PREDICATED THEMES AS TEXTUAL RESOURCE: AN ANALYSIS OF ALAN PATON'S *CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY*

Maria Martinez LIROLA
(University of Alicante, Spain)
Bradley SMITH
(Macquarie University)

ABSTRACT: *In this presentation we will pay attention to the dialogue between text and context during the apartheid period in South Africa,. Our text is the novel Cry, the Beloved Country, written by the South African writer Alan Paton; the context is a society where certain meanings were not 'available' for negotiation in the spoken, face-to-face context mode. Our contention is it was only in a novel that one could offer the sort of meanings that Paton was offering in that particular historical period, that context of culture. In particular we wish to explore a non-canonical construction, the predicated theme, and its function in creating textual cohesion, contrastiveness, and to build the context of the novel. The analysis of the structural component of predicated themes (theme and rheme and known and new information) will be essential to understand the use of the structure. Special attention will be paid to the discourse functions and stylistic distribution of the examples. The use of Predicated Themes, in this and in other novels, allows Paton to not only make the text a more coherent unit – a text – but also allows him to draw the text 'closer' to the contexts of situation and culture of the reader, drawing the reader into a 'dialogue' with the issues of the culture of the time, into the 'cultural dialogue' of black and white South Africans. Understanding the role this grammatical resource plays in the novel will help us to better understand the context Paton is trying to create, and the relations between the contexts of culture and situation, and language.*

KEY-WORDS: *Predicated theme, Alan Paton, Systemic Functional Linguistics, context of culture.*

1. Introduction

In this paper we intend to show that the use of predicated themes in the novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* written by the South African writer Alan Paton (founder of the Liberal Association against apartheid) is a resource used by the author to highlight certain climatic moments, and to build

the context in which the novel is placed: the apartheid period in South Africa. Systemic Functional Grammar will help us to understand the main reasons for choosing between some linguistic forms or others, depending on the function that choice of those linguistic forms have in society.

We are going to analyse the different ways in which predicated themes contribute to the analysis of the novel as a discourse of hope, since this structure has certain communicative implications that allow the author to use it to talk about feelings such as love, fear, loyalty to God and to the country and to establish a contrast between the two main racial groups in South Africa: the white and black population.

In this paper we would like to emphasize a very important use of predicated themes: the fact that the cleft sentence is used by the protagonists in some of the most important moments of the novel makes clear that we are in front of a structure very much used to emphasize, to highlight a certain part of the information, or to point out feelings or emotions. The cleft sentence contrasts with something previously said or highlights a certain fact that is important for the narrative.

Our hypothesis in this presentation is that the recurrent use of predicated themes has certain communicative implications that will be the object of this study. Our corpus of examples belongs to one of the novels written by Alan Paton: *Cry, The Beloved Country* (1948), in which we find 56 examples.

We intend to consider the role of predicated themes in the novel under analysis by taking into consideration their function in building meaning in the novel. In this sense, it can be stated that we want to concentrate our attention on meaning beyond the clause, as Martin and Rose (2003: 1) state: "[…] we want to focus on the social as it is constructed through texts, on the constitutive role of meanings in social life."

The following study will point out how lexico-grammar gives language the potential to create different meanings. We agree with Eggins (2004[2]: 139) in that the grammatical description presented in this article will allow us to "make statements about the appropriacy of certain linguistic choices given the context of their use."

Paton was committed with the socio-political situation of his country and his intention with this novel was to create a social consciousness, to

oppose to the dominant ideology in South Africa in his historical moment. His use of language appears clearly connected with a marked social reality.

We are going to focus on the analysis of predicated themes to understand the meanings expressed in the novels better. As Halliday declares in his *Introduction to Functional Grammar,* one of the purposes for which linguistics is useful is "to understand literary and poetic texts, and the nature of verbal art" (Halliday 1994[2]: xxx).

With the analysis we intend to prove that the use of predicated themes in the novel is a resource used by the author to highlight certain climatic moments and to build the context in which the novel is placed: the apartheid period in South Africa. In our view, the study of grammatical patterns such as predicated themes in the verbal art is essential to understand the meanings expressed in the novel under analysis.

The recurrent use of a certain grammatical pattern such as the cleft sentence is always significant from the semantic and the grammatical point of view because there is no doubt that grammar is the means by which we make meanings. In this sense we agree with Butt (2003a: 11) in the following statement:

> "But grammar is significant because (and only because) we know it is the organization of meaning-of semantics. And crucially, it is this tie-up between the semantics and the grammar that we are always focusing on when we are talking about grammar- we are talking about it in relation to the higher levels in the linguist's model, the **semantics**[1] and the **context**: how do the grammatical selections construct a particular kind of meaning, and how does that particular kind of meaning have a place in, contribute to, shape, direct, provide the basis for, the unfolding of a social event? These are questions that put grammar to work."

The exploration of predicated themes in context will show how this structure functions in a literary text, because the exploration of any

---

[1] Bold type in this word and the following one appear in the original text.

grammatical aspect in literature has a purpose that is different to that of other forms of writing.

Literature is a practice that is socially conditioned. That is why we can state that the author shows certain ideological convictions, certain interests since he is impregnated by the community's characteristics. We can say that literature is a link between the situation that the community is living, the history that surrounds it and the rest of the world since it tries to transmit a message, to let us know how the socio-political situation was.

