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CONTESTED DOMESTIC SPACES:
ANNE LANDSMAN'S *THE DEVIL'S CHIMNEY*

Jill Nudelman

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg, 2005

ABSTRACT

This dissertation interrogates Anne Landsman's *The Devil's Chimney*. The novel is narrated by the poor-white alcoholic, Connie, who imagines a story about Beatrice, an English colonist living on a farm in the Little Karoo. Connie, who is a product of the apartheid era, interweaves her own story with that of Beatrice's and, in this way, comes to terms with her own memories, her abusive husband and the new South Africa.

Connie deploys the genre of magical realism to create a defamiliarised farm setting for Beatrice's narrative. She thus challenges the stereotypes associated with the traditional *plaasroman* and its patriarchal codes. These codes are also subverted in Connie's representation of Beatrice, who contests her identity as the authoritative Englishwoman, as constructed by colonial discourse. In addition, Beatrice's black domestic, Nomsa, is given voice and agency: facilities denied to her counterparts in colonial and apartheid fiction. Nomsa's relationship with Beatrice is also characterised by subversion as it blurs the boundaries between colonised and coloniser. In this regard, the text demands a postcolonial reading.

Connie, in narrating Beatrice's and Nomsa's stories, reinvents their invisible lives and, by doing so, is able to rewrite herself. In this, she tentatively envisions a future for herself and also potentially 'narrates' the nation, thus contributing to the new national literature.

The nation is inscribed in the Cango caves, whose spaces witness the seminal episodes in Beatrice's narrative. In these events, the caves 'write' the female body and women's sexuality and the text thus calls for an engagement with feminism. The caves also inscribe South African history, the Western literary canon, the imagination and Landsman's own voice. Hence, the caves assume the characteristics of a palimpsest. This, together with the metafictive elements of the novel, invites an encounter with postmodernism.

KEYWORDS:

Magical Realism (Literature); Home; Feminism; Postcolonialism; White Women; South African Literature; Post-apartheid Literature; Literary History – South Africa; Caves; Space and Time in Literature.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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Name of candidate)

_____ day of _____, 2005.

Dedication

To Sam, and our children Leigh, Craig, Jake and Zach
for giving me the space to write this dissertation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere and heartfelt thanks go to my supervisors, Gerald Gaylard and Michelle Adler, for their invaluable insights, comments and time, of which they gave so generously. Not only did they provide me with encouragement and inspiration, but they shared my enthusiasm for the novel. Their contribution is deeply appreciated.

My thanks also go to my sister, Pam Michelow, for her careful proof-reading.

Thanks to Anne Landsman for her time and her permission to print the interview.

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INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I investigate Anne Landsman's *The Devil's Chimney* and the contested domestic spaces with which the novel engages. The word 'contested' relates to crossing boundaries, negotiating spaces or resisting the status quo. 'Domestic' is concerned with the home, the household and family affairs and is traditionally associated with the activities performed by women, although the word also relates to the homeland, the society or nation. In addition, the verb 'to domesticate' means to tame or civilise. The term 'space' has been used to categorise all aspects of the material world. Soja (1985: 90-94) broadly categorises space into three classes: geographical space or place, societal space, and the mental spaces of the human subject. Two further categories can be added: those of temporality and textuality. This analysis thus deals with the various connotations of the word 'home', and the boundaries marking the home or homeland. It engages with the characters within the home/homeland and how their subjecthoods are moulded within these boundaries, depending on their race, gender and class. Focusing on the women in the novel, I interrogate whether they traverse the bounds of their societies and challenge the restrictions imposed on them. I also look at the spaces of the novel itself and its relationship to historiography and the Western literary canon. Lastly, I look at the textuality of the novel in terms of the genre to which it belongs.

The story is narrated by Connie, a poor white, who lives in small-town Oudtshoorn in 1997. On her recurrent visits to the Oudtshoorn museum, she sees artefacts that belonged to a Miss Beatrice Chapman, who lived on an ostrich farm in the area, circa 1910 and she is prompted to imagine a story about this English woman's life. With only her husband and deaf sister as her audience, Connie narrates Miss Beatrice's story, basing it on fragments of fact and myth and the phantasms she sees at the bottom of her glass of gin. Connie, having grown up in apartheid South Africa, is very clearly a product of her time and place. Damaged from her harsh upbringing, she is somewhat dysfunctional in her life and her relationships, and marginalised by her society. However, she plays an important role when she reinvents the story of Beatrice and her black domestics, whose lives have been all but invisible in South African history books. Her revised version of

history allows her to engage with the postcolonial as her narrative recreates the colonial period from below. In addition, her reflections on the past allow her to rewrite herself, which propels her into the future. This metafictional element inherent in the text sites the novel in the realms of postmodernism as well. Thus, magical realism can be considered a hybrid born of two differing parents: postcolonialism and postmodernism. However, in this dissertation, I focus predominantly on the postcolonial aspect of the genre.

The novel can be considered an early example of post-apartheid literature and appears to have preceded a wave of novels written by white English-speaking women. These novels present a fascinating arena for scholarship because they demonstrate how this category of writer has adapted to the changes within the country post the 'Struggle' and the collapse of the master narratives of apartheid. Some of these examples reveal a post-apartheid euphoria, while others are laden with disillusionment as the writer realises that the binaries informing apartheid discourse still exist. Related to this is the category of whiteness that has come up for debate recently. Where previously in mainstream South Africa, to be white was the norm and 'whiteness' was not considered for academic enquiry (amongst the white academic majority, at any rate), it now becomes a locus of guilt and anxiety, the source of which relates to privilege and its loss. In addition, the promises of a constitution that espouses equal rights for all appear increasingly empty as women are victims of rape and other forms of phallocentric violence. Moreover, research in this area is and has always been paltry. While there are a few critical writings pertaining to black women writers and white Afrikaans women writers, there is an obvious gap associated with white English-speaking women writers (with the exception of Nadine Gordimer).[1]

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[1] Some recent criticism relating to black women's writing includes:

Dorothy Driver ''M'a-Ngoana O Tsoare Thipa ka'… Women as Mothers, Women as Writers.' In: Martin Trump. (Ed.) *Rendering Things Visible*. Jhb: Ravan, 1990.

Margaret Lenta. 'Goodbye Lena, Goodbye Poppie…' *Ariel*, Vol. 29, no. 4, 1998, pp. 101 – 118.

Boehmer. Elleke. 'Stories of Women and Mothers…in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa.' In: Shusheila Nasta (Ed.) *Motherlands*…New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1992.

Some recent criticism relating to Afrikaans women's writing includes:

Louise Viljoen. 'Postcolonialism and Recent Women's Writing in Afrikaans.' *World Literature Today*. Vol. 70, no. 6, 1996, pp. 63-72;

Why specifically Landsman's text? In reading a selection of white women's novels, I mostly found them self-conscious and poorly written. Despite the cataclysmic changes that have taken place in South African society since 1994, Njabulo Ndebele's and Albie Sach's descriptions of apartheid writing still apply. Ndebele (1991: 38) vilified apartheid writing as a display of 'the spectacle of social absurdity', presenting only 'triteness and barrenness of thought'. Sachs (1998: 240) too, bemoaned 'the impoverishment of our art'. In a paper prepared in 1989 for an ANC seminar on culture, he lamented: '(t)he range of themes is narrowed down so much that all that is funny or curious or genuinely tragic in the world is excluded. Ambiguity and contradiction are completely shut out'.

Post-apartheid South Africa sees a continuation of this denigration of South African writing by critics, such as Elleke Boehmer and Eva Hunter. Boehmer disparages the forms deployed by South African writers post-1994. She proposes that they have not found a discourse unique to the changed South Africa and continue to use ready-made models, such as: 'magic realist conjuring tricks (and) the treatment of history as 'discourse' or as fantasy' (1998: 46). Many of the novels I selected to represent this category indeed do offer a version of 'history as discourse' or as fantasy. My criticism is that the authors are so intent on presenting their revised version of history, on providing a sounding board for the voice of the subaltern, that any subtlety, depth and texture is sacrificed to their cause. The protagonist becomes a literary device rather than a character to whom the reader relates. Of course, the hero can embody or represent a socially relevant issue but he or she must be credible, otherwise the narrative fails to absorb the reader. Ironically, this applies to Elleke Boehmer's own novel, *Bloodlines* (2000), whose characters failed to move me in any way. Perhaps this reveals something of the reader, but I think it relates more to the rendering of her characters, who are formulaic and artificial. The novel presents the voice of the noble, long-suffering Dora, who as a domestic, is required to colour code her employer's panties. Her

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Emily Zinn. 'Rediscovery of the Magical: on Fairy Tales, Feminism and the New South Africa.' *Modern Fiction Studies*. Vol. 46, no. 1, 2000, pp. 246-269;
Mark Saunders. 'Truth, Telling, Questioning… Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull*….' *Modern Fiction Studies.* Vol. 46, no. 1, 2000, pp. 13 – 41.

debasing and mindless job should have evoked my sympathy but she failed to elicit any such response. As the subaltern, she is uneducated and disadvantaged, yet she is as articulate as a toastmistress. Her inappropriate eloquence is illustrated by the following example of her speech:

> What my son did was an act of political sabotage. Maybe he acted alone but he has no personal motive. He believes the race war here isn't won yet but he's not a racist… Black people have died and still die every day in this country for demanding no more than whites have. (*Bloodlines*: 66)

Eva Hunter (1999: 44) confirms my opinion. In a disparaging critique of the novels of white English-speaking women post-1994, she determines that the characters peopling these novels are inauthentic and stereotypical. She denigrates them as not fleshed out and portrayed in the simple binaristic terms that characterise patriarchal colonialist writings. In addition, she complains that: '*most* novels by white English-speaking women published during the 1990s have continued to inscribe lack of agency (in their female protagonists), and so have not fostered the maturing of feminist politics' (ibid.: 38).

Following Hunter's criticism, I find the lack of agency evident in Lally of *The Beneficiaries* (Sarah Penny, 2002) and Kate in *The Innocence of Roast Chicken* (Joanne Richards, 1996). Both these disagreeable protagonists witness atrocities as youths, which leave indelible scars on their psyches. They are enraged by the iniquitous regime of apartheid yet do nothing but 'collude in the cruel socio-economic system' (ibid.). In *The Innocence of Roast Chicken*, which Hunter (ibid.) describes as 'shoddily-written', the eight year-old Kate watches as her father helplessly witnesses the castration of a black rapist by white Afrikaans farmers on their farm. While espousing liberal politics, her father is incapable of breaking ranks with his white compatriots while knowing that what they are doing is despicable. Her identity informed by this experience, she is bitter and disengaged. Yet, she conforms to the role of wife, married to a lawyer, living in

'one of Johannesburg's nice suburbs' (ibid.: 18), lacking the power to change the circumstances of her life which find her so unhappy.

Lyn Freed is hardly comparable to Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer. Nevertheless, I found both their heroines in *The Mirror* (1999) and *The Pick-Up* (2001) respectively, clichéd and one-dimensional and the resolve of these plucky protagonists in resisting their patriarchal societies left me indifferent. Similarly, I found Gillian Slovo's characters in *Red Dust* (2000) also wooden and unconvincing, their responses to situations shallow. The novel, set at the time of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), tells the story of an ex-South African, now top New York lawyer, who is requested by her former mentor to represent the parents of a murdered freedom fighter in an amnesty application. The book deals with the Big Issues, such as truth and power, heroism, exile, memory and the individual as victim of history but the author is too self-conscious, her agenda too obvious, and her descriptions, excruciatingly detailed and laboured, leave nothing to the reader's imagination.

For me, Landsman has thrown off the 'culture of oppression' (Ndebele: 1991: 39) that continues to influence South African writing. She demonstrates that realism is not the only genre appropriate for fiction and creates a text that reflects and embraces the complexity and diversity of South African society, post 1994. Although the novel also deals with 'history as discourse or fantasy', it departs in interesting ways from the humdrum that I have experienced. Most importantly, her writing style shimmers on the pages, as opposed to that of other writers in the category, which I found plodding and dull. Although her novel is not in the realist mould, her characters, ironically, are credible and their narratorial paths are gripping.

Brink (1997: 1-2), in opposition to Boehmer, regards magical realism as an 'exuberant' replacement for 'the realism and commitment that marked the dark years of oppression in South Africa'. He posits that magical realism is particularly apposite to South Africa where two indigenous forms of magical

realism already exist: one being the oral narratives of black culture and the other, the tales told by trekkers and lonely travellers alongside camp fires, or by Boers on isolated farms deep within the interior of the country. Landsman evokes a dreamlike landscape that, according to critic Anne Ursu (1997: 1), occupies a world in that 'nebulous space between dream and daylight, beauty and horror, hate and desire'. Time and space are transformed into 'magical and elastic concepts' creating an interweaving that facilitates ambiguity and contradiction (Brink: 1997: 1).

With respect to magical realism, Landsman's novel is a relevant subject for academic interrogation. Felicity Wood (2001: 7, 37) writes that fiction incorporating the fantastic has up to now been an unusual practice in South Africa. As a result, it has been understudied, evident by the paucity of scholarly research in this area. Furthermore, investigation surrounding women's identity issues that are grounded in magical realism has rarely been undertaken, both in South Africa and internationally. A last point regarding the relevance of studying this novel is the fact that the white working class hardly ever features as a subject of fiction. Connie is one of the few working class heroines to appear in the corpus of South African literature.[2] This, of course, also accounts for the dearth of critical analyses and writings in this regard.

Landsman's text is multi-layered and its scope is broad and complex as a result of the labyrinthine nature of the genre she deploys. The thrust of this dissertation aims to analyse these different layers using appropriate theory. The uniqueness of the South African context and the originality of the novel preclude the use of only one theory or theorist and to have limited this dissertation to, for instance, a postcolonial reading alone, would have resulted in a very impoverished interpretation of a most rich and multifaceted text. This accounts for the panoply of theorists and the eclectic readings that I have cited. The dissertation does, in fact, frequently engage with postcolonialism, often referring to Homi Bhabha and his notions regarding the location of culture within the discourse of a nation and

[2] Mention must be made here of Mol, Marlene van Niekerk's downtrodden poor white heroine in *Triomf* (1999), another most worthy read.

the dialogue between narrative, nation and cultural identity. In addition, I have also employed his idea of the unhomely nation. Rosemary Garangoly George features significantly. To this postcolonial feminist, the home is not a politically neutral space but reflects the binaries of imperial power, especially in terms of race and gender. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's articles on the subject of the subaltern feature and I have also made substantial use of Anne McClintock, who although she has reservations about the term postcolonialism[3], can be described as a postcolonial theorist. She describes her work as grounded in Marxism, psychoanalysis and feminism and related to the dynamics of power. I have also drawn on a broad spectrum of South African theorists ranging from J.M. Coetzee, whose *White Writing* features considerably, to Marks and Trapido, who have provided valuable historical background. Jacklyn Cock's *Maids and Madams*, Stephen Gray's chapter on the Hottentot Eve and an article by Wendy Woodward, accessed off the internet (and thus not refereed), have also provided grist for my theoretical mill. In addition, Dorothy Driver's feminist critiques have been of much use. I have also cited other feminist writers, including the influential Gilbert and Gubar, and the theorists featured in Warhol and Price Herndl's anthology on feminisms. Additionally, I have deployed Blunt and Rose's feminist-based work on spatiality. The theories of Freud, Lacan, Foucault and Bakhtin make brief guest appearances in the dissertation. In terms of magical realism, the collection of articles edited by Zamora and Faris has been invaluable as have my conversations with Gerald Gaylard.

Magical realism is very much aligned with the postcolonial and postmodern. The monolithic single term that is used to designate each 'post' is problematic as it belies the complexity and differences that characterise the genres. In addition, the 'posts' in these terms infer linear time against which both genres often set

[3] McClintock (*1995*: 10 -13) takes exception to the prefix 'post' in postcolonialism, which relates to linear time and thus perpetuates the binary oppositional thinking of Western historicism. To her, the term is reductive, inscribing history as a single issue, whereas it is complex and unevenly distributed. She offers the examples of Brazil and Zimbabwe, which, she says, do not offer the same postcoloniality. In some places, for example, the Palestinian occupied territories, the term is 'prematurely celebratory', and she hesitates to use it with respect to women, who are as yet subjected to unequal access to the rights and resources of the nation state.

themselves.[4] As parents to magical realism, the problems associated with postcolonialism and postmodernism and their appellations are compounded within magical realism and readers must be suspicious of theorists who state too categorically what the genre is or is not. Magical realism is thus characterised by defamiliarisation, fluidity, shifts, contradiction, propinquity and ambiguity: elements that pose challenges for readers steeped in Western rationality and realism. The differences between realism and magical realism generate a list of binary opposites, which includes, according to Simpkins (1998: 141), history/myth, narration/meta-narration, resolution/open-endedness, nationalism/romanticism, rationality/imagination, familiarisation/defamiliarisation and the mimetic/the fantastic. Depending on the discourse, other binaries, such as West/East, wealth/poverty, coloniser/colonised, white/black (in terms of race) and technology/pre-industrial are also inscribed or challenged. In magical realism, the oppositional elements of the binaries exist in propinquity to each other to generate a dialectical tension and the genre moves away from a single dialectic, for example of homeliness/unhomeliness, to feature a cluster of dialectics, a range of binaries whose relationships are relativised and flattened so that no class or element has a monopoly or takes preference over another. In addition, the protagonists and other characters in the text are in a state of flux, their subjecthoods are unstable, and they can move in and out of their situations or cultural mindsets at the whim of the author.[5]

Another factor responsible for instability in magical realism is defamiliarisation, in which the familiar is placed in an unfamiliar light, transferring objects to a different plane of reality. This major trope of the genre was elucidated by the Russian formalist, Victor Shklovsky in his article 'Art as Technique' (1917), as follows:

> The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length

[4] Refer to footnote 16.
[5] The information on magical realism here was gleaned in conversation with Gaylard.

> of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of the object: the object is not important.

According to Mose (1989: 9, 17), the result is positive: the poetic images thus created reveal the hidden beauty in the world. Defamiliarisation is generated by deviations from familiar time, changes in rhythm, complicated sentences, deflections, digressions and long descriptions, rhetoric such as wordplay, euphony, parallelism, comparison, repetition, hyperbole, euphemism, tautology, contrast, oxymoron and neologisms.[6] These all add to the originality and novelty of the work as do meandering labyrinthine plots and unreliable and multi-voiced narrators. These latter two features are also deployed by postmodern authors, who, in common with the magical realist, may also engage with the play of metafiction and write about a character writing (or telling, in Connie's case) a narrative. This affords them the opportunity for self-reflexive moments. In addition, Landsman's magical realism is not nihilistic but offers a glimmer of hope for the future. Lastly and significantly, in contrast to a number of postcolonial texts, the genre is seldom aligned to nationalism, ownership and sovereign identity: its rationale is rather one of subversion, dissidence and antihegemony.

As suggested by its title, this dissertation is grounded in spatiality theory. This theory suggests that society has been mapped out as an object in space with a demarcated core and margin. There is a dialogue between the space and the people occupying it: the space confers status on to its inhabitants and inversely, the space is defined by them. Thus, the resulting space is not neutral: those occupying the centre hold the power and knowledge to control the workings and the members of society, and those located at the margins lack knowledge, power

[6] Brechtian theatre deploys a form of defamiliarisation in relation to performance. Also known as the 'alienation effect', it attempts to distance the audience to what is happening on stage by making them aware of the illusion inherent in the usual mimetic presentation of a play. It involves the element of surprise which is elicited, for example, by actors moving into the audience and speaking from among the rows of spectators or by actors exchanging roles and characters in the course of the play. The technique is meant to confront the audience to make them reflect on what they see (Wikipedia website: internet).

and agency to control any such workings. This social map that is generated mimetically tends to represent hegemonic structures. Early feminist theory identifies social maps as gendered, where the core is masculine and associated with the public realm of politics, culture and the economy and the outer margins are feminine and concerned with private domestic activities, such as home-making and childrearing. Following these ordering principles, space is hierarchized: the public masculine core is perceived as invaluable to the workings of society and the private feminine margin is seen as unimportant and is thus devalued (Blunt and Rose: 1994: 3). Interestingly, the colonies, and especially the frontier of the Cape Colony, were seen to occupy the periphery of the British Empire and, as such, were consigned to the private, the domestic and thus the inferior. (The devalued status of the colonies arguably accounts for the phenomenon of 'cultural cringe', which is prevalent in Commonwealth countries outside of Britain even today.)

In the Cape colony and apartheid South Africa, the social map was complicated by race issues. Subject positioning, which was constructed around racial stereotypes and fixed binaries, became ambiguous and produced an anxiety that seeped through the pores of colonial discourse. The space became three-dimensional: white middle-class heterosexual males occupied the centre of society and the indigenous population the marginalised domestic realm, with black women assigned its outermost edges of the margins, but it was difficult to locate the position of the white female colonialist who occupied the spaces between the centre and the margins (Wittenberg: 1997: 128; Soja: 1985: 109-115). The white woman, complicit in the project of imperialism in varying respects and to shifting degrees, was relegated to the spaces outside of centre in terms of the power and authority refused to her by patriarchal society, but she occupied a central position in her home in terms of the authority she assumed over the colonised of both genders (Blunt and Rose: 1994: 14). Her subject position was thus unstable: vacillating between the margins and the centre, albeit the spaces she occupied were confined and delimited.

Literature emerging from this era often inscribes and reflects the spatiality of the hierarchical social order. Typical of this writing was the *plaasroman,* which was a response by Afrikaans writers of the early to mid twentieth century to the forced urbanisation of Afrikaans farmers. The genre, which tells of the return to the land by misplaced Afrikaans city dwellers and life on the farm, reflects the rigid boundaries of colonial society and its subjects, whose identities were informed by the domains of difference in which they lived. In contrast, magical realism engages with the postcolonial in its anti-centre/anti-margin thrust. It is about dismantling binaries and boundaries, deconstructing social maps and, therefore, constructing new and defamiliarised social spaces. These new spaces are filled with ambiguities and slippages and inhabited by characters who slip between the margins and the centre. These are the spaces that Landsman deconstructs and which comprise the content of Chapter One. The chapter is divided into two sections: in the first half, I look at the text as an alternate version of the *plaasroman.* Landsman subverts the genre, describing events that do not normally occur on these farms and inscribing characters who do not conform to the stereotypes filling these pages. In the second part, I look at the physical spaces of the text: the landscape, the houses in which her characters live and the caves, as part of the defamiliarised magical realist context. Both Landsman's subversion of the *plaasroman* and her magical realist spaces relate to the undermining of patriarchalism of colonial and apartheid rule, the patriarchal codes of the Western canon and the empiricism and rationalism of Western enlightenment philosophy.

The patriarchal authority that characterises South African hegemony not only affects public life but intrudes into the private spaces of the home, impacting on all human relationships within the home. The signifiers 'home' and 'nation' thus assume the same significations: for the denizen to be safe in his or her nation or home, those who are regarded as threatening or who contest ownership must be excluded. Thus, the homeland or home 'is a way of establishing difference' between the 'self' within the home and the 'other' living outside its borders (George: 1996: 4). However, differences are also established between insiders within the home/homeland. These differences preclude certain subjects from

gaining access to the national sources and resources of knowledge and power. For these marginalised subjects, the home becomes unhomely or, as denoted by Bhabha (1997: 445), *unheimlich*, a term he derives from Freud. The subjects unhomed in their homes, what should be familiar and known now becomes unfamiliar and strange. This description befits the homes of the women who inhabit Landsman's text: namely Beatrice, the white English colonial woman living on the peripheries of the Cape colony, Nomsa, her domestic servant, and Connie, the poor white alcoholic narrator. Their dwellings do not provide them with the shelter, nurture, comfort and protection one expects to find within the walls of the home. Chapters Two, Three and Four deal with the unhomely homes of the three women and their identities, which are informed as a result of living in these homes.

Beatrice is the subject of Chapter Two. Her subjectivity subverts the stereotypes constructed by colonial discourse and she is characterised by fragmentation and fluidity. In one respect, she complies with Rosemary Garangoly George's picture of the authoritative white English woman who was created in the colonies: as manager of her domestic realm, she was seen as an important contributor to the imperial project, conferring civilisation onto the chaotic landscape of the colonies and disciplining the untamed indigenous inhabitants. In addition, she was given identity in terms of Christian morality and was thought to be the bearer of the European soul. In the colonies, gender boundaries were laxer than those in the metropolis and she was permitted by colonial society to undertake the masculine activities associated with farming. However, Beatrice transgresses these boundaries and breaks down not only gender binaries but those associated with race. She destabilises the authoritative identity of the English woman, and goes native. Now aligned to the female indigene, she cannot control her sex drive and trespasses into the spaces of her domestics, where she commits miscegenation. Her crossing the colour bar is considered too depraved, too immoral for her society, and for Connie who feels the need to punish her for her transgressions. Connie nullifies her power by having her capitulate to Henry's demands to leave the farming to him and she loses her baby to Nomsa. The question arises as to

what her transgressive sexuality signifies to Landsman and what her identity signifies in terms of the new South African identity.

Nomsa, as the subject of Chapter Three, is the site of intense alterity and defamiliarisation. As a victim of colonial oppression, her status is that of subaltern and she is relegated to the margins in terms of her subjectivity. Even her dwelling is symptomatic of colonialism that has imposed itself upon her, constructed as it is from corrugated iron and paper: materials that symbolise Western technology and culture. Initially, she conforms to colonial representations of the black female domestic, where, if she was represented at all, she appeared as a silent shadow flitting across the landscape or figured in terms of an extreme other. Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm* (1883) is an example of colonial literature that depicts the female indigene as silent or invisible. Ngcobo (quoted by Daymond: 1996: xxxi) suggests that this novel exhibits common nineteenth century racial prejudice in treating black women as nameless, shadowy 'woolly Kaffir maids'. Coetzee (1988: 71) observes that there is generally a silence surrounding black labour, both male and female, in the Afrikaans *plaasroman*, as well as in the novels of Pauline Smith. Elleke Boehmer (1993: 269-270) presents the writings of the Victorian explorers, Mungo Park and Richard Burton, who portray the black female as the extreme other. Gagool in Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and the 'barbarous and superb woman' (109) in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) embody this extremely othered character. In addition, Nomsa can also be considered a variant of the Hottentot Eve. This archetype, according to Stephen Gray (1979: 38, 39, 52, 62), is the representation of the black domestic working in the houses of white men. She is associated with heightened sexuality, embodying all that is dark and unknown in Africa, and appears in various forms and fulfils various roles, from Rousseau's noble savage to fallen seductress in Gertrude Millin's *God's Step Children* (1924).

Nomsa is mostly silent and predominantly consigned to the private spaces of her employers' house but, paradoxically, she evokes fear and anxiety in those around

her with her occult powers and potential for destruction: this ambivalence surrounding the figure of the black female subaltern is also typical of colonial discourse. In many respects, her relationship with Beatrice exemplifies that of the South African maid/madam but it is profoundly subverted by the power she has over Beatrice and the role Beatrice expects her to play within the relationship, which includes that of friend and handmaiden, dispenser of *muti*, midwife and nurse. Thus, Connie's rendering of Nomsa incorporates the iconoclastic as well as the stereotypical. Additionally, in opposition to colonial discourse, Connie allows her to resist colonial oppression by granting her agency to move the plot to its climax and acquire subjecthood in the process. However, until the end of the text, she remains a sinister presence and her identity is filled with ambiguity and slippage and the reader is hard-pressed to know the significance of her role within the text.

According to Bhabha (1990: 1-7), the nation shapes the narratives that emerge from its spaces, and reciprocally, these narratives have the potential to shape the nation. In Chapter Four, I reflect whether Connie, as a narrator, has the potential to shape a new South Africa. In addition, I ask whether Connie can be a metonym for a nation based on matriarchal rather than patriarchal values. Connie's identity has been moulded by apartheid's oppressive doctrines, as embodied by her punitive mother, and is characterised by fear and passivity. She has also failed to fulfil the function of motherhood demanded of women by her conservative Afrikaans society. As a poor white, she hovers on the margins of society. Abused by her husband and isolated by her neighbours, Connie consoles herself with gin, which she describes as her 'special friend' (*The Devil's Chimney*: 42).[7] To help her confront her past and survive in the New South Africa, she conjures up an alter ego in the form of Miss Beatrice, who is at once brave and gentle, strong and nurturing, and who allows Connie to escape the stark reality of her own world. Beatrice's experiences create new vistas for Connie who is now able to conceive of a world where women can contest the stereotypes constructed by colonial and apartheid discourse and traverse the boundaries that delineate their societies.

[7] The text is referred to as DC from now on.

Connie is not very educated or self-aware; her reliability as a narrator is questionable and her stories are often recollected in a haze of alcohol, but her re/vision of Beatrice's past enables her to reconcile herself to her own past, allowing her to adapt to the changing circumstances of the present. Thus armed, she feels ready to take on the challenges of the future. This resonates with the idea of nation building in the new South Africa. Whether Connie is metonymic, a narrator for the new nation, is arguable but it is she alone who offers the reader any glimmer of hope for the future of the country.

Connie begins her narrative with the story about Pauline, the coloured domestic who disappeared in the caves in 1955. Her disappearance continues to haunt Connie in all the ensuing years. Accessing the caves of the imagination, the unconscious and memory, Connie reinvents Beatrice in an attempt to elucidate and comprehend what really became of Pauline. Beatrice's story therefore rests on the spaces of the caves, which assume multiple significations within the text. Chapter Five deals with these significations and the palimpsestic-like nature of the cave. Bushman paintings on the cave's walls, graffiti and other historical markings reveal the contestations that were waged in the area. Scratching beneath the surface, one uncovers references to the Western canon, such as Plato's cave and the Marabar Caves in Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924). The shadowy presence in the text suggests syncretism and propinquity between old and new, colonised and coloniser and East and West, typical of magical realism.

Noteworthy is the absence of women in the cave's layers, reflecting the absence of their voices in the canon. Confined to their roles within the domestic, excluded from the world of commerce and marginalised by their patriarchal society who eschewed their transgressive gender roles, women writers suffered from 'anxiety of authorship' (Gilbert and Gubar: 1997: 25). For George Eliot, this resulted in poor mental health as she suffered from headaches and depression, as did Sylvia Plath. Emily Dickenson explored the theme of 'infection in the sentence', seeing the process of writing as imprisoning and fever inducing and as producing hallucinations of her losing her femininity (Cordeiro: 2002: 10-11). Connie too

suffers from hallucinations in the process of 'writing' and the disapproval of her society, and like the heroines of the Victorian Gothic, she also experiences cycles of entrapment and escape.

Connie's cave allows her to access the voices of women that have been silenced in the patriarchal Western canons. The cave becomes a mythopoeic space, resonating with the voices of archetypal mothers and their daughters. In addition, the caves are inscribed as feminine, represented in terms of the female sexual organs. The space is profoundly defamiliarised as the cave's walls entrap Beatrice in an earth-shattering orgasm, which results in her losing her baby. The caves, therefore, also represent a hole, a lack of fulfilment and an absence for women, and as such, engage with authorial self-reflexivity. For Nomsa, however, they provide the womb where she develops into a woman with subjecthood and agency, for it is within the caves that she reclaims the baby. The absences of the South African canon are redressed for Nomsa, as a black colonised woman and for Connie, as a poor white Afrikaans woman. Thus, the caves are a tangle of polysemy, ambiguities and contradiction and as such, are inscribed in modern feminisms, postcolonialisms, postmodernisms and magical realism.

The caves also feature prominently in the last chapter, which deals with discursive space and the novel in the context of magical realism. The chapter focuses on postcolonial aspects of magical realism, and looks at the interface between colonised and coloniser interacting in real and magical worlds. The colonised Bapedi and Nomsa clash with the colonial Beatrice and Boer in the magical and ambiguous spaces of the cave, where their cultural differences invert or merge and fracture the unhomely binarisms constructed by patriarchal discourse. Henry, as the coloniser, too, appears to change in the unhomely spaces of the colony. Although we do not know how he behaved at 'home' in England, here on the farm, he is governed by irrational and brutal impulses and if his cruelty is emblematic of colonial capitalism, then there is no mistaking Landsman's antipathy towards this ideology. For Henry, there is no meeting halfway, no dialogue with the indigene, unlike Beatrice, who integrates with the African

landscape, transforming at times into an ostrich and a Cape fox and who inculcates black identity into her very essence. Although Jacobs, the successful neighbour, is also a capitalist and a coloniser, his Judaism renders him exotic and hybridised. He holds intense allure for Beatrice and it is difficult to know why Connie presents him as so appealing to Beatrice. For Connie, as the narrator, her engagement with the past allows her to survive her present situation. She is the heroine of the story as her imagination uncovers the narratives of lives that have been hitherto invisible and allows Landsman's voice to be heard. Using Connie's voice and the genre of magical realism, it appears that Landsman resists and undermines patriarchal colonialism, both past and present, but the ending is unresolved and Landsman offers no real solutions or replacements for this ideology.

The conclusion points to further research possibilities and the value of this type of research for defining a new South African literature. This has important consequences for galvanising the new nation, although ironically, it appears that Landsman is opposed to the ideology of nationalism. The text also invites an exploration of other issues relevant to the new South Africa that have emerged since 1994, being gender and the category of whiteness. However, the hybridity, fluidity and ambiguity of the genre disallow any dogmatic pronouncements and Landsman's positionality and vision for the new South Africa remain open for discussion and interpretation. The conclusion also invites an engagement with the metafictive elements in the text. Connie's writing the past allows her to rewrite herself and her future. Her reliability as a narrator is questionable, but this does not negate the importance of her looking back into the past, and also the significance of the process of writing itself. Although the veracity of her stories is doubtful, her vision is hopeful and idealistic and the reader closes the novel feeling oddly uplifted. Magical realism, with its trope of defamiliarisation, the propinquity between opposing forces and fields and its stories from the past told from below is a genre that can be successfully imported into the South African context. However, Landsman's original and radical treatment of the genre, in terms of both her aesthetics and her politics, not only reflects the uniqueness of

the South African context but also makes a valuable contribution to the genre as a whole.

Ultimately, in a moment of self reflection, I look back into the empirical realist past and offer Blunt's and Rose's discussion of the power intrinsic in the colonisers' mapping out of the colonies (1994: 15). They state that imperialist maps were not only used to describe the landscape but were also a way of imposing the discipline of Western power/knowledge on a territory. In 'knowing' the territory in this way, the territory is claimed and conquered because as Trinh Minh-ha notes:

> [this] territorialized knowledge secures …a position of mastery: I am in the midst of a knowing, acquiring, deploying world – I appropriate, own, demarcate my sovereign territory as I advance – while the 'other' remains in the sphere of acquisition. Truth is an instrument of a mastery which I exert over areas of the unknown as I gather them within the fold of the known. (Quoted in Blunt and Rose: 1994: 15)

In this way, it appears that as I advance through the spaces of the book, I appropriate and own its spaces, guilty of securing for myself a position of mastery. I counter this by proposing that I do not claim to know 'the truth'. As I uncover and explore avenues of interpretation, I offer a tentative reading of Landsman's text, rather than advancing any of these readings as the final solution.

CHAPTER ONE

Slippage on the Farm

Afar in the Desert I love to ride,
With the silent Bush-boy alone by my side:
O'er the brown Karroo, where the bleating cry
Of the Springbok's fawn sounds plaintively;
And the timorous quagga's shrill whistling neigh
Is heard by the fountain at twilight grey;
Where the zebra wantonly tosses his mane,
With wild hoofs scouring the desolate plain;
And the fleet-footed ostrich over the waste
Speeds like a horseman who travels in haste,
Hying away to the home of her rest,
Where she and her mate have scooped their nest,
Far hid from the pitiless plunderer's view
In the pathless depths of the parched Karroo.

"Afar in the Desert" Thomas Pringle

In *The Politics of Home*, George (1996:3) avers: 'The search for the location in which the self is 'at home' is one of the primary projects of twentieth-century fiction in English'. In this chapter, in contradiction to George, I argue that Landsman's postcolonial project is not about the creation of a homely space for her characters but more about undermining the patriarchalism of colonial and apartheid rule, whose legacy is still evident in South Africa's period of transition. Landsman's voice is one of subversion and dissent and, as such, is well suited to the genre of magical realism. The magic in magical realism introduces a lightness into an otherwise heavy present-day reality, where the political forces of the past echoingly resound. Between these layers, the narrator also often artfully interposes a revised version of history, to create a palimpsest where no one layer is more significant than the other: where the magic must not be discounted but the real also cannot be ignored. Gaylard suggests that the genre does not generally promote a synthesis between the magical and the real but is more about the creation of a dialectical tension between the two worlds, an effect which produces dissonance, agitation and *unheimlichkeid.*[1] An excellent example of the tension that is set up between the narrator/protagonist and history is Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), whose narrator closes with the lines:

> …it is the privilege and the curse of midnight's children to be both master and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in peace. (463)

The genre, filled with ambiguities and slippages, is thus never really about resolution but more about opening up possibilities and exploring potential. The reader is asked to suspend his/her belief structures and skepticism and explore a world not bound by Western empiricism and rationality. In this way, doors are opened to a space that allows for creative imaginings and to one that allows for a revision of history where previously silenced voices can be heard and their invisible lives revealed. Landsman uses the genre to produce a space where she is

[1] In conversation with Gaylard.

able to explore patriarchal society and the women who are constricted and subjugated by its ideology. She does this by engaging with the slippages produced by defamiliarisation and constructs a space that is disturbed by cracks and fissures on and into which her characters slip and fall, proving not only uncomfortable for her female protagonists but positively lethal for some of her male ones. In addition, with a farm as the setting of the novel, Landsman generates a *plaasroman.* Here again, there is slippage because she subverts and parodies many of the genre's themes and tropes. However, the slippages relate not only to Landsman's subversion and parodying of the *plaasroman*. What is also implied is more a positive, proactive approach in that Landsman envisions a farm whose boundaries are fluid enough to allow her characters and her consciousness to slip through the gaps and holes therein, unlike those of the '*plaas*'', whose boundaries were rigid and entire. The world she creates is closer to the real world: it is unconstrained, multiplex, interactive and intermeshed, brimming with life and abundance. Here, on this less bounded landscape where there are no absolutes, Landsman constructs a space that is able to facilitate the removal of the patriarchal oppressor.

How does the *plaasroman* relate to patriarchy? Coetzee argues convincingly that the genre is the manifestation of a drive towards authenticity, home, belonging and organic rootedness in the soil. The genre is thus associated with the quest for a fixed sovereign identity and ownership, ambitions that have tended to be historically patriarchal in South Africa. These ambitions arguably led to apartheid, an ideology built around white patriarchal authority. By deconstructing the *plaasroman*, Landsman subverts this patriarchal authority, and there seem to be many examples of this in the novel, particularly in the death of Henry, in Beatrice's movement away from a fixed identity, in the treatment of Nomsa and in Connie's capacity to change. Furthermore, Landsman creates a magical realist space that is characterised by defamiliarisation, effected by the slippage between the magical and the real. This produces a different kind of space, which not only alienates the reader but undermines the patriarchal codes of Western literary authority and the realist novel. Looking at the defamiliarisation in the text, I

deconstruct the places on which the narrative is staged, namely, the landscape, the house and the caves. This leads me to interrogate the meaning imbued in the physical places of the novel. Hence, the chapter consists of two parts: the first deals with the slippage of the *plaasroman* produced by Landsman's parodic treatment of the genre; the second with the genre of magical realism and the slippages produced by defamiliarisation of the physical spaces of the text. In conclusion, I look at the physical spaces in the magical realist context as the expression of the artist's self-reflexivity.

In *White Writing*, J.M. Coetzee (1988: 78) contends that the *plaasroman* was precipitated by the urbanisation of Afrikaners farmers. Traditionally, amongst the white South African population, farming was performed by Afrikaners. From the late 1920's, the farmers were driven off their farms by drought and general economic depression. This migration precipitated a class of urbanites who came to be known as the poor whites. Earning a pittance on the mines and railways or unemployed, they were mired in debt and were not only confronted with the demise of their economic independence, but suffered a loss of social standing and community values. They felt displaced in their urban milieu and saw this life as a threat to their cultural identity, believing that their authentic selves were rooted on the farm and in the tilling of the soil, rather than in the city with its vices and social ills (Coetzee: 1988:134).

The feelings of loss and resentment endured by these displaced farmers were articulated by Afrikaans writers of the 1920's to 1940's, who penned many novels telling of the return of the displaced farmer to his land to reclaim what he determined was his natural right. In these *plaasromans*, the ownership of the land was God-given and as such, the Afrikaans farmer was its only legitimate owner. In reclaiming the land, the farmer restored the old so-called peasant order of farming which, at this time, was being eroded by a new capitalist-based system that featured alternate modes of production. Economically more viable than the old order, this new order arose as a response to the non-sustainability of the old one. The *plaasroman* author was prompted to write about the capitalists' flight

from the farm in literary retribution that saw the landowner reinstated in his rightful position. With the old order restored, the patriarchal farmer could once again preside over the household, with his wife as his helpmeet and his labourers in their place as hewers of wood and drawers of water. The restoration of the old order also meant that the protagonist could recoup the meaning of his existence and recover his true self but this was only allowed if he adhered to the myth of the land which enjoined him, as the owner of the land, to practice good husbandry and refrain from exploiting the earth.

Although Landsman's novel does not conform religiously to the *plaasroman*, it certainly relates to the genre in many ways and could be considered its child, albeit a very rebellious and dissident one. Landsman often parodies the genre, subverting its dominant themes and tropes via Connie, the 'author' of the story. The story she narrates revolves around Miss Beatrice and her experiences on the farm, Highlands, situated near Oudtshoorn. Connie's life is also linked to farming. Her mother was from farming stock, living on a farm where 'everything always [went] wrong' (DC: 41) and was apparently forced to relocate to the town of Oudtshoorn where she joined the ranks of the poor whites. Connie, who has always lived in Oudtshoorn, obviously inherits her mother's status, as she relates that Jack was furious when he had to marry her as he said he 'wasn't planning on getting married to a Poor White' (DC: 13). Ironically, he also belongs to this class. Connie mentions that even the Railways did not want to employ him, alluding to the apartheid government's programme of job reservation to alleviate the poor white problem. She is a beneficiary of this system, occupying a post with the South African Tourist Board. Her job, which is to look after the dogs of visitors to the Cango Caves, is one aspect where she has benefited from the system. But when one thinks of her dysfunctional family life, the loss of her baby and her alcohol abuse, it appears as if her life is filled with as much loss and suffering as those displaced farmers of the 1930's.

Like the writers of the *plaasromans*, and born out of her miserable situation and her unconscious dreams and desires, she also imagines a story about life on the

farm. But unlike these writers, Connie subverts the old order, replacing the Afrikaner landowner with a debauched English aristocrat who offends his neighbours and upsets the myth of the land. In addition, contrary to the patriarchal belief (as espoused by Jack) that 'no woman knows how to farm, the way a farmer does. It's not in her blood' (DC: 46), Connie has Miss Beatrice farming the land and finding meaning in its red dust. Furthermore, instead of the stereotypical representations of women as portrayed in the *plaasroman*, Connie imagines Beatrice as fluid and hybridised. She also confers powers upon Nomsa, making her a very visible presence in the text, unlike the representation of black labour in the *plaasroman*. At the end of the novel, as a result of her subverting the myths and conventions of the *plaasroman,* there is a possibility that Connie, too, has the potential to change in response to the changing circumstances of the country.

One of the major subversions in the text is the portrayal of Henry as the patriarchal farmer. The old peasant order disavows Henry's legitimate ownership of the farm, his having bought the farm instead of inheriting it. As a dissolute gambler, he is the very converse of the God-fearing *Boer*. He upsets his neighbours with his 'strange medicines and electric bells' (DC: 17), and his bizarre paintings of 'demons and monsters crawling out of the mountains and the sky' (DC: 17). Moreover, he subverts the accepted convention of the farmer as rugged and masculine by 'having the whole thing upside down', standing in the veld and drawing on an easel with a 'big white hat on his head like a girl' (DC: 17). Worst of all, he absconds from the farm, abnegating his duty to the land and reneging on his sacred promise as a farmer to nurture the soil and keep it fertile for succeeding generations. Coetzee (1988: 67) describes the farmer's obligations to the land as part of a myth of the land originating from traditional Old World discourse wherein the farmer is 'forbidden to rape the land'. Henry's dereliction of his duty is bad enough but his decision to cash in on the feathery riches is in opposition to the myth of the land. He initiates a frenzy of plucking, despite advice to the contrary. His actions reflect the cruelty that typifies the brand of capitalism associated with the phallocratic ideologies of colonialism and

apartheid. Traumatised and exposed to the harsh elements, many of the ostriches die but two surviving ostriches, not content to bury their heads in the sand, get their revenge. A nesting female and her partner attack him, catching his lip with 'a long toe-nail' and pulling it down, 'like someone opening a can of sardines' (DC: 231). He is kicked and 'split lengthwise and sideways' and dies against the fence, 'cut up like fruit salad' (DC: 232).

The sensationally graphic violence of the scene links Henry to the violence associated with capitalism. In this scene, Landsman reveals an aversion to capitalist practices in common with the writers of the *plaasroman*, although for different reasons. Although capitalism was not directly responsible for driving the Afrikaner off their lands, the capitalists were often blamed for their plight and the loss of traditional ways of life and old values. For the wistful Afrikaner, the capitalist who replaced him was not the farm's legitimate owner but a rapacious parvenu for whom the land held only commodity value. The writers of the *plaasroman* often inserted the Jew in this role. Landsman conforms to this by presenting us with Jacobs, the Chapmans' neighbour, who is the ultimate capitalist. He is the prototype of the conspicuous consumer with his Model T Ford and European knick-knacks. To the peasant farmer, he would have been anathema; his vast wealth signifying extreme exploitation of the land.

Landsman is ostensibly opposed to Henry's brand of capitalism with its notion that the accumulation of wealth takes precedence over all else, including the value of life and the sustainability of the earth's resources. Capitalism is also associated with patriachalism, although its practice has, of course, not been confined to men alone. Henry's comeuppance subverts the patriarchal authority associated with capitalism.

In addition, his violent death is also reminiscent of the violent process of appropriation that has taken place in the area from the time the Xhosa appropriated land from the San, to when it was appropriated, in turn, by the Colonialists, the Boers and 'Big Business'. By its nature, violence is a feature of

land ownership as it is often associated with the forced removal of a group of people, the imposition of a political and social order onto the surrounding countryside, fear of another group claiming the land and the construction of 'others' whose claim to the land must be repudiated. Landsman not only subverts the patriarchal landowner, but literally removes him from the pages of the text in an act that is as violent as South Africa's patriarchal history, characterised as such by incursion and occupation, oppression and domination, and rebellion and struggle.

