A woman of all times: A discourse-semiotic approach to André Brink’s Philida

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Abstract: Novels as cultural products are the representatives of a society which has been configured with a variety of discourses. Being involved in perpetual discursive practices, these discourses are constantly attempting to hegemonize their desired meanings via utilizing discursive strategies to marginalize the competing discourses. With Philida, André Brink makes a strong statement on the formation of the identity and power of indigenous African women. He sheds lights on the discursive practices that a female black African slave depicts to not only to gain voice, but also to construct a solid identity and power. Pertaining to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s notions in discourse theories, the authors of this paper analyze Philida to provide a new reading of the construction of a woman’s identity. Thereby, first we are going to discover the conflicting sub-discourses which have had impacts on the formation of the characters’ identity and power. Subsequently, since novels are the reflections of societies, we explore the major conflicting discourses in the actual society of South Africa. Finally, not only will we discuss Brink’s views on the identities of Afrikaners and the indigenous Africans, but also we argue women’s lower discourse has initiated to elevate during the timespan from slavery to post-apartheid era.

Subjects: Semiotics; Language & Power; Stylistics; Language & Literature; Literature; Post-Colonial Studies; Literature & Culture; Literary/Critical Theory

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Aye, we use language to communicate. But with an effective communication, we can highlight our thoughts in everyday conversations. It is also possible to gain power and to define our identity by special ways of talking. Interestingly, we can follow the same idea among the characters in novels. If we read novels as carefully as possible, we can discover which special ways of talking or discourses become powerful/powerless. Discovering power relations in a fictional story, we can detect social and political conflicts in a real society. Laclau and Mouffe are two experts in discourses theories. They believe that social and political positions, identity, meaning, and power are determined through discursive practices. Since South Africa has been a country full of historical upheavals, reading André Brink’s Philida (focusing on its African and Afrikaner characters) and with regard to discourse theories, we can discover the dominants and subordinates in discursive struggles.
1. Introduction

In all social phenomena which are made up of discursive constructions, individuals can enter power relations via specific utilizations of language. It is through perpetual discursive practices that the minor and major discourses strive to constitute a firm establishment for their locus and power; nevertheless they are marginalized and eliminated. Historically there have been long lasting oppositions between the indigenous Africans and the Afrikaners in South Africa due to racial discriminations. Such ethnic prejudices and injustices have been pondered upon by André Brink (1935–2015) as an outstanding South African author in his last novel *Philida* (2012), which is mostly focused on a female black character. The question is whether it is enough to conclude that the identity of female black African has been configured due to the discursive struggles between the sub-discourses of indigenous African and the Afrikaners? What are other sub-discourses which are involved in discursive practices during the course of the story? Concerning the larger social sphere in South Africa, there must be major discourses whose struggles would result in clashes among minor sub-discourses in smaller social spheres. Is it possible to find relations between the sub-discourses in a literary work and the major discourses in South Africa? Only a discourse-semiotic analysis of the novel would yield thorough findings regarding the orders of sub-discourses in a novel and its associations with major discourses in actual society.

A glance at the novel renders it as a representation of a system of master/slave in which the Africans have long been subdued by the Afrikaners. A second glance would attest that both Afrikaner and African women have been extensively dominated by the domineering sub-discourses of patriarchy as well. In other words, Nkomo asserts that women in all races have been subjugated by both patriarchy and colonization in South Africa. Likewise they were regarded as the second class in status and under the control of their fathers and husbands (2016, p. 73). Consequently, black women were considered twice lower in locus due to their race and gender. In such conditions, Brink’s main character as a protesting slave woman in the nineteenth century is ahead of her time, since according to Nowrojee, women’s struggles with racial and gender discrimination began in 1913, as they initiated to the struggle against “the application of passes” for women (1995, p. 12). Alongside with the dominance of patriarchy, racial and gender discriminations, there must definitely be other domineering sub-discourses whose oppositions and competitions have the potential to construct the identity of the actual/fictive women in the society/novel.

Pertaining to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s notions in discourse theories, this research helps to avoid simplifications on the formation of identity and power in literary texts. Thus, while attempting to provide a comprehensive identity analysis for the readers, this research will also utilize an effective method to make the findings as data-based, impartial, and comprehensive as possible. Prior to initiating the analysis, it is significant to have a brief review on scholarly publications on Brink’s *Philida* to highlight the unique status of the present study.

2. Review of literature

This section is going to be concerned with the works of critics, researchers, and scholars on Brink’s novels generally; and on *Philida* (2012) particularly. This novel is a rather recent work, thus there are few available academic publications focused on Brink’s final literary text at the time of writing this paper. Nevertheless the recurrent discussed themes and depicted approaches are going to be surveyed. The objective is to render the areas of studies which have already been considered as well as overlooked regarding the selected case study to affirm the present research’s unique status.

*Philida*, which has been written during post-apartheid era, deals with racial and gender inequalities throughout the age of slavery in South Africa which began in 1652 and lasted up to 1834 when suppressions were obliterated by the British Empire. Besides representing severe oppressive
circumstances for the blacks, the novel renders a harsh portrayal of Christianity. In *Led into Mystery* (2013), De Gruchy ponders upon Christian theological perspective and argues the negative and terrifying depictions of the Lord by some philosophers such as Nietzsche in his works and some writers like Brink in *Philida* and *A Fork in the Road* (p.103). Indeed, religion is one of the dominant sub-discourses in some of Brink’s novels where it is exploited as a tool to subvert the antagonistic forces through chastisement and marginalization to sustain the hegemony of dominant discourse of the whites. Since *Philida* has been authored during post-apartheid, the present paper is to explore the re-emergence of such deep-rooted discourses as slavery and racial inequalities with modern appearances.

The significance of reconstructing identity and gaining freedom has been focused in “Journey of Women from Enslavement to Empowerment in André Brink’s *Philida*” (2015), where Bhosale Vithoba explores how a historical figure rises above her subservient locus in a society which has been packed with unpleasant traditions and customs. Vithoba also refers to the women’s movements in the recent years in South Africa. Insufficiently this article misses a strong methodology and critical application to the novel despite pointing out to a female slave coping with white patriarchy and mentioning the faults with South African tradition concerning deteriorating women’s degraded place. In another article “Ambivalence in the relationship between slave and master in *Philida* by André Brink” (2015), Bothma discusses issues such as inconsistency, ambivalence, and master/slave from postcolonial standpoints. Likewise she has attempted to relate the novel to the history of South Africa. However, since the text is in Afrikaans, the paper is not accessible enough for all international readers.

The next disputable theme in many of Brink’s works is violence. In “Giving Voice: Narrating Silence, History, and Memory in André Brink’s *The Other Side of Silence* and *Before I Forget*” (2005), Kossew explores the significance of violence, oppression, and revenge in the mentioned novels, as they would revitalize history and memory. She also emphasizes the silenced marginalized voices and focuses on the configured identities being recaptured by a male narrator. Violence and oppression have been utilized as discursive tools in *Philida* as well. Yet they are going to be treated as discursive strategies of dominant discourses.

