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Waking the White Goddess: a novel

Nudelman, Jill

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Abstract

(Jill Nudelman)

This dissertation presents a novel that charts the progress of the white protagonist, Rose, whose mysterious origins have rendered her disconnected and alienated. In addition, moulded by her sheltered and privileged lifestyle she experiences guilt faced with the suffering and poverty that she encounters in post-apartheid South Africa, but lacks the strength to act.

The novel opens with Rose, now 30, bereft and alone. When she discovers a box of mysterious objects which hint at her origins, she is lead to Oberon, a fictional village in the southern uKhahlamba-Drakensberg. Here, Rose's search becomes more than a search for her biological parents as she experiences events that lead her to an identity beyond whiteness and help her to find rootedness in African soil.

A reflexive essay follows. The essay is a personal reflection of the writing process, and includes the inspiration and development of the story line, problems encountered around the narrative voice and the contribution of the Masters programme workshops to the project. It also explores and expounds on the theoretical underpinnings of the novel, such as white identity in post-apartheid South Africa, the use of Western mythologies in an African context, and a discussion of San culture, including concerns around its inclusion in the text. The use of the heavily-loaded signifier, "White Goddess" as in the title, is also touched upon.

Key Words

Fiction, creative writing, novel, South Africa, white identity, post-apartheid literature, women's writings, San culture