Henry's violent end is not only nature's revenge for his 'raping the land' but also for the killing of his coloured labourer, September. Thus, Henry not only flouts the myth of the land that is associated with the *plaasroman*, but he also defies another myth and here I digress to South African white liberal fiction of the apartheid era. The myth associated with this fiction, as explained by Crehan (1998: 6) is the belief that black people are seen as living close to and in accord with nature and this affects the relationship between black servants and white masters. When the master is exploitative and abusive, the servant gets his revenge in an act that may '…be figured [in terms of] some apocalyptic act of nature such as an attack by wild beasts or a thunderstorm'. In Landsman's text, Henry callously kills his servant September. As a Coloured man, September is so aligned to nature that he is not merely connected to things earthly but has access to the realms of the stars wherein he can read their stories and hear the noises they make. In addition, he is figured in animal terms. He is compared to small, endearing creatures, which underscores his status as prey rather than predator. In other words, he is the victim of oppression. Connie describes him 'running into the veld like a *dassie* or a *meerkat*, running and disappearing into the ground' (DC: 129). After Henry kills September, Connie, conjuring up an explicit phallic image, observes: 'Mr Henry just put the *sjambok* back in his pants and went back to the house…' (DC: 197), showing no remorse. Conforming to the myth, nature, in the form of two murderous ostriches, takes its 'apocalyptic revenge' (ibid.), killing the patriarchal oppressor of the naturally aligned servant. Although the text is iconoclastic, here Landsman paradoxically upholds the myths espoused by

white liberal writers of the apartheid era and the fixed identities of black characters as represented in this earlier fiction. This is significant as it demonstrates that magical realism's iconoclasm is not prescriptive and the writer is not obliged to conform to any conventions. In addition, September's alterity emphasises the racial and cultural differences between him and Beatrice. As a colonised African farm labourer steeped in his indigenous culture and aligned to nature, he is diametrically opposed to Beatrice, the white female colonialist. As a result, when he and Beatrice couple, the scene depicted is one of intense defamiliarisation and is disturbingly unhomely as a result. In this hybrid space, coloniser merges with colonised to create something Precious, although this does not precipitate a happy ending.

Landsman also subverts another myth to which the writer of the *plaasroman* subscribed. This is the myth of the land as 'a place of meaning', a concept which Coetzee (1988: 91) regards as central to the *plaasroman*. In the act of working the soil (in this case, the breeding, feeding and plucking of ostriches), man becomes part of the 'great cycle of nature'. With the integration between man and nature, a 'mystical bond' between man and earth forms which reveals the 'meaning of life and consciousness' to the farmer. This normally epiphanic revelation authorises the farmer to recover his 'true self' and attain the 'transcendence' that the land has to offer (ibid.: 79 – 91). By conferring on Beatrice the role of the Afrikaans farmer, the theme as it is represented in the *plaasroman* is doubly contested as Beatrice is not only English but she is also a woman. Beatrice's identity and gender should preclude her from experiencing any transcendental experience in this staunchly patriarchal and fiercely nationalistic society, but for her, 'Highlands is heaven' (DC: 39), a paradise where she is allowed to break free from the shackles of her society and attain a metaphysical transcendence. As she walks around the farm, 'the soles of her feet get pricked and scratched but all she can feel is the Farm' (DC: 32). She is unaware of the harshness and dangers of the veld but only of her physical connectedness with the farm with a capital 'F'. In this epiphanic moment, she 'sees everything' (DC: 32); 'even the mountains are lit up' (DC: 33). With this enlightenment regarding her newfound identity, she

attains the transcendence that the land has to offer, to the point of physically dematerialising and becoming one with not only the land but the very air rising above the farm. Beatrice magically 'floats on, getting lighter and whiter, whiter and thinner, until she's a column of smoke herself '(DC: 33), an event that reinforces her transcendence into the realms of the metaphysical, where she attains freedom from all earthly restrictions, including the laws of gravity.

In true *plaasroman* mode, the farm is boundless; its immensity, according to Coetzee (ibid.: 91), is 'conceived of as the sacral place where the soul [can] expand in freedom'. In this immense space, Beatrice rides '…all over Highlands for days' (DC: 44). Her reconnaissance exposes her to 'the fences that [are] falling down' (DC: 44). The fences ostensibly represent societal boundaries and their collapse gives Beatrice licence to contest the restrictions imposed on her by her patriarchal society. With this authority now removed, Beatrice takes control of the farm. In so doing, like the farmer of the *plaasroman* who returns to his land and reclaims his authentic identity, Beatrice finds her identity as the 'Queen Bee' (DC: 32), the owner and custodian of the land.

In contrast to the *plaasroman* where women's identities are fixed, Beatrice's is changing and fluid, rendered now as fragile as a wraith of smoke, now as tough as a farmer on horseback garbed in pants and *veldskoene*, now submissive, now authoritative. Beatrice's character is thus a subversion of the stereotypical representations of women in the *plaasroman*. The portrayal of Nomsa also subverts the idea of the black domestic worker as represented in the *plaasroman*. In this literature, as in most colonial literature, blacks hardly ever featured and black labour, especially, was not inscribed. Coetzee (ibid.: 20, 21) attributes this to the problem inherent in the construction of binaries. Colonial discourse often invoked the binary of idleness/productivity. This binary stems from the Protestant work ethic that considers idleness a sin and decrees that man must labour for his bread. By conferring the trait of sloth onto a group or individual displaying differences in race, class, sexuality or ideology, an inferior other is constructed. So it was with the indigene of the colonies. However, despite their 'idleness',

black people were used as labourers. This created a problem when attempting to integrate black labour into Boer farms (ibid.: 71-72). To overcome the problem, black labour was rendered invisible, hardly registering on the pages of the text.

Initially, Nomsa, as a domestic, conforms to this, confined to the private spaces of the kitchen and bedroom, only performing the most menial of tasks and watching but asking no questions because 'servants never ask' (DC: 35). In contrast, later in the text, by taking possession of Beatrice's baby, she is given the agency to move the plot to its climax. She bestows the baby on her grandmother: an action that humanises her, because by the reader meeting her grandmother and beholding her dwelling, Nomsa is assigned origins and an identity. The reader is presented with her '*ouma'* squatting 'at the end of a little path' in front of the fire, cooking mieliepap (DC: 271). When the grandmother sees Nomsa and the baby, she 'laughs like a drain' (DC: 271). When she lifts her dress and puts Precious to her breast, 'the old lady laugh[s] again' (DC: 271). This is the first time that anyone laughs in the text. Whether her laughter signifies her joy at receiving the baby, *schadenfreude* regarding the coloniser's loss or disbelief that at her age she is still capable of breastfeeding is immaterial. Her laughter endorses her humanity as the human is the only species within the animal kingdom to laugh. Thus, it is not an empty, hollow laugh but an emotional response to a situation, which, whether good or bad, is the elite preserve of humans. In addition, by taking Precious, she takes possession of what she believes is legitimately hers, something to which she is not entitled in the *plaasroman* and in most other colonial fiction.

In contrast to the *plaasroman*, where the Afrikaans peasant farmer reclaims his ownership of the land, Landsman sanctions none of her characters' possession of the land. Henry, as rapist and colonial appropriator of the land, is certainly not permitted ownership. One would think Beatrice's subversion of the patriarchal codes and her transgressing the boundaries of miscegenation might favour her in a liberal post-apartheid world. Yet, because of her complicity in the project of colonialism, she is denied the fruits of her labour. She spends the remainder of her days behind the high walls of the Highlands farm house, dispossessed of both

her land and her child. September appears a prime candidate for ownership of the land with the blood of the original land occupiers, the Khoisan, coursing through his veins. Also, by his 'showing kindness to '…everything that [flies], [runs] or [jumps] all around the farm' (DC: 89), he fulfils the obligations required of the peasant farmer. But he too is denied ownership. What then of Nomsa as the doubly dispossessed black female? By allowing her ownership, Landsman would redress the iniquities of the past. However, although Nomsa takes possession of the baby Precious, she too is not permitted to own the land, spending the rest of her life in the house with Beatrice.

With the renunciation of ownership, Landsman reveals a cynicism relating to all power structures. Allied to ownership and possession is the concept of power and authority. Her antipathy towards hegemony subverts patriarchal discourse with its strong emphasis on the Law of the Father and is a typically magical realist concern which proposes that no matter the regime, there are always the winners, empowered to control their own and others' lives and construct new binaries; and the losers, displaced to the margins of society. For me, the only winner is Connie, with her capacity for change. Whereas throughout her narrative, she is too self-absorbed to feel sorry for anyone but herself, by the dénouement, she feels empathy for everyone, including the blacks who suffered during apartheid. She also accepts the new dispensation, declaring that although the beach in Cape Town looks 'like Seal Island with all the black people lying in the sun,' she does not 'mind seals so much' (DC: 276). In addition, she promises to learn how to swim. By immersing herself in the ocean with its baptismal powers, she can wash away past sins and start anew, throwing off the shackles of patriarchal power and taking charge of her own life. Moreover, she holds the power of the artist, owning the space in which she creates. Connie, and, by extension Landsman, is contributing to the discourse to emerge out of the new democratic South Africa. By the processes of creativity, Landsman possesses the freedom to reject the narratives and binaries of the past and partake in the creation of a new discourse, one that subverts the patriarchal power of the past, as exemplified in the *plaasroman.*

Landsman's subversion of the *plaasroman* and her use of magical realism conceivably serve to create a space which facilitates the removal of the patriarchal oppressor. The genre of magical realism is one of rebellion against and the subversion of Western artistic convention, to which the *plaasroman* subscribed. Slippage between the magical and the real produces tensions, ambiguity and fissures, creating a text that is not only *unheimlich* for the characters but one that evokes feelings of alienation and discomfort in the reader. These effects are generated, more specifically, by defamiliarisation, which, as defined by Mose (1989: 9), is the presentation of the familiar in an unfamiliar light. Using surprising angles, objects are portrayed in a different perspective, transferred to a different plane of reality and rendered charmingly or disturbingly novel. Devices used to create this effect also include contradictions within the narrative and complex textuality. Defamiliarisation adds to the originality of the work and serves to subvert the themes, tropes and formats of Western realism.

Landsman uses defamiliarisation to create physical spaces that are alien and unfamiliar when compared to those of the *plaasroman*. These writers imbued their fictional farm with sublime meaning, making it a source of physical succour for the farmer and the place where he found his sovereign identity. In Landsman's text, Connie's alcohol-sodden brain conjures up spaces whose meanings are contradictory and abstruse and where identity is no longer fixed but fluid and shifting. Textual identity frequently relates to landscape. For instance, in texts, national identity is often aligned to the physical landscape and individual identity to the spaces of the home. Questions arise regarding the meaning inherent in Landsman's landscape, and what this betokens for the new South African national and individual identity.

Magical realism creates a space where meaning is problematic, always slipping. So it is for the landscape described by Connie, whose meaning is filled with contradiction. At times, the secrets of the land can be read; at others, the landscape is wholly devoid of meaning. Coetzee (1988: 165,166,173) argues that

the meaning of the landscape should be articulated in its verbal transcription but that the African veld rejects its naming in English, a language whose etymology lies in a land where it is 'cool and damp and green and there are no bad animals, no scorpions, not even the tiniest threat of a scorpion' (DC: 25-6). Landsman struggles to interpret the 'signs' of the veld and has Connie often using Afrikaans when English fails to evoke any meaning. The text, in fact, originally included many more Afrikaans words, but Landsman was requested by her publisher to remove a quantity to appease those English speakers other than South Africans.[2] Landsman (via Connie) justifies her use of Afrikaans, noting: 'There's no word for *vrek* in the English language. Animals *vrek* and people die in Afrikaans but in English everyone just dies' (DC: 191). But it appears that Landsman is ambivalent about the language that has been strongly associated with apartheid and its oppressive ideology, and has Connie's creation, Beatrice, remarking that 'Afrikaans [is] like plates breaking in your mouth' (DC: 39). Hence, expecting an English novel, readers are disconcerted to find many Afrikaans words. For readers not particularly au fait with Afrikaans, the text becomes defamiliarised and Connie's use of Afrikaans evokes feelings of alienation and discomfort.

Landsman uses defamiliarisation to create a landscape that is at once familiar and alien. The Karoo, to those familiar with it, is one of monotonous regularity, monochromatic in its shades of brown, its buff soil sparsely dotted with the darker grey-brown of the low scrub. This is the landscape of Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*, which she describes as a 'wide lonely plain' where 'stunted 'karroo' bushes' grow in 'dry sandy earth' (35). According to Coetzee (1988: 64), Schreiner's African farm is indifferent, empty and desolate. In contrast, Connie presents a new and close up perspective of the landscape. Notably, her landscape figures mostly in menacing terms. She remarks of the veld: 'Here there is always something to poison or shoot or chase' (DC: 42). By this statement, she evokes a landscape that is both threatening and under threat. Using the language of defamiliarisation with its repetition, euphony and contrast, Connie lists the many inhabitants of the veld: '…the *goggas* and ticks and lice that live on the *aasvoëls*'

[2] See appendix.

(DC: 178), 'the birds, beetles and locusts', 'the goat suckers flying about in the bushes, calling and weeping, carrying their short, broad heads and wide bills like tragedies'(DC: 178) and '[p]uff-adder in the sand, puff-adder leaping at your horse, at your ostriches, at your very own throat' (DC: 179). Here is a landscape that is brimming with life and that actively impacts on the characters' emotions and identities. Even the flora contributes to the characters' distress as 'the thorn bushes prick with their nasty little hands' (DC: 57).

The full and animated landscape reveals and reflects Beatrice's emotions. Initially, after her sexual union with Jacobs and filled with a warm post-coital glow, the veld sparkles with 'bright puddles all over the farms and tiny flowers all over the veld' (DC: 55). But later, when she feels guilty about her adultery and uncomfortable with her role as farmer, the veld, reflecting her intolerant and insular patriarchal society, rears up to judge and punish her. Bearded bats and leopards come to view her guilt. 'The bitter aloes' want to escape her presence and 'run away to the mountains'. The thorn trees and prickly pears do not '…budge. They grow […] their needles into spears to drive into Miss Beatrice's heart'. The *brakbos* '…start[s] to wither' and all she can feel is 'guilt' and 'shame' (DC: 160). Nature berates her for her reprehensible behaviour. In response to her transgressions, the farm becomes a threatening place in which to live, with its thorn-laden plant-life, poisonous arachnids and deadly predators. Landsman's landscape is thus a place of frenetic activity, dangerous objects and violent interactions. In the building of nations, a myth exists which relates to the correspondence between the type of landscape and the people inhabiting the land. National identity and nature become one, and it is presumed that a rugged landscape, for example, is responsible for the rugged farmers who live on it and peaceful and gentle terrain breeds peaceful and gentle people. The *unheimlich* landscape of *The Devil's Chimney*, thus, may reflect the tensions surrounding the new South African national identity and the difficulties surrounding the changes taking place in South African society. National identity is in a state of flux and people need to find their places within new social and political orders that are in the process of being formed. However, I propose that Landsman's landscape is

more a reflection of a discomfort with the building of nations and nationalism. This sentiment is a typical magical realist concern, and is a reaction against nationalism that is often implicit in Western realist discourse.[3] Nation-building and the associated ideology of nationalism continue to generate the powerful and the disempowered. Nations are born and nation die; nations strengthen and decline, and in these waxings and wanings, so begin new cycles of domination, exploitation and oppression.

As full as the landscape is at certain times in the narrative, at other times, the veld becomes as disconcertingly empty and as devoid of meaning as Schreiner's empty landscape. The empty landscape is, interestingly, a key notion in colonial fiction and is associated with the coloniser's reading of the colony as uninhabited, a perception that sanctioned and legitimised his occupation of it. In contrast, for Schreiner, the empty landscape reflected her disenchantment with the iniquitous ideology of colonialism and the alienation it bred in her society. *The Story of an African Farm* can be described as anti-pastoral, a description that, in fact, also befits *The Devil's Chimney*. Connie remarks how 'Mrs Jacobs looked out at the veld and saw how empty it was and it must have made her very sad' (DC: 113). This is also evident when Connie says: 'The veld yawned in front of [Beatrice]

[3] Brennan and others have commentated on the link between nationalism and the realist novel. The reason is multi-factorial, relating to industrialization in the nineteenth century that gave rise to a growing bourgeoisie, better educated than previous generations and with money to spend on newspapers and other print media, including the novel. This fed print capitalism and resulted in an even wider dissemination of the printed word. Industrialization also led to colonization, providing more than markets for manufactured products and sources of raw materials but a confidence that inspired men to rule the world and spread the word of Western empiricism and rationality. Consequently, this created cultural confidence which promoted the arts, including novel writing. Novels captured the imagination of nascent nations because they galvanized national language, standardised spellings and created a national literature, all factors promoting national pride. Brennan (1990: 50) says: '[The novel's] manner of presentation allowed people to imagine the special community that was the nation'. In addition, the novel was also a response to the loosening hold of religion. The nation replaced religion (to some extent) in that it adopted 'religion's concern with death, continuity and the desire for origins' (ibid.). The novel, which mirrored these 'religious imaginings' of the nation, inspired a readership who were looking for answers in a world of increasing secularism. What they got was nationalism. In terms of realism, Gaylard (2005:14) notes that Western empiricism, which is underpinned by rationality, linked to the realist project 'of making the world appear sane and rational'. Also, the era saw the rise of democratic ideology, which invokes 'the people'. Brennan (1990: 52) remarks that realism garnered readership from the working-class (as well as the middle-class) because it provided the 'serious treatment of everyday reality' and 'the rise of …inferior groups to the position of subject matter'. This also galvanised the idea of 'the nation'.

and there weren't any answers. The bush didn't burn' (DC: 176). The hand of God is no longer evident and the land has become an arid wasteland with its 'dry air and dry ground and dry everything' (DC: 34). The place provides neither metaphysical answers nor spiritual succour. In this timeless space, all human innovation and endeavour come to naught and death signifies nothing more than the disintegration of the body into mere dust and bones, as Connie observes, '…in English everyone just dies' (DC: 191).

Her existential vision contrasts with the notion promoted in the *plaasroman,* where man's existence was imbued with purpose and his bones with sacred meaning. In this fiction, to leave one's bones in the soil was to establish ownership and the ancestral farm was marked by these ancestral bones (Coetzee: 1988: 85,100). The idea of 'dust to dust', as invoked in the Bible, tied man to the cycle of nature and the fertility of the soil and gave him a meaning for his existence. In opposition, Landsman's treatment of this ontological theme reminds the reader that his/her life is one of mere insignificance, characterised by a lack of purpose on this earth. These notions subvert the religious foundation on which Western discourse is based. This seems to contradict the anthropomorphism integral to Landsman's landscape, which implies that all the components of the landscape, including the air and the cosmos are part of an interconnected, spiritually-laden realm. Thus, it appears that there are moments when Landsman's vision of the world appears rather nihilistic, but this is refuted by her landscape, which is so abundantly alive and fecund and the images she conjures up, which are mostly those of life and not of death. The meaning inherent in the landscape, therefore, ostensibly leans more towards a Pagan, animistic interpretation where man interacts with nature on a non-hierarchical basis, rather than the Judeo-Christian interpretation deployed in the *plaasroman*. Thus, a diversity of contradictory images and meanings emerge: of an abundantly inhabited landscape and of a desert, of a landscape devoid of meaning, as one that reflects society and as an existential emptiness.

It appears that for Landsman, the landscape betokens a mass of conflicting messages, one whose truths, if they are to be found, include all possibilities, like the ubiquitous dust that blows across the veld. Landsman uses the dust of the Karoo landscape as a metaphor of Beatrice's sexual identity. Tied to the notion of sexuality, the metaphor relates to the *plaasroman's* notion of dust as an entity which represents the fertility of the soil and the connection between man and God's great cycles of life. However, Landsman subverts the sacred connections between sex and reproduction and dust because Beatrice's sexuality is aberrant: she first commits adultery and then crosses the colour bar. In her adulterous affair with Jacobs, the dust reflects their sexual desire. When Jacobs realises he is sexually attracted to Beatrice, '[t]he dust start[s] to sparkle and pop' (DC: 53). Beatrice exudes this dust: when she removes her hat in Jacobs's house, it falls 'like a blessing' (DC: 59), and before their sexual encounter in the cave, Beatrice's leans forward and 'suddenly there [is] dust in Mr Jacobs' face' (DC: 70). However, Beatrice's union with September causes the character of the dust to change. On returning to her house after their encounter, the water Beatrice pours over herself turns the dust red, 'making a red puddle on the floor' (DC: 90). This dust, now resembling a puddle of blood, possibly symbolises the generation of life that was initiated by Beatrice's and September's sexual encounter. However, it could also signify the violence intrinsic in Beatrice's entering Nomsa's and September's pondokkie 'without knocking' (DC: 86) to satisfy her sexual needs. By her act, she asserts the authority given to her as an emissary of colonialism, which by its nature, is filled with violence. No matter the connotations of the red puddle, the mutable dust is a symbol of Beatrice's protean sexuality which accommodates differences. This is contrary to the heterosexuality prescribed by the patriarchal authority, which was responsible for the hierarchised mapping of colonial spaces and the forbidden sex across the colour bar of apartheid South Africa. It can be argued that this fluidity and tolerance, not only in terms of sexuality but in all area of human identity, is one of the spaces that Landsman marks out as her vision of the new South Africa as opposed to the inflexibility and rigidity of the old.

Moving off the landscape and into the farmhouse in which Beatrice and Henry live, the reader is presented with a strange and unfamiliar space, which subverts the idea of the home as a sacred haven of domesticity as represented, for example, in colonial novels. George (1996: 23) explains how in these previous representations, the home was seen as an expression of personality, and as aligned to the domestic, was perceived as an extension of the chastely feminine. It was a woman's job to decorate and maintain the home as she would her body and, in fact, the home was used as a metaphor for the body in nineteenth and twentieth century tracts on homecare and decorum. Landsman subverts the idea of the house as a metaphor of the female self, and renders it now in masculine terms. Connie describes it as 'a funny long farmhouse' (DC: 62) with a shape that is 'hard' (DC: 67). In addition, it is not only the Chapmans' house that is inscribed with masculinity but it is clear that Jacobs's house, too, has assumed his character. When Beatrice looks at Jacobs's house, Connie describes how:

> …all she saw was Mr Jacobs' body, the sandstone walls the colour of his hands, the roof as black as his hair…She couldn't walk in that door. It led straight to the engine-room. His heart. (DC: 64)

Jacobs's house has not only assumed his physical characteristics but it holds the organ of his emotions and sensibilities: his heart.

For Henry, as the patriarch, his house is steeped in metaphysical significance. When he enters the house, it is 'like a blessing' (DC: 179) and he will not allow Nomsa to throw her bones near it because, arguably, her ancestral rites will desecrate the sanctity of his home. However, for Beatrice, the house is especially unhomely and uncomfortable. Inscribed with masculinity, it provides no safe haven for her in this patriarchal colony. After September has been murdered, she returns to the empty kitchen that feels like 'a ruin or an old cave' (DC: 200). The house takes on the nature of an uninhabitable ruin or the inhospitable caves. She wants to ask Henry about the blood on his neck and the whereabouts of Nomsa and September, but the house colludes with him and, as Connie describes, '…the

house caught her, with its thick walls and mean little windows, and she was silent' (DC: 200).

The house provides a space that clearly manifests the slippage between the magical and the real. This is especially evident at the Chapmans' dinner party to which the Jacobs family are invited. Connie innovatively describes the positions of the diners around the table in terms of compass points. She notes: 'Mr Henry was North and Miss Beatrice was South, Rachel and Mr Jacobs were East, and the younger girls and their mother were West' (DC: 153). Their positions are arguably significant, reflecting the ideologies each represents. For example, Henry represents the capitalism and patriarchalism of the North. Beatrice, who has 'gone native', embodies the colonised and untamed South. Jacobs's exoticism as a Jew originates from the East and Mrs Jacobs's consumerism is a characteristic of the West. Of course, the argument would have worked somewhat better had Henry been West as this is the convention used to denote the origins of the ideologies to which he subscribes. No matter, the merging of people of different origins, race and ideologies elicits feelings of discomfort and insecurity. The house offers the participants no protection and they feel exposed and uprooted. They have to 'keep still' and hold 'the roof down with their legs and their elbows' to prevent the house from 'flying headlong into the night' (DC: 153). The house appears to enhance their differences and adds to the conflict and disharmony that characterise their interactions. Magically, the house further augments their discomfort when Henry begins 'You Jews…and suddenly there [are] lice falling from the ceiling and making them all itch' (DC: 154). The discomfort of Beatrice and her guests is so palpable that even the curtains, the flowers and all those pillows and cloths boil up 'like the Red Sea' and the Jacobs family leave, like the Israelites 'running into the desert' (DC: 156). The house is thus a reflection of patriarchal society that creates unhomely homes for women and for the other, in this case, the Jew. If the genre of magical realism is not about the creation of homely spaces but more about the creation of a space in which to remove the oppressor, then what about the oppressed? Landsman's version of the genre, for all its magic, novelty and charm, offers quite a dismal view of the world and

society, for apparently there is no place that can offer a homely home for the subjugated of this world.

The caves are another physical space featured in the text, their labyrinthine structure reflecting the textuality of the novel. One of the features of magical realism and its defamiliarisation is the web-like textuality created by the two worlds of the magical and the real where, according to Wilson (1995: 225), one world emerges from another that is always already contained within. He avers that the presence of these two worlds create labyrinths of textuality, facilitating the creation of richer and more diverse narratives. Landsman engages literally with this notion by using the labyrinthine caves as a setting for parts of her narrative. The caves sparkle with a numinous and uncanny quality. Landsman enumerates many of the structures and spaces, which all evoke the romance and magic of fairytale, majesty and myth, such as the Fairy Palace, the Crystal Palace, the Rainbow Chamber, Madonna and Child, the Coffin, Jacob's Ladder and the Wing of a Lost Angel. The light in the caves shifts and swerves, sometimes streaking the walls 'with the most beautiful pinks and blues and reds' (DC: 269). At other times, '[a]ll the stalactites, stalagmites and the curly ones called the helictites [are] covered by the black, like some lady's grand piano covered with a black velvet cloth' (DC: 239). Ghostly voices reverberate from the long-dead 'Nooitgedacht ladies not to mention all those stick-men and the Bushmen painters' (DC: 268). But most uncanny of all is the scene where the caves' stalactites and stalagmites transmogrify into male sexual organs, invoking a Dionysian orgy.

The space of the caves is a world that lies hidden within another and the spaces above the cave fold in on themselves to form part of the cave itself (ibid.: 226). In terms of the text, this is true as well. Landsman tells of Connie who narrates the story of Beatrice. The present intermingles with the past, as one text sits inside the other, as the cave sits inside the earth. The structure of the text results in deviations from familiar time, another feature of magical realism Landsman constructs her narrative in such a way that the present weaves through the past.

She indirectly alerts the reader to the web-like structure of her narrative, comparing its complexity to the many 'arms and legs' of a spider. The trope of the spider is one that runs throughout the text. Beatrice finds a spider's nest inside her corset and she pretends to have been bitten by a tarantula to explain her odd behaviour when visiting Jacobs's farm. Connie blames everything that has gone wrong in Oudtshoorn on her web-like story. Connie remarks:

> The story had many arms and legs, just like a tarantula, and it hung in everybody's house, on the ceiling. It was the reason for everything that was bad in Oudtshoorn. (DC: 266)

One of the many arms and legs of the story is that of Landsman's own voice. In line with magical realism, the physical spaces of the text provide Landsman with the space for self- reflexivity. In this, she tangentially engages with the processes of creativity. For example, the immensity of the farm mirrors the vast potential of the imagination and the myriad possibilities inherent in the act of creation. This is an exciting and empowering notion for the artist to contemplate, as Connie says: 'All I can think of is Miss Beatrice's farm and how big it was' (DC: 53). However, the range of possibilities is daunting. Confronted with the blank page, the writer struggles to reign in and transcribe the products of her imagination. This is revealed when Connie notes: 'Her farm was so big you could get lost on it' (DC: 53). Later, she simply says: 'The farm was too big' (DC: 177). In addition, the product scooped from the creative juices may be dry and barren, yielding little, like the Karoo landscape itself, failing to provide its readers with any food for thought. Also, the peregrinations of the imagination may be as dangerous as a walk in the night veld 'with the chance of snakes and vermin and night scorpions' (DC: 33), for it may lead the artist to a confrontation with the demons lurking within the depths of her soul. Like the product of Frankenstein's creation, the manifestations may be monstrous, which is reflected by Connie who states: 'When you have a farm, my ma says because she grew up on one, everything always goes wrong. If it's not the drought, it's worms. If it's not worms, it's thunder which makes the eggs hatch all wrong and the birds come out like glue'

(DC: 41). However, Connie (or Landsman), the artist, can surmount the dangers and vanquish the demons in the process of creating. As Connie says: 'Me and the dogs walk together through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and it's all right' (DC: 179). Although she worries about puff-adders getting the dogs, she says, 'we'll drown those puff-adders with one sip of gin' (DC: 179). For her, the present day Karoo can be tamed with gin, which has the power to transport its imbiber into a safer and more tolerant space, one where she can escape the quotidian and engage with an altered reality. In other words, the magical realist landscape gives the artist another dimension with which to transcribe the essences and issues of human existence, thus allowing her to produce a text which holds meaning and relevance for today. The possibilities for the creative imagination that magical realism offers the artist ameliorates, to some extent, the dismal view that Landsman inscribes for subjugated women but there are always the dangers associated with alcohol abuse. Connie (and Landsman), as artist, must beware of the effects of overindulging and producing a work that is a nonsensical flight of fancy, one that escapes the gravitas inherent in meaningful literature.

In conclusion, what emerges from the slippages on the farm? Landsman's subversion of the *plaasroman* reveals her disenchantment with patriarchal hegemonic structures and the ideology of nationalism and imperial capitalism. In her deployment of magical realism, it appears that Landsman considers nations, based on patriarchies, to be unhomely homes for women. For the reader, as well, the text is unhomely. Its lack of resolution, in contrast to the realist novel, is dissatisfying. Connie is too unreliable a narrator and her narrative is filled with too much ambiguity and improbability for readers wanting closure on the characters' lives. Furthermore, Landsman, with the humility characteristic of the magical realist, offers the reader no answers, unlike the realist author whose authority permits him/her to point towards a moral path and the promise of redemption. In addition, I do not think Landsman is trying to render characters who are representative of the South African collective cultural identity. Connie is not a new South African woman who speaks on behalf of all. The text is rather more a representation of an individual's reaction to her world. What then of

Landsman's magical realism? It is difficult to categorically state whether it is positive or negative. Perhaps it slips somewhere in between. We do not know if life holds promise for Connie. She intends to change but the road to hell is paved with good intentions. There *is* a possibility of the potential for change, like the glimmer of light at the opening of a cave?

CHAPTER TWO

Beatrice and the Home of the Authoritative Englishwoman

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys & desires.

"The Garden of Love" William Blake

To think of the signifier 'home' is to immediately picture a space that is at once familiar and private, rooted and fixed, where the boundaries to the outside world are well marked, and which offers shelter, comfort, nurture, protection, safety and security to its occupants. According to George (1996: 1), these idealistic notions of the home are erroneous; engendered in the first novels penned in the Age of Romanticism by bourgeois women, and fostered in the realist novel in the ensuing centuries. By interrogating the definition of the home in these terms, these notions are revealed as essentialist, based on a series of binaries such as home/not home, inside/outside, public/private and self/other, and which by their nature, are organized around a series of 'select inclusions and exclusions' (ibid.: 2). Recognised by those within and without, membership is maintained by bonds of love, fear, power and control as those within desire to safeguard themselves from perceived others, both within and outside the home's boundaries. Thus, the home is an exclusive 'place of violence and nurture' and provides the milieu for individual identity formation (ibid.: 9).

When gender enters the equation, the significations of 'home' connote something different again. In explaining feminist spatiality, Blunt and Rose (1994: 2) argue that women are associated with the private spaces of the home and men with the public spaces of culture, economics and politics. The home itself, like a microcosm of society, further reflects this division: the kitchen is domestic and as such is a feminine space. Here, women can speak with authority and be heard more easily because in the 'patriarchal division of labour', this is where her authority is the greatest. However, they contend that in the bedroom, 'she is not to be eloquent with her mind but only with her body for there she exists for her husband's pleasure'.

McClintock (1995: 36) asserts that the idea of the home as associated with the feminine and the private evolved during Victorian times. George (1996: 21) suggests that the association of the home and women served to devalue both because domesticity was associated with the biological functions of womanhood, those of childbearing and mothering. This association, says Driver (1988: 459),

led to the assumption that women possessed the inborn qualities thought mandatory for child rearing, such as sentiment, expressiveness, spontaneity, generosity, self-denial and altruism. But alongside these features were associated passivity, dependence, timidity and vulnerability. Consequently, these qualities were internalized and became integral parts of the female identity. As a result, women were incapacitated because they were tied to the home, and the home became a shelter for the incapacitated (George: 1996: 19). These myths certainly directed the lives of women living in the nineteenth and mid-to-late twentieth centuries. Even today, this legacy continues to haunt women, especially those in the developing world.

McClintock (1995: 36) argues that the privatisation and feminisation of the home significantly occurred in the heyday of the British imperial project, and proposes that its ideology was central to identity-formation in the British male subject. As women were considered naturally aligned to the domestic and the private, men, as their binary opposites, were aligned to the public and the cultural: a position that was infused with power and authority. In the colonies, this authority enabled the colonisers to take the indigene from what they regarded as his naturally uncivilised state and 'tame' or 'domesticate' him via mission schools, educational institutions and various types of low-ranking employment, including domestic service. Consequently, the relationship of white men to the colonised was not only hierarchised, but their respective positions were naturalised. The white male thus considered himself naturally superior to the colonised people and, as such, deemed himself born to civilise the world, a myth he introjected into his subjecthood.

Looking for a moment through the lens of poststructuralism, Smith (quoted in Alcorn: 1994: 30) describes the subject as an entity constituted by ideology. The interpellation of ideology by the subject does not happen in any 'unitary way' but occurs through collections of differing ideologies. Because of the perhaps contradictory nature of these differing ideologies and because no ideological position is ever absolute, the subject is always potentially able to resist an

ideological force that is imposed from without and thus there is always room for resistance and subversion of existing ideologies. The colonial home, ordered around ambiguous and conflicting ideologies and centred on gender as well as race and class, served as a site for resistance and subversion.[1]

The colonial home conceived of by Landsman is truly revealed as such a site, the occupants therein resisting the dominant ideology of the day and subverting the binaries constructed around the home. One could argue that Beatrice renounces all convention surrounding the colonial home and relocates beyond its spaces, which are not all that 'homely'[2] to begin with, into a far more dangerous, far less comfortable space of her own making. To do so, to create one's own spaces or effect the changes required to mould space to one's own needs, requires significant power because, as Gregory and Urry (1985: 31) say, 'such change must be affected at different points in space'. This becomes clear when one examines how Beatrice negotiates the boundaries of her home and trespasses into worlds far beyond the reaches of her experience, including that of male farmer, colonial capitalist and black indigene. Her behaviour, influenced by but also resistant to the ideology which shapes colonial society, is considered completely scandalous by the standards of the day. In this chapter, I examine colonial ideology, exploring its causes and effects, and interrogate the interface between Beatrice and her domestic spaces.

The space in which Beatrice lives is shaped by British imperial ideology, which dawned in the age of Queen Victoria. At the time, white English men, recently exposed to Darwin's theory of evolution and obsessed with classifying, measuring and mapping their world, created hierarchies, orders and classes of living objects. The increasing production of maps, taxonomic tables and classification charts

[1] The indigene is a good example of the subject as a site for resistance and subversion from within the home. The indigene, although in the position of subaltern, wielded an inverse power over the coloniser due to his insider's knowledge of the local political, social and geographical climate. Another site of resistance and ambiguity was the black nanny. The power she exerted over her young white charges, as the incipient captains of industry and politics, was a subversion of colonial society's hierarchical spatiality.

[2] The knowing reader may at this point wonder why I do not introduce Bhabha's discussion of the 'unhomely' at this point. I do so in the next chapter, whose very title in fact refers to this notion, being: 'Nomsa and the Unhomely Home of the Indigene'.

bore witness to the penetration by Englishmen of yet further reaches of the globe. Their pursuits shaped not only their natural worlds but also their social domain, which they ordered around race, class and gender. Supposedly super-endowed with civility, rationality and culture, they positioned themselves in the uppermost echelons of the social hierarchy. Women and the darker races of the world, supposedly aligned to nature, and, as a result, accredited with irrationality and uncontrollable appetites, were assigned the lower rungs of the scale, as determined by their various stages of evolvement. Consequently and ironically, McClintock (1995: 35) notes, these 'less evolved' members of the human race needed to be forced from their 'natural' states and 'tamed' in order to fit in to their place in the social hierarchy. It became an imperial imperative, albeit tacit, to produce and legitimise this 'natural' social order, the maintenance of which required hard work and energy.

Interestingly, the 'rise of capitalism' affirmed the British middle-class subject's belief in his superiority and eligibility to control the 'weaker' sex and the darker races. Comaroff (1997: 170-171) notes that these were the men who had witnessed the accrual of wealth and its power, a development that brought about the belief in the self-made man. The possibility that a man could fashion himself fostered the notion of the divided self: one part being the self who was allowed to look out and act on the world and the other who, in contrast, allowed himself to be shaped by the world. Comaroff observes that the subject now recognized that he had the choice to restrain his appetites, practice 'self control, self discipline and self possession' or conversely, indulge himself and lead a life filled with 'hedonism and indolence'. The result of these choices would lead either to success and riches or to a life filled with degradation and self-destruction but either way, the outcome was determined by the subject. [3]

Henry Chapman, as an Englishman, should have been well endowed with the qualities which British heterosexual males allegedly embodied. But possessing neither the self-discipline nor the self-control, as apparent in the gambling debts

[3] Interestingly, this 'split' is explored in *Heart of Darkness*. Kurtz epitomises one who has lost his self-control and restraint and who thus leads a life of degradation and self-destruction.

he has chalked up in England, he is forced to immigrate to a farm in the Klein Karoo. Instead, he is effeminate and infantile: a deadly combination that earns him a low score on the Victorian scale of social rankings. His hands are 'as soft as a baby' and he wears a 'big white hat on his head, like a girl' (DC: 17). Furthermore, he has unresolved Oedipal issues. He finds life on the farm untenable and wants to go home to his mother or nanny[4], envisaging one or the other 'smacking his wet, cold bum with a leather belt or a snake' (DC: 29).[5] There is a strange anxiety regarding his sexual identity. He suffers from traumas associated with erotic displacement and the deployment of a phallic substitute, indicative of sexual fetishism. Also, sexually aroused by his phallic mother or mother substitute, he identifies with her, a trait that indicates an arrested and hysterical personality (McClintock: 1995: 91,174). It is clear by Victorian conventional wisdom that he is suffering from a taint of the blood that has caused him to regress to something less than a prime example of British male subjecthood.

In contrast, it could be argued that the farm offers Beatrice the chance to achieve individuation and realise her full subjecthood. When Henry takes off for the mountains, Beatrice cuts her hair, dons Henry's shirt, pants, steps into his *veldskoene* and takes over the running of the farm with all its vagaries and hardships. Considering women's ostensible bondage to their homes and limited roles as home-makers, her physical exertion appears to defy the conventional gender roles as they were perceived at the time. However, Beatrice's behaviour is not so unusual because, as George (1996: 4) notes, the public/private domains were less distinct in the colonies than in the metropolis. Although women had no political power or access to the professions, their roles as frontier women were not

[4] McClintock (1995: 87-91) presents an absorbing discussion regarding the development of Freud's Oedipal complex. His theory of childhood sexuality was formulated as a result of his own memories. Apparently, in his first writings, he remembered that it was his childhood nurse who had first aroused his sexual feelings. In later writings, Freud elided her name with that of his mother's, thus presenting his Oedipal family drama. McClintock asserts that Freud, as a product of Victorian times, disavowed the power associated with lower class, paid females.

[5] The scene has overtones of sadomasochism with its reversal of power roles (man to women), phallic-like props (leather belt and snake) and connotations of self-debasement. According to Victorian scientists, sadomasochism was regarded as a taint and a stigma and the sign of the worst kind of aberrance. For a fascinating insight into S/M rituals, see McClintock (1995: 138-148).

merely limited to decorating the house and managing the staff but extended to physical labour, which was recognised as an important contribution to the project of imperialism. George (ibid.: 39) further goes on to say that it was in the colonies that nineteenth and early twentieth century English women became full individuals, in accordance with the desired goal of feminism in capitalist societies. She offers Spivak's opinion that the modern politically authoritative Englishwoman was made in the colonies.[6]

Even discounting the physical labour undertaken by some, by setting up home in the British Empire, the colonial woman gained status as a national subject. George (ibid.) observes that her housework and home management skills were seen as a valuable national contribution to the imperial enterprise. By running a household and ruling her domain, she performed side by side with her husband. Her work, requiring both 'brains and heart', brought 'civilisation' associated with domesticity to the colonies. In Beatrice's and Henry's case, they do bring the accoutrements of European civilisation with them to Highlands: but they consist of 'things that nobody ha[s] ever dreamed of', 'strange medicines and electric bells' (DC: 17) and even 'special dogs from the steppes of Russia' (DC: 16). And Beatrice does try to beautify her home when Jacobs and his family come for dinner by tossing 'scarves on the chairs and thread[ing] leaves behind the stale old pictures and mirrors that were there when they came to Highlands' (DC: 153). But their strange medicines and alternative lifestyle upset everyone, the exotic dogs die and the dinner is an unmitigated disaster. All these events indicate that their civilising mission is mostly ineffectual and often merely frivolous. Moreover, Beatrice's mission is, in fact, rather touching and winsome when compared to the harshness of the conventional colonising mission. For Beatrice, homemaking and home management are not the stepping stones to her individuation as she fails within the house with its long, hard masculine shape.

[6] George quotes Spivak: '…what is at stake, for feminist individualism in the age of imperialism, is precisely the making of human beings, the constitution and "interpellation" of the subject not only as human beings but as "individualist" ….As the female individualist, not-quite/not-male, articulates herself in shifting relationship to what is at stake, the "native female" as such (*within* discourse, *as* a signifier) is excluded from any share in this emerging norm' (See also Spivak:1985: 244 -245).

She also gets involved in philanthropic efforts to uplift the dwellings of the servants by building bungalows with 'doors and windows and chimneys' to replace their *pondokkies* made from 'paper and broken wood and anything else they [can] find' (DC:108). Beatrice is not unique in her efforts to improve the living conditions of her servants. It was, in fact, common procedure for colonial housewives to manage the illnesses, cleanliness and behaviour of their servants. George (1996: 56) views this practice as an intrusion into the private spaces of the colonised people whose household habits and arrangements were deemed inferior and consequently were thought to require educating in the ways of 'civilised' homemaking. White women extended these sorts of practices in to the public realm where they were allowed to advocate and carry out social reform (ibid.: 40). Their public role in works of benevolence in the colonies was another area where, George says, the modern Englishwoman obtained her authoritative subject position. Interestingly, this was in contrast to the female national subject position in England at the time which was that of mother. The 'New Woman', moving out of her private sphere and into the public spaces of the metropolis, was much ridiculed and maligned (ibid.: 40).[7] But Beatrice in the colonies again fails in her role as benefactor as her efforts are dismantled, leaving her no space to access her subjecthood. Henry gives the order for the bungalows to be taken down and snow sheds built in their stead. In his madness, he forgets that he is in the southern climes, and thinks that with Christmas coming, the birds will need protection from the snow.

Where she does achieve full individuation is in farming the land, despite the commonly held notion that farming is a natural proclivity of males and that, as Jack avers, 'no woman knows how to farm, the way a farmer does. It's not in her blood' (DC: 46). But she proves this assumption incorrect. Once she internalises the African landscape, she claims the land and farms, initially to great success.

[7] Vicinus (1977: ix, x) notes that in England at this time, there was much awareness and activism regarding the limited roles for middle-class women and their lack of earning power. By the 1860's, job opportunities, marriage laws, female emigration and education were some of the hot issues debated in relation to women. Middle-class women, especially, were active in promoting the idea of 'a widening sphere' for women.

Beatrice sets herself up in opposition to her neighbour, Mr Jacobs, who is known as the Ostrich King. Punning on the 'Bea' in her name, she names herself the 'Queen Bee' (DC: 32), reflecting her ambition to be the biggest and most productive 'Bee' in the colony. Connie remarks how she 'want[s] to beat Mr Jacobs at everything' (DC: 48). Her motive is capital as she ponders the amount to be made from the black feathers, the drabs, the fancy-coloured and, most valuable of all, the prime whites.[8]

Beatrice starts by examining the fences, and, like any hard-nosed capitalist, insists Jacobs pay his half of the repairs because of the shared boundary between their farms. Ironically, while mending the boundary markers of her farm, she transgresses the boundaries of the supposedly feminine and enters the spaces of the masculine. This she does so successfully that Connie observes there is talk that 'Miss Beatrice [is] really a man' (DC: 41). In her quest for knowledge relating to ostrich farming and the feather market, she sits in the men's bar where there are 'no ladies ever' (DC: 44), listening to conversations and asking questions. Her behaviour incites the anger of those enjoying the bar's amenities. Comments Connie: 'the men of course were furious because she was trespassing' (DC: 44). Not only does Beatrice trespass into the physical spaces of the male, but she forays into the 'masculine' pursuits of ambition and competitiveness and adopts the 'masculine' role of capitalist and empire builder. In so doing, she rejects the binarisms that have been constructed around gender and the limitations of their associated essentialisms. Her transgression has potentially positive consequences: she is given the resources and means to control her own life, to make her own decisions, ultimately to pay her own way and to fulfil her potential as a fully-individuated human being.