Concerning the depicted approaches to Brink’s post-apartheid works, the following publications can be noted. In “A Cultural Analysis of Identity in André Brink’s Post-Apartheid Novels” (2012), Bezdoode focuses on Brink’s six novels, excluding *Philida*, and scrutinizes the formation of national identity in the South African context with regard to the theories of Homi Bhabha, Benedict Anderson, and Anthony Smith. As many scholars incessantly have made use of Bhabha’s prominent theories to discuss identity crisis in post-colonial states, Bezdoode likewise has focused on “hybrid” and “ambivalent” aspects of identity. He suggests that in previously colonized countries like South Africa, the boundaries among ethnic groups have been distorted (Bezdoode, 2012, p. 6). In other words, Bhabha proposes the term “dissemination” as the current state of most multicultural nations and he argues that a nation cannot have a complete uniform nature due to the presence of the “discourse of minorities,” “antagonistic authorities,” and “cultural differences” (1994, p. 146).

Regarding the ethnic groups which manage to retain their locus in a nation over time, Anthony Smith proposes four distinct ethnic communities including “imperial-dynastic, communal-demotic, emigrant-colonist and diasporarestoration” who might be involved in national struggles to gain a highlighted position (1999, p. 125). Indeed the Afrikaners in South Africa are the epitomization of an emigrant-colonist community. Bezdoode has focused on A. Smith’s third group and has focused on the Afrikaners’ attempt to devise a national identity in Brink’s selected novels (2012, p. 13) which do not include *Philida*. *Philida* includes both Afrikaner and African voices which must be discursively scrutinized to discover how Brink has strove to represent African/Afrikaner’s identities.

In “Reading the ideological subtext in André Brink’s *An Instant in the Wind* and Patrick White’s *A Fringe of Leaves*” (2001b), Wenzel provides a comparative study of the two novels while
approaching their texts via focusing on Friedman's reading strategies including vertical and horizontal analyses. Thereby, she has presented a post-structuralist reading of Brink’s novels. In the next book, Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing: André Brink, Breyten Breytenbach, and J.M. Coezeet(1996), Jolly has argued the Colonial and post-colonial aspects of Brink's novels. Jolly employs mainly the notions of Freud, Hegel, and Hucheon to have comprehensive arguments on oppression and violence. Among Brink's fictions, only A Dry White Season and A Chain of Voices have been meticulously scrutinized in this book.

In Postkoloniale Perspektiewe in Enkele Romans van André P. Brink (2009), Mathilda Bothma has explored three phases of pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial eras in South Africa to study the representation of these phases in Brink's novels. She has also focused on the aspects of postmodernism, post-structuralism, and eco-criticism in South African context. Similar to many researchers, Bothma has applied popular postcolonial theories of Said and Bhabha to Brink's works. Yet interestingly, Bothma suggests that ecological approaches to colonialism are interrelated with postcolonial readings, since it focuses on attempts to prohibit environmental exploitations (2009, p. 46). According to Derek Barker, ecocriticism has been often applied to Southern African literature to ponder upon the significant role of land and nature (2010, p. 11). Consequently, Bothma believes that the increased consideration to the relationship between man and nature has made environmental issues significant themes in many South African literary works such as in Brink’s An Instant in the Wind(1976) and The First Life of Adamastor (1993) (2009, p. 48). Yet although the mentioned dissertation has been concerned with several approaches, very rarely it refers to discursive struggles in the Philida, and there is no application of discourse theories to the novel.

As the final depicted approach by literary researchers to Brink's works, magical realism can be mentioned. Among South African novelists, the works of André Brink and Ben Okri have been discussed in Bowers' Magic(al) Realism (2005) from magical realistic aspects, since magical realism indirectly contributes in highlighting the controversial social and political problems. There is also an article, "The Fantasia and the Post-Apartheid Imagination" (2006), in which Ezeliore contemplates on the utilization of magical realism in Brink's Devil's Valley as a post-apartheid and post-colonial novel.

All in all, thematically there have been some researches focusing on the formation of identity in Brink's Philida, yet some of them are devoid of a new critical approach and some other are deprived of a qualified method. Very rarely the depicted case study has been explored in detail and with regard to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theories. Laclau and Mouffe's notions have been mostly utilized in real social and political domains, yet here the authors of this paper are going to enact their theories to a fabricated literary work with a focus on available signs and significations to provide a discourse-semiotic analysis.

3. Methods and designs

Discourse analysis has widely attracted the attention of many scholars, since the individuals’ talks and discursive practices not only define their identity and power, but also they have the potential to provide a foregrounded or a marginalized locus for them. Accordingly, Jorgenson and Phillips also affirm that the individuals’ ways of talking shape and are shaped by their “world, identities and social relations” (2002, p. 1). Since the present paper’s focus is going to be on the formation of the characters' identity and power, scrutinizing their appearance, manner, speeches, and thoughts would yield a powerful sense of their personalities. The following sections primarily trace the available signs associated with characterization to attain a sense of the characters’ personality and identity. While many approaches in linguistics looks for the systematic production of sentences and grammar, the present discourse analysis is going to put emphasis on general usage of language among the characters.

As to provide a discourse-semiotic analysis, it is fundamental to have a brief introduction on the selected theoreticians. Ernesto Laclau (1935–2014), the Argentinian political theorist, has offered a number of outstanding insights in post-Marxism. Many of his notable notions have been gathered
in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985) which has been co-authored with Chantal Mouffe, (1943-), the Belgian political theorist. Regarding sign and meaning, Laclau and Mouffe have notions similar to Saussurian ideas. According to Jorgenson and Phillips’s explications on Laclau and Mouffe’s notions, analogous to a sign which gains its meaning through its relation to other signs in a language, social actions become meaningful as they are viewed in relation with their differences and associations with other actions (2002, pp. 35–36). Thus all social phenomena such as “economy, the infrastructure, and institutions” are discursively constructed (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 30). Thus, for instance in Brink’s *Philida*, Philida’s social relations with Cornelis, Frans’ father. Indeed both have a determining influence on the configuration of her identity and power.

Methodologically, this paper is going to textually and contextually explore discursive practices in *Philida*. A three-step-model, including textual, intertextual, and contextual analyses, has been primarily offered by Soltani in “Discourse-Semiotic Analysis of a Separation” (Soltani, 2015) to have a discourse analysis of a Persian movie. The following sections are going to partly follow the suggested method of analysis.

Based on Laclau and Mouffe’s notion that man is regarded as a nodal point (2001, p. 117) this study treats the characters as nodal points which attempt to assign appropriate meanings to specific “value signifiers” around the very nodal point to provide their desired meanings. A “value signifier” refers to any kind of sign such as type of clothes, language, action, and so on that assist the reader to recognize a particular type of personality and identity, as Soltani states (Soltani, 2015, p. 53). Primarily, the research is going to textually explore the available signs and significations to identify nodal points and to argue the formation or loss of characters’ identities (The authors of this paper suggest that identities of families and social classes be surveyed with the same procedure to arrive at more comprehensive findings). Eventually, the orders of sub-discourse in the novel will be revealed through the main characters’ utilization of language and their specific constructed identity.

The contextual analysis in this research will be concerned with the actual historical circumstances in South Africa to relate the conflicts among sub-discourses to the struggles among the major discourses in the society. Significantly, the formation or loss of identities are going to be discussed with regard to Laclau and Mouffe’s key concepts including nodal points, moments, elements, chain of equivalence and difference, antagonisms, and dislocations.

### 3.1. “We got to change the way of the world”: the structure of Philida’s identity

The story begins with Philida’s account of making an official complaint against her master Cornelis Brink and Frans. There are many sections in which Philida is the first person narrator and she is involved in a number of discursive conflicts with the major and minor characters in the story. Thus, she is regarded as the first nodal point who attempts to renovate her identity and power in various circumstances. Due to the large amount of value signifiers associated with Philida’s personality in *Philida*, only the major ones have been assembled in Table 1 to provide an inclusive analysis of her personality.

