

André Brink's *Rumors of Rain*: An Intersection of Entangled Liminal Beings

Golchin Amani & Zakarya Bezdoode

Department of English Literature and Linguistics, University of Kurdistan
Sanandaj City 66177-15175, Kurdistan Province, Iran

Email: amani2015.g@gmail.com

Email: zbezdodeh@gmail.com

Abstract This paper endeavors to address the socio-political situation of ethnicities' lives through literature. André Brink is a South African novelist whose *Rumors of Rain* (1978) demonstrates the situation of ethnicities during apartheid. Victor Witter Turner (1920-1983) is a British cultural anthropologist whose concept of liminality will be exclusively studied in this paper. Brink's novels have been examined by different researchers. However, most of them have demonstrated either historical characteristics of his novels or a particular ethnic group in them. Although like the colors in a rainbow one ethnic group may allocate a greater range than others, such a suffering regardless of their ethnicity and color, gathers them in the same structural spot and provides them with the relatively same socio-political condition. The significance of the present research is relevant to the very fact that the dominant impression supposes the blacks to be in a more in-between situation; however, this research reveals liminality in the lives of other ethnic groups as well. The present paper comes up with this conclusion that different ethnicities are like the guests in a carnival who are welcomed equally without any priority and superiority. South Africa has become an anti-structured entity in which the boundaries between high and low are broken and due to the fixation of the beings in liminality, the very liminality itself seems to have become an integral component of South Africa.

Key words Apartheid; André Brink; Afrikaners; Ethnicities; Anti-Structured Entity; Liminality; South Africa.

Author **Zakarya Bezdoode**, Assistant Professor of English Literature in the University of Kurdistan in Sanandaj, Iran. He is working on contemporary English Fiction and have published work about Andre Brink; **Golchin Amani**, MA graduate in English Literature from University of Kurdistan, has done his masters dissertation

on Contemporary English Fiction and does research in that field now.

Correspondence between being an ethnicity and the sense of belonging has become a thought provoking issue in the enquiries regarding the identity crisis of the ethnic groups. Therefore, the objective of the present study is to address liminality in *Rumors of Rain*. Here, the main interest is to find out how does Brink represent the status of different ethnic groups before the transition in South Africa through the use of liminal spaces? In order to find the answer, three questions will be raised: First, how does Brink represent liminality, i.e., what techniques does he use to represent liminality? Second, how does he present each of the four dominant ethnicities in regard to the existing liminal spaces? Third, can any changes be predicted to occur after this era in the history of South Africa or not?

Brink's novels have been examined by different researchers. Most of them have demonstrated either historical characteristics of his novels or a particular ethnic group in them. Regarding the situation of all ethnicities living in South Africa, no significant exploration has been offered so far. The following is a review of the most important works in this vein. Lenta (2010) addresses the significance of Cape slavery in Brink's *A Chain of Voices* (1982) and Yvette Christiansë's *Unconfessed* (2006). She argues that slaves have become conscious of the reality of their own harsh existence. Viljoen (2007) studies the characters' situations in the process of getting authentic spirituality in liminal situations.

Diala (2006) focuses on the thematic similarity of Malraux's *Man's Fate* (1933) and Brink's *Rumors of Rain* (1991). He demonstrates that following Malraux's tradition, Brink's fiction gives priority to rebellion against tyranny and tries to bring human being into a sense of consciousness to feel and understand their own dignity. Diala (2005) examines Brink's *Looking on Darkness*. He clarifies Brink's concern with writer's responsibility in a state of moral and political siege. Brittan (2005) studies Brink's *Rumors of Rain* and *A Dry White Season* (1979) with special reference to sex and violence in them. Sanders (2002) addresses the role of South African intellectuals by looking at the work of a number of key figures.

Burger (2001) proposes an analysis of Brink's *Devil's Valley*. He puts emphasis on the role played by stories and narratives in a community. She emphasizes the significance of narrative for forming individual and collective identity. Meintjes (1998) acknowledges the postcolonial tendencies in Brink's prose oeuvre and has claimed that in *Imaginations of Sand* (1996), colony, colonizer and colonized fuse into one. Kossev (1997) scrutinizes Brink's *Imaginations of Sand* (1996). She comes up with the conclusion that since the understanding of past seems to be an imaginary

thing, finding truly reliable stories becomes a problematic issue in the post-apartheid era. Kossew (1996) studies the novels of two most remarkable white writers, J.M. Coetzee and Brink. She indicates that Brink's critical texts contrast with Coetzee's neutrality.