As noted before, Beatrice is not the first colonial woman to trespass into the realms of the masculine and take on physical labour. In fact, the 'brave white frontierswoman' is somewhat of an archetype in colonial discourse. In her

[8] The value of the feathers according to their colour evokes the racially-divided society in colonial and apartheid South Africa where people were judged and valued according to skin colour. Whites, at the top of the hierarchy, had to be of prime value.

seminal article: *'Woman' as Sign in the South African Colonial Enterprise*, Driver (1988: 9) analyses the autobiographies of two colonial women, Melina Rorke and Elsa Smithers, who undertake intensely 'masculine' activities. Rorke describes killing a Matabele with a 'heavy ten-bore shotgun' and Smithers handles oxen, drives the wagon and 'shoot[s] for the pot'. Yet, Driver asserts, they neutralise their masculine traits by retaining their 'deeply internalised' femininity. To exemplify, Driver quotes how, when Rorke is confirmed by a bishop, she clearly hears 'the rustle of an angel's wings'. This resonates with the Victorian ideal of the mother's role as angel in the house. Smithers becomes the 'Florence Nightingale of the Boer War' (ibid.), adopting the nurturing role of the female. Driver (ibid.: 11) says there are other examples where the femininity/masculinity binary appears to break down but she argues that ultimately women 'withdraw to home and hearth' to fulfil their roles as mother, primary school teacher, lower-level care-giver and dabbler in 'the drawing-room arts'.

Beatrice typifies the brave white frontierswoman who oversteps the gender line in terms of her running the farm. Moreover, she is also able to break down the binaries associated with race and class. After her first sexual encounter with Jacobs, she believes a visit to his wife and children might perhaps allay her desire for him and that the 'whirling would go away sitting there in his house, sitting on his English sofa, sitting in her corset and gloves, drinking tea' (DC: 57). Interestingly, she is driven to this on hearing 'the voices of her father and brothers and what they said about Jews, the men in particular' (DC: 57). So it is impossible to know whether she feels guilty about her adulterous behaviour or the fact that she has had sex with a Jew, but these conjectures both indicate that she still kowtows to society's injunctions and prejudices. She begins to dress for the occasion but the Africanisation of her space has encroached even into her closet. There is a cockroach in her shoe and a spider's nest in her corset. She abandons the idea of wearing the corset but without it, her dress is unable to close because her body now, 'is smaller at the top and bigger in the middle' (DC: 57). The manual labour has perhaps also played a role in her changed body shape. Nomsa

improvises, wrapping her orange head scarf around Beatrice's middle. Connie describes the result:

> She didn't look like Miss Beatrice from England, she looked more like a *hotnot*, with a *doek* around her middle. To make things even worse, she had a farmer's tan, with brown forearms and hands, and white, white shoulders, and that head on top, almost bald like an ostrich. (DC: 58)

Beatrice's external appearance echoes her shifting and fluid identity. Although her white, white shoulders are very suggestive of feminine elegance and ball gowns, her farmer's tan parodies this image. Along with the *doek*, she is no longer a white English woman but a hybrid black woman domestic/white male farmer. She merges the binaries associated with race, gender and even species as her head assumes the appearance of the ostriches she farms.

Her bald ostrich-like head evokes an image of vulnerability, of a woman being pulled in all directions, struggling to retain, then to let go of, her old identity and the forces that govern colonial ideology. But, of course, it might also refer to her bird-brained mission, which fails. On leaving the Jacobs family homestead, she recognizes that 'her old world [is] gone and the whole animal [is] finally out' (DC: 64), thereby acknowledging that she is free of the internalised rules that govern her society. Her human self has become animal. Spivak (1985: 249), discussing Jane Eyre, suggests that Bertha Mason, the Jamaican Creole produced by the 'axiomatics of imperialism', too blurs the boundaries between human and animal. Bertha is described as grovelling, 'seemingly on all fours', growling 'like some strange wild animal', with her 'dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane'. Consequently, she provides the European self with its 'not yet human Other' (ibid.: 247). Furthermore, Spivak argues that the colony from which Bertha originates is inscribed as hell and, as such, as its occupant, Bertha embodies all that is morally degenerate and contrary to Christian ethics. The Jane Eyres of the world, coming into contact with the almost-animal native subject via the colonial experience, were afforded the opportunity of developing their identities in terms

of Christian morality. No longer confined to domestic duties and sexual reproduction, the English woman's purpose on earth was elevated, as bearer of the European soul and transmitter of its values. By Beatrice's unleashing the animal within, she profoundly subverts this idea. She completely renounces her English identity, assuming not only the external characteristics of the indigene, but inculcating the immorality and degeneracy associated with the native subject.

One of the signs of moral taint was female sexuality. White English women could not admit to feelings of sexual desire and during the act, they had to lie back passively, close their eyes and think of England.[9] In fact, Schor (1989: 54) notes that the sexual roles of both women and men were very much prescribed and constructed around an order of 'austere binarisms' in order 'to codify the respective and complementary places of men and women in society' (Schor quotes Foucault: ibid.). Beatrice rejects the role assigned to her by society and surrenders to her sexual drives, first with Jacobs, and when she can no longer have him, with September and Nomsa, walking into their *pondokkie* without knocking, asking them to love her and '[t]here they were under the blanket together, all three of them and Miss Beatrice was moaning like mad' (DC: 88). Not only does Beatrice reject the passive role assigned to women, she also crosses the barriers of race, class and heterosexuality and escapes into, what Barthes terms (quoted by Schor: ibid.), 'the utopia of (sexual) indeterminacy'. Both Barthes and Foucault see the 'erasure of sex' or 'desexualisation' in positive terms: Barthes describing the rejection of the 'male/female paradigm' as the road to free play which will liberate 'meaning and sex' to a state of 'infinite expansion'. In this, there will no longer be any place or need for sexual difference. Initially, Beatrice exemplifies this position. She frees herself from the socially imposed shackles of femaleness and in so doing, gains the freedoms associated with indeterminacy. However, by the end of the novel, her sexual indeterminacy has turned her world into a dystopia. Beatrice ends up isolated from her society: her baby is gone; and she

[9] Smith in Vicinus (1977: 189) states that there is much evidence that deconstructs the stereotypes of Victorian sexuality. Widely disseminated literature on women's health spread the message that 'every healthy woman after the age of puberty felt, in some degree, the passion of love'. For my argument, however, I adhere to the stereotypes.

and Nomsa are left to sit alone, in the 'giant heart' of the Karoo, 'like people lost forever' (DC: 273).

Beatrice's sexuality flouts the dominant discourse of the day. As the voice of public authority is audible in the private spaces of the bedroom, enjoining how sex should be performed and with whom, Beatrice's transgressive behaviour defies the public/private binary of colonial ideology. Her behaviour here is one form of resistance, her donning male clothing is another. McClintock (1995: 174-175) observes that the subversive element embodied in the cross dresser has its roots in the early modern period, in Europe and Britain, with the introduction of the sumptuary laws. These laws restricted certain economic and social classes of people from wearing particular items of clothing, fabrics, colours or styles, a constraint which, by using clothes to mark and thus to police social boundaries, was inherently paradoxical. By revealing 'the invented nature of social distinction' and the question of 'the origins and the legitimacy of rank and power', the clothes become 'subject to disarrangement and symbolic theft' thereby disrupting the stable social identities that are encoded within society. She argues that this is the reason that the 'historical figure of the cross dresser [has become] invested with a potent and subversive power'. In terms of gender, cross dressing is a form of ambiguity which inscribes it with a transgressive element. For Beatrice, cross dressing, of course, arises from practical considerations; women's dress is far too constricting for the physical demands of farming. But, it also signifies the symbolic theft of the phallus, the signifier of male subjectivity and thus of privilege, which gives her a strategy of resistance against the patriarchal society and a subjectivity that is beyond binarisms.

Paradoxically, when Beatrice 'pul[s] on those pants of Mr Henry, the convict shirt and the *veldskoene*' (DC: 86), she not only resists patriarchal discourse but she also becomes complicit in its imperial project. Taking on the persona of the privileged white male, she also assumes the power and entitlement associated with male identity. Wearing the pants that normally enclose a male organ and the convict shirt which suggests crime, she steals into Nomsa and September's

pondokkie, and, like the imperial male coloniser claiming the land, she penetrates and claims the space and bodies of the indigene. Before setting off, she gazes into the distance and sees 'the bottom of the sky…, a long thick line telling you that you [are] here, not in England' (DC: 86). The view reinforces the fact that she is in colonial Africa, where she has been allowed to transgress boundaries, as opposed to England, where she had to conform to rigid behavioural codes and conventions. She opens the door of the *pondokkie*, 'without knocking' and puts '…her face close to Nomsa's, her lips right next to Nomsa's ear' (DC: 86), as if about to tell a secret to a confidante. Although Beatrice's act approximates rape, her actions are filled with intimacy and tenderness. Beatrice notices that September's palm, as it dangles off the edge of the bed, is etched with dirt 'into the cracks and [he has] a thumb-nail like a horn' (DC: 86). Her observation evokes the labouring class to which he belongs but the work-worn state of his hand elicits her sympathy and she takes his hand 'as if it [is] a gift' (DC: 86), discerning that he has something precious to offer. She asks Nomsa and September to love her but immediately follows this with: 'I am sorry' (DC: 87), acknowledging that she has overstepped the boundaries of socially acceptable behaviour, as applied to all societies. Nomsa and September look angry but they concede that Beatrice still burns with an irrepressible desire for Jacobs, as September says: '*Die mies is verlief*. In love' (DC: 87), and as domestics, they know they must serve her and apparently service her, as well. Beatrice shatters a societal myth constructed around sexuality which avers that uncontrolled libido is a feature of the lower classes, specifically black females. Beatrice appears to adopt the unbridled libido that is supposedly the prerogative of a white man but she does this apologetically.

In the violent, patriarchal society of the colonies, the rampant libido of white men was avowedly a sign of masculinity and virility, qualities that were endorsed by society. Their sexuality sanctioned, if not encouraged, they viewed black women as easy targets to release any pent-up sexual frustration. The reason that black rather than white women were considered more eligible for this purpose was because black women were regarded as diametrically opposed to white men, in

terms of the nature/culture dichotomy. In order for the white male to shape and maintain this myth, he had to wield his power, and in this case sexual power, over his racial and gendered other, otherwise the spatiality of his society threatened to collapse. On the other hand, the sexuality of black men was disavowed by colonial and apartheid society and a myth was instead constructed around the black man as rapist and penis. Mills (1995: 82) considers that the demonising of the black male was used as a way of displacing the violence and barbarism of colonialism. By creating this myth, attention was focused on the savagery of the native instead, which also served to underscore his racial difference and otherness. Mills (ibid.) notes that the 'rapable white female' was somewhat of a stereotype in British colonial fiction. The creation of this figure led to the notion of the white woman as victim and as needing protection. It was thus prudent for the woman to remain in her home and to go into the public realm only when accompanied by a protector: a perception which supported the public/private binarisms around which the spatiality of society was structured.

It is arguable whether Beatrice's sexual act with her servants can be defined as rape but for Nomsa and September, it is certainly 'undesired to the core'.[10] When Beatrice's mission becomes clear to September and Nomsa, they both look angry as if 'Miss Beatrice ha[s] taken those pumpkins off the roof' (DC: 87) and September grunts and spits. This is neither the noise nor the action of a man in the throes of passion. Beatrice's sexual act is forced upon them but nevertheless they comply because of Beatrice's authority as their employer. Thus, Beatrice's 'raping' (and I use the term advisedly) of her employees subverts the black male rapist/rapable white female binarism associated with patriarchal discourse. As mentioned previously, her actions compare with those of the white male coloniser and his attitude of entitlement regarding the body of the colonised, but they could also be viewed as a somewhat hyperbolic representation of her role of authoritative Englishwoman.

[10] This quote is from Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999). I could not resist inserting this here. The novel's narrator describes Professor Lurie's interaction with Melanie Isaacs as: 'Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core' (25).

Beatrice's authority represents another area where, according to George (1996: 50), the white English woman assumed her status as a national subject. As supervisor of her servants, she was entrusted, along with her husband, with the duty of keeping the 'strange and unmanageable territory under control'. Whereas his duty lay in the public realm, hers lay in the domestic spaces of the home. In managing her home, the English homemaker was expected to create a mini-Empire which included the management and discipline of her servants. George (ibid.) notes that the interaction between the homemaker and her servants was often the only interaction between the colonial woman and the colonised races and was where, in the presence of the native other, her authoritative self as Englishwoman, was defined.

By taking up their supervisory pursuits, rooted as they were in the domain of the white male colonist, white women were guilty of complicity in the imperial project and as such, repudiated any sisterly bonds that may have existed between themselves and black women. According to George (ibid.: 57), friendships made by women of differing races seldom feature in colonial texts written by English authors at this time, being the late nineteenth, early twentieth century. In addition, as Michelle Adler comments, accounts of mistress-servant relationships that do exist in documents, such as travel journals and colonial women's diaries, often highlight the differences of class, race and culture that exist, rather than the alliances forged between them. Beatrice's and Nomsa's relationship certainly cannot be described as an alliance. It is evocative of the typical 'maid-madam' relationship of South Africa even of today, which is characterised by an ironic one-way type of intimacy. For Beatrice, Nomsa fulfils a role that is more than mere servant, as Connie observes: 'Miss Beatrice wasn't lonely because she always had Nomsa' (DC: 42). Not only does she sweep and polish, light the fires and the lamps and cook and serve the food but her role as domestic gives her access to the most intimate recesses of Beatrice's life. Privy to Beatrice's deepest and sometimes darkest secrets through her powers of prophesy and also via direct observation, Nomsa ' [is] the one who [sees] how her *broekies* stay[ ] white, even when the moon [is] full' (DC: 97). Besides this, she plays apothecary and

midwife, entrusted to administer to Beatrice the *muti* she concocts and delivering Beatrice of her baby. But for all Nomsa's knowledge of the most intimate details of Beatrice's life, there is no intimacy between them, a truth that reflects their vastly different positions on the social map. Of this, Beatrice is aware. On one occasion, Nomsa intuits that it is September's baby that Beatrice is carrying and eyes Beatrice with a needle in her look. Beatrice is afraid but cannot broach the subject responsible for Nomsa's ire. Connie describes Beatrice's perspective as follows:

> Of course, nobody said anything because you can't say things like that to your maid. You can't just say what you're worried about. You can't even say What's wrong? You must go on being the madam and asking about supper and what's in the pots. (DC: 130)

Beatrice interacts with Nomsa on a somewhat superficial level. Nomsa is by no means Beatrice's confidante and Nomsa, in return, reflects the silences back on her employer. Beatrice, fearing for the normalcy of her unborn child and recognizing that Nomsa could allay her fears in this regard, resists asking her, as Connie reflects: 'Nomsa was not the kind of person you could ask. She did things and was silent and she could scare you if she wanted, with her ropes and her bones' (DC: 168). The silences between the two women reveal their lack of solidarity and if Nomsa has insight into Beatrice's life and is a companionship of sorts in that she is a human presence who staves off loneliness for Beatrice, there is no reciprocation. Beatrice lacks all knowledge of Nomsa's life, ignorant even of the existence of her children, as Connie tells: '[Nomsa and September] had their own babies, who lived with their *ouma* on Mr de Koek's farm. They went there on Easter and Christmas and Boxing Day. Miss Beatrice didn't know about that…' (DC: 98).

For Beatrice, Nomsa's life is situated on those blank spaces of the earth, where 'the horror' of Africa is to be found. I allude here to Marlow, in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* who refers to the areas of the world untouched by the 'civilising'

mission of imperialism' as the 'blank spaces on the earth' (21). To the colonisers, the areas as yet uncolonised appeared blank, the landscape empty, reflecting their perception that the land was uninhabited by people who possessed authoritative subjecthoods. The dark-skinned races, who populated these lands, were perceived as devoid of the cultural, social and religious imperatives that moulded the European identity (specifically middle-class and male) that came complete with authoritativeness and soul. The indigene was a site of ambiguity and repression for the coloniser, who had to maintain the dehumanised status he conferred on the colonised, to legitimise his project. He constructed the indigene as other, disavowing his/her identity and subjecthood. For Beatrice as the authoritative Englishwoman, Nomsa is the other. So, paradoxically, while Beatrice, by some of her actions, subverts some self/other binarisms constructed by colonial hegemony, she also maintains them in her relationship with Nomsa. In this way, she is complicit in upholding the binaries of colonialism. Driver (1988: 14,15) avers that the complicity of white women was due to the fact that they were manipulated to align politically with their own racial group and contends that the authority of white women was 'carefully defined and circumscribed' by the male patriarchy.[11] This contrasts to Spivak's theory of the authoritative subjecthood of the colonial woman, whose role as wife and mother was extended to include the lofty task of soul-maker (Spivak: 1985: 247).

Driver proffers a Lacanian take on white women's identity in the colonies. In this schema, the phallus is used to define subjectivity. White women were given the power of the phallus as frontierswomen, but it was taken back by white males, who limited their position to the domestic and the private. Consequently, although women were bearers of culture, they remained only bearers and not possessors because to possess the phallus was the preserve of the English cultural male subject (Driver: 1988: 15). Thus, as Rorke's and Smithers's masculine pursuits is acceptable, Beatrice's horse-riding and ostrich farming is not particularly scandalous for her times, but what is beyond the pale is her treading the waters of capitalism. She knows how to 'sell her feathers, how to buy a pair

[11] However, political manipulation is by no means exclusive to women. Men are just as manipulated to buy into ideology.

of Guaranteed Breeders, breed them and sell them for a profit' (DC: 103). In addition, Beatrice thinks the farm belongs to her, saying to Henry: 'It's my farm, you know. It's mine and not yours. My father's money'. Henry quickly divests her of her delusion, responding: 'You're my wife. …Now take off that hat and go back to your bed!' (DC: 188). For Beatrice, as a bearer of the phallus, her farming pursuits are sanctioned, but ownership of the land and the business of farming are restricted to those who possess the phallus. Beatrice capitulates to Henry's demands and hands over the control of the farm to him.

Phallic Law establishes difference not only between 'self' and 'other' in terms of gender, but also in terms of race. If white women were other as aligned to nature, then blacks were more other and black women, perceived as the most savage and the least controllable, were the ultimate other (Driver: 1988: 19-20). Thus, race, along with gender, was used as a platform on which identity in the colonies was constructed and white women were used to mediate a diametric opposition between white men and black women. Consequently, the relationship between the white English woman and her female domestics was characterised by the construction and maintenance of self and other and their relative rankings on the social scale. This weighs heavily on Beatrice's and Nomsa's relationship which, as a result, suffers from constraints and strains. Thus, on the one hand, Beatrice upholds her role as the authoritative English woman. She maintains her and Nomsa's relative positions on the social map by remaining ignorant of Nomsa's personal life and of her values, beliefs and feelings. She goes 'on being the madam', keeping her distance and not telling Nomsa what she is 'worried about' (DC: 130). However, in other respects, Beatrice subverts this profoundly and assumes the identity of a black person.

Beatrice trespasses across the racial divide and assumes a black identity, dressing like a '*klonkie*' (DC: 18) and sitting at the table with her servants, eating '*mieliepap* and bread like the *kaffirs*. No knife, no fork, no spoon, just shovelling the *pap* with the bread and swallowing it in big chunks' (DC: 34 -35). No longer ascribing to the table manners that are a mark of English decorum and finesse,

Beatrice adopts the eating habits of the locals, which Connie regards as lacking politesse. To Connie, the food and the manner in which it is eaten, signify class and race. Beatrice's using her bread as a shovel indicates that she has joined the ranks of the labouring classes. The big chunks of bread and the *pap* she 'shovels' into her mouth appear hard for Connie to swallow because of the fact that she regards blacks as inferior. This is indicated by her using the appellation '*kaffir*', a term so deeply etched with pejorative connotations, of which even Connie, despite living in small-town Oudtshoorn, must be aware.

Connie says: 'on the inside she went black, like a *kaffir*…She didn't worry anymore about white people, or Mr Henry, she just made Highlands her country' (DC: 43). By Beatrice consuming 'black' food, blackness consumes her and she undergoes changes that go deeper than the colour of her skin and her eating habits. Along with the food, Beatrice ingests a black identity and a new homeland. Not only does she cross the race divide in her home but she displays her newfound self publicly. Requiring supplies, she rides into the very public spaces of the town with September and Nomsa, shocking the respectable members of society who have to 'look at her twice to see if she is '[w]hite because by now her skin (is) very brown' (DC: 43). So, although Beatrice upholds certain of the black/white binarisms, she also subverts them, and in the process, hugely destabilises the role assigned to white women in the colonies.

Beatrice's 'going native' is the very antithesis of what was expected of a white English woman, whose duty it was to uphold and perpetuate British norms and standards. Women were encouraged to settle in the colonies to prevent the white colonist taking black consorts, a union which was seen as the slippery slope towards depravity and degeneration. It was presumed, as McClintock (1995: 48) asserts, that through sexual contact with women of colour, European men contracted not only disease but 'debased sentiments, immoral proclivities and extreme susceptibility to decivilised states'. White women, in servicing white men with sanctified sex, prevented the contamination of 'superior' white blood from 'inferior' black blood. According to Coetzee (1988: 138), 'blood poetics'

had its origins in the Victorian paranoia that stemmed from a post-Darwinian obsession with eugenics and the idea of superior and degenerate races. The blood was regarded as the transmitter of race, in that white blood was different to black blood, and bad blood was thought responsible for flaws and degeneracy. These covered a whole range of diverse behaviours and symptoms including depression, epilepsy, alternative sexuality, criminality, alcoholism and opium addiction (ibid.: 142; McClintock: 1995: 46-47).

Associated with these ideas was the notion of contamination, which, according to McClintock, was responsible for the Victorian obsession with disease and contagion. The boundary of the body was a place of anxiety as it was felt to be permeable and thus susceptible to contagion. Sexuality, in particular women's sexuality, was felt to be a place where racial transmission occurred and hence cultural contagion. What McClintock (1995: 46-47) terms the 'poetics of contagion', including the fear of racial contagion, justified a 'politics of exclusion'. For this reason, it was deemed necessary to police the boundaries between the ruling elite and 'contagious' or lower classes by enforcing controls on women's sexuality. In the colonies, vigilant control had to be meted out on women's sexuality as it related to distinctions between the ruling class and the colonised. McClintock (ibid.: 47) states: 'In the eyes of policymakers and administrators, the bounds of empire could be secured and upheld only by proper domestic discipline and decorum, sexual probity and moral sanitation'. The controlling of women's sexuality and the exalting of maternity ensured a swelling in the ranks of the white civilised race that would perpetuate the health and wealth of the body politic. Thus, white women were needed not only to prevent the transgression of miscegenation but also to serve as mothers of the next generation of empire builders. George (1996: 38) talks about the class of English women imperialists who had no suffrage but whose authority was gained through motherhood: the bearing of male children who would continue the lines of colonial power. In Lacanian terms, if white women were the bearer of the phallus, they were also the transmitter, not only between clans but dutifully passing the Law of the Father on to the next generation.

Of course, with the Victorian obsession with eugenics and its related paranoia firmly in place, Beatrice's crossing the colour bar of interracial sex and the resulting miscegenation is conceivably seen as the worst sort of abomination by her society. Even in the democratic South Africa of 1997, for conservative small-town inhabitants such as Connie and Jack, miscegenation still retains its taint of the taboo. Connie thinks it is so bad that 'it isn't even in the Bible' (DC: 88). Jack declares that 'what Miss Beatrice did was the worst and that she should have been left at the top of the Swartberg Pass under a pile of stones while she was still alive' (DC: 159). Beatrice, herself, feels an all-consuming guilt. After she has sex with September, she runs back to her home and into her bedroom where, apparently lacking proper ablution facilities, she pours water over her head. She can see September's eyes 'sewn shut with a thousand needles' (DC: 90), witnessing his painful shame and empathising with him. Connie describes how '[w]ater streamed down her legs, through the seat of her pants, and slowly the last of the burning flickered and died' (DC: 90). Beatrice cleanses herself, performing a baptism which she hopes will wash away her sexual desires and absolve her of her sin. It also signifies her attempt at purifying and preserving her white body from the contamination of her encounter with the racial other. Her cleansing resonates with cleaning rituals that, as McClintock (1995: 33) notes, are integral to most cultures. She says cleansing and absolution rituals relate to ideas surrounding the integrity of the body's boundaries and the attempted exclusion of contaminants, such as those transmitted by the lower classes or darker races and are a way of maintaining social hierarchies.

The power of water is a trope that runs through the narrative. Beatrice's dalliance with Jacobs triggers her vision to build 'a fountain in the middle of the house' (DC: 76). September makes a hole and inserts a round basin that is filled with water. Beatrice sends away for lotus roots, but as Connie narrates:

> …by the time they came, the whole thing was already a flop. A young ostrich had crawled into the basin and drowned and so had some *meerkats*.

> It was like a floating cemetery…So she filled the hole with cement and that was the end of that. (DC: 76)

The fountain is partly an attempt at making her home environment more homely. Prior to this, she has decided that she belongs to the South African land and she knows that '[s]he will not go back to England' (DC: 32). However, the fountain could also represent Beatrice's attempt to recreate, in her home, the intense pleasure she experienced with Jacobs in the cave. During their sexual union, the cave becomes a metaphor for Jacobs's body and its underground river represents Beatrice's response to him, as Connie expresses: 'The cave she was in was him, and she moved in it…There was an underground river, flowing from her into him, and they swam with it, until it swelled over and flooded them' (DC: 71). Their experience is strongly linked to water as associated with birth and fecundity and with growth and renewal, and as suggested by the promise held within the lotus roots. To Freud (1973: 188), the fountain symbolises male genitalia. Thus, the fountain not only relates to the underground waters of the cave but also to sexuality. Placing the fountain in the middle of her home is Beatrice's attempt at bringing Jacobs into her home, which then becomes a metaphor for her own body. But the fountain becomes an instrument associated with death, foreshadowing the impending tragedy that results as a consequence of her behaviour and her dismal failure at motherhood. Perhaps realising the fruitlessness of her mission, Beatrice abruptly gives up on her idea, as indicated by Connie's 'that was the end of that'. Her unhomely home remains hard and masculine, rejecting her attempts to create a space which signifies the female body or celebrates the generation of life and birth.

An alternative interpretation for Beatrice's attempt at installing the fountain is that it may stem from a deep-seated guilt. After she and Jacobs have sex, Beatrice wistfully asks him: 'Do you think my husband is dead?' (DC: 73). She is unsure if Henry is dead and her question underscores her realisation that she has committed adultery. That Beatrice feels guilty after her sexual relations with Jacobs is undeniable. As Beatrice and Jacobs emerge from underground,

'everything look[s] like it could scratch or sting you. …All the rocks [are] broken and the air [is] filled with dust' (DC: 73). She feels that her and Jacobs's act has invited castigation from even the inanimate landscape and the very air they breathe. She undoubtedly cannot shake off the values that she has imbibed as a member of colonial society, which still subscribes to notions surrounding women's sexuality and the archetypal Good Woman or the asexual Madonna. In addition, the fact that Jacobs is the othered Jew adds to her feelings of guilt and contamination. Beatrice, wanting to find absolution, builds the fountain to bring water into the house for its association with the rituals of purification and absolution. The guilt she suffers springs from the core of her being and it is this centre that she wishes to access in her quest to regain social, if not spiritual, purity.

It is after her intimate relations with her servants that her transgression across the bounds of 'decent' behaviour situates her in a space where she would rather not be: in the spaces of Africa and its colonised people. She dreams of a house that she builds with money from the sold feathers and again the trope of water features, but this time, the water has lost its spiritual properties and become merely prosaic, required by the household servant only for washing clothes and making *mieliepap*, the staple diet of Africans.

> …with the money she built another house with a Spanish courthouse and five fountains… Then she saw that Nomsa was washing clothes in one of the fountains and September was wading in another one… She wanted to tell them …to go back to their *pondokkie* but she couldn't…and suddenly she was lying in the water, in the middle of Nomsa's fountain. The clothes Nomsa was washing were hers and she saw her slime-green dress, floating and some old corsets and petticoats. She couldn't tell if they were foam or material and she lifted them to her lips and they tasted like that *mieliepap* cooking on the stove. (DC: 93)

Beatrice dreams of a life inculcated once again with European culture and values, as in the Spanish courthouse and the fountains. But the world of her black domestics has subsumed her, instilling itself into the middle of her subjectivity, represented by the fountains in which Nomsa and September are wading. That she now finds this distasteful is signified by her vision that her dress has turned into scum that floats on a polluted pond. Finding herself in the middle of Nomsa's world, she wants to mark herself off from her servants and affirm her difference as a white colonial, but she fails: her Africanisation is too deeply entrenched and there is no way of reclaiming her unsullied white identity. In her effort to re-inculcate her erstwhile identity, she tries to ingest her corset and petticoats, items of clothing that are the mark of white English women but she discovers that they have transformed into African *mieliepap*. The dream speaks of her need to wash away the dirt that has sullied not only her skin in the *pondokkie* of her domestics, where 'the floor made her dirty' and where she acquired 'black streaks all over her face'(DC: 88), but her whole being. The 'dirty' sexual encounter with September and Nomsa has blackened her skin and contaminated her blood. She has allowed her body to become 'polluted' with the 'degenerate' blood of the 'inferior' race. Carrying the stigma of racial and class degeneration, she desires to cleanse her body of this taint.

In the end, Beatrice, like her discursive predecessors, also withdraws to hearth and home. Once delivered of her baby, she not only hears the rustle of wings but becomes the angel of the house, trumpet and all, as Connie relates: 'And she was the angel and trumpet, holding that girl' (DC: 228). But the new beginning the trumpet heralds, sounds out a dismal future for her. With the loss of the baby, she is left with nothing, losing 'all the love in [her] heart' and some say 'most of her mind as well' (DC: 267). Nomsa 'punishes' her for her complicity in the imperial project and appropriates her baby, and colonial society spurns her for the sin of miscegenation and the theft of the phallus. She disappears behind the high walls surrounding Highlands, removing herself from her society and withdrawing to a space that is completely private. Ironically, Beatrice reverts to the role society has prescribed for her, as a white woman of the colonial era, by withdrawing to hearth

and home. But she subverts it again because it is said that she and Nomsa sleep in the same bed, an occurrence that, once again, contests the binarisms constructed around gender, race, class and sexuality.

The identity of Beatrice that Landsman has constructed is one that is filled with paradoxes and ironies. Her character is multi-faceted and fluid, allowing her to attain a transgressive positioning that moves back and forth across a binary subjectivity, conferring on her power she uses to cross social and sexual boundaries. On the one hand, she conforms to the role of brave white frontierswoman setting up home in the colonies, but she takes this too far, according to her society (and according to Connie as well) and trespasses into the realms of the masculine by putting on the pants and stepping into the shoes of the white colonial farmer and capitalist empire builder. She assumes the role of George's authoritative Englishwoman which shapes her relationship with her employees. Her complicity in the imperial project limits the potential for true intimacy with her domestics, but then she oversteps this boundary by stepping into their private space and initiating sexual intimacy. The power that she wields in her action becomes more akin to the male coloniser who assumes he has the right to rape the land and the colonised, but the act itself subverts all the binaries, taking on an ambiguity and indeterminacy that blurs all boundaries, and also contests the spaces of white female sexuality.

Woodward (1999: 2-3) proposes that *The Devil's Chimney* engages with the potential in post-apartheid literature for moving 'beyond binary subjectivities' towards 'cultural or creative hybridities.' She avers that South African society is still living with traces of the apartheid system that enforced race as a 'social construction of difference'. She suggests that the 'new signs of identity' and 'the innovative sites of collaboration and contestation' in the novel contribute to the act of defining the idea of society itself. In this vision of a post-racial society, identity is ambiguous and open to multiple reinscriptions: the binaries are denatured. Beatrice's hybrid identity certainly does move 'beyond binary subjectivities', but if she is a representation of a new South African society, the

future is not a positive vision. To the contrary – the ending for Beatrice is far from happy: she is literally and figuratively spurned by her society and incarcerated by her creator, Connie, who, at the end of her narrative, isolates her in Highlands, behind its wall that 'makes [her] think of a prison' (DC: 47).

What does Beatrice represent? Bhabha refers to a 'metonymy of presence', which refers to the essentialisms that are used to define the identity of the other (1992: 239). He talks about, for example, 'the Simian Black, the Lying Asiatic' – all these are metonymies of presence'. Beatrice could arguably be a metonymy of presence for a future South African identity where stereotypes and essentialisms are destabilised, exclusivity is rejected and hybridity is embraced. However, to me, she reflects Landsman's opposition towards the repression experienced by colonial women with respect to their behaviour and sexuality, and which women, in today's society, continue to experience. Beatrice's story is underpinned by her transgressive sexuality, which plays a pivotal role in propelling the story towards its climax. Her sexual transgressions fly in face of her repressive Edwardian society, which has inherited its sexual mores from the Victorians. Not only is Beatrice's adultery sinful according to Judeo-Christian injunction, but the passion she experiences is aberrant in a society where women supposedly do not have sexual feelings. To allay her pent-up libido, she initiates sex with Nomsa and September, assuming an active role that is also considered deviant for a woman. The *menage à trois* that results is abnormal because normal sex only takes place between a man and a woman who are married. That Beatrice's sexual partners are her black, domestic employees and that the sex is partially lesbian in nature, renders it outrageous. Arguably, to some modern-day readers, Beatrice's sexual diversity and practices are still shocking.

According to Foucault (1984:295, 296), we (denizens of Western society) are still living with the repressed sexual mores of the Victorians. He proposes that to speak about sex is a subversive act that defies the established power structures and to change the laws, to eliminate the effects of repression, we must talk about sex: to reveal the truth, to overturn global laws and to proclaim a new day. This, to

me, is where Landsman's motives lie. However, contrary to Foucault's optimism, her 'talking about sex' does not have the power to foresee a new day although it does perhaps contest some of the myths that have been associated not only with sexuality but with race as well. In so doing, she offers the reader a slight glimmer of the possibility of a new day, when there will be a greater tolerance towards difference, including that which relates to gender, sexuality and race.

CHAPTER THREE

Nomsa and her Unhomely Home

Come with us to the place of mothers.
We will stroke your flat empty belly,
let you weep with us in the dark
and arm you with one of our babies
to carry home on your back.

"Small Passing" Ingrid de Kok

Benedict Anderson (1991: 3), in his seminal *Imagined Communities,* proposes that defining the nation has proved notoriously difficult. Nevertheless, he defines it as a community of people sharing a feeling of belonging to a specific geographic place and identifying with each other through some common factors, such as history, language and culture. However, Anderson deploys the adjective 'imagined' because 'members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members (ibid.: 6). Further, he adds that nations are imagined as sovereign and with finite (if elastic) borders which generates the notion of inside and outside, and inclusion and exclusion. The nation is thus based on the sense of belonging, of having a community and a home. Consequently, the words 'nation', concerned with matters public, and the 'home', relating to the private, both signify the self, inclusion and belonging. When there is a breakdown of the private/public binary, the relationship between the home and the nation goes deeper than shared significations because the home becomes shaped by the homeland and the nation, which in turn, is influenced by the spaces of the home.

This notion is well illustrated in the era of colonialism, when the appropriation of land and power affected not only the public sites of authority but soaked into the entire social fabric of society. This included the intensely private interstices of the home: who you were, who you could love, was no longer an individual's choice but was prescribed and sometimes legislated by the government. Thus, says Bhabha (1994: 9,11), the private spaces of the home or dwelling place reflected the public spaces of the homeland, and the familiarly personal became the coldly political. Consequently, an uncanny fusion took place as the private and the public became part of each other: the result was the unhomely home. Bhabha adopts Freud's usage of the word 'unhomely' or *unheimlich* in contrast to the 'homely' or *heimlich*, meaning familiar and 'belonging to the home' (Freud: 1950: 368, 370). The *unheimlich* is uncanny and frightening because the once known and familiar, the homely, becomes unknown and unfamiliar. To experience strangeness in a familiar space can evoke feelings of alienation and discomfort. These circumstances typically describe the lot of the colonised. Considered inferior by the colonial power, they remained invisible and their needs

went unheard. They were unequal subjects exploited within their homeland: they were the unhomely living in their unhomely homes.

In *The Devil's Chimney*, Nomsa, the black female domestic, is one of these unhomely beings living in her unhomely colonial home. Elleke Boehmer (1993: 269-270) notes that in colonial discourse, women are figured in terms of the 'extreme Other' and as such are cast as 'corporeal, carnal, untamed, instinctual, raw, and therefore open to mastery, available for use, for husbandry, for numbering, branding, cataloguing… possession'. In addition, she submits that '[i]mages of the body of the Other are conflated with those of the land,… being seen as amorphous, wild, seductive, dark, open to possession'. Like discursive representations of the black female domestic from this era, the spaces Nomsa occupies are confined to the private, her duties seem limited to the domestic and her powers belong to the exotic and mysterious organic occult. However, in *The Devil's Chimney*, these stereotypical portrayals are somewhat subverted and the scope of her role is significantly broadened as she is given textual agency. Nomsa is presented in such a manner as she has never before appeared. In this chapter, I interrogate Nomsa's unhomely home and her role in the text, ultimately questioning her significance in the trajectory of the novel.

Nomsa's context is that of the newly unionised South Africa of 1910. Residing in the Eastern Cape, which has long been a British colony, she lives with the legacy that granted English-speaking settlers a special position at the cost of other race groups, especially of blacks (Marks and Trapido:1987: 5).[1] Disenfranchised and deracinated as a colonial subject, she is also displaced and unhomed by the introduction and consolidation of a segregationist policy that allocated reserves for black domicile and instituted urban influx control through pass laws (ibid.: 7). These served to control the movement of blacks and limit any potential for insurrection by the black community, but as Marks and Trapido (ibid.) suggest, their institution was actually underpinned by the fear that blacks would stake their

[1] Michelle Adler comments that the year is also significant because it marks the beginning of an era of rapprochement between English and Afrikaans speaking whites with a concomitant exclusion of the black population.

claim to the relatively newly-discovered mineral wealth of the country and also by the colonials' feeling 'swamped' by large numbers of tribal blacks who had been brought under colonial rule. Also introduced at this time was the migrant labour system that, together with the segregationist policy, caused the breakdown of family and community structures. In addition, colonial society ascribed to social Darwinism, an ideology that came to the fore in the late nineteenth century and that was based on the Victorian assumption of the natural superiority of the pale-skinned races and the inferiority of the darker races. The colonial hegemony used this so-called science of evolution to justify the imperial project and to confer credibility on their overtly racist policies. Marks and Trapido (ibid.) quote Lord Milner, High Commissioner of South Africa who, they say, epitomised British race ideology. In 1903, he pontificated:

> The white man must rule because he is elevated by many, many steps above the black man…which it will take the latter centuries to climb …One of the strongest arguments why the white man must rule is because that is the only possible means of gradually raising the black man, not to our level of civilisation – which it is doubtful whether he would ever attain, but to a much higher level than that which he at present occupies.

The ideology of colonialism emphasised differences associated with race and gender and therefore placed the white male in the topmost echelon of its social hierarchy, which was a ranking of 'evolutionary fitness'. The black female, as the white male's absolute other, was placed on the lower rungs of the ranking system, a position that was characterised by subordination and inequality. Subsequently, although a subject, she existed as another kind of subject: that of the subaltern whose subject position was devoid of all status, and as one, as George (1996: 25) notes, who was subject to someone else's control and one whose identity was conferred upon her. Her inferiority entrenched, she was denied her civil rights and access to decent education, and earmarked for employment of a lowly status. She was exploited for her cheap labour and was thus vulnerable to abuse: she was a victim of her inequality.

Even prior to social Darwinism and eugenics, white men on voyages of discovery and colonising missions constructed racial stereotypes after contact with black indigenes. When, in the age of imperialism, numerous whites were brought into propinquity with blacks in colonies around the world, the racial stereotypes were crystallized, exacerbating a racism that always existed. These Victorian racial stereotypes provided the white male with his racial other, against whom he offset his character, and resulted in a discourse that denigrated the indigene, presenting him as primitive, irrational, bestial and in touch with his baser instincts and appetites, while promoting himself as naturally superior, enlightened, rational and progressive. This is the stereotype that Fanon (2000: 214) encounters: '[b]lackness, darkness, shadow, shades, night, the labyrinths of the earth, abysmal depths, blacken someone's reputation… [a]ligned to evil and Satan, [t]he archetype of the lowest values is represented by the Negro…the Negro is the symbol of sin'. He adds: 'In Europe, the Negro has one function: that of symbolising the lower emotions, the baser inclinations, the dark side of the soul'.

Thus, as the black soul was set up as a foil to the European soul, Africa, as the home of the black races, was set up as a foil to Europe. Brantlinger (1985: 196, 197) speculates that the Victorians viewed Africa as a dark continent that needed civilising on moral, religious and scientific grounds. Because Europeans saw Africans as promiscuous, they imagined Africa as a place redolent with temptation, especially of a sexual nature. What Africa, in fact, represented for them was a place to project their own repressed desires and fantasies and if Africa's people served as a site of displacement for the guilty impulses of their unconscious desires, then Africa's woman was the site of their deepest desires and signified the darkest side of the European soul. Gilman (1985: 225) says black sexuality, especially the black female's, strongly featured in European iconography of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, where she appeared as an archetypal seductress or love goddess. In addition, the black female of the servant classes was strongly associated with illicit sexual activity; her mere presence sexualised the society she served. Manet's *Olympia* of 1863 is one of the

examples Gilman uses to illustrate his point. In this painting, a black servant figure who sits attendant to the white Olympia serves to highlight the latter's sexuality and underscores the eroticism of the portrait.

The sexuality of the black female domestic was endlessly fascinating to colonialists, who endowed her with exaggerated sexual characteristics that spoke of rampant sexuality and which placed her in the realm of beast rather than man. It is from this mould that the Hottentot Eve archetype emerges: a usually coloured woman working as a domestic in the houses of white men. Gray (1979: 38, 39) suggests that she emerged out of a Genesis-type myth of origins as an archetypal Mother Africa, and out of a European frontier myth, which placed her on the frontier between whites and blacks. Interfacing between her people and her white employer, she was a mediator between men of different races and could also have been a manifestation of the white man's interpretation of the interior, which, to him, embodied all that was dark, unknown and dangerous. Like her Western namesake, she fulfilled the role of Eve, as fallen temptress. Changing chameleon-like according to the men (and women) who constructed and controlled her identity, her variations thus reflected the varying shifts in hegemonic drive and repressed desires. Gray proposes that she represented the essence of black, especially that of the black female, and assigns her a multiplicity of roles: from sex goddess and seductress in van Riebeeck's time, when she was characterised by animality and intemperate sexuality, to Rousseau's noble savage of the 1780's. In 1810, she became flesh and blood in the form of Saartjie Baartman, who, as the Hottentot Venus, became a symbol for European and black sexual difference. Other renditions include Andrew Geddes Bain's *Kaatjie Kekkelbek*, a long-lived stage persona created in 1838, who, although uneducated and intemperate, turned 'monogamous[ly] bourgeoise', to Gertrude Millin's fallen seductress in *God's Step-children* whose act of miscegenation tainted the blood of subsequent generations for the next hundred years, causing untold misery and suffering (ibid.: 52, 58, 62).

Nomsa could be the Hottentot Eve for the new South Africa, although, unlike this persona who has always been coloured, Nomsa is Xhosa. Connie's representation of Nomsa partially conforms to earlier colonial depictions, where she was essentialised and depicted in starkly binaristic terms or where her presence was disavowed completely. McClintock (1995: 138, 152, 153) offers the reason for this, suggesting that in colonial society the presence of black labour, including that of the female domestic servant, was negated because it demonstrated that blacks were contributing to the capitalist project. That black labour had any commercial value undermined the identity given to blacks as too incompetent and too unintelligent to contribute in any way to the white man's mission. Even Schreiner, who was a bastion of liberalism, disavows the presence of domestic servants in her fiction.[2] McClintock (1995: 268) describes how, in her fiction, '…Africans pass like fitful shadows through the white people's lives, unnamed and without identity'. Connie, living in conservative and behind-the-times Oudtshoorn, has unquestioningly bought into these representations of the black female domestic. Nomsa, as a Hottentot Eve variant, initially conforms to the image of her counterparts in colonial discourse and also passes silently through the private spaces of the house, lighting the lamps and fires for the stove, cooking, washing the clothes and in that most private of domestic spaces, Beatrice's bedroom, assisting Beatrice with her toilette. In fact, it is only a third of the way through the narrative that we hear her utter a word, and this is her very prosaic observation: 'Glory (an ostrich) is sick' (DC: 96), although it must be noted that none of Connie's characters are very talkative.

Working in the private spaces of the house of her white employers, Nomsa, like previous Hottentot Eves, occupies the frontier between the private spaces of Henry and those of September. In her role of mediator, she brings 'blackness' into Henry's kitchen, carrying the smell of 'the *rooibos* tea and the *mielie pap*'

[2] For her times, Schreiner was especially liberal with women's issues. She viewed marriage as an equal partnership of both husband and wife (Clayton: 1983: 50) and believed that women had a right to economic independence (ibid.: 48). She often took up cudgels for the oppressed (ibid.: 55), and was aware of the unfair treatment of black labourers. Schreiner writes: '…I had seen how white men used the dark as beasts of labour, often without any thought for their good or happiness' (ibid.: 61).

(DC: 95) into his house and 'whiteness' into September's *pondokkie,* with its 'cracked mirror', a symbol of European enlightenment, on its wall and 'an old brown blanket that used to be Mr Henry's' on his bed (DC: 86). But her mediatory role does not result in a cooperative and conciliatory relationship between the two men who come to blows in the sorting-shed, an altercation that ends with Henry wrapping a '…*sjambok* around September's neck' (DC: 196) and breaking it. As in previous renditions of the Hottentot Eve, Nomsa is represented as an archetypal Mother Africa figure, darkly mysterious, but she undoubtedly is not characterised by intemperate sexuality and fecundity. In terms of her fertility, we are denied any details regarding her own children save that they live with their grandmother and the only physical description we have of her is in reference to her very small face, a feature that hardly contributes to an image of fecundity. Moreover, her sexuality is repudiated. When Beatrice traverses the threshold of their *pondokkie*, the scene that opens before her eyes is one that decidedly lacks even a hint of sexual activity between Nomsa and September as they lie on their narrow and sagging bed under Henry's old brown blanket, fully clothed, their backs touching. Ironically, Nomsa's sexuality nevertheless presents a foil for Beatrice's European sexuality. While Nomsa is represented as asexual, Beatrice subverts the black/white binary and displays the ostensible rampant sexuality of the black woman. In the same vein, although previous Hottentot Eves have been guilty of black/white miscegenation, it is now Beatrice who is the miscegenator, as opposed to Nomsa (although strictly speaking, Nomsa is also a miscegenator as she is Xhosa and September is coloured). Nomsa, however, does embody the generative and regenerative power associated with the archetypal Mother Africa, as well as the darkness and danger. Connie describes how 'Nomsa used to make special *muti*…All the Bantu people used to go to her with their problems. Some say she could make people fall in love and die'(DC 16). That people go to her with their problems and that she concocts *muti* to restore them, speaks of her wisdom and talent for nurturing, conjuring up an image of a matriarch who presides over and looks after her tribal brood. But that her *muti* can also be used to kill people, suggests that her powers are not always used for acts of benevolence.