Referring to Table 1, the constructed moments around Philida’s nodal point are as followed: being a member of the lower class; being subversive and submissive; not/being religious; valuing Christian norms; being moral, ethical, superstitious, and inferior; being a responsible mother, a story maker, and a power seeker; valuing myths and African (indigenous) traditional culture; becoming individualistic, literate, powerful, and not inferior; becoming an external antagonism, a Moslem, and a religious justifier.

Philida as an indigenously South African is a submissive girl to the patriarchal and racist structure of the society of the novel in both the Brink’s and the De la Bat’s household. As Table 1 renders, there are two major contradictions in Philida’s personality in both places. Although some
Table 1. The prominent aspects of Philida’s personality

| No. | Value Signifiers | Significations |
|-----|------------------|-----------------|
| 1   | Philida is a slave (Brink, 2012, p. 12). Her life has been filled with “the beatings and the knitting and the working day and night” (p.17). She has been a knitting girl since she was 9 (p.18). | Being a Member of the Lower Level in the Social Structure Being Inferior |
| 2   | She intends to “lodge a complaint against her owner” (p.12). She does not use the word “Baas” for her Boss (p.15). She admits that she has learned “to say no” (p.97) and later she disregards Cornelis’s request (p.130). | Being Subversive |
| 3   | She knows that protesting “makes things worse” (p.39). She returns back to Zandvliet (p.41). As she is taken to the auction, she “stops resisting” and accepts “it is what it is” (p.81). | Being Submissive |
| 4   | She swears to God (p.15) and thanks “the Lord God” (p.16). She believes that the superiority of the whites is “the way the Lord God made” (p.30) it. She baptizes her children although she has converted to Islam (p.154). She believes in Lord God’s helps (p.167). | Being Religious Valuing Christian Norms |
| 5   | She believes that “the Bible is an evil book” which ascribes a submissive locus for women (p.61). | Not Being Religious |
| 6   | The story begins with Philida being in the Slave Office to protest against her boss and to protect her children from being sold (p.15). She implores the person in charge in the slave office not to sell her children (p.37). She insists that “the Dubaas cannot do this, she objects. I lie with Frans now” (54). | Being Moral and Ethical Being a Responsible Mother |
| 7   | She believes in the existence of ghosts in the mirrors (p.27). She considers that “cats know all about ghosts” (p.27). She knows she “can sprinkle salt to scare off the ghosts” (p.42). | Being Superstitious |
| 8   | She narrates myths and stories for herself on the back to the village (40). She believes in the existence of ghosts (p.42) and the presence of gods and mythical creatures “when the very first people was walking in the mountains” (p.42). | Valuing Myths Being a Story Maker |
| 9   | There are many instances concerning traditional stories that she mentions in the novel. She believes in traditional stories retold by Ouma Nella (150). | Valuing African (Indigenous) Traditional Culture |
| 10  | She knows how to rationalize and religiously justify her speech (p.40). She names all the things she sees in the way back to the village (p.40). | Being a Power Seeker |
| 11  | She ponders upon her own role and her boss’s role in deciding on what she should do (p.43). She asserts that she does not require a pass (p.52). She insists on the idea that she is “nobody’s poesmeid” (p.53). She plans to have her “own patterns” while stitching (p.63). She intends to find a new boss for herself (p.65). | Longing for Individualism Becoming Individualistic |
| 12  | Philida protests against the Brinks (p.12). Her boss regards her as “a threat” (p.50). She calls her boss as “Ouma” (p.52). She learns to “say No” (p.97). | Becoming an External Antagonism |
| 13  | She learns how to read and write (p.108). She learns to “say no” to her boss (p.129). As Cornelis implores her to come back and kneels down in front of her, she does not approve (p.130). She insists that “I’m not going to step carefully if I know I can jump. Remember, I wearing shoes now” (p.159). | Becoming Literate, Powerful, and Not Inferior |

(Continued)
concepts such as black slave's inferiority and being moral and ethical have long been preserved for her as moments “with fixed meanings” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.110) around her nodal point, she overlooks such other norms as being submissive to the white discourse. Thus, as the first sign of incongruity in her identity, she has articulated submission besides subversiveness as a new concept which makes her an antagonistic force to the superior whites. If Chaudhari’s notions are acknowledged, in that, the moments of submission when Philida becomes silent should be regarded as a method of “resistance” (Chaudhari, 2017, p. 1), this incongruity might be overlooked. Yet, there are moments when Philida is inevitably silenced by the dominant discourses’ utilization of soft and hard strategies which will be argued later ahead.

Philida’s resistance is more noticeable in her speeches than in her silences. Her awareness of the significance of deconstructing a sedimented discourse to transform power relations makes her an opposing force to the hegemony of the superior white sub-discourse, as she asserts that “we got to change the way of the world...otherwise it will always stay the same” (Brink, 2012, p. 30). Thus she becomes an antagonistic force whose discursive practices result in disturbances in the white’s nodal point. Referring to Laclau and Mouffe’s notions, antagonisms occur due to any interruptions in the fixed meaning p. 124) in the nodal point of the sedimented discourses. Consequently, many power centers are formed, as Laclau explains (Laclau, 1990, p. 40). However, as it will later be discussed in the contextual analysis, such dominant sub-discourses as patriarchy and racism neutralize Philida/women’s antagonistic discourses.

The second source of contradiction in her personality is observable in the discrepancies among her established characteristics associated with her origins as an African and the Afrikaner’s norms of life and culture. There are some instances based on which she seems to be a Christian, a non-religious and at the same time a believer in African myths and superstitious. Her conversion to Islam increases the inconsistencies, as she asserts that “the children are now baptized in the name of Al-lah” (Brink, 2012, p. 155), while she also clings on to the African mythological stories narrated by Petronella (Brink, 2012, p. 150). Thus the second contradiction in her personality is rooted in the oppositions among indigenous traditions as well as Christian and Islamic norms whose fusion does not have negative impacts on morality and ethicality as major concepts around Philida’s nodal point.

According to the achieved significations in Table 1, Philida’s nodal point has been constructed with such major concepts as being a slave, moral and ethical; being submissive/subversive; being religious/irreligious, and superstitious; and valuing myths and indigenous traditional life and culture. Based on the “logic of equivalence and difference” that has been offered by Laclau and Mouffe, this array of features is called a chain of equivalence which assigns a specific identity that is in contrast with opposing forces with dissimilar features (2001, pp. 129–130). Frans’ betrayal to Philida who has constructed morality and ethics as fixed moments around her nodal point, initiates the process of identity loss for her. The value signifiers that render identity crisis in her in the novel are as followed: She fills her world with the ghosts, otherwise she feels “too empty” (Brink, 2012, p. 42); She emphasizes the preservation of her friendship with these ghosts and her shadow even

| No. | Value Signifiers | Significations |
|-----|------------------|----------------|
| 14  | She is taught about Islam and Allah by Labin in section XIX (pp.105–112). She learns about Muhammad and is taught how to read and write (p.108). She states that she is “with the Slamse now” (p.130). She insists that “Slamse people got their own Book...[which does not] talk to white people and shit. He talk to us” (p.130). She believes in Allah’s helps (p.167). | Becoming a Moslem, Becoming a Religious Justifier |
through her death (p.42); She feels lonely (p.43); Her true companions are natural elements such as the sun and the wind in Zandvliet (p.44); and she believes that she “belong [s] nowhere” (p.45).

