here were not however chosen with this in mind but rather with a view to examining how Bosman interprets various inter-cultural encounters, as opposed to merely noticing that inter-cultural dialogue is happening. The following stories will be discussed individually over the next few pages: "Unto Dust"; "Funeral Earth"; "Die Kaffertamboer"; "The Rooinek"; "Dying Race"; "Birth Certificate"; "Makapan's Caves"; "The Prophet"; "Graven Image" and "Jim Fish".

* * * * *

The Afrikaans version of "Unto Dust" appeared as "Tot Stof" in *On Parade* on 21 December 1948, followed by the English version published in 1949 in *Trek* magazine. As with the story "Funeral Earth", which will be analysed next, this piece critiques racial prejudice. This was the last story told by Oom Schalk, almost twenty years after "Makapan's Caves", which was the first Oom Schalk story to appear. "Tot Stof" appeared at a time when Prime Minister Malan was introducing Verwoerd's apartheid. It was in 1949 that the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act came into being, and in 1950 the Group Areas Act was introduced. It was thus a time in South African history when 'separate development' was being instituted. "Unto Dust" begins with a touch of pathos:

> I have noticed that when a young man or woman dies, people get the feeling that there is something beautiful and touching in the event, and that it is different from the death of an old person. (*UDOS* 49)

Oom Schalk narrates the story about the impossibility of telling the difference between two men after they are dead. Hans Welman had been killed when the Boer commando of which he was a member walked into an ambush. Later on witnesses saw a black man with a yellow dog stripping the body of Hans, the dead man. This act provoked Stoffel to shoot the black man and then flee. When the group of Boers returned to the scene some months later, the

yellow dog was still slinking about the site and they were unable to correctly identify the two bodies, as sorting out the pile of bones had become impossible. Oom Schalk's biggest fear is that in death he, as a white man, will not be distinguishable from a black man.

This text has attracted commentary from several critics (Wright, Lawson, Hutchings, MacKenzie) from the angle of race and identity. Bosman employs irony and satire to expose Afrikaner racism and to subtly point at what he feels to be narrow-mindedness or simple stupidity. We see in this story that it is only that which remains, namely the bones, which gives the reader an idea of what has been lost. While the bones are evidence that lives have been lost, it is not obvious to whom the bones belonged:

> there was a heap of human bones, with here and there leather strips of blackened flesh. But we could not tell which was the white man and which the kaffir. To make it still more confusing, a lot of bones were missing altogether, having no doubt been dragged away by wild animals into their lairs in the bush. Another thing was that Hans Welman and that kaffir had been just about the same size. (*UDOS* 51)

The feeling of unease is pervasive, because one's sense of identity is threatened if at death all that remains is a pile of indistinguishable bones. One of the concerns of this thesis pertains to what Neville Alexander termed "major social markers of difference" (141). If a white man such as Oom Schalk is, in the end, no different to a dead black man, what then is left to determine his identity? There remains nothing in the bones to show a person's colour, language or culture. Bosman's message in this story is clear as he points to the inherent fear of losing one's identity, of not knowing the difference between the bones, between people. It is that very notion of difference and celebrating difference which is at the basis of hybridity.

"Funeral Earth" was first published in the 1950 issue of the University of the Witwatersrand's *Vista* magazine, and has since been published in a collection by Craig MacKenzie entitled *Unto Dust and Other Stories* (2002). The action of "Funeral Earth" takes place near Abjaterskop, where the Mtosas surrendered to the conquering Boers. The story begins as follows:

> We had a difficult task, that time (Oom Schalk Lourens said), teaching Sijefu's tribe of Mtosas to become civilised. But they did not show any appreciation. Even after we had set fire to their huts in a long row round the slopes of Abjaterskop, so that you could see the smoke almost as far as Nietverdiend, the Mtosas remained just about as unenlightened as ever. (*UD* 108)

Bosman's tongue-in-cheek style disguises the irony of these opening lines which are loaded with clever political comment. Before the Anglo-Boer war, as it was then known, battles had raged for several decades between Africans and Boers, and the struggle was over land. It is this agrarian war that is central to this story; a war which in the narrative illustrates the farcical nature of the unrest between "skillful kaffir-fight[ing]" Boers (109) and the "ignorant" Mtosas (110). Interestingly, however, as the story progresses and reaches its climax, it becomes evident that Bosman views both the Boers and the Mtosas as people of the earth, as evidenced in the following:

> Ndambe gave another signal. A woman with a clay pot on her head rose up from the kneeling column and advanced towards us. We saw then that what she had in the pot was black earth. It was wet and almost like turf-soil. We couldn't understand what they wanted to bring us that for. As though we didn't have enough of it, right there where we were standing, and sticking to our veldskoens, and all. And yet Ndambe acted as though that was the most precious part of the peace offerings that his chief, Sijefu, had sent us. (110)

This "turf-soil" is not only fertile and good for the sowing of seed, but it is also that which connects men, that which creates bonds between them. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, Bosman felt all people to be connected to the soil. In this story, the same act carried out by both Boer and black tribesman, of crumbling the earth in their hands, is an act which unites both cultures. This kinship between black and Boer is one that Bosman writes about again and again in his stories, emphasising a deep-rooted bond that existed naturally, before any racial prejudice was made conscious.

It was merely two years into the apartheid era when this story appeared in print, and Bosman intentionally drew in racist readers for a specific purpose: in order to confront racial phobias. It is worth remembering that long before apartheid officially came into being, the ground was being made ready. The promulgation of the Natives Land Act in 1913 is a case in point, in terms of which land ownership by black people was strictly regulated. This particular Act was an early and highly significant indication of the divisive society to come. Bosman presents a counter to this, a critique, by suggesting that the ground, the land, is commonly owned.

In "Funeral Earth", the causes of racial prejudice are questioned, and this story attempts to point to equality between the races. Soil in the hands of the black man is the same soil in the hands of the white man. Land, which is so often the cause of war, is in this story

that which unites. Bosman thus attempts to counter the racism that South Africans would encounter more and more during the ensuing apartheid years.

"Die Kaffertamboer" first appeared in 1949 in *On Parade,* and no English version by Bosman exists. Years later it was translated by Abrahams as "The Kaffir Drum" and appears in the collection *Unto Dust* (1963). It seems it was intended particularly for an Afrikaans readership. According to Snyman, it attests to "a finely tuned awareness of the connectedness between language and the landscape from which it grew as well as the subtle nuances of language that render a story more powerful and […] more 'right' in one language than another" (*Locating Bosman* 62). This refers to the same connection between landscape and language that Bosman alluded to in some of his essays.

"Die Kaffertamboer" is a story narrated by Oom Schalk of an old drummer, Mosigo, who relays messages via the beat of his drum across Africa. "No white man has ever been able to learn the language of the kafirs' drums. The only white man who ever had any idea at all of what the drums said […] was Gerhardus van Tonder" (*UD* 100-1). Buitendag, who is illiterate, claims that he and his wife brought up their children via messages beaten on the drums:

> I can't read or write […] and I don't know what it is, exactly, that you are talking about. But I know that the best sort of news that I and my family used to get in the old days was the messages the kafirs used to thump out on their drums. I am not ashamed to say that I and my wife brought up seven sons and three daughters on nothing but that kind of news. (*UD* 102)

Snyman says this is a "sincere and touching tribute to Africa and unequivocally testifies to the allegiance that these Afrikaners felt to their African roots" (*Locating Bosman* 63). Oom Schalk decides to look up Mosigo, and he says that he

> found him sitting in front of his hut. The wrinkles on his face were countless. They made me think of […] footpaths […] that never come to an end. And I thought how the messages that Mosigo received […] came from somewhere along the farthest paths […] across Africa… (*UD* 103)

Again the landscape is intimately connected to a way of living: it is via long African footpaths that news finally reaches small villages in drumbeats. Bosman's final message connects landscape and man to spirit, when it is implied that the drummer Mosigo knew things from another, more spiritual, realm. The drumbeats constitute a language and

communication with drums is a cultural practice amongst the tribal people in the story. The fact that the drumbeats are not usually understood by people of different races and cultures suggests a hybridity predicated on difference. In other words, the language of the drums, now understood by other cultures is an example of hybridity.

"The Rooinek" was published in 1931 in *The Touleier*, by Herman Malan, initially in two parts, and is the longest of all Bosman's short stories. Oom Schalk begins narrating the story with the simple remark that "rooineks are queer" (25). Immediately the reader is hooked and wants to know precisely what there is to substantiate Oom Schalk's claim. Lloyd points out that in order to tempt prejudiced readers to read his stories, Bosman had "a narrator begin them by expounding views they would agree with" (125).This specific technique of drawing in his readers thus was used to great effect by Bosman, as is clear in this particular story. Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia are worth considering in this regard, where he states that:

> orientation toward the listener is an orientation toward a specific conceptual horizon, toward the specific world of the listener; it introduces totally new elements into his discourse; it is in this way, after all, that various different points of view, conceptual horizons, systems for providing expressive accents, various social "languages" come to interact with one another. (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 282)

This orientation toward the listener that Bakhtin highlights is exactly what grabs the attention of the reader in Bosman's story. By means of his introduction, using the derogatory term for Englishmen, rooinek, and calling them stupid, Bosman immediately pulled in his non-English-speaking readers who were anti-British.

Oom Schalk goes on to explain how Hannes prevented him from shooting a British soldier who was assisting an injured soldier, suggesting that a show of bravery is what saved the British soldier. But Oom Schalk then says that not only are rooineks queer, so too is his own nephew:

> It seemed that not only was that Englishman queer, but that Hannes was also queer. That's all nonsense not killing a man just because he is brave. If he is a brave man and he is fighting on the wrong side, that is all the more reason to shoot him. (*SV* 26)

The difficulties and contradictions of war are illustrated with great sensitivity in this story. A telling comment is made which relates directly to Bosman writing in English:

> "These are very good books," Koos Steyn said. "[…] It's lucky those books are written in English, and that the Boers can't read them. Otherwise many more farmers would be ruined every year." (*SV* 29)

While not everyone will agree, this suggests that Bosman might deliberately have chosen to write his stories in English and not in Afrikaans, perhaps because there were things he felt could more easily be stated for an English readership only. During Bosman's time, the interaction between speakers of the two national languages of English and Afrikaans was still on rather shaky ground. As a result of the South African war, these two groups of people were not natural friends. The notion of treason and translation comes through very clearly in the following passage:

> In the meantime the other farmers around there became annoyed on account of Koos Steyn's friendship with the rooinek. They said that Koos was a hendsopper and a traitor to his country. He was intimate with a man who had helped to bring about the downfall of the Afrikaner nation. […] "But the English are here now, and we've got to live with them," Koos answered. "When we get to understand one another perhaps we won't need to fight any more. This Englishman Webber is learning Afrikaans very well, and some day he might almost be one of us." (*SV* 30)

Might Bosman be making a comment on various cultures coming together? The suggestion is that he perceived a future South Africa where English and Afrikaans people were united and understood one another. This is corroborated in Bosman's non-fiction discussed in the previous chapter, particularly in the essay entitled "An Indigenous South African Culture is Unfolding". It is clear that Bosman's vision was for a unified nation, where various cultures and languages could stand side by side and support one another with understanding. This was not, however, the common view held by most South Africans during Bosman's time. This poignant story is a lingering comment on various aspects of war and loss, race relations, neighbourliness and simply being human. It is the impact that history has made in forming identities that helped shape a hybrid South African culture, which a century ago was yet in its infancy.

"Dying Race" was published in *The Forum* in September 1951, merely weeks before Bosman died, and this controversial story satirizes scientists' analyses of the 'missing link'. The year 1950 in South Africa had witnessed much political unrest and general dissension, and 1951 brought with it further entrenchment of the apartheid policy. Some scholars, such as Abrahams, have considered this story to be racially offensive (MacKenzie and Sandham 72).