This paper approaches the concept of liminality from the view point of a British cultural anthropologist, Victor Witter Turner (1920-1983). In terms of what we have discussed so far, we need to demonstrate the way Brink represents the situations of ethnicities through liminality. Therefore, an exclusive investigation of the concept of liminality will be useful here. Historically, the concept of liminality was introduced by the French ethnographer and folklorist, Arnold Van Gennep (1873-1957) in *Les Rites de Passage* (1909). Turner has developed Arnold Van Gennep's theory of liminality, and has written several books. Turner has observed that Van Gennep's concept of *The Rites of Passage* includes three phases: "separation, margin (or limen=threshold), and reaggregation" (Turner, *On the Edge* 158). According to Turner:

The first phase comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions ("a state"); during the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject (the "passenger") is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state; in the third phase, the passage is consummated. (Turner, "Betwixt and Between" 6)

The second period or liminality means "threshold" in Latin (Turner, *The Ritual Process* 94). Consequently, liminality is a middle, or an in-between state in which the individual's transition occurs from one state to another. Among the above three stages of the rites of passage, Turner has devoted a large part of his discussions to the concept of liminality which is the second stage. The characteristics of this period will be discussed thoroughly.

Communitas, anti-structure, ritual subject, liminal beings and situations, liminar, novices, initiands or neophytes, transition and passage are the most key terms used by Turner in studying the concept of liminality. Turner has attributed several features to liminal places, beings and situations. Since he has lived with the Ndembu tribe, he has based his argument of liminality on the ritual society of Ndembu people. "The Ndembu term comes from the vocabulary of hunting and exemplifies the high ritual value attached to this value....they associate this term with aspects of the chase" (Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* 48). Moreover, he has

depicted that all of his publications deal with aspects of the ritual system of the Ndembu people of northwestern Zambia in South-central Africa.

“Liminality is not confined in its expression to ritual and the performative arts” (Turner, “Frame, Flow and Reflection” 466); his ideas are not just restricted to ritual societies, contexts other than ritual ones could be examined in terms of liminality as his major theory. For Turner, two aspects of society are “structure and liminality” (Turner, *On the Edge* 11). Subsequently, there might be no structure and hierarchy in the liminal phase in that it is contrasted to structure by Turner. Turner has found the essence of liminality to be a “release from normal constraints” (Turner, *On the Edge* 160). Liminality means to be “free from the pragmatics of the commonsense world” (161). Socio-cultural liminality provides conditions for “criticism” (ibid, 170). In other words, in liminality one can comment on and criticize the society (Turner, “Frame, Flow and Reflection” 467).

Liminality is a “definite stage in the passage of an initiand from status A to status B” (Turner, *On the Edge* 160). In the way indicated, liminality “must bear some traces of its antecedent and subsequent stages” (ibid). Subsequently, a liminal being occupies neither the A position nor the B one. The liminal being shares the characteristics of both A and B, and is a mixture of the features of the antecedent and subsequent stages. According to Turner, liminal figures are “neither living nor dead,” (ibid, 7) “Neither male nor female” (ibid, 8). In the liminal period, “distinctions and gradations tend to be eliminated” (ibid, 9). Liminal human beings are “stripped of status role characteristics” (Turner, “Frame, Flow and Reflection” 471). Liminality in locations and spaces are of a high significance in the present research. Accordingly, instances for almost all of the characteristics of liminality and their definitions will be offered throughout this paper.

Brink’s *Rumors of Rain* demonstrates the situation of ethnicities and the sociopolitical situation of South Africa during apartheid. The central Afrikaner character in the novel, Martin, believes that history has supplied them with all of the required facilities to survive in the land. The novel is concerned with the land owned by Martin’s family. Land as a tie which connects its owner to his/her so-called country of origin, is decided to be sold. Therefore, this loss will designate the previous owners with a crisis in their situation and in a country in which they acquire no more the very basic elements of connection. The lives of other ethnicities as well as Afrikaners are presented in this paper. They are described in some common critical moments and situations. The references to the questioned sense of ownership and belonging to South Africa becomes more conscious for its ethnicities. Liminality and the techniques in representing them will be enumerated

one by one. Accordingly, liminality will be employed as an instrument in deploying the crisis in the situation of ethnicities and in different dimensions of the involved characters' lives.

This hostile world, ponderous and aggressive because it fends off the colonized masses with all the harshness it is capable of, represents not merely a hell from which the swiftest flight possible is desirable, but also a paradise close at hand which is guarded by terrible watchdogs. (Fanon, *The Wretched* 52-53)

Palmer's study (qtd. in Ratiani) depicts the situation of liminal beings. He argues that they live "in the gap between worlds" (web). The central character in the novel finds himself in an abyss and claims that "there is an abyss between the man I once was and the man I am" (410). It sounds that such big abysses lead to the total vanishing of the human beings' existence on the Earth, the more they attempt to set themselves free from them, the more they are drowned within it. Brink is not that much concerned with the racial discrimination imposed upon blacks; conversely, he gathers ethnicities in the same context to give us a clear understanding of their common situation.