However, in contrast to her discursive precursors, her importance in Connie's narrative is fundamental and she is no mere shadow. Connie opens her story about Beatrice with the line: 'Miss Beatrice had a maid called Nomsa' (DC: 15). The fact that Nomsa features in the very first line underscores how integral she is to Beatrice's story. In addition, she is named, accorded ethnicity and described. Connie says she has encountered her in a *muti* shop, a fabrication that invites intense scorn from her husband Jack. Nevertheless, she describes her thus:

> September was married to Nomsa, even though she was a Xhosa and he was a Coloured. I think her father was a Bushman because she had such a small face. When I saw her, she must have been over a hundred. She looked like one of those dried monkeys you see in *muti* shops hanging upside down from the ceiling. (DC: 23)

Connie's depiction of Nomsa is in great contrast to her portrayal of her own maids. Of them, she says: 'My maids never last. They come from all over…There is always a new face in the house but I don't notice anymore. They all look the same and I call them Lizzie' (DC: 43).

Connie denies her domestics their identity, perceiving of them instead as a mass of nameless and featureless bodies. Each is merely a generic maid, devoid of origin or context, passing like 'fitful shadows' through her life. Her comments reflect the depersonalisation to which the subaltern domestic is subjected. Cock (1980: 137) quotes Memmi who remarks: 'The colonised is never characterised in an individual manner; he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity'. In contrast, Nomsa has been allowed to retain her indigenous name, unlike the vast majority of blacks who have had to provide their white employers with an alternative Anglicised name because their indigenous names are too difficult for their white employers to remember, let alone pronounce. Cock (ibid.: 60) suggests that the different English name symbolises the break with the domestic's own social roles and cultural identity. Interestingly, Scott (1990: 32) suggests

that the generic names assumed by domestics, are a form of subversive resistance on the part of the oppressed, serving as 'a veil that the dominant find difficult or impossible to penetrate'.

Thus, although Nomsa retains her indigenous name, Connie omits Nomsa's clan name or her married surname, thus denying her her origins, tribe and context: identifications that would have rooted her in the land and given her her cultural identity. In addition, although Connie labels her ethnicity, it may be more indicative of Connie's adherence to apartheid ideology, which highlighted ethnicity to uphold the policy of separate development, rather than a desire to confer subjectivity on Nomsa. Connie's speculation that her father was a Bushman merely serves to underscore the smallness of her face. This smallness, her age and the observation that she looks like a dried monkey in a *muti* shop evokes colonial representations of black women as fearsome witches, Rider Haggard's Gagool in *King Solomon's Mines* being a prime example. McClintock (1995: 245), in analysing Gagool, notes that she, too, is very small and explains that the emphasis on diminutive size reiterates the belief that the darker-skinned races have regressed to bestiality and that childhood is a stage in the recidivation. It also legitimises the paternalism inherent in colonialism in that blacks are like children and whites are expected to fulfil the role of father. At the time of Connie's encounter with Nomsa, her advanced years indicates, as do Gagool's, the regression in time 'traversing backward to a point where the human has become bestial', and as Gagool is described in terms simian, so too does Nomsa resemble a dried monkey (ibid.: 245-247). The way Connie describes the monkey's position as hanging upside down, is actually reminiscent of a bat, a creature associated, albeit unfairly, with Fanon's darkness, evil and sin and of something to be feared.

Connie narrates: 'People say Nomsa was a witch or a witch doctor or whatever it is they call those women who throw bones and make small fires'. She observes that 'Mr Henry and Miss Beatrice weren't scared of her because they were English people' (DC: 15 -16). Her comments reveal her prejudice, for not only

does she negate the profession by the flippancy in her professed ignorance of its designation, but she also reveals that, as a South African, unlike Henry and Beatrice, she does have reason to fear her. Nomsa possesses occult knowledge as a witch doctor, with her 'special *muti*' and ability to make people fall in love or die. For example, she foretells the future. When Beatrice builds bungalows for the domestics, Nomsa foresees they will 'go away' (DC: 86, 108). Her paranormal power is a characteristic she also shares with Gagool and which causes discomfort and anxiety for the men who come into proximity with these witch women. Scott (1990: 143-144) suggests that witchcraft is an 'act of secret aggression' enacted to bring harm to one's enemies but it is significantly associated with oppressed and disempowered groups who have no other means of seeking justice. He regards it as 'the classical resort of vulnerable subordinate groups who have little or no safe open opportunity to challenge a form of domination that angers them'. Despite Connie's observation that Henry does not fear Nomsa, he forbids her from throwing her bones near the house. He perhaps recognizes the subversion inherent in her magic and is apprehensive about her potential for destruction and chaos.

Interestingly, the potential for the destructive power of black, and specifically Xhosa, woman has historical resonance. In 1856, a young Xhosa girl, Nongqawuse, living on the Transkei coast, along with her younger cousin Nonkosi, saw a vision of their ancestors, who commanded them to instruct their people to destroy the crops and kill all their cattle, promising them a 'great resurrection' and the destruction of the English. The starvation and suffering that followed have been described by Mostert (1992: 1187) as 'the saddest and most overwhelming of all South Africa's many human tragedies'.[3] The point is that this watershed event served to endow Xhosa women with power but it was such that it was associated with destruction, chaos and death. As exemplified by this story and others, such as Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, the

[3] At this time, the Xhosa nation was spiritually, politically and economically in crisis from the bitter frontier wars against the British. The event seems to have had profound resonance in identity formation in the Xhosa nation, dividing the people into Believers and Unbelievers. Zakes Mda's *Heart of Redness* (2001) centres on this rift which still bitterly divides families in rural Kwa-Xhosa today.

destructiveness of black female power apparently constituted a theme with which some colonial writers were intensely preoccupied. Another example of this is Schreiner's fiction, for which, as noted by McClintock (1995: 268-269), the black woman is a figure of vengeful authority', an 'ominous figure of domestic prohibition' who berates her wards with ferocious intensity. The question to ask is why the figure of the black woman provoked such egregious anxiety, as reflected in the ambivalent representations of her as either the timeless archetype, albeit silenced and thus disempowered, or the powerful menace, possessed of destructive capabilities and paranormal insight. As the site of repressed male desires and dark fantasies, she patently caused anxiety to men who feared exposure of their latent erotism but McClintock (ibid.: 246) offers the answer as lying in the generative labour power of women. She says female labour and power were feared and consequently disavowed as they posed a threat to imperial power.

While McClintock conjectures that the domestic was a source of anxiety for the colonial hegemony because she represented the generative labour power of women, I propose that this anxiety was also due to the iniquitous balance of power in the madam/maid relationship. The maid was the displaced, disenfranchised, deracinated colonial subject, a black other, her movements and her identity controlled by her master or mistress. Generally speaking, she was grossly underpaid, subject to long hours and poor working conditions. She was vulnerable to gross exploitation, unable to negotiate for fairer conditions of employment and powerless to redress any wrongs. To validate their shabby treatment of their maids and exculpate themselves, white employers needed to believe their maids were inferior and, as such, deserving of their low status jobs. They created stereotypes of their maids as irresponsible and promiscuous, thieves and drunks. This is reflected by Connie, who says:

> My maids never last… There's always something. A man or some babies, or they steal Jack's shirts. Or they drink and the bottles are empty and Jack

> thinks it's me. There is always a new face in my house and I don't notice anymore. (DC: 43)

By and large, the maids were dehumanised to justify the cruel and inhumane treatment meted out by their madams and masters. The maids' feelings were disavowed, in addition, to erase the cruelty inherent in a system that separated mothers from their children and wives from their husbands. Thus, it was not colonialism or apartheid's evil system that separated mothers from their children, but the maids' irresponsibility and lack of motherly love that allowed them to leave.

Nomsa is, to some extent, created in the image of Connie's own domestics and Nomsa's and Beatrice's interactions are characteristic of this tension-fraught madam/maid relationship, up to a point. For example, Cock (1980: 59) says that the maid/madam relationship is mostly characterised by social distance and formality. Both Nomsa and Beatrice are guarded and keep secrets from each other. When Beatrice is suffering from pre-eclampsia in her pregnancy, Nomsa recognises its symptoms but does not impart her knowledge to Beatrice. Connie observes: 'Nomsa and September would talk sideways, with their eyes up or down or skew, but they wouldn't say what that doctor told me. They had their own babies, who lived with their *ouma* on Mr de Kock's farm. They went there on Easter and Christmas and Boxing Day. Miss Beatrice didn't know about that either' (DC: 98). And Beatrice does not know about Nomsa's children because either Nomsa has refrained from telling her or because Beatrice has simply not asked as she is uninterested in Nomsa's private life. Because of the distance in the relationship, Beatrice cannot ask Nomsa '[w]hat's wrong?' but 'must just go on being the madam and asking about supper and what's in the pots' (DC: 130). Nomsa's circumspection and distance is again emphasised when Beatrice wants to ask Nomsa about the normalcy of her child but she refrains from engaging with Nomsa's prescient powers, as Connie notes: 'Nomsa was not the kind of person you could ask. She did things, and was silent and she could scare you if she wanted, with her ropes and bones' (DC: 168). Nomsa's silence disturbs Beatrice

as it constitutes a type of resistance against her oppression, presenting an inscrutable barrier through which Beatrice cannot penetrate. Nomsa, too, does not ask questions. When Beatrice sits down at the kitchen table, dressed in a convict shirt and shovels *mielie pap* into her mouth, with Henry now gone but his clothes still there '… Nomsa and September [don't] ask, because servants never ask' (DC: 35). Scott (1990: 36) observes that 'the prudent subordinate will ordinarily conform by speech and gesture to what he knows is expected of him'. Nomsa and September know that it is prudent for them not to ask questions but it only serves to mask normal human responses, such as concern and curiosity. This, in turn, serves to render them even more impenetrable and, thus, more 'other'.

Another aspect of their relationship that is typical of the maid/madam relationship is the madam's lack of privacy engendered by the domestic's presence. No nook or cranny can escape her silent gaze: her eyes fall on crumpled bed linen and soiled underwear. Her ears overhear private conversations and she is witness to domestic violence and family squabbles. Beatrice feels most uncomfortable and anxious regarding Nomsa's constant presence in the house. Her presence compromises Beatrice's secrets. When Beatrice has sex with Jacobs in her house 'in the middle of the day', she is afraid that 'her screams or laughs or cries' are 'so loud' that Nomsa will hear (DC: 54), and when she falls pregnant, it is Nomsa who first gleans this fact as she is the 'one who washe[s] her clothes. Nomsa [is] the one who s[ees] how her broekies stay[...] white even when the moon [is] full' (DC: 97). In addition, not only can Nomsa see tangible objects and hear audible noises, but she can even discern the guilt that weighs heavily on Beatrice, due to her adulterous behaviour with a Jew, as Connie describes:

> As Miss Beatrice moved around in the house, she could feel that they (Nomsa and September) knew where she had been and what she had done. Even when they looked down, or looked away, Miss Beatrice knew that they knew. They could see Mr. Henry dragging behind her, his hands clasped around her ankles…They saw Mr. Jacobs, more hair than man, fanning out behind her like an Old Testament prophet. (DC: 83)

The domestic's watchful silence accorded her power, which made it possible for her to resist the earlier imperial and later, apartheid patriarchal power. As the subject is constituted from discourse, her silence denied her employers the opportunity to know her and thus exploit her strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, through surveillance, the domestic was able to acquire knowledge regarding her employers. With the Machiavellian injunction to 'know thy enemy' denied to the master and madam, it was offered instead to the domestic, placing her in an advantageous position. Surveillance of the colonised by the coloniser was purportedly an occupation of the coloniser. McClintock (1995: 140) talks about the 'philanthropic surveillance' of the colonialist who gazed and claimed what he saw. Now, ironically, it is the colonised who surveys the coloniser, although she cannot claim what she sees.

Bhabha (2000:96) considers the watchful silence of the domestic an act of resistance and rebellion. Surveillance allows the domestic to 'subvert the perverse satisfaction of the racist masculinist gaze that disavowed her presence, by presenting it with an anxious absence, a countergaze that turns the discriminatory look, which denies her cultural and sexual difference, back on itself', thus unsettling the colonial psyche. For the other in her unhomely home, resistance is an act of defining her identity. Silenced but also voluntarily silent and watchful, she assumes a menacing power, and if aware of her ominous authority, she can flaunt this aspect of her identity, exploiting her power to her advantage. In Nomsa's case, her knowledge does not merely incorporate the information from the real world but extends to the preternatural and extrasensory. Beatrice, smitten with Jacobs and burning with unrequited sexual desire and guilt, remarks to Nomsa: 'You know everything…You hear what's inside my head' (DC: 87), a comment that underscores Nomsa's hold over her.

Nomsa's power certainly unsettles Beatrice but it does more than merely unsettle. After Henry kills September, Nomsa casts an ill-omened shadow over him that portends his doom. Connie describes 'how Nomsa looked at Henry and how her

shadow fell across that cart filled with feathers, how it fell across Mr Henry's face, and the heads of the horses' (DC: 208). The shadow continues to hang over and darken him as he rides to town only to hear that the ostrich market, wherein he has invested all his hopes of returning to England, has crashed. On returning to the farm, he imprudently visits a pair of nesting birds who tear him apart, leaving his body 'cut up like fruit salad' against the fence of the *kraal* (DC: 232). It is clear that Nomsa's paranormal powers have played a role in Henry's untimely and violent demise and for Nomsa to have killed Henry, who embodies patriarchal power, signifies that she is powerful indeed. In addition, by 'clicking' like a bat, she is able to find Precious in the darkness of the cave, another instance where she uses her powers to her advantage (DC: 241). However, although she is given power, it is the preternatural power of the other. She is, until the end, imbued with occult and mysterious powers that serve to unsettle and alienate the reader. Her alterity remains: she is too uncanny, too unhomely for the Western reader governed by empiricism and rationality.

This is the reason why Nomsa's power as a witch doctor is condemned as superstition by Western society. However, interwoven into Connie's narrative, the magic and myths of Nomsa's culture serve to introduce a different cultural subjectivity, that of Nomsa's primitive oral traditions. The syncretism between the traditional and the modern, the real and the magic, and the propinquity between different ethnic groups, each laden with their own myths and narratives, is a feature of magical realism, and renders a space that is unfamiliar or unhomely to the reader. In this space, the supernatural is not presented as problematic, but its presence seems to create problems for Beatrice who is the recipient of Nomsa's magic. Initially, Nomsa's witchcraft helps Beatrice. As Connie narrates when the dogs, Leo and Lena, die, 'Miss Beatrice was so sad…They say that's when Nomsa gave her the *muti* and she got much better' (DC: 43). But later, after Beatrice has intruded into the private spaces of Nomsa and September's pondokkie, Beatrice fears her. She walks into the kitchen and Connie relates what Beatrice observes:

> Nomsa bending and fire-making, her eyes long and distant, some song inside her from before, when there was a baby in a blanket on her back. But when she stood up, she looked at Miss Beatrice and there was a needle in her look. Suddenly Miss Beatrice was scared of her. (DC: 130)

Beatrice, herself now pregnant, perhaps realises that Nomsa's children have been wrested from her, as a result of colonial ideology which disallows the influx of all blacks, including black children, into areas reserved for whites. Here is a moment when the public intrudes on the private. The needle in Nomsa's look pricks Beatrice's conscience, and she is suddenly made aware of her position as a white woman with authority over her domestic. As such, she is complicit in the project of imperialism, which has created this unhomely home for Nomsa, who gazes back into her long and distant past, back into her origins, when her cultural identity was rooted in the land belonging to her people. Miss Beatrice is scared of her because Nomsa becomes the site of the magical, the site of defamiliarisation. As such, Nomsa is unhomely, evoking feelings of discomfort and anxiety in Beatrice and in the reader, who relates to Beatrice as the protagonist.

How does Beatrice interact with Nomsa's alterity? Because Beatrice is such a subversive figure herself, she not only takes advantage of Nomsa's uncanny powers by drinking her *muti,* but incorporates this alterity into her own self. Connie relates: 'Nomsa knew about the juices. She made *muti* and Miss Beatrice had already drunk some of it' (DC: 83). Furthermore, Nomsa provides Beatrice with female companionship in her otherwise isolated and patriarchal home, as Connie observes: 'Beatrice wasn't lonely because she always had Nomsa' (DC: 42). When Beatrice readies herself in preparation for a visit to the Jacobs's home and her dress rips, Nomsa gives her '…an orange *doek* from around her head which unravels into a sash to cover the tear around her waist' (DC: 58). And before another visit, Nomsa again helps Beatrice cover a tear in a dress, this time as a result of her burgeoning pregnancy, and pins 'a lace hanky over the trap door' (DC: 117). These activities demonstrate that although the status of their relationship remains unchanged and Nomsa retains her servile position, there is

the sense of a shared moment, a collaboration. They are co-conspirators in concealment, in cahoots to pull, in addition to the wool, a lace hanky and an orange *doek*, over the eyes of Mrs Jacobs, who aspires, with all her heart, to be a genteel English lady. In addition, when Beatrice is pregnant, Nomsa experiences solidarity with her, as a mother. Connie notes: 'On the earth there in front of them was a tiny clay ox. Nomsa picked it up and let it stand in the middle of her palm. The children. Our children. These are their toys'. She conjures up an image of both their children, playing cooperatively on the land, indifferent to race, creed or class, sharing their toy cattle. However, the magical then intrudes on the real, (or the real intrudes on the magical) and Nomsa becomes a site of defamiliarisation once more. The solidarity dissipates. Nomsa knows Beatrice will not remain the mother to her child for long as it is Nomsa's mother tongue that the baby speaks. Nomsa hears the baby talking '…and it [isn't] in English.' Nomsa stands up next to Beatrice and says 'something in Xhosa and the baby [lies] still' (DC: 177).

There is another scene that attests to the profound sense of community, of shared humanity, cooperation and reciprocity between Beatrice and Nomsa. When Beatrice is in labour, all barriers are broken down as Nomsa bolsters Beatrice physically and emotionally, shouting at her to push, pressing down on her head, holding her under her arms. Connie describes the following actions:

> Nomsa sank down onto the floor and grabbed her arms so that they faced each other and squatted, like old *kaffirs* sharing a pipe. They were stuck together in a dance and the humming came out of Miss Beatrice and into Nomsa, out of Nomsa and back into Miss Beatrice. (DC: 222)

Nomsa forces her to kneel on her hands and knees and 'pulling at her hips, singing, making her woman's part swing in a circle, round and round in the same old circle' (DC: 220). Her actions are imbued with ancient ritual, with the secrets that have been sung from time immemorial by midwives plying their skills, privy

to ‘the same old circle’ of life, of which birth and death are its impetus and of which both Nomsa and Beatrice are part, regardless of their race or class.

Nomsa also incites in Beatrice a strange sexuality. Beatrice has a dream which is laden with bizarre sexual longings and transgressive sexual roles, and which disconcerts me in its intimate descriptions. In the dream, Beatrice dreams that she is a midwife to Nomsa. She puts her hand between Nomsa’s legs and presses them open, but what is born is such intense sexuality for Beatrice that she feels she is back in the cave with Jacobs but the burning she experienced with him, comes ‘back a thousand times over’ (DC: 85). September, also participating in the scene, adds to the eroticism, moving Beatrice’s hand to the ‘dark place’ where the baby’s head is trying to come out and licking the sweat from Beatrice’s neck (DC: 85). The dream goads Beatrice into action as the morning sees her walking across the veld and into the *pondokkie* of Nomsa and September, where she asks them to love her. Again, Nomsa appears to fan her flames, giving her ‘an old cup filled with tea made from red sticks’ (DC: 87) from which to drink and after which the three of them partake in some passionate sex. The graphic sexual descriptions and the subversive sexuality defy the repressive sexual conventions that were part of colonial society. To include these scenes proffers a means to resist and rebel against the patriarchal authority that governed this society. Foucault (1984: 292-295) proposes that we (and I assume he generalises and speaks for all Westerners) are still governed by these rules, calling us the other Victorians, which explains my discomfort. He prevails upon modern society to speak about sex, which, he says, will break down the barriers created by repression, and create a revolution that will lead to a new day.[4] However, as the new day has yet to dawn, we are still generally embarrassed to talk about sex and the sex in the text causes agitation and disquiet in the reader.

Alternatively, Beatrice may presume that Nomsa and September, as conforming to stereotypical representations of black sexuality, would not be averse to relieving her sexual burning, and especially Nomsa, as a Hottentot Eve. However, when

[4] Foucault is influenced by a text called *The Other Victorians* (1966) by Steven Marcus.

Beatrice crosses their threshold in search of love, she brings her authoritative English identity into their private living spaces. Her intrusion is unwelcome. As well as living and working in the unhomely spaces of the white colonialist, their *pondokkie*, too, becomes a place of unhomeliness. Although Beatrice is never lonely because she always has Nomsa, the feeling is not reciprocated. This aspect of the madam/maid relationship is reiterated by Cock (1980: 87) who avers that, often, the madam considers the maid as part of the family but the maid does not share her feelings. Experiencing no sense of belonging to the family, the community or the nation of Englishmen, the indigene is an alien in a strange culture. Within the walls of the colonial house or nation, the lives of Nomsa and September are subject to the ideologies of colonialism and their identities distorted by its forces. Connie reflects that for September and Nomsa, their lives start outside, '…on the other side of the kitchen-door' (DC: 84). The question is: where is the other side of the kitchen door for them? For September, it lies in the time prior to the arrival of white men to the Cape and the time long after apartheid has been dismantled and its effects have dissolved into the ether. For Nomsa, perhaps it is nowhere: a notion that reflects the anti-nationalistic thrust very often inherent in postcolonialism.

Colonialism, as the foundation of South African history, also betokens the suppression of the cultural identity of the colonised people. Because cultural identity is associated with dominance or suppression, it is used as a tool to promote nationalistic pride or foment rebellion against the dominant discourse. Relating to cultural identity, Wasserman (2000: 97) defines two categories of postcolonial writing, oppositional and complicit. In 'oppositional postcolonial', the colonised people highlight the differences of their cultural identity from that of the colonisers', endorsing and repeating the essentialisms and binarisms. This contrasts with what he designates 'complicit postcolonialism', which inculcates fragments of colonial culture into its core, resulting in a fragmented and heterogeneous identity. The complicit postcolonial is a resistance towards the imperial centre but, paradoxically, it experiences a closer relationship with it because, instead of a static, essential identity, new forms of identity are constantly

invented, in relation to the coloniser. This type of postcolonial has, to its advantage, an exploration of cultural difference leading to a better understanding of different cultures and the potential for opening up spaces in the dominant discourse for marginalised voices. Wasserman (ibid.: 98) equates this type of postcolonialism with Bhabha's notion of hybridity.

What of Nomsa's identity in her own dwelling on the farm Highlands? It can be argued that her identity has a flavour of the complicit postcolonial, having inculcated fragments of the coloniser's culture into her life. This is at its most apparent on the other side of the kitchen door, in her own *pondokkie*, where she is, at least, able to speak her own language and live without the constraints and restrictions of the imperial gaze. The concept of 'the house as self' endorses the idea that Nomsa's dwelling is a representation of her identity. The structure of the house and its contents incorporate both colonised and colonial shibboleths, the self and the other, melded together to perhaps form a new kind of space. The house is constructed from fragments of various materials, suggestive of the heterogeneity of her hybrid identity: waste discarded by the white landowners and organic objects found on the African landscape, including '…sheets of corrugated iron' (DC: 33), 'wood and paper and sticks with pumpkins on the roof and some chickens in the back' (DC: 86). Although iron technology is a feature of ancient African societies, the sheets of corrugated iron are more reminiscent of industrial England and its factories. Paper and the printed word suggest Western enlightenment and technology that was established by white colonialists as superior to that of the black oral tradition as a means of disseminating knowledge. In contrast, the pumpkins, as the indigenous gourds of Africa and the ubiquitous chickens are rooted in the culture of the colonised. The interior also evokes the hybridised space of colonial and colonised. When Beatrice crosses its threshold, she steps into an interior redolent with the smells of the primeval past, of '…woodsmoke and wet soil' (DC: 86), odours which evoke the timelessness of Africa and the supposed primitivism of its indigene. The floor is made from peach pits and dung, substances which represent the organicism of Africa and the close alliance of its people to nature, in contrast to the rationality and technology

associated with the Western identity. But the space also smells of tar, a substance used to construct the roads for the motor car, a commodity deeply symbolic of Western capitalism and progress.

In opposition to the complicit postcolonial identity, I argue that Nomsa has not inculcated aspects of the dominant culture into her essence to form a new hybridised identity, capable of negotiating with the colonial centre. Instead, she retains her subaltern status with its associated disempowerment: the fragments of the coloniser do not meld with those of the colonised to form a new postcolonial space but merely continue to impose themselves upon her. The components of the house signify a series of essentialisms that underscore the oppositional logic of colonial discourse and the colonial artefacts in the house are simply an indication of the impecunious conditions suffered by these workers living under colonial rule. Nomsa's and September's house is so flimsy that it looks '…much worse than the house the three little pigs lived in…' (DC: 33). This is the unhomely home that replaced the original after it was blown down by the big bad colonial wolf. It remains as vulnerable to white intruders as revealed by Beatrice, who opens its door and 'without knocking' (DC: 86) crosses the threshold. Within, she sees '…garden tools and a cracked mirror' (DC: 86). According to McClintock (1995: 32), the mirror is an emblem of Enlightenment self-consciousness. But for Nomsa, when she looks into this mirror, her image is distorted by the cracks. Her identity has been disjointed and distorted by the imposition of colonialism, divested of its indigenous culture, and now recognisable only as a commodity for exchange on the labour market. This is invoked by the garden tools stored within and the wood and sticks that constitute the house's external structure and which are used to make the fires necessary to warm the home and cook the food of the colonial masters. Although commodified, the labour of the colonised races was undervalued (and disavowed) by colonialists (ibid.: 154), and as a result, they were paid very poorly. Indeed, the very word *pondokkie*, which Connie uses when referring to Nomsa's house, is derived from the Malay word '*pondok*'

meaning hut or shed,[5] conjuring up the Malays who were brought to the Cape as slaves from the Dutch East Indies by the Dutch, the first colonisers of the Cape.

Thus, far from being a space that is partially shared with the imperial centre, one that is suggestive of a complicit postcolonialism, the house is, in fact, a place of submission. It is arguable that Beatrice's dalliance with September and Nomsa constitutes rape but it is clear that it is undesired by them both. Nevertheless, their total acquiescence reflects their complete lack of resistance to Beatrice and to the oppressive policies of colonialism she represents. Colonialism has shaped their responses: they lack the power to change their circumstances. However, in contrast, their home does offer some potential for resistance, albeit of a passive kind. Beatrice decides that the *pondokkies* need replacing and builds sturdier bungalows to house her workers but, as Connie observes: 'They didn't want to move to one of the bungalows so they had stayed in the house they had built themselves' (DC: 86). The *pondokkie*, although humble and inadequate, is theirs, reflecting their cultural identity. They have chosen its materials, its manner of construction and the aspect it faces. The new bungalows (the word derived from an Indian term; also a colonised civilisation) that Beatrice has built for them, deny them any opportunity for choice. Once again, the colonialists' culture and values have been imposed on the colonised, but instead of submitting, this time Nomsa and September resist, refusing to move into the new dwellings and remain in their *pondokkie*.

If Nomsa's dwelling is a space that permits only passive resistance, it is the dank and rank spaces of the cave, unhomely to all except bats and troglodytes, that allow Nomsa to reclaim that which she believes belongs to her and her people: Beatrice's baby. When Nomsa steals Precious, she is given textual agency to move the plot to its climax, a rare event indeed in South African fiction. This scene, which takes place in the cave, is one of extreme defamiliarisation and leads to her acquiring subjecthood. The cave is Nomsa's element because, as Connie says, 'Nomsa was the bat' (DC: 240). Beatrice, anticipating that Nomsa may try

[5] A Dictionary of South African English, p. 561

to claim her child, takes Precious to the cave to hide her, but using bat-like echolocation, Nomsa 'clicks' her way to the child, 'following the map of her echoes' (DC: 241). Nomsa's anger is directed personally at Beatrice whom she feels is incapable of rearing a child. Connie tells how 'all [Nomsa] knew was that she must get this child away from her, from those clutching hands and that chicken head' (DC: 269). To her, Beatrice is not only a feckless fool, but she is licentious with her insatiable sex drive and adulterous ways. Beatrice's violation of behavioural codes is not only unacceptable to colonial society but to Nomsa as well. She is livid with Beatrice and wants to punish her for her transgressions. A fight ensues between the two women in the cave. As Connie narrates:

> Nomsa was bigger and the anger inside her wasn't just Precious. It was all her children who she had left and lost, and all the white noses and bums she had wiped, long lines of them, so many they were like guavas on a tree going *vrot*. She was shaking that tree at Miss Beatrice and smacking her with it, over and over again in that stomach, right in that empty place where Precious used to live. (DC: 242)

Nomsa's anger is a response to the rotten system of colonialism, hanging over her head like so many rotten guavas on a tree, and the losses it has caused her to suffer. Not only has she lost her children, she has lost her culture, her heritage and her history, her voice and her dignity. Now, perceiving Precious to be a symbol of all of this, she claims her as her own, as the child of her husband, whose death has been at the hands of the violent hegemony. Disempowered by the system, rendered voiceless and invisible by its discourse, she nevertheless musters up enough physical strength and takes Precious, an act that permits her to take revenge on the agent of imperialism: the complicit Englishwoman, Beatrice.

According to Grossberg (1996: 99), agency has to do with the possibilities of actions as interventions into the processes by which society is constantly being transformed and power enacted: in other words, who gets to make history. Those who have agency are given access to particular sites of activity and power, and

belong to them in such a way as to be able to participate in the processes that enact their powers. In the same way, marginalisation is not a special position but a vector defining access, mobility, and the possibilities of investment (ibid.: 100). Grossberg concludes that people experience the world from a particular position: where they live, how they speak, their access to certain spaces and their access to knowledge are factors which affect their sense of belonging, which in turn, affect agency. Thus, the possibility for, or the denial of agency is a means of defining identity. In this way, identity is not a social category but a statement of power (ibid.). McClintock (1995: 140) considers what type of agency is possible in situations of extreme social inequality such as the female subaltern in the unhomely home. Her cultural and sexual difference disavowed, the black woman is denied access to the structures and signifiers of authority. Deprived of a voice, erased from the chapters of history, she is displaced everywhere. George (1996: 9) asks where the home is for the female subaltern. In answer, she offers a quote from bel hooks who reflects that for her, 'home is nowhere'. Thus is the identity of the black female living in the unhomely home: disavowed, displaced and powerless, but potentially powerful and consequently feared for possible subversion, resistance and rebellion. In this morass of conflicting subjectivity, Fanon (2000: 215) notes: '… unconsciously, I distrust what is black in me, that is, the whole of my being'. For the female subaltern, these words must be changed to read: '… unconsciously, I distrust what is black and female in me, that is, the whole of my being'.

One possible way for the subaltern to claim agency is via the text. Durix (1998: 126) suggests that revisionist historiographies offer the oppressed subaltern a forum in which to voice her memories. By representing her history in fictional terms, the subaltern, if she can speak[6], can present alternative versions of the official truth wherein some of the wrongs inflicted by past structures of authority are redressed. In magical realism, the 'drama of conquest and oppression' is replayed but in a more distant way, thus creating an archetypal world where the subaltern can reclaim her subjecthood in imaginative terms. The imaginative

[6] Reference is made to Spivak's article: 'Can the Subaltern Speak' (1993). This is discussed in the conclusion of this thesis.

world created by Connie provides Nomsa with a space in which to resist colonial oppression. It is within the strange and uncanny cave that Nomsa steals Precious, an act that signifies the climax of the novel and leads to its dénouement. The impetus she gives to the narrative defies colonial authority as it subverts former fictional representations of the subaltern as silent and invisible. In addition, Connie first tells of the theft form Beatrice's persepctive but then, most importantly, the events are replayed from Nomsa's perspective. Nomsa's voice not only adds another aspect to the labyrinthine structure of the text, but by telling her side of the story, Nomsa gains a subjecthood that is not dependent on or controlled by the coloniser.

After she locates Precious in the cave, Nomsa finds herself in a space where the air is soft, the walls streaked 'with the most beautiful pinks and blues and reds' and the ceiling sparkling with 'stars and crystals more beautiful than anything you will ever see in the sky' (DC: 269). In this beautiful fairyland, Nomsa becomes fairy godmother to Precious and bestows health and goodness on the child, covering her eyes, 'so that she should not want what other people had', touching her mouth, 'so that she should not say evil things', laying her hands on her head 'so that she should not have bad dreams', holding her hands and squeezing them, 'so that Precious would be able to hold onto the things that she wanted' and holding her feet, 'so that Precious would walk with straight, strong legs across the veld'(DC: 270). Nomsa reclaims her identity as mother, fairy godmother, bestower of gifts and creator of happiness. She then makes a nest for Precious from an ostrich skin bag lined with prime whites. Nomsa now becomes the mother ostrich to Precious, reclaiming this role from Beatrice who thought *she* was the female ostrich, 'dressed in the colours of the earth' (DC: 32).

After emerging from the cave, Nomsa takes Precious to her grandmother who lives on a farm in the area. When the grandmother sees Precious she laughs 'like a drain' and then lifts her dress, and puts Precious to her breast, which is 'as flat as an elephant's ear' (DC: 271). When Precious drinks, the old lady laughs again. The scene is heavily reminiscent of Bakhtin's carnivalesque with its laughter and

topsy-turveyism. The breastfeeding *ouma* is typical of the grotesque carnival, which presents images of the body as grotesque, emphasising functions such as eating, sex and defecation and the associated body parts. Typical are grotesque images, such as pregnant senile hags and breastfeeding *oumas* (Bakhtin:1984: 27). The grotesque is about the ever-unfinished body as part of nature and its cycles as opposed to the classical take on man as perfect and finished. Laughter is also a feature of the carnivalesque and is the laughter of the folk, always positive and regenerating (ibid.: 11). The carnivalesque celebrates the liberation from established truths and order, as the old gives way to the new. It is, thus, about subversion and dissidence, characteristics it shares with magical realism. When Nomsa's *ouma* laughs, it is in recognition of the regeneration of their bloodlines, an immanent new world order and the subversion inherent in Nomsa's act of liberating Precious from colonial oppression. In addition, her laughter may be *schadenfreude,* indicating her joy at the expense of Beatrice's misfortune. However, this is in opposition to the role of laughter in the carnivalesque.

After Nomsa gives Precious to her *ouma*, she goes back to Highlands, where she has nothing and Miss Beatrice has nothing, having both lost 'all the love in their hearts' (DC: 267). Connie further adds: 'Nomsa and Miss Beatrice lived at Highlands together and some say they slept in the same bed…' (DC: 267). Thus, in spite of Nomsa's newly-acquired subjecthood, her plight continues: she continues to inhabit her unhomely home, occupying her lowly status, living behind the walls of the coloniser's house until the end of her days. This is a somewhat strange dénouement in a novel written post-apartheid, when one would assume it would be more in accordance with the postcolonial to reveal a reversal in the status of the marginalised black woman. Nomsa may reflect Landsman's profound ambivalence and guilt with regard to the South African female domestic. When Landsman was asked in an interview[7] whence her inspiration came, she responded by telling of the summer holidays she and her family took each year to Plettenberg Bay, a town providing easy access for day-visits to the Cango caves. She reminisced how, one year, the family went on a visit to the caves and took

[7] See appendix.

along their Coloured domestic who accompanied them on their holidays. The experience evoked extreme fear and panic in the domestic. Landsman noted that the domestic was very young and was someone to whom she related. She said, in fact, that their relationship was more that of a friendship. However, the domestic left her family's employ and they lost touch. Years later, she chanced to see her but the meeting ostensibly left her disappointed and unsettled. She commented that the woman had assumed the dull expression, non-communicativeness and obesity so typical of the South African domestic drudge, a site of unhomeliness. She displayed no evidence of having been changed at all by their prior relationship. Although Landsman did not offer the reason for her disappointment, I propose that it may have resulted from her regretting the fact that their relationship had not left its mark on her, that she was not more 'liberated' or perhaps Westernised.

The Landsmans' Coloured domestic appears in the prologue of the novel, reincarnated as Pauline Cupido, who is brought to the Cango caves by her employers in 1955. Connie relates how she disappears into the depths of the caves and is never seen again. The incident resonates strongly for Connie who imagines all manner of outlandish explanations for her disappearance. Connie, in relating Beatrice's story, mentions Pauline again only at the very end of the novel when she says:

> …somebody told me that what really happened to Pauline was that she wasn't really Pauline, she was Precious, the child raised by *Ouma* on the farm…. When she was fourteen she went to work for the Steencamps …They took her to the Caves and that's when she disappeared, for the second time. I think she disappeared because she had to come back, and that coming back was finding her way to say goodbye to Nomsa and Miss Beatrice. I think that's where she still is, looking after them as they get as old as all those people in the Bible… (DC: 274)

Pauline's identity is so nebulous as to belong to the realm of legend. Her story is one of numerous stories, the tellers' identities unknown and the stories unverifiable. In addition, that Precious is Pauline is so unlikely considering the time-gap between the date of Precious's birth and Pauline's disappearance. Pauline is only an invisible presence who disappears when the narrative begins, representing the invisibility of the other. Bhabha (2000: 96-97) maintains that the challenge of postcolonial space is to see the invisible other. He claims that to see the missing person or to look at Invisibleness is to place the self at the point where 'the Orientalist stereotype is evoked and erased at the same time'. In this position, the privileged 'I' is not a reflection of the other, but a 're-presentation' of an image reflected off an absence. Here, there is no longer privilege, merely an 'anguished presence' of an 'existentialist agony'. Is this what Precious/Pauline represents for Connie, an anguished presence of her existentialist agony? Connie thinks that she sometimes sees her in the distance. She relates how Precious/Pauline turns around and then Connie waves at her but 'she doesn't wave back. She just keeps walking' (DC: 10), forever disappearing as she moves towards some vanishing point. Failing to return Connie's wave, she never reflects the self back on itself. Never catching the eye or 'I' to generate a 're-presentation' of the self, she continues to haunt those living in her unhomely home.

Finally, what is the significance of Nomsa's role? Her character is one of intense slippage, essentialised yet individualised, acquiescent yet dissident. With her witchcraft and midwifery skills, she is portrayed as the essentialised Mother Africa. In this way, she does not portray a 'real' character and the reader finds it difficult to relate to her. However, she subverts the Hottentot Eve archetype as she is temperate and asexual and she also subverts previous representations of the female subaltern in terms of her power. In contrast to Gagool, Nomsa's powers are not defused by the white man, a factor which destabilises many features of the madam/maid relationship and which allows her to steal Precious. This event gives impetus to the narrative, allowing it to reach its climax, and at the same time, conferring power on Nomsa as a character in the text. But Nomsa is rendered

silent, gnomic, obscure and unreachable. These factors could indicate her resistance to hegemonic authority and prudence to act the part of the subordinated, but they augment her alterity. For a reader growing up on a diet of Western realism, her unhomeliness again generates a character with whom it is too difficult to relate. She is the site of profound ambivalence and she generates a complexification of sympathy. On the one hand, we sympathise with her for stealing Precious because her reasons are logical and her actions could be seen as retributive. Moreover, although she is revealed as punitive and revengeful, the reader feels that amends have been made for the oppression she has suffered. Nevertheless, we do not sympathise with her because of her alterity and essentialised characteristics. This contrasts with Beatrice who, as the protagonist, has our sympathies. Although we may disapprove of Beatrice's trespassing into Nomsa and September's private space, we feel deeply disappointed for her and wish that she had kept her baby. Nomsa's victory regarding Precious is, however, tempered because she does not see the return of her freedom, evident by her incarceration behind Highland's walls. Ultimately, for me, Nomsa's victory directs the text towards political correctness and it appears to gesture towards restitution in an effort to assuage white guilt. Nomsa's role, however, is much more complex than mere symbol, illustrated by the fact that there is such ambiguity in her transgression, that she herself is a site of intense ambiguity and that the narrative does not end happily for her or for Pauline/Precious.

The question arises whether Landsman is guilty of appropriating the voice of the silenced by speaking as a white writer on behalf of the other. Does Landsman, as a white woman, have the right to tell Nomsa's story? For critics writing in a Western paradigm, white identity is based on the self-evident nature of whiteness. The white is never other, always self. Bhabha (1998: 21) describes it as the 'normativity of the white position', which confers upon whites the 'claim to social power' and the privilege of always belonging. Thus, the concept of 'home' does not mean the same thing to a white woman as it does for a black women. Although white women are disadvantaged by their gender, their race gives them membership, albeit restricted, to the nation's sites of activity and power.

Consequently, Pratt (1992: 193) comments that from her perspective, it seems apparent that race is more of an identificatory mechanism than gender. In addition, the call for a universal feminism is, in fact, only a 'feigned homogeneity' created by white middle-class feminists whom she also accuses of incorporating black women into Western feminist discourse by merely adding on difference 'without leaving the comfort of home'. Also, Driver (1988: 13) argues that as soon as a [white] woman writes, she aligns herself with Western patriarchal culture and thus separates herself from blacks, especially black women who are doubly aligned with nature and suggests that 'any attempt to bridge the gaps between white and black is inevitably constructed within the very terms already created to keep women in line within the signifying system'. Driver penned this in 1988 and I wonder whether, nearly two decades later and the country having undergone tumultuous political change, she would adhere to this argument. From my viewpoint, her comments appear guilt-ridden and she perpetuates the essentialisms and binaries of the very ideology she wishes to denigrate. Does one relate to a book depending on whether the author is black or white? Surely the text must be valued for what it has to say and not by the race of its author.

According to Govinden (1999: 72), the woman writer's quest is one of 'emancipation, self-identity and fulfilment', which is to be found in the exploration of ideological and discursive complexities and personal and political tensions. For the privileged white woman, this includes 'unlearn[ing] one's privilege' and listening to the 'other constituency' (ibid.: 71). Landsman, as an inhabitant of the First World steeped in Western discourse, has as much right to set up a creative dialogue between herself and the others of the Third World as black women writers have to set up dialogue between themselves and a Western audience. By exploring Nomsa's identity as well as Connie's and Beatrice's, Landsman applies the strategies for resistance that Nasta (1992: xvi) mentions: such as a 'multiplicity of perspectives'. Nasta (ibid.: xv) says the postcolonial woman writer needs to make herself heard by changing the 'architecture of male-centred ideologies and languages'. Thus, within the ambivalences and paradoxes

of magical realism, Landsman inscribes the postcolonial as she subverts and thus resists patriarchal discourse which sought to label all women.

Woodward (1999: 10) proposes that by living together at the end of the novel, Nomsa and Beatrice merge, to result in a hybrid identity. She claims that '…the hybrid nature of the characters, both on a social and on a psycho-spiritual level, means that *The Devil's Chimney* opens up an in-between space through which to progress to the future – one of fecundity, compassion and healing of past trauma'. Thus, the text could be thought of in political terms, as one that underpins the struggle and exploitation that South African Blacks, especially black women, have faced within the history of South Africa. Nomsa's representation must be thought of as symbolic, her actions signifying the challenge to the patriarchal system of white colonial power. I agree that Nomsa's actions could signify this challenge. However, I disagree with Woodward's proposal that Nomsa represents a new South African hybrid identity suffused with healing and compassion. Although this may reflect the spirit of the text, Nomsa is too laden with ambivalence, the ending too unresolved to make such an announcement. The reader is left with the image of Nomsa and Beatrice, lonely behind the high walls at Highlands: left with nothing, having 'lost all the love in their hearts and with Miss Beatrice they say it was most of her mind as well' (DC: 267). This is not a happy, regenerative vision for a future South Africa. Nomsa's and Beatrice's exile signifies the continued imprisonment of women within the paradigm of the domestic. It is left to Connie to provide the reader with the faint glimmer of the possibility of hope in the otherwise unhomely labyrinths of the novel.

CHAPTER FOUR

Connie: V*olksmoeder* of the Narration?

For busy thoughts the Stream flowed on
In foamy agitation;
And slept in many crystal pool
For quiet contemplation:
No public and no private care
The freeborn mind enthralling,
We made a day of happy hours,
Our happy days recalling.

"Yarrow Revisited" William Wordsworth

The section entitled 'Dismantling the Father's House', in McClintock's *Imperial Leather* (1995: 371, 372, 373, 375), features photographs of Afrikaans women who participated in the events commemorating the centenary of the Great Trek in 1938. One such event was a restaging of the journey undertaken by the *Voortrekkers* as they made their way from the Cape to the interior. The photographs reveal women, dressed as their great grandmothers, in long white dresses, their faces partially obscured by the wide brims of their *kappies*. Other photographs present these women standing in rows, staunchly holding the South African flag or lining the sides of the *Vrouemonument*: proud symbols of Afrikaner womanhood. These twentieth century women modelled their values faithfully on the lives of the matriarchs of the Afrikaner nation who, a hundred years earlier, had travelled steadfastly next to their husbands as their ox wagons rolled over the treacherous terrain, forever closer to their nationalistic dream of an Afrikaner homeland and freedom from British rule. Mothers of the nation or *volksmoeders*, McClintock (ibid.: 377) refers to these Afrikaans women as 'gatekeepers of the nation' whose duty it was, via their reproductive capabilities and mothering skills, to uphold the purity of their tribe's race and culture.

For Connie, who feels pressured by her society to uphold their muliebrity[1], the responsibility proves too onerous. Childless, timid and an alcoholic, she certainly does not qualify for membership to the *Kappie* Commando. In addition, she does not even have pure Afrikaans blood coursing through her veins as she is a cultural hybrid: although her maternal grandmother came from good farming stock, her paternal grandmother was a low-class Cockney who lived on the streets of London and who arrived 'on the boat from England' (DC: 62). Connie, thus, makes for a travesty of the iconographic Afrikaner *volksmoeder*. In addition, as a poor white, she is excluded from mainstream middleclass society and her alcoholism has made her unacceptable to all sober citizens.

Her context is as follows: born in 1933, she was a teenager when the Nationalists came to power and sixty-one years old at the time of the first democratic elections.

