Experiencing Loss: Traumatic Memory and Nostalgic Longing in Anne Landsman's *The Devil's Chimney* and *The Rowing Lesson*, and Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*

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Abstract

This thesis examines the experience of loss in Anne Landsman's novels *The Devil's Chimney* (1997) and *The Rowing Lesson* (2008), and Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* (2005). Positing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as an impetus for emerging literary traditions within contemporary South African fiction, the argument begins by evaluating the reasons for the TRC's widespread impact, and considers the role that the individual author may play within a culture which is undergoing dramatic socio-political upheavals. Through theoretical explication, close reading, and textual comparison, the argument initiates a dialogue between psychoanalysis and literary analysis, differentiating between two primary modes of experiencing loss, namely traumatic and nostalgic memory. Out of these sets of concerns, the thesis seeks to understand the inextricability of body, memory and landscape, and interrogates the deployment of these tropes within the contexts of traumatic and nostalgic loss, examining each author's nuanced invocation. A central tenet of the argument is a consideration, moreover, of how the dialogic imagination has shaped storytelling, and whether or not narrative may provide therapeutic affect for either author or reader. The study concludes with an interpretation of the changing shape of literary expression within South Africa.

Abbreviations

DC	*The Devil's Chimney*
GST	*Gem Squash Tokoloshe*
RL	*The Rowing Lesson*

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Chapter One: Introduction

Memory and narrative

"The TRC was nothing if not storytelling," declares author Sindiwe Magona (34). More and more frequently, South African writers are looking for those encounters which reflect lived experience, and are finding that narratives and telling stories are innately connected to unearthing our communal histories. After South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, the endurance of events such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has stood as evidence that there has been an increasing interest in attempting to capture the divergent streams of voices which have begun the slow process of disrupting past silences. It is only in giving these voices an equal opportunity to tell their stories that South Africa can begin to transcend the past, offering possibilities for a mutually inclusive future. While the TRC's primary aim was to achieve the goal of reconciliation on a political and social level, Sue Kossew notes that the Commission was "also concerned with narratives of the past and concepts of 'truth'" (133). In order to achieve the type of reconciliation sought by the TRC, the idea of what we hold to be true about the past needs, therefore, to be questioned. Changes in post-apartheid South Africa have lead Susan VanZanten Gallagher to direct this concern to the present: "If the country is no longer to be defined by its adherence to apartheid ideology, what is the new South African identity?" (108).

The answer to such a question may be answered by reconsidering the fundamental role memory plays in moulding the individual. As memories are produced from experience, and then, in turn, continue to shape ongoing experiences, Paul Antze and Michael Lambek suggest that memory is inextricably linked to our conception of identity (xii). As they argue: "when we take our personal identity for granted we are not self-conscious about the past. When identity is not in question, neither is memory" (xxii). With the dissolution of apartheid, however, many South Africans have found their personal concept of identity brought into question. Antze and Lambek explain that "while memory should support the dominant view of our identity," and consequently determine how we place ourselves in relation to others, memory by its nature constantly "threatens to undermine [a sense of identity], whether by obvious gaps, by uncertainties, or by glimpses of a past that no longer seems to be ours"

(xvi). This is particularly relevant to South Africa, where, as Shane Graham argues, "the whole history of colonisation, modernisation and apartheid has served to rupture the connections between people and places" (2). Such ruptures fracture the innate connections between memory, identity and place, leading Graham to suggest that, within our country, it is likely that "memory bears witness not to any straightforward, cogent sense of collective identity, but to a pervasive sensation of loss, dispossession, and bewilderment" (*ibid*).

One of the central aims of this thesis is to understand how this sense of loss is experienced. Focusing on Anne Landsman's *The Devil's Chimney* (1997) and *The Rowing Lesson* (2007), and Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* (2005), the study examines how, in these novels, memory is refracted through loss, which is experienced as nostalgia or as trauma. Typically, a dispossessing experience, or one of extreme loss, will either be coloured by a nostalgiac's attempts at restoring the experience, or a traumatised individual's inability to fully comprehend the true impact of the situation until much later. Furthermore, this thesis analyses the discursive ways in which memory is inscribed on the human body and mapped onto the South African landscape, and explores the modalities of truth available to the individual, as expressed by the narrators of these individual novels .

Kossew notes that the TRC and its processes aimed at the recovery of memory have significantly changed the literary landscape of South Africa (133). Due to the public nature of the TRC hearings, its testimonies and revelations were broadcast across the country and have subsequently found their way into South African narrative fiction. Meg Samuelson argues that the novels which began emerging during this period are "largely invested and implicated in national, often nation-building, processes," which is why such novels are able to find their "symbolic and moral centre in the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission" ("Scripting Connections", 113). A slightly different angle is pursued by David Medalie when he asks, "what would it mean for [South African] literature to 'outgrow the madness' of apartheid?" (43). He suggests that the possibility for transcending an oppressive past can only be possible through a re-examination of how we, both as individuals and as a collective, configure the relationship between our past and our present.

My interest in these three specific novels is rooted in the choice of narrators: white women in post-apartheid South Africa who are attempting to construct their own stories. In the very act of storytelling, Connie (*DC)*, Faith (*GST)* and Betsy (*RL)* weave their individual voices into the

tapestry of the "new" South Africa, breaking the silence that has dominated their lives so far. By focusing on three individuals, each narrating their own story, I am able to draw on specific experiences while exploring what truths may hold fast for many others. The central concern that connects these women is the experience of loss: loss of loved ones, loss of home, and loss of identity. I will argue that loss is the locus of two complicated, seemingly opposed but also potentially intertwined phenomena, namely nostalgia and trauma. Balancing precariously on the experience of loss, these novels demonstrate the possibility for an individual simultaneously to wish to remember, as in nostalgia, and to wish to forget, as in trauma.

Body and landscape

The formation of memory around nostalgia and trauma implicates body and landscape in multiple ways in these novels. Both Landsman and Zadok invoke nuanced conceptions of how an individual deals with loss, and my analysis consequently requires a working understanding of how traumatic and nostalgic memory interact with the dialogue between the human body and the land it inhabits.

Medalie notes that nostalgia involves not only a desire for an individual seeking a return to a specific time, but also to a specific *place* (37). In returning to the physical landscapes of their childhoods, the protagonists of *The Rowing Lesson* and *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* are able to relive and reprocess the memories which these locales evoke. The concept and feeling that they would describe as "home" are, as they soon learn, bound by physical space and founded on the unreachable temporality of a time that has long since passed. For both Betsy and Faith, returning to the physical location presents an opportunity for them to process childhood memories, and in turn re-evaluate the relationships they have with their parents, as well as how they are able to position themselves within a changing world. Conversely, in *The Devil's Chimney,* Connie finds herself trapped at one physical location, but through her tales of Miss Beatrice and through her alcoholism she dissociates herself from her present, which allows her to re-examine the events she has previously repressed. In all three novels, the characters find that memory and landscape form a complicated relationship between the physical and the psychical.

Landscape, as Jessica Murray defines it, provides us with a term that encapsulates the connotative emotional qualities as well as cultural memories that bind an individual to a physical locale:

> a phenomenon that a particular person perceives and experiences and it includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the surface of the land, what lies beneath and above the land, as well as the memories, dreams and imagination that are centred on that place. (84)

Derived from the German geographical term, *Landschaft*, landscape's etymology, as noted by Kenneth Olwig, belies a double meaning (630). On the one hand, the term can mean "a restricted piece of land," while in other contexts it has come to mean the "appearance of a land as we perceive it" (Hartshorne 150). Only in the 1980s and 90s did poststructuralists begin reconceptualising the term in order to emphasise "horizontal (spatial) difference and fragmentation of perspective" (Luig and Von Oppen 15). It is this understanding which gives rise to a socially-constructed view of landscape, one that best explains how the physical setting may influence the formation of either nostalgic or traumatic memory.

If nostalgia is one way in which memories of loss are expressed, trauma is another. Following Anne Whitehead's assertion that "[t]raumatic memory is inflexible and replays the past in a mode of exact repetition, while narrative memory is capable of improvising on the past so that the account of the event varies from telling to telling" (87), I plan to trace how Landsman and Zadok employ narrative memory not only to repeat the past but also to revise it. Telling and re-telling stories, I argue, become a viable means of confronting the pain of an individual's past and reintegrating memory in a more complex way into the individual psyche. For Connie, the traumatic event is both the loss and mystery surrounding the birth of her child, while Faith has entirely repressed her involvement in the death of her beloved Nomsa. Betsy watches her father die, the experience of which unfolds as the novel is narrated, and during this time she is led through the bewildering and traumatic experiences of her childhood. Because Betsy has the opportunity to make peace with memories of her father as he lies on his death bed, she is able to process her mourning, and is therefore less likely to experience the type of haunting that dominates Connie and Faith's lives. However they process it, for all three women "narrative memory presents itself", to quote Sam Durrant, "as a mode of mourning, as a way of consciously working through history" (11).

As the unspeakable, that which is unable to be verbalised, trauma frequently makes itself known by inscribing its effects on either body or land. All three novels make this clearly visible through an evocation of dismemberment: Connie's farm is ravaged and the caves, holes and wounds come to represent the loss and damage rooted in her psyche, while Faith feels herself drawn to return to her childhood farm, and here discovers that there is something within her which requires purging. *The Rowing Lesson* provides one of the most interesting uses of body and location. As Betsy narrates her father's life story, she maps memories directly onto his body, using both the interior and exterior surfaces of his physical form to create a natural landscape capable of housing memory. In this organic process of remembering, Betsy pulls the strands of individual memories together, demonstrating the necessity of narrativised memory and its power to process loss.

Furthermore, if we begin to contemplate the juxtaposition of such memories, we can understand Jane Taylor's comment that, in a country like South Africa, "individual narratives come to stand for the larger national narrative" (ii). The novels I will be looking at might be considered as contributing to the country's diverse voices, locating these voices in the memories that particularised bodies carry of the places they have inhabited.

From repression to expression

It is very easy to describe contemporary South Africa as a country imbued with the politics of violence. Within this political climate the role of the author should be seen as increasingly important, considering that literature has been used for centuries to probe the consciousness of humankind, and to attempt imaginative means of broaching reconciliation where real attempts fail.

When asked of the capacity that literature has to deal with trauma, writer André Brink says:

> It is enormous, almost endless, because over so many centuries literature has done so much, has probed so deeply into all kinds of human situations, and has developed so many forms that it seems almost uniquely able to cope with the anxiety, with the anger, with the uncertainty, with all these aspects thrown up b y the turmoil. And it has the tradition of trying to evaluate, trying to explain what was happening, trying to understand what was happening. ("Articulating", 5)

For Brink, literature is really "a medium of sharing, of articulating the inarticulate, sometimes the inarticulable" ("Articulating", 8). Fellow author Sindiwe Magona affirms this stance, finding the process of writing to be therapeutic. She comments:

> There is something soothing about taking an ache and bringing it out under the light, holding it to the light, and seeing it for what it is. In a way it's a form of letting go; it's a part of the process. You can look at it, you can talk about it, you can change it around, you can shape it, you can address it, and you can let go. There is value in putting it out there and seeing the words you feel on the paper, and seeing your pain on the paper. You may even cry doing it, you may even get angry doing it, you may re-experience all the emotions that you walked through, but in putting it out, sharing it with others, in getting reactions of other people who underwent similar experiences, you might find solace and even a better understanding. You might grow away from the pain. (36-7)

The cathartic experience Magona feels in writing resonates with the TRC because, as she says, "after the TRC more and more people began to realise that there is value to their hitherto worthless lives" (34). While acknowledging the many limitations of the Commission, Magona still finds that it has developed the autobiographical genre exponentially. She argues:

> there are people who witnessed the TRC and that resonated with them, reminded them of their own lives or other lives they know, and they want to write about it. People want to write their grandmothers' stories, their mothers' stories, because the TRC told them there is value. Our history is beginning to matter to us in ways that were not possible before the end of apartheid and the TRC. (*ibid*)

While ethical issues surrounding the Commission abound,[1] it does appear that in serving as a creative impulse, the TRC has stimulated a substantial shift in South African literature. This shift is especially apparent in terms of what stories authors feel *should* be being told. Writer Njabulo Ndebele comments:

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[1] The most common grievance with the TRC is the fact that "[g]ranting amnesty to gross human rights violators has undermined respect for the rule of law and the institutions of law in South Africa" (Gibson 342). Meintjies and Goldblatt also argue that the gender politics of the Commission were particularly discriminatory against women, and that "the TRC's narrow interpretation of 'severe ill-treatment' means that women who bore the brunt of oppression through forced removals, pass arrests and other acts of systemic apartheid violence have not been identified as victims of gross human rights violations" (8). Furthermore, Du Toit notes that the trials were "conceptualised in relation to the perpetrators and victims of specified political atrocities, a conceptualisation which tended to exclude the collaborators with, and beneficiaries from, the social injustice and systemic inequalities of apartheid from its purview" (439). According to Du Toit, the victims were often rendered as objects, because "the victims' hearings had been only one phase and had increasingly been subordinated to the methodology of systematic data-processing and corroboration of statements as a basis for the objective of making victim and perpetrator findings" (440).

> the stories of the TRC represent a ritualistic lifting of the veil and validation of what was actually seen. They are an additional confirmation of the movement of our society from repression to expression. Where in the past the state attempted to compel the oppressed to deny the testimony of their experience, today that experience is one of the essential conditions for the emergence of a new national consciousness. These stories may very well be some of the first steps in the rewriting of South African history on the basis of validated mass experience. (20)

If South African history and literature are moving towards this sense of a new national consciousness, then we can understand how important Ndebele's "lifting of the veil" could be to many individuals still haunted by their pasts. Psychologist Chris van der Merwe sees literature playing a fundamental role here. Van der Merwe argues:

> All people who have been traumatized have this paradoxical desire to reveal and to conceal. That is the wonderful thing about literature, music, and the arts in general. Artistic works – literature, film, theatre, music, sculptures, painting – are indirect forms of expression. The artists do not say explicitly: 'It's me'; instead they fictionalize, but at the same time they reveal, and that is the wonderful thing about art: it can contain the paradox of revealing and concealing. And something similar happens to the receivers of the artist's message – the activity of interpreting and appropriating a work of art is a paradoxical process of distancing and identification. (184)

Within this paradigm, literature functions as a performative embodied experience, allowing an author to deal more empathetically with subject, and the reader to engage more directly with object. The relationship between revealing and concealing is inviting to readers, giving them an active role to play in relating to the text, and perhaps offering them perspective on their own situations. Finding ways of identifying with the text, as well as being able to distance themselves from both the work and their own lives, may allow readers the opportunity to process their own experiences.

Nostalgia and trauma

In order to analyse the processes occurring within these three novels, it is necessary to outline the theoretical framework in which the terms 'nostalgia' and 'trauma' are used, and to trace how these psychic conceptions might figure as literary tropes. After I establish the manner in which these tropes interlace with one another, the thesis explores, in each novel, the strategies attempted by the respective protagonists in dealing with the experience of loss.

Defining nostalgia as “the source of a sorrow that cannot be dislodged” (37), Medalie argues that there is a sense of longing more for a time than a place, although often the two are presumed to be inter-changeable. Noting the etymology of the term, Svetlana Boym indicates that “nostalgia” is formed from the Greek “*nostos* – return home, and *algia* – longing” (xiii). Frequently, this “is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed”, meaning that nostalgia is not only “a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy” (*ibid*).

Such intense romanticisation of the past can, of course, be dangerous to an individual’s association with the present. The key lies in what Svetlana Boym identifies as the difference between “restorative” and “reflective” nostalgia. “Restorative nostalgia” is that which “manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past,” as opposed to “reflective nostalgia”, which Boym argues “lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and time” (42). Dennis Walder maintains that, if employed correctly, nostalgia can be a powerful tool. “Exploring nostalgia”, Walder argues, “can and should open up a negotiation between the present and the past, leading to a fuller understanding of the past and how it has shaped the present, for good and bad, and how it has shaped the self in connection with others, a task that may bring pain as well as pleasure” (*Postcolonial,* 9).

The counterpart to a nostalgic memory that cannot let go is the traumatic memory that will not go away. Graham argues that because there is an intimate connection between “land” and the “human body,” trauma frequently registers as a response to land, where it is “paradoxically both inscribed on and perceived as external to the body/land” (42). He explains that because of such externalisation, “the memories generated by the inscription are involuntary, arising in the survivor almost like a demonic possession” (*ibid*). These memories are able to take hold of an individual, overpowering his or her daily existence. As Van der Kolk & Van der Hart put it, traumatic memories are “the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences,” and for these memories to be released, they “need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language” (176). Unless it is narrativised, the traumatic event is split off from an individual’s psyche and persistently affects how the individual is able to function in daily life. Whitehead argues that “fiction offers the flexibility and the freedom to be able to articulate the resistance and impact of trauma” (87).

Nostalgic longing and traumatic memory resonate with the distinction Durrant makes between mourning and melancholia, as respectively "a 'healthy' process of remembering in order to forget and an 'unhealthy' process of remembering that seems to have no end other than the perpetuation of the process itself" (9). Trauma can be as overwhelming and consuming as melancholia, while nostalgia, in the reflective form, offers the possibility for the healthier process of mourning, or accepting the position of loss. The work of Melanie Klein is useful here in shaping the manner in which I approach the three novels, most notably in my analysis of *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* and *The Rowing Lesson*. Klein's conception of an individual gravitating either towards the depressive position or the paranoid-schizoid position correlates to this paradigm of nostalgia and mourning as an alternative to traumatic memory and melancholia.

Splitting and integration

As Julia Segal notes, Klein's theoretical contributions to the field of psychoanalysis "were based on the work of Freud but went further and challenged many of his ideas" (28), most notably Klein's suggestion that "Freud's concept of stages of development through which a child passes in well-defined order was too limiting" (Segal 33). Segal explains that Klein agreed with Freud's hypothesis that "children's primary interest shifted from oral, to anal and then genital concerns," but that she furthered this theory in her work by suggesting that, rather than having a distinct progression of stages of development, "there was constant movement from one to the other and back again" (*ibid*). R.D. Hinshelwood believes that Klein's theory with its "to-and-fro movement is much more fluid than Freud's notion of phases and regression" (96).

These shifting concerns form the basis for Klein's theory that the infant is caught between what Harold B. Gerard describes as "two opposite tendencies, one toward splitting and another toward integration, each serving a different function" (117). Klein terms these two tendencies the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position. As with Freud's stages of development, these are natural occurrences with an infant, beginning with the first object the child encounters: its mother's breast. Segal notes that during the initial periods of life, it is necessary for an infant "to distinguish between good and bad, and the danger comes from a

muddling of the two" (33). At this stage, the infant's development is dependent on its ability to learn how to differentiate between love and cruelty.

While under the affect of the paranoid-schizoid position, explains Beverly Burch:

> Anxieties about persecution or overwhelming fears of being destroyed can cause the fragile ego to disintegrate. The ego actively splits off the bad object relationship to get rid of the source of danger; thus part of psychic reality is split, and the ego is in a schizoid as well as paranoid state. (127-8)

It is this process of splitting that characterises the paranoid-schizoid position, argues Michael Feldman, allowing the infant to segregate the good experiences from the bad (74). Feldman further asserts that this involves "both segregating off everything perceived as harmful and dangerous internally, and/or projecting it into the outside world" (*ibid*). Klein describes this process as "projective identification", which essentially "involves a phantasy in which some aspect of the self, felt as unbearable, is got rid of into someone else. The person then no longer feels that this aspect of themselves (including the feelings attached to it) belongs to them" (Segal 37). As Feldman explains it, projective identification is "the psychic equivalent of expelling dangerous substances from the body" (75).