Brink chooses art, here literature, to represent the situation of ethnicities in South Africa. Ratiani conducts a historical study of liminality and demonstrates the very liminality of different types of art. Consequently, a liminal genre becomes the ground for representing liminality, it could be called a meta-liminal instrument. Aristotle takes poetry to be a liminal genre in that it is in a "liminal space that separates philosophy from history," it imitates both of them. Sidney calls poet a liminal being, one who is a "mediator" or "an intermediary between historical truth and philosophical abstraction," "between reality and imagination." Schiller considers art as a "third reality," one which is placed between sensation and thought. Shelly defines art and poetry in an in-between space, between "reality and the world beyond." Sartre takes imagination as a liminal entity, Iser offers a formula in which literary invention or illusion is placed between reality and imagination ("Liminality and the Liminal" 2-3). All of the stated examples above prove the very liminality of the genre through which Brink examines the lives of ethnicities.

The setting of the novel is closely connected with road. It turns out to be one of the most compelling evidence for liminality in this novel. Martin goes on a journey to arrive at the farm. During the journey he is in his car on the road. The very road itself is a space between a beginning and an end or a destination, between the point of departure and arrival. This liminal space becomes the setting of the novel. "A

whole swarm of gnats plastered on the windscreen and the wipers out of order” (1). Accordingly, future is opaque or blurry and the world of future becomes an unknown entity.

Viljoen argues that there is a close relationship between places and the human actions in them. He assumes these places to be the result of human actions in them (“Journeys from” 195). In order to propose an exploration of liminality, it would be more appropriate to study first the associations between human beings and the places in which they spend time and life. It could be one of the approaches through which Brink specifies liminality in the lives of different ethnicities. Brink indicates that one of the basic needs or the most basic urge in human beings is “to make signs,” as a result every human being tends to leave a mark, to signify his/her existence in that place. Otherwise, the human being will never feel satisfied (Brink, *A Fork in the Road* 327); that is why all of the efforts of the human beings are to guarantee their own survival.

Lack of a sense of belonging is one of the situations that people hate to be in. Thus, the characteristic of mirror will be carefully taken into account here. A mirror “can’t hold an image” (12). On different occasions in the novel, we observe that Martin looks back through the rearview mirror at whatever he has gotten past from, he views the past fleeting scenes in every moment, such transient moments and what has been observed in them gets past from both the memory of Martin and the mirror. Mirror’s incapability to hold images, puts it in contrast with a camera which holds images and makes permanent images rather than temporary ones. The time and space are frozen within it. Conversely, in a mirror, each presence is replaced by an instantaneous absence. Human beings are exceedingly in need of leaving a trace to prove their existence; however, Martin passes and nothing is left in neither the memory of the mirror nor the road. Here, mirror could be taken as a metaphor for whatever places and situations in which he has existed once. This is the general liminal conditions of Martin, who represents the situation of almost all of the Afrikaners in the novel. Such a situation signifies that Martin does not meet his need of survival due to the lack of existence of a mark to prove his existence.

In another investigation of liminality, Brink points out that the road is covered by “thick silence of the fog” (25). Such a fog metaphor, makes the road and all of its constituent parts “invisible” (Turner, “Betwixt and Between” 6). Being in a fog, creates a liminality that one who is entangled in it should wait for the atmosphere to be cleared of vagueness. Liminality could be also observed in the emotional aspect of Martin’s life. He has many love affairs in apartments and hotels. Turner depicts “ambiguity” as a feature of liminality (*The Ritual Process* 106). Martin

attributes such a future to his own apartment in which he has affairs with his beloved, Bea. In such a circumstance he regards himself to be completely free from any barrier. He proposes that in such relationships, women “demand from you no more than an arranged fee.” He introduces it as one of the situations “which leaves one completely free.” It is due to the fact that neither of the people involved in the relation, impose responsibility upon the other, whereas a mutual responsibility exists in a married life (7).

Martin does not care about what happens in his married life, instead he continues his stricken with liminality affairs. In spite of the influential political, social and psychological elements in determining liminality, the body of human beings should be taken into consideration. Martin's body is a liminal entity by itself, in that it is the body that can help him pass from the pre-liminal-stage (self) to post-liminal stage (society). In effect, human's body is placed between the individual's experience and the world. Martin is left on this bridge and fails to integrate with the society, he cannot be regarded as a full citizen in the society. Regarding liminal beings, Turner states that “they have physical but not social reality, hence they have to be hidden” (“Betwixt and Between” 8). It is the existence of Martin's life which should be hidden. To be hidden is the space between presence and absence, a presence which is negated by a subsequent indication of an absence.

The year 1948, is the beginning of apartheid which has not been yet replaced with a new sociopolitical state. Turner argues that by “state,” he means “any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized” (“Betwixt and Between” 4). In addition, it is through the passage from one stable state to another that a transition could be completely conducted. In contrast, South Africa is still on the move, and has not passed from it, it is stricken with liminality. Brink asserts that “the fear of rejection is incredibly strong in Afrikaans society because that society has habitually been isolated (also geographically) from the rest of the world” (*Mapmakers: Writing* 77). Thus, all of the inhabitants will be recognized as isolated human beings as well.