It is easy to see why the opening paragraph quoted below and several paragraphs following it were cut by Abrahams in his 1971 collection:

> We agreed with Gysbert van Tonder that, for ignorance, the T'hlakewa Bushman took a lot of beating. For real ignorance, that was, of course. And then it had to be a real T'hlakewa Bushman, also. It had to be the genuine article and no nonsense. We didn't want a Flat-Face Koranna that you could see by his toenails was half Mchopi coming along and pretending to us that he was a Bushman. (*CV* 433)

Spoken in a jesting manner, these passages when heard read aloud are intended to be funny despite the fact that they are culturally or racially offensive. This is not simple satire, as the wording carries a sting layer upon layer. What Bosman is trying to put across in this fashion, is just how clever the Bushmen in fact were, when the so-called civilised white people did not think so. Jurie Steyn remarks that "the Bushman needed every spare moment of time […] in order to be able to meditate properly on what kind of a lost heathen he was" (*CV* 434). Ironically, it is not the Bushman who is the lost heathen. The ones who are really lost are those who do not understand, those who are pretending to be civilised.

In this piece, Bosman suggests that the Afrikaner is not quick enough to understand the Bushmen, and therefore found the Bushmen stupid. Gysbert van Tonder relates what was answered when a scientist asked "'What happens when you throw a stone into the water at Lake Ngami?' … and the Bushman said, 'It makes brass bangles come on the water, baas'" (*CV* 437). Lake Ngami, in Botswana, is a significant choice of scene for Bosman's anecdote about throwing a stone in the water, since the Bushman's reply in the story illustrates aptly the repeating circles of movement that appear on the surface of the water. Bosman employs the "brass bangles" image to emphasize how these ancient people communicated in terms of their connection to nature. This also highlights the different manner in which various cultures see things.

The Bushmen/San people lived very closely to the land and nature. Sadly, however, civilisation has developed so rapidly that the ancient ways are disappearing:

> But just to think, Gysbert van Tonder observed finally, that the Bushman had today already grown so ignorant that he couldn't make a fire anymore by rubbing two sticks together, but had to use matches. It might even be true, Gysbert van Tonder suggested, what the scientists said about the Bushman – that he was a member of a dying race. (*CV* 437)

In response to this, the young schoolmaster, Vermaak, explains that the scientist was merely tracing humankind back to its origins: "How man rose from savagery. How he advanced by virtue. How he started enquiring after truth. […] How he followed his destiny, with science and knowledge as his guides" (*CV* 437). Once again, it is evident that Bosman, by means of this cleverly conceived story, was a *verbindingsteken* between different cultures, attempting to bring them together. Thus, in this story, Bosman translates one culture for another.

"Birth Certificate" appeared in 1950 in *The Forum*, very likely in protest against the newly promulgated Population Registration Act. The story opens with the following paragraph:

> It was when At Naudé told us what he had read in the newspaper about a man who had thought all his life that he was White, and had then discovered that he was Coloured, that the story of Flippus Biljon was called to mind. I mean, we all knew the story of Flippus Biljon. But because it was still early afternoon we did not immediately make mention of Flippus. Instead, we discussed, at considerable length, other instances that were within our knowledge of people who had grown up as one sort of person and had discovered in later life that they were in actual fact quite a different sort of person. (*MC* 164)

The above lines recall the concept of identity introduced in Chapter 1. Stuart Hall's contention that identity is not fixed, but rather in transition (*Modernity and its Futures* 310), is worth bearing in mind with reference to this Voorkamer story. Bosman here satirizes legislation that deals with identity, ultimately suggesting that what is innate cannot be dictated by claims on a piece of paper. This is done subtly, however, and a deeper reading of the story suggests that Bosman's ideas were anti-establishment and pro-human rights. For instance, his opening paragraph points immediately to the issue at hand: race classification. Half-way through that paragraph however, he writes that "because it was still early afternoon we did not immediately make mention of Flippus" (164). As suggested by Gray, action is postponed, denying outrage (*Bosman's Marico Allegory* 89). Indeed, Bosman was commenting on avoidance of an issue, and on people not taking a stand, a trait that was to become characteristic for many years in apartheid South Africa.

Unlike many of the other Voorkamer pieces, "Birth Certificate" in particular has a stronger sense of closure in the narrative, and does manage to stand on its own as a complete story, suggesting that Bosman felt strongly about such issues. The ending of the story is an inversion of the beginning, and many twists happen throughout before the punch-line is

given. In this piece, the farmers discuss how changelings might have been raised, and then At Naudé wonders how it might feel to find oneself in such a situation:

> How would any White man feel, if he has passed as White all his life, and he sees for the first time, from his birth certificate, that his grandfather was Coloured? I mean, how would he *feel*? Think of that awful moment when he looks in the palm of his hands and he sees … (*MC* 165)

It is at this point that one of the other farmers, Gysbert van Tonder, gets defensive and tries desperately to prove that he himself is white, and then Oupa Bekker intervenes and starts to recount the story of another changeling. He relates how a young Afrikaner boy who was taken from his family as a baby, and raised by baboons, continues to believe that he is still a baboon, irrespective of what race is stated on his birth certificate.

Funny at times, given Bosman's wry sense of humour, yet also deeply sad, this piece shows Bosman to be critical of racial prejudices. Since the Group Areas Act had been passed merely two months earlier, it is possible that this piece was intentionally written in response to that Act.[17] Gray observed that "no writer has dealt more poignantly – or more confrontationally – with the race classification laws than Bosman has in 'Birth Certificate'. Bosman's record on human rights issues is immaculate. [...] His main theme is always how the roots of the present lie in the past […] apartheid was not born overnight" (Gray, *MC* 12). However, Bosman's record on human rights was far from "immaculate". As a man of profound contradictions, not only in his life, but also in his work, Bosman sometimes came across as racist. While his views were generally liberal and anti-racist, various contradictions in thought are still cause for dispute. However, it is indeed true that Bosman's main theme always connects the present to the past. Bosman was arguably one of the first South African writers of his time to question injustice by craftily satirizing early apartheid legislation, despite it being "still early afternoon" (*MC* 164). This particular story illustrates Bosman's humanity and his idea of a hybrid South African culture having its roots in the past.

"Makapan's Caves" appeared pseudonymously under the name Herman Malan, in the December 1930 issue of *Die Touleier*. Gray claims that this is one of Bosman's "greatest achievements in the ironic mode" (*HCB* 26) and it is easy to see why as the story progresses. It is in "Makapan's Caves" that Oom Schalk Lourens was first introduced to Bosman's

[17] The infamous Group Areas Act was promulgated on 14 June 1950.

readers. The Afrikaner in this story, uncharacteristically, is the aggressor, not the victim. The events in the story date back to 1854, and are therefore very much in the memories of the people to whom Oom Schalk relates the story half a century later. The introduction, loaded with irony, was to set the stage for Bosman's particular trademark humour:

> Kaffirs? (said Oom Schalk Lourens). Yes, I know them. And they're all the same. I fear the Almighty, and I respect His works, but I could never understand why He made the kaffir and the rinderpest. The Hottentot is a little better. The Hottentot will only steal the biltong hanging out on the line to dry. He won't steal the line as well. That is where the kaffir is different. (*MC* 15)

Using Oom Schalk as the storyteller, Bosman immediately draws in racist readers, who tend to agree with such sentiments. Bosman employed this technique specifically as a means of enticing readers into a story and then allowing them to re-think their racist views as the story developed. Bosman's use of humour here was intentional in order to subvert the dominant ideologies current at the time. His carnivalesque language, which was becoming more racist in its stance, stands opposed to the language of authority figures. MacKenzie remarks that the "racist slurs" succeed in "misleading the reader into believing that a lighthearted anecdote about the thieving nature of 'kafirs' is to be expected. What it finally comes to deal with, however, is the manner in which racial boundaries are transcended by bonds of interracial friendship and trust" (*The Oral-Stylist* 147). How this friendship develops is related in the next paragraph when Oom Schalk adds that "sometimes you come across a good kaffir, who is faithful and upright" (*MC* 15). He goes on to explain how Nongaas came to be in their lives:

> Just as I was getting off the waggon, I looked round and saw something jumping quickly behind a bush. It looked like some animal, so I was afraid, and told my brother Hendrik, who took up his gun and walked slowly towards the bush. We saw, directly afterwards, that it was the piccanin whom we had seen that morning in front of the hut. […] He looked dirty and tired, but when my brother went up to him he began to grin again, and seemed very happy. (*MC* 16)

Such a description succeeds at drawing in the reader early on, and Bosman is thus better able to get his point across. That this black youth "looked like some animal" suggests a colonial viewpoint to which many white South Africans in the 1930s would have related. The patronising tone would also have drawn in a 1930s reader who would want to help such a poor being out of charity.

When the men go on commando to find a tribal chief and Oom Schalk's brother, Hendrik, does not return, a search is mounted. Oom Schalk relates that he

> saw Nongaas walking away with a water-bottle and a small sack strapped to his back. He said nothing to me, but I knew he was going to look for my brother Hendrik. Nongaas knew that if his baas was still alive he would need him […] If Makapan's kaffirs saw [Nongaas] they would be sure to kill him, because he was helping the Boers against them, and also because he was a Bechuana. (*MC* 21)

The theme of betrayal is apparent, with the mention of Nongaas helping the Boers, and this increases the dramatic irony when Hendrik says "Then Nongaas came […] he found me and gave me food and water […] Nongaas was crying when he found me" (*MC* 22–3). By this stage, the outcome is obvious to most readers. The story delivers a poignant message of devotion and self-sacrifice by the black man for his white 'baas' who so often mistreated him.

As the story reaches its climax, Oom Schalk hides his own emotion by saying that "my brother Hendrik was feverish" (*MC* 23), implying that he didn't know what was going on. The shock ending serves to prove how Bosman succeeds in showing not only the tragedy and futility of war but also how human lives and friendships, despite skin colour or cultural differences, are affected and lost. There is a commonly held belief in the story that the races ought not to mix and that black people were the enemy of the whites. Bosman turns this around by showing how close and important a friendship between two people was, irrespective of their skin colour. Bosman shows that similarities between the two cultures do exist, and this attests to his interpretation of a specific hybridity. This story is a good illustration of a nexus of two very different cultures that contributed to forming what would eventually become a more hybrid South African culture in the future.

"The Prophet" was published in December 1945 in *The S.A. Opinion*, and is a tale of fate. The multiple voices of author, narrator and characters in this story exemplify Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia. This hybrid mixture of voice also furthers Bosman's use of humour to bridge cultural divides. Initially the reader learns of two white prophets, but mid-way Oom Schalk, ever alert, introduces a very old man named Mosiko who arrived mysteriously:

> Nobody knew where he had come from, except that when questioned, he would lift up his arm very slowly and point towards the west. There is only the Kalahari Desert. And from his looks you could easily believe that this old kaffir had lived in the desert all his life. There was something about his withered body that reminded you of the Great Drought. (*SV* 65)

This is a very different description to that of another prophet earlier in the piece, Stephanus Erasmus, whom Oom Schalk says "had a great power. He was just an ordinary sort of farmer on the outside, with a black beard and dark eyes and a pair of old shoes that were broken on top. But inside he was terrible" (*SV* 65).

News soon spreads of the greatness of Mosiko the witch-doctor and people begin to visit and ask him questions. Oom Schalk says that sometimes "Mosiko told them what they wanted to know. At other times he was impudent and told them to go and ask Baas Stephanus Erasmus" (*SV* 65). Bosman uses his signature sense of humour to play the two prophets against one another. As time goes on the prophet Erasmus becomes very annoyed and he then visits Mosiko, taking a number of Marico farmers along with him, and when they arrive Oom Schalk notices that:

> Mosiko had hardly any clothes on. He sat up against a bush with his back bent and his head forward near his knees. He had many wrinkles. […] And yet there was a kind of strength about the curve of his back and I knew the meaning of it. It seemed to me that with his back curved in that way, and the sun shining on him and his head bent forward, Mosiko could be much greater and do more things just by sitting down than other men could do by working hard and using cunning. […] I was glad that I was there that day, at the meeting of the wizards. (*SV* 66)

In this story Oom Schalk points to hypocrisy and injustice when Stephanus threatens to kick Mosiko. As Stephanus takes a step forward, Frans Steyn and the others burst out in laughter when they notice that Stephanus's veldskoen has broken. "Stephanus Erasmus had lost his power" says Oom Schalk, "I could see by that look in his eyes that, when he took the step forward and Mosiko didn't move, Stephanus had been beaten for always" (*SV* 68). The power struggle between the two prophets, and the near kicking of a black man become less intense when such a racist act highlights the hypocrisy, and the one prophet, Mosiko, gains due respect. Both prophets, however, turn out to be charlatans. In this manner, Bosman foregrounds hybridity through alternately highlighting cultural differences and also showing that both cultures are in fact similar.