2. Analysis of the variables of the context of situation in the novels: field, tenor and mode

As regards the context of situation, when we approach the novel *Cry, The Beloved Country* (1948), we find the story of a white and a black family, the story of black and white social groups and the discriminatory society in which they coexist. We consider that *Cry, The Beloved Country,* the story of Stephen Kumalo and the search for his son in Johannesburg, is a product of his time since we can clearly see the social tensions and after them the search for brotherhood.

Since our corpus of examples belongs to a novel, there is a very clear context of situation created by the author, which can be described paying attention to the characteristics of its three components:

When we analyse the notion of **field** we have to remember the place and the moment in which Alan Paton places the action of his novel: the action in centred in South Africa, concretely in the apartheid era. The topic in *Cry, The Beloved Country* shows how the terrible conditions in which black people live takes Absalom Kumalo to an extreme situation, to kill a white man.

Poynton (1985) points out that we find three dimensions inside the notion of **tenor**, to which we shall refer briefly:
The power dimension observes if the relations between the participants are equal or not. In the case of the novel we are analysing, it is evident that the author, Alan Paton has power on the readers and tries to make them aware of the facts that he is narrating.

The contact dimension makes reference to the existence or not of a contact relation between the participants. In our case, it is evident that

there is no contact. When we read the novel, we establish a relationship with the author and we are conscious of his thoughts and his ideology but we are not in contact with him. The author establishes a relationship with the reader throughout the characters, the psychology and the thoughts of the characters and the context in which they are framed.

The affective involvement dimension refers to the extent to which the participants are emotionally involved or committed in a situation. It is evident that the author is committed and the way to express his commitment is by writing this novel or any other of his books. Alan Paton tries that readers commit with the social situation in such a way that they are involved affectively.

The concept of **mode** makes reference to the role that language plays in the text. We consider that in the case of the novel we are studying, language is not limited to presenting a series of actions, but offers us a detailed description of the facts that took place - it teaches us.

The author transmits the concrete cultural situation of his time together with the characteristics and social values of that situation through the main topics of the novel and through the use of language. He tries to show the negative aspects of that society, and he suggests ways to improve it. As Thiong'o (1995: 290) declares:

> "Communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication. Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world."

As a writer, the author becomes an authority and transmits through an expressive language, political, social and cultural facts that really took place in the society of his time. Paton uses language to reflect the social situation he lived in.

3. Definition and analysis of the structure

The construction under focus in our present work is known in structural linguistic theory as a cleft sentence, since it comes from the division of a simple sentence into two different parts (that constitute different sentences). It normally starts with the pronoun *it* without any meaning,

followed by the verb *be*. In terms of a Systemic Functional Grammar approach, the term used by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004[3]: 95) is "predicated theme", since the elements we find at the beginning of the sentence are introduced with the predicative formula "it +be". After that, we find a nominal or adverbial group that receives emphasis.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004[3]: 97) propose a double thematic analysis of predicated themes. An example that illustrates both analyses is the following:

[...] *it   is the yellow trousers   that   anger   me most of all.* (1971: 55).
a)Theme   Rheme   Theme
        Rheme
        Theme   RhemeVersion (a) shows the local congruent thematic structure of the two sentences in the construction; both themes are non marked (*it* and *that* are both subjects). Version (b), on the contrary, shows the thematic structure of the whole sentence as predicative theme. No matter what analysis we choose, it is evident that in analysis (a) and (b), the theme is the part of the message with less communicative dynamism because it hardly adds any information as we can see in *it* and *that,* whereas the rheme is the expression that shows a higher level of communicative dynamism since that part of the message is essential to understand the message, as we can see in the highlighted element *the yellow trousers* and in the relative clause *that anger me most of all.* Collins (1991: 170) refers to version (b) as "metaphorical analysis in which the superordinate clause is all thematic."[2]

The significance of the Predicated Theme structure may be appreciated more fully when we consider its role in terms of what in SFL theory are called the systems of INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION and INFORMATION FOCUS[3]. These two grammatical systems are often overlooked in the analyses of the textual metafunction in SFL work, simply because their realisation in the spoken mode is wholly through

---

[2] In our opinion, the cleft sentence is grammatical metaphor no matter if we apply analysis (a) or (b).

[3] For a full elaboration of the SFL framework for intonation research, please refer to Halliday and Greaves (2006).

the phonological resources of intonation[4]: specifically, the systems of 'tonality' and 'tonicity', respectively. However, their significance in the textuality of spoken discourse is, paradoxically, generally accepted.

In the spoken mode, the phonological resources of intonation allow for the division of information into 'information units' – 'chunks' of information - which "organizes continuous speech as a succession of units of information…manages the flow of discourse" (Halliday and Greaves, 2006: 15): in the system of INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION. In the unmarked instance, one information unit is co-extensive with one clause: that is, the two major units of the grammar of English – the clause, and the information unit – will be mapped onto one another, unless there is good reason, in terms of the management of information flow, for it to be otherwise (and this 'good reason' principle has particular application to our discussion of Paton's use of Predicated Themes in 'Cry, Beloved Country', as we shall show). In the spoken mode, the option of assigning marked tonality is clear, and may be utilised to its utmost, depending upon the context.

The other system relevant to our discussion, INFORMATION FOCUS, is concerned with the specification of the point of Focus of the information in the information unit; and more specifically, generates the Given-New structure by which speakers alert listeners to the culmination of New information, the climax and point of greatest attention, of these chunks of discourse. In the unmarked case, the last content item in an information unit carries the Focus of (culmination of) New (Halliday and Greaves, 2006: 47).