The process of identity crisis for Philida is followed by three other processes of individualism, religious conversion, and identity recuperation. Referring to the value signifiers in Table 1, the process of individualism begins for her, as she becomes obsessed with her role in the construction of her future. Moving in the path of subversion, she becomes an antagonistic force who learns to “say No” (Brink, 2012, p. 97) to her master. Moreover, initiating the process of conversion to Islam, Philida reconstructs her nodal point with equality as a pristine signification. Subsequently, she gains inclinations to religiously justify the incidents from Allah’s standpoint, as Table 1 attests.

The more physical and spiritual individualism are grown in Philida, the more power to solve her identity crisis is achieved. While Philida becomes physically free due to the British laws in “the first of December in … 1834” (Brink, 2012, p. 152), she gains spiritual freedom, epiphany, and self-recognition as she arrives at Gariep and decides to wash herself in the river: “Brown is what I am and brown is what I want to be… Brown I will wash myself. A new person I will be” (Brink, 2012, p. 169). Finally, she arrives at the utmost of individualism and manages to recuperate her identity at the end of the novel where the story is finished with the first person pronoun “I” which is the indication of a free individual in body and soul.

Concerning Philida’s freedom from the burden of slavery at the end of the novel, it is essential to argue the modified locus of her nodal point. Although the slaves are announced to be free, they have to remain as “slaves for another four years,” but “to be slave means something else” (Brink, 2012, p. 158) now. From then onwards, the blacks have to continue to work for the white boss as a worker rather than a slave. Thus, the word “slave” is substituted by the word “worker.” Paradoxically they are free and also restricted to working for a superior. Consequently, since the articulation of a new meaning sustains the survival of the older meaning and the power of the sedimented discourse, it is essential to argue the issue with regard to Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theories.

Laclau believes that social order is obtained through hegemonic constructions which should be perpetually under articulation and rearticulations (1990, p.214). Since the articulation of pristine concepts would distort the already established significations and they would transform the individuals’ identities, the sedimented discourse should be involved in perpetual re-construction of its major concepts. A. M. Smith also affirms that a nodal point has a dominant role in the rearticulations of the position of other forces in a chain (1998, p. 89). In Philida, although the British announced the end of slavery, racial discrimination perpetuated to preserve the superiority of the whites and the inferiority of the blacks. Indeed as the higher locus of the affluent whites is retained, the lower locus of the slave class is going to be sustained via its transformation into the working class.

3.2. Philida’s utilization of soft strategies in discursive struggles

Due to the existence of dichotomies and the emerged crisis in Philida’s identity, it is crucial to explore the strategies that she utilizes in discursive practices to reveal her points of vigor in dealing with superior sub-discourses. Laclau and Mouffe hold that the domineering discourses eradicate other possible meanings and send them to the “field of discursivity” to sustain the present power (2001, p. 112). Although the subordinated black sub-discourse has been preserved in the field of discursivity in Philida, Philida acquires her power to foreground her locus via her relations with Frans and the laws that have been devised by the British concerning the assigned “working hours” and “a slave Protector” (Brink, 2012, p. 48). Thus, the attained hegemony of the Afrikaners will be at stake due to the emergence of oppositional significations.

Philida is an internal antagonism in the Brink’s household where she creates dislocations for the hegemonized racism, the master/slave power relations, and the Christian norms in the sub-
discourses of the whites, patriarchy, and religion. According to Laclau, since antagonisms result in the dislocation of the master signifier, the center must be rearticulated before other centers develop (1990, p. 40). As a result, there are a number of discursive struggles out of which, only one example has been depicted to discuss Philida’s utilization of strategies in discursive conflicts. Regarding the strategies, Soltani proposes soft and hard tactics that are used by the competing discourses to foreground themselves and to marginalize the Other discourses (2016, pp. 112–113). The depicted instance is related to the time when Philida is involved in a discursive struggle with Cornelis, as she comes back from the Slave Protector Office and is washing herself in the river. After a series of threatening and downgrading verbal tactics that Cornelis utilizes to accuse Philida for leaving the farm without a pass, he intends to thrash and assault (Brink, 2012, p. 54) her as hard strategies. Yet, Philida answers (Note: The significations associated with signs and value signifiers including the character’s speeches and reactions have been provided within the brackets):

Philida: The Oubaas cannot do this, she objects. I lie with Frans now. [She is rationalizing through ethics.]
Cornelis: You got a bloody cheek, meid! [He is downgrading her.]
Philida: I will tell the Ouvrou Janna, she says. [She is threatening him via his old wife as a superior’ power.]
Cornelis: What shit is this? I ask in a rage. You are no longer the Philida you used to be before you went to Stellenbosch. [His anger attests that his superior locus has been disturbed.]
Philida: My Ouma Nella tell me long ago what your father do to her, she says. [She is challenging her master and is rationalizing through ethics.]

All I [Cornelis] can say under my breath is, Bend over, Philida. When this young woman bends over, it is different from when I lie with Janna . . . She can hit you with a fist so you feel like you’ve run into a stone wall… with Janna, people say, I’m like a mouse on a sugarloaf… I cannot do anything. Not with the thought of Janna which Philida has brought back into my mind… [He has been defeated. His superior discourse has been dislocated.]

Philida: And now I want my child, she says. [She is demanding.]
I [Cornelis] hand her the baby still swathed in his blanket. (Brink, 2012, pp. 54–55)

Referring to the value signifiers in the above example, Philida utilizes rationalizing, threatening, and demanding languages to cope with the marginalizing discourse of her master. Regarding other employed verbal tactics by Philida, there are moments in which she is able to make her discourse be heard via ethically rationalizing and persuading the superior discourse. For instance, she manages to persuade Frans not to kill a cat in section II (Brink, 2012, p. 18) and to convince De la Bat to let her travel to Gariep in section XXVII (Brink, 2012, p. 158).

Besides treating the opposing discourses via soft usages of language, Philida utilizes the narration of stories and myths to prevent the de-centering of her Self and master signifier. The myths and stories in Philida are retold and made up by the slaves to have healing effects. For instance, on the way back to Zandvliet, Philida narrates stories concerning a “Water Snake,” “the Nightwalkers,” and “Water Women” (Brink, 2012, p. 40) to decrease the ordeal of the striding on the road.

Indeed these African stories fortify such concepts as hope and strength and reinforce the norms of indigenous life and culture in the blacks’ nodal points and identity. In other words, as Giddens and Giddens affirm, African slaves tried as they might to retain their tradition, language, and myths, though they were coerced to harsh labor and calamities (2006, p. 13). Likewise, African myths have been utilized to assist the Africans to deal with “the numerous uncertainties of life” (Giddens & Giddens, 2006, p. 16). Considering narrating the myths and stories as a soft tactic to preserve one’s self from devastation, the black characters in Philida make use of storytelling. Not only “all the slave women from the farms” (Brink, 2012, p. 41) but also Philida narrate stories to
“feel alive” again (p.40) and to forget their sufferings (p.43). Quite in the same manner, as Ouma Nella’s death creates “emptiness” for Philida, the gaps are filled for her by retelling African stories (Brink, 2012, p. 149). Here stories have been utilized as soft tactics to fill in the emerged fractures in the individuals’ identities and to rectify the created disorder in their mental states.