[1] Muliebrity: Womanly nature or qualities, womanhood. World Book Dictionary, p. 1364

Her mother, who raised her (her father remains silenced and invisible), was rooted in Afrikanerdom, a nation that was born out of antipathy towards British imperialism. It is a nation that has been underpinned by the austere Dutch Reformed Church and powered by the Broederbond, both organisations contributing to its patriarchal hegemony and gendered and racist ideology. Connie's identity forms in response to its harsh authoritarianism, as embodied by her mother who raises Connie with an iron hand, and her marriage to Jack, which arguably reflects the cruelty and violence inherent in the system. She and her marriage are like relics in a museum, representing the old. Now, in the new South Africa, she has to adapt if she is to survive. To do so, she imagines a story about Beatrice, who, as her alter-ego, helps her face the past and deal with the vicissitudes of the future.

Beatrice's story is set at the time of Union, when South Africa's four provinces were first unified under a single authority. Connie relates her own history as well, intertwining it with Beatrice's story. Telling her stories in 1997, a mere three years after the end of apartheid, Connie engages (albeit implicitly) with the history of the country as it moves from Union to Republic to new South Africa. Connie culminates her story by giving the reader a faint glimmer of the possibility for the future. Consequently, using Bhabha's notion of the nation as narration, Connie narrates her version of the new nation and, as such, can be labelled *moeder* of a new *volk,* mother of a new South African nation.

1997 and the new South Africa is undergoing what has been designated its transitional period. Three years after the country's first democratic elections witnesses a nation that has yet to come to terms with its past while expectantly eyeing the future. It is a time which sees the jostling for positions of power, the emergence of a black elite, the dashing of hopes for the impoverished masses and a time of profound insecurity for whites who envisage their privileges of yore disintegrating before their eyes: thus a time where the seeds of new cultural identities are sown. According to Bhabha (1990: 3), the cultural identity of a nation is embedded within its narratives. In addition, narratives provide the

substrate on which the cultural authority and political power of the nation is to be found. This 'in-between space', as Bhabha (ibid.: 3) terms it, forms the basis of his idea of 'nation as narration': an idea that insists on the text as a space where identity and authority can not only be accessed but where they can be constructed, shaped and changed. As such, narratives open up a space for negotiation as well as for 'subordination, fracturing, diffusing, reproducing, producing, creating, forcing [and] guiding' the narrative of the nation (Bhabha quotes Said: ibid.: 3-4). Hence, Connie's narrative not only reflects her individual identity, but it allows the reader to access the formation of a new cultural identity: one that is in progress, adapting to the changes taking place in the fledgling nation. Thus, Connie, while previously disempowered by her class and sex, arguably has the power to give birth to a new nation through her narration (although, with her lack of confidence, education and self-awareness, it is likely that Connie would be most surprised to know how weighty and significant her narrative is).

Bhabha (ibid.: 3) quotes Tom Nairn who describes the nation as 'Janus-faced': looking backwards to the myths of its origins and forwards to its future horizons, never static and always in progress, its history in the process of being made and its 'cultural authority…caught in the act of 'composing' its powerful image'. Connie, spawned in the violence of the past but looking towards the future, is arguably an embodiment of the Janus-faced new nation, whose identity is still unstable and uncertain. By offering the reader glimpses of her past, reconstructing her present life and, with her resolve at the end of the novel intimating a future viewed with optimism and hope, she can be thought of as a metonym for the nation. According to McClintock (1995: 353), this notion is a subversion of conventional representations of female cultural identity. McClintock views the nation as constituted via masculine ideals and ideology, which excludes the possibility of female participation in its formation and institutions. To McClintock, even the Janus-like nature of nations is figured in gendered terms, with woman representing the past, the passive and the natural, and men associated with the future, progress and power. Women metaphorically symbolize tradition and the continuity of the nation, while men, by contrast,

personify culture and change (ibid.: 359). In addition, McClintock offers Boehmer's observation that men are represented metonymically in narratives, their identities reflecting the phallocentric modern Western construction of the nation. In this metonymic representation, one man represents the nation: his memories tallying with the collective memory of the nation, his power, authority and access to knowledge and other resources reflecting its ideological dispensation and his dreams and aspirations for the future aligning with the national dreams and hopes. In the old South Africa, I imagine a khaki-clad Afrikaans farmer would have been one kind of metonym for the nation, one whose ancestors trekked the Great Trek and fought the English, who had political authority and self-determination, and whose vision of the future for the Afrikaner nation included sporting, technological and cultural progress and excellence. We are not presented with such a figure in the text. Instead, we are given Jack, a drunken wife abuser whom the Railways 'didn't even want' (DC: 275), and who, as a metonym for the nation, presents us with a less than idyllic vision of the nation, perverting the paternalistic sentiments inherent in nationalism.

Furthermore, if men are metonymic, then women are represented symbolically or metaphorically: as exemplified by the Afrikaans *volksmoeder*, with her steadfastness and courage. Accordingly, they are 'symbolic bearers of the action' in nations created in the image of man (ibid.: 354-355). In contrast, Connie's memory of the past, her experience of the present and her reflections on the future, along with her negotiations relating to identity and power and authority represent a metonym of a new nation not only in a state of flux but also created in the image of woman. Perhaps, Connie, no longer mere symbol, offers a feminised version of the nation, subverting the idea of the patriarchal nation and of its men as representative of cultural identity.

The political structures of colonial and apartheid South Africa were grounded in patriarchal power and phallocentrism, and as such, were based on inequality, injustice and violence. This model of political authority filtered into the homes of individuals comprising the nation. The private reflecting the political, the family

was often centred on a dominant father whose identity was bound to authority and violence. Female identity, in opposition to this, was constructed as passive and disempowered. In addition, as a result of white colonisation, identity was also constructed firmly within a racial hierarchy as there was a need to legitimise the imperial project with its emphasis on white right and privilege. When the Nationalists came to power in 1948, racial identities were entrenched in law and the State now intruded legally into the private lives of individuals, concomitantly committing human rights violations with respect to race. Amid growing dissent, an omnipresent and insidious militarization was instituted, precipitating increased violence and, in consequence, harsher oppression for the down-trodden of the nation. Public policy informing the domestic spaces of the nation, this tells of the type of home in which Connie has grown up. In addition, her present-day home in the new South Africa continues to reflect the legacies of the past. Class also being a factor in the construction of identificatory hierarchies, as a poor white and also as a female, Connie remains doubly down-trodden despite the fact that she now lives in the new South Africa, a country whose constitution is founded on the estimable principles of equality and justice. Her long-standing feelings of inferiority internalised, she remains passive and powerless in her relationship with Jack.

Connie says about Jack that he 'could be someone nice but he isn't' (DC: 39). Unconsciously engaging with the nature/nurture debate, she implies that the apartheid environment, with its inherent violence, has shaped him, making him into the malicious and abusive person he is. Connie tells of the time when Jack enters the house holding a stalactite that he filched from the Cango Caves. She says:

> Then he started to play with the damn thing. He acted as if it was a sword and started coming towards me, laughing and taunting…Jack started poking at my drink with his spear, shouting horrible things about me being an alcoholic. (DC: 5)

When Connie retorts with a 'Look who's talking!', she finds his hands around her neck, squeezing. Abusing his phallic power, as represented by the thrust of the stalactite, he reflects the murderous and warped mindset of the old South Africa. Another display of this behaviour is the time when Connie recalls how he masturbates on their bed and when it is over, allows their dog, Flo, to lick 'right in his pants', laughing as if Flo is 'his *bokkie*' (DC: 40). He is as unpredictable and dangerous as the animals to which he putatively aligns himself. Connie never lets him walk behind her and always turns around for she never knows when he 'might *klap* [her] on the head' (DC: 106). Displaying a cruelty as he bites, stings and toys with his quarry, the image of Jack as a wild animal is sustained as he prowls through the house, sounding like a 'wolf' (DC: 199). Connie relates:

> Once, he bit me when we were lying down together, and my legs were wide open. He bit the fleshy part really hard, just below the elastic of my panties. I thought a scorpion was stinging me and I almost fainted. (DC: 106)

According to Connie, in Jack's world, red in tooth and claw, there is no space for ethical or humane behaviour: an irony in light of the myth that it is women who are more aligned with nature. Connie, suffering the brutality of his male might, believes that if it were not for him, she would not need to resort to alcohol to help her cope with her suffering. She comments that if there was '[n]o Jack, just me and the dogs. I wouldn't even be drinking' (DC: 51). Connie presumes that her home would be less unhomely if not for its patriarchal organisation. And it is the violence meted out within the home, and on a broader scale, homeland, that causes dysfunction not only to the individual but to the country as a whole. Connie has been infected with the cruelty that has seeped into the marrow of her society and, consequently, she does not only take on the role of victim, but also that of perpetrator. She puts 'petrol-soaked paper' between Jack's toes while he is sleeping outside 'on the *stoep*' (DC: 107) but he awakens before she has a chance to light it. That she has a mean and vengeful side is also revealed when she recollects visiting an ostrich farm as a child with her parents and how she laughed

with them, sharing their mirth at Gerda's misfortune when she fell off the ostrich she was riding.

Connie's disclosures lead to speculation as to whether there have been other incidents where she has attempted and possibly succeeded in hurting Jack and other members of her family, but of which we are not told. We are only told of the wrongs wrought on her and never of the hurts she has inflicted on others. The possible gaps in her narrative cast doubts on her reliability as a narrator, although any narration is a process of selection and omission of information. Nevertheless, this engagement with this postmodern aspect of the text leads the reader to conjecture whether her narrative is perhaps not entirely fair on Jack as we are not privy to his side of the story. Are we to believe everything Connie tells us about him? In addition, Connie omits to tell us how she does not take responsibility for her own life but finds others to blame, including Jack, for her alcoholism and the disappearance of Pauline for her 'bad dreams at night' (DC: 2). When Jack chastises her for her drinking, she retorts: 'The dogs love me no matter what' (DC: 20), indicating that she can only see her side of the story and disavows Jack's possible concern for her health. She is a trembling bundle of insecurities and fears, which include all manner of real and imagined situations and objects, including '… s*kollies* under the bed with knives… fights with… Jack', '[h]eights, going across bridges, the Devil's Chimney, sailing, the water, crayfish, monkeys, speaking in front of people'(DC: 2, 7), and as her partner, Jack's life must be mired in difficulties and frustrations.

Another aspect of Connie's and Jack's relationship, and one that causes Connie grievous pain, is the fact that their marriage is childless. She still mourns the loss of her child as she is never allowed the opportunity for closure on his death, never permitted to hold the baby nor even glimpse his face. Also, because motherhood is such an important aspect of female identity in conservative Afrikaans society, Connie feels inadequate as a woman. In addition, it is possible that Connie's and Jack's marriage and their childlessness takes on a significance beyond the private, arguably reflecting the sterility that permeated apartheid South Africa. It could

thus be said to reflect apartheid's mode of governance, with its harsh censorship laws and severe restrictions on all aspects of life. These measures stunted not only social progress but generated an environment where personal growth, creativity, compassion and charity often failed to exist, as symbolised by the death of their baby. Life in apartheid South Africa was pervaded by an overarching feeling of barrenness and aridity. Moreover, Connie, herself, is a relic of the past although she has difficulty in coming to terms with the passing years and her mortality. When she looks in the mirror at the museum, she is shocked to see an 'old woman there' (DC: 21). Later in the narrative, she asks 'Why are my hands so old, older than the road? When did that happen?' (DC: 157). Still feeling eighteen and living in the past, she clings to her anachronistic racist terminology and disregard for blacks. She refers to blacks as *kaffirs,* an appellation that is deemed profoundly racist in South Africa, and she still thinks blacks have no place living in close proximity to whites, observing that in the new South Africa '[t]hey are not in the locations where they are supposed to be' (DC: 196). She is like a museum, displaying ideological artefacts from a bygone era.

In fact, museums always do reflect ideology. In their display and ordering of collective memory, they permit the viewer to look backwards to the mists of the nation's origins, thus fulfilling a nation-building role, by evoking a sense of shared history. This is the nature of the Oudtshoorn museum visited by Connie, the one that ignites her imaginative spark. But the history on display is that of white colonial and apartheid culture and heritage. Indigenous African culture does not seem to feature in this museum: the invisibility of the indigene extending into the realm of memory. The display includes frivolous items of the colonial era: feathers and frocks, old shoes and theatre programmes. When Connie sees the models who sport 'big flat hats stacked high with feather' (DC: 14), she conjectures that they display clothes worn by ladies who lived in Europe because South African white women would not have adorned their hats with feathers. She offers the glut of feathers in Oudtshoorn as the reason for her deduction, saying: '[h]ere every *kaffir* could pick up an ostrich feather and stick it in his dirty hat' (DC: 14). She wants to point out the error to the custodian of the museum but she

is drunk and she slurs her words. She relates: 'The box is wrong, I want to say, but it comes out like *fok* and now the *tannie* thinks I'm swearing' (DC: 14). Connie's Freudian slip of the tongue perhaps reveals a notion of hers that lies buried within her unconscious, that the artefacts in the glass case are obscene as they present merely a superficial view of the colonial age. Consequently, they trivialise the violence inherent in British imperialism and the attitude of entitlement and superiority that accompanied it.

The characteristically superior attitude of the English colonialist informed the identity of other groups with whom he came into contact. Identity formation resting on difference and binary oppositions, his attitude provided a foil to other races, classes and ethnic groups, whose identities were then constructed as inferior. Connie's representation of Henry Chapman corroborates the notion of the Englishman as arrogant and superiorly condescending. He always wears white and his hands are as 'soft as a baby's' (DC: 17). His personal habits and attributes suggest that he is foremost a gentleman rather than a farmer as he never sullies his clothes or hardens his hands, but hires labourers to perform the manual work on the farm. He keeps a 'hanky near his mouth' as if he has consumption and is 'about to cough up blood' (DC: 17), but we suspect the reason for the handkerchief is to keep the bad smells of Africa from his nose. In addition, Connie remarks: 'Some people even said that Henry Chapman, the *baas*, was a baronet or a marquis. He certainly acted like one' (DC: 16). With their 'special dogs from the steppes of Russia', their 'strange medicines and electric bells' and their attitudes, Beatrice and Henry 'upset everyone' (DC: 17). However, Connie, in her vision and version of the past, does not allow the colonialists' superiority and their transgressions to go unpunished. The brutal Henry meets with an untimely death and Beatrice, as punishment for her complicity, has her baby taken away, never to be returned. Their comeuppances are a display of Connie's authorial power: an irony in light of Connie's marginalised and disempowered status.

The ‘everyone’ whom the Chapmans upset and to whom Connie refers, includes the Afrikaners, a group whose collective identity evolved in response to the British attitude of superiority. Marks and Trapido (1987: 7) remark that the tendency of the English colonists to see the non-English settlers as members of an inferior race grew as the nineteenth century wore on. Comaroff (1997: 180) quotes mission literature that contemptuously describes Afrikaners as ‘half savages, leading degenerate unrefined lives, lacking a true European ‘spirit of improvement’ and showing their ‘monstrous’ character by treating blacks as prey to be ‘hunted and enslaved’. Connie is aware of the English disdain for the Afrikaner. In narrating her story, she tells how Beatrice describes the Boers as ‘dirty’ and their women as ‘ugly’ (DC: 38). Beatrice also disparages Afrikaans as ‘plates breaking in your mouth’ (DC: 39). To her, it is a language that emits a harsh and meaningless jangle, and she hears destruction in its chains of signifiers that circumscribe the Afrikaner identity.

The Afrikaner identity grew in response to these negative perceptions. In addition, adverse circumstances also played a role in defining the Afrikaans identity. The early twentieth century, as Wenzel (2000: 93) maintains, saw the incidence of drought, pestilence and the Anglo-Boer, which forced Afrikaans farmers to migrate to the city. These landless Afrikaners became the ‘poor whites’, the class to which Connie, and also Jack, belong. This class became important to the nascent Afrikaner nationalists. By emphasising the plight of these poor whites and blaming the English for their sorry lot, they mustered up support for their nationalistic ambitions. In addition, the Afrikaner identity was also forged in the pugnacious and resilient *Voortrekkers* of the Great Trek who made their way into the interior. Furthermore, the Afrikaner identity also sat doggedly on the tenets of the Dutch Reformed Church and the *Broederbond*. In the Oudtshoorn museum, relics commemorating these origins are exhibited. Connie sees ‘pictures of the *Voortrekkers*’ (DC: 140) and a ‘fat *Voortrekker* Bible’ (DC: 14), but they frighten her.

The austerity of the religion that underpins Afrikaans identity is fraught with danger for Connie. Walking past the Dutch Reformed Church, she declares: 'The steeple looks like a big witch's hat and I'm afraid it's going to fall off and kill us' (DC: 80). Connie associates the church with a witch wearing a murderous hat, a connection that betokens her fear and anxiety surrounding the church's authority. Marks and Trapido (1987: 11) aver that the church's influence ran deep through the waters of Afrikanerdom and from its inception, it was strongly affiliated to Afrikaner nationalism. As the nineteenth century drew on, and more and more land was annexed to the Cape colony, increasing numbers of the Cape Dutch, especially the poorer Boers, found themselves included under the auspices of British colonial authority but concomitantly excluded from British institutions and colonial politics. The Dutch Reformed Church provided these Boers with a forum in which to articulate and sometimes achieve their political ends. The church was therefore initially founded on political needs, its Calvinist doctrines were elaborated only later.

In the late nineteenth century, the connection between Christianity and nationalism was formulated by S. J. du Toit, an active promoter of the Afrikaner cause, who expanded its Calvinist doctrines. Now called Afrikaners, their 'demands for sovereign independence' was linked to the notion of 'God's sovereignty in every sphere of life' (ibid.: 14). The tie between Afrikaner nationalism and Christianity was further strengthened in the 1930's, when proponents of Afrikaner nationalism formulated a set of principles that heralded apartheid's policy of separate development. These proclaimed that all nations and cultures were divine and sovereign, each had its own calling and destiny and 'service to the nation was service to God' (ibid.: 18). But it was apparent that the Afrikaners were über-divine, enjoying a special relationship with God and the idea of the nation as superior, especially in opposition to the darker skinned races of the earth, was promoted.

The church was characterised by strict conservatism and prudery, which led to the formation of a repressed and restricted society, creating punitive, rigid and self-

righteous individuals.[2] This is evident when Connie's remarks how in the early days of Oudtshoorn, '[e]very time there was a drought or water on the heart, some of the elders of the Dutch Reformed Church would blame the ostrich feather farmers. God was punishing the vanity. Women were not supposed to decorate themselves like that. They said it was an abomination against the Lord' (DC: 81). A generation or two hence, the sternness of the Church continues to influence its members' belief systems, values and behaviour. The novel's attitude to the conservatism of the Dutch Reformed Church is derisive and it mocks the hypocrisy it engenders. Connie's mother is so fearful of her neighbours' harsh judgements regarding the sin of fornication that she ordains that the pregnant Connie keep her windows and curtains closed and prohibit anyone from entering the house, to prevent their snooping around and calculating that Connie fell pregnant out of wedlock. For the sake of outward appearances and in her overriding concern for respectability fostered by the Church's powerful conservatism, she makes Connie wear a bandage on her head when visiting the doctor for her antenatal check-up to make it appear as if she has '…fallen down or something, so that the people in the waiting-room [won't] ask the wrong question' (DC: 128). She goes to even greater lengths, adding to the absurdity of the situation by supplying Connie with a '*knobkierie* to walk with' so it looks as if she has hurt her leg as well (DC: 128).

Another body that was to profoundly influence Afrikaner identity was the *Broederbond*. Founded in 1919, it was a secret society that exerted enormous power, rallying disheartened Afrikaners to participate in the nationalist project and fostering Afrikaans male enterprise. Marks and Trapido (1987: 18, 19) comment that the *Broederbond's* adherence to the principles of Christian Nationalism was instrumental in forging a divisive racism, leading to a fear of miscegenation, a suspicion of the outsider and a *laager* mentality within the collective psyche of the nation. Racial division, however, was not the only distinguishing characteristic of

[2] This is a very monolithic representation of Afrikaner identity, depicted in starkly binaristic terms. At all times, the society was not homogeneous but deeply fragmented, with its members not merely confined to the *verkrampte*, but also belonging to the ranks of liberals and dissidents. However, Connie, as a poor white and living in conservative Oudtshoorn, could not include these more leftwing members of Afrikanerdom in her coterie of acquaintances.

the organisation for, as McClintock (1995: 377) observes, it also divided the nation along gender lines. The *Broederbond's* extreme patriarchal structure and authority prohibited women from joining its ranks. It also rigorously promoted the strict division of duty according to gender, enjoining men to act as agents of political and economic power and women as moral and spiritual emissaries and keepers of the *volk's* traditions. Marks and Trapido (1987: 24) assert that, in this regard, Afrikaner women were urged to give selflessly of themselves, not only to their families, but also to the *volk,* by making their homes havens in which to nurture the spirit of Afrikanerdom. For women of the nation, nationalism was borne out through femininity and motherhood, notions which, via the discourse of the time, were given a specifically Afrikaner content.

In view of the patriarchal authority, the gendered and racist divisions and the stringent conservatism holding up the twin towers of Afrikanerdom, women's identities were profoundly shaped by the state. But in Connie's narrative, Afrikaans women, as exemplified by Connie and the working-class women with whom she interacts, are either passive, inadequate and pitiable or disagreeable, unappealing and harsh. The '*tannie* at the desk' (DC: 13) of the museum is an old-style Afrikaner bureaucrat who reminds Connie of her primary school principal with her formidable authority and censorious looks. Afrikaner womanhood is subverted and turns masculine and austere, as embodied by this woman who sports short grey hair and resembles '*Oom* Paul Kruger' (DC: 14). Connie describes the woman's thighs rubbing against each other when she walks, sounding 'like two hissing snakes' (DC: 14): the reptilian sibilance evoking dread and repugnance. When, to Connie, the tiny stones in the woman's lurid hair-net turn into 'tiny *miggies*…coming to get [her and Gerda]' (DC: 14), the experience proves all too much for Connie and she needs a '*dop*'. Connie fears the woman's authority because of the violence she associates with those in positions of power. In addition, Connie describes Mrs van der Westhuizen, her neighbour across the road, as a 'fat pig' (DC: 100). Gerda, her deaf sister, also subverts the image of the Afrikaner woman as an icon of femininity. Connie remarks that dressed in her husband's tracksuit, Gerda looks like his twin brother except that her bosom sticks

out ‘like a tray’ (DC: 15). In addition, Gerda blindly complies with her mother’s intended machinations regarding Connie’s baby. She is, thus, a reflection of many white women in the era of apartheid who, by their silence and passivity, can be considered complicit in the cruelty inherent in the system and culpable for the pain generated via its ideology.

Connie’s mother embodies everything that is unpardonable about the old regime. She apparently takes her duty as gatekeeper of the *volk’s* morals seriously, although she interprets and applies its creeds in a somewhat perverted fashion. Accordingly, although her home may be the ideal haven for fostering the spirit of Afrikaner nationalism with its Christian morality, it is harsh and punitive, giving rise to an environment that is adverse for child-rearing. Connie recalls how, at seven years old, she attempts to run away from its stringent discipline. Her mother, catching her, cruelly frogmarches her and her stumbling, crying siblings down the road towards the prison in their Sunday best, threatening Connie with incarceration for her transgression. Connie’s threatened punishment resonates with the removal of freedom that people suffered on such a grand scale in apartheid South Africa. Connie also recalls how her mother warns her that if she falls pregnant out of wedlock, she would be sent to a home for delinquent girls. The fact that the home is run by the church evokes its punitive brand of conservatism, which so ubiquitously pervades South African society. Connie remembers her mother’s words:

> Connie my girl, if you fall pregnant, I’m sending you to Magdalena *Tehuis*. That’s where they make the girls wear maids’ dresses and scrub the floors. It’s run by the Dutch Reformed Church. You stay there until the baby is born and then they give your baby away. That’s when you can come home. (DC: 12)

Again, Connie’s mother uses malicious threats to stamp her authority. Connie does fall pregnant out of wedlock but marries Jack prior to the baby’s birth. Ironically, her mother nevertheless cooks up a bizarre scheme to give the baby

away to Gerda as she feels Connie is too young for the onerous responsibility of child rearing. She also believes that by giving Gerda the baby, the latter might be recompensed for her loss of hearing. Like the colonial and apartheid governments who saw fit to remove the colonised from their land, regardless of any claim they may have had, so too does Connie's mother see fit to divest Connie of her baby. This resonates with Connie's story about Beatrice. Beatrice, too, has her baby taken away by Nomsa, who deems she will not make a fit mother. This event in Connie's life signifies how she (Connie) has no self-determination, and has had to conform to the oppressive tenets of society, as have all its marginalised members.

Connie recalls the time when, after her mother dies, she goes to her house to discover that her mother has suffered from an obsessive compulsive disorder, which manifests in a most appalling manner. Connie enters the house and the smell hits her 'in the face as if you were lying' (DC: 100). Connie continues:

> She had been wrapping her own waste manner in neat little newspaper packets and they were all around the room, soldiers marching along the skirting board out of the door… (DC: 100)

Connie's mother, a staunch acolyte of apartheid ideology, embodies its sickness. The values, morals and beliefs and the militarization (suggested by the soldier metaphor) upholding the great structures of apartheid have been nothing more than many nauseating packets of faeces. The fact that Connie has to pick them up and discard them is significant as it symbolises her realisation, albeit unconscious, regarding the nature of the old system and the dire necessity of its disposal.

Connie's identity emerges from this traumatic past as symptomatic of the authoritarian patriarchal society in which she was brought up. Disadvantaged by her gender and class and suffering the effects of an abusive marriage, she is passive, self-limiting and fearful. Her self-esteem is so poor that Jack, displaying rare insight, sarcastically asks her if she thinks she is '…see-through, like a plastic bag? Invisible?' (DC: 52) Connie believes herself to be so powerless as to feel

invisible. She describes herself as having once been a shoe. She says: 'I came into the world too soon and so they put me in a shoebox' (DC: 27). The shoe is a classic object of Freudian fetishism. As a shoe, Connie believes she is a stand-in for the object of desire, merely a substitute for the perverted male whose libido is abnormally fixated. Her feelings of emptiness and disempowerment make it difficult for her to cope with her world, and she chooses rather to impose the oblivion of alcohol on her inner life. Her victim mentality is to blame for her dysfunctional marriage. She is so solipsistic, so totally absorbed in her own narrative and her alcohol dependency that she has no empathy with the people around her. This seems a rather extreme take on her but she does say that she has never felt the need to apologise for anything in her life. Her comment reveals that she has never felt sorry for anyone except herself (although this statement may be hyperbolic considering her narratorial unreliability). This is further illustrated by her inability to credit Jack with any feelings and her perception that she was the only one to suffer her baby's loss even though Jack was given 'the baby when the breath was gone, when there was nothing left' (DC: 274). She says: 'I see only my own pain' (DC: 274). Emotionally isolated from Jack and hostile towards her neighbours, she lacks any bonds of trust, friendship and reciprocity that living in a community provides. She is lonely and alone in her struggle, and like the *verkrampte* white South Africans of old, she lives in a *laager* of her own making.

Connie's perception of poor self-worth also stems from the lowly status of the class to which she belongs. She identifies strongly as a poor white and, as such, as inferior. She tells how Jack reinforced this identification at their shotgun wedding of which she remembers little, except that 'Jack was mad as a snake. He wasn't planning on getting married to a Poor White he said' (DC: 13). Connie reiterates her perceptions via Beatrice who comments that the 'Boers are bad enough, and so are the Poor Whites' (DC: 36). When the nationalists came to power in 1948, Connie's class benefited from the regime's policy of reserving bureaucratic posts for whites. Connie enjoys her privileged position as a white South African. She has a 'job with the South African Tourist Board with a four-bedroom house thrown in and a swimming pool in the yard' (DC: 2). She also has

authority, albeit limited, over the servants who clean her house and whom she rates as inferior, stereotyping them as incompetent promiscuous thieves, accusing them always '…of something. A man or some babies, or they steal Jack's shirts. Or they drink…' (DC: 43). Affiliating herself to white Afrikanerdom, she is implicated in the racist policies of apartheid. But, buying into its projects, she also accepts the role Afrikaner nationalism conferred on women as mothers, not only of their own children, but also of the *volk* as a whole, duty-bound as nation-builders to bear and nurture children and pass on the spiritual values and traditions of the nation. Thus, much of Connie's identity stems from essentialised perceptions of women as child-bearers of the nation and the weighty responsibility that comes with the role. With her sense of self so bound to reproduction and the fact that her baby is stillborn, and unable to have any more, she experiences her self as erased, inadequate, worthless and empty, feelings which are aided and abetted by her addiction to alcohol.

Connie, at the time of her narrative, is sixty-four years old. A product of her time and place, her identity has indisputably been moulded by the ravages of her life experience within apartheid ideology. Now, the old regime dying and the new not quite begun [3], Connie experiences a moment of self-consciousness that propels her into the interregnal spaces of the present. Consequently, as must the new nation, so must she adapt to the changes that are happening around her, renew herself and heal her wounds from the past. Connie, the old dog, is about to learn new tricks. In accordance with Lacan's theory of identity formation, that the identity is always a work-in-progress, Connie's identity adapts to the new circumstances despite her advanced years. Still feeling like an eighteen year old, she looks in the mirror and is shocked to see an old woman there. She refers to her reflection as 'old bag', a term that once again bears testimony to her feelings of emptiness and poor self-worth. She observes:

[3] Misquoted from Gramsci who wrote: 'This crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born: in this interregnum, morbid phenomena of the most varied kind come to pass' (Internet: *International Gramsci Society Newsletter*, p. 7).

> …when I look in the mirror I see an old woman there. I get a shock and then I think, she's not so ugly for an old bag…That lasts for a split second…Then I see the old bag again and I have to have a *dop*. (DC: 21)

This moment can be interpreted in terms of the Lacanian mirror stage. Connie, looking in the mirror, expects to find a *Gestalt*, a concordance between her concept of herself and the image she presents in the mirror (Lacan: 1966: 3-5).[4] But what she sees instead is that her image does not align with what she feels, and her perception of herself as subject becomes submerged in error and fallacy. Furthermore, her feelings of fragmentation increase when, for a moment, she sees the old woman as almost pretty. Lacan (ibid.: 5) avers that if feelings of fragmentation appear in adulthood, they usually appear in dreams, but in Connie's case they are probably brought on by her excessive intake of alcohol. Connie experiences decompensation, a mechanism that could be considered as belonging to the hysterical subject, where the subject loses touch with reality. Connie's incipient immersion into the imaginary world of Beatrice and her strong identification with her protagonist attests to this. Unsettled by her phantasy of fragmentation, Connie has a moment of real clarity about her aging and mortality, and she feels the need for a drink. However, in addition, as part of the normal development of identity, the mirror stage 'projects the individual into history' (ibid.), after which the individual is shaped by the forces of the space-time continuum of his or her society. For Connie, the moment is brought on by her engagement with history, after her visit to the museum. Connie, seeing the display boxes, is inspired to begin her narration. By her act of creation, she confronts the past and its truths, an assignation that empowers her to contest and disavow the 'Name-of-the-Father'.[5] In this way, she frees herself to explore other types of identities and find her own truth in the process.

[4] In the mirror stage, the developing human expects to see a *Gestalt* but instead sees the body as fragmented. The subject who, before this, is only aware of his existence as an organism and not of the world around him, is now made aware that he exists as a subject in the world.
[5] A Lacanian term roughly used here to mean the patriarchal structure of society and the rules which govern it.

Shusheila Nasta (1992: xxi, xxv) asserts that the act of writing can be 'transformative', empowering for women as subjects of a patriarchal society. By the act of narration, motherhood becomes a metaphor for creativity and 'the patriarchal appropriation of power over the Word' is disavowed. The theme of motherhood runs strongly through the text. Connie, having suffered a stillbirth and still mourning the loss of her baby, gives birth instead to a narrative. The narrative serves as a remedy, having the potential to heal her broken heart and her relationship with Jack. The therapeutic power of the text is mediated via Connie's imaginary role model, Beatrice. Connie structures her narrative by juxtaposing events from Beatrice's life with parallel situations in her own life. For example, the event surrounding the conception of Beatrice's baby is intertwined with that of her baby's conception. Her experience of labour in the hospital is sited alongside Beatrice's labour in her home and the loss of her baby runs adjacent to Beatrice's loss of Precious. There is reciprocity, the two parallel events inform and mould each other: where Connie suffers from pre-eclampsia in her pregnancy, so too does Beatrice, but as Connie points out: 'Miss Beatrice wasn't like me. If she'd had what I'd had, she would never have lived' (DC: 175). What is significant is that Connie takes great pains to define the differences between herself and Beatrice. Whereas Connie is cowardly and weak, Beatrice is courageous and tough. When Henry goes walkabout and Beatrice is forced to undertake the running of the farm, Connie admiringly comments on Beatrice's tenacity, reflecting: 'Miss Beatrice didn't stop herself like me. She just went on' (DC: 90). When Beatrice finds a spider's nest inside her corset and a cockroach in her shoe, Connie declares: 'I would have given up and cried', but: 'Miss Beatrice didn't care. She probably laughed at all the *goggas*. That's who she was' (DC: 58). Beatrice assumes the role of Connie's alter-ego and their identities almost begin to merge. When Gerda asks what Miss Beatrice is up to, Connie replies: 'I'm fine...' (DC: 80). It is in this space where the restorative effects of the act of writing emerge. After Jack grossly abuses his masculine power, forcing Connie to have sex and afterwards vomiting on her stomach, Beatrice appears. Connie recounts:

> I saw Miss Beatrice then. She came to me like a nurse does when you push the button next to your bed…She was as strong as a lion and was even wilder. You couldn't catch her or squash her like Jack was squashing me. (DC: 107)

Beatrice comes to Connie as a nurse who has the potential to heal Connie's broken life. The illusion of Beatrice affects the reality of Connie's life; Beatrice's past informs Connie's present. Displaying the courage and strength of a lion, Beatrice throws off the shackles of her narrow-minded colonial society, giving Connie the courage to confront the chains that bind her.

Connie's life has been restricted by her society, her mother and by Jack. Perhaps as Beatrice, she too would have liked to have broken boundaries and experienced, for example, sex across the colour bar. On one occasion, when Jack asks where she has been, she tells how she wants to say: 'I was there by the aerodrome. I was lying down with the garden boy' (DC: 158). (The aerodrome is where she conceived her child with Jack). It is not known whether she would like to tell this to Jack to bait him or whether her comment is a repressed desire, but her statement underscores the restrictions placed on the private lives of citizens in pre-1994 South Africa, as enforced by the colour bar laws and the Group Areas Act. Aware that blacks have achieved their long fought-for liberation, Connie wants liberation from the shackles of her own life, which include Jack's abusiveness, Gerda's bullying ways and her fears. Her past also thwarts her from living a functional life. She asks: 'How do you forget when something terrible happens like my baby with a leaking heart. I drink and it goes away but the next morning it's all back…'(DC: 252). To help Connie transcend the restrictions of her own life, she invokes Beatrice who, in her transgressing the boundaries of her repressive society, functions as a role model for Connie. The illusion that is Beatrice provides Connie with an escape in her real life.

Questions must be asked why Connie, as a narrator of history and fantasy, chooses an English colonial woman as her alter ego. Why does she choose someone of

English extract and what does her fascination with the colonial era imply? Her opting for an English woman perhaps signifies her defiance towards Afrikaner nationalism, whose proponents made sworn enemies of the English, never having forgiven them for incarcerating their women and children in the Anglo Boer war and for their arrogance and superiority at the cost of Afrikaner dignity and self-worth. Connie's choice of Beatrice is arguably a reaction against her mother's brand of Afrikanerdom. Her mother was unkind and severe, never consoling or comforting Connie who, at times, was desperately in need of her love. Connie recalls how, as a very young child, she stood at the edge of the sea and told her mother that she wanted to go to London to meet the Queen. This memory reveals that her attraction with things English started at a young age but it is also a display of her mother's severity and intolerance: after telling her mother of her longing, she starts to cry, her mother shouts: '*Hou op*!', pulling her arm so hard that Connie nearly falls in the wet sand (DC: 81). After Connie has lost her baby, her mother marches into the ward, all efficiency and purpose, to put a wet *lappie* on Connie's sore breasts before she even says hello. To Connie, who needs consolation rather than a wet *lappie*, her mother seems to disavow her very existence. She refuses to remember the time Connie was born and when Connie asks her whether it was day or night, her mother replies: 'I forget…It could have been either' (DC: 98). Connie remarks that her mother, along with her brother and sister, hate her and, wallowing in self pity, childishly remarks that Beatrice would probably have hated her too, but she adds: '[Beatrice] wasn't like them, though. She wasn't like anybody else' (DC: 67).

Beatrice, as the imperial mother, is everything her mother is not. Beatrice is not harsh and punitive but a fragile and fluttering creature who, as Connie observes, 'thought she was a fairy' (DC: 98). Connie remarks that '[o]f course Miss Beatrice was not the kind of madam to count the spoons or watch out for the salad oil' (DC: 250), implying that Beatrice, in her generosity, is indifferent to such trivialities. This is in opposition to her own mother who is most concerned about people stealing from her and who grows 'prickly pears and lots of other cactuses' (DC: 209) as a fence to keep intruders out. Also, in contrast to Connie's mother

who threatens to have her children imprisoned for running away, Beatrice is compassionate and nurturing. As the birds lie dying after their traumatic plucking, she sits on the ground, lifts the birds to her lap and tries to feed them some of the prickly-pear leaves. As they die, she cries for them, 'her tears dripping on the remnants of their rough little feathers' (DC: 206). In addition, she has the courage of a lion and is not afraid to fly in the face of her colonial society's repressive morality, unlike her own mother who goes to bizarre lengths to conform to her society's standards.

Connie selects the colonial period for her fantasy because it is a formative period in this country's history. The appropriation and violence associated with colonisation provided fertile ground on which the seeds of apartheid were sown. The period saw the beginning of legislated racial discrimination and the 'invention' of organised Afrikaner nationalism (Hofmeyr: 1987: 95). Although Afrikaner society was informed by Dutch Calvinism, the Victorianism that ordered colonial society possibly also contributed to the straight-laced conservatism espoused by the Dutch Reformed Church, and played a role in shaping the Afrikaner psyche, entrenching the stereotypes around gender. Moreover, the Victorian notion of social Darwinism, which strongly influenced colonial society, also informed apartheid ideology. These notions were brought into the home where the private lives of the individuals played out colonial and later apartheid ideology. Connie's home reflects these beliefs and principles, via her mother, who enacts the repressive conservatism and cruelty inherent in these systems with Connie bearing the brunt. In addition, Connie chooses this period because it bred women of Beatrice's ilk: authoritative and strong frontierswomen who traversed the boundaries of gender by performing men's work, managing their homes and disciplining their domestics. Connie admires these qualities, because they are everything she is not. Her domestics always say: '*Die mies praat jonk*… The madam talks young' (DC: 43), implying that she lacks authoritativeness, assertiveness and the organisational skills required to run her home. Lastly, the era holds fascination for Connie because of the romance and adventure associated with the ostrich feather boom, when Oudtshoorn abounded

with wealth and opulence. Connie relates how the town was packed with people who wanted to make lots of money or become famous. She wistfully remarks: 'I am sorry I was born too late. I wish I could have seen what it was like' (DC: 81). Connie is moved by the fact that ostrich feathers from Oudtshoorn adorned the necks of the most alluring women in the world. She tells of the time when she and Jack went to the 'bioscope' and saw a 'flick' about can-can dancers in Paris. She recounts:

> The main dancer had a huge powder blue feather fan and I was crying because I knew all those feathers came from Outdshoorn. Every time she fanned herself, the feathers moved like water or singing and the tears just rolled down my cheeks. (DC: 49)

The feathers speak of untold glamour and romance for Connie and of a time when Oudtshoorn was on the world map as a producer of these essential fripperies for the fashionable. As such, it contrasts greatly with Connie's modern day Oudtshoorn with its austere *tannie* in the museum and the Mrs van der Westhuizens of her society, who disapprove of Connie.

However, Connie's fantasy about a woman who is othered by her society and whose life is beset by violence and horror, gives Connie access to the parallel events in her own life, thus facilitating a rendezvous with her own past. Liebenberg and Zegeye (in Zegeye: 2001: 325) state that by accessing the past and confronting its horrors and associated violence, 'one sustains or revives the hope for a better future'. This is true for Gerda as well. Not only deaf physically, she has been deaf to Connie's pleas for answers about her dead child. Furthermore, she has been blind to her mother's iniquitous treatment of Connie and to her pain. Spurred on by reports in the newspapers of 'this thing called the Truth Commission' (DC: 247), Gerda decides to admit to her culpability regarding her mother's planned appropriation of Connie's baby. Not only does it permit Gerda to come to terms with what she has done but it allows Connie to confront the past. Gerda's unburdening does not have the effect she anticipates. Connie, now

apprehending Gerda's complicity in her mother's schemes, says to her: 'I never want to see you again or your husband or your kids' (DC: 251). Unlike the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), where reconciliation was the keyword and human rights abusers were given amnesty if they met certain conditions[6], Connie is not prepared to reconcile with Gerda under any conditions. Her extreme reaction is potentially healing. For the first time, she casts off her passive role and rids herself of her sister, who has enacted her mother's evil and who embodies Connie's demons from the past. She now turns to Jack for solace, commenting: 'I am waiting for Jack to come home. I have never waited so hard in my life' (DC: 262).

Throughout the text, it is clear that it is most often Connie's drinking that raises Jack's ire, eliciting his jibes and bullying. Apparently, he would like Connie to stop drinking and whether his main motivation for this is her behaviour or her health is immaterial. The fact is, Connie needs Jack to keep her in check and unconsciously, she knows this. When Jack rapes her, Beatrice appears before her 'like a nurse' and exhorts Connie not to leave Jack but to '[g]et him back' (DC: 106). At the end of the novel, Connie acknowledges that Jack could help get her life back on track and speculates: 'Maybe Jack can teach me how to swim…' (DC: 276). In addition, she is brought out of her solipsistic vacuum, recognising that Jack, too, has mourned the loss of their baby. When Jack says: 'I wish he'd lived' (DC: 275), Connie discovers that not only was the baby a boy but that Jack mourned his loss as well. Along with his violent temperament, there is also weakness, pain and suffering. She remarks: 'For the first time in my life I say I'm sorry'. A moment of connectedness and understanding passes between them as Jack's eyes 'fill with water' and they hold each other. Connie then says to Jack: 'I'm glad' and Jack responds: 'I know'. Connie's gladness signifies that her wish to know the sex of her baby has at last been fulfilled and it also betokens that she and Jack have had this moment of shared grief. Jack understands. The moment

[6] Political activists who were involved in human rights abuses were given amnesty if they could fully disclose all knowledge pertaining to 'gross human rights violations'; if they could explain their political objectives for their involvement and if they could show a proportional relationship between their political objectives and the violations in which they were involved (Internet: *Iris Films: LNJID – History*).

invokes Connie's deep sympathy and compassion. She says: 'Now I am sorry for the prisoners [on Robben Island], but I am also sorry for myself and Jack and my baby, and for Miss Beatrice and Nomsa and September and even Mr Henry' (DC: 275). She realises that suffering is a universal human condition. She experiences a connectedness with the rest of humanity in her shared suffering and no longer feels isolated and marginalised by her sorrow-filled life.

After throwing out Gerda, her story is almost told. Connie, empowered, no longer has need of Beatrice. After Nomsa returns to Highlands without Precious, Beatrice is not 'herself anymore' (DC: 272). When Nomsa tells her that Precious is not dead, she does not answer but just pours herself another '*dop*' (DC: 272). Like Connie, Beatrice having lost her baby, finds solace in drink. Connie observes that a silence begins as 'Nomsa and Miss Beatrice …[sit] on the back *stoep*' (DC: 273). By telling their stories along with her own, Connie has found a way to break the silence and a way to adapt to her changed world. Like Scheherezade, Connie needs to fabulate to survive in the new South Africa. It is within this function that Connie becomes a reflection of the author. Landsman's survival as an artist demands that she, too, tells a story. However, their storytelling is beleaguered by problems. The artist encounters all sorts of limitations in the manifestation of his or her art. Questions arise as to whether the artist will find a publisher or an audience. Will people listen? Will her voice be heard? Connie laments her lack of a voice: 'I want to shout but my voice is stuck to my throat' (DC: 100). Perhaps the artist can only be assured of a partial manifestation or perhaps none at all. In a self-reflexive moment, Landsman grants Connie only a deaf audience for Connie's voice falls on Gerda's deaf ears. For Gerda to 'hear' her, she needs to lip-read or put her hand on Connie's throat, an act that embarrasses Connie. Thus, Connie's story is only partially heard in private spaces.

Despite its limitations, the narrative provides an outlet for the memories stored in the cave of the human mind. Wordsworth (1994: 449) writes that the origin of poetry is 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. As the country reflects on its past

in the spaces of the TRC, Connie's art provides the meditative space that is required to access memories: one where they can be sifted, understood and dwelt in. In this, she finds the courage to confront her past and its truths. The process of narrating allows Connie to reconcile herself to her memories and the emotions they evoke. The revelations regarding the birth and circumstances of her baby allow her to move on, signalling new beginnings. Connie tentatively embraces these and the changes they herald. She tells of the beach in Cape Town looking like Seal Island 'with all the black people lying down in the sun.' But she counters this, declaring: 'I don't mind seals so much' (DC: 276). Ultimately, the ending to Connie's story reveals that she has the potential to forge connections with all her 'fellow' South Africans, whether black or white, male or female and thus end her isolation and marginalisation. In addition, Connie looks to the future. Previously, she states: 'I'm *poep*-scared of the water because I can't swim' (DC: 101). Now, she says that she will learn how to swim. The water not only symbolises her desire to cleanse herself of the horrors of the past but the sink/swim binary is a metaphor for failure or success in life. Perhaps her desire to swim signifies her intention to assume more responsibility and quit drinking, or perhaps she intends to swim in more gin. We do not know. The dénouement of the novel is open-ended: we are not certain if her life changes in any way. Although the distance between intention and reality is vast, we hope she has been empowered, given a capacity that unleashes her determination to learn to swim, and in this baptismal event, find a new identity.