"Graven Image" appeared in *On Parade* in August 1948, only a few months after Bosman's death. The story begins with Oom Schalk relating how ingeniously the wood-carvers crafted images of animals such as giraffe, leopards, and wild ducks. He introduces "an old Bechuana wood-carver named Radipalong [who] began carving what he said were

the images of various white men living in the Marico" (*SV* 82). Oom Schalk goes on to explain that a Bechuana wood-carver is not allowed to cut the figure of one of his own tribe as that would cause "a lot of trouble in the kraal" (*SV* 82), since such action was only done in 'voodoo'-like fashion to harm an enemy. For instance, by hammering a nail into the stomach of the likeness, belly pain would be felt in the living person. Oom Schalk says that it was because of Radipalong's not being allowed to fashion likenesses of his tribe, that he started carving the images of white people instead:

> But it was when Radipalong started carving what he imagined, in his kaffir ignorance, to be the likenesses of Boer farmers in this part of the Marico, that we commenced laughing differently from the way we laughed at his wild ducks. Our laughter now seemed to have more meaning in it. (*SV* 83)

The farmers do not see what Radipalong does, and while they dismiss his artistic style as "kaffir ignorance", beneath it all is an unknown fear. By sometimes making a mockery of what is considered serious, Bosman illustrates that "[f]ear is the extreme expression of narrow-minded and stupid seriousness, which is defeated by laughter" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 47). Bosman's sparkling wit comes through once again when Oom Schalk relates how Reverend Kriel came home with a carved image of himself, and the Reverend himself asks "Have you ever seen such a dishonest-looking pair of eyes before?" (*SV* 83) This wry humour serves Bosman's purpose of being subversive, in order to criticise something he felt strongly about. In this instance Bosman is alluding to the Reverend's hypocrisy.

Reverend Kriel and others are secretly aware of quite how aptly Radipalong has captured their likeness and their moral characters, and they are far from happy. In addition to wit, there is the irony too that is so characteristic of Bosman, as conveyed when the Reverend adds that "the funny part of it is that [Radipalong] seems to take his ridiculous wood-carving seriously" (*SV* 83). Indeed, it is Radipalong who, seriously, will have the last laugh in the end. He carves an image of Karel that makes everyone except his fiancée, Louisa Wessels, laugh. Karel says:

> I asked [Radipalong] why he used such a white piece of wood to carve my image out of, and what do you think he said? He said, 'Well, but you are a white man, baas Karel.' And I said, well, of course, I was white but I wasn't sick. And then I asked him why he had made me out of such soft wood. And – you know what? – he just didn't answer me at all. (*SV* 85)

As is his style, Bosman's twist-in-the-tale ending is a profound comment on a mixing of cultural beliefs: when Karel opens Louisa's abandoned trousseau he finds Radipalong's carving of him with rusty nails driven into his heart. This story is an example of a hybrid text, as per Trosborg's definition offered at the beginning of this chapter, in that a strange, out of place practice (the voodoo performed by Radipalong, which is also not specific to his own culture), normally considered unusual for the receiving white culture, is eventually adopted by that culture. In this fashion, Bosman illustrates how the Afrikaner Louisa has adopted some of Radipalong's beliefs to suit her own purposes.

"Jim Fish"[18], published posthumously, was intended as a novel, a novel that Bosman never completed. Provisionally entitled *Johannesburg Christmas Eve*, the novel was set in the1920s and told the story of how two lazy white men lived compared to a hard-working black man. Gray notes that this work highlights the "chasms between the white and the black experience of common events [where] the harsh, unrelenting and vicious concrete jungle is remorseless and unforgiving" (*HCB* 13). This piece, which stands alone as a short story, is from that proposed novel.

"Jim Fish" was the name used by white people in the story for Mletshwa Kusane. Bosman uses both the English as well as the African names throughout the story, sometimes even in the same sentence, which suggests he was making a point about the double identity lived by most black people at that time. This double identity is similar to Bosman's own identity of Englishman and Afrikaner. Recalling Bhabha's 'insider's outsideness', Mletshwa's double identity described in the story is like Bosman's use of pseudonyms which afforded him several identities. The point Bosman makes in this story is that the protagonist lived two very different lives, depending on the circumstances and context:

> He was an African from a kraal in the Waterberg, and he had not been in Johannesburg very long. His name was Mletshwa Kusane. That was his name in the kraal in the Waterberg. In Johannesburg he was known as Jim Fish. That name stood on his pass, too. (*RB* 47)

[18] "Jim Fish" appears in the "List of Ethnic Slurs" as a derogatory South African term for a black person, <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/List-of-ethnic-slurs> similar to the American "Jim Crow" used for a black person and to refer to segregation laws in the 1950s and 1960s. It is very likely that Bosman was aware of the American slur as well, being well versed in American literature.

Jim Fish, aka Mletshwa Kusane, worked in a bakery for a religious man of good standing in the community. The story gives a behind-the-scenes view into the workings of a busy bakery. Sometimes, due to electrical failure or machinery breakdown, Fish and his colleagues would knead the dough differently:

> Strict adherents of the school of thought that places the coloured races outside the pale of humanity as such would in this situation find themselves in something of a dilemma. For it would not be human hands *or* feet, but just the feet of niggers that kneaded the dough, in long wooden troughs. (*RB* 48)

The suggestion here is that "niggers" are less than human, yet the irony is that it is they who knead the dough bare-footed. The storyteller goes on to explain how much the workers sweat:

> For it is a characteristic of any person whose ancestors have lived in Africa for any length of time that he *does* sweat a lot. Whether he's a nigger, or a white Dutch-speaking Afrikaner, or a white English-speaking Jingo from Natal, if his forebears have resided in Africa for a couple of generations he sweats at the least provocation. (*RB* 48)

Bosman has chosen to use the American term "nigger" instead of his usual "kaffir" in this story because he intended this to be read by an international audience. Since this story is an extract from what was to be a novel one day, Bosman must have had great plans for publishing it and receiving a large readership. As will be seen in the next chapter, American words are similarly used in *Willemsdorp* instead of the South African equivalent. In the above extract, Bosman connects all cultures by virtue of them having "resided in Africa". As suggested in his essays "An Indigenous South African Culture is Unfolding" and "Aspects of South African Literature", Bosman felt that anybody living in South Africa was an African, irrespective of European or other background.

All people who have lived in Africa sweat a lot, says Bosman, however, since Fish apparently does not sweat as much as his fellow workers, he is promoted and chants a praise song out of immense pride. The story is told in a way that is side-splittingly funny, as Bosman passes comment on culture and race because "surely, the ways of the White man were strange" (*RB* 52). By juxtaposing two different cultures in the manner he does in this story, the irony is all the more powerful:

> Get out of that tub, you black son of a bitch, […] That's for cake for White people to eat, you bloody — Look at all the sweat running off your — backside into White people's cake. […] Cha-cha […] Inindaba wena want to steal wet meal, huh? Come

> on, put it all back. That lump between your toes, too. It's for the cake for White people to eat. You meningi skelm, you. (*RB* 52–3)

This passage is an example of Bakhtin's polyglossia, with the simultaneous presence of two South African languages interacting within the same cultural system. At the same time the foul language (indicated by "—") is an example of the carnivalesque at work. This use of language and the humour serves subtly to connect the white boss to the black worker. Bosman points out how blacks at the time were typically considered by many white people to be no more than lazy, cheeky thieves. He does not condone this perception, however, and as illustrated above, through humour, Bosman offers racist whites a chance to re-think their prejudices.

This story sees Bosman making complex cultural commentary connected to the specific hybridity he espoused, as well as a unique understanding of the insider's outsideness. By means of carnivalesque humour as seen in the quoted passages, Bosman passes comment on what he construes as ridiculous racist behaviour on the part of white South Africans. Furthermore, this story exemplifies Bhabha's Third Space, where different cultures connect and confront the issues and prejudices they encounter.

4.4 Conclusion: Bridging the Gap

These stories are culturally unique, and hybrid, for several reasons. Bosman as *verbindingsteken* is a hyphenated identity, connecting and bridging the gap between two distinct South African cultures: English and Afrikaans, and also between white and black. At the same time, Bosman illustrates, via his stories, the injustice shown towards black people at a time when apartheid was coming into being.

In the previous chapter evidence of Bosman's views about Afrikaans and Afrikaners was obvious in his essays, yet he was himself not known for his Afrikaans writing at the time. He envisioned a broad South Africanism that encompassed various cultures, including English, Afrikaans and African, but this was not necessarily the view of the average reader. Bosman expanded the possibilities for bridge-building between these cultures, yet his multicultural approach was not always appreciated by those who saw him as a traitor.

It must be remembered that the time during which Bosman's stories were being read was a period in South African history of a growing separation of cultures, both black and white as well as English and Afrikaans. Divisions that existed were beginning to be

formalised and Bosman reacted by writing as a means of bringing the issues to the attention of his fellow South African readers. The short stories that have been analysed in this chapter are dual explorations of one experience. How the Afrikaner or Boer and the English or Bechuana dealt with things, or how the Afrikaner and the Mchopi chief worked together in the same place, shows Bosman exploring various cultures with a focus on forms of hybridity including heteroglossia, polyglossia and cultural translation. Difference is key to hybridity and Bosman appreciated cultural difference. While he did not want cultural difference to be suppressed, he also recognised a common humanity between the cultures. Bosman was ahead of his time, and, ironically, because so much of his work was published only posthumously, it is through his stories that time has caught up with him.

Chapter 5

Crossing Boundaries: *Willemsdorp,* a Novel

A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.
(Martin Heidegger, "Building, dwelling, thinking")

5.1 Introduction: Cultures in Contact

The Heidegger quotation above appears at the beginning of Bhabha's introduction to *The Location of Culture*. Boundaries are not the end of something, but rather the beginning, and are necessary in order for limits to be set and helpful for parameters to be defined. Countries have borders, and crossing those borders suggests moving into new and different territory. Even within countries there are borders, and cities and towns develop within those boundaries. Small towns in Bosman's work are cameos of a hybrid community influenced by societal and political pressures; places where, recalling Breytenbach's "glorious bastardisation of men and women" (35), different cultures are either in contact or in conflict.

In the previous chapter, it was seen how Bosman conveyed small-town rural life often humorously, via the short story. This chapter sees a departure from the positive aspects of hybridity viewed previously, and instead focuses on the contradictions and dilemmas of cultural encounters. It is rural country life, and the "dorp" or small-town in particular, that becomes for Bosman the perfect setting to highlight social and moral aspects of such a close-knit community. *Willemsdorp* is an example of a novel that illustrates how "small-town society acts as a social barometer in the way that it mirrors the political changes and economic pressures of the wider national picture" (Snyman, *Small-town* 8). By means of showing his reader social and political interaction in the town of Willemsdorp, Bosman is in effect commenting on such behaviours that take place on a much larger scale, in the country as a whole.

Two of Bosman's novels are situated in small towns. His first novel, *Jacaranda in the Night*, set in the small town Kalvyn,[19] was published in 1947 and was the precursor to

[19] A small town in the Northern Transvaal where Bosman lived and worked. The name comes from that of religious leader John Calvin, and the townsfolk themselves are Calvinists and are portrayed by Bosman in *Jacaranda in the Night* as being morally debauched (MacKenzie and Sandham 118).