It is confirmed that “the nation is depicted as one great family, the members as brothers and sisters of the motherland or fatherland;” thus, nation and family are two similar entities (Smith, *National Identity* 79). Each group of ethnicities, either Blacks, Whites, Coloreds or Asians in South Africa could be considered as a member of South Africa which equates to a family in a macrocosmic sense. Isolation is the characteristic of liminal beings and since South Africa is isolated from the rest of the world, all of its ethnicities or inhabitants are isolated too. Accordingly, all South Africa and its constituent parts are suffering from the generally pervaded

liminal circumstance.

Turner elaborates on two kinds of liminality: “rituals of status elevation” and “rituals of status reversal.” The first kind is related to a promotion in the status of one’s life and the second type is the reversal of a status (*The Ritual Process* 167). In the present novel, the second type of liminality is observed in that almost from the beginning of the novel there are references to drought which has stricken the land (6); and in the last pages of the novel the wipers come to be used in clearing the windscreen from the fallen drops of rain. Therefore, the geographical circumstance is reversed and drought is replaced with a heavy rain which causes flood.

Color is another technique used by Brink in demonstrating liminality in the novel. Grey is a color between black and white and happens to be the most frequent color in the novel. It forms the background color of the novel. Merriam Webster Online Dictionary describes the gray color as “having an intermediate and often vaguely defined position, condition, or character” (web). Luscher focuses on the psychological exploration of the grey color:

A neutral grey, containing no color at all and therefore free from any affective influence, while its intensity places it halfway between light and dark so that it gives rise to no anabolic nor catabolic effect- it is psychologically and physiologically neutral. (*The Luscher Colour* 26)

Lack of color, neutrality, lack of anabolic and catabolic (constructive and destructive) effects, being neither mental nor physical, which means being neither abstract nor concrete, are the characteristics of grey color that make it appear as a liminal issue. We will enumerate on some instances during the rest of the study. Martin’s car is a “grey Mercedes” (40). This color makes both the car and subsequently its passengers invisible. While describing the courtroom, Martin says that the walls are covered with “grey curtains” (61). Curtain is a cover that distinguishes outside and inside; moreover, it is the boundary between the outside and the inside world. They could be both a way to connect the worlds or a barrier between them. The drawn curtains put the people in an isolated environment and leads to their seclusion from the outside world. Accordingly, grey color and curtains could be a metaphor for an indeterminate and being on a fence like situation.

Grey is the color of those who do not take a particular side in discussion, those who prefer to sit on the fence rather than being on its either sides. Martin calls political attitude a “dangerous grey area” (106). Aforementioned discussion indicates that human beings’ actions are extremely influenced by their environment

and in such a circumstance the politicians do not determine their status clearly. The members of such a nation will be indispensably affected by the situation. Consequently, Martin, a conservative Afrikaner, is the one in whose behavior and condition, such liminal and in-between characteristics are manifested.

Being on the farm, Martin describes his situation in this way: "The first dark grey light was just beginning to filter through the windows; it was as yet impossible to distinguish anything outside. The lamp isolated us at a corner of the large table" (209). Hence, the grey color leaves Martin with an incapability to see the outside world. Martin uses the grey color to describe the hills as well. Grey has taken everything under its surveillance not only the interior domains but also the world beyond them. Martin sees everything in a grey color; he even uses this color in describing the times of the day. For instance, he refers to the day he spent with Welcome, one of his Black friends, as a "dull grey afternoon" (362). As a result, the whole life of Martin is doomed to colorlessness, which makes him completely invisible.

Due to the fact that human beings suffer greatly from being simultaneously in and out of something, and to be both included and excluded or being left in an in-between state which is a limbo too, they always seek to find a loophole to set themselves free from such unbearable conditions. Conversely, it seems to be a failure; in that, while discussing to be black or white rather than being black and white, Louis tells Mr. Lawrence, a character in the novel, that "You think you can keep everything nicely separated through apartheid," Louis went on, like a bloody fly on a windowpane. "White here, Black there. But this isn't chess. It's people" (367). To put it differently, Louis claims that since in the society, in spite of the chess play, we are dealing with human beings, distinguishing human beings could not be an easy thing to do. Being in liminality and on the boundary between categories, forms an indispensable part of the life of ethnicities in South Africa.

Martin considers his life full of "*ifs*" (171, italics in the original). *Ifs* stand for suppositions. They indicate situations which could be both real and unreal, possible and impossible. In if sentences, the results could not be claimed without any doubt. They are conditional terms which indicate dependence on other situation for their actualizations. *Ifs* stand between doubt and certainty and signify liminality in Martin's life and speech.