Connie's story is about identity-building in a changing world. As Connie confronts her memories to build a new identity, the confrontation with memories and the truth resonates deeply within the creation of the new nation and the idea of nation-building. The past and its memories are central to the founding tenets of the new South Africa which were set up around remembering the past and the acts of reconciliation in response to its truths. Buntman (in Zegeye: 2001: 223) suggests that there is a close link between memory and identity and with identity and nation building. To build a nation, a common identity must be forged between people of different social backgrounds and to do this, there is a need, on

an individual level and collectively, to cultivate a common memory of the past. Thus, there is a call for the writing of new histories, not only based on accuracy and fact, but also derived from fiction, to facilitate a revised version of the past and potentially give the previously silenced voices a hearing. These include the passionate, vociferous, creative and constructive voices of women who have been unable to change political institutions or constitutions. The revisionist voices, while giving these silenced voices a forum to be heard, play a decisive role in the formation of a new cultural identity. Landsman is one of these voices, her text displaying the potential for, as Said (quoted by Bhabha: 1990: 3-4) notes, 'subordination, fracturing, diffusing, reproducing, producing, creating, forcing [and] guiding'. Connie's engagement with the past resonates with that of the TRC, whose commitment to memory was instrumental in nation-building and the production of a new national identity based on reconciliation rather than blame. Also, despite the fact that Connie is mired in apartheid ideology, she nevertheless produces the transgressive Beatrice, who fractures the race and gender binaries advanced by apartheid discourse. By Connie's creating Beatrice as her alter ego, she facilitates a merging of time, space, ethnicity and class. This inclusivity produces hybridity, a phenomenon that opens up many possibilities for reconstructing the cultural identity, thus guiding the new South Africa towards fluidity and flexibility. Connie's memories, her present life and her reflections on the future could represent a new nation not only in a state of flux but also created in the image of woman. Narrating her story from a female perspective, she uses the iconography of the feminine, that of motherhood, as a metaphor for creativity. It could be argued that by presenting a new nationalism with a matriarchal focus, the masculine identity of nations is subverted. She thus offers a feminised version of the nation: a motherland rather than a fatherland.

As an artist, Landsman claims her right to speak as a white writer, engaging in resistant and contestatory quarrels with racism, class and patriarchal structures. Landsman, as a white, educated, middle-class woman living in New York, should have no quarrels of her own in this respect. The question rears up again, whether she has the right to speak for the other. The postcolonial project is about the

conquered and the oppressed summoning up the courage to write and speak openly of their past experiences. Does Landsman have the right to write the past for cultures and ethnic groups other than her own? Rosemary Jolly (1995: 26) proposes that the critic/artist has a 'legitimacy, right and authority' to speak about other cultures. One might even go as far as to say that one has an obligation to speak about other cultures. In destabilising the binary logics, such as those pertaining to race and gender, dialogue is opened up. Also, Landsman's opposition and resistance to the discourse of nationalism is, in fact, an acknowledgement of the damage inflicted by apartheid and a display of solidarity with those who bore its brunt. This is her contribution towards reconciliation between the races in South Africa.

In conclusion, the question must be posed whether Landsman is so committed and materteral. Is she the guiding light who points the way towards a new cultural identity for a new nationalism? Magical realism, as a genre, relates to postcolonialism and, as such, is typically opposed to nationalism. Landsman appears to conform to this by presenting her readers with a critique of nationalism as evinced by her portrayal of Henry, Connie's mother, Gerda and Jack. These 'nationalisms', characterised by essentialisms and repression, sought to contain the feminine and create spaces where there was no place for alterity, as the stories of Nomsa, Beatrice and Connie so aptly illustrate. This leads me to question whether Connie is a metonymic representation of the nation, offering a feminised version of the new South Africa. As a poor white woman, Connie is still the other, and as its voice, she does not have the cultural authority to narrate the nation. She cannot represent the new South African identity although her narrative has the potential to contribute to the national literature. Surely then, she potentially has the power to force, fracture, produce, guide and thus contribute to narrating the new nation? We are not given any answers. However, although Landsman's commitment to the new nation is questionable, she does offer us a faint glimmer of hope with regards to Connie's possible future role. As Anderson (1991: 8) states, the borders of the nation are elastic: the inside/outside is always in progress. For Bhabha (1990: 4), this means that the nation is in a process of

hybridity, incorporating ‘new’ people in relation to its body politic, generating new sites of meaning and new forces for political representation. Connie could possibly become one of those ‘new’ people if she learns how to swim, but she may have to learn to swim with the tide if she wants to be part of the new nation.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Canon in the Caves

That sunny dome! Those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

"Kubla Khan" Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The prologue of the novel, which was initially published as a short story[1], tells of Pauline Cupido, the pretty coloured domestic, who disappears in the Cango Caves in the summer of 1955. Connie, who relates the story, introduces the caves, names their various chambers and describes the racially separate tours on which the public is led. She also gives an imagined account of the events leading up to Pauline's disappearance. Her story is bizarre and disturbing: Pauline enters the caves only to fall victim to the Devil who resides within and who requires every few years to impregnate a 'nice, young woman, with long legs and firm breasts' (DC: 8). Pauline is forced through the 'Letterbox' into a pitch black cavern by the Devil's emissary, the Coloured tour guide, who cuts her panties off with a knife, in readiness for the Devil's lustful intentions. What next confronts Pauline is a scene from Hell:

> There were huge bats the size of people. They surrounded her and took off her clothes. Then the Devil came in, with his skin and hair on fire. He took Pauline in his arms and she started to burn. He did awful things to her while she was burning, like putting his hand inside her which made her burn on the inside too. Finally she disappeared in a puff of black smoke which stuck to the top of the cave like a piece of black skin. (DC: 9)

At the end of the prologue, Connie offers a significantly blander version of the story, saying: 'I think Pauline didn't go on the tour at all. I think she walked back down to the parking lot and got a lift with some Coloured people to the main road' (DC: 10). Nevertheless, Connie's first account is not negated by this alternative version but continues to haunt the narrative that follows. As Pauline's vaporised vestiges stick to the roof of the cave, transmogrified into a piece of black skin, so too do they stick to Connie's unconscious, informing her imagination and her conscious life. Pauline's disturbing disappearance lingers in Connie's mind, inspiring her to chronicle Beatrice's story, which presents a possible source for Pauline's origins. Thus, Pauline's story lays the foundation for the main narrative of the novel, contributing another passage to its labyrinthine structure.

[1] See appendix.

Consequently, the relationship between the two discourses is like that of the caves to the ground: the caves are a presence that lie underground, offering barely a trace of evidence on the surface, but nevertheless they continue to haunt those who live above their spaces.

Pauline's voice has been submerged, buried in the depths of the caves. By Connie unearthing her story, she evinces a revised version of the past and gives utterance to the voices that have been silenced in the chronicles of history. As a result, the cave becomes imbued with history. Connie gives Pauline the opportunity to reclaim her history in the magical world of her (Connie's) imagination. This is the archetypal world of magical realism, where the 'drama of conquest and oppression is replayed' in a space characterised by the juxtaposition of the magical and the real, the past and the present, the colonised and the colonial (Durix: 1998: 126). The syncretism of these opposing binaries serves to create a text that is many-layered, like a palimpsest. Speleology, which is caving, relates to the idea of the palimpsest, of many layers of history waiting to be excavated. Landsman's cave is a space where the layers of history are revealed in the shadows of Bushmen drawings that danced on its walls and the caverns and in the markings of white settlers who named and claimed the land and its subterranean spaces and chronicled its history. The palimpsestic nature of history, of kingdoms having to be unearthed, reveals something about the nature of power, and that is that all dominions eventually decline and fall; their ruins lie buried under the ascendant sovereign power. The lack of faith in hegemonic structures and the notion of sovereignty, as well as the novel's labyrinthine structure, confers a typically magically realist quality on the text.

Much magical realist fiction is postcolonial in character as it is often underpinned by the desire of a colonised people to rid their world of their oppressors. One way in which magical realist artists do this is to destabilise the authority of the colonial texts by placing them alongside the narratives of the colonised. Consequently, the artist will make references to texts that embody the authority of colonial culture: those of the Western canon. By incorporating this discourse into the postcolonial

text, the writer claims ownership of European culture, which also connotes resistance. Hence, Landsman's cave is not only comprised of the silent voices of the colonised but there are also voices from the Western canon embedded in its layers. Coleridge's 'deep romantic chasm' from the poem, *Kubla Khan* (c1797/8) is located within the cave, as is E.M. Foster's Malabar Caves in *A Passage to India* (1924). In addition, Landsman's caves echo with the eponymous Plato's cave, whose author, as a Classical Greek philosopher, can surely rank as one of the fathers of the Western canon. Her caves also resonate with the myths of origins arising from the culture of Plato: of the Demeter myth which helped to give the Western canon its archetypal good mother. From these examples, one can conclude that the cave has been significant in Western culture, resonating profoundly within the human psyche. The cave has provided a womb to primal humankind, who emerged from its spaces. Associated with the origins of humankind, it is thus linked to the first woman, Eve and it is within Landsman's caves that Beatrice assumes her Eve persona, a pervasive archetype in Judeo-Christian discourse.

Paradoxically, the caves are also a place of profound unhomeliness. With its uncharted and untapped depths and darkness, its spaces may speak of horror. The subterranean caves also signify a space of entrapment and enclosure. Pauline gets abducted by the troglodytic Devil and lost to the world. Their allure ensnares Beatrice, who loses Precious in the caves. In contrast, they also offer a conduit of escape for Nomsa who throws off the oppressive bonds of colonial society within the caves, and claims what she believes belongs to her. In addition, the caves provide an escape route for Connie, by lighting the spark of her imagination and enabling her to find not only her own voice but the lost voices of history. The caves relate to Gothic literature written by women, in which the heroine experienced cycles of entrapment and escape. Although there are examples of this fiction in the Western canon, such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and novels by the Brontë's, these texts remain generally excluded from the canon,

their authors mostly voiceless.[2] Furthermore, these texts reflect the enclosure and entrapment experienced by their authors, living in a society that frowned upon women writers and disavowed their imaginations.

In opposition to those canonic voices which disapproved of the female imagination, *The Devil's Chimney* is a celebration of female imagination. The caves assume a dreamlike irrationality and unruliness that ignite Connie's imagination and allow her to unearth the stories that have been submerged in history. The process facilitates the 'narration' of herself as well. The cave, thus, assumes metaphoric dimensions, representing the imagination and the unconscious. The cave of the mind holds the secrets to the identity with its problematic fixations and repressions. Plumbing its depths unearths these issues, which may be a healing experience, but it is also terrifying as it facilitates a confrontation with one's demons.

Additionally, the caves take on the characteristics of the human body, but specifically the female body, specifically the vagina and the womb. The caves, infused with female sexuality, become the heart of Beatrice's sexual desire, a place where she loses her head and, as a consequence, her child. For Landsman, the caves become a place for self-reflexivity, where she encounters the demons that lurk within. Specifically figured by Landsman as female, the caves facilitate an engagement with the female artist and the artist-as-woman. The caves as a palimpsest of history, as a metaphor for the imagination and as a place of self-reflexivity generate the idea of the space as a representation of the literary canon,

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[2] Gothic novels emerged in the period between 1760 and 1820. There were many women novelists writing in this genre at the time, several examples being Ann Radcliffe who wrote such titles as *The Mysteries of Udolfo* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), Charlotte Smith with *The Wanderings of Warwick*, (1794) and *The Banished Man* (1794), Eliza Parson - *The Mysterious Warning, a German* Tale (1796) and Regina M. Roche - *Children of the Abbey, a Tale* (1796). (Kurtz and Womer: 4.) The Brontës novels have also been classified as Gothic, although they were written later: for example, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* was written in 1846, Emily's *Wuthering Heights* in 1847 and Anne's *Tennant of Wildfell Hall* in 1848.

It must be noted that exclusion from the canon is not exclusive to women. There are many male Gothic authors whose voices have been lost to all but aficionados or academics specialising in the genre. While many may have heard of Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) or Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), I question who has heard of *The Adventure of Ferdinand Count Fathom* by Thomas Smollet (1820) or *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury* by Thomas Leland (1762): just two of a long list of obscure examples from the genre (*The Gothic Canon:* 1).

but, in light of its configuration in female terms, the canon in the caves must be viewed under the glow(er) of feminism. Thus, the concerns outlined above form the basis of the discussion in this chapter, namely: the layers of history as reflected in the cave; the cave as related to the Western literary canon; the cave as a site of Gothic entrapment and escape; as related to Plato's cave: as a location of the female unconscious: as inscribed as female, as a mythopoeic space and the cave as a site of authorial self-reflexivity.

The cave is like a palimpsest whose layers can be scraped away to reveal what came before; excavated to reveal which men held dominion within and above its spaces. The cave reveals that the first men to inhabit the area were the San, the hunter/gatherers who held sway over the fauna and the flora. Evidence of their existence is to be found in the name of the caves: 'Cango', which is a derivation of the San word for water and relates to the Waterberge, the mountain range in which the caves are situated.[3] The history of these tribes has been all but lost due to the oral transmission of their stories through the generations, which was far too ephemeral to have survived the arduous journey through time. However, they did leave their mark via the rock paintings that were to be found near the mouth of cave, although when Connie narrates her story, they have been lost through time and vandalism.[4] Nevertheless, their shadowy presence filters through to Connie's unconscious as she relays how Nomsa sees 'Bushmen paintings of ostriches and buck and stickmen' on the walls of the cave and how they seem 'to be racing and racing to get to Miss Beatrice' (DC: 268). Ironically, the 'Bushmen' do not win the race for survival because they are superseded by the black tribes, the British and the Boers who all, at various times in history, claimed the space. Symbolic of this succession of ownership are the names that have been etched or marked on the walls of the cave. One such name is 'Frikkie', which appears directly above the San paintings. The name has been burnt on the wall by a loud Boer who discusses '*Duitsland* and a big war and not fighting for the *blerrie* English' (DC:

[3] See Cango Caves website: internet.
[4]Eugene Marias recorded folkloric stories and songs from a farm worker who had descended from the San. The stories, however, only approximate the oral performance because, as Marais notes in his preface, the gestures and expressions are lost in the transcription (Johan Van Wyk: 1996: 31).

259) with a group of his friends. There are many more references to the Boers and their Dutch predecessors within the caves. Connie makes reference to Van Zyl's Hall, named after Jacobus van Zyl, the man who was lowered into this space for the first time after a herder, Klaas Windvogel, stumbled upon the entrance to the caves in 1780.[5] She also mentions Botha's Hall, which has been named after Oudtshoorn's district officer in the 1880's. Mr Jacobs observes that there will never be a cave named after him because he is Jewish and 'the caves were named after Boers most of the time' (DC: 77). His comment serves to highlight that the claimants to the spaces took naming rights as well. Other names appear on the walls of the caves, along with the dates when they visited the caves. These include: 'Barend Oppel, 1790, Sir Lowry Cole, 1831 and Sir Henry Barkly, 1874' (DC: 141). Oppel was the teacher to Jacobus van Zyl's children. The other two men were British governors of the Cape.[6] Leaving their marks on the cave, the men, from the San to the British to the Boers, named, claimed and recorded their places in history. However, the writing was on the wall for these men: their reigns of power proved all too transient, as revealed in the palimpsestic nature of the cave.

Nevertheless, these were the men who wrote history, who recorded their stories in its chronicles but who, in making their marks, left no space for the stories of women or the colonised. Thus, the caves can be conceived of as a reflection of the South African historical canon. As such, the voices of the San and the other dark races inhabiting the area remain silent, the names of their pathfinders, such as Windvogel, have all but faded into obscurity. Also notable is the absence of women, black or white. Like the historical canon, the South African literary canon fails to include the discourse of the San. Similarly, although women's writings have been included within the existing canon - here, Olive Schreiner and Nadine Gordimer come to mind - there continues to be an imbalance in the representation of women as opposed to men. Annemarié van Niekerk (1996: 142) states that 'a cursory look at the leading literary histories in Afrikaans (and the same goes for English) shows that [women's writings have been marginalised in

[5] See Cango Caves website: internet.
[6] See World Statesmen website: internet.

literary historiography]'. Not only is there an overall gender imbalance, but whole groupings of women are not accommodated within the canon. The voices of black women, particularly, have been silenced in all genres. Like Pauline's disappearance in the caves, their literary presence has all but disappeared within the gaps of the canon.

Such is the situation of the South Africa canon today. More than a century on and context aside, nothing much has changed since Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1997: 23) recognised the overwhelmingly patriarchal nature of the Western literary canon of the nineteenth century. In an article published originally in 1979, they refer specifically to middle-class white women writers of the Victorian era, who had stories to tell and thoughts to voice, but their autonomy, authority and productivity were denied by patriarchal discourse. As a result, the Victorian woman writer, constrained by repudiations and dictates, struggled with what Gilbert and Gubar (ibid.: 25) term an 'anxiety of authorship'. The writer was made to feel inferior by this discourse, which determined that to create was inappropriate for her sex and out of kilter with her biological destiny. Isolated by middle-class society, where women were expected to be passive, and bound solely to domestic activity, her guilt and anxiety manifested not only in somatic illnesses but in psychological disturbances. Failing as the angel in the house, she became the madwoman in the attic[7], the social outcast breathing despair and grief. The act of creating was fraught with danger and dis-ease, associations that led to her sense of enclosure and entrapment within the confines of her genteel surroundings. These feelings contributed to the fashioning of female literary heroines whose circumstances were often testament to the writer's own feelings of entrapment. However, these heroines were also allowed to escape their situations, a phenomenon that was, no doubt, an expression of the writer's desire to escape the constraints of her society and a reflection of her flight as permitted by the peregrinations of her imagination.

[7] *The Madwoman in the Attic* is the title of the influential book on nineteenth century women writers by Gilbert and Gubar.

This is the society that confines women like Beatrice to their roles within the domestic. Beatrice finds her escape via her farming pursuits and her sexuality, which elicits her cross-dressing and her consorting with her black domestics. Ultimately, her behaviour only serves to entrap her again as it is considered utterly outré. People look at her and shake their gloves and say '*skande*, *skandaal* and so on' (DC: 92). Her behaviour is regarded as contagious and dangerous and she is eschewed by her society. Connie relates how '…all the mothers were afraid that their daughters would catch what Miss Beatrice had so they pulled them into the Post Office or the General Dealer's when she was there' (DC: 43-44). Connie never reconciles Beatrice with her society, who remains forever incarcerated behind the high walls at Highlands. When Landsman was asked in an interview[8] why she punished Beatrice at the end of her novel, entrapping her behind the high walls of Highlands, she replied that Beatrice had '…gone too far in terms of her society. She had to pay the price'. Thus, Beatrice's voice is silenced and her story is lost forever. It is left to Connie, via Landsman, to find Beatrice's voice and reclaim her story.

As an author, Landsman, obviously no longer suffers the anxiety of authorship endured by her Victorian foremothers, but the pre-democratic South Africa in which Landsman grew up, was a space of darkness, stifling claustrophobia and entrapment for many of its inhabitants, much like a cave. The strict authoritarianism of Christian National Education, stifling censorship laws, and a feeling of isolation from the rest of the world pervaded the lives of white South African children growing up in those years. Landsman, as one of these children, was aware of the darkness that pervaded South Africa. In an interview, she commented that she never 'felt comfortable in South Africa, even as a child'[9]. Upon reaching adulthood and South Africa academic institutions failing to offer an outlet for her writing talent, she took flight to America where her creative life took hold. The effect of apartheid on Landsman is also evident by her commenting that it was only after 1994, with the liberation of the country and the advent of democracy, that she felt personally liberated enough to tackle a book

[8] See appendix
[9] See appendix

about South Africa. Thus, Landsman, certainly suffering from the constrictions of her early life and later achieving freedom through writing, like her literary predecessors, creates a novel where these echoes continue to haunt her heroine. Connie, like a Gothic literary heroine, also experiences cycles of entrapment and escape.

Connie is not only trapped by the hypocrisy of her society and her abusive marriage to Jack but the sense of her enclosure is heightened by the obstacles that impede the outpourings of her imagination and the audibility of her voice. Like the Gothic novel that portrayed the home as a place of danger or imprisonment[10], Connie's entrapment takes place within the walls of the home. She is threatened with enclosure, trapped within its rooms and even locked out of her house. Upon falling pregnant out of wedlock, she escapes her mother's threat of the Magdalena *Tehuis* for wayward girls by Jack's marrying her. Later, her mother, fearing the neighbour's gossip, orders her to remain in her house while pregnant. Now, in the present, she endures imprisonment in her bathroom: while she has been sitting in the empty bath partaking of the mouthwash, the drunken Jack enters and passes out on the floor of the bathroom, and prevents her opening the door. Connie observes: 'I can't open the door to get out. I must now sit and wait' (DC: 175). Her home becomes claustrophobic and cave-like, trapping her within its walls. And not only incarcerated on the inside, she is also locked on the outside, excluded from her house, as she is from society and its canons. Sitting on the *stoep*, she indignantly exclaims: 'Where is Gerda? Where is Jack? The front door is locked. They locked me out. They left me here all night long as if I was one of the dogs' (DC: 101). In addition, she remarks that the perimeter wall at Highlands makes her think of a prison and that it reminds her of the time when, at seven, her mother catches her running away and marches her down to the prison as if to deposit her behind its bars.

[10] Ellis (1989: xii) comments that the Gothic was often concerned with a home within whose walls the heroine was confronted with dangers of 'license and lust'. Her struggle ultimately led to her reclaiming the space as a type of 'heaven on earth'.

For Connie, walking in the veld with her dogs provides her with the escape from the stifling feelings of oppression and danger that confront her within the walls of her house. She asserts:

> I am walking the dogs and there are no bottles to hide or to find out here. I am scared of the ships coming but there are no walls for them to crash through. The sky is my shepherd, I shall not want. The mountains are my walking sticks. Skollie and Esther will guide me through the bushes and over the *koppies*. There are no Valleys of Shadows. It is all light. (DC: 130)

In this spiritual, dreamlike landscape, with Psalm Twenty-three echoing in its topography, Connie fears no evil as the veld is endowed with all sorts of guides that will keep her from harm. Unlike her entrapment in the house, she finds freedom and safety on the veld. Even the phantom ships cannot harm her, which, for her, signify not only the real and perceived dangers in her life, such as her judgmental and disapproving society, but also her cravings for alcohol. Like all alcoholics, she tries to hide her addiction, but ironically, alcohol provides her with the great escape, for it is the liquid within the bottle that liberates her and unleashes her imagination. However, it is Pauline's disappearance in the cave and the cave itself which resonates strongly in her unconscious and allows her to engage with her imagination's creative potential and to find her voice. Here is where her alcohol-induced hallucinations seem to freewheel, as distinguished by the imagery she deploys to describe its spaces and the strange events that transpire within its walls. Thus, she generates an uncanny space that is embedded with many layers of signification. These layers resonate with echoes from the past and inscribe the spaces deep within the female body, emerging from the dream-like spaces of fantasy.

Her creativity empowers her to narrate her own story as well as the silent voices of the past. By creating the transgressive Beatrice as her alter-ego, Connie is able to find her voice and to confront her own past. Connie creates Beatrice's life to

run parallel to her own: Beatrice is also married to an abusive husband, is also stifled and excluded by her society and also loses her baby. By representing Beatrice's life in imaginative terms, Connie summons up the courage to narrate her own experiences and in so doing, she also is able to reclaim her past and preserve its truths. This is facilitated at the end of the novel, when Connie's audience, Gerda, is encouraged to tell a story of her own: that of their mother's nasty and rather silly plan to give Connie's baby on its delivery to Gerda. Coming face to face with her mother's malice and her sister's complicity is very painful for the usually passive Connie, but it spurs her into action. She declares that she never wants to see Gerda again and tells her to '[go] back to Ashton…to [her] furniture shop with all those old kettles and *riempie* chairs' (DC: 251).

Gerda has significance in terms of the metafictive elements in the text. Although Connie's voice brims with imagination, courage and facility, like her female predecessors', it falls on deaf ears. Gerda is almost the sole member of her audience and she is deaf. She can lip read but she gets tired and then she has to put her hand on Connie's throat to 'hear' the vibrations of Connie's voice but this embarrasses Connie as 'people always stare' (DC: 15). Although Jack sometimes listens to her story, she notices that he, too, prefers to close his ears, as Connie reveals: 'When I talk to him, he looks very heavy and so I wait till he's asleep. Then I say whatever I want' (DC: 40). Landsman is perhaps reflecting on the degree of self- censorship in the creative process. The author is conscious of writing for an audience and cannot 'say' whatever she wants. In addition, there is also an awareness of writing to gain audience approval, an understanding that permeates the creative process.

There are other obstacles that thwart Connie's storytelling. As the storyteller, she holds the memory bank of her culture, but as she tries to narrate the silent voices and the lost stories of history, she is presented with difficulties. She wishes to find Pauline's voice, but it remains elusive, as she observes:

> I often think about all the things that happened that day, the way you do when you're looking for something. Where did you see it last? Is it hidden inside an armchair or did it fall behind the bed? Is it lost or staring me in the face? Most people have forgotten about Pauline but I'm the one who has to live here, right at the spot where she vanished. (DC: 3)

The missing narrative haunts her, but its contents, like a dream, slip away. Connie feels duty bound to find Pauline's story because in its telling, in its reaching the light of day, its disturbing and dark presence would dissipate. She believes that if she could only know what happened to Pauline, she could lay her ghost to rest. Thus, Connie recognises the power of narratives and their capacity to demystify, to heal and to appease. This is also illustrated when she begins to tell Beatrice's story to Gerda. She does this in her attempt to stop the latter's handling one of the museum exhibits, as she relates: 'I try to stop her [picking up an antique iron] by telling her the story of Miss Beatrice but the *tannie* is right there again, …and she *skels* us out, just what I was afraid of' (DC: 15). But she finds storytelling taxing as she has to do 'all the parts' (DC: 15) herself.

Aware of the power of the imagination and its product, the fictional narrative, she also recognizes that it is potentially threatening and its effects wide-reaching. She describes her story as a tarantula, the spider whose 'bite is so terribly, terribly sore' (DC: 62). Later she remarks: 'the story had many arms and legs, just like a tarantula, and it hung in everybody's house, on the ceiling. It was the reason for everything that was bad in Oudtshoorn' (DC: 266). According to Gilbert and Gubar (1997: 26), writers of the Romantic age attested to the danger of too much imagination, proposing that it made one a dreamer, isolating one from the reality and from one's society. [11] For women artists, the dangers associated with too much imagination proved especially true. In those times, (and still today), society

[11] In *Strong Imagination*, Daniel Nettle (2002: blurb) describes the link between madness and artistic creativity. In individuals suffering from certain mental illnesses, the imagination runs riot, producing delusions which serve to cut the sufferer off from his society. Normal individuals have an attenuated form of this pathologically hyperactive imagination, which Nettle suggests is an evolutionary adaptation that allows humans to interact on a social level in their communities. Interestingly, he says that rates of mental illness are hugely elevated in families of poets, writers, and artists – suggesting that the same genes are responsible for madness as for creativity.

dictated that only certain behaviours for women were normal and the act of writing did not fit this category. The woman writer, therefore, was viewed as subversive and dissident and had to be suppressed. Quelling this type of behaviour involved classifying such a woman insane: a perilous label carrying with it a profound stigma, whose effects could result in incarceration, accompanied by humiliating, if not dangerous and even deadly 'treatments'. Thus, the border between sanity/insanity and gender was policed and it was prudent, as a woman, to toe the line.

Connie's behaviour is also considered dissident by her society. To her working-class neighbours, who aspire to middle-class respectability, her behaviour, her alcoholism, her fertile imagination and her story-telling are not normal and they exclude her from their ranks. There is a profound sense of isolation and exclusion that lingers about her character. When she walks on the veld, she encounters only the vastness of the sky and the immensity of the mountains. Nary a living soul does she meet save for her dogs. Connie is cognisant of the fact that her society finds her behaviour strange. She has no friends and notices how her neighbour from across the road stares at her as if she is 'Satan' (DC: 100). After awakening from napping on her veranda, she wants to ask her staring neighbour what is wrong with sleeping on her 'own front *stoep* in the middle of summer? (DC: 100). She wants to be heard but her voice is silenced, as she relates: 'I want to shout but my voice is stuck in my throat' (DC: 100). Although she knows societal constraints require her to remain silent, Connie nevertheless finds her voice, which enables her to narrate her stories and in so doing, escape the constraints of her past. Paradoxically, Connie's voice and the 'lost' ones she unearths from the cave provide Landsman with the opportunity of being included in the South African literary canon. In fact, this novel can be regarded as an example of a canonical early post-apartheid text as it has been included in curricula and reading lists of university courses.[12]

[12] It is one of the novels studied for the South African Literature Honours course at the University of the Witwatersrand. A search on the internet using the terms "Anne Landsman" and "The Devil's Chimney", on the 31/03/2005, revealed that the novel appears on the reading list for *Anglophone and Lusophone African Women's Writing* at the University of Exeter, Wales (www.ex.uk/~ajsimoes); is on the *Feminist Guide to Good Reading* list at Wellesley College,

Landsman's cave and the stories that Connie unearths within its layers resonates with Plato's cave and its notion that the world that we perceive as reality, is, in fact, comprised solely of shadows on a cave's walls. Our vision of society is not perceived by us directly, but is filtered through our senses. Thus, what is deemed reality is, in fact, merely a consensus by the majority. Those members of society whose perception of reality differs, are termed mad. It is arguable whether Connie belongs to this latter category, although she could be considered mad with grief, still suffering the loss of her baby some forty years later. In addition, with her sense of reality blurred by alcohol abuse, she certainly perceives a differing sense of reality from the rest of her society. She knows that her behaviour is considered unacceptable: people look at her '*skeef*' (DC: 80), Jack calls her a '*loskop'* (DC: 52) and a '*dronklap'* (DC: 159) and when admitted to the hospital with delirium tremens, she notices the other *tannies* in their beds watching her with fascinated disapproval and thus comments: 'They're watching me, as if I'm the TV' (DC: 218). To escape her censorious world, she creates the story of Beatrice, but the only reality attached to the story is the high walls around Highlands and the artefacts on display in the museum. Consequently, Connie manufactures her story by looking at the shadows on the cave wall, but what she sees is filtered not only through her grief and the hallucinogenic haze of her alcoholism, but through the mists of time, the codes of imperialism and the binaries associated with race and class that linger in Connie's world and inform her perception of reality. With these codes so rooted in patriarchy, she has only a phallocentric route of access to Beatrice's story, which is not appropriate to her situation as a woman living in postcolonial times in the Third World. However, although the shadows on the cave's wall dance on the ruins of the past, Connie, through her altered state of reality, is able to construct a narrative that deconstructs the binaries and one which talks back via the imperial mother, Beatrice.

Massachusetts (www.wellesley.edu/WomensReview/archrevw.html), and is prescribed reading for a course entitled: *Reading for Race/Sex: Representations of Inter-racial Relationships* (www.uwc.ac.za) at the University of the Western Cape.

Thus, a politically-committed 'Third World' postmodernist narrative is created, typical of a magical realist text. In addition, the altered reality that features in the caves also allows a reading that employs a brand of feminism that embraces the idea of woman as other. Western philosophical thought has always been based on the idea of man as conscious of his consciousness and of himself and his world as rational and real. Because men have regarded women as other, the world of the feminine is considered irrational and unreal. But instead of vilifying this idea, certain feminists have adopted the stance that the perceived differences between the genders is cause for celebration, and instead of mimicking men and adopting phallocentric culture and politics, women are urged to create their own new culture. Hélène Cixous, in her classic 1975 article: 'The Laugh of the Medusa', exhorts her sisters to liberate themselves from the repression of living in a patriarchal world. She proposes that women's bodies have been appropriated by men and that they are afraid, their unconscious dampened, because they have been taught that they are dark and dangerous. Their tribulations have led to the suppression of their creativity. Now, to win back strength and reclaim their bodies, women '…must return to write, to be, to have ideas' and her injunction is to write themselves, through the body and the unconscious (Cixous: 1997: 349). Thus, instead of writing within the discourse of men with its '…partitions, classes and rhetorics, regulations and codes' (ibid.: 355), they must invent their own language, where the stereotypes that have been conferred on them via patriarchal culture are not only inscribed, but are valorised as well. Nina Baym (1997: 283), too, proposes that the litany of adjectives given women, such as 'madness, antireason, primitive darkness, mystery', must be inscribed in a 'female language' and quotes Christiane Makward, a commentator on French feminism, who characterises this language as: 'open, nonlinear, unfinished, fluid, exploded, fragmented, polysemic, attempting to speak the body i.e., the unconscious, involving silence, incorporating the simultaneity of life' (ibid.: 282). Connie's cave embodies all these qualities: filled with ambiguity and contradiction, a liminal space hovering between the real world and the unreal underworld, a cavern representing a hole, a lack and, as such, a feminine space, one which provides the womb in which the incipient story is grown.

The caves are also inscribed as the human body. Connie mentions '[a]ll that dripping and soft echoing as if you're in a giant stomach and the juices are working' (DC: 10) and Beatrice thinks about the 'caveness of the body. Your stomach is a cave and so are your lungs, with millions of tiny live stalactites and stalagmites made of flesh' (DC: 82). There is a blurring of the boundaries where cave ends and body begins. Significantly, the caves/body are inscribed as female and specifically, they are imbued with female sexuality. Connie compares the caves to female sexual organs. Beatrice climbs into 'the part they now call the Chimney which is just like a woman's shoppie' (DC: 259) and later, as Nomsa looks for Precious, '[t]he whole of the caves was like a giant aching shoppie' (DC: 268). Even the smell of the caves is redolent of feminine sexuality. Connie refers to it as 'the moist place that smelled of wax and clay' (DC: 70) and how, after when her dog had spent the night in the cave, '[t]he next morning you can smell the caves on him. He wears the darkness in his wet coat like the smell of sex' (DC: 2). To Henry, who is so enmeshed in the codes of imperialism and patriarchy, the female sexuality infusing the caves is offensive. In the caves, he smells only the 'terrible smell of bat droppings' (DC: 72). And for Jack, the femaleness is threatening and provokes him to violence, for when he holds a vandalised stalactite in his hands, its phallic shape reminds him too much of a weapon and he cannot resist intimidating Connie with it. For Beatrice, the caves are not merely a metaphor for feminine sexuality but are the source and centre of her sexual desire. The cave under Jacobs's land is the site where she and Jacobs consummate their passion and where now Jacobs, now Beatrice become the cave. Connie describes their sexual union: how '[t]he cave she was in was him, and she moved in it and it rose up against her. There was a river, an underground river, flowing from her into him, and they swam with it until it swelled and flooded over' (DC: 71). The images of the cave are depicted in overtly sexual terms, of tumescence and orgasmic rapture. Connie deploys the metaphor of the underground river in a cave to represent the passion flowing from Beatrice into Jacobs, and which then overflows, allowing both to partake of its life-force.

Connie, in her description, captures the fecundity and fluidity which the French feminists enjoined of women when writing the self and the body.

Beatrice does not want her and Jacobs's cave 'to be a place where anyone had been' (DC: 72). She wants to keep it private, this secret place abundant with the secrets of the body and desire. After their union, she tells Jacobs: 'You are the first man … I am the first woman' (DC: 72). To Beatrice, their passion represents something primitive, something atavistic that has conveyed itself from the moist and secret spaces of the caves themselves. Furthermore, although the space encloses Beatrice and Jacobs in its darkness, it is an ambiguous space for it does not hem them in but rather represents a nothingness, a lack. Beatrice comments that '[h]ere…there [is] no house, no curtains, no nothing' (DC: 72). This is not the claustrophobic and menacing space of the Gothic house, entrapping the female heroine, but a space that releases Beatrice's sexuality, which is liberating, beautiful and generative. However, the nothingness of the cave later becomes suffocating when Beatrice's sexuality becomes so all-consuming that it entraps her in a frenzy of unrequited love, leading to the tragic events that follow. Subsequent to her tryst with Jacobs, her sexual appetite becomes unbearable whenever she enters the caves as she is reminded of her erstwhile encounter with Jacobs. When visiting the caves with Henry and a group of tourists, she feels all that 'old warmth rushing through her like a river' and she almost lies '…down right there and ask[s] Mr Henry to lie down on top of her, so that he [can] put out the flames with his body' (DC: 142). On reaching the underground river, Beatrice starts to take off her clothes to wade into its cooling waters but Henry prevents her, apologising to his fellow tourists for his wife's transgressive behaviour with the oft-used excuse: 'My wife…*sy is deurmekaar*…*sy verwag*' (DC: 143).

It is within the Banqueting Hall where Beatrice finally partakes of the feast of sexual euphoria that the caves have been promising. After giving birth to the baby, she intuits Nomsa's intention of taking Precious. She escapes to a section of cave with the baby and puts her down:

> And then it happened like they say it happened to Pauline except this was bliss and not fire. Those soft rocks went inside her, and she moaned and she cried and she rocked. She was on the edge of something yawning and open and impossible and then it burst and she tremored and fell through to the other side. Then it happened all over again and the stalactites and stalagmites picked her up and poked her and entered her this way and that. She shook and she twitched so much that she didn't know if she'd ever come right again. The cave itself was singing and moaning with all the voices of the *Boesman* painters and the *Nooitgedacht* ladies who were dancing together between the Organ Pipes and Cleopatra's needle.
>
> Nothing was still anymore, not even the water, which came up and licked at Miss Beatrice. It touched her bum and her shoppie and now the trembling inside her was so strong that she burst all over again, this time with lights and a fairy band and all the hundreds of thousands of ghosts clapping like mad. (DC: 239)

The cave is revealed as a heterotopia, shifting in its configurations that realign from female to male, pleasure to pain, bliss to despair and from life-generating to death. The space is inscribed with multiple significations that include the vagina, the carnivalesque and the grotesque, Dionysian frenzy, creativity and victimisation by chthonic forces beyond our control.

The caves are inscribed with female sexuality. Beatrice and the cave transmute into a gestalt: Beatrice becomes integral to the essence of the cave, part of the walls of the cave itself and the coalescence of Beatrice and cave form a throbbing vagina in the throes of orgasm. The speleological stalactites and stalamites within the cave become as soft rocks, giant thrusting phalluses that pick Beatrice up and poke her 'this way and that', and Beatrice, in the very apotheosis of sensation, 'moans and cries and rocks' with pleasure. Connie, fulfilling the injunction of Cixous et al, writes the female orgasm, inscribing Beatrice as 'on the edge of

something yawning and open and impossible' (Cixous: 1997:349). The writing is characterised by its fluidity in the long sentences, and the oft repeated use of the word 'and', which confers on the text the idea of accumulation upon accumulation of sensation. But the writing is also imbued with a feeling of fragmentation and indeterminacy as Connie cannot capture the sensation of the orgasm itself, describing it merely as something that 'burst', causing Beatrice to 'tremor' and [fall] through to the other side'.

The passage is a celebration of sensation, and with its inscription of the orgasm, it connotes liberation from patriarchal discourse. As such, it is imbued with the carnivalesque and the grotesque, which emphasises bodily orifices, in this case, the vagina, excess, suspension of prohibitions and a 'brimming over of abundance' (Stallybrass and White: 1986: 9). The scene is also reminiscent of a Dionysian frenzy, brimming with the 'singing and moaning' of the voices of the Boesman painters, 'the Nooitgedacht ladies dancing together between the Organ Pipes and Cleopatra's Needle' and 'the lights and a fairy band and all the hundreds of thousands of ghosts clapping like mad'. Dionysis, the god of intoxication and euphoria and associated with primordial, passionate vitality and imaginative creative power (Russell: internet), relates to the carnival in his alliance not only with joyful exuberance but also with iconoclasm and resistance to the structures of power. Stamm (quoted in Stallybrass and White: ibid.:19) suggests that the 'carnival…implies an attitude of creative disrespect, a radical opposition to the illegitimately powerful, to the morose and monological'. With this scene, Landsman thus displays a resistance to patriarchal discourse with its morose sexual repression and monological essentialisms.

Dionysian power is also allied to the chthonic, pertaining to the dark forces of the spirits of the underworld: the violent, the irrational and the chaotic. What starts out as sexual euphoria and liberation for Beatrice becomes associated with the chthonic and the frenzy turns terrifying as the Devil not only sucks up Precious but puts his hand in Beatrice's chest and 'squeezes her heart and her lungs and everything in between' (DC: 240). Instead of a site of sexual rapture, the caves

become the domicile of the Devil. The stalactites and stalagmites, from organs of pleasure, turn to instruments of pain and the cave now only echoes with Beatrice's screaming: 'Precious, oh my Precious!' (DC: 240). Beatrice has become a victim of chthonic forces beyond her control. Her sexuality envelops her and she is obliged to succumb to its overwhelming force, but she suffers intensely as a result. Precious disappears and the caves take on a deathly cast that reflect her despair, becoming an icy 'graveyard' where 'each spike of water turn[s] into a rock [like] the spine of some dead person or animal frozen underground forever' (DC: 259). An alternative interpretation of this scene is the danger imputed to female sexuality. In this case, perhaps it would then have been better for Beatrice to have conformed to societal mores and repressed her sexuality because the consequences of her uncontrollable sexuality are dire.

The cave, as inscribed with sexuality and danger, resonates with the cave in Coleridge's *Khubla Khan*. The poem features a 'pleasure dome' which sits atop 'caverns measureless to man'. The caverns are a 'holy and enchanted' place, occupied by a woman who, like Beatrice, seethes with 'ceaseless turmoil' for her demon lover. The cave, like Landsman's, becomes animated with the woman's sexual yearnings: the earth of the cave pants 'fast' and 'thick'. Similar to the stalactites and stalagmites in Landsman's cave, which inflame Beatrice's sexual desire, a phallic fountain is forced through the earth of Coleridge's cave, whose 'swift half-intermitted burst' throws up 'huge fragments' of rocks, transforming the pleasure dome into 'a miracle of rare device', a palace of sexual delight. However, like the Devil who resides in Landsman's cave, the demon lover in this cave, with his 'flashing eyes' and 'floating hair' has tasted sexual bliss, having fed on 'honey-dew' and drunk the 'milk of Paradise'. He augurs danger for maids. The caves, in truth, are not deeply romantic but, like Landsman's caves, are frozen and deathly 'caves of ice'. The speaker of the poem cries: 'Beware! Beware!', warning women to 'weave a circle around him thrice', to close their eyes to his charms and not succumb to the lure of sexual desire.

As Connie's visions are induced by alcohol, the images in *Khubla Khan* are said to have appeared to Coleridge (1978: 156) as he slept profoundly in the cave of the unconscious, after having taken an 'anodyne' for a 'slight indisposition'.[13] In addition, as Coleridge's images seemed to have risen up before him 'without any sensation or consciousness of effort' (ibid.), so too does Landsman's cave embody the shifting landscape of dreams and the unconscious. For Jung, the images that occur in dreams reveal the unconscious aspect of the human psyche. The names of the Cango Caves, and the formations within, evoke the collective unconscious, derived, as they are, from popular culture, fairy tales and the Bible. These include the Fairy Palace, the Throne Room, the Rainbow Chamber, the Bridal Chamber, the Tunnel of Love, the Ice Chamber, Crystal Palace, Lot's Chamber, Madonna and Child, Wing of a Lost Angel and Peach Brandy Bottle.[14] In addition to the collective unconscious, the names resonate strongly with the palimpsestic metaphoric 'meanings' associated with the caves. For example, the Throne Room is evocative of the marks of power inscribed on the walls of the cave; the Fairy Palace is an apt name for Beatrice, who Connie describes as a fairy and who makes the caves her palace of sexual delight; the Bridal Chamber and Tunnel of Love suggest the sexuality with which the caves are associated; Madonna and Child and Wing of a Lost Angel are reminiscent of Connie and Beatrice's lost children and the unfulfilled promise of motherhood; and the Peach Brandy Bottle is a symbol of Connie's alcoholism.

Within these aptly named spaces, Connie dreams up the vivid events that occur in the lives of her two protagonists. Featuring in the creative world of her imagination, Beatrice and Nomsa are part of Connie's inner life, her inner impulses and her needs as set against the demands of the outside world. As such, they represent Jungian-type archetypes, symbols that arise from the collective unconscious and that appear time and again in fairytales, myths, stories and

[13] Coleridge was a known opium addict - probably the ingredient of his 'anodyne'.
[14] At least some, if not all the names listed in the novel, do describe the formations and spaces of the Cango Caves and are not Landsman's inventions. *Africa Travel Magazine,* on the internet, describes the caves as follows: '…the incredible Cango Caves have a variety of unique halls and chambers with limestone formations such as the Pipe Organ, Cleopatra's Needle, Fairy Palace, Throne Room, Bridal Chamber, Roman Candle and Crystal Forest - names that conjure up all sorts of impressions for the imaginative visitor' (*Africa Travel Magazine* website: internet).

legends. Thus, the archetypal mothers, Beatrice and Nomsa, reflect Connie's desperate need not only for nurturing and mother-love, but also her all-consuming desire to have been a mother herself. Notably, Beatrice's and Nomsa's archetypal personas are not stable but are multiple in form, shifting to reveal the many facets of the Mother Archetype, which, in turn, reflects different aspects of female identity.

Beatrice, with her raging sexual desire, is akin to an Earth Mother, a sex goddess. This white colonial woman, as wraith-like and fragile as a column of smoke, with her short blonde hair and skinniness, is a complete subversion of the archetype, which normally is embodied by a black Mother Africa (in South African fiction), who with her bountiful hips, thighs and breasts symbolises abundance and fecundity. Connie subverts the binarisms associated with this archetype, perhaps as a reaction to her own condemnatory society that continues to subscribe to the same codes that informed Beatrice's society. By allowing Beatrice, with whom she strongly identifies, to traverse cultural boundaries, she gives herself licence to cross the boundaries of her own society, thus permitting herself to drink, to dream and to narrate her stories. Furthermore, she identifies with Beatrice's experiences of pregnancy and childbirth: traumatic events that shaped her own adult life to a large extent. Connie, reliving her own pregnancy and childbirth experiences via Beatrice's, derives the courage to face her past. Unlike her own mother, who embodied the atrocities of nationalism and apartheid, Beatrice is the imperial mother, transmitting another set of behavioural codes to her daughter. These codes include defying societal convention and breaking out of the stereotypes that shape and mould the female identity. Connie learning from these, albeit dissident, codes, vows to take courage and learn how to swim. For Connie, Beatrice is the good mother, who passes on her wisdom and encourages her to grow, unlike her own mother, who is in part responsible for Connie's passivity and fear.

The Good Mother is another archetype featuring in myths and legends from the earliest times. One such mother is Demeter, Greek goddess of grain, plenitude and harvest. Although Landsman does not refer directly to the Demeter myth in

the novel, there are many parallels between this story and that of Beatrice and Precious/Pauline. As Precious is abducted by the Devil in the cave, so Demeter's daughter, Persephone, is abducted by Hades, the god of the underworld. Demeter searches frantically for her and unable to find her, lays a curse upon the world, causing the crops to wither and die. Her curse, however, is attenuated, because she bargains with Hades, who agrees that Persephone can spend half the year with her mother, but must return to him for the other half of the year. Hence, as Persephone returns to Hades, Precious as Pauline also returns to the Devil. And as Demeter is blamed for the death of the land in winter, so too is Beatrice blamed for the death of the town. Connie asserts that she is held responsible for making the Devil in the Chimney and 'now everybody is leaving because the Devil made the price of the feathers drop and the whole town is dying without any money' (DC: 273).