These constructions, which Klein terms "phantasies", are a child's primary means for engaging with and relating to the world. Klein uses the word "phantasy" to differentiate between these unconscious phantasies and the conscious fantasies of which an infant may be aware (Segal 29). Segal explains:

> Phantasies give 'body' and expression to emotional states. Klein used the concept of phantasy to describe the active and 'concrete' nature of … mechanisms of defence, as well as the results of these mechanisms. Repression of a dangerous impulse, for example, may be represented in phantasy as chopping up something frightening and pushing it down a hole, or putting it into a can with a lid on. (30)

Here, the Freudian mechanism of repression is manifested in the splitting typical of the paranoid-schizoid position. Robert Caper argues that "[w]here Freud believed that intolerable thoughts are pushed into the unconscious, Klein emphasized the projection of the intolerable parts of the self into an object" (139). For Klein, then, the infant attempts to purge itself of these negative qualities by splitting them from itself and then projecting them onto another.

Ultimately, however, this splitting and projecting of the ego create confusion about what belongs to the self, and what belongs to the object.

Later, this gives way to the depressive position, wherein the infant "begins to integrate experience rather than split it. Awareness of objects as more whole, with both loved and hated characteristics begins" (Segal 41). For the child, the source of anxiety shifts from self-preservation to concern for the object, which it now sees as an integration of good and bad qualities. Gerard notes that "As a result, feelings shift from the persecutory anxiety of being destroyed, to guilt, remorse, and sadness arising from the belief that it has destroyed the object; hence the term, depressive position" (117). For Caper, this position involves a move away from the narcissistic identification of the paranoid-schizoid position, allowing the infant to see itself in relation to the object (5).

The most important factor in distinguishing these positions from Freud is the fact that the depressive position does not ultimately supersede the paranoid-schizoid position. The oscillation between the two positions was fundamental to Klein's understanding of the continued development of the infant all the way through to adulthood. As Burch suggests:

> crises in adult life trigger a return to one of these positions especially when it has not been worked through adequately. The clearest example of this regression is seen when the loss of a loved person cannot be mourned and overcome. (128-9)

Psychoanalysis and literary analysis

Within the field of psychoanalysis, the emphasis on a split in the psyche has become fundamental to its form of analysis. Freud pioneered the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious mind, while Klein developed this into an understanding of how individuals separate experiences. The notion of the split psyche implicates, also, the distinction between self and other, the relationship between body and place, and the boundary between past and present. These particular types of relationships, marred by rupture, discontinuity and silences or gaps, are the type of problematic dialectics with which this thesis concerns itself.

Moreover, if phantasies are a consequence of the split psyche, they may also be viewed as a means of overcoming this split. When configured within literary expression, phantasy formations are able to mediate the relations of splitting. This can be rendered through various techniques, such as metaphor and metonymy, or the parallelisms and contrasts offered by narrative structure. Even the authorial and narratorial voices can bridge the divide between individuals by virtue of the dialogical and the intersubjective possibilities of literature.

The possibilities inherent in the argument for literature's performative and affective values, prompt this thesis to initiate a dialogue between psychoanalysis and literary analysis, utilising psychoanalytic theory to facilitate the discussions of trauma and nostalgia and interpret how they function within selected narratives. Divided into four chapters, with this introductory chapter functioning as means of exploring the literary landscape in which the three novels discussed have emerged, the thesis works through each novel systematically, before concluding with an understanding of how the narratives differ, and whether or not they are efficacious in their goals.

Chapter Two, "Traumatic Memory and Storytelling in Anne Landsman's *The Devil's Chimney*", begins with an exposition of the role that storytelling can play in assisting the traumatised individual to process the non-linear experience of traumatic memory into a clear chronology. Within this chapter, Cathy Caruth's seminal work *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) anchors my literary analysis of an individual who is suffering the effects of life-long trauma. Furthermore, post-Structuralist Mikhail Bakhtin is invaluable to my reading of the novel as a polyvocal text; that is, as a text constantly in discussion both with itself and with greater social concerns that resonate within the novel's particular political context of the TRC. In this novel, the effect of phantasy is engaged by a delusional alcoholic narrator who establishes a split narrative in order to transpose various elements of her own life onto the background of Miss Beatrice's story.

The third chapter, "The Fractured Selves and Fragmented Realities of a Disturbed Childhood in Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*", relies on Kleinian psychoanalysis to interpret Faith's psychological state, both as a child and as the young adult who returns home. Analysing the discrepancies in belief structures, the chapter discusses the manner in which Faith is forced to "split" herself in order to survive her childhood, as well as the implementation of traditional African medicine and its uses in banishing the spirits

responsible for trauma. As a child, Faith finds herself haunted by the fairies her mother tells her are real, and these fairies eventually become Faith's own phantasy construction, housing the parts of herself that she wishes to purge. Here, Klein's concept of positions is the lynchpin to articulating a dialogue between Western psychoanalytic theory and the traditional African concept of "bewitchment", or possession by evil spirits. The modelling of such a syncretic structure is the exact merging of worlds alluded to in the title of the novel.

Finally, Chapter Four, "Memory, Body and Landscape in Anne Landsman's *The Rowing Lesson*", weaves together the intricacies of body and landscape, interpolating how the use of nostalgic memory binds the three concerns. In this novel, Betsy's own construction is the imaginative modelling of landscape on the interior and exterior surfaces of her father's body, as if he is the virtual map that she uses to retrieve her memories. Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection is deployed in my discussion of the somatic elements of the novel, while Bakhtin and Klein are drawn on to establish the text's dialogic values and a return to the depressive position.

Using nostalgic recollection and traumatic memory as a framework, my discussion will focus on the relations between these two modes of remembering, tracing the experience of loss located at the core of trauma and nostalgia in the three novels, and explore how the protagonists are able to excavate their own memories. The conclusion of this study will return to the relevance of the TRC, its position within literature, and interrogate what the novels have taken from the Commission, and how the concepts of truth, reconciliation and amnesty are deployed within Landsman's and Zadok's texts. Examining the motifs of body, memory and landscape in the three texts, the study will be able draw connections between the process of storytelling and the affective experience of reading. Finally, the thesis will comment on the role that the experience of loss has played in South African literature, and how this concern is developing in emerging literature.

Chapter Two: Traumatic Memory and Storytelling in Anne Landsman's *The Devil's Chimney*

"Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present" (Bhabha 90).

Loss, memory and the body politic

"How do you forget when something terrible happens like my baby with a leaking heart?" asks Connie, the narrator of Anne Landsman's *The Devil's Chimney* (252). She continues by saying, "I drink and it goes away but the next morning it's all back, and I have to start all over again" (*ibid*). Alcohol thus provides Connie with a means of repressing the traumatic experience of her stillborn child as well as combating the painful memories she associates with it. This coping-mechanism, however, proves ineffective because, as Shane Graham notes, the very nature of human memory necessitates an understanding, and any kind of "wilful amnesia cannot bring about the desired numbness to painful memories if those memories stubbornly insist on haunting and possessing the survivor" (141). In a case like Connie's, one in which an individual has suffered a severe trauma and is continually haunted by the events of the past, Graham suggests that "it is better to work through memory in a conscious, productive manner" (*ibid*).

Having sustained the trauma of losing her baby, Connie finds herself attempting a form of double denial. She attempts to obliterate all of her memories by drinking them away, and displaces her pain by instituting the parallel narrative of Miss Beatrice. The practice of storytelling, as argued by Graham, should provide a productive means of processing memories. However, Graham suggests that Connie's use of narrative may, in fact, be counter-productive. Instead of consciously processing her own painful memories, Connie begins the parallel narrative of a woman named Miss Beatrice, who lived on the same land as Connie much earlier in the twentieth century. At many critical junctures throughout the novel, Connie chooses amnesia over her pain, and with the help of what she calls "Tannie Gin[2]"

[2] Afrikaans for Auntie Gin

(*DC* 42), disappears into the story of someone else. It is for this reason that Graham comments that "the novel itself might best be described as an exercise in displacement and denial" (142). What needs to be considered, however, is that Connie's alcoholism has paradoxical consequences: she drinks in order to forget, but her drinking opens her ability to begin narrating her pain. Even if this storytelling is initially remembering in a displaced form, it is the contradictory role that alcohol plays in her life that lends the novel a multifaceted dimension. My reading of Landsman's text argues that the phenomenon of the parallel narrative requires a more nuanced interpretation than Graham allows. I suggest that despite Connie initially using the other woman as diversion, she soon discovers how their narratives intertwine, and more importantly, differ from one another. It is in establishing the differences between herself and Miss Beatrice that Connie is eventually able to begin working through her memories in a productive manner.

First published in 1997, during the height of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *The Devil's Chimney* was nominated for the PEN/Hemingway Award, the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize, QPB's New Voices Award, and the M-Net Book Prize. Christopher Warnes, however, laments that the novel has "received nothing like the critical attention it deserves" (53). Despite Warnes' assertion, the novel has garnered the attention of several reviewers and critics, both within South Africa and internationally. André Brink, in particular, has responded favourably to the novel, calling it: "a truly remarkable debut, written with an intensity of imagination that lights up the dark places behind the world and the history we thought we knew" ("Review", n.p). In particular, Brink praises Landsman's use of magical realism, defining the mode as follows:

> the hallmark of literature built on the conviction that a nation need[s] stories in order to define its identity. No political, or social, or economic programs aimed at constructing a new society could hope to succeed … unless they were inspired by that leap of imagination which expresses itself in the telling and inventing of stories. (*ibid*)

Still, Landsman's use of the technique is markedly different from other versions of magical realism. Connie's alcoholism, which even extends to the use of methylated spirits at one point, provides a doorway to this other dimension, creating a world which might otherwise remain unoccupied by the narrator and the reader. Jill Nudelman notes:

> 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. ("Magical Realist", 113)

Part of what makes Landsman's particular deployment of magical realism so effective is the fact that it creates this ambiguity in the narrative, allowing Connie's storytelling to take on a disruptive quality which is visible in the multivalent strands of metaphor and mythology prompted by the text. Essentially, the effect of alcohol abuse is a narrator who is suffering from various delusions. Not only does she populate her life with invented characters, but she frequently suffers from the disturbed visions and nightmares that one might expect from an alcoholic. Nevertheless, Landsman deploys this symptomology as a powerful form of communication in order to cast doubt on which elements of the narrative reflect Connie's true reality and which are able to blur the distinction between the worlds of Connie and Miss Beatrice.

As Nudelman comments, in Landsman's deployment of the genre of magical realism, Landsman is able "to rewrite the exclusionary narratives of colonial and apartheid South Africa and present a more inclusive national narrative" ("Magical Realist", 112). Although it may be slightly naïve to hope that Connie's narrative could be an entirely inclusive one, Nudelman does highlight the element of hope inherent in the novel. This telling of stories and the political possibilities that narrative could offer are, indeed, the focus of Nudelman's article, "Anne Landsman's *The Devil's Chimney*: A magical realist narrative for a new nation?" (2008).

While Nudelman considers the narrative inclusive, Graham observes a direct correlation between the novel and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). *The Devil's Chimney*, he says, "raises many of the motifs that recur so insistently in South African literature after the TRC – memory and forgetting, loss, haunting, and present absences" (142). For Connie Lambrecht, loss appears to be a central concern of her existence; the most obvious loss being that of her child. At a more conceptual level, though, loss points to an emotional incongruity between what an individual experiences and what she or he had hoped or expected to experience. Within the novel, loss insistently makes its presence known through various tropes: the death of a child, a loved one gone missing with no explanation,

the emptiness of the caves, and the physical ravages suffered by the farm, are a few prominent examples.

Warnes in particular views the losses directly related to the land as crucial to the narrative of any "farm novel", and identifies the link of "the farm as pastoral idyll or locus of identity" (51). Invoking J.M. Coetzee's seminal work, *White Writing* (1988), Warnes delineates the relationship between South African art during the last two centuries and epistemological landmarks of settler identity, an identity forged upon an intimate connection between land and landowner. For this very reason, Warnes argues that, in the novel, the setting of the farm plays a greater role than just a necessary location. The farm "encircles and subsumes these events, providing a material basis for abstractions about landscape, belonging and culture" (*ibid*). With the dissolution of apartheid, the manner in which we understand these conceptions of farmland needs serious re-evaluation.

It is within a turbulent political climate of transition that Janette Turner Hospital locates the primary concerns of Landsman's novel. Taking an almost dystopian reading of *The Devil's Chimney*, Hospital titles her review "The abyss of the past" (1998), bleakly asking "can the future be saved?" (11). Hospital identifies the titular landscape of the novel as "the gaping underworld of the Cango Caves, a vast nothingness of negative capability that can swallow not only the unwary but also memory, entire cultures, the past and perhaps the future as well" (11). Likening the political climate of South Africa to the claustrophobia of the Cango's narrow rock formation, the devil's chimney itself, Hospital finds the "course of a national history that is stuck at its own point of no return and its own destruction" (11). Jochen Petzold, however, illuminates an important truth inherent in Connie's storytelling. The "emphasis is not on history as fact," he argues "but on her personal involvement with the story of the past" (118).

This level of personal involvement between Connie's narrative of an imagined history and a denied present effectively captures part of what I would call dimensions of reading. Connie may function as a narrator, but she is also a reader and an experiencing individual within a story told by someone else. At one point, as she retreats into the story of Miss Beatrice, her act of self-denial escalates to the point that her husband tells her that she is "living inside someone else's skin. Someone else's dead skin" (*DC* 116). Connie's only response is: "My skin is too tight anyways" (*ibid*). These multiple forms of displacement are also something

which can extend beyond the novel to the person reading Connie's narrative, making it difficult to ascertain whether it is Landsman, Connie or the reader who is attempting to work through something, or seeking a form of self-denial. When posing these difficult questions within fiction, it may be helpful to consider psychologist Chris van der Merwe's discussion of trauma:

> The important thing is that the body remembers [trauma] even if you don't remember intellectually. And part of the narrative treatment is to literally move the traumatic experience from one part of the brain's memory to another part where it becomes narrative memory. Trauma is so overwhelming that you cannot express it, so you push it down and your body remembers it all over. The narrative is not a quick fix … but it's a way of making a few steps towards working through that overwhelming experience, which left its marks on the body as well. (178-9)

As trauma has such an overwhelming effect on an individual, it is apparent that denial may be a conscious effort to forget, but there is also a strong likelihood that no attempt at denial will be able to resist the eventual return of trauma. Its effect on the body is frequently something that registers through reading via a sensory experience. As a novel, *The Devil's Chimney* could produce a somatic, affective identification with the reader, making it difficult to read the text without responding to it on more than a purely rational level. The countless descriptions of bodily invasions, damages, and violations reach the reader beyond a purely intellectual reaction, and may facilitate access to the reader's own experiences of loss, or at least allow an affective response in which the experience of loss is recalled.

Of course, as suggested by Van der Merwe, this is not to claim that narrative can definitively purge trauma, but perhaps, it may encourage readers to construct, however obliquely, their own narratives, Landsman may be providing an impetus towards catharsis. Specifically, the literariness of Connie's text and its somatic and affective quality at least allow one to entertain the notion of narrative's ability to revise the past and re-integrate memories into a productive structure.

Narrating the nation

Dividing Connie's narrative journey into the psychic phases of repression, transference, and resolution, this chapter discusses the nature of trauma, reflecting upon its damaging effects, and briefly suggests how Connie uses storytelling as a means to reconsider the losses she has

suffered. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on Connie rather than Miss Beatrice as a site of reading, opting to analyse the means through which Connie, and not so much the character in her imagined secondary narrative, processes her painful memories, and comes to terms with the loss of her child, while also commenting on the changes occurring within post-apartheid South Africa and its emerging literature.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been acknowledged as having had an incisive influence on evolving literary trends in South Africa (Kossew 133). This is because the Commission's goal was to perform a political and social initiative of reconciliation, concerning itself with the investigation of past narratives as well as debating concepts of 'truth'. Furthermore, after South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, events such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) stand as evidence that there has been an increasing interest in attempting to capture what Stephen Clingman refers to as "the oscillating profusion of voices that must make South Africa's future" (156). Meg Samuelson argues that the TRC "can be understood as balancing uneasily and precariously between two performative functions": that of a "cracked heirloom" and that of a "brand new mixing bowl of rainbow nationalism" ("Cracked Vases", 66).

"Rainbow nationalism" is a problematic concept within a South Africa which, despite eighteen years of democracy, still reflects a nation deeply divided. Calling on the census of 2001, Angela Hamilton argues that South Africa is still politically, culturally and geographically divided, and that race and class are still widespread problems (5). While Hamilton suggests that, through the use of literature, South African authors may be able to demonstrate possible strategies for handling problematic and divisionary social issues (5), Isidore Diala, however, realises the problems inherent in such a broad undertaking. Diala argues that:

> for South African whites generally, as for white South African writers, there has been, perhaps expectedly, no consensus about the appropriate ethical response to the historical guilt of apartheid, just as there has been a deep anxiety to acknowledge the culture of violence in post-apartheid South Africa as part of the enduring legacy of apartheid. (50)

Contemporary writers explore literature's capacity for translating this guilt, while seeking ways of moving beyond the politics of violence, perhaps to create a literature that adequately addresses the issues that the TRC could not.

As an author, Anne Landsman's writing appears to acknowledge both the limitations and possibilities of the unsettled cultural divisions raised by Diala and Hamilton, making it possible for her novel to be more nuanced than Graham's pure accusation of denial would suggest. Landsman comments that there is "no blueprint for writing fiction, no m ap, no recipe," but she also suggests that narrative is a crucial tool in understanding "the workings of memory, and how our lives are built on the complex interface between what we've lived through, and what we hope for" (Qtd in Firestone, n.p.). This view of the functioning of memory establishes Landsman as one of the few writers who may be an exception to Diala's apparent blanketing of white writers, suggesting that she sees narrative as having the ability to bridge the interstices present in most post-apartheid fiction.

Narrative is something which provides the means for Landsman to interact with memories, mirrored in Sam Durrant's assertion that all forms of storytelling, whether written or oral, constitute an important step in alleviating what he refers to as the "tension between the oppressive memory of the past and the liberatory promise of the future" (1). As Jill Nudelman argues, "Connie's art provides the meditative space that is required to access memories: one where they can be sifted, understood and dwelt in" (*Contested*, 130). It is through her creative act of linking herself with Miss Beatrice, and comparing the ways in which they deal with similar situations, that Connie "finds the courage to confront her past and its truths [as] the process of narrating allows Connie to reconcile herself to her memories and the emotions they evoke" (*ibid*). The creation of Miss Beatrice is indicative that narrative may indeed function as a type of suturing to Connie's pain.

By facing the past and remembering past memories, Landsman's narrative is able to bear witness not only to the story of Connie's individual pain, but also a national trauma, which continues to affect the way in which people relate to each other. Part of this dialectic is rooted in Diala's comment that there is very little consensus as to how white writers, and white South Africans in general, are to process their guilt alongside their own pain. It could be argued that the stories of Connie and Miss Beatrice are also prompted by vast social changes which cause them to re-evaluate other things they may have lost. For Connie, there is clear anxiety living in post-1994 South Africa, as someone who feels recently dispossessed of political status. Miss Beatrice is unsure of how to proceed in a patriarchal and racial post-1910 South Africa after her husband goes missing. Both of these time periods are definitive

moments in the history of South Africa which saw vast shifts in political power, and the resulting effects of uncertainty in social standing are clearly evident in Connie and Miss Beatrice's lives.

It can be argued that storytelling works as a means of remembering the lives of those whose stories have been silenced by authoritative accounts of "history". Storytelling is, thus, a crucial tool, if we are to follow Durrant's aim of learning "how to live in memory of both the dead and all those whose living human presence continues to be disavowed by the present world order" (1). If, within the narrative, each reader is able to locate one affective aspect among the various layers of loss, then he or she may be able to respond somatically alongside the narrator, and in so doing transform the reading process into something other than merely a heuristic process.