3.3. Philida’s nodal point and its moments
Having scrutinized the prominent value signifiers associated with Philida’s personality, it is revealed that Philida as a moral, ethical, submissive, and subversive character deals with the contradictions in her identity and finally she arrives at self-recognition, as she constructs a solid Self. Her journey from the Brink’s household to De la Bat’s family has had impacts on getting aware of her own identity as well. In struggling with oppositional discourses, she makes use of accusing, complaining, admitting, ethically rationalizing, threatening, demanding, persuading, and religiously justifying languages as well as storifying and narrating the indigenous myths as soft strategies in discursive practices. Philida’s nodal point has been represented in Figure 1.

The kind of identity that Brink has attributed to Philida, oscillates between the past and the present era. In other words, Brink intends to render the quality of women’s locus during slavery and post-apartheid periods. Although the longstanding master/slave relations might not be overtly visible in the present SA, its revitalization in various forms has sustained the black’s and women’s inferior locus in the society. The women’s movements and the struggles for freedom from 1910s (Nowrojee, 1995, p. 12) to the time of the publication of this novel, attests that the journey to freedom has not been over yet. The associated historical incidents will be more focused and elaborated in its due place where the relations between Philida of the novel and Philidas of South African society will be argued.

3.4. The structure of other character’s identities
The next significant character and nodal point is Cornelis Brink, who is involved in a number of discursive conflicts in the novel. As a white Afrikaner master, he is a member of the slave owning class. From the beginning of the novel, he is a powerful superior who copes with minute contradictions to his patriarchal white discourse. The British legislated rules concerning the black slaves and Cornelis’ economic problems as two external antagonisms on the one hand, and his knitting...
girl and some members of his family as internal antagonism on the other hand, lead his power and identity to undergo modifications.

The acquired data regarding the denotations of numerous signs associated with Cornelis’ character and identity render that Cornelis’ nodal point has long been articulated with fundamental moments including being a slave owner, a master, and a fraud; being religious, superior, moral, ethical, patriarchal, and dominated; valuing polarization, Afrikaners’ traditional life and culture, and Christian religious stories; not valuing Islamic religious rules; being possessive and materialistic; being an imperialist and a racist; not being moral and ethical; not valuing modern norms of life including the British rules; and becoming inferior and powerless.\(^1\)

An overview on Cornelis’ constructed nodal point attests that there are some incongruities in his overall structured personality based on which his identity has been configured. The first root of contradiction is traceable in his being moral and ethical concerning his sympathetic feelings for Philida and Petronella, yet his immorality and unethicality are overtly observable in his cruel treatments towards his son and the slaves. The second source of incongruities in Cornelis’ identity is associated with being simultaneously a superior patriarch and “a man just below the Lord God” (Brink, 2012, p. 33), yet he is also a dominated male figure by his wife and mother.

The third source of contradiction in his identity is related to the articulation of religion besides a number of such negative moments as being racist, imperialist, immoral, unethical, and a fraud around his nodal point. Significantly, Christian religion seems to be one of the fundamental causes of patriarchal domination and racial discrimination, since Cornelis recites Abraham and Isaac’s story from the Bible to repeat the significance of the submission of children to their father and Lord (Brink, 2012, p. 51) as well as to assert the superiority of the whites over other races (Brink, 2012, p. 55).

The final source of contradiction in his identity is detectable in the transformations that in the long run have appeared in the superior locus of his discourse. Subsequently the quality of his identity and power has been affected. The next section is going to focus on internal and external antagonisms that function as destructive forces for the sedimented sub-discourses of the whites and patriarchy.

Similar to Philida, as Cornelis enters discursive practices, there are transformations in his identity and power while coping with opposing sub-discourses of a protesting slave, Frans, his wife, and his mother as internal antagonisms as well as with the British rules as external antagonistic forces. Cornelis manages to hegemonize patriarchy, religion, and racism around his nodal point, since he is a strict master who harshly deals with a minute source of conflicts whether stemming from a rooster’s unpunctual call (Brink, 2012, p. 36) or out of his slave and children’s disobedience (Brink, 2012, p. 49) via physical punishment. Similar to Philida, Cornelis makes use of stories as a power fixator. There are various instances in which he refers to Biblical narratives to religiously justify his patriarchal and racist notions. Thus, he assigns a superior position for himself as the father in the household.

The British rules concerning the “working hours” and the establishment of an office of the “slave Protector” (Brink, 2012, p. 48) on the one hand, and Philida’s lodging a complaint against the Brink on the other hand, ignite the initiation of the process of becoming inferior and powerless for Cornelis. There are many instances in which Cornelis is involved in discursive struggles to highlight his power points with which he also defines his identity, yet only one sample has been depicted to render the types of strategies that he applies to fixate the vigor of his nodal point.

This example is associated with the time when Cornelis provides a downgraded locus for Philida, as she has been publically assaulted by two black slaves in section V (Brink, 2012, p. 29). Strategically, Cornelis intends to preserve the Brink’s reputation from getting stained as a result of Frans’ affairs with a slave girl and the produced children (Brink, 2012, p. 31). In this example,
Philida has already been silenced, yet Frans protests against his father’s superior discourse (Note: The significations associated with signs and value signifiers in the character’s speeches and reactions have been provided within the brackets):

Frans: Pa! I screamed at him [He is protesting.] How the bladdy hell dare you? [He is warning.]… Then I saw Pa’s arm with the long sjambok jerk back and the blow struck me in the face, just missing my eye. The pain was unbearable and I sank to my knees… [Cornelis harshly beats Frans to silence him.]

Cornelis: Stop it, you little shit! [Cornelis is demanding.]

Pure rage took over…I [Frans] managed to stagger to my feet…I realised something…how very small he was, half a head shorter than I…Until that day I had always thought of him as just my father, the Baas of Zandvliet, whose word was law, a man just below the Lord God himself…you had to obey [him] or find yourself struck down into the fire, sand and brimstone of hell. And now…he had turned into a small and rather ludicrous person…[Frans has found a breach in his father’s discourse.] How could I ever have felt scared of him? (Brink, 2012, p. 33)

As the discursive skirmish between Cornelis and his son continues, Cornelis makes use of demanding and asserting language, while downgrading Frans’ locus through making fun of him. However, neither his soft nor his hard tactics are vigorous enough to silence Frans, as France pursues his opposing speeches (Note: The significations associated with signs and value signifiers in the character’s speeches and reactions have been provided within the brackets):

Frans: I won’t ever listen to you again [Frans is asserting his decision.]… What you are doing here today is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord God. [He is opposing his father’s discourse and is religiously justifying the incident.]

Cornelis: Shut your trap, you little poephol! [His anger and swear word render that his discourse has been disturbed due to Frans’ subversive talk.]

Frans: Who is the poephol here? I asked him. [He is challenging and deconstructing Cornelis’ discourse.]

Cornelis: Francois Gerhard Jacob, today I swear I am going to kill you! [He is threatening Frans to marginalize his subversion.]

Frans: Let’s see who gets killed, I shouted back, completely beside myself. [Farns is also threatening him back to retain his foregrounded locus.]