Another instance of liminality is the immigration from villages to the cities. Mabin introduces a type of migration which is "circular" ("Dispossession, Exploitation" 14). It is exactly the type of migration in *Rumors of Rain*; in that the migration here is bilateral. It is urban to rural and vice versa. Martin is originally

a rural man and he goes on a journey to The Cape of Good Hope which is a rural setting. In such a circumstance “the entire households have frequently not migrated as a whole” (ibid 13). To give an illustration, Martin’s mother is still living in the Cape of Good Hope, such a lack of a complete migration process leaves people swaying between rural and urban context. It does not lead the transition to become successfully conducted. Such a coming and going creates a kind of dependence for inhabitants of each. This dependence and lack of ability to govern oneself independently leaves the individual in oscillation between these two contexts of life and makes them liminal beings.

Being entangled between the dilemma of choice is one of the other techniques used by Brink in representing liminality in the life of Martin. He confronts a kind of undecidability, he does not know whether he should help his convicted and imprisoned friend, Bernard, or not.

Martin: “Bernard, do you realize the risk I’m exposing myself to if I—”/

Bernard: “Everybody gets a chance to decide with open eyes” (199).

It resembles the Hegelian tragedy in that if he chooses to help him, he may put his own life at stake, if not, he betrays the very rules that govern friendship and define a good friend as the one who helps in need.

Martin’s wandering is presented in the novel via the use of words like maze and labyrinth (378, 381). Such words become images in the novel. Klapcsik describes labyrinth as “a barrier between the known and the unknown” (*Liminality in Fantastic* 107). In such a situation, one finds himself/ herself lost in the warp of time and difficulties. The individual cannot find the paths of entrance and exit. It is a place within interior and exterior and that is why Martin asserts: “but in my panic I’d lost all sense of direction” (397).

Being in the jungle, Martin sees an old man and he describes liminality to something like this old man’s presence. He says “I was lost. And behind me, somewhere close by but *invisible*, he was lurking like a *shadow*, the evil old man” (397, my italics). His presence resembles that of a shadow and shows a situation in which presence and absence are simultaneously combined. Henceforth, getting lost is a technique to demonstrate liminality. Martin gets lost in the jungle and sees an old shadowy man. Martin is wandering in the jungle. He cannot recognize the back and the forth path of his movement. Hence, he is left in a coordinateless spot, a blind spot, in which he cannot see the world beyond. He enumerates on his situation in the jungle in the following way:

The first time I stopped again was when I recognized something familiar on a thorny branch in front of me. A small patch of material. For a moment I refused to believe it: it had to be someone else's. But the rag belonged unmistakably to my expensive imported jacket. I could match it with a tear on my shoulder. How on earth had I started crawling in circles? If that was true I was really lost. Night would catch me here. (398)

While he thinks he is proceeding on his way, he suddenly finds a torn piece of his cloth ahead. It proves his previous presence there; then he notifies that he is stymied in a vicious circle, worse than this, is the lack of existence of any sign, even the sky does not equip him with any sign to find his path through.

Music is another example of liminality. It affects the personal feeling. Although temporarily, it frees the listeners from the concerns and worries which bother the psyche. Since the problems do not vanish permanently, music provides the listener with a relaxation. It creates a liminal situation in the mind of the listener. In his car and in Aunt Rainie's Party, Martin listens to music and finds it "the *only pure form of escape*" (122). After the end of the played music, the person reintegrates into the previous and the very harsh reality of life. This music throws him into a kind of seclusion. Seclusion is one of the features of liminal beings.

The breaking of Martin's glasses is another means of representing liminality. When Martin breaks them inadvertently, he is placed in a liminal space. Not having his glasses to wear, he describes the scene in the following way:

All precision had disappeared from the landscape, leaving me lost and angry in the midst of it. Damn it! Suddenly my own farm had become strange to me. I could still see well enough to find my way, but all detail was lost, all definition blurred, *all familiarity gone. I felt isolated, abandoned among the dull hulks of things.* (223; my italics)

The aforementioned situation is called liminal in that without the glasses, Martin is neither completely blind nor has sharp eyes to see the environment clearly. Martin's life is "doomed to incompleteness" thus he lacks perfection. This imperfection leaves him in a permanent liminality (499). Almost in the middle of the novel, Martin elaborates on the life of several generations of his ancestors. All of them have been in the same context and their lives have been full of wandering, riots, wars, and years in detention (234-235). He says that "they've all been losers"

of history (243). In the way indicated, nothing has changed for them, they have experienced the same life all through the previous years.

The more mirrors are used in a space; the more bewildered human beings will become. Similarly, the more borders are constructed, the more confused the people will become. The increasing number of borders is what Martin and Louis take into consideration. Regarding their life condition, Martin proposes that “We’re creating more and more frontiers all the time” (294). The number of borders is constantly increasing; therefore, they are more disconnected with the world they are living in, and it seems as if they are put away from the world and whatever constitutes it.