However, in contrast to the Good Mother, Beatrice is also analogous to the Eve archetype who succumbs to temptation, thus precipitating the fall of humankind. Beatrice sees herself in this position as she says to Jacobs: 'You are the first man … I am the first woman' (DC: 72). This resonates with the palimpsestic history associated with the cave, with Genesis and the myth of origins. Like Eve, Beatrice succumbs to the allure of the snake-like phallus, bringing disaster to those around her. If the lives of the characters that take part in Connie's story are not exactly Edenic before Beatrice's dalliance, they are positively hellish after her fall: both Henry and September die grisly deaths, as do most of the ostriches; Precious disappears in the caves; Nomsa and Beatrice are trapped behind the high walls of Highlands forever and the feather market collapses: arguably all appropriate punishments for Beatrice's sin of miscegenation. Connie has difficulty coming to terms with the mixing of the races, which has become prevalent in the new South Africa. She narrates: 'I thought I saw Pauline or Precious sitting in a *bakkie* next to a white farmer with curlers in her hair and I got such a *skrik* because the world is really changing if you can see something like that and it's not the maid'. She punishes Beatrice by having Nomsa steal Precious. She says: 'I still think Miss Beatrice was wrong to lose Precious in the

Caves like that, but Precious did live, not like my poor baby' (DC: 274). Connie, notwithstanding her prejudices, does not want another baby to die so she has Precious live.

If Connie identifies with Beatrice as self, then Nomsa represents the other. Connie portrays her as the archetypal African sorceress or devil's agent, who, with her black magic, steals babies. It is in the caves where Nomsa's presence is announced to Beatrice by her smell of 'wood smoke and *muti* and *mieliepap'* (DC: 240). Like one of the human-sized bats that surround Pauline and remove her clothes in preparation for her date with the Devil, Nomsa, bat-like, uses echolocation and following the 'map of her echoes'(DC: 241), talks and clicks her way to Precious, locating her and taking her from Beatrice, in revenge for 'all her children who she had left and lost, and all those white noses and bums she had wiped…' (DC: 242). However, it is also in the caves, where Connie's eyes are opened and where she apprehends that black women are more than mere domestic drudges, wicked Medusas or shadows flitting through the pages of texts, but are human beings, whose multifaceted identities belie their stereotypical discursive representations. Thus, in this space that no longer conforms to the hierarchical, enclosed and inscribed spaces of the patriarchal narrative, Nomsa is empowered. Finally, her voice as a black woman is no longer silenced but vociferous enough to locate Precious. She has sufficient strength to ignore her employer's commands to return the baby and empowered enough to revenge the many wrongs that have been wrought on her. To Precious, she is both Good Mother and Fairy Godmother. Locating the infant, Nomsa welcomes her as her own and shouts: 'It is me… Welcome, child of my husband' (DC: 269). Nomsa becomes the Demeter figure here, freeing her 'daughter' from the Devil's grasp. When she reaches to pick up the baby, 'Precious stretche[s] her arms like a baby monkey falling off a vine right into Nomsa's arms' (DC: 270). Like a ripe fruit, she falls into Nomsa's arms: the tableau created is one brimming with love, life and abundance. Nomsa, again like Demeter, takes Precious back up to the world of light, lucerne fields and willow trees. Also, in this fairy palace, aglow like a dawn laden with the promise of new beginnings and new life, Nomsa acts as fairy godmother,

magically bestowing on the child the gifts required for a fulfilling life, such as generosity of spirit, determination, sweet dreams and physical strength.

The caves are a mythopoeic space: ancient, primordial and undifferentiated, transcending time and experience. Nevertheless, the space does not signify prelapserian innocence, for deep within its core, resides the devil who holds that apple. The caves, then, are the boundary into the underworld: a liminal space between the outer- and the underworlds, generating the margin between 'two domains of difference' which, quoting Bhabha (1994: 4), 'prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities'. This is what creates the *unheimlichkeid* that unsettles people, this blending of primordial darkness with the light they bear from their outer-worlds. When Beatrice and a group of tourists visit the caves, she apprehends that a timid member of their party is '*poep-scared',* as she hears her say '…the Lord's Prayer, over and over again in Afrikaans' (DC: 143), to ward off the uncanny feelings that she is experiencing.

However, for Beatrice, the caves become intensely unhomely because, in addition to losing Precious, she also loses her identity as the authoritative Englishwoman. Playing a central role in the merging and shifting of the archetypes that form Beatrice's identity, the caves mutate from a womblike nothingness where her spirit can escape societal constraints to a claustrophobic and dangerous site of entrapment. Initially, the caves welcome her as if they have a 'door and a welcome mat' (DC: 236), and provide her with 'a cave inside a cave' (DC: 238) in which she nurses Precious. But later, when she loses Precious in the Banqueting Hall, Beatrice is forced to adopt the wiliness of a fox to escape its danger, and even then, 'all the fox tricks in the world [are] not enough' (DC: 242), for they do not prevent Nomsa from taking her baby. Seeing Nomsa taking Precious away, Beatrice screams her name. Her voice comes 'out of the past, out of the kitchen at Highlands, an old order from before. But it does not stop Nomsa' (DC: 242). Beatrice's authority has been lost and her voice comes out as a mere 'Om' (DC: 261). The caves have lost their magical opulence and take on only a dull and

destructive monotony that is reminiscent of those other famous literary caves: the Marabar Caves from the canonical *Passage to India*.

Dover (internet) imbues Forster's caves, like Landsman's, with multiple significances and polysemy, including sexuality and the encounter with the unconscious. The Marabar Caves are also said to represent the 'alien otherness' of India, which is complex, ungovernable and enigmatic. Referring not only to India but also to the Indian, the novel, which explores inter-racial friendship, begins and ends with the question of whether the English and Indian races can be friends. The answer, found on the very last page, is 'No, not yet' (316). This is also true for Beatrice and Nomsa, whose race and class differences exclude the possibility of friendship. Forster was a liberal humanist who wrote about the individual and the personal experience. He did not speak for the masses but narrated from an individual's perspective. In addition, his voice was anti-hegemonic, critical of the priggishness, censoriousness and complacency of imperialism. This echoes with the anti-hegemonic, anti-nationalistic thrust of Landsman's text. Finally, Dover (ibid.) conjectures that the caves also signify 'emptiness at the heart of things'. This absent centre strongly relates to the empty but multiply-signifying cave at the heart of Landsman's text. As such, it is profoundly postmodernist, Derridian and gynocritical in concept. Ambiguous and contradictory, a space where nothing is prescribed, the cave represents a hole, a lack of fulfilment and an absence. If the centre does not hold, things fall apart. The structure of the text is supported by a central emptiness, an enigma that invites introspection, a turning inwards, a self-reflexive moment.

Landsman's cave, distinguished by its cavernous lacunae, is a nothingness representing the existential hole, the blank page that faces every author and whose task it is to fill. The dream-like spaces of the caves certainly reveal the inner life of the artist, the shadowy part of the self, within whose centre lurks the other: in this case, the Devil. For Landsman, writing the novel when she was pregnant, the caves represent an inwards look into the womb, into that unknown space of the self. Looking into the self requires courage for it is frightening to confront one's

inner demons. She says about her pregnancy in the interview[15]: '…I was dealing with my fear of something going wrong. I was wrestling with the fear of the unknown.' Her inward look also reveals the cave within the body, the womb, as a site of momentous change, whose little occupant will radically alter her life and her identity. Thus, it is not only the fear of 'something going wrong' with the pregnancy, but also her trepidation and ambivalence regarding the changes that motherhood will wreak on her identity as a woman. She alludes to this when she comments: 'This was definitely going on…the idea of having a child or not having a child… Also, I put off having a child until relatively late in life – and then having one – these issues definitely changed the work'.

The author's personal tensions inexorably lead to an exploration of political and discursive issues. Govinden (1999: 71) writes that a woman writer's quest is one of 'emancipation, self-identity and fulfilment' and for a white woman, this necessitates the unlearning of privilege and a need to listen to the other. Thus, the ambiguous space of the caves and the shifts of power that occur within are significant, because Landsman, rather than positioning her subjects on the basis of their race, class and sexuality, listens to the other. By deploying a multiplicity of perspectives that culminate in 'a more complex and shifting notion of both space and subject positionality' (Blunt and Rose: 1994: 9), Landsman's text is one that subscribes to modern feminist issues. In addition, the notion of complex space and shifting subject positionality also features in postcolonialism and magical realism. This lack of prescription is a strategy for resisting the master narrative of patriarchal colonial discourse. Blunt and Rose (ibid.: 18) offer Homi Bhabha's argument that in order to resist the 'discursive structures of the master subject', there is a need to find a space that goes beyond the territories defined by the dominant discourse. Bhabha calls this 'the third space': the one that reaches 'beyond the discursive limits of the master subject' (ibid.: 18). This is the space of Landsman's cave: a heterotopia of ambivalence and contradiction, of escape and entrapment, of womb and tomb, of identity and alterity, of abundance and lack. It goes beyond, exceeding the barrier constructed by the master discourse, to

[15] See appendix

a space where stereotypes and essentialisms are destabilised and hybridity is embraced, where identity is ambiguous and open to multiple reinscriptions. As such, according to Woodward (1999: 2-3), it is a metaphor for a new cultural rubric set in opposition to apartheid's patriarchal nation or fatherland.

Abrams (1993: 19-20) states that canonic boundaries are fluid and forever changing, always subject to conflicting interpretations and evaluations, somewhat like the caves. Canons and their boundaries also reveal the ideology, politics and values of the privileged society. In the Western literary canon, those with agency, the 'big guns' of society have been white, male and European who have thought in terms of stereotypes and essentialisms. In contrast, the space of Landsman's caves, with its multidimensional qualities, is a metaphor for the canon of the new South Africa, which will hopefully reach beyond these essentialisms towards, as Woodward (ibid.) terms, 'cultural or creative hybridities', generating, in the process, a home for all artists, regardless of gender, race, class and sexuality.

CHAPTER SIX

The Genre as a House for a Novel

the poet like an acrobat
climbs on rhyme
to a high wire of his own making
and balancing on eyebeams
above a sea of faces
paces his way
to the other side of day
performing entrechats
and sleight-of-foot tricks
and other high theatrics
and all without mistaking
any thing
for what it may not be
"Constantly Risking Absurdity" Lawrence Ferlinghetti

In 1991 when apartheid is in its death throws, Njabulo Ndebele (1991: 22) writes an article where he offers some generalizations on South African liberal writers. Their main endeavour, he says, is to impart their commitment to and engagement with politics. However, they comply so self-consciously and zealously with their lofty mission that they fail lamentably to provide any entertainment for the reader who, in turn, cannot relate on an emotional level to these texts (ibid.: 15). Seven years hence, and Elleke Boehmer (1998: 43) observes that writers, no longer mired in realism and overt moralizing and now given the opportunity to experiment with new forms, disappointingly persist with 'second-hand, borrowed or inherited models [such as] …magic realist conjuring tricks' with which to articulate their brave new world. I do not think that originality of form is the yardstick for judging fiction, but rather whether the text is diverting and has depth enough to invite a deeper interrogation from critical readers. Magical realism, the genre which Boehmer refers to as 'borrowed' and tricksy, is particularly well-adapted to South Africa. The genre first emerged in South American countries, whose heterogeneous population was living in the throes of the postcolonial experience. The similarity with South Africa, as it emerges from its turbulent colonial past and with its multicultural society, is certainly noteworthy.

Contrary to the staid mimetic traditions of South African fiction, magical realism has an abandoned playfulness about it with its echoes of Bakhtin's carnivalesque, where socially-constructed hierarchies and boundaries are inverted and transgressed, where the familiar is often cast in an unusual light and the unfamiliar presented as the quotidian. The result of this topsy-turveyism is the creation of an in-between or third space, which offers the writer the opportunity for inserting, albeit perhaps unconsciously, a socio-political voice contrapuntal to the narrative. Landsman says that when she started writing the novel, she did not set out to produce a magical realist text but she had been exposed to the South American magical realist novelist, Gabriel García Márquez.[1] She comments that she was taken by the interesting and magical way he engaged with his country's tragic and tumultuous history. Hence, although Landsman borrows her form from

[1] See appendix

international models, her text is more than mere pastiche because it has the potential to raise consciousness amongst her readers, rendering it as 'worthy' as any realist text in the liberal pre-apartheid mould. Her message, arguably, is her antipathy towards hegemony and patriarchal nationalism (especially that of colonialism and apartheid) and the inequality and unhomeliness that exists for certain subjects living within the nation, such as the colonised and women. Her text thus lays the groundwork for the discursive removal of the patriarchal coloniser. This is achieved in fiction by placing the coloniser and the colonised in propinquity and syncretically aligning their cultures and the different spaces they inhabit. However, the removal of the oppressor is never wholly successful because of the unresolved nature of the genre, which pertains more to rapprochement, the opening up of potential and the exploration of possibilities than about conveying absolute and dogmatic pronouncements that speak for all.

As presented in Western discourse, the worlds of the colonised and coloniser are diametrically opposed. Colonial culture is characterized by modernity, technology, capitalism, rationalism, fact and the real. In contrast, the world of the colonised is represented as pre-industrial and primitive and as one of folklore, myth and magic. Consequently, in magical realism, the propinquity between the coloniser and the colonised results in a slippage out of which emerges contradiction, ambiguities and *unheimlichkeid*. It is within this uncanny space where the potential for dialogue is opened up between coloniser and colonised, their exchange facilitating the break-down of the essentialisms of Western discourse, subversion of the tropes of Western realism and a challenge to Western rationality, all areas underpinned by patriarchalism. In this chapter, I interrogate the 'house' Landsman constructs as she brings the colonial/colonised and the magical/real into propinquity. I also analyze the way in which the characters in the novel interface with their environment and with each other. I specifically look at the colonised characters, the hybridized Beatrice who occupies both worlds, Jacobs who is also a hybrid but not a member of the colonised, Henry as the colonialist and Connie as the magical realist anti-heroine who provides a forum for the silenced voices of the past and creates the space in which to revise their

histories. Present and past voices inhabiting colonised and colonial spaces weave in and out, deviating from familiar time to create a labyrinthine structure, which reflects the caves where a portion of the narrative occurs. The nature of the text also provides a home for Landsman's own voice, which adds yet another layer to the web-like textuality of the narrative.

The effect of incongruous juxtaposition is described by Freud (1950: 405), who says that writing moves into the realm of the uncanny when the writer 'pretends to move in a world of common reality….[but] then deceives us into thinking that he is giving us the sober truth, and then after all oversteps the bounds of possibility'. This, according to Freud, takes us into the realms of the *unheimlich* – the unhomely. Bhabha (1997: 446) takes Freud's term and gives it a postcolonial slant, where he uses it to describe fiction where the presence of Western culture is placed alongside that of the coloniseds, with both cultures enjoying equal status. The in-between space that results offers the unhomely living in their unhomely worlds a chance to interrogate, split and renew cultural differences, historical conditions and social contradictions, factors which distinguish differences between the unhomely and the homely. In so doing, the colonised are able to resist Western culture, but as Western culture is often 'owned' by the colonised, the space is laden with contradiction, ambivalence and ambiguity. However, it is these very elements that allow the author to negotiate a range of possibilities, conferring a freedom on him or her that allows the dismantling of the homely/unhomely binarisms created by colonialism.

In magical realism, as in postcolonialism, the propinquity and syncretism between the coloniser and the colonised renders the in-between spaces of a hybrid world. Accordingly, the genre is greatly preoccupied with resistance to colonial culture, making it inextricably intertwined with politically-committed Third World postcolonialism. However, in magical realist fiction, magical events and fantastical elements are matter-of-factly interposed by a narrator who displays no surprise at their occurrence, draws no attention to these events, nor judges them in any way but gives equal credence to both 'realities'. In *The Devil's Chimney*,

Landsman creates this milieu via Connie's world, apparently characterised by 'reality' and 'fact', and that of Beatrice, which is the world of fiction, illusion and magic. However, the boundaries between the real and the magical are porous and the narrative slips effortlessly between the two worlds, manifesting a dialectical tension between the two oppositional structures. The in-between space that results is especially *unheimlich* for the Western reader, steeped in realism, who is asked to suspend his or her belief systems in order to relate to the narrative and its characters. Again, as in postcolonialism, the blurring of boundaries is a political act of resistance because it opposes Western rationality and rebels against Western artistic convention. The magic in magical realism confers permissiveness on the text, opening up possibilities that could not otherwise exist in a realist genre. The world of the imagination thus generated provides the perfect medium in which to explore alternative scenarios of colonial conquest and establish relationships that have previously not existed. In this way, the unhomely can replay a past that has been erased by colonial history.

The magical in magical realism is generated from many sources, according to Spindler (1993: 79, 81, 82), and includes the delusions of psychotics or substance abusers; supernatural or preternatural events which contradict the laws of nature; defamiliarisation where real objects are portrayed in an unusual manner to produce feelings of alienation in the reader; and national myths relating to nature and natural phenomena, manifesting as a controlling influence on the characters' lives and the events in the narrative. The magic in *The Devil's Chimney* springs forth from these sources. It has, as its narrator Connie, untrustworthy and inebriated, out of whose bottle of gin flows the story of Beatrice. Fantastical events occur that blur the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman and the animate and the inanimate: Beatrice transmutes into an ostrich, a column of smoke and a fox. Non-human objects assume human characteristics in response to the dramas played out around them: pumpkins animatedly dance to the rhythms of love-making, lice rain down on the uncomfortable partakers of a dinner party and a clap of thunder echoes the beating of a love-smitten heart. The text has its fair share of the preternatural via Nomsa, who displays a 'crack of lightening

between [her] teeth' and 'a needle in her look' (DC: 130), portending the doom that will befall her employer. Nomsa's *mut*i making ability fits magical realist typology, as Connie draws attention to the doubtful veracity of its existence, and thus its efficacy. For example, she says: '*Some say* she could make people fall in love, or die' (DC: 16) or '*People say* that Nomsa took some ostrich toe-nails and dog hair that day for a special *muti*' (DC: 41). In this way, Connie suggests that Nomsa's *muti*-magic may be mere hearsay but *muti*-making and its paranormal power is strongly rooted in African tradition and is a powerful force in its culture. It thus exists anyway, precisely because of this hearsay. The integration of this type of indigenous element is typical of Third World magical realism and is significant because, when placed alongside Western technology and rationality in a non-hierarchical relationship, once again the in-between site is generated, with its concomitant slippages, ambiguities and tensions, and subversion and resistance against Western colonial and patriarchal ideology.

For white South African writers who grew up in the era of apartheid, any resistance they display against apartheid is filled with contradiction and ambiguity as these writers benefited from apartheid and enjoyed the privileges associated with their white skins. In addition, their cultural identities conform somewhat more with that of the oppressor than with that of the oppressed. In Landsman's case, however, as a woman and as a migrant living in New York, the 'us' takes on a more complex hue. Her feelings around South Africa, as well as her exile from its shores, are filled with profound ambivalence, as she states in an interview:

> [South Africa] is a very hard space ... I'm not that comfortable when I'm there. I wasn't really comfortable there as a child. I'm incredibly attracted and drawn to it and I miss it terribly. Living here, there is some sort of alienation from that part of myself. [2]

Landsman, enjoying the privileges of her 'Second World' status as the stock of white settlers, feels herself 'unhomed' on South African shores. She observes that

[2] See appendix

she regards New York as home, commenting: 'Living in New York, being an outsider is part of the society. Everybody here comes from somewhere else'. Thus she does not belong to the ranks of the unhomely in New York but she does feels alienated from a part of herself living in New York, and significantly adds that she does not know if she would feel 'at home' if she lived elsewhere in America besides New York. Consequently, Landsman's here/there, insider/outsider, self/other binarisms are intensely unstable and the space she inhabits lies in a tangled web of multiple and contradictory allegiances and antipathies. She belongs to no nation, but hovers between two worlds, inhabiting the ambiguous spaces of an ex-South African in New York. Consequently, denationalised, she displays dissidence, subversion and resistance towards nationalism. The fact that she only felt ready to undertake writing the book after apartheid's demise indicates the political underpinnings of the text. She says: 'In fact, a lot of writing the book was an act of real liberation. I started it in 1994. I suddenly felt ready to write a book about South Africa. Coming from South Africa, I felt ready to face it as an act of personal liberation'. To liberate oneself implies the act of freeing oneself from some form of oppression. Slemon (1990: 36) proposes that the aim of all resistance, literary included, is the removal of an oppressor from one's space. Consequently, to resist the authority of her 'oppressor', Landsman creates a space filled with ambiguity, fissures and tensions echoing the *unheimlichkeid* of the space she herself occupies.

The rationale behind hybrid space is a resistance to the binaristic logic of patriarchal ideology. Hybridity creates non-hierarchical spaces that, as Gaylard (1999: 101) says, are forever 'locked in a continuous dialectic', in contrast to the binaristic hierarchical paradigm of colonial and apartheid discourse. Sangar (2001: 79) promotes the notion that instead of an 'adversarial and antagonistic encounter between the colonised and coloniser', hybridity is more of a 'dialogic exchange'. In conforming to these notions, Landsman constructs hybrid spaces by juxtaposing colonial culture with that of the colonised. Thus colonial modernity, with its technology, rationalism and capitalism, is brought into propinquity with the colonised's pre-industrial mode of existence and their close

relationship to folklore, magic and myth. Furthermore, Connie weaves her own present-day story in between the threads of Beatrice's story with the result that time in the text is not linear, but folds inwards and back on itself, generating a labyrinthine time-space configuration. Moreover, the propinquity is not merely manifested between the old and the new, magic and the real, primitivism and modernity, and the past and the present, but also between the human and the animal. Connie comments on the clothing habits of Edwardian ladies, a comment which underscores the propinquity between these antithetical realms: 'In those days, a lady went out with an ostrich in her hat, a seal on her back and kids on her hands and feet. They even had pockets in their dresses for little dogs!' (DC: 44). Beatrice herself becomes an ostrich, as Connie narrates: '[Beatrice] knows that she is the female ostrich, dressed in the colours of the earth' (DC: 32). Her metamorphosis is so complete that outsiders comment on her appearance: 'Her eyes got bigger and her neck got longer, and she got on with the birds so well that people made jokes about plucking her and selling her feathers' (DC: 49). Neither human nor animal, she also loses her whiteness. She sits at the servants' table and eats '*mieliepap* and bread like the *kaffirs*. No knife, no fork, no spoon, just shovelling the pap with the bread and swallowing it in big chunks' (DC: 35). 'People had to look at her twice to see if she was White because by now her skin was very brown' (DC: 43). Furthermore, she is a perpetrator of miscegenation, using September to allay her sexual longing for Jacobs. Miscegenation often occurs in magical realist fiction, because with the assimilation between races and the generation of hybrid stock, colonial binaries are violated to their very core. The result of miscegenation is a group of people who personify that ambiguous and subversive in-between space.

Whereas Beatrice is hybridised, inhabiting the in-between spaces, Nomsa and September and the five Bapedi, who appear at the climax of the novel, inhabit the primitive and mystical spaces of the colonised. September's family tree has its roots in the most ancient of soils. He tells Beatrice what his Ouma Boesman told him: '*Ons is die eerste mense*…We are the first people' (DC: 65). His ancient family lines make him privy to the secrets of the universe, and he is able to hear

the noises of the stars, how 'Orion [is] bellowing and the Lion and the Little Dog [are] up there panting' (DC: 65) and why the ostrich cannot fly. In addition, Nomsa is also familiar with secrets, but of the body and knows about the juices from which Beatrice has drunk. The Bapedi too are in touch with ancient and arcane rites and rituals. They make their appearance in the novel after Precious's birth and disappearance. Bapedi folklore ordains that the bad outcome of a pregnancy promotes drought because rain 'is too afraid to fall near the place where the blood of the child is lying' (DC: 253). Thinking Precious dead and buried, they stake out Beatrice's house in the hope that she will lead them to the child. The Bapedi want Precious's blood for a ceremony that will counteract the curse that her 'death' will incur. Their quest leads them to Nomsa who thinks that if she gives them the dried-up umbilical cord, it will go some way in satisfying their mission. She leads them to the site of the cord – the caves - where the frenzied Beatrice is searching for Precious.

At the same time, also in the caves, are a group of Afrikaans dissenters, plotting to defy their call-up to fight for Britain in the Great War. Colonised and coloniser[3] meet head-on in the labyrinthine spaces of the cave. But instead of a coming together, a concordance between white and black, the encounter is chaotic and antagonistic, reminiscent of the chaotic spaces of Forster's Marabar caves in *A Passage to India*. One of the themes in his novel draws on liberal humanistic principles of Modernism and interrogates whether humans can connect on any level. This question is perhaps answered by the terrible consequences of the events that take place in Forster's caves. Within its spaces, one of the protagonists, an English tourist, imagines herself raped or does, in fact, experience rape, and accuses her Indian tour-guide and erstwhile friend of this dastardly deed. His incarceration and subsequent court case sours relations between members of their two race groups. The caves, with their 'terrifying echo'(158), consequently represent all that is disharmonious and antagonistic between human beings. ''Boum' is the sound [heard in the caves] as far as the human alphabet can express

[3] The Boers were not strictly the colonisers at this time. This designation belonged to the British. However, it was the Dutch, the forebears of these Boers, who had first colonised the Cape and who were to have their day again, after the Nationalist party assumed power in 1948.

it, or 'bou-oum', or 'ou-boum' – utterly dull' (159). In the Cango Caves, when Beatrice shouts Nomsa's name, her voice reverberates with an 'Om' (DC: 261). Not only is this reminiscent of the echo in Forster's caves, but 'Om' is a sacred Hindu word[4], derived from the religion largely practised in India, the location of Forster's novel. The links between Forster's and Landsman's caves are too strong to ignore and site Landsman's cave in the realms of colonial India. Landsman's caves, thus, are imbued with syncretism, bringing not only the colonised Bapedi and Nomsa into proximity with the Boer colonisers but also Landsman's postcolonial text with Forster's colonial one. In addition, it is within the caves where technology meets myth, a union that produces surprising results.

In the flickering candle light, the Boers see Nomsa and the Bapedi whom they threaten to shoot. Traditional power relations are conjured up as the weapons confer superiority on the white man. But then the binarisms break down and instead of Western technology dominating, it is the voice of Beatrice that is invested with superior power. Fearing the ricocheting of the bullets, Beatrice screams from the Devil's Chimney into which she has previously crawled. Her voice resembling the bullets about which she is warning, echoes off the walls and strikes terror into those present. The Boers shout: '*Duiwelsvrou, duivelskind*, Devil woman, Devil's child' (DC: 260), before fleeing out of the cave along with the Bapedi. Contrary to the accepted norm, the power invested in Beatrice's voice is superior to that of the armed *Boers*, who associate it with the mischief-making of the Devil. They are defenceless in its face and subsequently blame Beatrice, as the emissary of the Devil, for the feather market crash and other misfortunes that befall Oudtshoorn. Thus, despite taking advantage of the empiricism and technology of the modern world, the *Boers* are still profoundly influenced by their own primitive myths and superstitions. The cave becomes a hybrid space wherein the inversion of power and the irrationality of white beliefs subtly subvert the authority of the coloniser.

[4] The World Book Dictionary, p. 1449

Nevertheless, within the hybrid space of the cave, nothing is clear-cut and there are no absolutes. It is only Beatrice's voice (reflecting Connie's and Landsman's in turn), which is imbued with any power. Beatrice herself remains disempowered. Her greatest subversion of colonial ideology, her act of miscegenation, is severely punished: Precious is never returned to her and she is forever marginalised, living on the outskirts of her society and incarcerated behind the high walls at Highlands. The Bapedi remain forever marginalised, inhabiting only shadowy spaces. They are so powerless as to appear otherworldly and as flimsy as ghosts. They materialize in the narrative like wraiths brought in by the wind, their spokesman appears to be made from cork and string and the women wail like banshees. Beatrice has no idea where they have originated and after the incident in the caves, they disappear just as suddenly as they arrive. In addition, September's ancient and secret wisdom does not imbue him with the power necessary to withstand the greed of colonialism, as represented by Henry, at whose hands he dies a very violent death. Nomsa, too, is destined to spend the remainder of her days at Highlands, alone with Beatrice. Furthermore, Precious remains in the realms of the fantastical, defying space and time, appearing forty five years later as Pauline, the young virgin who disappears in the Devil's Chimney, and nearly ninety years after her birth, appearing to Connie as she walks her dogs on the veld. Connie waves to her but her wave is not returned. Precious just keeps walking 'with those long thin legs' (DC: 10), her destination never drawing closer as she forever walks towards some vanishing point. Precious's *ouma* promises that '…the days [are] coming, the days that belong[..] to Precious' (DC: 272). The *ouma* refers to the time when the world will be a homely place for Precious. In Landsman's text, we never witness these days. The colonised continue to live their unhomely existence in the shadow of the dominant colonial culture. Moreover, Connie remains forever suspended above that water in which she intends to swim. Landsman does not confer upon her the power necessary to resist the oppressors. Landsman's characters remain forever trapped in their unhomeliness. Thus the text remains open-ended and does not confer false hope or consolation.

While the colonised are not provided with a homely home, the colonisers, represented by Beatrice and Henry, do not inhabit one either. Beatrice, as a British subject, is complicit in the imperial project but, as a woman, she is oppressed by its patriarchalism. On the farm, she quickly loses her colonial identity and goes native, living in the syncretic spaces Landsman constructs via Connie, but she never enjoys the luxury of a welcoming home. Unlike many of his discursive colonial predecessors, Henry transforms from his colonial experience as he absorbs elements from the culture of the colonised. In transforming, his authority as an English gentleman is undermined and the hybrid identity he assumes in the hybrid spaces of the text first destabilises and then destroys him. Henry, who originates from the supposed cream of colonial society, is rotten through and through. Wanting to extract as much revenue from the farm as possible before selling up and going 'home' to England, he orders the feathering of the birds in the most unfavourable conditions. Most of the birds die as a result.

To Henry, living in the colonies is an anathema. The space is unhomely for him and all he desires is to return to his beloved England. Degenerate and unbalanced to begin with, living in propinquity with the natives makes him mad. There is no meeting them half way, no dialogic exchange. The indigene imbues him with a sense of alienation. For example, Nomsa's throwing bones near the house gives him 'the *grils*' (DC: 203). But, more than merely adversarial and antagonistic, his encounters with the colonised are positively deadly as he breaks September's neck with a *sjambok*. In addition, his identity as an English gentleman crumbles around his ears in the syncretic spaces of the narrative. As a member of the white race and a practitioner of Western culture, he is supposedly governed by rationality, but under the African sun, he becomes intensely irrational, displaying the trait assumed by colonialists to be the preserve of the colonised. He goes walkabout in the mountains, leaving Beatrice to run the farm. His disappearance and reappearance in the narrative somewhat reflect Pauline's transient appearances and serve to render him as inconsequential, fleeting and shadowy as the discursive representations of the colonised in colonial literature. Thus, like Beatrice, he too

assumes a hybridity, even to the extent that he metamorphoses into an animal. But, unlike Beatrice who transforms into a fragile ostrich with a long neck, he transmutes into a deadly and venomous member of the animal kingdom. Connie describes him as '…the most frightening animal of them all, worse than puff adders and tarantulas and even a *boomslang*' (DC: 198). Furthermore, the propinquity of his Western technology with pre-industrial colonial society also results in distortion and dis-ease. The undreamt of things that he and Beatrice bring with them from England, like the 'strange medicines and electric bells' (DC: 17), may be an indication of their technological superiority but they confer no benefit on Henry. Despite his machines, Henry cannot fix anything. 'All he [can] do is break and break and break' (DC: 103). The scientific empiricism that also was expressed in the obsessive measuring, classifying, naming and claiming by the imperialists, in Henry's hands goes awry as he neurotically measures and records the dimensions of his hands and feet in the belief that they are shrinking. Perhaps, his shrinking feeling is symptomatic of the break-down of his identity and he feels he is not half the man he used to be when he lived in England. Nevertheless, the superiority of Western technology is subverted and is shown to be the ridiculous and useless tool of a sick and pathetic madman, in his case.

Whereas there is little ambiguity in Landsman's antipathy towards Henry and the authority and ideology he represents, there appears to be no such aversion towards Jacobs, who, as 'Ostrich King of the World' (DC: 56), is also the local king of capitalism. While in Henry's case, his pecuniary acquisitiveness leads to violence and destruction, in Jacobs's, the fruit of his capitalistic pursuits is used merely to purchase a Western identity. His attempts to inculcate the culture and modernity of the metropolis into his life in Oudtshoorn materialise merely as frivolous and superfluous objects in his wife's hands. After returning from a grand tour of Europe and America, Mrs Jacobs takes great pleasure in showing Beatrice the objects they have acquired abroad: a giant music box with metal records, a stereoscope, programmes of Sarah Bernhard's performances and, ironically enough, clothes made from feathers and brightly coloured beads, and a tomahawk from the Red Indians of the Niagara Falls. Mrs Jacobs perceives the artefacts of

the Canadian indigenes as having great rarity value and exoticism. I am sure she would not view items from indigenous South Africans as being so worthy of her neighbour's attention. The objects, which also include '…a car in a box, a Ford' (DC: 111), seem very out of place in Oudtshoorn. This is especially evident when the Jacobs family visit the Chapmans in their newly acquired Ford and September thinks the car poses a threat to their safety. He sees 'a puff of dust on the road, with something black and shiny in the middle of it' (DC: 150). Connie narrates, too, how 'he saw that the black thing had wheels and was rolling towards him…[and how he] ran back to the house, to call Mr Henry to get his shotgun' (DC: 150).

The coloniser's technology is incompatible with the archaic mode of the colonised. The uncomfortable propinquity generated between the modern and the primitive is very characteristic of magical realist texts, such juxtaposition demonstrating that neither the modern nor the primitive world takes precedence over each other. Modernity is associated with progress and is underpinned by empiricism and rationality. This suggests that it takes preference over the world of myth and magic. Yet, in the Third World, there is extensive interpenetration between both worlds. The ancient world exists and it cannot be discounted. September's disquiet regarding Jacobs's car establishes a geopolitical location for the text and is a classic magical realist moment. Underlying this scene is the fact that technology is not innocent: if it were not for the gun, the colonial project might not have been successful. With its invention, the car succeeds the gun as an emblem of technological imperialism.

As incongruous as the car is on the dusty roads of Oudtshoorn in 1913, is Jacobs in his home. With his technical doodads, his fake English accent, his English sofa, chintz-covered pillows and Western culture, Jacobs is a wannabe, a mimic man. Rural Oudtshoorn is an unhomely place for him as Beatrice remarks how he is 'so wrong in this place, so very wrong' (DC: 36). Furthermore, he does not feel at home in the great civilisations of the West either: as Mrs Jacobs observes: 'Over there, you are smaller than a tadpole. Nobody knew Mr. Jacobs was the

Ostrich King' (DC: 122). Ironically enough, Jacobs's forefathers probably lived for many generations in Europe. Connie notes: 'They say he was a religious man' (DC: 53). As with many observant Ashkenazi Jews living in the Diaspora, he retains Jewish traditions and values and lives by the laws decreed in the Bible but he adopts the dominant culture of the land wherein he lives. Additionally, his religion also sites him in the Middle East of the Bible: the birthplace of his primal ancestors. His name alludes to his origins: Jacob, along with Isaac and Abraham, is one of the Patriarchs of Judaism.

His origins confer a hybrid identity on him. Initially, Beatrice is prejudiced against his foreignness, making reference on more than one occasion to his Jewish otherness. On first hearing her neighbour is a *Boerejood*, she speculates about him and his tribe, as he is the first Jew she has ever met. She wonders if the Jews run around with 'the Hottentots and the Bushmen, the Xhosa and Zulus' (DC: 36). She contemplates whether they came to Oudtshoorn 'on ships from the East with their spices' (DC: 36). She ruminates on Jacobs and asks whether there is 'garlic in his pockets and a black beard covering his whole face? Or [is] the Jew part underneath?' (DC: 36): this query being a double entendre that not only refers to his 'essential' Jewish identity hidden beneath his exterior veneer but also to the Jewish ritual of circumcision. Her conjectures all serve to emphasise how other he is to her, as she aligns him with primitive Africans, exotic Orientals and medieval Jews from European ghettos. After she meets him, she envies and resents his knowledge and commercial success and wonders how it is possible that a Jew could be richer and more successful than an Englishman, who is endowed with inborn superior intellect and ability. She seethes: 'How dare he. A Jew. Not an Englishman, not even a Boer. How could he. Who let him' (DC: 62). Henry, too, never misses an opportunity to cast racial slurs Jacobs's way. Connie describes how, after an onslaught of Henry's insults, the Jacobs family flee the Chapmans' dining-room table like the acolytes of Moses fleeing the wrath of Pharaoh. She narrates: 'Beatrice saw the Jacobs family running away, the Israelites running into the desert. The curtains and flowers and all those pillows and cloths were boiling like the Red Sea...' (DC: 156). The very presence of the

hybrid Jacobs in her home collapses the boundaries between the manmade and the natural, endowing Beatrice's furnishings with the energy of natural phenomena. The ordinary objects in Beatrice's house assume fantastical properties, generating what Bhabha (quoted by Blunt and Rose: 1994: 18) calls the 'third space, [which goes] beyond the discursive limits of the master subject'. According to Blunt and Rose, these limits refer to those of logical, rational Western knowledge.

What is interesting is that despite his capitalist propensity and ambition, Jacobs educes from Landsman descriptions that wax most lyrical and magical. The rhetorical devices, the similes and metaphors, which she uses to describe Jacobs, are at their most evocative. Indeed, nowhere else in the text is her language as magical as in the descriptions of Jacobs, besides those that occur in the cave. Jacobs is a magical figure with his 'dark brown eyes as hot as treacle' (DC: 56), which burn and pour into Beatrice's bones. Despite Beatrice's bias against Jews, the sweet hot syrup of his look is irresistible and there is no mistaking the seductive effect he has on her. Beatrice finds him sexually fascinating and she cannot resist his magic.

His magical quality, which is, in effect, an expression of his hybridity, aligns him to the cave with its hybrid and magical properties. When Beatrice and Jacobs make love in the cave, Connie describes it as follows: 'The cave she was in was him, and she moved in it and it rose against her' (DC: 71). At this instant, he becomes cave. His animal magnetism, with his hairy chest and taut-skinned ribs, evoke strong visual and tactile images in the reader as Connie describes how, after his and Beatrice's coupling, he stands up against the walls of the cave, 'staring up, the skin tight against his ribs, black hair covering his chest like felt' (DC: 72). To Beatrice, he appears to have reverted to some primitive being. She tells him: 'You are the first man' (DC: 72). No longer the King of Ostriches living in the age of modernity, he is a caveman living in prehistory. A hybrid between the ancient and the modern, he excites Beatrice, who is just exploring her own hybrid world, and releases the animal in her. Before their sexual encounter in the cave, their conversation spinning around disjointedly, Beatrice exclaims suddenly: 'Look,

Mr Jacobs, I am green like a horse that has never been ridden'. He responds like a cowboy hero about to seduce the girl in an old Western movie. As Connie describes: 'That's when his eyes boiled at her, and he looked like he was about to pull her off the saddle and break her in' (DC: 69), this exchange blurring the boundary between the animal and the human.

Jacobs's otherness as an exotic alluring projection rather than demonised self-exteriorisation is interesting. It is difficult to know why Connie imagines Beatrice as attracted to Jacobs. Beatrice's new-found connection to the land appears to put her in touch with her sexuality. As Henry is not available to satisfy her sexual needs (he has left for his walkabout), perhaps Jacobs, as next most eligible male, looks very attractive to her. Possibly Beatrice is attracted to his success as an ostrich farmer or she is simply weary of Henry and his ways. Beatrice's foray into farming appears to propel her into a mood of rebellion with regard to the strictures that bind the lives of colonial women. The fact that Jacobs is Jewish may also indicate her wish to disavow her father's and brothers' anti-Semitism. Jacobs's exoticism may represent an escape, allowing her to free herself from her society's and her family's conventional attitudes.

Jacobs is a tangle of syncretism, contradiction and ambivalence: Ostrich King, capitalist, coloniser, technophile, Jew, Oriental, South African, and caveman. At times, he looks 'like the Devil…his cheeks red from the sun, his eyes big and dark' (DC: 61) and like an African with 'that hair as *kroes* as a *hotnot's*' (DC: 61). At other times, he is an Old Testament prophet, seeing his God and hearing His voice. After his first sexual union with Beatrice, Connie describes his spiritual elation: 'That's when he saw his own God who told him that this was not his neighbour's wife, this was an angel, a messenger to tell him that the Messiah was finally coming' (DC: 54). Nonetheless, he tries hard to live within the rational, chronologically-ordered paradigm of Europe or England, but he is thwarted by the ancient rhythm of his environment, which does not move according to clock-time. As he and his family sit in the railway station, waiting for their cart to carry them home, he notes that the station clock is wrong. Paradoxically, it is Jacobs's

alliance with Western capitalism, with its laws of economics and measurable market forces, which allows him alone, of all Connie's fictional characters, to emerge unscathed from the spaces of the text. At the dénouement of her narrative, Connie remarks on his prescience relating to commerce: 'There were some people who could look into the future and see that there was a living in the ostriches but they were a few. Mr Jacobs was one of them' (DC: 266). He also has the insight to recognise the peak of the feather market and foresee its impending crash. He sells his farm 'at the height' (DC: 266). His success perhaps reveals, along with the allure he holds for Beatrice and his magical rendering, Landsman's empathy towards him as a hybrid, displaced, white, Jewish male.

Kabbalistic scholars interpret the Biblical Jacob as representing the essence of truth. Although Connie is not a reliable narrator, her story of the namesake of the original Jacobs goes some way in presenting a more comprehensive truth than the version supplied by the colonisers, as do her stories of Beatrice, Henry, Nomsa and September. Their lives belong to the same order as those other countless erased lives whose histories must be told in order to resist and deconstruct the binarisms and oppositional logic of imperialism and Afrikaner nationalism. By telling her stories, Connie digs beneath the colonial top layer of the palimpsest of history and, not hampered by the restrictions of realism or limited to objective or historical fact, she uncovers a very different past to the one found in South African history textbooks. Also, because her backwards look is distorted by her abuse of alcohol and because she recounts both the real and the magical in a way where everything seems normal, the reader is confused as to what constitutes 'fact' and what is invented. Within this fluid space, she gives herself carte blanche to play with notions of authority, subversion, transgression and resistance. Durix (1998: 126) defines such a narrator as a hero because courage is required to redress some of the wrongs inflicted by colonialism and to write and speak openly of the tragic history of oppression.

If Connie is a heroine, she certainly makes an unlikely one. Pre-1994, her skin colour and Afrikaans background, paradoxically, do not grant her access to the

privileged ranks of the ruling white minority as she is marginalised by her gender, class, alcoholism and rural location: a status quo that is maintained in the post-apartheid era. In addition, although her status is not that of the subaltern, as she is literate enough to know about history, she is othered in apartheid South Africa and now in the new South Africa. She has always been one of the unhomely living in an unhomely world. To survive the harsh realities of her life, she creates an inner world with the aid of alcohol, conforming to Delbaere-Garant's (1995: 251) description of the hero of magical realist texts, whose 'fissured self renders him or her particularly sensitive to the manifestations of an otherwise invisible reality and whose visionary power can be induced by drugs, love, religious faith…or erotic desire'. The hero's visions are imbued with magical events but to the hero, they are part of his or her reality, hence the matter-of-fact way they are related.

Connie's narrative style is noteworthy for its sparing use of direct speech and when she does quote, it is without the use of inverted commas. The effect Landsman perhaps wishes to convey with this unconventional punctuation is to underscore the orality of Connie's narration. Her characters' words are not those spoken by real characters at any time but have been invented by Connie, as enacted by all accomplished storytellers, to enliven her narration. The stories she tells are second-hand, stored in her unreliable memory bank and filtered through alcohol, making her the conduit for the narratives of multiple voices. The narrative assumes a multilayered texture complicated by its non-chronological sequence, and like all magical realist stories, assumes a labyrinthine complexity that is reflected in the tangible spaces of the cave. Connie makes reference to the cave-like nature of the structure by using the spider as a metaphor, saying: 'The story had many arms and legs, just like a tarantula, and it hung in everybody's house, on the ceiling' (DC: 266). The arms and legs of the spider include the narratives of Beatrice and English imperialism, Nomsa and the lot of the dispossessed, Connie herself, in the spaces of Afrikaner nationalism and Pauline, the shadowy black female other who is found deep within the psyche of white men, haunting their dreams, the photographic negative on which their identity is created. Connie refers to the dream-like nature of her stories, saying: 'All of these

stories you could hear like dreams in the bar of the Oudtshoorn Hotel before closing or early in the morning with coffee' (DC: 267).

Connie's stories are a way for her to survive her harsh upbringing, abusive marriage and the loss of her baby. She suffers due to her ignorance and her inability to fill in the gaps and feels invisible through a lack of identity, a point which causes Jack's ire. He admonishes her for her alcoholism and tells her she cannot drink with impunity. Connie recounts:

> Jack is shouting at me and he says that everybody sees what I am and I say no they don't. They can't see anything.
>
> Do you think you're see-through, like a plastic bag? Invisible? (DC: 52)

Durix (1998: 126) says the phenomenon of invisibility is often used by the hero as a means of protection against the enemy and becomes a form of superiority. For example, he discusses Márquez's character, José Arcadio Segundo, from the novel *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, who is invisible to the soldiers who come into the house to arrest him. The soldiers have been so conditioned by their version of reality that they fail to see the truth. Durix (ibid.: 127) speculates that in the Marquez example, the characters who belong to an oppressed group see the whole of reality, whereas their opponents have a warped view. In contrast, Connie's feelings of invisibility stem from her distorted view of the world whereas Jack and her judgmental neighbours see the truth. Connie's erroneous feelings serve to disempower her and render her helpless rather than protect and empower her. Wallowing in a world of pain, she resorts to methylated spirits. Feeling the cold spirit in her mouth, she says: 'It's cold as dying. The last of my feathers are turning to ash. The mountains are breaking' (DC: 75). Connie enlists the help of Beatrice's ostrich identity to help deflect her inner conflicts, but, at this point in her broken world, Beatrice's feathers turn to ash. Nevertheless, by exploring an alternative identity and uncovering its origins in the imperial mother, Beatrice, her story-telling helps her to survive, Scheherazade-like. Her storytelling is a way to overcome her grief as she fills in the gaps with her imagination.