The return of the repressed

The process which Connie initiates from the first page of the novel demonstrates how difficult it can be to navigate the memories of traumatic incidents. In the prologue, Connie declares: "Ever since Pauline Cupido's disappearance during the Christmas holidays in 1955, I have been trying to remember things" (*DC* 1). Much like the absence felt because of the death of her own child, as well as the many unanswered questions which surround the birth, the mystery surrounding Pauline, a domestic worker who ostensibly disappears while on a tour of the Cango Caves, is a memory which invades Connie's day-to-day life. The fact that both of these events occurred at least forty years prior to Connie beginning her narrative and still have a profound impact is an indication of how severely Connie has been affected by her feelings of loss.

Despite attempting to drink until she forgets, Connie is still haunted by memories, including both the death of her child and the disappearance of Pauline. For Connie, resolving the mystery surrounding the birth and death of her child, as well as the disappearance of Pauline, holds the potential to relinquish their hold on her. Connie says, "I keep thinking that if I find Pauline everything will go back to the way it was before. No more bad dreams at night … no more fights with my husband, Jack" (*DC* 2). These moments which filter through her drunken shield of protection force her to acknowledge that for her and her husband Jack, "the baby's

ghost lies between [them] like the ghost of baby Jesus except Jesus is alive after so many years and [their] baby is dead" (*DC* 199).

Time, therefore, does not necessarily ease the pain of having suffered a trauma, but can actually exacerbate the event, meaning that the recurring memories are what keep an individual trapped. This feeling of entrapment is shown in Connie saying, "I still feel like I'm eighteen inside only when I look in the mirror I see an old woman there ... and I have to have a *dop*[3]" (*DC* 21). This assessment of her life not being one which she herself lives, of herself as being stuck in the past, testifies to the reiterative nature of trauma. The belated impact of the traumatic event is represented here by a recurring memory which appears to cause greater pain when Connie is in her sixties than when she actually lost her child.

This delayed advent of pain, as seen in Connie, is a symptom common to individuals who have suffered some form of trauma. Originating from Sigmund Freud's theory of "traumatic neurosis", the term "trauma", as Cathy Caruth notes, can be defined as the "unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind" (*Unclaimed*, 2). Although this term was originally used in reference to an injury inflicted upon an individual's body, Caruth notes that in "later usage, particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature, and most centrally in Freud's text, the term *trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (*Unclaimed*, 3). As for what causes this wounding, Kai Erikson argues that "trauma can issue from a sustained exposure to battle as well as from a moment of numbing shock, from a continuing pattern of abuse as well as from a single-searing assault, from a period of severe attenuation and erosion as well as from a sudden flash of fear" (185). Thus, in its most general of definitions, "trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which *the response* to events occurs in the often *delayed*, and *repetitive* occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth *Unclaimed*, 11. My emphasis). For Connie, these intrusive phenomena take the form of particularly disturbing nightmares, as well as hallucinations brought on by alcoholic delusions, such as when Connie believes she sees whole ships sailing through her living-room wall, accompanied by people drowning and screaming. As Erikson notes, trauma can radically threaten the sense of self, as it is during such an event that something "breaks in on

[3] Afrikaans colloquialism for an alcoholic drink.

you, smashing through whatever barriers your mind has set up as a line of defence. It invades you, takes you over, becomes a dominating feature of your interior landscape" (183).

Caruth suggests that trauma sustained is something which never fully leaves an individual, which is why Connie sometimes feels as if she is trapped in the Devil's Chimney.[4] The section of the Cango Caves which gives its name to the novel is only the first indication of how Landsman employs caves as a motif in order to represent elements of loss and trauma which are not apparent on the surface (Graham 142), and which are continuously pushed out of Connie's awareness by her drinking. As Graham suggests:

> land is deeply and intimately connected to the human body, and … the memory of landscapes can behave much like bodily traumatic memory: the trauma is paradoxically both inscribed on and perceived as external to the body/land, and the memories generated by the inscription are involuntary, arising in the survivor almost like a demonic possession. (141)

The complicated dialectic visible between body and landscape suggests that there are unread traumas of the land which need to be actualised and understood in the same way we view bodily trauma. Durrant argues that "memories lodge themselves in the body precisely because they cannot be verbalised" (87), and similar causality is certainly evident in the landscape/memory correlation. As proposed by Graham, the landscape in the novel functions as an embodiment of certain unspoken traumas; erosion, drought, Mr Henry's anticipation of snow, the death of many ostriches, and Mr Henry's own bleeding into the soil, are physically realised events which are simultaneously representative of the emotional.

The symbolism of the caves becomes clear when Connie links them to Pauline's disappearance. They are the location of Miss Beatrice's lost child, whom she later presumes to be Pauline, and a locus to house Connie's own fears. As enigmatic as the child she never saw, the caves also represent both loss and female sexuality. Connie makes these connections in her comments about "the caveness of the body [where] your stomach is a cave and so are your lungs, with millions of tiny stalactites and stalagmites made out of flesh" (*DC* 82), and

[4] In the Cango Caves in Oudtshoorn, the "Devil's Chimney is just an opening between rocks. You crawl through it on your stomach" (*DC* 7). Renowned for being such a small crawl space, it is no wonder that on occasion Connie's situation makes her feel "like those people in the Devil's Chimney who get stuck half in and half out" (*DC* 226).

quite explicitly when she says “the Chimney ... is just like a woman’s shoppie, if you ask me” (*DC* 259).[5]

The fear Connie associates with the womblike nature of the caves and the loss of Miss Beatrice’s baby, literally snatched from this environment, relates directly to Connie never seeing her own child after it leaves her womb. Connie says “I never saw my baby alive,” and at first she reasons that, because of this, she “never knew what was gone” (*DC* 261). For a while Connie is able to repress her pain, convincing herself that she could not miss what she had never actually seen, as if only vision and not somatic sense captures the bond that makes the child real. This is, of course, the beginning of her denial, the very first lie she tells herself in order to avoid the pain of her loss.

Only in later years, particularly after discovering that she cannot have another child, does Connie start to feel the full extent of her loss. Despite having started drinking while pregnant, a possible cause of her baby’s heart problems, Connie defines this as the moment she became reliant on alcohol. Connie claims that she spent her nights alone, drinking excessively, actively trying to forget, but finding it impossible to constantly keep her guard up. She comments that forgetting “was hard and the hospital [and everything that happened there] would come back to me” (*DC* 261). While Connie finds it necessary to escape the immediate pain felt, Graham argues:

> Forgetting ... can be as painful as remembering, and never lasts long. So in addition to drinking away the memory of her loss, she also *displaces* her own grief through the narrative of Beatrice, who becomes a paradoxical figure of both remembrance and amnesia. (147)

Miss Beatrice offers Connie a space in which she can re-member certain events in her own life, project certain anxieties, and escape from her harsh reality via the medium of storytelling.

This example of Connie’s life demonstrates that trauma can be termed an event that “is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive

[5] “Shoppie” being the word Connie’s grandmother uses as a euphemism, considering it far too rude to refer to a woman’s genitals in public.

actions" (Caruth *Unclaimed*, 4). Traumatic loss is something which eighteen year-old Connie cannot adequately process, particularly because the still-born baby means that Jack did not need to marry Connie after all, and Connie is sure that this results in him resenting her. Connie's life, as a result, has been determined by an event which has not really come to pass, and this appears to factor into the disintegration of her relationship with Jack. At this point Connie says that she did not "want to know whether it was a boy or a girl because sometimes the less you know the better" (*DC* 13). This resonates with Caruth's observation that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in … its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance" (Caruth *Unclaimed*, 4). In a later essay, Caruth suggests that the true origin of being traumatised lies in "the incomprehensible act of *surviving* – of waking into life – that repeats and bears witness to what *remains ungrasped* within the encounter with death" (Caruth "Parting", 50. My emphasis).

Having lived through the death of her child, Connie compares the feeling to something located in the physical: "Your body loses a wing or a shoulder. There's a big piece missing where that other person used to be" (*DC* 74). Despite this event having occurred some forty years earlier, Connie clearly demonstrates that something continues to affect her to the point where her own body remains traumatised. Not having held the baby, this experience of her baby's death haunts her, through her own incomprehensibility of having survived the same encounter. Knowing that her baby died from a hole in its heart has its own devastating effects for Connie, for every time she hears her own heart beating, she is reminded of the child whose heart never beat. Living is therefore often unbearable for Connie, because mourning has become impossible, so she lives in a state of pathological melancholia. She desperately wishes to be back in the past, or may even be unconsciously willing her death through her alcoholism. This death wish is evident when she proclaims: "Sometimes I wish I had died all those years ago with my cookiebird. I would be the one resting now. I wouldn't have to do anything anymore" (*DC* 118).

Psychic rupture and the spectre of the past

The act of repression serves as a means of protection which ruptures the chronology of the event, and only returns to parts of the particular memory at a later stage, as seen in Connie saying: "I remember that horrible dream. Connie, Ma says, I'm giving the baby to Gerda"

(*DC* 175). Unable to truly understand the meaning of this event, it appears to Connie repeatedly, but she views it as if it were only a terrible dream. Anne Whitehead notes there is a "collapse of understanding which is situated at the heart of trauma," and that this "registers as a non-experience causing conventional epistemologies to falter" (5). Such memories occur in fragments, allowing Connie to slowly process the event. Whitehead describes this kind of experience as follows:

> Insufficiently grasped at the time of its occurrence [it] does not lie in the possession of the individual, to be recounted at will, but rather acts as a haunting or possessive influence which not only insistently and intrusively returns but is, moreover, experienced for the first time only in its belated repetition. (*ibid*)

Clearly, time is not something Connie experiences in conventional chronology, as seen when she says: "I wake up and I'm not at home anymore … I'm wearing a hospital nightie and I have a horrible feeling that its then and not now and the baby has just died" (*DC* 216). In her unsuccessful attempts to repress these haunting memories, Connie becomes further disorientated by her excessive alcohol intake:

> I drink and it goes away but the next morning it's all back, and I have to start all over again. And each forgetting with the bottle is different. Sometimes *the door that closes is made of iron*, and sometimes *it's thick and padded* like a velvet cushion. Once the door that closed was a beaded curtain except there was *broken glass* where the beads are supposed to be and you couldn't go in or out without getting cut. (*DC* 252. My emphasis)

Drinking functions as a "door" to block out the thoughts which continue to haunt Connie. This description shows how physically trapped a person can feel when memories are forcibly repressed. Sometimes Connie is able to repress her memories with a force that she compares to an iron door, while other times the door is thick and padded like that of a cell. This wilful amnesia, however, is not something which is successful. As Connie's words suggest, that which she attempts not to remember is still ever present, and she still feels the pain of the memories as if they were glass piercing her skin, registering somatically as well as psychically.

For Caruth, the haunting effect of memory "lies not only in the incomprehensible repetition of the past […] but in the incomprehensibility of a future that is not yet owned" ("Parting", 51). Past atrocities impeding an individual's ability to envision a future are, of course,

particularly relevant to a fractured country attempting to move forward as a united nation. Moving out of chronology, a memory can haunt a traumatised individual by placing him or her in a precarious position between being possessed by, and having possession of, a particular event. As Connie herself says: "Most people have forgotten about Pauline. But I'm the one who has to live here, right at the spot where she vanished … I'm stuck here, with the ghost of someone else's maid roaming around" (*DC* 3). Petzold argues that Connie "connects the disappearance [of Pauline] to the concept of loss and links it to her own experiences," and thus "finding Pauline becomes a symbol for coming to terms with her own life, for overcoming her experience of loss at the death of her child" (125). The mystery around the disappearance of Pauline, and the uncertainty surrounding the death of Connie's child haunt Connie. Such gaps in the understanding of how past events occurred, and the circumstances in which loved ones died, become much more than a literary motif when considered within the broader socio-political context of South Africa. The atrocities committed during apartheid were a co mmonly-broached topic during the early-1990s, and consequently attempting to breach these types of gaps was one of the goals the TRC hoped to achieve. Detailed knowledge of the events was considered necessary for any form of reconciliation to be possible.

The inability to come to terms with past events is often depicted in fiction by the arrival of a ghost or spectre. According to Anne Whitehead, "haunting in contemporary fiction often represents the figurative return of elements of the past which have been silenced or culturally excluded," with authors making use of ghosts to "embody or incarnate the traumas of recent history and represent a form of collective or cultural haunting" (7). In terms of *The Devil's Chimney*, the entire novel is seemingly populated by ghosts. The missing Pauline, Connie and Miss Beatrice's own missing children, and the ghost dogs demonstrate how much the novel is centred around reclaiming lost figures.

Indeed, Landsman stresses the importance of reclaiming such figures, particularly those marked by injustice, when Connie comments that Pauline's search party stopped after only a few hours because "you can't make the whole world stop because of one screaming girl who misses her maid" (*DC* 10). The implication here is that the search for Pauline is more for the sake of the child Marie-Louise's attachment to the woman who helped raise her than actual concern for the missing woman. Furthermore, Connie even summons the ghosts of Mr Henry's dogs to fetch him after his disappearance, as if the dead animals might be able to find

him. Similarly, when Connie is hospitalised due to her alcohol poisoning, she comments that the "ghost dogs are coming into the room. They're coming to get me" (*DC* 217), and even goes as far as to ask "Are my ghost dogs their cousins?" (*DC* 224). Her deceased dogs have, of course, been buried alongside her dead child, and her living dogs are the only ones who can also see "Pauline when [they] are out on the veld together," who Connie is sure "must be a ghost by now" (*DC* 39).

The appearance of ghosts, Susan Spearey suggests, "serves to unsettle notions of presence, thereby forcing the witness to acknowledge that which has been excluded or repressed from the here-and-now in the process of rendering the present both comprehensible and habitable" (171). Essentially, the spectres are visualisations of loss. Connie's visions of these dogs and Pauline function as a sign of Connie's need to understand what has happened in her past, while the moments in which she calls her own baby a ghost reflect how constant its presence is. Drawing on Derrida's *Spectres in Marx*, Spearey argues that, when the dead return, "our duty is to enjoin them; to speak to, with and of them; to mourn them; to acknowledge our debts to them; so as eventually to release ourselves from a history impelled by a cycle of vengeance and retribution" (171). Having non-corporeal ghosts intersect both of her narrative streams demonstrates Connie's difficulty in allowing any process of mourning to come to a state of completion, and is indicative of her having sustained a trauma which she struggles to leave behind.

It is precisely because the "traumatic incident is not fully acknowledged at the time that it occurs and only becomes an *event* at some later point of intense emotional crisis" (Whitehead 6), that Connie continues to be haunted by her memories, despite her child having died forty years previously. The day after she gives birth, Connie already remarks that "[t]hen it was too late to keep asking and asking", and Jack simply says "[w]hat you don't know can't hurt you" (*DC* 245). Of course, Jack's notion is proved wrong by Connie reflecting that "[w]hen something dies there is a hole, like a shadow that stays behind … You can't fill [the holes] in. They're just gone forever and ever, no matter what the ministers say" (*DC* 264). Such incidents actually hold a pervasive influence over the present, and this is why Van der Kolk and Van der Hart suggest that traumatised individuals frequently "experience long periods of time in which they live, as it were, in two different worlds: the realm of the trauma and the realm of their current, ordinary life" (176). Similarly, the character of Connie occasionally acts as if she is still eighteen and lives by the socio-political standards of the past, as seen in

her anachronistic racist terminology and general political attitudes (Nudelman, "Magical realist", 112).

It becomes clear that Connie, inhabiting two different worlds, is suffering a fracture of the self. In this instance, the subject experiences a dissassociation that reflects the split that she feels between past and present. For Connie, the overwhelming feelings of loss surrounding her trauma have resulted in an extreme disjuncture between the different elements of her life. At times she is surprised by her own reflection, and on a few occasions she is sure that she is back at the hospital on the day that her baby died.

As suggested by Caruth's argument that a trauma results in our consciousness suspending its linearity through the act of repression, we can understand the need for an experience of memory that is not invasive. Approaching the topic from a clinical perspective, Van der Kolk and Van der Hart comment:

> the traumatic experience/memory is, in a sense, timeless. It is not transformed into a story, placed in time, with a beginning, a middle and an end (which is characteristic for narrative memory). (177)

If experiencing trauma is such a pervasive, and simultaneously unclaimable, experience, the question arises as to how one heals and puts the traumatic event to rest. The answer lies in memory itself. Van der Kolk and Van der Hart argue that "[t]raumatic memories are the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences," and in order to be released from these memories, they "need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language" (176). While this argument is made in relation to patients who are actually receiving treatment from a medical professional, literary scholar Whitehead notes that the same processes are applicable to the form of the novel, as "fiction offers the flexibility and the freedom to be able to articulate the resistance and impact of trauma" (87).

While some may advocate narrative as a therapeutic tool for clinical patients, Whitehead's argument sees that its uses may be extended and be of use on the level of writer and reader. Like clinical practice, narrative helps to establish a chronology to memories, which in turn has the potential to abate the impact of trauma. To some extent this novel deliberately blurs the distinction between the role of writer and reader. At certain points it is not entirely clear who is actively shaping the events of the novel. While there is the author Landsman, there is

also Connie who is telling her own story, as well as the story of Miss Beatrice. Even the repetition of certain events as told through Connie's drunken haze have multiple outcomes, making it unclear as to which elements of Connie's story are actually truth. This suggests that, like Connie's storytelling itself, we can all be involved in the meaning-making process.

The difference between traumatic memory, and narrative memory that makes for such diffusive possibilities in the process of meaning-making, Whitehead notes, is that "[t]raumatic memory is inflexible and replays the past in a mode of exact repetition, while narrative memory is capable of improvising on the past so that the account of the event varies from telling to telling" (87). Telling and re-telling stories become, thus, a viable means of confronting the pain in an individual's past, and putting these memories to rest. The possibility of extending this process beyond the individual, such as forays into the discursive that interrogate the atrocities of the past, leads Durrant to assert that "narrative memory presents itself as a mode of mourning, as a way of consciously working through history" (11).

The phenomenon of trauma functions as a slippage in experience, resulting in the individual being unable to process it sufficiently at the time. Consequently, Erikson notes "the traumatised mind holds on to that moment, preventing it from slipping back into its proper chronological place in the past" (185). This is precisely what hinders any possibility of narrativising memory. When Connie encounters nightmares, moments of unconscious memories which filter into her dreams, she makes coffee and adds some brandy to "burn the dream away" (*DC* 138). Suffering from trauma, "as a delayed experience" (Caruth *Unclaimed*, 114), Connie actively pushes away the memories by drinking, using alcohol as a self-regulated form of denial. As she says, "when the sharpness gets to you again, you just visit Tannie Gin again and everything's not so hard anymore" (*DC* 67). Yet, despite her attempts to repress these memories, Connie does eventually find a way of processing her own pain by telling the story of Miss Beatrice.

Transference and the dialogical imagination

Connie's narration of Miss Beatrice is triggered by a visit to the Oudtshoorn museum with her sister, Gerda, where Connie is literally confronted by history in the form of relics, which she believes to have belonged to a woman living in the same area during the early twentieth century. The physical remnants of a time past clearly affect her somatically long before she

conceptualises the character with whom they are associated. Mostly as a means to distract her sister, Connie begins telling Gerda about Miss Beatrice, a woman whom she describes as "fearless" (*DC* 20). This contrasts with Connie herself, who has a long list of fears: "Heights, going across bridges, the Devil's Chimney, sailing, the water, crayfish, monkeys, speaking in front of people" (*DC* 7). This narrative split between a fearless Beatrice and a fearful Connie is reminiscent of Klein's paranoid-schizoid position, in which an individual splits different experiences in order to create a "good" or a "bad" object. For Connie, Miss Beatrice features as someone with whom she can identify, someone who exhibits agency and who is not afflicted by the fears that paralyse Connie.