In concert with the division into clauses, and the clausal system of THEME, the systems of INFORMATION FOCUS and INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION "vary the density with which new information is introduced, show how it relates to what has gone before... and direct the listener exactly to what he wants him to attend to" (Halliday, 1985b: 59]. The two 'waves' of prominence in the textual metafunction – of Theme, and Information – in the unmarked case complement each other, the former falling from the beginning of the clause, the latter rising towards the end of the clause; however, in the spoken mode there is the option of assigning marked options in either of these two systems:

---

[4] For a discussion of the history of linguistics in relation to the written and spoken modes, refer to Halliday (1985) and Linell (2005).

> "whereas in written language there is a tendency to proceed linearly from the known to the informative (since there is no resource in the writing system for expressing this kind of meaning), in spoken language there is a great deal of variation, as the speakers exploit the potential of tonicity to its full rhetorical effect" (Halliday, 1985: 56).

In the written mode, there are of course no such phonological resources. In the graphological system of the English culture there has thus evolved a set of resources for realising some aspects of these systems: punctuation (Halliday, 1985: 32) indicates what in intonation is the system of tonality, with full stops, commas, semi-colons, and colons, and so can encode marked tonality (an information unit consisting of other than one clause); as well as realising other systems realised in the spoken mode by intonation, such as an exclamation marks for a tone 5, and a question mark for a tone 2 (although it tends to be used more for the semantic choice 'Question', as is evident in its use for a 'Wh-interrogative', which in intonation is realised in the unmarked case by a falling tone). However, these resources tend to be used inconsistently, and without the level of consciousness of the grammatical systems their intonational correlates realise. More importantly for our discussion, there are no explicit resources in the orthography for a graphological assignment of Focus of New information.

In the Predicated Theme structure, the metaphorical coupling of two clauses into one allows for the unmarked assignment of New - on the last content item of each clause – to suggest a potential for marked New in the 'single' (metaphorical clause), thus:

[...] *it is   the yellow trousers that anger me most of all.* (1971: 55).
(Given)……(New…………..) (Given)………(New……)

The terms Given and New have been bracketed in the analysis because we cannot say for certain which mapping of each is the one intended (excepting that there must be an assignment of New somewhere in an information unit). However, there are strong suggestions in a written text as to the intended interpretation of the information structure[5], based upon the cohesive and thematic and other discourse properties of the text

---

[5] For a full discussion of the interpretation of this and other aspects of intonation in a written text, cf. the work of Martin Davies, for example (1986, 1994); also Collins (1994).

(for example also, the context which has been construed, either explicitly or by assumption, in the text).

Firstly, unless there is indication otherwise somewhere in the text, in the written mode we must assume an unmarked mapping of New (according to the 'good reason' principle mentioned above). However, in terms of the Predicated Theme structure, if there is no 'new' information (as distinct from 'New' information – the structural assignment of a grammatical item) after the first (unmarked assignment) of New (in the first congruently interpreted clause) – that is, if the information after the first unmarked New is already known to the reader – then there is a strong tendency for a reader to infer that the second clause has no assignment of focus: that is, that the INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION is thus marked – one information unit for two clauses – and that the INFORMATION FOCUS is thus also marked – being on the last content item of the (congruently) first clause. In terms of the grammatically metaphoric, 'two clauses as one' interpretation, the assignment of New is therefore on a non-final content item, and is therefore marked.

In the example given above, the interpretation is unclear, without further knowledge of the context (including the preceding 'cotext' of the text) - although we may suggest that there are two information units, as the interpersonal Adjunct 'most of all'[6] we would expect to have informational assignment. However, in the following example, from an exchange between the characters Kumalo and his wife, taken from our novel, the interpretation as Marked New is unambiguous:

> *- You have opened a door, and because you have opened it, we must go through. And Tixo alone knows where we shall go.*
> *- It was not I who opened it, she said, hurt by the accusation. It has a long time been open, but you would not see […]*

The Predicated Theme may thus be confidently analysed as:
It was not   I   who opened it
Given………New   Given………

---

[6] NB: although in speech the assignment of Focus is phonologically on a single item (actually a syllable), grammatically it is (generally) on a word group or phrase – an 'informational group'. So here the assignment of Focus on 'all', in speech, would indicate that the entire group 'most of all' would be highlighted.

Here, the personal pronoun 'I' is highlighted as Focus of New in the first clause; and as all the information in the second clause is entirely recoverable from the preceding cotext, we must assume that the 'speaker' (the character in the fictive dialogue) is using marked New in a Predicated Theme structure, in order to make textually prominent this item, (as contrastive with 'who did open it' – the Agent of the material process of 'door opening' in this case, in the text, unspecified).

4. Culture as a meaning potential for a society: Paton's use of the written mode

In the last example cited and analysed above, from the second chapter in the novel, we see a critical moment early in the development of the narrative: an argument between two characters, where a particular issue is being passionately debated. In writing this 'scene', Paton faced a dilemma which faces all users of the English language constrained by the written mode: 'how to realise, in graphology, those critical grammatical systems of the language realised, in speech, through the phonological resources of intonation?'. These are the systems which 'tie a text to its context' and are a resource for dialogic engagement – interpersonal and textual systems which are part of the 'on-the-spot' features of spoken text:

> "What then is the nature of these 'missing ingredients' that writing can do without: essentially they are the on-the spot features of language, the things that tie it to the particular moment and context of speaking…because of its core functions, writing is not anchored in the here and now…At the same time…the omission of prosodic features from written language is, in some respects and under certain circumstances a genuine deficiency" (Halliday, 1985b: 32).

