

Point of View in a Divided Society:  
“The Parts” (a novel) and “Putting ‘The Parts’ Together” (an exegesis)

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## Abstract

The thesis comprises a novel that is written from four points of view and an exegesis on how a multiple-narrative text affords a useful means of depicting a divided society. In the creative work, each of the interconnected stories is presented from a different perspective, with its own distinct voice and dominant images. The theoretical component attempts to lodge the polyphonic experiment within a postcolonial, post-apartheid and transnational context.

“The Parts” turns on what appears to be a home invasion in contemporary South Africa as Lily Blake is attacked by Siyaya Songongo in her suburban house. However, in a land that is still torn by the effects of historical separation and discrimination, things are seldom what they seem and the central characters have more in common than they suspect. For Riaan Niemand, whose girlfriend is Lily’s daughter, the violent assault is a reminder of why his family immigrated to Australia. Set further back in time, Cikiswa’s tale is told by a group of women affected by HIV/AIDS. Lily’s version of events reveals an absorption in art, detaching her from harsh realities. And Siyaya’s rite of passage into adulthood is twisted into a journey of another kind. “The Parts” deals with themes of identity and belonging.

The quartet of separate vantage points offers a method for aligning form and content, with a composite picture emerging from the accounts. Research questions pivot on finding the strongest ways to set up and sustain the disparate approaches while deciding how best to reconcile them. William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* serves as the structural model while André Brink’s *A Chain of Voices* establishes apartheid’s legacy of conflict. Close analysis of point of view in Phaswane Mpe’s *Welcome to our Hillbrow*, Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying*, Antjie Krog’s *A Change of Tongue* and Yvonne Vera’s *Butterfly Burning* helps to locate “The Parts” within a broader literary framework.

## Statement of Originality

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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