That was when he swung up his right hand to strike out again with the long hippopotamus Sjambok [Cornelis opts to thrash him when verbal talks have been useless]…I managed to grab the whiplash and jerk it away with such fury that he lost his balance and stumbled forward, landing on all fours next to me. [Frans manages to defeat his father through a fierce physical reaction.] (Brink, 2012, p. 34)

The above discursive struggle between Cornelis and Frans renders that they both apply soft and hard strategies to marginalize each other. Cornelis utilizes demanding, downgrading, asserting, and threatening languages as soft tactics and he applies thrashing and physical punishment as hard strategies to maintain the hegemony of his white patriarchal discourse. Finally, the discursive struggle is over via matriarchal intervention of Cornelis’ wife, as she states “that’s enough, both of you” (Brink, 2012, p. 34).

Another technique in treating oppositions is the deconstruction of the competing discourse which has been utilized by Frans in the above example. Torfing holds that as hegemony naturalizes the articulated objectivity in a discourse, deconstruction exposes the uncertainties and un-decidabilities of the other discourses (1999, p. 103). Thus, in the above discursive conflict, since Cornelis’ weak points have been illuminated for Frans, Frans manages to deconstruct the superior discourse through discursive practices including religiously justifying, challenging, asserting, and threatening
languages as soft policies. Frans also makes use of fierce physical reaction as hard tactics to ensure the deconstruction of the competing discourse.

During the course of the story, both the external and internal antagonisms lead Cornelis to his gradual identity crisis and loss of power. Although in most discursive struggles Cornelis’ discourse is foregrounded, he gradually enters the process of losing power and deconstruction which begin with losing his fortune, and it moves on to the establishment of the Slave Protector Office, and the slaves subversive reactions. The latter two issues, which are due to the British legislated laws, are indeed in contrast with the long established norms in Afrikaners’ traditional life and culture which hover around the whites’ superiority and the blacks’ submissiveness. As a result, both internal and external antagonisms provide the downfall of Cornelis’ superiority and solid identity. Noteworthily, here André Brink does not render a hopeful view of the Afrikaners’ traditional life and culture which have been under the impacts of severe patriarchy, harsh Christian norms, and strict racist attitudes.

The next prominent character and nodal point to be discussed here is Frans Brink. He is a member of the white slave owning class, yet he is not as strong as his brothers, since he is represented as a boy who spends time with Philida indoors (Brink, 2012, p. 23) and his future is decided for him by his parents (Brink, 2012, p. 29). As a result, he is involved in discursive struggles in most of which he is silenced via the intervention of patriarchal and matriarchal sub-discourses in most instances. Thereby it is not possible to assume a fixed identity for him, due to his perpetual oscillation between submission and subversion. As Frans suffers from the instability of personality, he is unable to construct his nodal point with the required vigor to get rid of over-submission to various characters’ discourses including those of Philida, Cornelis, Janna, and the Berrangé girl during the course of the story.

Surveying Frans’s discursive practices and the value signifiers associated with his speeches during the course of the story it is revealed that Frans’ chain of equivalence has been mostly constructed with such fundamental concepts as the white superiority, Christianity, and Afrikaner traditional life and culture as moments with fixed meanings around his nodal point. Likewise, it is Philida’s conversion to Islam that makes Frans overlook his feelings for her, since her nodal point is deprived of Christianity as the remaining similarity with that of Frans.

The next character to be discussed here is Petronella, Cornelis’ African mother. She is a member of the slave class and she has been set free by Cornelis who “bought her freedom” (Brink, 2012, p. 31). Her chain of equivalence equals being a member of lower level (slaves) in the social structure; being religious, irreligious, superstitious, and a religious justifier; valuing myths; observing indigenous traditional life and culture; and not valuing polarization. Based on the obtained value signifiers, the only observable dichotomy in Petronella’s personality is associated with her religious and superstitious ideas, since Petronella has been under the impacts of tradition and Christian religion. Yet here, tradition is mostly related to indigenous superstitious and mythical beliefs. It is noteworthy to mention that Petronella’s adaptation capability has made her fuse the principles in both African and Afrikaner’s culture and religion to prevent identity crisis.

The following minor character whose discursive practices have supplementary roles in determining further attributes of the white superior discourse is Janna Brink, Cornelis’ wife. The exploration of Janna’s speeches, actions, and behaviors in the novel renders that her chain of equivalence equals the following features: being a member of higher level (slave owning) in the social structure; being a superior master, matriarchal, and a domineering Mother; becoming inferior. Referring to the value signifiers, the only observable incongruity in her identity is associated with losing her superior status due to the Brink’s economic problems, since their possessions have been put into auction (Brink, 2012, p. 115). Consequently, Janna has been struck with identity crisis.

Labyn, the Muslim slave, is the next minor character to be argued. He is a member of the lower class in the social structure and he has constructed his nodal point with moments including being a slave, a story maker, and a Muslim; being moral, ethical, religious, and a religious justifier; valuing
traditional life and culture, myths, and religious stories; and not valuing Christian norms. Quite similar to Petronella whose identity bears contradictory signs related to the dichotomies between Christian religion and indigenous tradition; Labyn also believes in the Islamic teachings and has firm beliefs in African myths which have been rooted in indigenous traditional life and culture. Here again myth making and storifying have healing effects concerning the preservation of an individual’s identity and obstructing the de-centering of the Self due to the amount of ordeals the African have undergone “on the ship during the sea voyage” (Brink, 2012, p. 101), as an example.

In Philida, storifying has been consulted with the purpose of retaining the stability of personal identities and individual nodal points. The African characters including, Philida, Petronella, and Labyn strive to preserve the stability of their nodal point and identity through narrating mythical stories to cope with the emerged mental and physical ordeals. According to Jorgenson and Phillips, myths are often utilized to create effective spaces for discourses to advance their discursive negotiations (2002, pp. 39–40) and to preserve the unity of the chain of equivalence, as A.M. Smith states (1998, p. 89). In the same manner, both Cornelis and Laby employ religious stories to religiously legitimate their deeds and to marginalize other competing discourses.

Concerning the last minor characters in the novel, Bernabé de la Bat who is Philida’s second master, is a member of the slave owning class. Based on the obtained value signifiers and their significations, De la Bat’s chain of equivalence equals being a slave owner, superior, and master; valuing modern norms; and observing law and order. In comparison with Cornelis Brink who has been a portrayal of the utmost of the white malice in the novel, Bernabé de la Bat has been represented as a less cruel master whose identity has been articulated with very few signs of incongruities. Although Bernabé de la Bat highlights his superior power through such hard strategies as thrashing (Brink, 2012, p. 133), he is obsessed with Philida’s future after gaining her freedom (Brink, 2012, p. 128).

3.5. The fourth step in textual analysis: the orders of discourses in the represented society of the novel

So far the identities of characters have been explored via analyzing available value signifiers and their associated meanings in Philida. Based on the obtained details, this section has been focused on inducing the orders of sub-discourses. According to Jorgenson and Phillips, order of discourse includes several discourses which are involved in discursive struggles to fix their preferred significations (2002, p. 141). These conflicts normally contain the utilization of soft and hard strategies which have the requisite potential to either reinforce or decline the power of a discourse. Brink’s Philida is a portrayal of South African society of the nineteenth century when slavery was the major dominant mode of the era. However since Philida as a slave woman has been represented as a subversive character against patriarchy and racism, her struggles has some affinities with post-apartheid South African society as well. The textual analysis has revealed that there is a variety of contradictions in the identities of Brink’s characters. In fact, Meer believes that since both black and white women have been subjugated by patriarchal norms in social and political spheres (Meer, 2005, p. 37), patriarchy has managed to undermine race struggles.