Willemsdorp (which remained unfinished at the time of Bosman's death) set in the small town of the same name. Besides these two titles, no other novels by Bosman exist in published form, although a section from the first chapter of a proposed novel, provisionally entitled "Johannesburg Christmas Eve" found its way into being the short story "Jim Fish" (Gray, *HCB* 13) as discussed in the previous chapter. Throughout this thesis various aspects related to hybridities and cultural identity have been foregrounded, ranging from Bosman's own hyphenated identity to how different cultures interpret the same experience. Drawing from Bhabha's concepts of identity and culture, it is specifically his notion of the Third Space, the in-between meeting place of different cultures, which lays the foundation for much of this final chapter. Bhabha defines the Third Space as a "present time and a specific space […] which challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force" (*Location* 36–37). Bosman's novel *Willemsdorp* illustrates various possibilities of what happens when cultures collide – in time and space – and it is not always a happy ending.

Willemsdorp was still only in manuscript form, unfinished, when Bosman died in 1951, and was first published (with cuts) in 1977, and then later (uncut) in 1998. Passages that were excised in the 1977 edition included depictions of police brutality meted out as a result of offences relating to the Immorality Act. The early edition of the novel, in incomplete, cut form, therefore concealed important information, thus leaving the reader a little confused.[20] Given the political climate in South Africa in 1977, a year after the Soweto uprisings, the publisher would have risked having the novel banned during such a time of turmoil had such cuts not been made. Had the novel been published in the 1950s, however, even at the risk of being banned, it might retrospectively have been considered a precursor to anti-apartheid struggle literature. Of relevance here is Bhabha's suggestion that "the notion of hybridity […] is about the fact that in any particular struggle, new sites are always being opened up" (in Rutherford 216). The "struggle" in this instance related to the excised passages in Bosman's novel. Bosman's intention was to expose racist brutality by means of

[20] All the cuts (including an entire section from Chapter 12) were concerned with horrific and illegal brutality on the part of the police, and the omission of such acts denied Bosman the exposure he intended for such brutality. "An element of tyranny, of menace, simply disappeared from the book" says Gray, and with important clues missing "one of the more sombre, sadistic threads was pulled from the weave of Bosman's embroidery" (*Willemsdorp* 216). As with clues lacking in a murder mystery, the design of the novel was left incomplete, leaving the reader of the cut edition unable to fully understand the text.

describing it graphically in *Willemsdorp*, but he was no longer alive at the time his novel was first published.

The "struggle" happens at that very point of contact, in the Third Space, where cultures collide, and something new has to open up. Drawing from Bhabha once again,

> as Nelson Mandela said only the other day, even if there is a war on you must negotiate – negotiation is what politics is all about. […] Subversion is negotiation; transgression is negotiation; negotiation is not just some kind of compromise or 'selling out' which people too easily understand it to be. (in Rutherford 216)

Bosman was masterful at subversion and negotiation: often his use of humour and satire in his short stories was subversive. While *Willemsdorp* lacks the lightness of his other works, and although it is not satirical, Bosman not only subverts but also transgresses by means of writing about contemporary issues that were relevant at the time, such as racist police brutality. The novel is depressing in many ways, which is perhaps indicative of the psychological state Bosman was in when he wrote it, as it was a particular moment in time and space that provided the setting for this novel. In this sense, by tackling real issues that were happening on the eve of apartheid, Bosman was taking a risk and was also ahead of his time. *Willemsdorp* could indeed have been considered a precursor to anti-apartheid struggle literature, had it been published uncut and two decades earlier when Bosman wrote it. While *Willemsdorp* repeats some of the usual topics seen in Bosman's short stories (such as dagga-smoking, betrayal, adultery, abortion and murder), these are given a dark twist rather than being treated humorously or satirically. Bosman deals with hybridity in this particular novel by depicting negotiation between cultures. It is by means of such negotiation that he is able to perform cultural translation.

Willemsdorp abounds with illustrations of cultural hybridity. For instance, it seems Bosman intended the novel for the American market, and he was actually in contact with the American agent at the time of writing. There is minimal use of Afrikaans slang, while Americanisms such as "negro", "green grass" and "sidewalk" are used instead of "black", "dagga" and "pavement". Besides the novel taking miscegenation as its main subject matter, Bosman's characters are of different races, including English, Afrikaner, Jew, Indian and African, indicating a multicultural society. However, it is the moment of contact, where these cultures meet, that interests Bosman, and how the clash that occurs at such borders is negotiated.

5.2 Historical Contextualization

Bosman wrote during a time just prior to apartheid becoming an official policy in South Africa, and *Willemsdorp* relates events on the eve of apartheid just before the 1948 elections. In her 1999 review of the book, Ruth Friedland writes:

> Reading *Willemsdorp* in South Africa in 1999 is a fascinating look into the pre-apartheid society of the Forties. […] There is obvious tension and differing political opinions between the English and the Afrikaners, between blacks and whites. Black people are cruelly oppressed and subjugated to the white government's laws and culture. […] Such aspects of the South African psyche [hypocrisy] were not publicly exposed during the period in which Bosman wrote his fiction, though everyone knew about illicit drug-dealing and physical relationships between blacks and whites. (n.p.)

Friedland's comment emphasizes the tension that occurs when cultures meet, recalling once more Bhabha's Third Space, "which enables other positions to emerge" (in Rutherford 211), and as she points out it is cruelty and racial oppression that was not exposed during Bosman's time. While so-called illegal behaviour (such as miscegenation) was rife between different races, and took place undercover, Bosman dared to write about it and expose such behaviour.

Bosman was never afraid to say it like it was, and in this novel he continually foregrounds cultural and racial tensions. While it is fairly clear what his own position was, the white minority in South Africa during his lifetime thought differently. Cultural tensions between different races and cultures grew and festered because of their differences. Andersen writes that the "newly formed South Africa [in 1910] was diversely populated […] by whites, half-castes (or 'Coloureds'), a community of Indian immigrants, and a number of indigenous black tribes" (*Colonialism* 127). These are the people about whom Bosman writes: both the oppressed and the oppressor, and the clashes or contacts that occur at the borders of encounter.

Lloyd notes that "Bosman was a radical figure who quite deliberately set out to interrogate an entire social structure and historiography in an ostensibly light-hearted and non-polemical way that would make outright banning of his works difficult to justify" (27). Indeed, Bosman was anti-establishment and took issue with what he considered unjust treatment of people during his time. His writing technique so cleverly disguised the issues at hand that, as Lloyd points out, any suggestion of banning would not have been acceptable to him. *Willemsdorp* is a fictional representation of a historical moment and social milieu. Bosman's use of humour, evident mainly in his short stories, as well as the manner in which

he questions social and political norms in *Willemsdorp*, was a subversive and transgressive technique. For Bosman, the use of humour served a very definite purpose of exposing a reality that was too often hidden during his time. In *Willemsdorp* however, there is far more bleakness than there is humour.

As has been evident in previous chapters the writings of Bosman should not simply be taken at face value, for it is only when the reader digs deeper that Bosman's social questioning is even noticed. It is his commentary, subtle yet biting, that is one of Bosman's great skills. *Willemsdorp* offers a critique of society in precisely this manner.

5.3 Characters and Setting: Big-time Intrigue in a Small-time Town

It is not immediately evident that the characters in the novel are "victims of an unnaturally repressed social environment" (Snyman, *Willemsdorp* 63), and Bosman builds up the atmosphere of an unstable society gradually. Some of these characters are both inside and outside their environment, marginalized by society, and are subsequently "neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between" (Bhabha *Location* 219). Both colonialism and Calvinism were largely the cause of this repression resulting in a split identity with characters living a life in-between. The manner by which individuals reacted to this varied greatly. While most people conformed, some rebelled. Either way, secrecy and duplicity became an aspect of daily South African life.

The characters Bosman writes about in *Willemsdorp* are not only small-town individuals; they represent South African society generally. In much of his early writing, Bosman used a number of pseudonyms for various reasons, sometimes to disguise his own identity. Drawing as usual from his own life, one of Bosman's heteronyms in *Willemsdorp* is the protagonist Charlie Hendricks. At the time Bosman was writing *Willemsdorp*, he himself, like his protagonist, worked as a sub-editor. At that time Bosman worked at the *Sunday Express*; he was an Afrikaner working for an English newspaper. Bosman, like his protagonist Charlie Hendricks, was acutely aware of the cultural schism not only in small towns but in the country as a whole. As editor of the *Northern Transvaal News*, Charlie Hendricks has no choice but to be concerned with the goings-on in the small town. He finds himself involved in a relationship with a coloured woman, and throughout the novel confronts the injustice of the Immorality Act.

Marjorie Jones is the young, coloured prostitute with whom Hendricks becomes involved; however, she also offers her services to several of the other white men in the novel. Running parallel to this is the story of Lena Cordier, a white former schoolteacher who falls pregnant and has to leave Willemsdorp and go to the city for an abortion. Both Lena and Marjorie find themselves in a similar predicament, as they both suffer the misfortune of unwanted pregnancies. Since one of the women is white and the other coloured, it is clear that the point Bosman is making is that race has no bearing on sex and sexual relations. Regarding Hendricks's involvement with Marjorie, Bosman writes that

> It wasn't that there was anything wrong per se with his relations with Marjorie. […] he was, in spite of all kinds of liberal and even egalitarian views that he might hold, still, at heart, a Boer and a Calvinist. Charlie Hendricks knew that about himself. He was the editor of a Union party newspaper. And intellectually he recoiled from the Volksparty tenets. But in his blood he was a Boer. And he was sleeping with a kaffir woman. The generations of Boer ancestry were stronger than he was. He felt a lost soul. (135)

In the above extract, Bosman has managed to capture the essence of a complicated cultural hybridity that involves questioning identity and negotiating the various beliefs held and encounters with that identity. Bosman explains that Charlie Hendricks knows who he is, "a Boer and a Calvinist", but that is only on the surface. Despite being such, Hendricks is "sleeping with a kaffir woman", which runs counter to being a Boer and a Calvinist, since 'miscegenation' was forbidden. In other words, while Hendricks's own individual morality shuns racism, the indoctrination of his cultural beliefs and his socialisation are stronger than his own morality. His ancestral beliefs held him captive, and thus he was torn and "felt a lost soul". This characterisation of Charlie Hendricks points to the difficulties of a cultural identity, and suggests that it is not always easy to negotiate a way to accepting a clear-cut identity. As a result, Hendricks finds himself having to negotiate his own way through this in-between space. The echoes here with Bosman himself are obvious, as in real life he was a combination of Boer and Englishman. It is especially through the character Hendricks that the reader feels both Hendricks's and Bosman's dislocation. While Hendricks holds mostly liberal and egalitarian views, not all the townsfolk feel the same way he does.

Shortly after Charlie Hendricks locks up his office and sets off for home, he encounters Detective Sergeant Brits, shining a flashlight on the pavement, and the two engage in conversation. Brits explains his mission:

> … what we's going to clean up *with* is the Tielman Roos Immorality Act. That's what we've got instructions for. And it's three months for the white man. And it's three months for the nigger woman. Maybe more. (31)

Referred to euphemistically as the "Tielman Roos Act",[21] the Immorality Act of 1927 forbade sexual relations between white men and black women. In 1950 the Act extended the prohibition to all races including people of mixed and/or Asian descent. In the novel, contravention of the Immorality Act becomes a major focus and punishment is to be meted out to offenders.

Several townsfolk like Charlie Hendricks are guilty of contravening the Immorality Act. Throughout the novel, the Immorality Act is portrayed as an example of blatant racism and violence. It is also an example of what happens when cultures come together and contact becomes a source of conflict. "We're going to clean up this town" (41) explains Detective Sergeant Brits to the commandant, and so when he visits the editorial office of the *Northern Transvaal News* and talks to Charlie Hendricks, he says

> getting them kaffirs to confess wasn't too hard, either. At the end of a week they all squawked. Except one nigger that I had to do up pretty bad with the sjambok. He just wouldn't come his guts. […] for all I know, he could have *been* innocent – well, him I really had to give a solid doing with the whip. […] Sometimes when I gets tired I calls in a couple of kaffir policemen to help me. […] But you should of seen that kaffir's shoulders and backside. It was a real treat, man. And I'm not talking now about his guts, where I kicked him a couple of times. Or what I done with his face. You can say what you like, but there's nothing as tough as a kaffir. If it was a white man, he would have been dead end of the first day. But you should of seen that kaffir, the places where that whip got him. (119–120)

The above passage is one that was cut from the first publication because it illustrated blatant police brutality. Bosman's aim was to fictionally portray the aggressive and racist consciousness of the average white Afrikaner in 1948, when they were preparing to vote the National Party into power. The quoted passage illustrates how Bosman portrayed this consciousness by detailing brutal police behaviour, suggesting they found it acceptable to behave thus since a black man was considered "tough" and could therefore be treated violently. Innocence or guilt, as seen in the extract above, is not relevant, as the man is beaten not because of a crime committed, but because of his skin colour.