The evolution of writing was not originally designed for such uses: "writing evolves when language has to take on new functions in society. These tend to be the prestigious functions, those associated with learning, religion, government, and trade" (Halliday, 1985b: vii). Over time however, writing has come to take on functions in a society more traditionally associated with the spoken mode: most significantly for the recording of verbal art (literature), and for dialogic interaction (letter writing, and particularly in recent times with the advent of e-communication, and real-time interaction in the written mode, such contexts as internet chatrooms, SMS messaging etc). Members of a

literate culture have therefore at their disposal a choice of modes in which to communicate with their society[7]. The issues of the use of the written mode could in fact therefore be questioned from another perspective: why was Paton using the written mode in the first place, as the means of creating his text, including the (fictive) spontaneous dialogic interaction found throughout? To answer this question we need first to look at the characteristics, advantages and disadvantages of each mode[8].

Mode:	Spoken	Written
characteristics	real-time, unrecorded, face-to-face, immediate presence of receiver and context, context available text-independently, continuous, and interactive	Not real time; distanced from receiver; non-interactive; detached from immediate situational context[9], context must be construed through text; non-continuous[10], and is recorded[11]
advantages	able to respond (and argue and react! And comfort and agree and disagree) immediately – is faster too (can speak casual conversation quicker than we write a novel); can use the resources of rhythm and intonation; can utilise other	avoid immediate interruption, reaction (possibly violent!); is received with more openness and concentration, reading being a private activity; able to pursue difficult or sensitive field/topics over a long uninterrupted stretch of a single text (is essentially a

[7] It should be noted that we are here considering culture as the system end of a cline, of 'context', whose instantial end is the 'context of situation'; that is, that we consider 'context of culture' as being at the same stratal level as context of situation, each context of situation as being an instantiation of the cultural potential. This cultural potential of course includes language. That is, properly considered, language is of course a part of the cultural potential (the total potential in a society for making meaning), and therefore at the level of context! However, the grammatical systems of language we consider at that level of abstraction; at the level of context, we need only consider the parameters of mode – the role language is playing in a context - such as whether a text is spoken or written, spontaneous/ or prepared, etc (cf. Butt 2003b)

[8] Note: these are by no means meant to be exhaustive observations, and are directed particularly at the context of culture prevailing for Paton in his time and society. Of course, they don't necessarily apply to other, particularly later contexts of culture; and are also subject in any society to variation in their applicability to the two modes (that is, speech is not always spontaneous, writing non-interactive, etc)

[9] Artificially: in reality it is a part of the context of the receiver, particularly the wider context of culture; but it seems to be taken out of the daily, time-constrained reality of unrecorded spoken dialogue

[10] It has an end and a beginning, and aims toward being a single statement, rather than a work-in-progress, as speech is

[11] One can go back and refer to it again and again; with speech, this was (in Paton's day) only practically possible, on the whole, with memory, which is always contestable.

	intonation; can utilise other semiotic resources such as gesture, bodily attitude/pose, etc	of a single text (is essentially a single 'turn'), organise and reorganise, is culturally privileged (cf. Halliday, 1985: vii)
disadvantages	can be interrupted, stopped, attacked, ignored, is harder than in writing to collect/ organise ones thoughts, hold the floor for a monologue/narrative, etc, tends to be tied to the immediate situational context – hard to introduce non-situational Field, particularly sensitive topics	Disadvantages: loses the phonological resources of the face-to-face spoken mode; writing is contestable, not so much according to the evidence - the text - but to the interpretation; and people can use it against the writer, as evidence, if they wish to accuse him/her of something they think is criminal/wrong/immoral

Table 1: context of culture: mode: spoken; written

The above table shows that in Paton's time there were both significant advantages and disadvantages to either mode. However, it is clear upon consideration of the themes and ideas addressed in 'Cry, Beloved Country' that the advantages of using the written mode far outweigh those of the spoken mode. In this respect, two major considerations stand out: the difficulty of negotiating meanings within the highly sensitive field of Apartheid South Africa, and all the attendant themes of crime, poverty, and the like; and the difficulty of developing in the spoken mode the sort of large-scale textual detail and coherence necessary to bring understanding to the complexity of these issues. In the spoken face-to-face mode, in negotiating such meanings one would always be running the risk of being interrupted at best, and at worst attacked!

Having selected the spoken fictive mode from the cultural potential available to him however, Paton then had the task of interacting with his audience. It seems obvious that in this novel the author, although distancing himself through the written mode from the other potential interactants of his society, had nevertheless the aim of engaging with them: the novel clearly seems intended not as an expression of abstract concepts, detached from the issues of the immediate social context, but as a vehicle for the negotiation of issues deeply and immediately relevant to the society of his day. It is with respect to this consideration

that we can see the significance, to the context of culture of his day, of Paton's versatile use of the Predicated Theme structure, as outlined above, in its several functions. In the following section we further discuss the use of Predicated Themes in the novel, as a resource for realising a closer relation between text and context – between text creator and text receiver – than the written mode would otherwise afford; and thus as evidence of Paton's attempt to interact dialogically with the society of his time, and its culture.