The creation of Miss Beatrice, as someone who is both strikingly similar and dissimilar to her narrator, can be explained by Freud's phenomenon of transference.[6] Cynthia Chase elucidates the origin of the term:

> By usage and etymology 'transference' is identified with metaphor (as transferral), metonymy (as 'displacement') and repetition (as resistance to recognition). To term the primary process in the dream-work 'transference', or the *displacement* of affect from unconscious idea to a preconscious one, as Freud does in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, is to grant implicit primacy to metonymy or sheer displacement by contiguity as the basic condition of signification, but also to suggest the inevitability and necessity of metaphor, as the displacement from one idea *to another of a different order*, essentially a displacement between signifier and signified: the condition of existence of the sign. (217)

According to Chase, transference can be identified in its metonymic or metaphoric usages. In the novel, Connie's creation of Miss Beatrice is initially provoked by sheer contiguity. Seeing an old dress at the Oudtshoorn Museum, Connie begins imagining the woman who may have worn it. It is the actual proximity in their living environments, the possibility of a physical connection, that begins the signification, but in creating the relationship on the metaphoric level, Connie invokes the symbolic. In this way, the metonymic is related to the somatic, with a rooted sense of identification, while metaphor corresponds to displacement on the level of the symbolic.

[6] Although Miss Beatrice's role is clearly to show certain ways Connie wishes she could be different, there are enough similarities to connect the figures. For instance, they live on the same farm, have problematic relationships with their husbands, are discriminated against by their closed community, and both lose a child.

In this approach to analysing the novel, the creation of Miss Beatrice is viewed as Connie's mechanism of both denial and self-analysis. Donald P. Spence suggests that during the phenomenon of transference, "it often happens that the subject of the interpretation becomes the object of interaction, and the *response* to an interpretation, when properly decoded, can be used to further support the *claim* of the interpretation" (195). Following Spence's line of reasoning, the reader is able to watch as Connie, in her process of denial, displaces her own problems onto the character of Miss Beatrice. In other words, Miss Beatrice and her experiences are manifested in order for Connie to interact indirectly with her own traumas and abusive home conditions. Moreover, Miss Beatrice is imagined by Connie to embody qualities which Connie herself lacks. For instance, while Connie is abused sexually and emotionally by her husband, Miss Beatrice's sexuality is re-awakened by the disappearance of her husband, Mr Henry. Connie may allow Miss Beatrice this opportunity because her own sexual encounters with Jack have become increasingly violent. During one such encounter, Connie says: "Jack pushed himself inside me and I looked into the eyes of the dog. Jack screamed and then he came. It made him dizzy so he vomited on my stomach" (*DC* 107). During this sexual invasion, Connie clearly wishes to move as far beyond herself as possible – something enabled through transference. She says: "I saw Miss Beatrice then. She came to me like a nurse does, when you push the button next to your bed" (*ibid*). Transference, as explained by Spence, arose from "Freud's particular genius to recognise that continuity could be maintained in a shift from language to action, from repeating to remembering and from behaviour in the transference to behaviour in the past." (195). Furthermore, Freud "realised that the change of mode does not necessarily imply a change in theme" (*ibid*), which would suggest that although Connie is using Miss Beatrice and storytelling as tools of denial, she has not entirely shifted her "theme".

The themes most prevalent in Connie's life, then, are not merely displaced through her identification with Miss Beatrice. In other words, the parallel narrative is not a form of pure denial, free from Connie's traumas. Instead, the fear, loss and repressed sexuality that characterise Connie's life are directly transposed onto Miss Beatrice's tale. The key difference, however, is the manner in which Miss Beatrice responds to similar scenarios. While Miss Beatrice is able to enter the caves without fear, Connie acknowledges that she "would have screamed and gone mad but Miss Beatrice just breathed, and kept on breathing" (*DC* 71). Inside the caves, Miss Beatrice has a magically charged sexual encounter with Mr

Jacobs, where the "cave she was in was him, and she moved in it and it rose up against her" (*ibid*).

Wendy Woodward notes that "the caves suggest awakened sexuality," and can be viewed as a place where "[s]exualities become fluid in time and space, desire cannot be pinned down either to homosexual or heterosexual categorisations" (32). It is therefore fitting that only one of these women is able to enter a realm where intimacy is not accompanied by abuse. Not only does Miss Beatrice find this encounter sexually awakening, but she is granted agency by means of her inverting the phallogocentric concept of gender roles. Mr Jacobs is the cave whose interior *she* penetrates. Every experience of gender discrimination encountered in the novel could be inverted in this moment. All the abuse Connie suffers at the hands of Jack can be negated in a magical dimension where the woman holds such control. Furthermore, the paradox of experience in the caves is revealed. Deep underground lies the possibility of symbolic death and re-birth, a potential for re-negotiation of self. Graham argues that "the figure of Miss Beatrice offers [Connie] the chance to project onto someone else her own anxieties about feeling trapped and confined, and to play out her own wish-fulfilment fantasies about escaping and taking flight" (143).

In his writing on subject positioning, Mikhail Bakhtin elaborated on the writing style of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, suggesting that as experiencing subjects we are only able to truly assess our own lives through our interactions with others. Discussing what he saw as the universality of the human condition, Bakhtin argues:

> we appraise ourselves from the point of view of others, we attempt to understand the transgredient moments of our very consciousness and to take them into account through the other … we oversee and apprehend the reflections of our life in the plane of consciousness of other men. ("Author and Character", 16-17).

Understanding ourselves is contingent, then, on our attempts to understand the other and how the other sees us. Bakhtin says that "It is only in another human being that I find an aesthetically (and ethically) convincing experience of human finitude, of a marked-off empirical objectivity" ("Author and Character", 34). He also maintains that it is only through "the act of understanding [that] a struggle occurs that results in mutual change and enrichment" (Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, 142). For Connie, the use of the parallel narrative

allows her the opportunity to reflect on her own life, to see it in its human finitude. After having inhabited Miss Beatrice's life to such a vast degree, Connie has the "objectivity" necessary to assess her own experiences critically.

Traumatic memory is reiterative in nature and causes a wound which never can truly heal, but Connie attempts to temporarily suture her traumas through her drinking, and this, in turn, allows for continual patterns of abuse and self-harm. This repeated pattern of self-abuse in Connie's life can be explained by Bakhtin's understanding that "[c]utting oneself off, isolating oneself, closing oneself off, those are the basic reasons for loss of self" ("Toward a Reworking", 311). As life is dialogic by its very nature, a human being cannot exist without interaction with the other. Dialogue is a necessity for any form of growth or personal fulfilment. An understanding of the self as a monologic entity, as being entirely self-reliant as a subject is alienating as such a discourse, according to Leitch et al, "describes not real, living language but an abstraction created through self-conscious deliberation about language and cut off from the daily ideological activities of social life" (1188). Connie exemplifies how individuals need to exist as two speaking subjects in dialogue. Without this dialogic relationship, the individual is reliant on the self for identity creation. In part, this may be why Connie creates Miss Beatrice. She needs a subject with whom she can experience this type of relationship.

The strength and importance of dialogic relationships reveal why narrative memory is a powerful tool. By telling stories, both of ourselves and of others, and then arranging memories so that they fall back into chronology, a traumatised individual may be able to suture the "wound", even if it still leaves certain scarring. While telling this story, Connie begins to empower herself by living through Miss Beatrice. There are many examples throughout the novel, and many of them are simply small changes in Connie's character. For instance, she slowly begins asserting herself in front of her husband, declaring that she will learn to swim even if he thinks better. After discovering the truth about the death of her baby, she forbids Gerda from ever visiting again. Eventually, Connie decides that she is better off than Miss Beatrice, including the fact that she would have been a better mother.

Telling Miss Beatrice's story, therefore, becomes a way for Connie to re-imagine herself. Petzold notes that storytelling here offers "certain therapeutic functions for Connie, and she does not primarily tell it for the sake of her (changing) audience, but for her own benefit"

(118). Connie, in fact, moves beyond simply identifying with Miss Beatrice. She eventually reaches a point where the difference in identity is completely fluid. On one such occasion, Gerda enquires after Miss Beatrice and Connie simply replies: “I’m fine” (*DC* 80). There is, however, one difficulty. If Miss Beatrice is seen only as “an idolized role-model,” as Petzold puts it, she “would be a constant reminder of Connie’s inability to overcome her fears and change her life” (127). As elucidated by Chase, “the struggle with transference would require loosening the fixation to an object as real as the self, to a past continuing into the future” (219). Overcoming this fixation, Chase continues, “would entail not simply declaring it unreal, but – in the words of a bleak passage in [Freud’s] ‘Mourning and melancholia’ - ‘disparaging it, denigrating it, and even as it were, killing it’” (*ibid*). In other words, according to clinical interpretation, Connie needs to separate herself from Miss Beatrice and destroy her creation.

The ability to compare and contrast actions is, thus, essential to Connie’s ability to understand the past and how it impacts on her present and her future. Durrant argues that “mourning rather than melancholia is a way of maintaining the connection” (87). With regard to Landsman’s novel, Durrant’s argument would suggest that Connie’s increasing obsession with Miss Beatrice becomes an unhealthy way of healing. Although piecing together Miss Beatrice’s story begins helping Connie excavate her own story, this soon becomes what Petzold calls “a kind of safety-valve,” which means that Connie’s “projection releases her from the obligation of actually changing her own life” (127). As Connie relates, “[Jack] says I’m living inside someone else’s skin. Someone else’s dead skin” (*DC* 116).

Simply thinking of storytelling as a “safety-valve”, however, shows that the readings by Petzold and Graham only find Connie engaging in denial and disallow the novel its particular complexity. I believe that Connie’s actions are far more complex than this would allow. While connecting herself to Miss Beatrice and the qualities which she admires in her, Connie eventually begins to seek closure in the story, and does so in order to distance herself from Miss Beatrice and to avoid staying trapped in the past. Although a vast part of the novel is truly an exercise in displacing the painful memories associated with loss, Connie certainly reaches a point in the narrative where she realises that she does not, in fact, want to live Miss Beatrice’s life. As Connie is determining the outcome of Miss Beatrice’s narrative herself, she is ultimately in the same position as an author who has created a character through

empathetic identification, and now begins to disengage from the character in order to return to his or her own life.

Bakhtin believed that each creative act would finally involve this type of return. As Tzvetan Todorov comments:

> Bakhtin asserts the necessity of distinguishing between two stages in *every* creative act: first, the stage of empathy or identification (the novelist puts himself in the place of his own character), then a reverse movement whereby the novelist returns to his own position. This second aspect of the creative activity is named by Bakhtin with a new Russian coinage: *vnenakhodimost*, literally 'finding oneself outside,' … *exotopy*. (99)

For Connie, the point at which she turns away from Miss Beatrice and her admiration of this "fearless" woman comes when she admits that she is "jealous and spiteful because [Miss Beatrice] lost her baby as if she was a sock or a hanky" (*DC* 262). Although Connie also says "[s]ometimes I was sorry for her because it's worse to know what you've lost" (*DC* 261), she still thinks that "Miss Beatrice was wrong to lose Precious in the Caves like that" (*DC* 274). Furthermore, she actually blames Miss Beatrice's sexuality for what happened. At first, Connie admires Miss Beatrice's awakened sensuality, but she also suggests that this is the reason for Miss Beatrice losing her baby, Precious. The vivid descriptions of the encounter during which Miss Beatrice loses her baby occur inside the caves, where "the stalactites and stalagmites picked [Miss Beatrice] up and poked her and entered her this way and that" (*DC* 239), causing her to misplace her child. Moreover, Connie also explicitly states that this experience is "bliss and not fire" (*ibid*), meaning that Miss Beatrice is distracted by her own bodily gratification. In doing this, her own desires consume her at a point where she should be putting the needs of her newborn child first, and Connie, who was never even able to hold her child, feels justified in judging Miss Beatrice.

Connie goes as far as to say "I'm surprised people don't blame Miss Beatrice for what's happening in this country now but maybe they have forgotten" (*DC* 246). This comment enjoins the personal and the political, and may be Connie's suggestion that South Africa is suffering like a child abandoned by its mother. In fact, in combining Connie's comments about Miss Beatrice's loss of a child, and the fact that Connie thinks the whole country should blame her for the country's state of affairs, there is an implicit suggestion that this

particular encounter has caused all of the problems facing contemporary South Africa. In this way, the story she narrates is one which she sees to be the national story.

Dis(closure)

As narrative, by definition, moves towards closure, Landsman finds a means of ending the novel with some sort of resolution to Connie's story, as well as making a comment on what the future may hold both for Connie and for South Africa. Closure as Connie learns, however, is not something which is simply gained from the disclosure of truth. The conclusion for Connie's part of this story comes almost unexpectedly, and even quite forcibly. Still following Miss Beatrice's life, Connie says: "I want to finish my story. I want to have a drink but [Gerda's] pulling at me and showing me this thing called the Truth Commission" (*DC* 247). The appearance of the TRC in the text intersects with Connie's narrative and her slow process of reconciliation with herself. Having immersed herself so thoroughly in her own fiction, "the truth … sounds like the worst thing [Connie has] ever heard" (*DC* 248). Despite Connie telling her sister to "let bygones be bygones" and not to "dig old cows out of the grave" (*ibid*), Gerda insists on breaking the silence physically rendered in her deafness by illustrating the truth in pencil "on the wall next to the fridge like a Bushman" (*ibid*). Gerda being deaf, on one level, shows the break-down in communication which has existed between the sisters for several years. It may not be that Gerda does not want to hear, but that, other than at an obvious corporeal level, she is really unable, at least initially, to hear Connie's pain. Deafness, then, provides Landsman with a platform to demonstrate how there are more ways in which people can learn to understand one another.

The way the sisters do learn to communicate suggests a deeper intimacy. Initially, Gerda places her hand on Connie's throat, literally using tactile sense in order to understand. Later she begins painting on the walls, displaying her actions. One night, after spending the day telling Gerda about Miss Beatrice, Connie remarks: "We stay up late, talking. I forget what time it is. I still feel Gerda's hand on my throat when I go to bed. There's Jack and while he's sleeping I put his hand right there, where her hand was" (*DC* 30). Moving Jack's hand to replace the missing hand of her sister suggests that Connie feels closest to her sister when they communicate with touch. Later, when watching her sister give voice to a story, one which tells of the secret loss that Gerda and Connie share, the latter says: "I know what she's going to do. I can finish the drawing myself" (*ibid*). The truth is something which Connie has

been vaguely conscious of, but has done her best to convince herself was actually a dream. Already, earlier in the text, Connie has stated, “I remember that horrible dream. Connie, Ma says, I’m giving the baby to Gerda” (*DC* 175). In a perverse attempt at providing reconciliation for her teenage daughter, Connie and Gerda’s mother offers the baby to Gerda to compensate for her deafness. In a cruel twist of fate, the baby dies within hours of the exchange.

Connie’s brief moment of clarity occurs at a point where she is trapped in the bathroom without alcohol, and Jack lies unconscious at the door, blocking her from escaping and finding a way to avoid this memory. Having already finished her gin and a bottle of mouthwash, Connie is denied the ability to drink away her painful memories. Sobriety, at this point, briefly overcomes Connie’s attempts at repressing her past. Despite occasional moments like these, or possibly even *because* of them, Connie continues the harmful cycle of alcohol abuse. Every time the beginning of sobriety has cleared the haze that blocks her memory, Connie reaches for the alcohol as she fears fully recovering the whole memory.

In the light of the TRC, ending a narrative with a large-scale closure, simply because the truth has been told, would be trite and possibly even offensive to those still suffering the effects of apartheid. Wendy Woodward approves of the ambiguous ending, saying that “rather than constituting a flaccid, feel-good ending, in which differences are homogenised into a multicultural soup, the reconciliations acknowledge histories and differences based on racial inequities” (35). While this chapter has not set out to comment on the complex race relations in the novel, these aspects are vital when considering how the novel relates to a wider scope of post-apartheid readers. In a country which continues to be affected by race, which is of itself a *national* trauma, the suggestion that trauma is entirely healable would be dangerously optimistic. As Durrant argues: “the weighty memory of an injustice done to the whole race constitutes a physical impediment to mourning” (80). The dramatist Jane Taylor extends this thought by commenting that, within a country like South Africa, “individual narratives come to stand for the larger national narrative” (ii). Connie’s story should therefore be considered as just one of many which comprise the diverse tapestry that is the history of South Africa. Woodward would appear to approve of this image, arguing that “the way the selves of the principal women interweave and become independent suggests a potential for re-defining ideas about selves and about the social formation” (35).

When considered in light of Hamilton's argument for transculturalism,[7] Woodward's assertion would suggest that a sharing of viewpoints is particularly relevant within a post-apartheid setting. South Africa is a country where there is, as Alex Halligey argues, an "implied confrontation with and a need to find a means of understanding the nature of our cultural history and present as well as anxiety over our future, projected, cultural identity" (208). Because of the multiplicity of competing cultural constructions in South Africa, and the resulting diversity that this causes, we require a diverse type of narrative in order, as Halligey puts it, to interrogate "the relationship between history and contemporary existence in the construction of [a varied] cultural identity" (209). This suggests a need for a platform where ideas can be voiced in order to interrogate our communal histories and to intervene in social injustices instead of pursuing merely idealistic dreams. Particularly in South Africa, this is a trap which should be avoided. In a country where many people have been silenced, and only a minority heard, it is especially necessary to re-evaluate and re-question the stories told about our history. As stories and "[m]yths are created to explain the past and to understand people's present existence" (Halligey 208), I argue that when they are re-interrogated within a particular contemporary setting, they can create the best structure to bring to the surface issues which still resonate with old literary motifs.

Landsman's novel comments succinctly on the paradox of the TRC: that a full confession would offer a perpetrator of various harmful acts full amnesty. In spite of Connie's attempt to keep the past at bay, both through her drinking and her storytelling pursuits, she is still forced into learning the truth. However, she does not quite reach this point on her own. As Samuelson maintains, "Gerda's insistence on truth-telling interrupts Connie's forgetting [but] it doesn't lead to a tidy ending" ("Cracked Vases", 74). Rather than suggest that South Africa can overcome its problems simply through confession, *The Devil's Chimney* espouses the necessity of an "on-going dialogue on the transformation process in the new South Africa" (Diala 52). Gerda, despite encouraging her sister to tell stories about Miss Beatrice, as well as finally confessing her role in the trauma which has plagued Connie's whole life, is not forgiven. Instead, Connie simply tells Gerda: "I never want to see you again or your husband

[7] Transculturalism being defined as "the principle that a single culture, in and of itself, for maturity requires interaction and dialogue with other cultures" (Millhouse et al qtd in Hamilton 4), Hamilton argues that contemporary South African fiction could improve the social consciousness of the country. According to her argument, "transculturality here functions as a framework capable of revealing the reciprocal influences between the culturally differing groups of South African individuals [… and] may help the people realise that the diverse forms of identity may have a positive influence within the process of self-awareness and self-knowledge" (8).

or your kids" (*DC* 251), and effectively cuts ties with the only family member she still has. Rather than bestowing amnesty upon Gerda, Connie tells her sister that she never wants to see her again. The manner in which these events unfold does not allow for Connie to see her sister as anything other than a perpetrator of her pain; someone unworthy of amnesty.