While describing Louis, Martin uses the phrase “boy-man” (312). Such a hyphen shows the hyphenated character of Louis. He is left on the bridge between these two poles and has not passed from it. Moreover, Louis says that “war makes a man of one;” he assumes that war is one of the rituals that makes a man out of its participants, the soldiers, (316). Louis proposes that during the war, “we were like zombies, we dropped down to sleep wherever we could find an open spot” (ibid). Here Louis describes all of the soldiers as zombies. As could be defined and presented, zombies are a kind of liminal creatures, which in a categorized system, could be placed between dead and alive. In other words, they are “neither dead nor alive” (Turner, “Betwixt and Between” 7). According to Turner, such a falling between the living and the dead is the characteristic of liminal beings. Louis does not successfully pass from this in-between state, the boy-man state. Turner has used the phrase “made man” (ibid, 10). Accordingly, Louis has not become a man yet.

Turner states that “homogeneity;” “abolition of rank” and being “disregard for personal appearance” are the characteristics of liminal beings (*The Ritual Process* 105-106). Louis has problem with either if he has been made man or not, or if war has made a man out of him or not, he shows this obsession by asking “I’d become a man, hadn’t I?” (320). In *An Act of Terror*, Brink notes the same point that “war makes a man of a boy” (251). Narrating the events of the war, Louis claims that “*Jesus, you should have seen the mud up there. We were grey from head to feet*” (328; italics in the original). Being covered by clay makes them appear similar without any difference in appearance. All of the participants are homogenized by the clay which has covered them.

War is a liminal time and space which traumatizes those who are involved, those who observe and experience many scenes of atrocities either exerted by themselves or other people. Therefore, it becomes exceedingly difficult for the traumatized to reintegrate into the peaceful society (post-liminal phase), peaceful moments without war. War overtakes every one with its destructive effects. The left

traumatized psyche does not let them have a productive and constructive life; that is why, Louis is not regarded as a useful person in life; he is aware of such a fact and states that "I'm not going to stay an invalid for the rest of my life"(45). Near the end of the novel, Martin talks about Louis and infers that:

And suddenly, while I was still thinking about possible remedies, he put out his hand to turn on the wipers as well. To my amazement they responded immediately, swishing to and fro in mechanical precision. Louis looked at me. With a smile of satisfaction, he said: "I fixed them on Saturday when I washed the car. Just a loose connection." It was a sensation both of relief and singular humiliation. As if he had finally and independently taken control himself. (488)

The above description signifies a pretty successful event which foreshadows independence for Louis; it may promise prosperity and an entrance into the post-liminal era. Focusing on some of Freud's theories, Turner acknowledges that if someone is afraid of an issue or a phenomenon, and suffers from the psychological wound caused by that issue, the best way to combat the fear is to face it and identify with it (*The Ritual Process* 176). In such a circumstance, Martin takes Louis along while going on the journey. Martin asserts "I'd brought him along with the intention of trying to "find" him" (255). His son is still suffering from the destabilizing effects of the war. Martin gives him an opportunity to narrate his memories of the Angola war.

Narration acts like a remedial technique for Louis to release himself from the undesirable memories and the irritating experiences of the war. Hence, Martin helps him get out of the trauma and be reintegrated into the healthy psyche which he enjoyed of having before the war. Martin claims that "All the months since Louis's return we'd been trying to handle him with understanding and patience: something traumatic had happened and we had to help him re-adapt to life" (255). Although there are some minor references to the individuals' release from undesirable liminality in the novel, the dominant condition which is not promising, is more significant. Despite dancing a shaky flame in the wind, it is most likely going to be off rather than on.

Bernard is another Afrikaner who is suffering from fixation caused by liminality. In terms of Martin's description of him "he had never outgrown his boyhood" (30). Turner defines liminality as a position "between boyhood to manhood" ("Betwixt and Between" 10). Bernard remains between these two polarities. He goes on trial in Pretoria and his sentence is ratified there too.

Imprisoning people indicates the ignorance of their presence and existence; that is to say, the ignorance of their identity in society. When a person is imprisoned, he/she is deprived of the sociopolitical identity constructed by him/her in the society. Prison is a liminal space and the imprisoned is humiliated by being imprisoned. Brink has elaborated on the situation of South Africa and refers to what John Berger has offered in his *Art and Revolution*.