5. Predicated Themes as textual resource in the written mode

Within the SFL framework, the settings in the contextual parameters of mode should be relatable most directly to selections from language systems of the textual metafunction, in the same way that we see tenor relations negotiated through selections in speech function, realised in choices from interpersonal systems such as MOOD and KEY. However, the semantic equivalent of the interpersonal semantic system of speech function, in the textual metafunction, is not so clearly set out in the corpus of work in the SFL tradition. It does seem clear however that if we are to relate the use of Predicated Themes - a textual resource - in 'Cry, Beloved Country', to the contexts of their use, we need to decide upon some unit at the semantic stratum by which to relate choices in textual systems of the lexicogrammatical stratum to parameters of mode at the level of context.

As we know the Predicated Theme structure to involve the systems of THEME and INFORMATION FOCUS primarily, we find the concepts of Macro-Theme and Macro-New to be useful in this regard[12] Thus, we look for the global Themes and New informations, with respect to which we may relate the instantiation of the Predicated Theme structure. It is

---

[12] We do not reject however the need for developing a more clearly elaborated set of textual categories for the semantic stratum; and would like to suggest for future discussion the possibility of using the concept of generic structure as a potentially rich concept for the discussion of textual semantics. In this respect, we would like to draw attention to the second order semiotic nature of the textual metafunction: that is, if we accept that a textual category such as Theme is determined by reference to experiential and interpersonal elements – being 'mapped' onto these functional items – then we may postulate that at the semantic stratum also the textual units are in fact made up of elements of the other two metafunctions, i.e. interpersonal and ideational semantic choices: that any textual semantic unit must be an ordering of the selections in ideational and interpersonal semantic systems. It is with respect to these considerations that we offer for investigation the idea of applying work done in generic structure theory to the area of textual semantics.

hypothesised that, being a structure which creates in the written mode textual prominence – via interactions of the systems of THEME, INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION and INFORMATION FOCUS – that we might be able to relate the place of occurrence of this marked textuality to the global themes of the book.

To discover the Macro-Theme of the story, we have applied the basic principle of the system of THEME – that, in English, the initial position in the clause is thematic – to the concept of a global Macro-Theme; and therefore analysed the first chapter of the book. This chapter in fact stands apart, textually, from the rest of the narrative following: it is concerned not with the domestic human-scale tragedies and developments of Kumalo and his people following, but with a wider more abstract perspective, of humankind as an entity – 'man', in its relation to the land. However, although in this regard it is a chapter more closely aligned with the traditional role of the written mode, in terms of its abstraction, it is the first chapter in which the reader is directly addressed – both explicity as 'you', and implicitly in a series of imperatives – and thus in which we see Paton not so much dealing with the internal context of the novel, but with the wider context of his society and its culture (or perhaps, societies and cultures).

In this chapter the author contrasts the state of the land which has been well looked after – ie has not had detrimental effects of human overcultivation – with that of land which has been degraded by overuse. Textually, the Theme progression is fascinating: there are 64 clauses in total in this chapter, with the Thematic development hinging upon one Thematic conjunction – 'But' – which signals the change from the description of the 'well-tended' soil to that where 'the rich green hills break down' (Paton, 1958: 7); and this 'But' happens precisely halfway through the chapter – in clause 32 (highlighted in bold). The full Theme analysis of the first chapter is presented below:

C	Text (theme underlined)	Textual theme	Theme experiential
1	<u>There</u> is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hills		'There'
2	<u>These hills</u> are grass-covered and rolling		'These' + 'hills'
3	<u>And they</u> are lovely beyond any singing of it	and	'they' (the hills)

4	<u>The road</u> climbs seven miles into them, to Carisbrooke		The road
5	<u>And from there</u>, <<if there is no mist>>, you look down on one of the fairest valleys of Africa	and	'from there…you'
6	<<<u>if there </u>is no mist>>	if	'There'
7	<u>About you</u> there is grass and bracken		'About you'
8	<u>And you</u> may hear the folorn crying of the titihoya, one of the birds of the veld	and	you
9	<u>Below you</u> is the valley of the Umzimkulu, on its journey from the Drakensberg to the sea; and beyond and behind the river, great hill after great hill; and beyond and behind them, the mountains of Ingeli and East Griqualand.		Below you
10	<u>The grass</u> is rich and matted		The grass
11	<u>You</u> cannot see the soil		you
12	<u>It</u> holds the rain and the mist		It
13	<u>And they</u> seep into the ground	and	they
14	<u>^they^</u> feeding the streams in every kloof		^they
15	<u>It</u> is well-tended		It
16	<u>And not too many cattle</u> feed upon it	and	not too many cattle
17	<u>Not too many fires</u> burn it		not too many fires
18	<u>^not too many fires^</u> laying bare the soil		not too many fires
19	<u>(you) Stand</u> unshod upon it		(you) Stand
20	<u>For the ground</u> is holy	for	the ground
21	<u>^the ground^</u> being even as it came from the Creator		^the ground^
22	<u>(you) Keep</u> it		(you) Keep
23	<u>(you) guard</u> it		(you) guard
24	<u>(you) care</u> for it		(you) care
25	<u>For it</u> keeps men	for	it
26	<u>^it^</u> guards men		^it - the ground^ guards
27	<u>^it^</u> cares for men		^it - the ground^ cares
28	(you) Destroy it		(you) Destroy
29	<u>And man</u> is destroyed		and man
30	<u>Where you stand</u> the grass is rich and matted		Where you stand
31	<u>You</u> cannot see the soil		you
32	<u>But the rich green hills</u> break down	**But**	the rich green hills
33	<u>They</u> fall to the valley below		They
34	<u>And ^They^</u> falling	and	^They^
35	<u>^they^</u> change their nature		^they^
36	<u>For they</u> grow red and bare	For	For they
37	<u>They</u> cannot hold the rain and the mist		they
38	<u>And the streams</u> are dry in the kloofs	and	the streams
39	<u>Too many cattle</u> feed upon the grass		Too many cattle
40	<u>And too many fires</u> have burned it	and	too many fires