There is, however, some closure on Connie's part. After Gerda's confession, Connie waits to interrogate Jack, saying, "I tell this to Jack and I'm searching his face for the rest of the lie. I see only my own pain. Suddenly I know they gave him the baby when the breath was gone, when there was nothing left" (*DC* 274). Despite having refused to forgive her sister, Connie suddenly realises that she, too, has been a perpetrator of pain. Despite having suffered emotional and physical abuse from her husband, Connie has been blind to the fact Jack has also been profoundly changed by the death of their child. This moment begins the reconciliation between Connie and Jack. Having always carried their baby's death as her personal trauma, Connie now realises that she has been focusing so much on her own pain, that she did not consider how Jack was affected. Furthermore, Connie realises what Jack was protecting her from. Having actually held his dead child, Jack has also been haunted by the memory of this trauma. "No wonder he dug under that lemon tree" (*ibid*), Connie reflects, understanding that Jack too has attempted to bury his pain. Having established the communal nature of their pain, Jack offers Connie a small consolation by saying, "I wish I had a real baby. I wish *he* lived" (*DC* 275. My emphasis). Learning the sex of her child is one of the novel's crucial moments for Connie. Saying that Connie's discovery completes her journey or that her process of healing is over now, would, however, be a rather reductive comment on the nature of trauma. While this information does remove some of the enigma surrounding her child, suggesting that this was all Connie needed to know in order to achieve closure is similar to suggesting that the TRC offered true consolation to the family members of victims. What this knowledge does offer is a possibility for reconciliation between Connie and Jack. As Connie comments:

> He? The world holds me and I see the baby's face and his *piel*[8] and I look at Jack and for the first time in my life I say I'm sorry … I see his eyes fill up with water and his mouth break open and we hold each other. (*DC* 275)

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[8] Afrikaans colloquialism for male genitalia.

In this moment, Jack reveals that they had a son, allowing for a moment of tenderness between himself and Connie. Connie being able to apologise, and Jack allowing himself to show grief for his lost son, offer some closure for the couple, or at least suggest that they may be able to survive together. This moment is compared to the time they held each other at the aerodrome, which is the occasion when they first consummated their relationship as well as the date of their son's conception. It appears, if only momentarily, that this embrace may be able to rewrite time, as if they may be able to work through their pain together. Processing their grief together like this, Connie appears to restore a certain chronology to her and Jack's lives. She says it feels as if "we are at the aerodrome again … but this time it is pure sadness that passes between us" (*DC* 275). Despite Connie and Jack feeling sadness and not desire this time, the moment allows them to focus on the importance that this single occasion held for them as a couple, although one could still argue that it might, in fact, also be a chronological repetition of their trauma. Either way, the moment is one filled with a deep sense of nostalgic longing.

Furthermore, after having restored chronology to her son's death, Connie is very willing to solve Pauline's disappearance. She claims: "somebody told me that what really happened to Pauline was that she wasn't really Pauline, she was Precious … that's when she disappeared, for the second time. I think she disappeared because she had to come back" (*DC* 274). By connecting Pauline to Miss Beatrice's lost child, Precious, and suggesting that they are the same person, Connie seems to alleviate certain guilt – even at the cost of erasing Pauline's story. If one reads Precious as the lost baby, and one of the reasons Connie mentions for South Africa's problems, then having the possibility of her growing safely to adulthood gives hope for the country's future. Landsman herself comments:

> 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. (Qtd in Nudelman *Contested*, 212)

Connie seems to be willing optimism into being. After all, early in the novel Connie alerts the reader to her belief that finding Pauline means "everything will go back to the way it was

before", meaning that Connie will have "no more bad dreams at night, no more *skollies*[9] under the bed with knives, no more fights with [her] husband, Jack" (*DC* 2).

The inconclusive: Underneath the silence

While later chapters utilise the work of Melanie Klein, *The Devil's Chimney* lends itself to a more linear, Freudian interpretation of Connie's trauma. Klein postulates that a subject oscillates between the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive position at various points during his or her life, but with a narrator like Connie, whose story frequently shifts between focalisers and time periods in an alcoholic blur, I have avoided imposing theories on a text when it is clear that the literary analysis should be of primary concern. Furthermore, Connie's final few pages of narration appear optimistic, but as Landsman's evocation of the TRC within the novel suggests, readers should be sceptical of the degree to which Connie's hopes of reconciliation translate into her actual lived experience.

Ultimately, *The Devil's Chimney* allows for various suggestions as to the fate of several of the characters. Just as Connie's story about Miss Beatrice has "many arms and legs, just like a tarantula, and it [hangs] in everybody's house, on the ceiling" (*DC* 266), Landsman's story about Connie allows for the readers to make their own judgements. One of the final messages Connie leaves with the reader is this: "When something dies there is a hole, like a shadow, that stays behind" (*DC* 264). Connie has made substantial progress as a human being, but she will never be without that hole. A wound can be cleaned, cauterised, and sewn back up, but a scar still remains. In Connie's case, she ends the novel declaring that she will learn to swim, literally and figuratively, in the waters of the "new" South Africa. Whether or not she actually does so is not known. It is doubtful the symptoms of trauma will be completely alleviated, or that she and Jack will stop fighting, but the nightmares and constant aching inside may become less frequent and intense. Standing testament to those stories which can never be fully answered, Connie comments that "if you listen very hard, you can hear something underneath all that silence, which is the terrible things people carry around in their heads like that story of Pauline" (*DC* 273). This suggests that, while Connie may be able to attain some form of closure to her story, the family members of someone like Pauline may never learn the true circumstances of her disappearance.

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[9] Afrikaans colloquialism for criminals.

Chapter Three: Fractured Selves and Fragmented Realities in Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*

"Little fairy glowing bright,
Lead lost children to the light.
Home to bed they safely go,
Following your golden glow.

Warning comes when glowing red,
Follow then and you'll be dead.

Green signals a dangerous path
For soon you'll meet Dead Rex's wrath" (*GST* 84-5)

Phantasy and the dialectic of memory and forgetting

Gem Squash Tokoloshe, says Rachel Zadok, is "a book a bout belief, and how a child's parents, her society and her schooling all mould her reality and the way she views her world," (Qtd in Russouw 3). More importantly, the novel interrogates these "beliefs and how as a parent if you teach your child to believe, as we were taught, in apartheid, it's very destructive" (Zadok qtd in Jacobson 3). Seven year-old Faith's major belief structure centres on the fairies that her mother, Bella, insists are real. "They lived on the peripheries of my vision," Faith tells the reader, "well hidden from my curious eyes, but I knew they were there. Mother was forever warning me about the dangers of bad fairies" (*GST* 7). While the fairies may be used by Bella to keep her child safe, such as warning her not to wander alone into the orchard at night, at times these fairies serve as social indoctrination – a means to control Faith and shape her beliefs. Even more terrifying, however, is the manner in which the fairies actually manage to fracture Faith's sense of identity, forcing her not only to reconsider every memory she has ever had, but also to question the very image of self she sees in the mirror.

This chapter contemplates the imaginative construction of these fairies, the role they play in both Bella and Faith's lives, and the results of this psychic experience on the developing child. The theoretical work of psychoanalyst Melanie Klein proves illuminating in analysing the fantasy construct of the fairies and the manner in which mother and daughter use the fairies as a receptacle for traumatic experiences. Following Laurie Vickroy's argument that "[t]raumatic experience can produce a sometimes indelible effect on the human psyche that

can change the nature of an individual's memory, self-recognition, and relational life" (11), the chapter will explore the nature of these traumas and their continued effect in the lives of the women. Of further importance is Susan Brison's assertion that "[t]rauma reveals the ways in which one's ability to feel at home is as much a physical as an epistemological accomplishment" (44), suggesting that if Faith is to find a way to live in the world, she will need to do more than reclaim and reintegrate her memories. She needs to establish a harmonious relationship between her concept of self and the seemingly dangerous landscapes in which she must exist.

My primary focus is Faith's personal journey from a disturbed childhood on the farm with Bella to a state of non-existence in Johannesburg with Molly and Mia, and finally a period of attempted recovery through her eventual, and somewhat prodigal, return to the farm. Laurie Vickroy suggests that in trauma narratives there is a "frequent focus on mother/child relations … with daughters deeply identif[ying] with their mothers," and this consequently "provides a locus for considering many sociocultural aspects of trauma" (4). Such is the case because, as "their identities are formed in these circumstances, daughters feel a conflicted protective fearfulness toward their mothers and a dread of reliving their mothers' traumas" (*ibid*). Considering Vickroy's assertion that the impact of a mother's trauma can be manifest in her relationship with the child, one of my main concerns is the manner in which Bella influences Faith's childhood. The novel is, after all, as Zadok herself states, "about women trying to survive in a world of imprisoning loneliness and physical hardship, inventing strategies to support and protect themselves and each other. Sometimes they fail; sometimes their strength takes them beyond all imaginable frontiers" (Qtd in Trinbacher 108).

Zadok's debut novel emerged on the literary scene by way of a publishing competition in 2005. Although she did not win, the standard of her writing impressed the judges to such an extent that she was offered a publishing contract and an advance. The novel has captured audiences both locally and abroad, selling over 50,000 copies, and most reviews have been favourable, praising Zadok's skill at capturing the evolving mind of a child witnessing the freefall of her parents' marriage. In the United Kingdom, Anita Sethi of *The Daily Telegraph* called it a "haunting novel," and described Zadok's use of language as "intense, lyrical, and absorbing" (n.p.), while *The Independent* declared *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* to be a "complex but immensely readable novel that blends myth and magic realism into a contemporary fable about the politics of apartheid".

Meanwhile, in South Africa, Neil Sonnekus of *The Mail & Guardian*, despite calling attention to the novel's need for serious editing, was nevertheless pleasantly surprised that Zadok's "descriptions of black people have a strange, universal ring of truth about them"(6). Furthermore, he attributes the success of the novel to the fact that "Zadok is simply a gifted storyteller … She has the uncanny ability to enter and exit the various worlds of troubled people, places and spirits with familiar ease, whether it's a white woman who had made ends meet as a single-mom bar lady, or the suburb in which she lives – a dilapidated Troyeville in transition" (*ibid*).

Karina Magdalena Szczurek promises readers that "*Gem Squash Tokoloshe* is as fascinating and intriguing as its title promises it will be," and says that it is "much more than just another book about growing up with apartheid" (1). She also appreciates the importance of memory in the novel and how Zadok's strength is in demonstrating the strategies which women use in order to support and protect themselves. "Through Faith's eyes we see a childhood of scary monsters and nightmarish bewilderment that we often wish to suppress," Szczurek says, noting that "remembering and facing up to them can be a liberating experience" (*ibid*).

In the academic world, the novel has yet to generate substantial critical commentary. Within South Africa, Miki Flockemann stands out with her article "Memory, Madness and Whiteness in Julia Blackburn's *The Book of Colour* and Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*", which considers how "fictionalizing memory is entangled with perceptions of madness and 'unbelonging', and is interpreted in terms of psychic pathology, as social metaphor and discursive strategy" (4). Flockemann's analysis foregrounds the isolation and hardship Bella endures, and how this is consequentially inherited by Faith.

Other than Flockemann, *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* has been part of the focus of these two theses, both from the University of Vienna. While one thesis has only a few pages on Zadok's novel, focusing solely on the incident of Nomsa's rape, Andreas Trinbacher devotes a whole chapter to *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* in his thesis entitled "Trauma and Narrative in the Contemporary South African Novel".

My reading of the novel is strongly influenced by Shane Graham's suggestion that it is imperative to challenge "the amnesiac impulses of the post-Truth Commission Era" (8). He postulates that post-apartheid literature should concern itself with "registering memories of

the past so as not to remain trapped in that past but to use it to build new identities in the post-apartheid future" (*ibid*). Graham's realisation that South Africa post-TRC requires new means for understanding our past is rooted in his belief that "simplistic notions of a past that can readily be recovered wholesale are inadequate to account for the complex intersections of landscapes, bodies and memories" (19). For this reason, he argues, our developing literature needs to resolve the tension present between remembering and repression, while simultaneously discovering strategies that enable an author to establish a dialogue which fully conveys the complexities of representing somatic or corporeal memory. Importantly, Graham suggests that "narrating the past must always be an inductive enterprise, one of decoding meaning through absence, loss, and rupture" (5). This resonates with Alan Young, who states: "A properly decoded narrative delineates the pattern beneath the chaos" (111).

In order to discuss Faith's narrative, it is necessary not only to place focus on what she presents to the reader, but also to try and decode that which is not immediately present on the surface of her story. Drawing attention to the irregularities and missing pieces of narrative, the reader reconstitutes alongside Faith the order and structure of her memories. This is the process which Faith, and the reader, are only fully able to commence when Faith returns to the farm. Once there, she says: "I conjure up the fragmented memories, image by broken image … trying to extract that vital puzzle that will somehow make everything fit, but it is elusive and I'm left frustrated and raw" (*GST* 305).

The structure of the narrative makes it clear that Faith realises that her memory has been elided. Between the ruptures and gaps in her story, the times when she blacks out, and the moments of time distortion, Faith herself begins to be aware that there are things she has "forgotten, or chosen not to remember" (*GST* 191). Realising that certain memories have been repressed, and that these may be crucial to her understanding of herself, Faith fears discovering what they are. "Not remembering," she says, "was scarier than all the things I did remember" (*GST* 135). While the functions of memory and forgetting may appear to be antithetical, Anne Whitehead proposes that memory and forgetting do not "oppose each other but form part of the same process," and that in instances of "mounting amnesia, there is an urgent need to consciously establish meaningful connections with the past" (82).

Whitehead's assertion succinctly captures Faith's dilemma. Her inability to remember her past has deeply compromised her ability to conceive of a future, a state which Melanie Klein

terms a "psychic retreat". Robert Waska states that when individuals are met with "internal and/or external difficulties in early development, their resulting psychic conflicts leave them fixated within particular internal modes of functioning," and claims that "[t]hese areas represent both a defensive fixation and an internal constriction of basic mental functions" (59). As an adult, Faith is clearly immobilised in her own psychic retreat: "I am a spectator. Since the day I stepped on the train bound for Johannesburg, I have done nothing to alter the course of my fate … I have drifted out of reach, sodden and heavy with water, soon my own weight will drag me under" (*GST* 242). Without any real connection to her past, Faith is unable to occupy any kind of embodied existence, and retreats into herself, hiding in what Waska describes as "an emotional foxhole in which the patient feels trapped in a no-man's land in between the pain and dread" (60).

In interpreting the novel, my conceptual framework draws substantially on the field of psychoanalysis, specifically using clinical studies as a means to elucidate the psychic processes described in the text. Psychoanalysis intersects with fiction as, according to scholars like Whitehead, it provides the opportunity for the suffering subject to re-narrativise his or her life. Cathy Caruth has long been a proponent in the movement of popularising this understanding of traumatic memory as a collapse in understanding or chronology, suggesting that the overwhelming nature of trauma can be attributed to the inaccessibility of the experience itself. My use of Bessel van der Kolk and his clinical diagnoses of psychological trauma and separation, on the other hand, is specifically geared toward an understanding of Faith's developing psyche in the novel. Lastly, this chapter draws most extensively on the findings of Melanie Klein's childhood studies as to formulate a means of interpreting Faith's behaviour, which occasionally borders on the schizophrenic, as well as to provide a viable paradigm for delineating traditional African healing within western clinical terminology.

Traumatic rupture of the self

Faith's childhood ends abruptly with the conclusion to the first part of the novel. Nomsa's death occurs as a non-event. All Faith tells the reader is: "I never saw Nomsa again, not properly. I watched through the window … as they took the stretcher away" (*GST* 168). The narrative resumes after fifteen years have elapsed, as if Faith had lost consciousness in her attempt to bury her memories of this painful period in her life. This peculiar gap in temporality can be more fully understood through reference to Whitehead's discussion of the

intersection of trauma and fiction. Whitehead suggests that "[n]ovelists have frequently found that the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterised by repetition and indirection" (3). This resonates with Caruth's assertion that trauma "is a break in the mind's experience of time" (*Unclaimed,* 61). What characterises trauma, she suggests, is the manner of its belatedness, how it is only truly experienced after the fact. In respect of Faith, this is evident in the inaccessibility of those traumatic memories. Faith is "plagued by violent nightmares, nightmares that left [her] feeling terrified yet unable to remember anything about them" (*GST* 181). Despite Nomsa's death being one of the defining moments of her life, Faith finds that she is unable to recall anything at all about that event.

The first half of the novel, set in 1985, is told in first-person past tense, while the second half follows after a fifteen year gap, and is told in first-person present tense. The implication of this is that the first part of the novel is told chronologically with minimal retrospective comment, while the latter half is rooted in the world of the now grown-up Faith as she attempts to process her childhood memories, still haunted by the events of one particular night, a night of which she has no memory. The night in which Nomsa, Faith's domestic worker and caregiver, is murdered appears to be completely absent from Faith's consciousness. This traumatic event is not only shown to be central to Faith's loss of worldly attachment, but is also mirrored, structurally, by Zadok's text. Faith blacks out, briefly apprehends that something has happened to Nomsa, and then the gap in chronological continuity is shown by the narrative leaping forward fifteen years, creating a gap also, in the epistemological continuity.

Framing the two parts of the novel are a prologue, "The Soul Stealer", and an epilogue, "The Baby Snatcher". These two extracts are written in a broken language, supposedly spoken by Dead Rex, whom Faith calls "the worst of them" (*GST* 10), referring to the faeries. The three pages of prologue essentially reveal the traumatic event which remains missing from Faith's conscious memory. Only in retrospect, and having read the epilogue, can the reader establish the true horror. As Karina Magdalena Szczurek argues:

> The broken grammatical structures mask the bleak and terrible events simmering underneath each word. Their full meaning unfolds as the story progresses and keeps the reader guessing about what reality is hidden

> behind the curtains of the magic world. The final passage returns to the same code, offering a magnificent closure to this remarkable book. (1)

The prologue establishes that an evil presence is woken by "a hunger in his guts", who tastes a "morsel of fear on the icy air", and goes to seek his meal, the "pain out there" (*GST* 1). The presence then actively shapes events, by seeking out the one he calls "mosetsana",[10] whom he likes because "she be still pure, blank canvas, torment not yet painted on her soul" (*GST* 2), and leading her to the scene of a horrific event. All the reader can glean is that the young girl sees the "fat pig-bristle buttocks, hard pumping, the trouser shackle round his legs. The dark juice stain on his legs as he mash into woman. Woman bent over bed, dark demon shadows lick her like dogs" (*ibid*). Dead Rex revels in the reaction, as he "feel mosetsana panic, feel mosetsana pain, feel fear, feel confusion. Her soul scream what her body hold frozen" (*ibid*). It is implied that not only does he feed off the pain of the woman being raped, but feasts also on the reaction of the young girl. The culmination of the prologue is Dead Rex, in a bid to cause further pain, telling the young girl, "He be hurting her … Hurt him back" (*ibid*).

While a critical reader may have an inkling of how this relates to the story, it is only with the epilogue that the event is concluded. What the reader finally learns is that this is the night of Nomsa's death, and that, not only was she raped, and inadvertently killed, but that the wrong person chose to bear the murder charges. In a last act of motherly love, Bella, after realising that her daughter, who pulled the trigger in an attempt to help Nomsa, has no memory of the night, allows herself to be arrested for the murder of her domestic worker. Rather than allow Faith to carry the burden of her own actions, Bella is willing to claim responsibility for Nomsa's death, knowing she will be incarcerated and have to bear her daughter's hatred. In the epilogue, we are told that, after leading Faith to Nomsa's room, Dead Rex is able to "Taste the burnt sulphur of gunpowder on her hand. Taste the fear in her heart and the scream of her soul when she realize that it be not easy to shoot straight. Guns have life all of their own" (*GST* 328).

In his clinical studies, Bessel van der Kolk has explored the implication that separation anxiety can have on a young child. Psychological trauma, he suggests, originates from the subject's fear that there is neither order nor a form of continuity in his or her life ("Separation Cry", 31). Van der Kolk further elucidates this by saying that trauma primarily "occurs when

[10] "Mosetsana", being the Setswana/Sesotho word for "young girl".

one loses the sense of having a safe place to retreat within or outside oneself to deal with frightening emotions or experiences," and this ultimately results "in a state of helplessness, a feeling that one's actions have no bearing on the outcome of one's life" (*ibid*). During her childhood on the farm, Faith slowly begins to lose her sense of continuity. One loss after another finally results in Faith losing not only her childhood, but also her ability to feel safe or secure. Following the traumatic events on the farm, Faith says, "I felt trapped in a nightmare, one in which I was unable to scream, where my voice had been stolen and the terror that something awful lurked around every corner squatted like a large toad in my belly" (*GST* 180). She goes as far as to say "Inside I was numb, safely hidden … by the fact that I wasn't anybody, by my refusal to face up to anything" (*GST* 182); and refers to herself as a "spectator", claiming that "There is no point to my life, it lacks meaning, direction" (*GST* 242).