[21] Tielman Roos, a politician and cabinet minister, supported institutionalised racial segregation (MacKenzie and Sandham 225). As noted by Gray in his introduction to *Cold Stone Jug*, it was Tielman Roos, the then Minister of Justice, who on 10 January 1927 signed the Notice to the Sheriff wherein Bosman's death sentence was commuted to a ten year sentence (12).

One of the places to look for an engagement with cultural hybridity in *Willemsdorp* is Bosman's characterisation, since he presents a diverse grouping of characters, ranging from Calvinist Boers to dagga-smoking Jews. There were also those who, like Charlie Hendricks, were not proud of themselves. The school headmaster, Johannes Erasmus, resents the fact that he is actually a "Boer", while Cyril Stein, the Jewish director of the school board, feels unworthy of his position as he obtained his job through nepotism.

On the other end of the scale, Jack Brummer is a man with much influence in Willemsdorp and as a Union Party member his views are often respected. Then there is Robert E. Constable, the Union Party by-election candidate for the Provincial Council vacancy. Although living in a predominantly Afrikaans town, Constable is not Afrikaans-speaking, and Bosman writes that

> Another disadvantage under which Robert E. Constable laboured was the fact of his not being bilingual. He couldn't speak Afrikaans. In private, of course, he was proud of this circumstance, regarding his inability to speak a word of the Boer language as a positive social and intellectual accomplishment. (18)

Indeed, at the time Afrikaans was considered a lowly, common language, whereas those who spoke English were considered to be far more cultured. Regarding the proper use of language, Constable tries hard to be politically correct as is seen when he is asked about giving people of colour the vote, and he replies "Only the civilised nigg- that is to say, civilised Natives" and "Only […] civilised cool- that is to say, civilised Indians" (20). While trying to be politically correct by saying the right thing, especially considering his position, Constable is colonially-rooted, and he finds it difficult to embrace other aspects of his identity.

Dap van Zyl, the self-assured Volksparty candidate for the Willemsdorp seat in the by-election, has a great love for his people, the Afrikaners, and makes it clear when he says

> We Afrikaners have got everything […] We've got a feeling for the country that's part of our blood. I can pick up a clod of earth, red Transvaal earth, between my fingers and crumble it […] What I feel about that handful of soil is the guts of nationhood. What English-speaking South African has got that? It's only we Boers that have got it. (108)

This romantic motif of the earth, of the land, appeared often in Bosman's short stories and journalism, as mentioned in the previous chapter, and he uses this idea again in *Willemsdorp,* thus writing the earth motif across genres. In this way Bosman illustrates how the Afrikaner or Boer at that time disliked their English-speaking counterparts. As was evident in "Funeral

Earth", the kinship between Englishman and Afrikaner is as questionable as that between black and Boer, and yet these are all peoples of the same earth, living in the same country. Bosman believed, as evidenced in the way he lived and through the journalistic pieces he wrote, that all South Africans comprised one united nation. He shunned racist, prejudiced attitudes, and did not agree with the separate development policies of his day.

Dap van Zyl "evokes a fictional parallel with National Party figures (e.g. Dr D.F. Malan and General Herzog) in the Union of South Africa on the eve of the 1948 election when the National Party took over the government of South Africa" (Snyman, *Small-town* 146). Indeed it would seem that Bosman wanted this link to be made with NP figures, as he wished to point to the hypocrisy prevalent in the country during that period of historical change.

In *Willemsdorp* the characters of colour are generally seen through the eyes of others, namely interpreted by white people. Bosman deals with this in a striking and humorous manner. Through a particularly interesting and somewhat bizarre description of the cook at the Kleinberg Hotel, Bosman satirically juxtaposes African and colonial culture:

> In the kitchen the naked kaffir cook, dinner over, was preparing a quick dish with a French name for a couple of late arrivals. He had a natural talent for cooking. And because he belonged to the Mchopi tribe – the male members of which were permitted, at certain seasons, to give the women a hand with the preparation of food and drink – he had not been completely frustrated in the old days, when he was still a tribal warrior. Coming home from an inter-tribal battle, he could get self-expression out of doing a ragout or an en casserole or a galantine just right. Or a meat gateau. If it had been a victory, the meat part would have consisted of some portion of an enemy that he had brought home with him. Otherwise just a lump of crocodile brisket would have to do. In the kitchen of the Kleinberg Hotel this naked Mchopi warrior had found himself. His buttocks and belly glistened regularly with grease. That was from wiping a knife or a spoon on them. If there was curry on the menu, that day, his belly and buttocks would be streaked with yellow – a bright yellow. He was an artist. (107–8)

This single paragraph, quoted above in its entirety for full effect, provides the only reference made to a nameless character in Chapter 8 of *Willemsdorp*. This description of an African warrior who is adept at European cuisine illustrates a particular kind of hybrid identity, and a character who has "found himself". The reference to "the old days" suggests that an event had occurred which had changed this man's perspective, enabling him to become "an artist". Certain aspects (such as the cook's body glistening from grease) are reminiscent of the character in the story "Jim Fish" who sweats excessively in the bread dough. Similarly too, this character has no real name, but the reader learns that he is an "Mchopi warrior". The way

Bosman casually throws in a few French culinary terms is pure genius, particularly as at the same time he mingles this with the mention that some of the ingredients might include human flesh. The subtle comment on French cuisine adds to the humour, and one wonders where this warrior might have learned such cosmopolitan culinary skills.

Other one-dimensional characters of colour in the novel are seen through the eyes of others. This is somewhat reminiscent of what Olive Schreiner does in *The Story of an African Farm* where her black characters are "one-dimensional figures" (Lockett 24). By means of depicting such characters one-dimensionally, focalised through complex white characters, Bosman positions them on the periphery of the narrative. To what end does he do this? During Bosman's time, people of colour were marginalised in such a fashion, and it is debatable that he purposely chose to deal with his black characters in this fashion in order to echo how society at the time treated them. Ruth Friedland suggests that "Bosman, in spite of himself, cannot or chooses not to inquire into the personalities of Marjorie, Josias and Pieta, the black people in the tale. He marginalises them except when they are necessary for the plot" (n.p). It is not quite as simple as Friedland suggests, however, and my contention is that Bosman wrote thus in an attempt to counter a growing racism that went against his own natural moral code.

Bosman believed that all races could live together comfortably, despite their differences. During the period in which he wrote *Willemsdorp*, racial difference was not celebrated, but separatism was encouraged. Apartheid was being legalised. While Bosman was a man of contradictions, and while he changed his mind often, he held strong views on certain matters. He was not only anti-establishment but also anti-racist. *Willemsdorp* is an account of the atrocities committed by a racist white minority. He might have been anarchic in his thinking but when the layers of irony are stripped from his writing and the subversive humour understood, Bosman's work is testament to a deep tolerance towards fellow human beings, whether black or white.

When Lena Cordier overhears Mhlopi, the watchman, and Pieta, the African flatboy, talking below her flat window, she does not understand the meaning of their actual spoken words. Although speaking in their own language, Mhlopi and Pieta are merely overheard by Lena after she has awoken from a nightmare and opened the window for air:

> They were talking in a Native language she did not understand. Even though they were black men […] the sound of their voices brought comfort to her. After the shock of that nightmare it was comforting to think that life was still calm and normal […]

> The sound of talk and laughter coming up from that passage below steadied her nerves. (*Willemsdorp* 111)

So, while Lena feels it is good to hear the voices, and finds them calming, she is totally unaware of what the voices are in fact saying. Bosman continues the story, by translating into English for the reader, but not for Lena. Bosman now uses the names, Mhlopi and Pieta, and he recounts their chatter as they share a dagga cigarette. In their dagga-induced haze, the two men start reminiscing before frightening one another with "stories of terror" and various "dagga nightmares" (113).

This translation employed by Bosman illustrates a misunderstanding of cultures that does not always help clarify or bring closer, yet serves to explore the differences or clashes. In a sense then, this illustrates a form of hybridity, relating to Bhabha's Third Space, in the boundary of clashes. While the incident is not a conflict between colonizer and colonized, it is an ironic situation because while Lena feels comforted by the chatter of native men, she does not understand what they are speaking about. She feels calmed by their words, which ironically are words about nightmarish behaviour, and it was a nightmare that awoke her. In a strange way Lena and the two men connect on a level of mutual unintelligibility. They do not know she overhears them and she does not know what their words mean. It is at this point where two different cultures come together and yet they do not meet nor do they clash. It is a coming together of sorts that could give rise to, if not a hybrid culture, at least an understanding of other cultures.

Another character of colour afforded his few minutes of fame, is the doctor who performs Lena's abortion, known as Dr Pee:

> The Indian medical man, Dr Ranjit Peewalaswamy – whom his white patients addressed as Dr Pee because they couldn't get their tongues round his name […] kept dropping in at intervals. […] [Lena] wished he wouldn't come round, any more. […] After all, he was an Indian. And she could not help but wonder what the landlady of Repton House was beginning to think of his visits. (*Willemsdorp* 180–1)

This passage illustrates how, on the one hand, it was considered quite acceptable for an Indian doctor to perform an abortion on a white woman and yet it was totally unacceptable for that very same doctor to visit a white woman. Bosman's aim in the novel is partly to show what happens when different cultures encounter each other. Various issues arise such as feelings of inadequacy, guilt and hypocrisy. In *Willemsdorp*, Lena finds herself in just such a

"new area of negotiation" as a result of her affair and the pregnancy which forces her to seek illegal medical help from an Indian doctor.

Potter notes that "[t]he introduction of race as an issue in every aspect of the highly complex plot suggests that it is with the implication of the racial make-up of South African society, in particular the causes and effects of racial tension and interaction, that Bosman is primarily concerned in this work" (159). The reader is reminded that the layers of this multiracial society are varied and complex, and there are different sides to any story, as he goes to great lengths to illustrate.

5.4 A Schizophrenic Reality: Mixed Languages, Races and Cultures

Hybridities in various forms abound in Bosman the man and in his work. The characters in *Willemsdorp* are examples of a hybrid society, trying to live together, yet influenced by societal and political pressures. At the beginning of the novel the narrator recounts the background to the Boers' arrival, and writes:

> They were not Hollanders; they were Boers. They had developed a language of their own. Their outlook was different from that of the Europeans. Although living among the negroid peoples of Africa they had remained white. They had a spirit of sturdy independence and their own way of doing things. In many respects primitive, they could nearly all of them read and write. They were strongly attached to the Bible and their church. They were potential schizophrenics through generations of trying to adapt the rigid tenets of their Calvinist creed to the spacious demands made by life on the African veld. And they didn't want to be Anglicised. (14–15)

The above can be interpreted as a critique of cultural hybridity and deserves attention primarily because it suggests the idea of schizophrenia as a result of the Boers' cultural ambivalence and inner cultural conflict. Cultural hybridity is not always considered in a positive light: it does sometimes come with its own problems, as has been suggested by Bhabha. Bosman describes the Boers as a lost, in-between people: not Hollanders, different to Europeans, not Anglicised, and they had to adapt their Calvinism according to their African surroundings. The Afrikaner in Bosman's writing is generally depicted as being deeply religious, Calvinistic, narrow-minded, closely connected to the African soil, and oppressed.

The Afrikaner that Bosman describes was a mixed identity, even somewhat confused. Recalling Bhabha's statement that hybridity is the "'third space' which enables other positions to emerge" (in Rutherford 211), it is evident that this hybrid Boer maintained

certain ways and beliefs and did not seem to want to mingle freely with the English nor the African or Indian peoples. This suggests that hybridity is not necessarily a combination of identities, but it can be a division or splitting of identities. In other words, the hybrid identity is sometimes fractured. With this in mind then, hybridity cannot always be regarded as an affirmation of integrated subjectivity. In *Willemsdorp* this is played out in aspects of the various characters and Bosman brings together all these peoples to see how the townsfolk react, and that is when deceit and hypocrisy come to the fore, and the quiet, small town is plunged into chaos. Many of the characters in the novel appear with flaws and dualities. On a deeper psychological level, they seem to have split, schizophrenic identities, perhaps as a result of their internal battles that eventually surface.