41	(you) Stand shod upon it		(you) Stand
42	For it is course and sharp	for	it
43	And the stones cut under the feet	and	the stones
44	It is not kept,		It
45	or ^It is not^ guarded	or	^It^
46	or ^It is not^ cared for	or	^It^
47	it no longer keeps men		it
48	^it no longer^ guards men,		^it^
49	^it no longer^ cares for men		^it^
50	The titihoya does not cry here anymore		The titihoya
51	The great red hills stand desolate		The great red hills
52	And the earth has torn away like flesh	and	the earth
53	The lightning flashes over them		The lightning
54	The clouds pour down upon them		the clouds
55	The dead streams come to life		the dead streams
56	^the dead streams being^ full of the red blood of the earth		^the dead streams^
57	Down in the valleys women scratch the soil that is left		Down in the valleys (women)
58	And the maize hardly reaches the height of a man	and	the maize
59	They are valleys of old men and old women, of mothers and children		They
60	The men are away		The men
61	The young men and the girls are away		the young men and the girls
62	The soil cannot keep them anymore		The soil

Table 2: Theme progression in Chapter One

There are many interesting observations that could be made upon this analysis of the Theme development of this opening chapter. For our present purposes, it can be seen clearly from the above analysis that the first chapter is developing a Theme of 'man' in relation to the land, our dependence and effect upon this primary physical resource. This, we contend, thus forms the Macro-Theme for the rest of the book. And it is with to this Macro-Theme, we further suggest, that the incidence of many at least of the Predicated Themes may be referred: that we find this resource for realising textual prominence mapped onto experiential meanings related to this Theme, as this Macro-Theme is developed throughout the story[13].

---

[13] It is not that we are trying to show that the Predicated Themes are directly related to this Macro-Theme; rather, that the use of Predicated Themes in many cases, as a textual resource realising, among other things, textual prominence, may be related to the semantic textual development of the narrative; and that we can see, through this attempt

For example, in the second chapter we can clearly see a shift from the beginning of the second chapter, from the abstract Themes of the first chapter, to the more domestic human-scale, symbolised in the figure of a child running:

> *The small child ran importantly to the wood-and-iron*
> *church with the letter in her hand* (Paton, 1958: 6)

Having thus set up the internal context of the scene as 'domestic: human', we witness the interaction quoted earlier (page 7) between husband and wife. It is a critical moment in their life: the moment they are brought to the point of confrontation with the certain knowledge that their life savings set aside for the education of their absent son will be wasted – who has, like so many others mentioned in the first chapter, in the context of the abstract concept of man and his relation with the land, disappeared to the city, not be heard from since. Tus the reasons for this exile have been made clear to us, the reader, and in the form of direct first person address, in the first chapter; and it is within this context – a context set up within the text - that we encounter this fictive dialogue, with the first instanstantiation of the Predicated Theme structure, realising Marked New, and thus textual prominence.

This first of the Predicated Themes is followed closely by this instance:

> *You are hurting yourself, she said.*
> *Hurting myself? Hurting myself? I do not hurt myself, it is*
> *they who are hurting me. My own son, my own sister, my*
> *own brother. They go away and they do not write any*
> *more* (Paton, 1958: 11)[14].

The very domestic concerns of the Kumalos are thus implicitly brought into textual relation to the Macro-Theme of the novel: Stephen is trapped in the domestic human context, blaming the people in his immediate social world; but his wife, and the author, see and suggest the wider

---

at an analysis of a textual resource in its interstratal relations, how we may begin to relate the textuality of the novel to its context.

[14] Note: in this instance, the most likely interpretation would be Marked Tonality – two information units for one clause – but Unmarked New in each information unit: constrasting 'they' and 'me'.

context, the underlying reasons for the tragedy unfolding in their life. Thus the reader is given a privileged perspective on the private tragedy of Kumalo's situation; but more crucially, is in a sense 'sat next to the author' as he tells the tale, so that we feel that we are still, for the rest of the novel, being addressed in the first person, as we were in the first chapter. Our's is a shared context, created solely through language: the language of the textual metafunction.

Other examples of Predicated Themes assigning textual prominence to meanings related to the Macro-Theme are shown below:

> *You will learn much here in Johannesburg, said the rosycheeked priest. It is not only in your place that there is destruction* (Paton, 1958: 22).

> *I say we shall always have native crime for fear until the native people of this country have worthy purposes to inspire them and worthy goals to work for. For it is only because they see neither purpose nor goal that they turn to drink and crime and prostitution* (Paton, 1958: 68).