Faith's belief that her life lacks meaning has rendered her passive, an object in her own life. In his research on the functions of memory, Ernst van Alphen argues that being denied, or denying one's own subjectivity, can render an individual entirely passive in his or her existence. As one is responsible for one's own actions, one's conscious behaviour, Van Alphen argues, can mould one's subjectivity, but when "one does not make any conscious choices, one is in fact not one hundred percent a subject" (30). In Kleinian terms, Faith engages in a psychic retreat where denial offers her the ability to hide from her emotional turmoil. This is not, however, a state of absolute protection. Further exploring the clinical term, Robert Waska explains that although

> the foxhole offers a minimal and temporary shelter from the certain danger of "what is out there," it offers no real lasting comfort, hope, or resolution. There is no surrender, peace treaty, or victory to be won. The battle is endless and the peril for self and object is constant. (60)

Faith's reluctance to face the world, and her subsequent feeling of helplessness, can therefore be related to Van der Kolk's point that "[e]motional attachment is essential for survival in children" ("Separation Cry", 31).

What begins as a biological function, attachment to a maternal or paternal figure, becomes crucial to how children navigate their experiences in the world, and establish not only a sense of self but also a sense of how their community is structured. My understanding of "selfhood"

is rooted in Susan Brison's conception of "the self", which Bal defines as "relational, based in language and culture, and dependent on others for its constitution and sustenance" (Editor's note, xii). The self, then, is contingent on relationships with others. Faith's sense of self is constantly reconstituted in relation to her parents or caregivers. For this reason, Van der Kolk maintains that the "earliest and possibly most damaging psychological trauma is the loss of a secure base" ("Separation Cry", 32), and he states that "When caregivers who are supposed to be sources of protection and nurturance become simultaneously the main sources of danger, a child must maneuver psychologically to re-establish some sense of safety" (*ibid*).

This understanding of the child's selfhood as relational is fundamental to Klein's theories of infant ego development. Explicating Klein, Segal explains that the child views his or her "mother and the other people around him through 'phantasies' which [are] constructed from external reality modified by his own feelings and existing beliefs and knowledge" (28), and maintains that "children relate to the whole world through their unconscious fantasies. Nothing is seen simply as it is: some kind of unconscious fantasy is attached to every perception: structuring, colouring and adding significance to it" (29). The actual behaviour of the parents then reinforces or disrupts these phantasies. Van der Kolk's argument is supported, then, by Klein's view that "destructive behaviour by adults left damaging phantasies which would have a long-term effect" (Segal 30).

Within the novel, these long-term effects are visible in Zadok's protagonist, who is deeply disturbed by the events of her childhood. Clearly, witnessing spousal violence, experiencing abandonment by her father, and then watching her mother's psychological breakdown, results in Faith seeing her parents as dangerous, something which deeply fractures her ability to relate to other people as well as to herself. She says, "What I knew of bad things in life, I knew from [my mother]. All the stories she'd ever told me about the bad things Dead Rex or Tit Tat Tay do, of the awful things that Night Scares do … she now seemed capable of herself" (*GST* 98).

During the course of 1985, Faith suffers the successive loss of the only caregivers she had ever known. Furthermore, not only does she lose these nurturing figures, but her mother actually becomes a source of danger. Her father Marius, already away for long periods of time because of his job as a travelling salesman, leaves her mother, Bella. One morning Faith peers into her parents' bedroom, and sees "Mother, lying diagonally across the top of the bed,

asleep in the clothes she had worn the night before. An empty bottle lay on the floor. Papa was not there. Nor was his car in the drive. He had left without saying goodbye" (*GST* 26). Slowly, Faith's once happy life on the farm begins to disintegrate. Bella's instability as a mother had already been intimated earlier in the text when Faith comments that "Some days a strangeness would take hold of her, and she would disappear into the orchard for hours, leaving me alone on the farm" (*GST* 8). Slowly, Bella becomes more and more distant from her daughter, and, as Faith says, "That lonely day turned into a lonely week, and every night we went to bed early, without stories, without fairies, and once, without dinner" (*GST* 31). Bella's depression reaches the point where Faith comments, "It was like Mother had gone to bed the night Papa left and never properly woken up" (*GST* 61).

Already feeling alienated from her mother, Faith is shocked when, on her seventh birthday, Bella abandons her at the Roadhouse. Fortunately, Marius finds his daughter and takes her home, only to find Bella wielding a gun. After she fires a shot into the dark, nearly killing Faith, Marius is furious, and tells Bella, "That's it. I can't fucking do this any more. You fired a gun at your own child" (*GST* 49). Their fight escalates to the point where Bella hits Marius with a spanner, and he retaliates by punching her in the face. Unknown to them, Faith is observing their altercation. She recalls how the "sound of his fist connecting with her face was hard and soft, like chopping a watermelon. [Bella] flew into the door of the shed, making the whole building shake" (*GST* 51). Naturally, Faith finds this event deeply unsettling, and for a moment believes that her mother may be dead: "Mother's broken face bobbed between the dots and I slid downwards. Everything went black. I struggled to breathe; it felt like there was a heavy weight on my chest" (*GST* 53).

Miki Flockemann explains Faith's reaction by saying that "As common to fictions using a child's perspective, her reaction is visceral, and as elsewhere in the novel *her body* reacts to what she 'sees' but cannot understand by vomiting, by fainting fits or illness" ("Memory and Madness", 11. My emphasis). This interpretation accords with Susan Brison's study of trauma narratives, where she maintains that a "primary distinguishing factor of traumatic memories is that they are more tied to the body than … narrative memories. Indeed, traumatic memory can be viewed as a kind of somatic memory" (42). Faith frequently has inexplicable

somatic responses to events, such as when she sees Oom Piet[11] again: “His close proximity makes me feel slightly nauseous, the way a bad smell would, but my reaction to him is out of proportion with my reasons for disliking him” (*GST* 299). At this point, Faith’s conscious memory is unable to recall that Piet was the one she saw raping Nomsa, but her body clearly registers this memory and responds in its own manner.

Faith’s reaction to her father punching Bella is, therefore, easy to understand – her body reacts in a way that her mind cannot. Further complicating matters is the fact that, on the same night, Bella shoots Boesman, the family dog with whom Faith has formed a strong bond. Although Bella claims to have shot Boesman because he had rabies, it is not entirely clear if this is an excuse for firing the gun into darkness, nearly hitting her own child. While Bella explains the dog’s absence by saying, “God’s taken him”, Faith only understands that “Boesman was gone, like Papa was gone” (*GST* 57). Similarly, in an attempt to explain Bella’s state on a level that a child could understand, Tannie Hettie simply tells Faith that her mother is “sick”, which further compounds her sense of isolation. Upon hearing this, Faith responds:

> I’d felt like I was on a swing, grasping for a handhold while I flew back and forth, about to fall off. Papa and Boesman had gone and now Mother was sick. She didn’t look sick. She wasn’t covered in spots like I had been when I’d had chickenpox, she wasn’t scratching, sneezing or blowing her nose. Her illness was mysterious and the thought of it made my hands clammy. Mother didn’t get sick. (*GST* 62)

While Faith’s world is starting to crack, Bella’s world has entirely come undone. Dr Fourie assesses Bella and tells Tannie Hettie: “It’s a typical nervous breakdown, she’s depressed … it’s happened before, lots of women around here come to me with these sorts of problems … It’s because Marius left. For some women this is like death … At least she’s not drinking” (*GST* 119). Glibly, he adds: “I’m not too concerned. She will get over it, given time” (*GST* 120). This medical opinion, however, seems far too simplistic for some of Bella’s symptoms. The doctor merely assumes that a husband leaving his wife would result in her depression, and does not take into account any other factors, such as Bella’s prior psychological turmoil. Dr Fourie views Bella as a wife and a mother, and therefore sees the loss of a husband to be a

[11] Uncle Piet, a family friend who begins courting Bella after Marius has left. Only later does Faith remember seeing him raping Nomsa on the night of her death.

devastating loss of self. Mary West argues that white women in South Africa "have often been defined by and in relation to men, who have conventionally objectified women and silenced them" (4). It is not necessarily, or exclusively, the loss of Marius, an abusive and philandering husband, but the overwhelming loss of agency and purpose that results in a breakdown that has been a long-time coming.

The sick mother and the sacrificial mother

With Marius having absconded from the home, and Bella having retreated into her bedroom, an opening is made for Faith to establish a relationship with a new caregiver. In such situations, where the primary caregiver is rendered invalid by illness or other factors, a child's need for psychological security increases exponentially (Van der Kolk, "Separation Cry", 32). For Faith, being separated from her mother leads to feelings of severe isolation and discontinuity. She comments: "my world was disintegrating … and I couldn't stop it from happening. For the second time that week I felt myself disappearing, drifting away. If I couldn't hold on to myself, how could I hold on to anything else?" (*GST* 162). Having lost both her father and Boesman, Faith begins to fear her mother's mysterious "illness". It is at the point when Faith, as Flockemann puts it, "begins to lose trust in her mother as a stable point of reference as she becomes aware of shifting realities" ("Memory and Madness", 11), that Nomsa is hired by Tannie Hettie. With these rapid changes and disappearances in her life, it is Nomsa who, in Faith's eyes, becomes "the only solid thing in the world" (*GST* 109). Vickroy argues:

> Dynamic relationships – especially between mother and child – should provide both safety and independent recognition of the child, making it possible for him or her to create symbolically meaningful internal and external objects that eventually help the child to affect and respond to the environment and discover him- or herself within a cultural framework. (24)

Fearing her mother and watching her transition into the fairy world, Faith turns to Nomsa as the only person able to provide the stability and safety that childhood should include, the type of nurturing which Bella has been increasingly unable to provide.

Flockemann suggests that Nomsa "acts as a kind of intermediary who negotiates reality for the child in relation to the 'mad' mother and her increasingly alienating environment, since Nomsa by birthright is the one who historically belongs to the farm" ("Memory and

Madness", 11). Nomsa also functions as a figure in relation to whom Faith can mould herself, with the relationship between Nomsa and the land offering an alternative to the dynamic between Bella and Marius, and between Faith and the fairies.

On their first meeting, Nomsa already shakes one of the foundations upon which Faith has based her reality, the fairies. Faith is shocked when Nomsa laughs at her mentioning of Sillstream, the water fairy Bella has created. She says, "Surely Nomsa knew about the fairies; everyone knew about the fairies" (*GST* 73). Instead, Nomsa offers a trade, saying, "I also know of someone special who brings rain. If you tell me about your fairy I will tell you about my queen" (*GST* 74). Nomsa, therefore, provides Faith with an alternate belief structure and way of life. Not only is she capable of providing the nurturing that Faith is lacking, but her cultural myths also appear less menacing. Moreover, the myths Nomsa is willing to impart are not based on secrecy and deception like Bella's fairies. Rather, Nomsa offers to tell Faith stories about whomever it is that brings the rain, implying a figure who is imbued with the values of renewal, growth and nurturance.

Bella, naturally, feels threatened by Nomsa's appearance, telling Faith, "That woman doesn't belong here … She'll make the fairies leave … Don't tell her about them. They'll hear you and they'll leave … I don't want us to be alone, Faith" (*GST* 75-6). As Faith grows more attached to Nomsa, Bella retreats into herself: "Mostly she sat on a swing chair, wrapped up in an old shawl, talking to herself or just staring at the sky" (*GST* 104). Eventually, Faith declares, "I decided that I would no longer love Mother. I would never again care what happened to her" (*GST* 103).

Flockemann notes, though, that "Nomsa is a rather idealized figure utterly domesticated within the child's frame of reference in a way that makes both Nomsa's blackness and her own whiteness appear invisible to the child at this stage" ("Memory and Madness", 11). While this is true, Faith does slowly realise that other people have a different response to Nomsa. While Bella is ill, Nomsa takes her place at the market. When no one buys anything from them, Faith slowly realises that "it was Nomsa that people didn't like. Even people I had always thought were nice … gave us a wide berth" (*GST* 95). Despite realising that there is something different about Nomsa with which people take issue, Faith is unable to realise that it is the colour of her skin. Racism, it seems, has not yet been socially indoctrinated. Faith, however, does comment:

> I felt as though the world was somehow different, like I had been exposed to something that made no sense, that had no reason to be the way it was. It was an unfathomable thing, made up of tenuous strands that had to fit together, if only I knew how to place them. Yet, even as I grappled with the threads of it, trying to weave them together into a solid idea, I knew that what I would find when I finally managed was something rotten. (*GST* 95)

Flockemann notes further that "Faith's accidental shooting of Nomsa in *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* renders Nomsa as typical sacrificial victim who triggers Faith's belated 'comprehension', and perhaps too easy redemption" ("Memory and Madness", 16). In Flockemann's reading, Nomsa becomes a vehicle of Faith's story, and her voice is silenced within the narrative. In as much as Trinbacher believes that "literary narratives play a major role in the country's healing process since they lend weight to voices yet unheard" ("Memory and Madness", 4), it is disappointing, suggests Flockemann, that at no point is the reader able to glimpse any aspect of Nomsa's story, instead receiving a silence and not the inclusive narrative one might have expected to find in a post-apartheid novel. The sparsely detailed characterisation of Nomsa and her history is equally worrisome, but this could be attributed to Faith's childhood comprehension. The farm is, as Faith puts it, "all I had ever known" (*GST* 100), and she consequently is seldom forced to think beyond certain geographic parameters. In other words, a world beyond the farm, and, therefore, the world from which Nomsa comes, is inconceivable to Faith. Even the fairy world operates in conjunction with the farm. This would certainly contribute to Faith's incomprehension of apartheid, and her strangely incurious and oblivious attitude towards Nomsa's existence prior to her coming to the farm.

Flockemann does, however, posit another role for Nomsa, saying that "One could argue that it is Nomsa's rape and shooting, her 'wound', that is spoken through the recurring trauma that haunts Faith" ("Memory and Madness", 16). Caruth suggests that what is remarkable about the nature of trauma is how, in the very process of listening to the "wound" of an individual, one is able to see how the "wounds" of others are implicated in it. Flockemann also draws on Caruth, finding her theories on the workings of trauma to provide an alternate reading of the novel, a reading which may not bring justice or reconciliation, but which provides an attempt at finding "lost" voices. Flockemann's two readings of Nomsa as either a sacrificial victim or wound through which the story can be told may seem contradictory, but perhaps the fault lies with the larger South African narrative within which the story is told, and Nomsa is just one

of countless women, like Pauline in *The Devil's Chimney*, whose story can only be registered by a resounding silence.

Nevertheless, *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* may still be Faith's narrative, but in voicing her trauma, she is still indirectly able to recount the traumas of the other women whose suffering have become interlinked with her life. In fact, Faith's story could be said to bear witness to the pain and suffering of Bella, Nomsa, and even briefly, of Molly. As Trinbacher suggests, "[w]ounds need to be recognized in order to be healed. Mourning is a process that takes its time" (84).

At this stage in the narrative, however, Faith's understanding of the world does not allow for anyone else's traumas to be explained. She will only begin to comprehend what life was like for her mother when she returns to the farm, fifteen years later. Only as an adult, and in a bid to understand what happened to herself as a child, will Faith be able to relate to her mother and what she must have gone through. Caruth's comment on the shared nature of trauma seems apt here:

> not as the story of the individual in relation to the events of his own past, but as the story of the way in which one's trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which one's trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound. (*Unclaimed,* 8)

Although the causes of Bella's psychological breakdown are not fully explored in the first half of the novel, her belief in the fairies can be read as an initial attempt at voicing her inner turmoil. In an article entitled "Young people's mental health: the spiritual power of fairy stories, myths and legends", Steven Walker argues that "Fairies often act in a healing capacity in mythology, or they appear as the agents between the world of human affairs and the invisible forces of nature" (83). Walker posits that "mental health practitioners can utilise such powerful narratives therapeutically and in a culturally respectful and spiritually innovative way" (81). While his article focuses on the uses of fairy tales in therapy with adolescents, it is not entirely implausible that Bella's paintings and stories are an attempt at exorcising her own personal demons and re-establishing some sort of control over her life, through regressive behaviour. One may argue, then, that Bella's use of the fairy world is her means of establishing her own narrative, her way of "narrating the unnarratable" (Whitehead 4), or establishing a sense of agency in a world which she may find bewildering. After all, as

Faith says, “Mother didn’t believe in things she couldn’t see” (*GST* 119). While this may comment on Faith’s childhood naivety, it could also suggest that, to Bella, the world of the fairies is as real as her life on the farm.

Michael G. Kenny posits that the “relation between symptom and its past cause is frequently judged to be ‘symbolic’ in nature, the symptom being a transformed representation of past events that demands interpretative decoding” (153). With this in mind, the fairies could read as a ‘symptom’ of Bella’s trauma, and their various incarnations could be said to be symbols of something greater. Flockemann, for instance, sees Bella’s stories and paintings of the fairies as “projections of evil and loss” (“Memory and Madness”, 9). In her reading, Dead Rex “is also the embodiment of the unmourned ‘old souls’ associated with South Africa’s violent history who still inhabit the farm, and whose pain and suffering have not been appeased” (Flockemann, “Memory and Madness”, 13). Dead Rex, after all, describes himself as being “long gone from man’s memory in this place. No one remember the soul stealer, no one appease him, no one protect himself, no more” (*GST* 1). Faith is even convinced that Dead Rex has stolen her mother’s soul, and she begins to refer to Bella as “the fairy-sick Mother” (*GST* 127). Krugman argues that an “abused child, feeling helpless, frustrated, and impotently enraged, diminishes its vulnerability by splitting the image of the abusive parent into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ parts” (134). Within the novel, this phenomenon of splitting is clearly evident when Faith finds herself “trying to see the old Mother that was hidden inside” (*GST* 126). The erratic changes in her mother’s persona may, however, complicate this process. As Faith says, “Mother had never been sorry … before; now that she was sorry, I was confused […] my real mother didn’t cry” (*GST* 127).

The process of splitting is typical of Klein’s paranoid-schizoid position, during which the infant learns to distinguish between love and cruelty. Segal explains:

> Splitting is an action undertaken in phantasy which can be used to separate things which belong together. A father or a mother, for example, can be seen in two distinct ways: as, on the one hand, a weak, kind loving person and, on the other, as powerful, undermining and dangerous, each view ‘cut out’ from a more whole one. The two perceptions may never be recognised as relating to the same person. (34)

Faith begins to see her mother as two distinct beings, the “fairy-sick mother” and the mother with the capacity to love. There is, however, a danger when splitting occurs. Segal explains:

“When one set of perceptions and phantasies is kept apart from another, the child (or adult) splits not only the object but also him or herself” (34). At times, this is quite visible in Faith’s own reactions to her mother, from describing her as “I didn’t want her to be my mother, this strange thin woman who wasn’t there any more” (*GST* 167), to willing Bella to recover from her illness.