On the whole, the smaller societies of the novel include 12 oppositional sub-discourses which have been in constant conflicts to foreground their own major concepts and to marginalize the competing sub-discourses via getting involved in discursive practices: Sub-discourse of the whites which has been represented by Cornelis, Frans, Janna, and Bernabé de la Bat; Sub-discourse of the blacks which has been rendered by Philida, Petronella, and Labyn; Sub-discourse Afrikaner traditional life and culture that has been represented by Cornelis, Frans, and Janna; Sub-discourse of African (indigenous) traditional life and culture that has been appreciated by African characters including Philida, Petronella, and Labyn; Sub-discourse of the British modern norms which has been rendered by the officer at the Slave Protector Office, has been condemned by Cornelis, and has been observed by De la Bat; Sub-discourse of Christianity, which has been portrayed by Cornelis, Petronella, and Philida; Sub-discourse of Islam which has been rendered by Labyn and Philida; Sub-
discourse of religion that has been represented by Cornelis, Petronella, Philida, and Labyn; Sub-discourse of superstition which has been propagated by Philida, Petronella, and Labyn; Sub-discourse of patriarchy that has been valued by Cornelis; Sub-discourse of submissive women, which has been represented by the African and Afrikaner women; and Sub-discourse of matriarchy which has been revealed though Janna and the Berrangé girl.

Table 2 displays the oppositional sub-discourses, which have been involved in discursive struggles in the South Africa of the novel. In addition to the detected orders of sub-discourses in the novel, there are definitely major competing discourses which are going to be discussed in next section while concentrating on actual circumstances in the society of South Africa during the associated era.

3.6. The contextual analysis: the interrelations between Philida and history

Up to now, this paper has been concerned with textual analysis of Brink’s depicted novel. This section intends to explore contextual social and political circumstances which have had noticeable impacts on the formation of Brink’s thoughts and cultural products. As the orders of sub-discourses in the smaller social spheres have been discovered, now the question is why have the discovered oppositional and interrelated sub-discourses appeared in the selected novels? In order to answer this question, one should look for the actual historical circumstances before or during the publication of the novel.

Since colonization in South Africa has led to a huge number of historical upheavals during the ages, power struggles and identity crisis have been thorny problems. Historically South Africa has been originally inhabited by the indigenous African. According to Landau’s explications, this country used to be a “world of tribes” comprised of a number of ethnicities which were governed through customs rather than politics (2010, p. 1). The African traditional life and culture have been based on what their fathers used to believe in and preach. As a result, not only were the indigenous tribes governed through patriarchy, but also they used to peruse the ways of their ancestors. In other words, Landau affirms that the “discourse of ancestry” had been configured with men as decision makers about the tribes’ future and power (2010, p. 16). Thus community, tribalism, patriarchy, and subordinated women have been long among major concepts and dominant discourses for the South Africans.

Before the arrival of the foreigners in South Africa in the 17th century, the discourses of tradition and the indigenous South African were also among the overriding master signifier in the very region. Referring to Thompson’s elaboration, most South African tribes were managed through Chiefdom (p.14) and their communities were highly hierarchical, as “men controlled women, elders controlled youths …and … chiefs controlled commoners” (2000, p. 23). However, as Thompson asserts, the entries of Dutch traders and European incomers had impacts on the emergence of modernity in South Africa (2000, p. 33). In the next two centuries, upon the arrival of the Dutch and British settlers and the emergence of Western codes and values as new grand discourses in South

| The Oppositional Sub-Discourses |
|---------------------------------|
| White                           |
| Afrikaner traditional Life and Culture ←→ African (Indigenous) Traditional Life and Culture |
| Christianity                    |
| Religion                        |
| Superstition                    |
| Equality                        |
| Submissive Women                |
| Matriarchy                      |

Table 2. The Orders of Discourses in Philida
Africa, such discourses as the white/foreign imperial dominance, Christian religion, and Capitalism were transferred into this traditional society.

Regarding the traditional South Africa, Majeke holds that the African tribes were destroyed for the sake of a “Christian capitalist civilization” which has been prioritizing the significance of properties and materials via usurping the land, products, and laborers’ working powers (2016, p. 1). Thus the triggering point of the struggles between the major discourses of tradition and modernity in the society was upon the arrival of the foreigners whose presence resulted in the discursive conflicts between the discourses of indigenous and foreign. Accordingly there have been long lasting discursive struggles between the two major discourses of black and white.

Besides the British incomers’ roles on the lives of the indigenous residence in SA, they have had impacts on the social and economic situation of the Dutch settlers. F. Shelley remarks that the British abolished slavery in 1834 when the Boer or the Dutch speaking population should not continue their slaveholding (2013, p. 363). This British action resulted in Boer’s reaction and dissatisfactions, since the Boers believed in their own superiority and they could not approve of the equality of races, as Abrams states (2008, p. 21). Consequently, the Boers instigated a great movement known as the Great Trek. According to the historical data regarding South African history, “the Great Trek 1835–1846” refers to the Boer’s migration “into the interior of Southern Africa in search of land where they could establish their own homeland, independent of British rule” (2011, p. 1). Ergo, Afrikaners are regarded as “emigrant-colonist” in Anthony Smith’s term which indicates a community which moves to another land while holding tight to their traditions and overlooking the rights of the native residents (1999, p. 137).

Philida’s story takes place 1 year before the abolition of slavery; thereby it has excluded any further social and political incidents from the constitution of apartheid in 1948 to Mandela’s democratic election as the first black president in 1994. Although it might seem that such drastic political changes should have resulted in strong transformations in the previously assigned power relations, the traces of the superiority of the discourses of patriarchy and its discursive conflicts with the discourse of subjugated women have been also continuously visible in SA. This is despite the fact that there have been a number of female activists who have had major active roles in social and political spheres.

During the long established South African struggles against the whites’ supremacy and racial segregation in the 20th century, women’s role in the process of national liberation has had a dual function. Meer asserts that not only did women take part in all social uprisings against the racist white government, but also they fought for achieving gender equalities simultaneously. Concerning the latter issue, women political activists emphasized the significance of their cooperation in political and social negotiations to liberate themselves have liberations from sexist oppressions (2005, p. 36). Consequently, women’s struggles against racial and gender injustices are noticeable in Philida’s discursive practices as they have been surveyed in the textual analysis.

Philida’s encounter with racial and gender conflicts in Philida are the reminiscence of two historical issues. The first is associated with the struggles of the African indigenous slaves with Afrikaner masters during slavery. The second issue is related to the black women activists who have been attempting to gain racial and gender equalities during the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. Meer affirms that the fights against apartheid are similar to the fights against gender injustices (2005, p. 40), since both are the hallmarks of battles against inequalities. Focusing on women’s attempts to gain racial and gender equalities from 1960s to post-apartheid period, Meer points out that women have been among “workers, students, and community activists” that have had to fight against the constraints imposed by their male superiors at home and work (2005, p. 37). But despite all their attempts, the signs of sexism and female oppression are still observable during post-apartheid era. As Meer emphasizes, women’s protests have been neutralized over time during the ages to preserve the inequalities of power relations between men and women (2005,
Hence, in *Philida* Brink has focused on the circumstances in the past to indicate some persisting significant factors in his contemporary period.