These "potential schizophrenics" (*Willemsdorp* 14) secretly had affairs with women of colour while pretending they were racially pure Boers. According to Bosman's portrayal of the Willemsdorp community, 'miscegenation' was considered wrong. Murder was a crime. Dagga-smoking was not a practice amongst the Calvinist whites in the small town of Willemsdorp. Early on in the novel, when Detective Sergeant Brits and Commandant Kolyn are talking about warning people about the law, Kolyn also suggests that Brits be on the alert for dagga-smokers and asks whether he has come across any cases. Brits replies:

> white men? Not as what I knows of, sir. Kaffirs, of course. I mean, you can't pinch a kaffir as hasn't got a pass on him, as you don't finds he hasn't got dagga in his back pocket. Nellie Pope, they calls it. Or the tree of knowledge, they calls it. Or voëls, they calls it, sir. But that you can never stop, seeing as how it grows wild here, sir. But white men? No sir, I dunno about white men. (43)

The implication here is that it is normal and acceptable for a black man to smoke dagga, but not for a white man to do so. Schopen suggests that smoking dagga, like miscegenation "threatens to blur the carefully defined distinction between the races" (*HCB's Landscape* 13). This blurring of the divide would not be acceptable in a town like Willemsdorp where white people appeared to be good citizens. Potter points out that "the white man in South Africa is afraid, basically, that any contact with the black man will drag him back, de-civilise him and return him to ancient and barbaric ways which he thought he had left behind him" (163) and this fear is constantly evident in *Willemsdorp*. The practice of smoking dagga illustrates such "barbaric ways":

> "This is truly of the number one msangu, my son," Mhlopi the Zulu watchman was saying to the Bechuana flatboy, Pieta.

> "It is the best green grass, my father," Pieta answered, accepting the dagga cigarette from the hand of the old Zulu and taking a number of deep puffs. […] He passed back the cigarette to the Zulu, who took it gratefully.
> "That is one thing in which you are not like the other low class Bechuanas" the watchman said. "There, you are almost a Zulu. Almost, you have in your liver the blood of kings." (112)

In the above passage, Bosman uses the practice of smoking dagga as a means of cultural critique, where even a distinction between Bechuanas and Zulus is made evident. It is considered more than acceptable for the black characters in the novel to smoke dagga, but not so the whites, as it is believed to be a lowly, degenerate and uncivilised act. Ironically, in the quoted passage above, the act of smoking dagga is praised, and compared with a king-like act. Further on in the novel, an outsider, a Jew, Cyril Stein, explains his drug habit to Charlie Hendricks, and the latter's sarcasm echoes the prejudices of the community:

> You know, I don't feel it's right that a white man should smoke dagga. Western Civilisation. We've got to set the Coloured races an example. You know what I mean – White superiority. (176)

This suggests an underlying anxiety in white society, and the assumption of superiority. A clear hierarchy exists in this society which is being fictionally represented. This hierarchy seems to be predicated on notions of Social Darwinism which justified supremacy even if it was of the minority and morally dubious. Bosman attempts to illustrate that the hierarchical borders are false boundaries. The fact that the above quoted statement is reflected by a white Jew, who himself is an outsider in an Afrikaner setting, shows that Bosman is satirizing these cultural distinctions. Stein is being hypocritical in stating that dagga smoking is a degenerate practice, and not for white people, since he himself clearly enjoys and even advocates the smoking of dagga. Stein goes on later to tell Hendricks that dagga "makes you forget all your troubles" (179) as he passes him the "zol" and continues by saying that

> It's the oldest drug in the world […] In the Arab countries they call it hashish. In the East they've got lots of names for it. Here the coloured addicts call it Nellie Pope. But what's in a name? The important thing is that it severs the bonds of time and space. (178)

What is being suggested by this is that dagga crosses all cultural divides, and Stein shows that he even knows the different names for the so-called "oldest drug". The point about dagga severing "the bonds of time and space" is made even more strikingly in the last few pages of the novel, as will be discussed later. When leaving, Stein offers Hendricks an envelope for his

own smoking pleasure, but Hendricks says "I am afraid of dagga […] I'm not worrying that it might lead me to commit murder. What I am afraid of is that it will bring me down to wearing a blanket with a top-hat, and no shoes" (180). This echo of Stein's sentiments serves to emphasize the hierarchical structure in Willemsdorp, and also suggests that Hendricks too is hypocritical. This is classic Bosman satire, and the image created can be considered carnivalesque. The contradiction in the image of wearing a top-hat and being barefoot suggests a comical hybridity. Hendricks's views are both racist and hypocritical, and Bosman's intention here is to critique these opinions by making the Bakwena image appear comedic to those whites who could not accept the hybridity embodied in the traditional African style of attire. The fact that Hendricks is more afraid of the dagga bringing him down to a lower level than actually impeding his memory points to what others might see, not what really matters. The many layers of irony and critique here serve Bosman's intention of illustrating what happens when different cultures come together. Throughout the novel, the reader is made aware that the smoking of dagga is a practice that crosses racial divides, irrespective of what the characters say on the subject. Similarly, sexual relations between races continue to occur in the novel despite a law that forbids it.

5.5 Dangerous Liaisons and the Immorality Act

Willemsdorp makes for heavy reading, and the novel is not a celebration of cultural hybridity but rather a critique of the hypocrisy evident in the illicit encounters that take place across the colour bar; encounters between different cultures in the Third Space. Bhabha's work illustrates how culture is created and hybridized when two opposing groups meet and clash at the boundary or in-between spaces, where the differences are noted. What we learn from Bosman's capturing of this is that there is a specific moment (at the outset) when the clash results in negative identity formations but with time the process of hybridization leads to a more positive integration of difference. Thus space and time are important aspects in creating hybridity.

The characters Bosman has brought together in this novel are damaged, fractured beings, trying to make sense of a world that has forced them into contact with one another. The hybrid identity, as posited by Bhabha, is also a split identity, where "two contradictory and independent attitudes inhabit the same place, one takes account of reality, the other is

under the influence of instincts which detach the ego from reality" (*Location* 132). This hybrid identity is Bosman. It is Charlie Hendricks. Both the writer and the character experience periods of what Bhabha terms "intellectual uncertainty and anxiety that stems from the fact that disavowal is not merely a principle of negation or elision; it is a strategy for articulating contradictory and coeval statements of belief" (*Location* 132). This has been evident in Bosman's own hybridity, in his contradictory beliefs, and these contradictions are also evident in *Willemsdorp* through Hendricks's apparent hypocrisy.

The law tries to intervene to prevent cultures from meeting, and in the novel much of the action takes place around the search for those who have contravened the Tielman Roos Immorality Act. Early on in the novel, Commandant Kolyn tries to steer Brits away from searching too hard for people contravening the Act, and the reader learns that "he wasn't going to have Brits focusing too much attention on local contraventions of the Tielman Roos Immorality Act. You never knew where that sort of thing ended afterwards" (42). Kolyn goes on to suggest that Brits warn potential suspects, and this makes the reader wonder what Kolyn's own personal motives might be. Jack Brummer is one of the first to be "warned" by Brits:

> We got instructions to tighten up the Tielman Roos law. I've come round to warn every white man in town that if he's caught in bed – *or* on the sidewalk, doing it, that is – with a kaffir woman, then he's for it. And no matter who that white man is, neither. I got the Commissioner of Police's authority to warn a man before I pinches him for it, see? (51)

It is evident that nobody will be considered above the law, and yet ironically, as the novel progresses, it is obvious that several people are guilty of breaking the "Tielman Roos" law and are not caught. Pieterse says that "when so much pathos was invested in boundaries, boundary crossing involved dangerous liaisons" (226). South Africa, during the time that Bosman was writing, had developed socially and culturally out of such boundary crossings. Boundaries were created for social, political and economic reasons. In the novel a clear social hierarchy is represented which automatically creates boundaries. As a result, not all cultures wished to mix, seeing that other cultures were considered beneath them. In *Willemsdorp* the law serves only to encourage further crime, and in the end, a real and far more serious crime than contravening the Immorality Act is the final, tragic result.

Bosman drives home just how often the Immorality Act was contravened, as Marjorie is visited by different white men in the town. His protagonist Charlie Hendricks is

exceptionally aware of the illogicality of the Act as well as the hypocrisy in the society that enforces and accepts the Act:

> when he lay with [Marjorie] on the divan, Charlie Hendricks could not detect that she was essentially different from a white girl that might have come to lie on the divan in his arms. And – although of this he was unconscious – he had also solved the problem as to how a white man had to act when a coloured girl came into his room. He couldn't offer her a chair, but he could the divan. (84)

This passage emphasizes how mixed morals and hypocrisy are involved in contravening the Immorality Act. Hendricks is anxious and uncertain as he tries to justify his relationship with Marjorie, and Bosman's irony serves to recall Bhabha's notion of 'splitting' which "results in the production of multiple and contradictory belief" (*Location* 132). Bosman's choice of words above is very telling when he talks of "the problem" of a white man and a coloured girl being together. After Marjorie has left, Hendricks is "filled with self-loathing" because he "understood then how far he was from being free of prejudice" (*Willemsdorp* 84). His mixed feelings continue to haunt him even when Hendricks reminds himself that he is at heart a Boer.

Bosman has alluded to the hypocrisy inherent in most of the racist characters. So, on the one level, Hendricks the racist, Calvinist Boer believes that it is wrong and immoral to have relations with someone of colour, and yet on another, more subconscious level, he does not understand why it should be so. Thus he feels a "lost soul" and remains split and confused, torn in different directions through the anguish that arises from being sexually involved with a woman of colour.

5.6 The Hottentot Eve Myth

It is not only Hendricks who has an intimate relationship with Marjorie, as in the novel several white men are fascinated by her. After he passes Marjorie in the street, Cyril Stein muses to himself:

> The African woman's backside […] was like the shape of the African continent on the map. From the loins of the negro woman would spring all the future generations that would people the African continent. The white man would come and go. His brief sojourn and his passing would leave behind few traces. In the loins of the black woman the history and the destiny of Africa were wrapped up. […] Africa, wombed in the negro woman's pelvis, was secure. Africa would go on forever. (95)

Bosman is making a comment on a stereotypical view of African women held at the time. In the above extract the African woman is a metaphor for the land, and this illustrates how the white man viewed his relationship with Africa.[22] "The frontier myth itself" writes Gray, "is devised not only to describe and assess a cultural gulf, but to bridge it" (in Lockett 38). The first male European travellers to the dark continent of Africa described black women in a distorted fashion, vacillating between two stereotypes: an untouchable destroyer (animal-like degenerate) or an unattainable (beautiful) black woman.[23]

The beautiful black Marjorie in *Willemsdorp* is similar to Kurtz's African mistress in *Heart of Darkness*, based on the stereotype of an untouchable, attractive temptress. Where Kurtz's black lover is loaded with jewellery, Hendricks's lover has many pairs of shoes. Early on in the novel, Detective Brits points this out in the following passage:

> She's one of the nigger women in this town as I suspects of sleeping with white men. She's got three pairs of shoes. Don't that give the game away, all right, hey? Why, you can convicts her in court yust on that evidence alone, almost, can't you? Three pair shoes… where she gets them from, hey, and she a nigger woman? (32)

Obviously the suggestion here is that Marjorie cannot afford to buy her own shoes and therefore must be looked after financially by someone else, according to Brits. In colonial societies such relationships between white colonizer and black colonized women did not last due to societal pressures and prejudices. Hendricks knows this and yet he continues his affair with Marjorie since he is both attracted to and loathes her, as is evident in this description:

> She had small features, a tilted nose that gave piquancy to her face and lips that were inclined towards fullness. She had the kind of face that could smile readily, or that could just as easily turn petulant. […] Her skin was no darker than many a white girl's skin. But her eyes gave her away. The lashes were thick and coarse […] it was a coloured woman's eyes. (81)

Bosman's description of Marjorie's hybrid identity suggests to the reader how easily she passed for a white woman, yet certain features (such as her eyes) told the truth. A few

[22] Stephen Gray's chapter "The Frontier Myth and Hottentot Eve" appears in his book *Southern African Literature: An Introduction.* In her informative article on the black woman in South African literature, wherein Cecily Lockett examines representations of black women from the seventeenth century until the late1980s, she discusses Stephen Gray's "The Frontier Myth and Hottentot Eve".