> *That happens nearly every day, he said. And it is not only the Europeans who are afraid. We are also afraid, right here in Sophiatown* (Paton, 1958: 22)

Each of these examples reveals a relation to the overarching Theme of the underlying causes of the social problems of the society, which are rooted in the faulty relationship between human society and its natural environment. European/African experiences, cultures and their relations are shown as complex, and not a simple matter of moral oppositions. In particular, the differentiation between the European and African cultures as semiotic for negotiation with the natural world is forgrounded, in contrast to the common, simplistic view of these two cultures as 'artificial' and 'natural':

> *It was a white man who taught me. There is not even good farming, he said, without the truth...It was he also who taught me that we do not work for men, that we work for the land and the people. We do not even work for money, he said* (Paton, 1958: 229).

However, there are aspects of European culture which are forgrounded by the use of the Predicated Theme structure, and with negative appraisal:

> *It is the duty of a Judge to do justice, but it is only the People that can be just. Therefore if justice be not just, that is not to be laid at the door of the Judge, but at the door of the People, which means at the door of the White People, for it is the White People that make the Law* (Paton, 1958: 136)

> *Umfundisi, it was the white man who gave us so little land, it was the white man who took us away from the land to go to work* (Paton, 1958: 228).

As we have mentioned earlier, we are not here suggesting that all the Predicated Themes may be related to this particular Macro-Theme: we have discussed above some of the many functions this structure may fulfil in written discourse, many of them related specifically to the internal context of the characters and their story itself. However, although this structure is used for a variety of textual purposes throughout the novel, it does seem that the incidence of a significant number of those Predicated Themes unambiguously realising Marked Theme – ie those functioning to realise textual prominence – may be related to the Macro-Themes of the novel. More importantly for our discussion, the occurrence of these textual prominences is one vivid illustration of the way in which the challenges of the written mode are met by an author both constrained, and enabled by this mode, in the negotiation of a very special type of dialogue with his social world.

The development of such a text, it need not be emphasised, would be impossible in most spoken modes – excepting perhaps those of a lecture or a formal speech or reading of a story. But even in these contexts – which Paton did avail himself in subsequent years - aside from the dangers of such a context (such as government sanctions), the development of such complexity and scope in terms of textual design would be difficult at the very least. It is precisely from within the safe and stable context of the written mode – that mode which evolved for cultures to record the non-negotiable meanings of wealth possession and distribution, religious codes, and laws – that Paton was able to weave a text which did in fact treat the complex issues of his society in a way

which didn't diminish their complexity or offer trite solutions, but rather suggested how these may all be related to that most fundamental (and fundamentally African of ideas): the dependence of human beings on the land they inhabit. At the same time, through the use of such textual devices as Predicated Themes, as well as many other devices outside the scope of the present work – lyrical repetitions, cohesive chains, etc - Paton was able to transcend to a great extent the limitations of this mode, and engage in a more dialogic interaction with the social world of his day, challenging them to a consideration of ideas and contexts which in many other contexts would have been taboo to discuss, or even to consider.

6. Conclusions

In our analysis, semantics goes together with the grammatical structure under analysis, and that is why our theoretical framework has been SFL since for this linguistic school grammar is connected with meaning since all the different choices in language are meaning determined.

In this paper we have concentrated on the analysis of predicated themes in context to observe the reasons why Alan Paton used this structure in the novel. It is evident that we have used a grammatical perspective since, in our view, grammar is a tool that allows us to study the organization of any text. As Butt (2003a: 35) states, grammar "allows you to get closer to the cultural phenomenon, first of all by being able to get closer to the textural and textual organisation."

According to our data, from the formal point of view we can conclude that the cleft sentence is a marked syntactical structure because it creates a local thematized structure throughout the predication (*it is*/*it was*), in such a way that the predicative element becomes the marked focus of the information, as we can see in: - [...]*, but it was not Johannes* [...], which belongs to the cleft sentence- [...]*, but it was not Johannes who had killed the white man, it was I myself* (1988: 143).

When analysing the form and function of the highlighted element, we have seen that it is varied and has a flexible structure, although in a high percentage of our examples, the highlighted element is a nominal phrase with the function of subject, although we also find prepositional and adverbial groups and sentences. This structure marks the division between theme and rheme since there is a change in the intonation of the highlighted element. The focus of the sentence appears on the

highlighted element. In predicated themes, the sequence theme-rheme is not reversible.

Predicated themes are used in discourse as one of the ways in which new information precedes known information. From the semantic point of view, predicated themes are considered identifying because they establish a relationship of identification between two entities: the identified and the identifier.

We can understand the function of the cleft sentence if we concentrate for example in the function of the subject as theme. It is well known that the subject normally coincides with the theme. That is the reason why it should be unnecessary to use a special structure to place it in thematic position. We are going to offer an example of our corpus and we are going to rewrite it so that we find a cleft sentence:

> - [...]*, but it was not Johannes who had killed the white man, it was I myself.* (1988: 143).

> If we avoid the use of the cleft sentence, the example would be as follows:

> *Johannes had not killed the white man, I had killed him.*

In this way we have lost almost all the contrast between both subjects. In the oral language, it would be possible to mark that contrast with intonation, highlighting "Johannes" and "I". The cleft sentence makes the reader to put emphasis on a specific element of the sentence.

In these sentences, the highlighted element is very important since *it* and the copulative verb have a low degree of communicative dynamism. Since the purpose of Functional Sentence Perspective of the Sentence consists on adapting the forms to the communicative necessities of the speakers, in this case the author uses the cleft sentence to express feelings in climatic moments of the novels.