The remarkable role of novels as cultural products gains a vigorous position via highlighting Benedict Anderson’s notion of “imagined community” and the role of language. An Afrikaner, African, and a reader with another nationality might not have a thorough access to the history of South Africa regarding the exerted racial, gender, and class discriminations. Yet while reading a novel like *Philida* in English, “they gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people …. These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community” (Anderson, 2006, p. 44). Those who spoke the same language or those who have suffered similar injustices would often identify themselves with the subjugated characters.

The significance of a novel in highlighting the sustained gender and racial discriminations is traceable in Deb’s argumentation on the publications during post-apartheid. Deb believes that “articulating the stories of gendered injustices censored or neglected by the post-apartheid state” would result in rethinking about gender relations and “gendered power structure” (2014, p. 198). Similarly, this line of thought is applicable to Brink’s attempts, as he focuses on discursive practices of such interrelated dominant discourses as white, patriarchy, religion, and tradition in *Philida* where the blacks and women are among the suppressed discourses both in the past and in the present. Deb continues to point out that post-apartheid South Africa has been quite active to extend social and political debates on providing justice in other such discriminatory and injustice driven conflicts as in Israel and Palestine case (2014, p. 198). Consequently, relating the past to the present and focusing on the sustained/revitalized discriminations, Brink’s *Philida* has the potential to represent the significance of justice as well as that of social and political conversations among the struggling discourses in South Africa and in other countries.

Truly, *Philida*’s struggle to enter her name at the back of the Bible in the Brink’s household; and her multiple attempts in negotiating with her superiors to gain her requirements are the reflections of women’s struggles to achieve social and political positions in post-apartheid South Africa. The same issue is at work in Brink’s *A Chain of Voices* in which he has depicted a past era to attract the readers’ attention to the present moments in South Africa (Moynahan, 1982, p. 1). Wenzel also affirms that focusing on the past historical moments uncovers the present injustices (2001a, p. 138). Thus Brink’s fiction has narrated the struggles between the major discourses of indigenous and foreign as well as black and white during slavery to make crucial points about the present gender prejudices.

As the final point, it is highly significant to argue that by re-narrating slavery during post-apartheid, Brink has focused on the preservation and revitalization of similar discourses in both eras as well. In fact, the emergence of xeno-racism is the perpetuation of racism in the contemporary period (Delanty et al., 2008, p. 2), since “economic background, social status, religion, and even skin color” are among the current factors that result in the perpetuation of discriminations among individuals, as Caravan points out (2016, p. 74). Thus, the unequal distribution of power among major discourses of black and white; indigenous and foreign; and men and women have resulted in the production of Brink’s *Philida* that makes the reader have thoughtful comparisons between South Africa’s past and present.

4. Conclusion
In this paper, we textually explored Brink’s *Philida* to explore the identities of the major and minor characters and to clarify the orders of discourses in the represented society of the novel. Moreover, we focused on verbal and nonverbal soft and hard strategies, via which the main characters either highlight their nodal point or marginalize/exclude the antagonistic forces. As a result, this paper has revealed the ways through which the identities and powers have been modified, lost, and reconstructed during the course of the story. We have argued that Brink’s *Philida* is both associated with South African history and social issues and is a warning to the revitalization/perpetuation of
oppressions and injustices. While studying the novel, a new method of reading has been used to avoid simplifications on the analysis of the formation of identity and power. After our reading of Philida, we propose the following:

First, it is not possible to explore the formation of identity and power of a single character or a sub-discourse in a vacuum. Yet it must be surveyed in relation to the discursive practices of the opposing and interrelated sub-discourses in both smaller and larger social spheres. The presented method of discourse-semiotic analysis is a comprehensive, data-based, and effective way of discovering the conflicting sub-discourses and studying the formation of identity and power. Accordingly, this paper attests that the emergence of oppositional and interrelated minor and major discourses in the case study has been due to the historical circumstances. The minor discourses including black, white, African and Afrikaner's traditional life and culture, the British modern norms, freedom, oppression, racism, patriarchy, subjugated women, religion, superstition, and matriarchy have been shaped under the impacts of the discursive struggles among major discourses including black and white; indigenous and foreign; and tradition and modernity. These conflicting discourses have inevitable roles in the formulation or loss of individuals' identity and power in the society.

Second, Philida is significantly relatable to the contemporary post-apartheid circumstances and Philida has the attributes of a woman of all times in SA. In this novel, the Afrikaner and the indigenous African's identity and power have been constituted with regard to the major concepts and the desired definitions in the sedimented sub-discourses of white, patriarchy, religion, and tradition during the nineteenth centuries in Cape Town. Brink's obsession with re-narrating past historical injustices is significant in two ways. First, it would highlight the overlooked inequalities in the present state in the same society. Second, it would be relating to other societies where various forms of discriminations are being exerted. Consequently Philida has the potential to function as an awareness agency which summons the readers to reflect upon the injustices in their societies. Moreover, the textual and contextual analyses of discursive practices in Philida reveals that the locus of women in post-apartheid society of South Africa, as presented in literature, must have undergone modifications from a subjugated position to a rather elevated status where women can gain voice, though discriminations in such spheres as class, gender, and race still exist. Particularly, since patriarchy and the inequalities of power relations between men and women have been retained through nullifying women's protests in South African society, the signs of sexism and female subjugation are still apparent during post-apartheid era.

Third, as the story of Philida represents, the quality of the identity and power of the black Africans have opposite relations with that of the white Afrikaners. Since the locus of the black discourse has been previously defined as being inferior to the white's superiority, the emergence of the British rules concerning the blacks' freedom creates disturbances in the long stabilized chain of equivalence of the white discourse. Accordingly, the more the indigenous Africans approach their mental and physical state of freedom and identity construction, the more the white Afrikaners are dragged into identity crisis. Meanwhile, only those Afrikaners, whose chain of equivalence has been reconstructed with the British rules as the signs of modernity have the capability to align their identity and power to the new circumstances. The condition of De la Bat's family is a representation of this idea.

The next finding is associated with an ironic condition based on which although the black slaves were announced to be free, they were going to require the whites' assistance and economic power to survive. In such circumstances master/slave as a discursive system transforms into worker/boss discursive system which is the perpetuation of oppositions between black and white discourses. Thus, the amount of a discourse (here the whites') success in the rearticulations of pristine significations with desired meanings around its nodal point determines the sustainability of the very competing discourse.
Finally, in *Philida*, Brink does not render a hopeful view of the Afrikaners’ traditional life and culture which have been under the impacts of severe patriarchy, harsh Christian norms, and strict racist attitudes. Since Brink has been concerned with both constructive and destructive aspects of the Afrikaners’ conduct being either against or in favor of the oppressed, *Philida* has both deconstructing or constructing impacts on the readers. In other words, it is impossible for the readers to assign a solid quality to the collective identity of the Afrikaners depending on the historical incidents of the era of slavery and post-apartheid. Indeed the Afrikaners have been depicted both as victims and culprits and the indigenous Africans have been portrayed as victims in *Philida*, though there are signs of their misconducts. Thus, it is not possible to assign a definite reconciliation and soothing effect as the outcome of reading this novel at least by the indigenous Africans.

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**Note**

1. Due to space limitations, the tables for other characters have not been included in this paper. The complete tables have been rendered in Discursive Struggles over Construction of Power and Identity in Selected Novels of André Brink and Nadine Gordimer (PhD dissertation, University of Tehran, 2017).

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