[23] For more in-depth discussion of these stereotypes, refer to Cecily Lockett's 1988 article "The black woman in South African English literature."

chapters later, the reader is shown how degrading the association with Marjorie is for Hendricks. She is the epitome of the 'untouchable' stereotype chiefly because although her skin is not dark, she still is not white: "Charlie Hendricks despised himself for having sexual relations with Marjorie, a coloured woman. But he had come to reconcile himself to having that opinion about himself. […] He was a dirty, lousy, shabby creature" (126). He is fearful of what he has become. In this sense, through association with Marjorie, Charlie himself had become the animal-like degenerate.

According to both the Hottentot Eve myth of the female destroyer and the white man's perspective of the interior, women were seen as objects of exchange to be sexually exploited. The unattainable, though greatly desired, must always remain beyond reach so that the impossible love union would be respected instead of being a disgraceful desire. Aspects of both stereotypes are evident in Bosman's creation of the character Marjorie. In *Willemsdorp* Marjorie is ultimately rendered tragically unattainable by death. The boundaries were crossed, but at that Third Space encounter the impossibility of union between colonizer and colonized resulted in death.

5.7 Conclusion: Moral Duplicity

There appear to be three different possible endings to the novel *Willemsdorp*. Had Bosman not died before the novel was published, there would probably have been several edits and a clearer ending in the final manuscript. Nonetheless, whatever ending one chooses to go with, it is apocalyptic: Hendricks is either arrested or he is still on the run. Schopen says the ending is "a nightmare vision of the white man in Africa […] for whom the landscape has become a terrifying and inescapable symbol of his inability to confront the uneasy paradox of his presence in Africa" (*HCB's Landscape* 15). This clearly relates to the Hottentot Eve myth regarding the white man's place in the interior and his connection thereto. But perhaps this is an over-interpretation and not entirely what Bosman intended, as his focus in *Willemsdorp* is mainly the moral duplicity evident in South African society at a particular time in history.

Throughout the novel it is evident that Hendricks feels the Immorality Act to be unjust, particularly as he himself contravenes it, and yet he is powerless to do anything about it, and is unable to fight it or stand up for his own moral beliefs. Towards the end, after the funeral of Johannes Erasmus, Hendricks takes to the road "desperately frightened" with a fear that "gripped his guts" yet having "false courage […] by the dagga fumes in his blood" (203).

His memory plays tricks on him, “another effect of the dagga” (206). This brings to mind Stein’s words quoted earlier in a previous section of this chapter, that dagga “severs the bonds of time and space” (178). Dagga is used as a means of escaping reality; it is used by both black and white, and in this sense it allows for the crossing of boundaries, where difference, time and space become blurred or even irrelevant. With time and space obliterated by dagga, for Hendricks, “with the dagga inside him nothing mattered” (209), not even the fact that he was suspected of murder. The last few lines of the novel express this clearly:

> All right, Charlie Hendricks knew that he was running away from himself.
> And it’s when it’s yourself you’re running away from that you can never stop running. (215)

The scars of a schizophrenic, fractured society continue to run deep in a South Africa where issues of race and culture are ever-present. The cultural and racial boundaries that are crossed in *Willemsdorp* are accompanied by difficulty and pain, as seen through characters such as Hendricks, Marjorie and Lena. The narrator reminds his reader in the last few paragraphs that

> The backveld town of Willemsdorp was a place where Life was still spelt with an upper case L. It was Life with the mask off. It was Life lived with an intensity that city dwellers had forgotten generations back.
> The manner in which the people of the small town of Willemsdorp had their being was, on the surface, sufficiently placid. Under the surface it was an inferno; a maelstrom; a mad profluence, as life should be. It was rank with humanity, thick with humanity, heavy with lust, gusty with being. (214)

It is that very humanity that comes under the spotlight in the novel. It is at the point of collision of cultures, where boundaries are crossed, that new perspectives are shaped. For some, this works, and like Lena, they move on. Charlie Hendricks, on the other hand, remains stuck in his fear of moving forward. He fears the new, he fears change. For Marjorie, change happens to her, and by no choice of her own, as it is forced upon her and tragically her death is the result.

Willemsdorp is not an easy novel to read, particularly in a post-apartheid era when one is aware of the history that brought about the prejudices and behaviours described in the novel. It is also not an easy read precisely because Bosman does not at any time elide the cultural and racial boundaries. Rather he emphasizes these boundaries, drawing his reader into Bhabha’s Third Space, where the different cultures are either in contact or in conflict. It is at the intersection of these cultures that the bleak perspective of *Willemsdorp* surfaces. In time the difficulties resulting from the encounters will become less painful and be resolved

into a positive form of hybridity. Instead of fractured personalities, the boundaries will become fractured and new ways of being will enter the world. In this sense, the Third Space provides a space for empathy where cultural dilemmas can be resolved.

Bosman's novel *Willemsdorp* presents hybrid culture as narrative. He offers a fictionalised interpretation of a particular history, a specific moment. There is no happy ending and the novel does not offer resolution. *Willemsdorp* is a narrative which emerged from a specific moment in time, from the Third Space of racial encounter, and Bosman not only wrote about crossing boundaries but he himself crossed boundaries by reflecting history and turning it into fiction in order to critique the injustice, racism and hypocrisy of a minority South African society during the early days of apartheid.

Conclusion

Bosman the *Verbindingsteken*

Bosman was described by Hennie Aucamp as a writer who acted as a "verbindingsteken" or hyphen between the two cultures of Afrikaans and English, bringing them together. This joining of cultures and languages brought about a cultural and linguistic hybridity that is evident in Herman Charles Bosman as well as his work.

This thesis has shown that hybridities in Bosman's texts were various and not straightforward, and that these were echoes not only of Bosman's own ambivalence but also of his own personal hybridity and cultural intermingling. The main concerns of this thesis relating to hybridity, identity and language were discussed in the first chapter, and thereafter textual analysis followed.

Biographies on an enigmatic man were seen to offer a range of different opinions, capturing the contradictions that were evident in Bosman's life and work. His essays and journalistic pieces that were analysed showed Bosman espousing a new, indigenous South African culture, yet at the same time slivers of prejudice appeared. It is especially in the short stories that Bosman captured a confluence of cultures that is truly South African. In contrast to the lightness expressed in the short stories, *Willemsdorp* pointed to the deepest levels of the ugliness of apartheid. Bosman's manner of showing the raw, gritty life experiences of characters grappling with the injustice of apartheid legislation effectively illustrated the tensions of what Bhabha called the Third Space.

Through these chapters I have shown the different aspects of Bosman and his work: the good, the bad, and the hybrid. Certainly as evidenced in most of his fiction, Bosman brought together both English and Afrikaans cultures which he himself represented as an anglicised Afrikaner. Other cultures, including "African" and "Malay", were also noted by Bosman in his writing and foregrounded where relevant.

This thesis has not managed to pay attention to the presence of hybridities in other Bosman texts such as his seminal prison memoir, *Cold Stone Jug*. Examples of linguistic hybridity in *Cold Stone Jug* are plentiful, as much of the book contains prison slang. Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque would also prove useful in understanding Bosman's use of subversive humour in this memoir. Given space constraints, it was not within the scope of

this particular study to analyse more texts than have already been tackled, and unfortunately *Cold Stone Jug* had to be omitted.

Globally there is a growing interest in issues surrounding hybridity and cultural difference, and South African contemporary literature tackles these issues frequently. Bosman's texts were precursors to this body of literature, and yet some of the texts discussed in this study are relatively unknown. Many of Bosman's short stories however are most certainly still popular and relevant even half a century later, in a post-apartheid South Africa.

One of the lessons that has been learned from Bosman is that hybridity is an essential aspect of South African culture. While on the whole, hybridity is positive, there are aspects that can be negative, as evidenced when Bosman captured a key moment when that hybridity was being put to pernicious use. Nonetheless, Bosman's writing prophetically imagined a hybrid, post-apartheid South African society.

It is hoped that this study will spark renewed interest in Bosman's work and in further research into his texts which certainly deserve more critical attention around the notions of literary, linguistic and cultural hybridities. Bosman the *verbindingsteken*, through his writing, clearly bridged the gap between distinct South African cultures: English and Afrikaans, and also between white and black. His ultimate desire was to see a hybrid South Africa that constituted a number of different cultures living together.

Bosman's vision of "An Indigenous South African Culture" has continued to unfold ever since he first wrote about it. Recently, an episode of the travelogue *Mooiloop* aired on SABC2 and featured a visit to the same Groot Marico that Bosman made famous in his stories. Viewers were shown a replica of the schoolhouse in which Bosman taught. The camera then panned across a Bakwana Homestead built by local Batswana people. One of the programme presenters, Denvor Phokaners, commented that it was "good to see all the cultures are represented here in Herman Charles Bosman terrain". These are words which would have warmed Bosman's hybrid heart.

Appendices

Appendix A: Illustrations

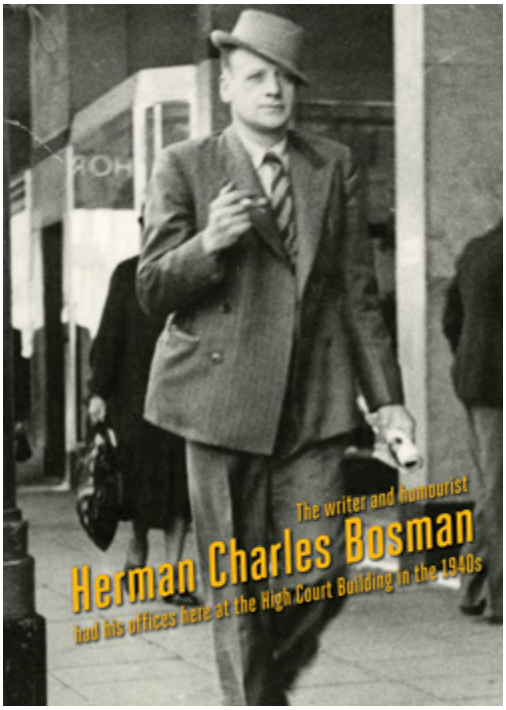

Fig.1. Herman Charles Bosman walking in Johannesburg.
(Photo: Harry Ransom Centre, University of Texas) [24]

[24] for further information, concerning due recognition for Bosman, see the official website of the city of Johannesburg <http://www.joburg.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6799:recognition-for-bosman&catid=122&Itemid=203#ixzz2pigrRoRO>

Appendix B: Chronology

Note: The timeline below has been taken from the chronology provided in Craig MacKenzie and Tim Sandham's book, *A Bosman Companion*, pages 9–13.

1867 Discovery of diamonds in Griqualand West.

1870-71 Diamond rush to Kimberley.

1877 Proclamation of Transvaal as British Crown Colony.

1879 Anglo–Zulu War.

1880–81 First Anglo–Boer War.

1883 Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* published.

1886 Discovery of main gold reef on the Witwatersrand.

1890 Cecil Rhodes becomes Prime Minister of Cape.

1895 Dr Jameson launches raid into Transvaal.

1897 Annexation of Zululand to Natal.

1899–1902 Second Anglo–Boer War.

1899–1900 Sol Plaatje writes his diary recording events during the siege of Mafeking (eventually published as *The Boer War Diary of Sol T. Plaatje* in 1973).

1905 HCB born, 3 February, at Kuils River, near Cape Town, the first son of Elisa (née Malan), a teacher, and Jacobus Bosman, a mine labourer. A second son, Pierre, is born in 1906.

