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"Ways of staying" paradox and dislocation in the postcolony

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Abstract

The first section of the thesis is a narrative non-fiction book-length work titled *Ways of Staying*, which is to be published by Picador Africa in May 2009 and is a journey through selected public and private concerns of contemporary South African life. Written in the first-person, it seeks to give the reader an intimate view of some of the more significant headlines of the past two years – the David Rattray murder, the ANC Polokwane conference, the xenophobic attacks, to name just a few – and to intersperse these with personal accounts of the fallout from violent crime (the author's cousin Richard Bloom was murdered in a high-profile attack in 2006). The objective of the book is to present in a non-solution orientated (or heuristic) manner the various textures and paradoxes of a complicated country.

The second section of the thesis is a reflexive essay on the above, where *Ways of Staying* is located within a range of thematic and symbolic influences, specifically: the work of novelist VS Naipaul vis-à-vis the parallel and incongruous dislocation of self and other in the post-colony; the work of Alan Paton, JM Coetzee and Rian Malan vis-à-vis the theme of 'fear' as a dominant force in white South African writing; and the non-fiction work of Antjie Krog vis-à-vis race and identity in a post-apartheid context.

My conclusion, if it can indeed be said that I have one, is that the 'unease' of the modern white South African (or at least a large enough number of us for the generalisation to be made) is an inevitable and necessary consequence of history, and so is perhaps better publicly acknowledged than willfully ignored.