In Berger's view, shared by many others, most of the problems in the world today are related to the exploitation and degradation of people all over the world, and to their struggle to liberate themselves from the most humiliating of these forms of exploitation and degradation. (*Mapmakers* 47)

The imprisoned people are disinherited of the social identity, and they do their best to get out of prison to reintegrate in to the society, a society in which they will be able to reestablish their denied identities. The imprisoned confronts a gap or an abyss which creates a barrier between his individual being and his social being. Brink identifies that almost all of the human beings' activities touch upon their "urge to communicate;" henceforth, "they should have the right to communicate" (*Mapmakers* 50). All of human beings' struggles are to set themselves free either from prison or other undesirable situations in which their identity is questioned. Jewkes argues that when someone is sentenced to life imprisonment, it is like a doctor telling his patient that he/she is going to die. Such a lifelong imprisonment puts the whole life of the individual in liminality. In this case, liminality is no more a temporary phenomenon and turns out to be a stable or nearly a stable one ("Loss, Liminality" 366-367). According to Jewkes, prison is a liminal place, and consists of uncertainty, chaos and danger. In such a place, the prevailing customs and normal behavioral codes are reversed (*ibid*, 375). Discussing Bernard's sentence, Louis claims:

To sit there for life — that's worse than a death sentence. Especially for a man like Bernard. The judge said he wanted to be merciful: but a life sentence was the worst they could have done to him. And they bloody well knew it. (407)

The liminal characters use a coded language which is beyond the realm of normal language. It is a specific language among them. The very meaning of the words they use carries secrecy and like their existence, it seems to be inconceivable by their surroundings. The meaning of such a coded language is hidden just like their

own existence. They have been detached from the society not only socially but also linguistically (semantically).

Louis asks his father “How long is a life sentence really?” to which Martin replies: “for however long you manage to keep alive” (135). Since the answer of the question is the prisoner’s life until death, life imprisonment itself creates a permanent liminality which prevails the whole life of Bernard.

Different ethnicities experience somehow common liminality with Afrikaners. As it is proposed in the jacket design of the novel “André Brink’s story of a community on the edge of collapse, spurred to profound self-realization.” All of the ethnicities’ situations are on the brink of collapse:

Nine or ten stories up a building in the process of construction a Black man was sitting on a narrow ledge, his legs dangling over the edge. All the windows were crammed with people leaning out to watch him; below, in the parking lot, a crowd was jostling round a small circle cordoned off by constables standing arm to arm. “What’s he doing up there?” I asked a man next to me. “Been up there since eleven, they say he wants to jump.” From a window overlooking the ledge a police officer was trying to talk to the Black man. It was too far away to make out what he was saying. The Black pulled up his legs, tautening his whole body, obviously preparing to jump. (27-28)

This Black man represents the situation of almost all of the Blacks in South Africa; their situation is standing on the edge or on the brink. It is the edge of life and death, suspense, and indeterminacy. These conditions show liminality in the life of Blacks. Louis asserts that “the Black soldiers who were with us, the Unitas” (317). War is a liminal space. Camps and the operational areas (318-319) are liminal spaces; in that soldiers from different ethnicities are gathered there. The soldiers undergo the same liminal situations. Charlie and Martin set up the following conversation:

Charlie: “Have you ever thought about how similar you and I really are?”

Martin: “You’re exaggerating.”

Charlie: “You think so? We come from the same sort of place. Then we both went overseas.” More subdued, he added: “And then we both came back. What the hell for? What did we really hope to find? We don’t belong any more, man. You’re just as bloody detribalized as I am.” (300)

Here, liminality is completely obvious for both the Blacks and the Afrikaners.

Charlie, the Blackman, elaborates on a shared pain which is the lack of a sense of belonging for both Martin and him (73). There is another conversation between Martin and another Black man:

The Black man: "That's my land over there."

Martin: "Morocco?"

The Black man: "No, Africa. My home is farther to the south, Nigeria."

Martin: "We're from Africa, too."

The Black man: "It's not good to be away from it." (73)

Martin adds:

That was the full extent of our conversation. But through it, for the first time in my life, I really became aware of Africa: that continent linking me to so many generations of men, past homo sapiens, millions of years back to homo habilis: my land and that stranger's (*ibid*, italics in the original).

Accordingly, South Africa is a common land in which different ethnicities inhabit. In such a common context, they are provided with somehow the same opportunities. Compared with war, detention centers are liminal spaces in that all of the detainees spend time in the same context and there is no superiority or inferiority in their status. They are equal. For instance, one of Bernard's co-detainees is a Colored man (159). As a result, the accused people have the same situation in detention centers. In such a case, the skin color does not make any difference and ethnicities without considering themselves as different beings due to the color of their skins, are suffering from the same unpleasant situations in South Africa.

Martin talks about his friendship with two men on the boat and on his way back to South Africa, one of which will be discussed here, his newly made friendship is with a young *Indian* doctor; they spend much time together on the voyage. They discuss their common interests in both music and their country which they "loved in equal measure." Martin adds that what upsets him most is the restriction that both of them suffer from. Martin claims that:

The fact that, upon our arrival in Cape Town, good friends as we were, we would not be allowed to have a meal or a cup of tea together in any hotel or restaurant. What was more, if I ever had a son and if he were to fall in love with Mewa's daughter (one of the prettiest and most delightful little children

I had ever seen), he would be jailed for it. Such are the small personal, subjective experiences which may prompt a change in one's entire view of life. (104)

Both Martin and the Indian doctor suffer from the rules of separation between ethnic groups. The separation rule between ethnicities is imposed by the government. Martin acknowledges that, although the Indian doctor and he could be good friends, they were not allowed to communicate with each other freely. In the following, we observe that both sides of the relationship, regardless of their ethnicities, suffer from the segregation laws imposed by a superior organization.