However, Connie's narrative is more than imaginative text. Ultimately, her stories are the vehicle through which Landsman, as an artist, is overtly resisting the ideology associated with colonialism and apartheid. Although in the Western world these iniquitous forms of hegemony have been pronounced dead, their insidious effects continue to linger in subtle ways: the glass ceiling still exists in the world of business and politics hindering the progress of women; white men and their culture continue to dominate the world and play out their policies of imperialism as displayed by the ubiquity of McDonald's hamburgers or the military invasion of Iraq. The World Bank is notorious for its money lending policies, foisting projects on developing countries, which are then forced to comply with the bank's regulations. These projects are often, ironically, detrimental to the country's economic growth and sustainability and include environmentally devastating projects such as deforestation for hydroelectric schemes and drilling for oil in the Amazon. Another area of World Bank intervention is that of subsistence farming and local market-oriented production, which is displaced in favour of chemical intensive cash crop production for global markets. Western corporations are also guilty of unfair and immoral labour practices by exploiting the cheap labour markets of the developing world. They outsource their production of manufactured goods to the 'sweatshops' of the developing world, where labourers are paid drastically reduced wages. These powerful capital-driven Western institutions, corporations and governments manipulate the world stage, forging and breaking alliances, creating political instability and poverty and invading to further their economic aims. Has Landsman, an outsider living on the inside of the most powerful nation in terms of authority and economic power, added her voice to the counter-movements that oppose Western neo-colonialism? What is Landsman resisting? What or whose cause is she taking up? Landsman appears to be assuming a global perspective although, paradoxically, she also takes a Third World stance and additionally a South African one.

Nation-building projects abound with a concomitant quest for a new national identity, operating as the leaven for pride and patriotism. But there are always

those excluded or who exclude themselves from such projects, whose old allegiances, present ideologies or the category to which they belong disqualify them, from the perspective of the hegemony, from partaking in the national project. South Africa continues to be or has become unhomely for these people who must resort to subversion and resistance in order to survive. Thus nationalism, hegemony and power are always problematic, providing the fertile soil on which the seeds of oppression are sown and out of which resistance grows. Thus, a never-ending cycle of power, oppression and resistance ensues. Connie says:

> …I saw a film on the TV about Robben Island, where they tortured people and of course we didn't know anything. Now I am sorry for the prisoners, but I am also sorry for myself and Jack and my baby, and for Miss Beatrice and Nomsa and September and even for Mr Henry. (DC: 275)

Connie feels sympathy for everyone, unconsciously realising that whoever is in power, there will be those who suffer, made victim by masters holding desperately onto the fleeting moment of power before it is blown away by the next wind of change. The recognition of the transience of hegemonic structures is a typical magical realist concern, and one which results in a desire to end all imperialism, hence Landsman's resistance to patriarchy, colonialism and apartheid.

Landsman offers a very tentative alternative to replace the ideology of imperialism and her text remains unresolved. When Jack tells Connie that she is '*poep-scared'* of getting her head under the waves and a '*dronklap* on top of it', she retorts: 'I don't care, I say, I am going to learn how to swim' (DC: 276). This is the last line of the novel. Connie's unreliability casts doubts on her intentions. We do not know if she does indeed learn to swim or whether she swims in more gin. Although she and Jack have reached a new level of understanding, it is possible that their relationship backslides because, directly subsequent to their sharing confidences, Connie relates how the 'old Jack is back' (DC: 275). Moreover, although she has grown and gained confidence via her creative

gin/djinn[5], we do not know if she has confidence enough to defy the societal boundaries that still restrict her world. That she creates a Beatrice whose dissidence is not followed through to the end of her narrative, attests to her lack of courage. Connie attenuates Beatrice's subversive behaviour and has Beatrice giving in to Henry's demands that she leave the farming to him and go back to bed. Ultimately, the open-endedness generates a text that is unhomely for the reader whose expectations of the resolution characteristic of Western realist fiction go unfulfilled.

Foreman (1997: 285, 286, 289) offers a feminist construal of magical realism in an article concerning the fiction of Allende and Morrison. Her focus is very much on magical realism as a means to appropriate and revise history, consequently to nurture the present. Both Allende and Morrison create storytelling women protagonists who preserve pasts too often trivialised, built over or erased and who then pass them on, using magic to achieve their aims. Allende engages with a troubled political era and uses magical realism as a bridge to recover and reclaim its history. For Morrison, magical realism is used to strengthen African American generational ties and offer a 'deracinated generation strategies for survival'. The question arises to what end Landsman uses magic. Like Allende's and Morrison's story-telling protagonists, Connie, too, is the site of history and magic. Her storytelling, impinging on the masculine world, preserves erased lives from a troubled past. Through Connie, Landsman is able to engage with patriarchal power and the master narratives of colonialism and apartheid, and resist and undermine them via the subversion of their authority and power. Using magic, Landsman breaks the binarisms created by colonialism, renewing the past and perhaps unconsciously proposing a model of hybridity for a new South African cultural identity.

[5] In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie puns on the homophones gin and djinn. (A djinn is a spirit or demon from Islamic folklore): 'The djinn roared through my father's lips, possessing him completely' (156).

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have argued that Landsman's *The Devil's Chimney* is a text that potentially narrates the nation. This notion has complex connotations because the relationship of the nation, the national identity and literature conjures up the image of a Gordian knot in the inextricable links between the three components. The nation is defined by the identity of its members, which, in turn, is reflected in the nation's cultural production. Noyes (1992: 6) proposes that literature is 'an acting out of domestic pressures and unconscious attitudes' of the nation as it reveals the tensions, anxieties, ideologies and hidden desires of the national psyche.[1] Foucault (quoted by Brennan: 1990: 46) suggests that the nation is a 'discursive formation'. Bhabha (1990: 3) says it is the 'performativity of language' in the national discourse that articulates the nation. Consequently, literature is regarded as having the ability to shape and mould the national psyche and the nation. Bhabha argues that a national literature has important consequences for a nation in terms of its influencing and inspiring nationalism. Culture is thus a force for 'producing, creating, forcing, guiding' the nation (Said quoted in Bhabha 1990:3 – 4).

Literature, therefore, is a site where national aspirations can be played out. Brennan (1990: 44, 46-47) talks about a national longing for a literary form that is 'more strongly felt in emergent societies of the world today'. In this regard, he refers to the Third World artist whose art reflects nationalistic aspirations and who is thus conscious of building or suffering from a lack of form.[2] A national literature is therefore one of the factors that galvanises a nation, and all novels that are considered a part of the 'national literature' contribute towards nation building. Consequently, in the new South Africa, where people are still divided in terms of the old divisions of apartheid, the creation of a South African literature could generate national unity and bring together people from diverse backgrounds. One of the ways in which literature is included in the nation's canon or defined as being a part of a national literature, is by scholarship. Thus, this dissertation ostensibly contributes towards defining a new South African Literature.

[1] Noyes applies this hypothesis specifically to colonial literature and the colonial psyche.
[2] In contradiction to Brennan's observation, magical realism, including that of the Third World, generally tends to shy away from nationalism and nation building projects.

However, many more theses and dissertations of this nature would be needed before a South African literary form is defined using this means.

The potential of art for promoting nationalist projects is certainly a notion of which governments are aware – as seen in pro-hegemonic cultural production in regimes such as apartheid South Africa, Hitler's Germany and communist Russia. Thus, in this conclusion, I interrogate how Landsman's novel speaks to the nation and if it contributes to a nation-building project. In addition, I discuss the value of magical realism for inscribing the complexity of the new South Africa and allowing Landsman to foreground her positionality and vision for postcolonial/post-apartheid South Africa. This leads me to ask where she is positioned and what issues appear on her agenda. I also discuss the contribution of the novel to magical realism as a genre.

In the South African context, with the end of the 'Struggle', a space has opened in which to examine issues that, in the past, were eclipsed by more visible and consequently more dominant violations. Thus, with the collapse of the central organising tenets that sustained the grand narratives of apartheid, writers in the new South Africa must find relevance and meaning anew. For Landsman, this lies embedded within nationhood and political order, gender inequality and the notion of whiteness. While engaging with these issues, she creates a space that offers possibilities and opens out into the future. Although Landsman avoids a doctrinaire or didactic approach, her positionality is apparently critical of patriarchy and globalisation, and she is individualistic rather than nationalistic. The patriarchal organisation of the nation marginalises certain subjects within its boundaries, and has seen the emergence of imperialism, neo-colonialism and exploitative practices around capitalism. In addition, nationalism is also ordered around an exclusivity which, according to Bruce King, relates to the closing of the mind, a dumbing down of ideas, a blinkered vision. King (quoted in Brennan: 1990: 53) contends:

> Nationalism is an urban movement which identifies with the rural areas as a source of authenticity, finding in the 'folk' the attitudes, beliefs, customs and language to create a sense of national unity among people who have other loyalties. Nationalism aims at …rejection of cosmopolitan upper classes, intellectuals and others likely to be influenced by foreign ideas.

Comaroff (in Zegeye: 2001: 3) proposes that the legacy of colonialism may be that it has yielded two counter-discourses on which the hegemony of the nation is based. The first is grounded on a liberal ethos of universal human rights, of free autonomous citizenship and individual entitlement. The second asserts group rights, ethnic sovereignty and cultural connection. Landsman's stance points to a congruency with the first discourse: of a nation unbounded, where the private domestic spaces remain separate from the public and are considered as valuable to the nation's progress as the cultural and political spaces; and where all of its subjects, including the Beatrices, Connies and Nomsas of the nation, have equal access to the national sources of knowledge and power. However, Connie's intention of learning to swim could relate to her swimming with the tide of society and could thus correspond with aspects of the second discourse and its notions of national unity. Landsman's vision perhaps thus includes a future of inclusivity and equity: where all the nation's subjects can participate, belong and connect on a cultural level, if not an ethnic or sovereign one. Consequently, she perhaps displays a leaning towards E.M. Forster's liberal humanist beliefs, who enjoined his readers to 'only connect', in the epigraph of *Howard's End* (1910).

Similarly, Zegeye (2001: 17) calls for the dismantling of the barriers that divide society. He contends that in South Africa, the legacy of apartheid lives on and racism as a socially constructed difference continues to exist. He maintains that to counter this, the diversity of society must be celebrated and the country needs to be committed to recognising varied identities, and attempt to accommodate different identities. In this regard, in the celebration of difference called for in South Africa, the genre of magical realism is especially relevant. The genre is characterised by syncretism and propinquity between opposing forces and fields

and is fluid and ambiguous, accommodating different cultures and ideologies, mythologies and iconographies. It is inclusive of the worlds of both coloniser and colonised, magical and real. In its inclusivity and hybridity, it is expansive, exuberant, rich and abundant. Landsman constructs characters whose identities reflect the richness and fluidity of the genre. Beatrice's identity, especially, is hybridised, oscillating between white/black, masculine/feminine and even animal/human. Nomsa's character, as both conforming to colonial binaries and subverting this representation, is an exploration of difference.

However, the ending for these two characters is far from celebratory. In addition, Beatrice and Nomsa have moments of camaraderie and solidarity as women and mothers, but their relationship is mostly characterized by silence and distance and Connie's connection with Jack is only transitory before '[t]he old Jack is back' (DC: 275). These features of the text are significant because they reflect Landsman's apparent cynicism: the connection between the different races and genders is only fleeting before the old divisions reappear: accommodation of racial and gender differences and the celebration of diversity in South African society remains a pipedream (for Connie, perhaps a bottle-dream). Nevertheless, Landsman's characters' identities and their narratives are the clay from which Connie moulds her magical realist art, and which allows Landsman to inscribe her anti-patriarchal/anti-nationalist stance and her wistful vision for the future with respect to racial and gender equality.

The lack of gender equality is another issue to emerge from the text that is of specific concern to South Africa and the Third World. In South Africa, gender equality is legislated and women enjoy meaningful positions within the President's cabinet. However, this is not carried through to the community where sexual abuse and rape are rife and there is still discrimination in the workplace. It also seems apparent that once women are in positions of power, they appear obligated to conform to the concerns of their male colleagues and disregard the gender agenda. In response to this, the text explores the theme of motherhood and its effects on women's identity. Nasta (1992: xix) contends that this theme is an

important aspect of feminist criticism as it relates to mothers who give birth to the female identity through transference to the text. She asserts that:

> Mothers and motherlands have provided a potent symbolic force in the writings of African, Caribbean and Asian women, with the need to demythologise the illusion of the colonial 'motherland' or 'mothercountry' and the parallel movement to rediscover, recreate and give birth to the genesis of new forms and new languages of expression.

Thus, Nasta seeks an alternative to the 'mothercountry' grounded in patriarchalism, and looks towards a space that produces a reformed discourse: one that discards phallocentric forms and language and inscribes the feminine instead. The non-mimetic nature of the genre allows Landsman to approach this in her writing of the cave. The cave is explicitly eroticised, sexualised and feminised, possibly inscribing Connie's/Landsman's vision of a nation where the female subject is not devalued and marginalised but is as valued as the male subject. The magical cave is also the site where Nomsa is afforded the opportunity to take Precious. This act confers textual agency upon her, which goes a way towards compensating her for the losses she has suffered as the subaltern.

The text thus ostensibly reveals the nature of motherhood and the role of the female in society, as viewed by Landsman. According to Nasta (ibid.: xx), the role of mother is 'universally imposed' on women as their main identity, their proper identity above all others. Perhaps her use of the term 'universally' is rather exaggerated, but it certainly is the case for Connie's conservative Afrikaans society, where women are expected to be guaranteed breeders, like the ostriches. With the loss of her baby, Connie suffers from a loss of identity as she feels unworthy as a woman. Beatrice's experience of motherhood is also most hapless. Although her foray into the realms of miscegenation produces something Precious, Nomsa determines that she is incapable of being a mother and removes

Precious from her care. By losing Precious, Beatrice loses not only her identity but 'all the love in [her] heart and …most of her mind as well' (DC: 267).

Nomsa, who has also been separated from her children, (although admittedly not by death or abduction, as they live on a nearby farm with their *Ouma*), does not suffer an identity crisis as a result. Rather, she is emblematic of the power of motherhood. Dorothy Driver (1990: 237-238) imparts the idea of the strong mother that, while appearing in British and American literature, seems to have greater currency in Africa. The strength of women is the strength of motherhood. Mothers are seen as strong, courageous and resourceful, as reflected in the adage *M'a-ngoana o tšoare thipa ka bohaleng*: 'The child's mother grabs the sharp end of the knife'. The power of the mother is the power she has over children. Nomsa's power includes that of the mother, and she exerts it over Beatrice, who is in need of her mothering and her *muti*.

Beatrice is somewhat childlike in the relationship, dependent on Nomsa to tend to her needs, but as her employer, Beatrice also assumes and maintains her position of authority. The reversals of power and the subversive dynamics within their relationship are responsible for the tensions that arise between madam and maid. The text explores the ambiguous positioning of both parties and also the power of the black domestic. Nomsa's power extends beyond that of the mother and the constrictions that are associated with the role as she is given the power to take Precious from Beatrice. Thus, she propels the narrative along its trajectory, an ability that has been denied previous subalterns in colonial texts. The empowering of Nomsa positions Landsman alongside the sample of other post-apartheid novels written by white women that I have read. Her message is not all that different as her text gestures towards restitution for the disempowered subaltern, and is thus flavoured with a smidgeon of political correctness and white guilt.

This leads to another issue with which the text engages and that is the notion of whiteness, which has come to the fore since 1994. Before this time, the state of

being ‘no longer European, not yet African’(quote from Coetzee: 1988: 11), gave rise to anxieties and tensions but generally, whites felt entitled to the Eurocentric knowledge provided for a nominal sum by the nationalist government and the privileges this afforded them. Now, still mostly benefiting from this accrued knowledge, there is a consciousness regarding these privileges and some whites are struggling over what to do with the knowledge. Sean O’Toole, in the *Mail & Guardian* (2004: 11), writes that the white shift to embrace the culture of Africa and to abrogate their position of privilege is slow and white people are feeling displaced in Africa. He maintains that many have retreated behind their walls in their cluster homes in the suburbs, calling this ‘a form of psychological emigration from this country.’ In addition, the TRC demonstrated white complicity and complacency with apartheid. Some experience guilt while others refuse to accept that whites should feel guilty about their positions. O’ Toole quotes Tony Leon and Antjie Krog whose assertions perhaps reflect two very different responses to the condition of whiteness: Leon categorically states: ‘I am no guilty white.’ Antjie Krog responds: ‘That is actually stupidity. Privilege is in the bones, you don’t wipe out privilege in one generation…. It is only when you are constantly challenged that there are other ways of doing [things] that people realize things about their position and privilege’.

Comaroff (quoted in Zegeye: 2001: 3) avers that blacks are still enduring the legacy of colonialism and racialism, still disadvantaged educationally and economically, still suffering ‘the black man’s burden’. In O’Toole’s article, Krog calls for white activism. Thus, the privilege with which the white man has been endowed must be his burden, and he should feel duty-bound to use it in a socially responsible manner. How does this translate on to the pages of a text? One of the ways in which whites can use their privilege of education is to speak on behalf of the subaltern. In Spivak’s article ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’(1993: 104), she closes with the words: ‘The [female] subaltern cannot speak’. It appears incumbent on South African writers to grant the subaltern the words to ameliorate her condition. But, as Spivak points out, the writer’s benevolence is often misplaced as the act is associated with epistemic violence: by interpreting the

subaltern in Western cultural terms and privileging this knowledge, a heterogeneous group of people is often reduced to a 'homogeneous Other' and represented merely as a 'shadow of the Self' (ibid.: 75,76,84). Nevertheless, Spivak (ibid.: 104) proposes that although the female intellectual's task is hence circumscribed, she must not disown it 'with a flourish'. However, speaking for the subaltern is also regarded as a form of silencing and hence, there are anxieties associated with it. Also, Spivak has been accused of simply not listening to the voices of the subaltern other. The questions of who 'speaks' for whom is not easily resolved.

Landsman approaches some resolution in her depiction of Nomsa, arguably circumventing the problems that surround the representation of the other. She creates Nomsa as stereotypical yet paradoxically iconoclastic, constructing her as a site of defamiliarisation. The ambiguity surrounding her character challenges the stereotypes of colonial discourse and opens a space for inquiry and dialogue. By Landsman's creating Nomsa's identity as fluid yet fixed, bounded by colonial binaries yet liberated, she is not a fixed construction that reflects the Western Self but is open to as many interpretations as there are readers. Moreover, Landsman's construction of Nomsa is not representative of a class but she is depicted as an individual whose story numbers only one of myriads that can be told. In addition, the defamiliarisation evoked by her dwelling and her relationship with her employers reveals hidden aspects regarding the effects of colonisation on the colonised homeland and identity and thus putatively raises awareness of the subaltern's dispossessed condition.

The Devil's Chimney thus demonstrates that the writer can be politically responsible but still create fiction that speaks. Herein lies the agency of the artist, in her or his ability to create, transform and mould the cultural authority of the nation. However, the problem of circumscribed manifestation rears its head and the question arises as to the potency of the artist's agency. How much agency does the artist have? To grasp the destabilising, opposing, transformative power of a text such as Landsman's, with its challenging aesthetics and politics, requires

an analytical reading, a skill that is often limited to the exclusive halls of academia. Consequently, it appears as if the project of post colonial writers, of writing back to empire, is often severely attenuated.

Landsman's novel is a case in point. It is a superb example of postcolonialism/magical realism and I believe it has been underrated, not having had the attention it deserves.[3] There has been an interview with Landsman by Shaun de Waal in the *Mail & Guardian* and the novel was short-listed for the 1999 M-Net Prize. Perhaps her not living in the country has limited the opportunities for interviews and other promotional events. Another reason for her lack of recognition may be the inaccessibility of Landsman's text for many readers. I asked an acquaintance, a doctor, what she thought of the book. (The reader's profession is mentioned to indicate that she has attained a high level of education – although medical training is no indication of literary sophistication.) This is her response:

> The first part was interesting. I liked the characters and the historical setting. I found it enjoyable. The ostriches were interesting: I learnt about the ostrich trade. But the second half lost me completely. There was no point to the fantasy. I got impatient with this aspect. It was inaccessible. I found it a waste of time. I didn't understand it. I was sad that it didn't

[3] The other South African novelists here appear to have garnered more press coverage (although in Jooste's case, the accusation of plagiarism was probably not the type of attention she wanted). The number of novels published influences press coverage.
A search of the *Mail & Guardian* (www.mg.co.za) and *Independent Online* (www.iol.co.za) archives, on 20 March, 2005, revealed:

Name of Writer	No. of Novels Published	No. of Articles in *Mail & Guardian* Archives	No. of Articles in *Independent Online* Archives	Total No. of Articles
Anne Landsman	1	2	0	2
Sarah Penny	1	3	1	4
Alexandra Fuller	2	1	5	6
Jann Turner	3	11	2	13
Pamela Jooste	4	8	5	13

> have a happy ending. It was scary. I personally don't like caves, the darkness. Perhaps it evoked all of that.

Admittedly, I have not ascertained her reading habits or the type of reader she is as this research is beyond the scope of this project, but I regard her opinion as representative of many women in Johannesburg's more affluent suburbs, who are educated, keen readers and members of book clubs. Another reaction that was most interesting was the response the novel elicited from a psychologist who said:

> I found it distasteful. It was a desperate, gruesome and unhappy read. I'm glad I read it; it wasn't a shocking piece of literature but I didn't want to know about these unsanitary conditions. It showed a tawdry, horrid underbelly of life. Maybe it was uplifting in its own peculiar way but I found it very sordid.

The strong exception she took to the text ostensibly arose from the fact that Landsman is not prissy, nor does she pussyfoot around scenarios that elicit profound discomfort in the reader bound by the norms of modern Western society. In the interview with De Waal (1998: 2), Landsman reflects: '[a]t moments, I'd think, that was a really odd piece of writing. I'd say to my husband, 'You can't believe what I just wrote.' Then I'd just go with it'. The writing is visceral, sometimes graphically violent, at times traversing the regions of soft porn and Landsman's treading these unsafe grounds is precisely what confers value upon the text. Consequently, the text is complex and challenging and it is this that renders it a first-rate novel. Many classics initially have a poor reception because, in the artist's desire to make a unique contribution, in his/her desire to push the envelope, the work becomes too inaccessible, too controversial, too unsafe for public approval and acceptance. Thus, the fault lies with the reader and not the text, as the reader acknowledged when she said: 'I'm glad I read it; it wasn't a shocking piece of literature but I didn't want to know about these unsanitary conditions.' I propose that this reader understood Connie only as the victim of abusive relationships and interpreted her on too literal a level. Although Connie is

not merely a literary device, her narrative cannot be taken too literally. She is not a reliable narrator and her story cannot be accepted as the only truth.

The reliability of Connie as a narrator engages with the postmodern and the metafictive aspect of the text. The metafictive element signals the artist's presence and the text becomes a reflective surface, a text about storytelling itself, which allows the author to reflect on the power and limitations of the process of storytelling. Connie draws the reader's attention to the process of storytelling. With only her deaf sister to 'listen' to her story or Jack whom she prefers to be asleep when she talks, she laments the limited distribution of the story. She says 'I want to shout but my voice is stuck to my throat' (DC: 100). However, she is aware of the power of narrator and warns that stories must be told with due consideration, because they can constitute the 'terrible things people carry around in their heads, like that story about Pauline' (DC: 273). The story takes on a life of its own and can manifest in different versions, depending on the listener. In the ensuing interpretations, the intention of the storyteller may become distorted, and the story may poison the minds and transform the lives of all who are privy to it. She compares the story to a tarantula, observing:

> The story had many arms and legs, just like a tarantula, and it hung in everybody's house, on the ceiling. It was the reason for everything that was bad in Oudtshoorn…Everybody was bitten, but in a different way. Of course, the Bapedi believed the baby came out dead…The white people believed it was Miss Beatrice who killed the child… (DC: 267)

As her stories transform and evolve in the telling, branching out into myriad versions, so her inspiration arises from multiple sources: from other stories 'you could hear like dreams in the bar of the Oudtshoorn hotel before closing or early in the morning with coffee.'(DC: 267), from artefacts in the museum, or from countless other voices that resonate in Connie's imagination, for instance, 'Oom Piet says he remembers Pauline going deeper into the caves…'(DC: 4); 'Jack says right in [her] ear that Pauline got lost there' (DC: 8); 'People say Nomsa was a

witch…'(DC: 15); 'Some say [Nomsa] could make people fall in love, or die.' (p. 16); 'Some people say [Henry] was trying to get to Cape Town.' (DC: 17); '…some people said [Nomsa and Beatrice] slept in the same bed' (DC: 267); '…with Miss Beatrice they say it was most of her mind as well' (DC: 267).

Are Connie's stories hearsay or are they 'truth'? How trustworthy and reliable is she as a narrator? Her stories are based on 'fact': Beatrice Chapman lived sometime around 1910 at Highlands as there is evidence of this in the museum. Connie narrates how 'someone left [Miss Beatrice's and Mr Henry's] things to the Museum after they were dead and you can see an old green dress that looks like rotting seaweed' (DC: 14). The wall of Highlands still stands: Connie describes it as 'that big sandstone wall around her house' (DC: 46), although we do not know if the house still exists. In addition, the bare facts of her own story are credible: she does marry Jack in 1951, she does lose her baby and she does work for the South African Tourist Board. But Connie opens Beatrice's story with the lines: 'I start talking about Miss Beatrice. This is her story and I have to do all the parts myself' (DC: 15). Connie's lines underscore their apocryphal nature, that Beatrice's story is a product of her imagination. Later, she attempts to assure the reader that her stories are to be believed. She says: 'My stories aren't made up' (DC: 165). But the reader is not fooled when she follows this with: 'I see who is lying and who is cheating and sometimes I even think I can see a hole in someone's sock, right inside their shoe' (DC: 165). Because of her alcoholism, her self absorption, her childish disposition and her persecution complex in the belief that everyone is judging her unfavourably, her narrative must be viewed with suspicion.

Connie writes for her own ends, inventing a past to boost her poor self esteem, but in so doing, she has meaningful things to say and significant tasks to perform. Reckoning with the past from the present, Connie rewrites herself and her future. This metafictive element of the text underscores the process of writing and Connie, as the anti-heroine, is made to perform all sorts of self-reflexive, narratorial tricks. Her rewriting herself calls attention to the importance of the

past and also to the importance of the process of writing itself, as this is what will enable her to project herself into the future. To create a future where, as an autonomous subject, she will benefit from the rights conferred on her by the country's constitution, she cannot look into the past with empirical realist glasses, but must rewrite history anew to include all the various voices that have contributed to the present and the possible divagations taken by the narrative. Her story is inclusive and expansive, offering a pan-historical sweep. The lenses she uses to look into the past are flawed, limited, even rose-tinted; her story is filled with happy synchronicities and wishful thinking, but the spirit is right even if some of the facts or specificities are invented. Connie's rewriting herself is imbued with hope rather than cynicism, presenting an idealistic rather than an apocalyptic vision of the future and to the reader who found the text uplifting 'in its own peculiar way', this is the cause. Ultimately, therefore, Landsman's contribution to post-apartheid and postcolonial literature generally lies in the notion that realist or mimetic representations may offer some truths, but these are not necessarily inherently valuable or useful, and it is the imagination that may be required to find truths that are valuable, especially for the future.

Importantly then, it is magical realism, with its engagement with the magical, the fantastical and the improbable, and thus the imagination, that allows the artist to uncover these valuable truths. However, magical realism has attracted denigration from critics such as Timothy Brennan, Arif Dirlik, Aijaz Ahmad and Michael Valdez Moses. Generally, they take exception to what they take to be the feel-good cosmopolitan exoticism exuded by the genre, which they label bourgeois. Furthermore, they accuse it of appropriating threatening or challenging forms of otherness and tailoring them to fit the requirements demanded by a safe and saleable 'Third Worldism'. Although this may be the case for certain writers and texts, it certainly is not the case for Landsman. Her version of magical realism is anything but safe or complacent in terms of both its aesthetics and its politics.

Landsman's brand of magical realism is radical and unique and it is in this regard that her novel makes a significant contribution to the genre. Both Landsman's

aesthetics and politics are radical. Her dissenting politics are especially apparent in the portrayal of Connie, who may disturb the white South African reader, grappling to deal with his/her as yet privileged status. The reason for this is that Connie, as a poor white, continues to be marginalized and silenced, a factor that underscores the fact that the social hierarchies of apartheid continue to exist. The reader, who harshly judges Connie for her representing 'a tawdry, horrid underbelly of life', perhaps inadvertently yet guiltily perpetuates the unequal social order. In terms of Landsman's aesthetics, the deviant sexuality presented in the text or the image of Connie desperately drinking mouthwash and hallucinating on the bathroom floor may cause the sensitive reader to cringe but it is Landsman's inscription of the cave, in particular, that demonstrates her aesthetic extremism. She rewrites the Western cave, amplifying the eroticism hinted at by Coleridge in his Romantic cave and perhaps more boldly suggested by Forster in his modernist one, and presents horrific images, exemplified by Pauline's diabolical rape and Beatrice's graphic sexual experience.

Ultimately, Landsman's cave writes the nation: with its fluid spaces, it evokes its unique, inchoate and shifting spaces, echoing with the voices steeped in the extreme violence from the past and the voices of the present living with those horrors. By granting a look at the nation's origins, the cave of the now allows a glimpse of the future: thus the cave can be read as a Janus-faced nation, looking backwards towards past horrors, which must be confronted and to which we, of the present, must reconcile if we are to progress as a nation or as individuals, in the future.

APPENDIX

Interview with Anne Landsman, New York, 10 July 2003.

What are you doing at the moment?

I'm writing another novel. I teach screenwriting but I've taken leave of absence to finish the novel.

Did you always write – even as a child?

My mom gave me this little yellow notebook so I wrote for her, embarrassing kid stuff. I was always writing, dealing with narrative. I read a lot of old-fashioned stuff - romances. I wrote in that style, trying to imitate this. You can imagine…

Georgette Heyer?

Yes – exactly. I did that as a kid. There were compositions at school but after school there was nowhere to go with it. There was journalism at Rhodes but I didn't want to go there. I was also torn between writing and fine arts. I did a year of Fine Arts at the Michaelis School of Art but gave that up. I landed up here, doing script writing.

I think I was always a fiction writer, a creative writer. Clearly, I was always dealing with narrative. If there'd been a creative writing course somewhere in South Africa, it would have been better if I'd gone straight into that, instead of varsity, but there weren't any. Varsity was a mistake for me. It was O.K but I think I was always a creative writer.

What was the source for the novel? Were you carrying it inside you for a long time before you wrote it? What was your inspiration?

My father grew up in George and we used to go there on holiday. I remember one summer, we took the maid with us, and visited the caves with her. There were separate tours for whites and blacks. She was very scared and landed up sitting in car. Decades later, I started thinking about the whole idea of the separate tours. I felt quite bad for her. She wasn't much older than me. We were more friends: it was more of a sibling relationship. She was very pretty, nervous…quite wonderful, actually. She left us, and I was always wondering what became of her. Decades later, I did bump into her. She had that dull expression and was

overweight – the typical domestic drudge. The connection we'd shared was completely lost.

Anyway, it led me to thinking about the idea of people disappearing in South Africa. Where did they go? What happens to them? They're here and then they're gone! It relates to the violence of apartheid. So I got the idea of a woman disappearing in the caves in South Africa. I was thinking about apartheid.

I first had the idea to write from the point of view of the little girl but, for a first novel, I didn't like it. I didn't want to do that kind of thing or I didn't feel ready for it. Then, in 1990 or '91, I went to an artists' colony, and the voice of Connie, the voice of an alcoholic, came to me.

I wrote the first section – the disappearance in the caves – the prologue, as a short story. That was published in the American Poetry Review. The editor liked it and it got a little bit of attention. Then the editor suggested a novel. Then along the way, I got the idea of using Connie's voice to tell Beatrice's story, which came from a screenplay I'd written years earlier. So I took Connie's voice and retold Beatrice's story from her perspective. I cannibalized the screen play. It was completely different. But there is something there from the old story.

In some ways, Connie's and Beatrice's stories bear little relationship to each other, although in some ways, their stories are similar: for instance Henry appears in the screenplay. But there were pretty much three separate stories. So the novel has three separate sources. The narrative is the adaptation of three different stories.

There has been a burgeoning of white writing in post apartheid South Africa, especially, it seems, from women writers. Have you kept up with South African fiction?

I don't really keep up with South African fiction. But I do keep up with South African writers here: *The Syringa Tree*, Alexandra Fuller's *Don't Let's Go to the*

dogs Tonight. Have you read it? It's a fantastic memoir of growing up in Southern Africa, in Zimbabwe. Their perspectives are not all that different from mine – how they deal with the issues.

You grew up in a small town, as an English-speaking white South African. Your father was the doctor. Did you discuss politics around the table? Your home must have been somewhat liberal?
Yes – we did discuss politics. We were somewhat liberal.

I find a lot of South African fiction poorly written. The characters are wooden and the writing is too earnest. I found your novel to be different. Although the story is a tragedy, there is a lightness of touch, a humour to the writing. What do you ascribe this to?
My father was a very quixotic and charismatic character. He was a much beloved figure in Worcester. He gave a lot to the community. He was unconventional to the point where it was hard to have a two-way conversation with him. He was funny: there was a comical side to him.

So it filtered through to you?
I like to think that. My father had an eccentric side. His whole family was unconventional as well: his sister - my aunt who's now in her eighties, my other aunt, and their mother: they were all like that, all a little eccentric. There was a feverishness to them. I suppose that comes through.

J.M Coetzee has described the novel as 'South Africa seen through the lens of magical realism for the first time'. Were you influenced by magical realism? Did you set out to write a magical realist text?
I read Marquez and was struck by what a magical and interesting way to deal with a country going through such heartache and tragedy and history. But I didn't set out a write a magical realist text. I wasn't conscious of it.

In fact, a lot of writing the book was an act of real liberation. I started it in 1994. I suddenly felt ready to write a book about South Africa. Coming from South Africa, I felt ready to face it as an act of personal liberation. And I was moving out of the screenplay, which I felt was very formulaic. I felt I could write whatever I wanted – and not care what the critics or reviewers would say. I just went with it. Having written scripts, novel writing was very liberating.

You have told me that the glossary of your novel forms the content of a Master's thesis-in-progress in Canada.
The editors wanted a glossary because readers would need to look things up. They were concerned about the South African words but I said that it was a South African story. There are readers who don't like words they don't understand but there are others who love them. There are very different kinds of readers.

Foreign words can be intimidating for the reader.
There were a lot more. Just before publishing, somewhere in the publisher's office, someone said to me: "Get rid of some of the foreign words". I was conscious of getting rid of them.

Coetzee talks about the incompatibility of English to describe the harsh African veld. He says that Afrikaans is much more suited to the landscape, but it's also used as a convention to indicate that the speaker's mother tongue is Afrikaans. Connie uses many Afrikaans words. Can you comment?
For me, Afrikaans was a way to tap into the mindset of Connie. Connie is Afrikaans. One of her grandmothers is Afrikaans; the other is very bilingual.

There's less Afrikaans in my new book. I wouldn't say it's less place-specific, but it's very much about character and less about place. It takes place in Cape Town and George so there's a more English feel to it because of Cape Town as its setting– it's more anglicised.

Is it also magical realism?

I don't know what it is. It's in my backpack over here, on my laptop. I write in a wonderful place called the Writers' Group. It's a non-profit organisation. They provide a computer space, a desk space: it's like a library that's filled with other writers. You see the other writers. Some spaces are more private than others.

Do you have a chance to run it by anyone there?
Everybody is working on their own stuff. There are reading groups you can sign up for: reading cafes. But, I do ask for help. The other day, I wanted the lines for "I Could Have Danced All Night". I was going to 'Google' it but I asked a writer – an actress and singer – if she knew the words and she sang the whole song beautifully. Amazing. But you have to be respectful. People do help each other though.

How conscious were you of the theories surrounding South African literature? Your novel fits in so well with the theorists I'm using, for example, J.M. Coetzee's *White Writing*, Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather* and a text called *The Politics of Home* by Rosemary Garangoly George.
I had JM Coetzee as a lecturer at UCT but I've never read *White Writing*. I know Anne McClintock personally. She and her partner, Rob Nixon, are friends of mine.

To me, the book fits the mould of the anti-pastoral, like Shreiner's *Story of an African Farm* and Gordimer's *The Conservationist*. Have you read it?
Yeah, I think I did.

As such, your novel is a foil to the *plaasroman*, presenting the reader with many reversals and subversions of it. Were you conscious that you were subverting the tropes, etc?
I was conscious in a way. I definitely grew up with lots of Afrikaans poetry. I was raised on that. I went to a dual medium school. There was a moment when I really wanted to take Afrikaans Higher and I really should have. I regret that, but I had Latin. I really loved Afrikaans poetry. There was one about a moth around

the flame. There was that poem and the way these poets wrote about the land, I definitely had that somewhere in my head. It was there for me. It wasn't like I was unaware of that. But when I sat down to write a book, did I say I was going to consciously subvert the myths? No, I didn't. I knew about the theories but I didn't consciously go out to subvert them.

I was in a discussion with my supervisor about this and he said that I must credit authors with consciousness: that authors are more conscious than I think.

At some level, there is some consciousness. There must be a neurological study somewhere about what you carry about in your mind and how it affects your consciousness. I carry a lot of garbage around in my head that filters through. There must also have been a level of academic thinking that filtered through. I was conscious of this at a certain level. I knew what I was writing about. For instance, when I saw the word "prime white", I realized the implications. I wasn't oblivious to that but whether I was consciously subverting the canon: no, probably not. I knew that I was writing about apartheid. I certainly understood there were issues I was writing about.

Your narratology is interesting – you don't use inverted commas for direct speech. In fact, your characters don't use much direct speech at all. This seems in opposition to a, say, screenplay. How were you influenced in this regard?

The influence of the script writing is an odd one. Its influence manifests more in the visuals and connections between the scenes and the creation of cinematic conditions and not so much in the speech of the characters. I felt very liberated writing a novel.

In this book, there're no happy endings; no one really comes out on top. Beatrice and Nomsa are imprisoned behind the high walls at Highlands and the novel is open-ended regarding Connie. Why?

It reflects South Africa for me. It's a very hard space. I'm never sure whether it's the psychological part or the political part. For me, it really does mirror my feelings. I'm not that comfortable when I'm there. I wasn't really comfortable there as a child. I'm incredibly attracted and drawn to it and I miss it terribly. Living here, there is some sort of alienation from that part of myself. The book mirrors that reality, that consciousness. I'm not really part of it. If I see other South African writers, we connect, but I've never really been part of the South African scene. I miss that. When I go back, I feel on the one hand, oh my God, I have to see everybody and do everything and I feel overwhelmed. But at the same time, I feel I never do the right thing. I feel I need to take my husband and children hiking on Table Mountain but I land up shopping at the *Naartjie* shop. I never do it properly. In the past, there were the political problems, but now, when I go back, I feel I'm not doing it the right way. I don't have that problem here in New York.

So you feel integrated in American society?

Living in New York, being an outsider is part of the society. Everybody here comes from somewhere else. Native New Yorkers are in the minority here. I don't know how I'd do living outside of New York. When I go into the [American] country, I feel I don't belong and then I land up missing South Africa. There's really a lot of South Africa I never saw. I'd like to take the kids back and see the Okavango Swamps. I've never done that.

Motherhood is one of the themes of the book. Would you describe yourself as a feminist?

I've read Anne McClintock. I'm very fascinated with the idea of the powerful women. I wrote a lot of the book when I was pregnant so I had the whole idea of the mother as a powerful life-force. I definitely felt that in a way – the power of motherhood, it's celebrated. But I also was dealing with my fear of something going wrong. I was wrestling with the fear of the unknown. That was definitely going on: the idea of having a child or not having a child…They were huge issues.

Also having put off having a child until relatively late in life – and then having one – these issues definitely changed the work.

For Connie, her childbirth experience certainly shaped her identity. Have you ever known any one like Connie?

Sure. Worcester was full of alcoholics. Worcester's in the middle of wine farms. They paid the workers with wine – the *dop* system. My father was a heavy drinker. So alcohol played a big part in my life. Some of my father's patients were alcoholics. I do remember there was a Jewish woman who was an alcoholic: it was fascinating to me. She was very pale and white and walked into my father's surgery. At one point, my father's surgery was in our house and I remember her walking into our house and down our hallway.

Connie, living in a democratic and free South Africa, lives a very repressed life whereas Beatrice, living in her repressed society lives an unfettered one. There's this reversal.

Yeah…I also feel for Connie, although it's partially her own fault, to some extent. She was her own worst enemy. At the beginning, I blamed Jack but I started to like him more at the end. I felt that he was originally much more one-dimensional but I reworked him to make him, although brutal, still a man who was able to feel. He also felt sad.

Beatrice is very fluid, partly feminine, partly masculine, part animal, even part cave. She contests the boundaries of her society but you have her pay a price.

She went too far in terms of her society. There was a price to pay for her subversion. For me, the book is also about living with a man, like Henry. His going mad, living out his fantasies and then coming back. She has to fight back. Although I couldn't see her in the end, continuing with that part. I saw her living a little bit apart. She's similar to the character, Helen, in *Road to Mecca.* She lives life on her own terms and has to live with the consequences in one way or another. She's eccentric and living on the outskirts, tolerated on the outskirts. I

had a friend who grew up on a farm in the Northern Transvaal and as a kid I used to visit. I had that in my mind. In small towns, there were outsiders living on the edge but they were tolerated. I had all of that in my head.

Maybe I also got the idea from some South African fiction, which featured relationships between white women and their domestic servants. They lived together but their relationships were only acknowledged after they had died and they were buried. For me, there is a little bit of that between Beatrice and Nomsa – a sort of weird underground thing going on. It's never really explored. But you also have to remember that Connie's telling the story and she sees it through the mists of alcohol. In her telling of the tale, she doesn't explain it fully - what's real and what isn't: it isn't clear. She doesn't explain everything fully – which I wanted to depict. I certainly know there were a lot of women of my mother's age, when I was growing up, who told stories about horrible and weird underground things going on – often very sexual. They wouldn't make much sense of what they were saying – they just told it. So I suppose Connie's that kind of woman.

She doesn't analyse – she just narrates.
Connie is spontaneous. It was hard for me to write that kind of voice. When I started writing her voice, I felt a bit nauseous. I understood her to be someone who had kind of limits. It was a little nerve-wracking but then I thought…

Just go for it?
Yes.

In apartheid fiction, it is said that black labour is invisible, flitting through the text like a shadow. But you have the Boer flitting through your text. We don't really meet any Boers at all.
It's true. Now that you mention it, I think I did want to do that at the time.

What about the black labour - Nomsa? In a way, she's similar to Rider Haggard's character Gagool – a powerful witch.

It was interesting. You know the part where, during the pregnancy, she puts animals on Beatrice's stomach; she does funny things with dead animals? I found that in a text on tribal customs. A lot of the things I made up, I later discovered actually exist. It was fascinating. Then, I was confused as to what was made up and what wasn't.

You could argue that Nomsa's still somewhat stereotyped.
When I look at the screenplay, it was completely highbrow. I was trying to elevate the blacks. Things I wrote in my twenties were very different. They were politically correct. I was thinking of suffragettes. Beatrice was living life on her own terms but she had to deal with the consequences.

Why does Henry measure his hands and feet? Is he afraid of getting absorbed into the soil of Africa?
I just came up with a disease where you think you are shrinking. You have exposure and then it would affect your brain. But then I discovered that it really exists. It's almost exactly as I made it up!

Henry creates a very unhomely space for Beatrice. The word 'unhomely' has been used by the critic, Homi Bhabha, who took it from Freud.
Unheimlich, uncanny. I know a little bit of Freud. I had a struggle with Henry. There were whole parts of him that came out of the screenplay. A woman described him as a remittance man. I'd never heard of this phrase but it is something like a man who lives off a trust fund. He never had a career or an identity of his own and is something very minor – a gentleman farmer. It was Beatrice's family who had the money.

He's so dissipated – the very opposite of what was expected of the British gentleman. You've again subverted this stereotype. He goes native, rapes the land. The scene where he denudes the birds of their feathers is completely brutal.

It's funny. Someone asked how I wrote the book in the Writers' Group. It's such a public space.

With regards to Precious and Pauline, what about the inconsistencies in their time frames?

This was the trickiest part. I spent a lot of time with my editor who had me do a timeline. It took ages to work out that Pauline and Precious were the same thing, only I wanted to leave it as a question. I didn't want Precious to die. I didn't want the book to be about the death of a child but I never wanted it to have a happy ending either. I wanted Precious to survive in a way we can't identify with so I went somewhere for her to appear in another reincarnation. It might possibly have been some sort of optimism about South Africa. But I never wanted the book to be about the death of a child – that would have been a different book.

In Coetzee's *Disgrace*, one could argue that Lucy's baby, conceived in violent circumstances, is a symbol of the new South Africa. The novel is also left open-ended. The baby isn't born.

It's almost the same.

Pauline has a fey quality, nervous quality, like she's from another world: a mythicalized character.

And the cave? **I'm looking at it as a space layered with history/ memory/ ownership/ conflict.**

I was aware of the metaphoric aspect of the caves. They're there. They exist in a metaphoric and a literal sense. I've always loved the idea of caves and was aware of the academic thinking around caves, going back to Plato.

The caves are also like the body

I'm very interested in the body as a mysterious region and as related to the land: as a symbol of the land, in terms of earth.

And the trope of spiders that runs through the book? You even describe the story like a tarantula with many arms.

This is a personal story. I remember growing up in Worcester or going to George, there were always spiders up on the ceilings. They'd just be there. I kind of remember the big ones, but never of killing them. Because my father was a doctor, there was a certain amount of hysteria about spiders. He never wanted to kill them but he'd anaesthetize them. He's walk around with his little bottle of ether. To anaesthetize them was much more humane.

There were also lots of playground games that involved spiders. Although it's not indigenous to South Africa, there was a folk dance about the tarantula that featured in the folklore of the town.

I have a book on symbols: the spider symbolises a flimsy house.

I was always fascinated by spiders – not so much with their webs but with their nests. The nests were bags that were thickly woven – they almost looked like pineapples! They were really gross – bags filled with spiders. The homes are flimsy but there's also something substantial about them. But spiders aren't running around in my book. They're there but they're not bad.

Good luck with your new novel and thank you for your time.

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