Complicating the relationship between Bella and Faith, however, is the interference created by the fairies. Andreas Trinbacher argues that the author’s use of the fairy world is threefold: “Zadok uses the theme of the fairy world to stress the characters’ mental instability, to create a world to take refuge in, as well as to display their fears” (88). All three functions identified by Trinbacher are clearly present in Bella, and slowly begin to appear in Faith. At one point, Bella says to her daughter, “I see them, Faith, the other world, the real one. It’s perfect there, no one will bother us ... I belong there, Faith, you belong there, with me, with us” (*GST* 100). At this point, it is clear that Bella is at the height of her psychological breakdown. Not only has the world of the fairies become entirely real to her, but it has, in fact, become what Bella calls the “real” world. This is further compounded by Bella saying, “That’s where he’s gone, you know. I can hear him sometimes, talking to me” (*GST* 100-1), suggesting that Marius has not really abandoned his family, but is actually waiting for Bella and Faith to leave the farm, and join him in the fairy world. Faith, on the other hand, finds this idea terrifying. Observing her mother’s slow transformation, she comments:

> The way her eyes sank into their sockets yet glowed a brighter blue than they’d ever been. The way she walked, the strange shuffle like she never lifted her feet suddenly erupting into what seemed like flight … Mother was becoming one of them, crossing over into the realm of the fairies. Hadn’t she said they were coming to get us? (*GST* 98-9)

The suggestion that there may be a long history to Bella’s mental instability is given by her friend, Mia, only after Bella’s death:

> I encouraged her to see him, she didn’t want to, she thought he was too strange. He was quite strange. *There was an odd look in his eyes, obsessive.* Lots of men had that look, the ones who’d been to the border. He looked at Bella with those eyes, and it freaked her out […] *After they married, it was like they swapped eyes.* Like all the demons he’d brought back with him from Angola attached themselves to her. Started whispering. I didn’t see it then, her going funny. Maybe I didn’t want to see […] both of them had that obsessive side. They couldn’t let go, Faith, it destroyed them. (*GST* 233. My emphasis)

Mia implies three important factors to consider. Firstly, Marius has been deeply affected, and profoundly altered, by his time during the war, something Faith as a child comments on, saying the times when Marius returned from the border could be confusing for her: "Sometimes he'd come back a different person, quiet and moody, other times he would be the same, just not laugh as much as usual" (*GST* 157). Steven Krugman provides a clinical explanation for such behaviour: "The trauma syndrome is actually a continuous range of reactions … that includes depression, avoidance of intimacy, and 'relational distortions'" (127-8). Marius's trauma is further compounded by the fact that he appears unable to release, or dispense with what has traumatised him. Secondly, Mia implicitly suggests that violence and trauma can be passed on. This finds clinical support in Krugman's positing trauma as syndrome, suggesting that it is possible for "the whole family [to suffer] traumatisation when one or more of its members is overwhelmed by outside events" (128). For Marius, the horrors witnessed during the Border war could be said to have a direct impact on his relationship with Bella, disturbing both Bella's sense of self and her ability to connect with others. Marius's traumatic experiences would then be the transference that Mia witnesses in Bella's eyes. Finally, the last thing that Mia implies is that not only has Bella's illness been a protracted one, but that she, like Faith, has been a victim.

Child of the fairies

The use of the mythological fairies may, then, be Bella's means of casting off her victimhood and giving herself a sense of agency. However, as Walker notes, fairies "can also, when used as metaphor, frighten children and potentially cause psychological harm" (83). This can be seen after Marius leaves, and the fairies appear to completely invade the house. Faith begins to believe that fairies are "closing in on the house, surrounding us until there was no escape" (*GST* 79), and Trinbacher maintains, "[b]elieving in everything she has been told by her mother, Faith blames the fairies for her mother's illness. She deeply believes that they cause her mother's increasing madness" (88). The more unstable Bella becomes, the more Faith fears her mother, and as a consequence the fairies become even more menacing. In fact, Faith begins to create her own fears. At one point she imagines that the "orchard was where Dead Rex reigned and somewhere in that orchard, perhaps inside trees, the souls of his victims were trapped. Suddenly everything made sense. Dead Rex had stolen Mother's soul: perhaps she'd accidentally looked him in the eyes" (*GST* 82).

Unconsciously, Faith continues to split negative experiences and associate them with the fairies, thereby creating a mother made ill by the fantastical. Commenting on Klein's work, Segal provides insight on such projections:

> Klein thought that the importance of parents' actual behaviour lay in the way it was taken by the child as confirmation or disproof of existing phantasies. Parents added new elements to the children's phantasy worlds but generally these tended to reduce the terrifying aspect of the child's phantasies: however well or badly the parents behaved, reality was less monstrous than the child's phantasies. (29)

This argument would suggest that Faith uses the fairies to establish a phantasy in which they are responsible for Bella's illness. The reasoning for this is most likely two-fold. Firstly, the phantasy allows Faith to avoid the role that the break-down of her parents' marriage has played in Bella's depression, and secondly, Faith is able to blame a third party for the neglect she experiences at the hands of her mother. Furthermore, the nightmarish quality of Faith's phantasies is more monstrous than reality, allowing Faith moments of respite in which she sees Bella as her mother once more.

Flockemann suggests that, for Faith, "the distinction between Mother/Monster, or the 'two profiles' becomes blurred" ("Memory and Madness", 11). Flockemann's distinction between Mother/Monster correlates with my assertion that Faith has split her mother's nurturing traits and her terrifying traits into two separate objects, and as a result is never entirely sure if she is interacting with "the fairy-sick Mother" (*GST* 127) or "the old Mother that was hidden inside" (*GST* 126). Bella's descent into madness terrifies Faith for two reasons. Firstly, with her father's physical absence and her mother's psychical absence, Faith's ability to discern an identity based on parental figures is entirely dismantled, and she loses what self-knowledge and ability she has to navigate the world. Secondly, Faith fears becoming like her mother.

While the accidental shooting of Nomsa is the central traumatic event of the novel, the inability to recognise Bella as the woman Faith had once known as her mother is in itself traumatic. Trauma, as Edkins notes, can also occur when "the very powers that we are convinced will protect us and give us security become our tormentors: when the community of which we considered ourselves members turns against us or when our family is no longer a source of refuge but a site of danger" (4). This, in turn, can also be said to be true of the

fairies. Initially, Faith is desperate to see them, despite knowing some are dark fairies, but as Bella becomes removed from the realm of safety, Faith becomes sure "the fairies were making her ill" (*GST* 117). The fairies, therefore, become a symbol of the threat Bella poses to her daughter.

Even after Bella is incarcerated, Faith still believes in the fairies. Trinbacher argues that "Inspired by her mother's tales, Faith develops emotions of fear and anxiety that intensify her belief in this surreal world sustainably" (87). Not even leaving the farm is enough to dispel the fairies from her world: "Once I'd told Molly about them," Faith recalls, "there was no stopping [Molly from exaggerating the stories they told about the fairies]. They grew nastier, their actions more evil, [and] more deranged" (*GST* 194). Faith also realises that "it wasn't long before I began adding my own fuel to the myths" (*GST* 195). One thing here is apparent, which is that the fairies are not only Bella's creation. In fact, similar to the transmission trauma, it would appear that tales of the fairies can also be passed on. Reading Faith's relationship with the fairies through a Kleinian lens, one could argue that Faith has established a mode of projective identification with the fairies. Feldman explains "projective identification" as follows:

> Klein came to use the term 'projective identification' to describe this process whereby the infant projects (primarily) harmful contents into his object (for example, into his mother), and by the same token projects those parts of his mental apparatus with which they are associated. In so far as the mother then comes to contain the bad parts of the self, she is not only felt to be bad, as a separate individual, but is *identified* with the bad, unwanted parts of the self. (75)

While the mother is usually the target of this process, in this case Faith has extended the projective identification to include the fairies. Already having turned against the fairies, Faith is deeply disturbed, then, when her mother tells her, "you're a child of the fairies … I think the day I conceived, the fairies came and put you inside me. I used to wonder about that; your father wasn't even there, I think … The fairies will never leave me, don't worry about that, not as long you're here" (*GST* 129). Confusing her daughter's sense of belonging is enough to evoke a physical reaction, which is why Faith's response is again somatic: "I ran outside and threw up" (*ibid*). Hearing this from Bella also deeply disturbs Faith's sense of self. Removing Marius entirely as a paternal figure fragments Faith's identity, as if effectively rewriting history. As Flockemann notes, however, "The sense of fractured realities and a

fragmented sense of selfhood is already evident when her father claims that she is 'just like' her mother after she launches herself in child-rage at him … it is precisely the fear of becoming her mother that plagues her" ("Memory and Madness", 11).

Not willing to believe her mother about the manner of her conception, Faith begins examining her face in a compact mirror and comparing it to Dead Rex's painting. She comments: "Dead Rex had slimy green eyes, but there was something about the way he looked at me, something in the expression, that seemed to me to be the same eye looking out from the compact" (*GST* 132-3). This initial physical similarity begins to rupture Faith's sense of self, and she searches the painting for more comparisons:

> There was a knob that stuck out on my wrist – everyone had it, I knew, but mine had always protruded more than other people's … I held my hand up and looked at his hand … *There, in the painting, were the same long fingers, the same knuckles, the same knobbly wristbone. Even the tiny freckle between the knuckle on my little finger and my ring finger was mimicked on his hand, on the hand of the most terrible fairy.* I backed away slowly, not willing to believe what my eyes were telling me. *My whole life was a lie. I wasn't even a person like other people were.* I was something else, a Halfling, a changeling. I knew from the fairy stories Mother read to me that people hated Halflings, left them in the woods to die. That was probably why Papa had left, because he knew and he hated me. (*GST* 133. My emphasis)

Although Bella has created these paintings, and based a certain likeness of them on her daughter,[12] it is Faith's own process of splitting and projective identification that leads to the epistemological confusion.

In psychoanalytic terms, splitting and projective identification denote a problematic relationship between an individual and the objects with which he or she interacts. An important theory of Klein's involves the individual's interaction with his or her internal objects. Robert Caper explains this term:

[12] As an adult, Faith returns to farm and finds her mother's sketches and paintings. Only then does she realise: "Some of the drawings of me are in similar poses to some of the painting of the fairies. I look from one painting to the next and see, for the first time, that each fairy, though their hair, skin and eye colour and expression are different, has the same face. The child-girl face that looks at me across time from the sketches I posed for also looks at me from within the frames of the fairy paintings. Their poses mimic quick studies of me at play, running, jumping climbing, swimming in the reservoir. It makes me realize just how isolated Mother was, how lonely she must have felt" (*GST* 296-7).

> a type of identification in which both the self and object are first split into parts, and the parts of the self are then confused with parts of the object. These confused mixtures of self and object are felt to be both possessed and possessing. They are the product of phantasies of omnipotent projection and introjection. One does not really have a relationship with such an object; instead, one feels in the unconscious that one *is* the object, and that the object *is* the self. (5)

Caper suggests that this identification is "a more concrete and psychotic phenomenon than the classical superego: it is not felt to be in the mind, but in the body" (95), and also that "in this area of the mind, phantasies are indistinguishable from bodily processes" (96).

Despite having previously projected unwanted evils onto the fairies, Faith begins to struggle with separating the image she sees in the mirror from the painting of Dead Rex. Her fears of her father leaving are reinforced by the conviction that she must be a "Halfling", or something vile and unnatural, some kind of rupture, half thing. It would then appear logical that Faith's first experiences of splitting arise from feeling un-homed in her own body, and that this has been a result of her wish to purge the undesirable from herself. Again, before Faith's mind can truly comprehend the significance of the situation, her somatic response overwhelms her: "I felt dizzy, sick. The walls of the room suddenly seemed much closer. I closed my eyes, feeling a stifling flush of heat rush up my neck into my head" (*GST* 134).

The primary danger of splitting lies in the fact that, through the process of splitting off and then projecting the part of one's self that the subject finds unbearable, the subject ultimately diminishes his or her own abilities and creates an object which is unbearable (Caper 139). In due course, the object becomes a receptacle for the purgation of these unbearable elements, but this is to the detriment of the individual's future as this ultimately leads to a severe state of repression and the inability to face the world. In the novel, this inability to face the world is best demonstrated by Faith referring to herself as a "spectator" to her own life.

Slowly it becomes apparent that the fairies could represent those parts of herself that Faith finds unbearable. Trinbacher suggests that the fairies are "partly responsible for the severe traumatization of Faith and may be the cause of [Nomsa's] fatal accident too" (88). The fairies begin to house the qualities that Faith most mistrusts in herself, and she soon finds them an easy source of blame. When she thinks she may be accused of eavesdropping, Faith says "I could blame one of the fairies" (*GST* 64), and later, after hurling a compact mirror at

the painting of Dead Rex and having it ricochet and hit her on the head, she comments: "I blamed him anyway, feeling sure he had somehow been responsible for making the compact bounce" (*GST* 136).

The ease with which Faith places blame upon the fairies changes the manner in which we read the prologue. Only towards the end of the novel does Faith begin to remember the night of Nomsa's death. The prologue, however, is told from Dead Rex's perspective. Dead Rex, we are told, rouses Faith and leads her to Nomsa's room, commanding her: "He be hurting her … Hurt him back" (*GST* 3). The implication of this is somewhat distressing. Dead Rex, in a bid to cause more pain, has brought Faith to the site of Nomsa's rape and, he is the one who wills her to fire the gun. Faith's belief in the fairies, then, brings her a strange absolution from having killed Nomsa. She is not the one to blame if Dead Rex tricked her into shooting. The trouble, of course, comes from Faith's later identification with the fairies, suggesting that the darker elements of herself that she projects onto the fairies are the very aspects of herself from which she is trying to hide. Moreover, if Faith has difficulty distinguishing between herself and the fairies, then it follows that she may be unable to properly differentiate between victim and perpetrator, making the issue of who actually pulled the trigger far more complex than it may appear at first.

Repression, spirit possession and a return to the farm

As Van der Kolk and Kadish argue, "patients use the defense mechanism of repression to remove the memory from consciousness" (182). Faith's state of repression is immediately apparent from the second half of the novel. She seems completely unwilling to participate in the events of her own life, resulting in her feeling like a spectator, and she even "can't remember when [she] gave up hoping, when [she] buried [herself] so deep that [she] ceased to be" (*GST* 242). The fifteen years of her life that Faith spends in Johannesburg are mostly devoid of any form of meaningful existence, until she hears news of Bella's death, and the memories come flooding back. The "nightmares have started again," says Faith, "I can feel it when I wake up, that sense of futility, that there is nothing to live for, that everything is lost" (*GST* 187). In the case of traumatised individuals, such nightmares and feelings of futility are commonplace. As Van der Kolk and Kadish explain:

> When the neat patterns of life are disrupted by loss of loved ones, physical illness, or other incapacities, the trauma is relived in dissociated form, in nightmares, in overwhelming affect states, or in re-enactments. (181)

Despite her repeated vows to despise her mother, Faith is still shocked to hear of her death, re-experiencing the loss of her mother as she did when she was a child. Faith comments that "the dreams are like ghosts, tantalizing images that slip away before I have time to fully grasp them. I haven't had the nightmares in years. Perhaps Mother's causing them from the grave, unwilling to be forgotten and left to rot. The thoughts chill me" (*GST* 187). As Trinbacher points out, however, "[t]hough she believes to have nightmares [sic], they actually are her memories that in the form of nightmares come to her mind. Due to her traumatization, the memory has vanished, only coming up as intrusive thoughts" (82).

Shortly after Bella's death, Faith encounters Elizabeth Mabutu, who describes herself as "a herbalist, a healer" (*GST* 229), and who offers to pray for her. Mrs Mabutu's appearance in the novel is somewhat transcendental in itself. Their meeting is a chance encounter on the street, but the older woman instantly makes Faith wary, while Faith compares Mrs Mabutu's appearance to "a movie séance" (*GST* 191). She immediately tells Faith that "there is bad inside you … bad things have happened and need to come out" (*ibid*), before beginning to sing. Faith observes that "It's the wailing kind you hear in evangelical churches, the pleading, demon-exorcizing kind of song. The noise freaks me out. I feel like it's battering against my body, trying to get inside me" (*ibid*). Unlike when she was a child, Faith regards this mystical encounter with cynicism and apprehension. While the fairies initially offered a world of magic and possibility, Mrs Mabutu's abilities are highly doubted by Faith. Despite what may be the scepticism of adulthood, the words that follow the song terrify Faith with their injunction to "Go home" (*ibid*). The fact that her body responds first, signals the suggestion that Mrs Mabutu's song has reached something deeply repressed within Faith's unconscious. Following Kenny's assertion that "[t]raumatic memories are concealed in another unconscious realm … a fortress protecting the victim against realization of things too terrible to bear" (154), we could argue that Faith's reaction indicates that Mrs Mabutu has roused some deeply repressed memories.

It is, therefore, unsurprising that shortly after this Faith finds her "thoughts fragmented, sliding around [her] mind, intangible, momentary, briefly incandescent," and even believes that she hears Dead Rex calling out to her, "Look, look, mosetsana, look what you done"

(*GST* 201). The implication is that Faith is beginning to recall some of the events of Nomsa's death, but cannot clearly place them. What appears possible is that, similar to the psychical process of splitting, Faith has managed to create a separation of physical spaces in an attempt to repress her memories. The split landscapes of farm and city stand as a metonym for the split in Faith's psyche which requires reintegration. In fact, the entire novel is populated by physical separations that mirror Faith's unconscious feelings of disjuncture. As a child, there is a distance on the farm between the safety of the house and the danger of the orchard, representing the interior and exterior dangers in Faith's world. The separation of Marius and Bella forces Faith to split her parents into good and bad qualities, much like she later finds herself doing with Bella and Nomsa. Even on a structural level, the novel is split in half by a large temporal gap. On a narrative and a psychic level Faith's life contains little stability, with ruptures making themselves more strikingly clear as the novel progresses.

At this point in the narrative, the differences between the belief-structures of the fairies and traditional African mythology become particularly apparent. While, earlier, Nomsa's stories suggested to Faith that there was an alternative to the menacing world of the fairies, it now becomes clear that even the way she approaches her memories and healing process has an alternative. While a more Western clinical approach concerns itself with the split world view that emanates from Cartesian thinking, traditional African healing is concerned with a holistic world view which emphasises maintaining connections with ancestral figures.

After their initial encounter, Mrs Mabutu arrives at the house that Faith shares with Molly and Mia with the simple explanation, "The child sought me out" (*GST* 229). She continues:

> Her spirit is restless, she has buried it for too long in darkness. There are many restless spirits around you, child … Some are ancestors, but there are others. Some very bad. Your mother collected these spirits around her, they brought sickness to your house … To our people, to insult a sangoma as you have insulted me … it would be extremely bad. Your ancestors have spoken through me to try to help you. You are a stupid, stupid girl. I, though, cannot afford to ignore the ancestors, so I tell you this one final thing. Go home. It is only at your home that you will free your spirit. (*GST* 230)

Mrs Mabutu makes it clear to Faith that Bella courted malevolent spirits, and that these have brought sickness upon her. Her last words to Faith re-iterate this: "If you don't return home to free your spirit, you will get sick. You already are" (*GST* 231). In African traditions, suggests

Suzanne Maiello, "[i]llness is not split into either physical or mental suffering. Body and mind are a unit … Consequently, the approach of traditional healers to illness is holistic and includes the biological, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions" (248). Offering an alternative to the typical Cartesian split of body and mind, this holistic approach to healing offers to bridge the disjunctures in Faith's life. Locating the human at the interface of different aspects of being, this view makes psychological reintegration possible in ways that are very different from the typical conception of clinical healing, which tends to the cognitive-behaviourist on the one hand and pharmacology on the other.

According, then, to Mrs Mabutu, Faith is experiencing an illness which, although spiritual in nature, impacts upon her body as well. Maiello argues that "[b]reaking the relation with the ancestors brings about illness, just as massive splitting, projective identification and 'attacks on linking' lead to severe psychopathological symptoms" (255). Despite the vast divide in cultural identification, Mrs Mabutu is clearly able to connect with Faith's situation, and finally convinces her that the nightmares will not stop until she re-establishes connections with her ancestors. This, of course, is not something Faith is able to do until she returns to the farm.

For Kenny, an anthropologist, a journey like the one undertaken by Faith back to the farm is "a process which entails the construction of a story or 'narrative' – a return to the scene of the crime in which the formerly disassociated material now finds a place in consciousness" (154). Faith's return to the farm is literally a return to the place where her repressed memories occurred. She acknowledges that all she "longed for was to return to the farm, breathe in the hot citrus smell or even taste the dust-grit of the drought years on my teeth" (*GST* 242), but she also begins to fear herself, saying, "There is something inside that is beating to get out … A thing that has suffocated for too long and now claws its way up, gasping for air. It's the voice that whispers spite in my dreams, a darkness that attached itself to me long ago" (*ibid*).