Bernard offers some love cases in which the partners were prohibited to marry each other. Once there was "a Colored teacher who'd had a relationship with a White secretary for over a year. If the law had allowed it, they would have got married" (107). After being imprisoned for a while, "they both committed suicide by gassing themselves in a car" (ibid). Therefore, being white or colored does not matter anymore and both ethnic groups are suppressed in equal ways. In the conversation between the ANC (The African National Congress) leader and Martin, the leader assumes that:

If you place the races of one country in two camps, he said, and cut off contact between them, those in each camp begin to forget that those in the other are ordinary human beings; that each lives and laughs in the same way, that each experiences joy and sorrow, pride or humiliation, for the same reasons. Thereby each becomes suspicious of the other and each eventually fears the other, which is the basis of all racism. (114)

The world does not have any special tendency to a particular ethnic group. To put it differently, "The world is neutral" by itself (411). The world itself does not consider a particular ethnic group as the other of another one. Subsequently, these categorizations and divisions are the results of some social contracts, the setting of different races and ethnic groups are due to the social and political rules, which are created by the ruling powers themselves. In most of the cases, like the one explored above, the ethnic groups do not want to be the subject of such divisions. That is due to the fact that they suffer from the joint pain which is the very fact of being a minority ethnic group. In the long run, the situations in which almost all of the ethnic groups are gathered together, the liminality has been demonstrated not only for Afrikaners but also for other ethnic groups too.

The text and its context is full of liminality, ethnicities have been detached from a pre-liminal phase and have not yet been reincorporated into the post-liminal phase. Martin is the representative of not only Afrikaners, but also other liminal ethnic groups. He asserts that “My convictions are based on the belief that revolutions, although they change political power, make no difference to the basic lot of people” (51). Although a revolution may occur in a political order, it makes no difference for the ethnicities. All in all, no change will occur to favor minorities in society and even if it rains (rain as a metaphor for a change in political power), the flood caused by it, will sweep all before it and the situation won’t improve.

In *Rumors of Rain*, Brink employs techniques like migration, journey and road, shadow (a simultaneous presence and absence), fog, physical body, jungle and getting lost in it, music, breaking of the glasses, variety of borders, boy-man, zombies, war, fixation, life sentence, edge, detention centers, camps and the operational areas, mirror, curtain, hyphenated human beings, hybridity, prison, being sentenced, blurring of vision, bifurcation or dilemma of decision making, illegal men and women love affair, symbolic usage of the grey color, boats, hotels and apartments as the conventions of representing liminality.

Rumors of Rain demonstrates quite well the sociopolitical situation of South Africa. Investigating liminality in the novel, the present paper comes up with this conclusion that being a minority acts like a uniting factor that negates other differences and gathers different ethnicities in the *communitas*. Using the term *communitas* will be a more preferred term in comparison with society in that according to Turner, *communitas* brings a sense of anti-structurality and emerges in the liminal phase and due to the fact that South Africa is in a way haunted by liminality, it is better to be called the *communitas* of South Africa rather than the society of South Africa. Consequently, the liminal beings are in *communitas* rather than a structured society.

Crisis, uncertainty, equality, unanimity, suspension, lack of a sense of belonging, wandering, invisibility, silence, anti-structurality, being left on the brink, oscillation and fixation are all according to Turner, characteristics of liminality which have been entirely explored in the novel. Most of the solutions to the existent liminalities are peripheral and carry some properties of liminality in themselves. To bring forth an illustration, one can allude to music, which is employed to get the characters out of a wider sense of liminality; however, it is liminal in itself. None of the remedial techniques are long-lasting. They just help the characters forget their miseries temporarily. The remedy could be effective only and only if the ethnicities

are provided with a sense of belonging; however, it has never been fulfilled.

The desire to be accepted in South Africa as full citizens is not met and it resembles an unrequited love in that South Africa does not respond to such desires. The transition from the state of being a colonized minority to a state of being completely independent citizens seems to be an incomplete process; therefore, the threshold won't be crossed successfully and the minorities' request will be denied rather than being ratified. The unfulfilled desires make the minorities in a life-long wander in search of a possibility and capability to incorporate themselves into South Africa. We do not employ the term re-incorporate here in that they have never been incorporated into the so-called *their* country. Liminal beings won't outgrow their transitional status. Liminality becomes a public phenomenon rather than a private one in South Africa. Due to the fact that the characters' aspirations for a development in their circumstance and social situations are moldered, they will appear as decentralized subjects in the postcolonial or the post-apartheid era.

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