1907 J. Percy FitzPatrick's *Jock of the Bushveld* published.

1910 Union of South Africa established.

1912 South African Native National Congress (SANNC) formed; Sol Plaatje is one of the founding members.

1913 Natives Land Act promulgated, in terms of which Africans are prohibited from owning land outside of designated reserves (7% of SA's land area).

1914–18 First World War.

1916 The Bosman family moves to Potchefstroom, the Malan family's home town. Sol Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* published.

1918 Jacobus Bosman finds a job on the Witwatersrand mines, and the family moves to Johannesburg. HCB is enrolled at Jeppe Central School.

1920, 21 HCB begins his sketches for *The Sunday Times*, and also publishes some material in *The Jeppe High School Magazine.*

1922 Matriculates from Houghton College after moving there from Jeppe High, where he has a chequered academic and disciplinary record. White miners strike; Rand Revolt.

1923 Registers at Wits University and the Normal College for teachers.

1924 Sarah Gertrude Millin's *God's Step-Children* published.

1925 HCB contributes various pieces to *The Umpa*. Jacobus Bosman dies in a mining accident; Elisa Bosman marries William Russell. Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* published in Sesotho (published in English translation in 1931); Pauline Smith's *The Little Karoo* published.

1926 Marries Vera Sawyer in January; is posted two days thereafter to a small farm school at Zwingli. Publishes a sketch describing this in *The Umpa* ("A Teacher in the Bushveld"). The first issue of the literary review *Voorslag* appears under the editorship of Roy Campbell, William Plomer and Laurens van der Post; Plomer's *Turbott Wolfe* and Pauline Smith's *The Beadle* published.

July: Returns to the family home in Johannesburg for mid-year holidays; is evidently very unhappy about the atmosphere in the home and the relations between the Russells and the Bosmans. On the eve of his return a scuffle breaks out between Pierre and David, and HCB fires a shot into David Russell's bedroom; David is killed instantly. Is arrested and appears in court on 11 and 15 November; is sentenced to death by hanging and taken to Pretoria Central Prison, where he is placed on death row.

1927 Jan: Is reprieved and sentenced to 10 years' hard labour; this sentence is later reduced by half. Begins writing poetry and sketches in prison; some are published.

1929 The satirical journal *The Sjambok* appears under Stephen Black's editorship; Deneys Reitz's *Commando: A Boer Journal of the Boer War* published. HCB's poem "Perhaps Some Day" appears in *The Sjambok*, 5 July 1929.

1930 31 May: HCB's sketch "In the Beginning" appears in *The Sjambok.* Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi: An Epic of South African Native Life a Hundred Years Ago,* the first full-length novel by a black South African writer in English, and Roy Campbell's *Adamastor* published.

Sept: HCB released from Pretoria Central Prison.

Dec: The literary magazine *The Touleier* appears under the editorship of HCB and Aegidius Jean Blignaut. It carries HCB's first Schalk Lourens story, "Makapan's Caves".

1931 *The Touleier* carries HCB's second Schalk Lourens story, "The Rooinek", in two parts (Jan–Feb and Mar). HCB and Blignaut launch *The New L.S.D.* following the death of Stephen Black in Aug. The launching of *The New Sjambok* by the pair follows. Various HCB stories, including "In Church" (2 Jan) and "The Nightdress" (13 Feb), appear in its pages. HCB's poetry pamphlet *The Blue Princess* appears.

1932 HCB's second and third small poetry collections, *Mara* and *Rust*, appear. HCB marries Ella Manson in Oct.

1933 *Jesus: An Ode* appears. The year also sees the appearance of two short-lived Bosman–Blignaut publications – *Mompara* and *The Ringhals*, which carries HCB's story "A Nun's Passion: A Christmas Story", and lands the pair in court on charges of blasphemy.

1934 HCB and Ella leave for England, where they spend most of the next six years, with some visits to the continent. "Veld Maiden", the first of a set of classic OSL stories HCB sends back from London over the next few years, appears in *The South African Opinion* in Dec.

1935 *The South African Opinion* carries "The Music Maker" in July, and "Mafeking Road" in Aug.

1936 HCB begins work at *The Sunday Critic*, a short-lived four-page tabloid. It carries some of his reviews and essays, as well as the lurid series *Leader of Gunmen*, featuring the gangster Claude Satang, which HCB intends ultimately to publish in novel form (nothing comes of this in the end).

1937 *The Sunday Critic* ceases publication in Feb. HCB goes into a lengthy creative hiatus.

1939–45 Second World War; the Bosmans are repatriated to SA in 1940.

1941–42 HCB publishes a number of journalistic pieces in various SA periodicals.

1943 Mar–Oct: Takes job as editor of *The Zoutpansberg Review and Mining Journal* in Pietersburg; this provides the setting for the novels *Jacaranda in the Night* and *Willemsdorp*; meets Helena Stegmann and begins relationship with her; is fired from *The Zoutpansberg Review* following a court appearance in Oct on charges of procuring an abortion; is later released after Helena drops charges; the Bosmans return to Johannesburg late in the year.

1944 HCB divorces Ella in Feb and marries Helena in Mar; takes on job as literary editor of relaunched *South African Opinion*. HCB begins the most productive period of his writing life: from this point on until his death he produces dozens of Schalk Lourens stories and scores of journalistic pieces.

1946 Peter Abrahams's *Mine Boy* and Es'kia Mphahlele's first collection, *Man Must Live and Other Stories*, published.

1947 *Jacaranda in the Night* and, later, *Mafeking Road* published.

1948 Begins publishing numerous Bushveld stories in the bilingual periodical *On Parade*; several stories appear in Afrikaans versions, sometimes before their appearance in English (the notable example here is "Tot Stof"). The Herenigde Nasionale Party (later Nasionale Party) wins general election with its policy of apartheid; Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* published.

1949 *Cold Stone Jug* and *Veld-trails and Pavements* published. Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act promulgated; Nadine Gordimer's *Face to Face*, her first collection of short stories, published.

1950 On 15 Apr begins the Voorkamer sequence with "The Budget"; the series will run to 80 pieces in all. Immorality Act amended; Population Registration Act; Group Areas Act; Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* published; the stage show *King Kong*, with music by Todd Matshikiza, first performed. HCB begins work as proofreader for *The Sunday Express.*

1951 (March) First issue of *Drum* magazine appears in Cape Town as *African Drum.* 14 Oct: HCB dies of cardiac arrest at his home in Lombardy East. 19 Oct: His last Voorkamer piece, "Homecoming", appears after his death.

1953 Bantu Education Act; South African Communist Party (SACP) formed underground.

1955 Sophiatown, a black 'location' northwest of Johannesburg, and the home or temporary abode of many artists and musicians, destroyed.

1956 ANC approves Freedom Charter; 20 000 women march to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against the extension of the pass laws to women; Nadine Gordimer's *Six Feet of the Country* published.

1957 Lionel Abrahams publishes his selection of HCB's journalistic essays as *A Cask of Jerepigo.*

1959 Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) formed; Es'kia Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue* published.

1960 Sharpeville massacre; State of Emergency declared; ANC and PAC banned; Douglas Livingstone's first poetry collection, *The Skull in the Mud*, published.

1961 South Africa withdraws from the Commonwealth and becomes a republic; ANC adopts armed struggle.

1963 Lionel Abrahams's selection of HCB's Bushveld stories appears as *Unto Dust*. Bloke Modisane's autobiography, *Blame Me on History*, and Dennis Brutus's poetry collection *Sirens, Knuckles, Boots* published.

1965 Abrahams's perennial seller, *Bosman at His Best*, appears.

1966 Verwoerd assassinated; Vorster becomes Prime Minister; Sydney Clouts's *One Life*, the only collection of poems to appear in his lifetime, published. District Six cleared and declared a white area. Like Sophiatown, District Six was the home or meeting place of numerous writers and musicians.

1969 Jan: First performance of *Willem Prinsloo's Peach Brandy*, Percy Sieff's adaptation for the stage of some HCB stories and extracts from *Cold Stone Jug*, in Cape Town. Nov: Patrick Mynhardt opens his one-man Bosman show, *A Sip of Jerepigo*, which runs for over three years, and is followed by various other one-man Bosman shows by Mynhardt, until his death in 2007. Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* published.

1971 Abrahams's selections of HCB's Voorkamer stories appear as *Jurie Steyn's Post Office* and *A Bekkersdal Marathon*. Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali's *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum* published.

1972 Mongane Serote's *Yakhal'inkomo* published.

1973 Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* published.

1974 Abrahams's selection of HCB's poetry appears as *The Earth is Waiting*. J.M. Coetzee's *Dusklands* and Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist* published.

1976 *Sunflower to the Sun*, Valerie Rosenberg's biography of HCB's life and work, the first full-length work on HCB, appears. The Soweto Uprising occurs; resistance becomes widespread and hundreds are killed; others go into exile. 1970s and 1980s poetry collections by Mafika Gwala, Oswald Mtshali, Mongane Serote, Sipho Sepamla, Ingoapele Madingoane, and others go on to reflect both a new urgency of tone and a more militant artistic agenda. Sipho Sepamla's *The Blues Is You in Me* published.

1977 *Willemsdorp* appears, with some cuts to get round the censorship board. Steve Biko murdered in detention, sparking an international outcry.

1978 Ahmed Essop's *The Hajji and Other Stories* published; the first issue of *Staffrider*, founded and edited by Mike Kirkwood, and espousing a workerist, egalitarian aesthetic, appears: it will go on to publish the work of Njabulo Ndebele, Mtutuzeli Matshoba, Miriam Tlali, Ahmed Essop, and Mothobi Mutloatse, among many others.

1979 Mtutuzeli Matshoba's *Call Me Not a Man* published.

1980 Stephen Gray's selection of HCB's stories, *Selected Stories*, appears.

1981 HCB's *Collected Works* appears in two volumes; this edition gathered all of the published HCB volumes to date, and was the most comprehensive gathering of his work at the time. Patrick Mynhardt releases his selection of Bosman favourites as *The Bosman I Like.* Mongane Serote's *To Every Birth Its Blood* and Achmat Dangor's *Waiting for Leila* published.

1982 Ruth First assassinated by parcel bomb in Maputo.

1983 Jeremy Cronin's *Inside* and Njabulo Ndebele's *Fools and Other Stories* published.

1985 Ellen Kuzwayo's autobiography, *Call Me Woman,* published.

1989 P.W. Botha suffers stroke; F.W. de Klerk becomes State President; De Klerk meets Mandela for the first time; Ivan Vladislavić's *Missing Persons* published.

1990 De Klerk unbans ANC, SACP and other opposition parties; Mandela's unconditional release announced.

1991 De Klerk announces that all apartheid laws will be repealed; Mandela elected president of the ANC; Nadine Gordimer wins Nobel Prize for Literature.

1993 Mandela and De Klerk announced joint winners of the Nobel Peace Prize.

1994 First democratic elections held; Mandela becomes president; his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* published.

1996 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) begins hearings.

1998 Human & Rousseau begin releasing two volumes per year of the Anniversary Edition of Herman Charles Bosman, which will end in 2005, with all of his work released in 14 volumes. TRC report published; Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull* published.

1999 Thabo Mbeki succeeds Mandela as president; J.M. Coetzee's Booker-winning *Disgrace* is published.

2003 J. M. Coetzee awarded Nobel Prize for Literature.

2005 To mark the centenary of HCB's birth, Stephen Gray's biography, *Life Sentence: A Biography of Herman Charles Bosman,* the most detailed and comprehensive examination of his life and work to date, is released. Valerie Rosenberg releases the third version of her biography, *Herman Charles Bosman – Between the Lines.* The 14-volume Anniversary Edition concludes with *Homecoming: Voorkamer Stories (II).*

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Note: When short stories or articles that have been published in more than one anthology are referenced, first publication details (where available) are followed by an abbreviation of whichever collection they are cited from in this thesis, as follows:

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CV – Complete Voorkamer Stories
HCB – Herman Charles Bosman
MC – Makapan's Caves
MLO – My Life and Opinions
RB – Recognising Blues
SV – Starlight on the Veld
UD – Unto Dust (Ed. Stephen Gray)
UDOS – Unto Dust and Other Stories (Ed. Craig MacKenzie)
UE – Uncollected Essays
VS – Verborge Skatte.

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