The highlighted element is followed by the relative clause, which is introduced by *that* with the function of subject in the majority of the examples in our corpus. As Huddleston (1984: 460), we come to the conclusion that there is preference for the use of *that,* although *who* is also very common when its reference is personal.

Up to this point, it can be stated that there is always a relationship between texts and society/culture, i.e., texts are sociologically shaped and they also constitute society and culture. In this sense, the novels under analysis do not have intrinsic meanings since meaning emerges according to the way the novels are used in social contexts. As Fairclough (1995: 55) states: "Language use-any text- is always simultaneously constitutive of (1) social identities, (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief."

While we were reading the novels that have been analysed we had a question in our mind: Why did the author use predicated themes and under what circumstances? In our opinion, the fact that the cleft sentence is used by the protagonists in some of the most important moments of the novel makes clear that we are in front of a structure very much used to emphasize, highlight a certain part of the information or point out feelings or emotions. The cleft sentence contrasts with something previously said or highlights a certain fact considered important for the narrative.

After the analysis of our corpus of examples we can state that the cleft sentence is a structure very much used in the written language since the combination theme/new information is marked, and normally of the contrastive type. The use of predicated themes in the written language allows the reader to be conscious that he is assuring or denying something in a firm way and it is also an important structure for the textual organization of discourse.

If culture is a resource for a society to negotiate the socio-material environment, then there is a suggestion in 'Cry, Beloved Country' that both the cause of and solution to the social problems which demanded such an attention as given in this novel, could be found in the society's culture: in the semiotic systems by which human beings communicate and so create their societies. Therefore we propose that Paton set out to contribute to the negotiation of the culture of his day; and that his attempt may be crucially assessed through an investigation of the textual resources, in particular, of his text.

In terms of the stratal relations of this structure, we suggest that 'Cry, beloved country' can thus be seen as an attempt by Paton to utilise, at the instance pole at the context stratum, a particular set of options in the cultural systems of his time, in order to skillfully negotiate meanings not readily available for development within other mode selections. The use

of Predicated Themes is thus a way to transform the written monologic fictive mode into a real dialogue with the reader, and the culture of his time; while at the same time allowing the construction of a more careful and elaborated text than possible otherwise. In this way Paton was enabled to negotiate complex meanings within this interaction, and express through this textual design - this instance of his culture - a simple and ancient truth.

REFERENCES

BUTT, D. 2003a. "Investigating Experience through Grammar: from Personal to Cultural Perspectives on the evolution of School Knowledge". In: Joyce E. James Ed. *Grammar in the Language Classroom.* Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

_____. 2003b. 'Parameters of context: on establishing similarities and differences between social processes'. Sydney: Centre for Language in Social Life, Macquarie University.

COLLINS, P. 1991.*Cleft and Pseudo-cleft Constructions in English.* London: Routledge.

DAVIES, M. 1986. Literacy and intonation, in Couture, B. (ed.*),* *Functional approaches to writing: research perspectives*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex. 199-230.

_____. 1994. '"I'm sorry, I'll read that again": Information structure in writing', in Csmejrkova, Svetla & Sticha, Frantisek Eds. *The Syntax of Sentence and Text:a Festschrift for Frantisek Danes*. Amsterdam: Jonhn Benjamins Publishing Company.

EGGINS, S. 2004. *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*. Second edition. London/New York: Continuum.

ERDMANN, P. 1990. *Discourse and Grammar: Focussing and Defocussing in English.* Tübingen: Newmeyer.

FAIRCLOUGH, N. 1995. *Media Discourse*. London: Arnold.

HALLIDAY, M.A.K. 1985a. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold.

_____. 1985b. *Spoken and Written Language*. Victoria: Deakin University Press.

_____. 1994. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. Second edition. London: Arnold.

HALLIDAY, M.A.K & C.M.I.M MATTHIESSEN. 2004. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar.* Third edition. London: Hodder Arnold.

HALLIDAY, M.A.K & W.S. GREAVES. 2006. *Intonation in the Grammar of English*. London: Equinox.

HALVORSEN, P.K. 1978. *The Syntax and Semantics of Cleft Constructions.* Austin: University of Texas, Linguistic Department.

HUDDLESTON, R. 1984. *Introduction to the Grammar of English.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

JESPERSEN, O. 1909-1949. *A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles I-VII.* London/Copenhagen: Allen and Unwin.

LINELL, P. 2005. *The written language bias in linguistics: its nature, origins, and transformations.* New York: Routledge.

MALINOWSKI, B. 1923. "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages", supplement to C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards (eds.) *The Meaning of Meaning* (8th ed., 1946), New York: Harcourt Brace and World; pp. 296-336.

_____. 1935. *Coral Gardens and their Magic*, V*ol. II: The Language of Magic and Gardening.* London: Allen and Unwin.

MARTIN, J.R. & D. ROSE. 2003. Working with Discourse. Meaning beyond the Clause. London: Continuum.

PATON, A. 1958. *Cry, The Beloved Country.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

_____. 1988. "Sudáfrica: Trágico Rompecabezas". *Mundo Negro*, 312: 50-53.

POYNTON, C. 1985. *Language and Gender: Making the Difference.* Geelong, Vic: Deakin University Press.

THIONG'O, N.W. 1995. "The Language of African Literature". In: B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths & H. Tiffin. Eds. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader.* London/New York: Routledge; pp. 285-290.