Arriving at the farm, Faith is amazed at the results, saying, "even as my tired body groans with each uneven step, my soul sighs with relief" (*GST* 253). For a moment Faith even feels happy, although she describes the feeling as "being somewhat alien, something I've not felt in a long time" (*GST* 254). Within days, she begins to have more frequent dreams about the night of Nomsa's death, but Faith is still unable to separate dream from reality. It takes an encounter with Oom Piet to jog enough of Faith's memory to finally recall the events of that

night. When she sees him, Faith comments: "the cold hand of fear closes over my throat and I can't breathe properly" (*GST* 299). Piet is clearly concerned about Faith's reasons for returning, and he pushes her for details, eventually trying to see if she can recall any of the details surrounding the night of Nomsa's death. "You didn't hear something, wake up in the night?" he asks (*GST* 303). Faith says "Tears spill down my cheeks. I don't want him to witness the fresh pain that has risen up and cut me like all of this was yesterday" (*ibid*). At first Faith only recalls witnessing him rape Nomsa, and is outraged that her mother protected him. But, she realises the truth when Piet remarks, "She didn't protect me, girlie, she protected you" (*GST* 316). Faith comments that his words "reach into the core of me and rip me apart, things I don't want to believe but I can feel, in the soul of me, are true" (*ibid*).

With her memory recovered, Faith becomes even more ill than she was in Johannesburg. As the days blend into one another, Faith finds herself unable "to tell the difference between sleep and waking", and constantly hears voices whispering "Killer" (*GST* 319). The fairies re-emerge to haunt Faith, although none frequents her as often as Dead Rex:

> He sucks me down, into him, where I clamour fearfully in his belly with disjointed creatures I try not to believe exist, things that have one arm or empty eye sockets or are nothing more than a head. But there is not enough space for me, I am still too whole. (*GST* 319)

As a child, Dead Rex terrified Faith, but now his presence threatens to destroy her entirely, as her "body shrinks, sweats, wastes away" into "a shrunken husk devoid of life" (*ibid*). Eventually a sangoma is called, and his prognosis mirrors that of Mrs Mabutu: "There is a thing inside her, a thing that has been there for many years, maybe since she was a small girl. It grows. She will not let it go; for some reason she wants to hold it inside her, even though it will destroy her. If we are to help her, we need to get it out" (*GST* 321-2).

In understanding the role that traditional healers play in South Africa, I draw on Gavin Ivey and Tertia Myers's study "The psychology of bewitchment", where bewitchment is described as follows:

> a culturally sanctioned supernatural belief system used defensively by individuals to protect themselves against acknowledging and experiencing a range of painful and anxiety-provoking feelings, typically involving

> hostility, envy, and loss. Bewitchment arises when individuals split off and project problematic self aspects elicited by adverse or stressful experiences. (75)

In their study, Ivey and Myers make extensive use of the Kleinian psychoanalytical model to interpret a more traditional African belief and integrate its manifestations within a Western therapeutic understanding. Although the two models appear to be divergent, the integration of two different schools of thought that nevertheless reveal an epistemological congruity in treating ideas as things allows psychotherapists to manage a broad spectrum of patients.

Faith makes extensive use of splitting and projective identification in her relationship with the fairies which gives Dead Rex the agency to consume her now. These psychological phenomena are responsible for diminishing an individual's capacity to function as a fully-actualised subject, suggesting that Faith's relationship with the fairies plays a large part in what plagues her now. Ivey and Myers suggest that "frustrating interactions with caregivers, coloured too by the infant's projection of aggressive instinctual impulses onto them, result in the internalisation of 'bad' objects" (79). These bad objects are then split off and evacuated through phantasy, such as Faith's construction of the fairy world, in an attempt to preserve good internal objects. However, as Ivey and Myers note:

> In some cases, our internal world is felt to be, intermittently or constantly, a war-like space in which our good internal objects are perpetually threatened by invading bad objects and parts of self identified with these objects. In this situation, primitive defences based on the splitting off and projective evacuation of bad objects impoverish the internal world and lead to the perception of the external world as malevolent and persecutory. (*ibid*)

Given Faith's experience of such a "war-like space", it is not surprising that both traditional healers view these symptoms as bewitchment or illness. Bewitchment is "characterised by a preoccupation with destructive events occurring inside one's body … Victims frequently report feeling that they are being attacked from within" (Ivey & Myers 80). These feelings of being attacked are clearly present in Faith. The fairies, who have not bothered Faith for years, make an unwelcome return. Faith experiences this as an attack from within, but the manifestations clearly affect her whole body, and she says that she feels like the fairies are "clawing [her], trying to rip [her] into small pieces to be devoured and regurgitated" (*GST* 320-1).

Over a period of three nights the traditional healer stays in a hut with Faith, trying to draw the malevolent presence out of her body. During the first night, the healer spreads tar on Faith's stomach, and it "sinks into [her], coating the swelling thing, containing it" (*GST* 322). The second night, Faith undergoes a transformation:

> Feeling begins to seep back into my fingers. My dead mind yawns and stretches and looks out … like a pupating worm, I begin to change. My outer shell hardens, cracks, falls away and I am left, small and pink and raw, squirming on the bed like a new baby grub. The old one digs his hands into my soft fleshy abdomen where the swelling thing lies, hard and dead now, and draws it out. (*GST* 323)

This transformation is possible only after the evil within Faith has been contained. Within the discourse of traditional African healing, these bad spirits have been contained and banished from her body. While a Kleinian perspective of splitting would seem to perpetuate the process of separating elements of the psyche, it is only when Faith allows herself to be entirely consumed that she is reborn. As she surrenders herself to the protection of the traditional healer, he is able to fully contain that which bewitches her and extracts it from her body. Finally, after the bad object is removed from her body, Faith awakens on the third night to find the fairies absent: "They're gone, for the first time I can remember they are not there and I'm alone. I'm an empty shell, hollow and vacant, yet somehow I feel free" (*ibid*). In her own experience with traditional healers, Maiello reflects that "the sangoma's function seemed to be to re-establish channels of communication between the internal and the external world at deep unconscious levels" (246). For Faith, then, this encounter dispossesses her of the presences that pervaded her daily existence, re-integrating balance between her "good" and "bad objects".

Ivey and Myers conclude that "the bewitched person is … operating from the paranoid-schizoid position, which makes it difficult to acknowledge and own one's hostile feelings, to evaluate interpersonal situations clearly, and to distinguish between reality and phantasy" (82). An individual in the paranoid-schizoid position, then, has difficulty negotiating the boundaries between the conscious and the projections of the unconscious, as well an inability to manage interpersonal relationships with sufficient empathy. Ultimately, the help of the traditional healer suggests that Faith may be able to move away from the paranoid-schizoid position and into the depressive position, wherein she would be able to concern herself with the wellbeing of others. This position, which concerns itself with the state of intersubjective

relationships, is also fundamental to the traditional African world view, which decentres the subject, and is in stark opposition to the individualism of the western Cartesian subject.

Nevertheless, despite the potential that this encounter holds, it is not as fully realised as the earlier parts of the novel. While Faith's childhood and time in Johannesburg are covered in some detail, her recovery is perhaps a little too quick and magical to really be convincing. The entire encounter with the healer is barely two pages long, which hardly seems sufficient to purge the harrowing events described in detail in the other sections. It may just be a little too easy and too convenient that Faith never mentions her guilt over killing Nomsa, or acknowledges what Bella sacrificed for her. Oom Piet practically delights in Faith realising that she shot Nomsa, and there is never any sense that he will ever face rape charges. This could put into question whether or not the novel really offers any true message of reconciliation. Has the self-reconciliation truly involved reconciliation with the other, thematically and structurally?

Conclusion: Community and the other

Mieke Bal also argues that interaction within a community is necessary for healing to occur: "the incapacitation of the subject – whose trauma or wound precludes memory as a healing integration – can be overcome only in an interaction with others" (x). Bal continues to say that this community can:

> be whoever functions as the "second person" before or to whom the traumatized subject can bear witness, and thus integrate narratively what was until then an assailing spectre. In other words, a second person is needed for the first person to come into his- or herself in the present, able to bear the past (xi)

As she is purged of the fairies, Faith shows a vague awareness for the first time that community may be necessary for the development of selfhood. The first person she comes into contact with is the man who has healed her, and she realises that they "have spent an eternity together in this room and [she] know[s] he has seen the things that [she has] seen. [They] have a shared past, yet [she has] never seen him properly before" (*GST* 323). The healer is the closest person she has to a witness, and Faith understands that, in having cast the

spirits out, the healer has established a spiritual connection with her, even if she has not the opportunity to acknowledge his presence.

Furthermore, the man enables her to mourn her losses. “The tears flow easily,” says Faith, “for Papa and Mother and Nomsa, for Oupa and Grandma English and Tannie Hettie, for Boesman, for Molly, for the fairies, and finally for my small self that died with Nomsa” (*GST* 324). Part of what she held onto for fifteen years is the pain associated with all the people she feels that she has lost. Of course, she finally remembers that she still has Molly and Mia in her life, and she asks: “I wonder what ever possessed me to doubt them, to flee the safety of their friendship. Of my family” (*GST* 326). It is in reuniting with the two women that Faith is finally able to banish Dead Rex. In the epilogue, we are told: “He watch them come, those who love mosetsana, and he watch as they unite, a power circle of three … He not like love, it starve him … he knows, they will burn his image, set fire to the mad woman painting that has trapped him in this place too long” (*GST* 327). Like Connie, who reunites with her husband in *The Devil’s Chimney*, Faith ends this novel on a note of optimism as she gathers the family she still has. The dialogical resolution of these endings suggests a movement towards communality in South African fiction that encourages the establishment of a developed form of intersubjectivity that supports individuals in their experiences of loss.

Chapter Four: Memory, Body and Landscape in Anne Landsman's *The Rowing Lesson*

> "That's where the truth is, woven into the violet and red grass of the epidermic fibrils, buried deep under my shameful cheeks. Remove me from my skin. Peel me like a banana"
> (*The Rowing Lesson*, 277)

"Death is fierce after all" (*RL* 279), reflects Betsy Klein, narrator of Anne Landsman's *The Rowing Lesson* (2007). Having watched her father, Harold Klein, slowly slip out of existence, Betsy's closing statement in the novel encapsulates the premise of this final chapter: understanding death, the process of mourning, and what effect loss can have on an individual. Linked with loss and mourning is Landsman's use of nostalgia as a way in which Betsy conjures up her comatose father in order to say goodbye. As the chapter will show, this process involves an intricate reworking of the connections between interior and exterior surfaces of the human body, the use of landscape that shapes an individual, and the memories that bind these structures. Refiguring medical terminology as landscape, Landsman demonstrates the way in which the human body constitutes a habitat that binds place and memory. Finally, the chapter will compare the workings of nostalgia to the processes of mourning and melancholia.

A mode of being

Published ten years after her first novel, *The Rowing Lesson* feels, says *The Mail & Guardian*'s Shaun de Waal, "like a quantum leap, a move to a new level" (n.p.). This sentiment has largely been universal, with Angelina Venezia commenting that Landsman "crafts impeccable figurative imagery", with a novel that "begs multiple readings" (n.p.), while Ángel Gurría-Quintana calls *The Rowing Lesson* "a masterclass in the examination of memory's richly layered textures" (38). Similarly, Ken Barris notes that Landsman "generates an imaginative pressure and intensity that renders immanent and vivid precisely what is about to be lost" (151), while also finding it "heartening that a novel as literary and uncompromising as *The Rowing Lesson* won both the M-Net Book Prize and Sunday Times Literary Award in 2008" (*ibid*). In addition to this, the novel was also awarded the 2009 *Sunday Times* Fiction Prize and shortlisted for the Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature (AnneLandsman.com).

Michael Gorra of *The New York Times* is among a handful of critics to point out that the novel "catches a few snags" (28), saying that "Betsy's description of what she herself has seen is less vivid than her account of what she has only imagined … Landsman seems to have had trouble bringing Betsy's narrative to a close. For where, after all, does memory stop?" (*ibid*). Despite these few reservations, Gorra still applauds the novel, noting that Landsman "risks everything in her decision to write in … the second person" (*ibid*). This stylistic feature is perhaps what has made Landsman's novel such a critical success. Harold Klein's life story is re-imagined and re-told by his daughter, Betsy, in the form of a direct address to Harold himself. The stylistic choice of perspective is directly appropriated from her own life, says Landsman, noting: "I wrote a letter to [my father] as he was dying that my brother read at his bedside and then it was read later at the funeral. Years later I realised that this was the spark of the book" (Qtd in de Waal, n.p.). The novel, then, has the form of elegy, and this is what gives the novel power. Gorra argues:

> Landsman's shifting pronouns are what gives this book its febrile and uncanny life, in which the barriers between self and other appear at moments to dissolve. Betsy's persistent invocation of "you" allows her to comment and question and judge, to conduct a conversation in which her father's physical silence matters not at all, so vocal does he seem in her mind. In that conversation, Landsman makes us see Harold Klein with a clarity she could not have achieved in a more conventional first- or third-person account. (28)

Although *The Rowing Lesson* has received favourable reviews, it has yet to garner the type of academic attention afforded to Landsman's previous novel. Frequently mentioned in academic articles, to date there has only been one notable response to the novel. This article, published by David Medalie in late 2010, reads the novel as a constructive form of nostalgia, weaving together elements of dystopia in past and present so as to critique both. What separates *The Rowing Lesson* from other novels produced along a similar vein, argues Medalie, is that it presents nostalgia "as a *process*, not simply a point of departure or an ending … nostalgia is constructed as a mode of being and thinking" (40).

The work of mourning

Having already discussed the operation of the paranoid-schizoid position in the previous chapter, the character of Betsy provides the opportunity to analyse an individual gravitating towards the depressive position of Klein's spectrum. Julia Segal argues that the advent of this

position occurs when the "baby (and later the child and adult) begins to integrate experience rather than split it," and as a result, "[a]wareness of objects as more whole, with both loved and hated characteristics begins" (41). It is during this time that the "[d]istinction between goodness and badness becomes more secure" (*ibid*). As Ronald Britton notes, the depressive position "arises inevitably and naturally in infancy as a consequence of the developing capacities of the child: to perceive, to recognise, to remember, to locate, and to anticipate experience" (38). The result of this change in perception is that it is now possible for a child to conceive of objects in a non-narcissistic dialogue. Ultimately, the child gains a "greater knowledge of the object which includes awareness of its continuity in time and space and also therefore of the other relationships of the object implied by that realisation" (Britton 39). Essentially, the child develops a growing awareness of his or her sense of self in relation to other beings. Moreover, the child begins to grow concerned for the welfare of others, as the move from paranoid-schizoid to depressive position is marked by "a shift from a preoccupation with the survival of the self to a recognition of dependence on the object and a consequent concern with the state of the object" (Steiner 46). Neither of these positions, however, represents a permanent state of being as an individual will oscillate between them, most particularly during times of great stress (Segal 33).

Within the depressive position, an individual is still prone to splitting experiences, most notably in a state within which "the object is felt to be damaged, dying, or dead" (Steiner 52). In situations such as these, Steiner notes:

> Attempts to possess and preserve the good object are part of the depressive position and lead to a renewal of splitting, this time to prevent the loss of the good object and to protect it from attacks. The aim of this phase of the depressive position is to deny the reality of the loss of the object, and this state of mind is similar to that of the bereaved person in the early stages of mourning. In mourning it appears as a normal stage which needs to be passed through before the subsequent experience of acknowledgment of the loss can take place. (52-3)

Progression through a particular depressive state is then dependent on an individual being able to accept the loss of the object, or, in other words, to mourn what has already been lost. Sam Durrant notes that "the work of mourning is ultimately a recognition of the impossibility of retrieval – and it is this impossibility that renders the work of mourning interminable" (8). Mourning according to Durrant is, therefore, a continuous "process of learning how to bury the

dead, how to attain what analysts refer to as 'symbolic closure'" (9). In defining this, Durrant cites Freud's original essay, "Mourning and Melancholia":

> which attempts to discriminate between a 'healthy' process of remembering in order to forget and an 'unhealthy' process of remembering that seems to have no end other than the perpetuation of the process of remembering itself. Freud categorises the former process as mourning, the withdrawal of libido from the love object, the gradual acceptance of loss, and the latter as melancholia, the refusal to withdraw this affection, the denial of loss. (9)

During this time, the individual's feelings towards the object become more complicated than usual. Robert Caper elucidates this tension in the relationship, suggesting that "the loss of a loved object precipitates unconscious hatred towards it, which results in an internal struggle between one's love and hatred for the object" (101). Fear of losing the object is at the crux of this self-defense mechanism which can project negative feelings onto the object, rather than deal with the imminent loss of that particular object. Caper suggests that the "pain of mourning is due to this struggle, and to the guilt and remorse that one feels as a result of hating a person that one loves" (*ibid*). Ultimately, however, in cases of "normal mourning, the strength of the mourner's love is eventually recovered … This means that he has in the end been able to retain his love for the lost object even in the face of the pain and frustration of its loss" (*ibid*).

These complicated mechanisms are crucial to my analysis of *The Rowing Lesson,* and to my understanding of how Betsy's elegy to her father unfolds. Essentially, the novel is located in the biographical mode for Landsman. Like Betsy, Landsman discovered she was pregnant within hours of hearing that her doctor father was gravely ill, and was forced to decide whether or not she would fly from New York to South Africa to be by his bedside when he died. While Betsy makes the impossible decision to return home, Landsman chose to send a letter for her brother to read to their father, believing he would have told her to "choose life" and not endanger her unborn child (Landsman, "The Moment" 170-1). The similarities are numerous, but Landsman steps from the mode of the biographical into the mode of fiction, allowing Betsy to travel far beyond the confines of pure biography, and this is ultimately where the novel finds its strength. Unlike Landsman, Betsy is free to travel back, and in travelling back to travel alongside her father, re-imagining his life, and perhaps finding the kind of closure that is hard to come by in biographical life.

Landsman says she chose to mourn the loss of her father through narrative as "it was important to find the most immediate way to bring him to life before he was completely gone, before the memories were gone … it was almost an attempt to resuscitate him in the imagination" (Qtd in de Waal, n.p.). While I prefer not to speculate specifically about an author's personal intentions and motivations, it is obvious that Betsy mirrors Landsman. Not only are they similar in the factual and physical comparisons, but more so in what their craft entails. Both are storytellers, and both are finding ways of dealing with the deaths of their respective fathers. Landsman comments:

> What added to the intensity – and difficulty – of the writing process, was that Harry was modelled on my late father, a country doctor in Worcester, and that this conversation with Harry, my fictional character, was also a conversation with my father, Gerald Landsman. ("Lonely Journey", 15)

Using Kleinian theory, this chapter entails a study of Betsy's process of mourning, and how she attempts to come to terms with her father's death. As Klein's work suggests, this process is ultimately a painful time of relinquishing control. Landsman herself seems to indicate this, saying that, through the medium of fiction, she "summoned [her father] up on the page and finally said goodbye" ("The Moment", 171).

Nostalgia and looking back

> "The ebb is an eking, a backwards yearning and you can never tell which way the river goes" (*The Rowing Lesson* 244)

From the first pages of the novel, it becomes clear that *The Rowing Lesson* is steeped in nostalgia. In the last hours of her father's life, Betsy Klein finds herself, as Medalie puts it, "enter[ing] the past in order to reconstitute the phases of his life, including those of which she had no direct experience, and which she can inhabit only through the imagination" (Medalie 40). Jacob Dlamini notes the inherent irony within the experience of nostalgia: "for all its fixation with the past, it is essentially about the present. It is about present anxieties refracted through the prism of the past" (16). While most of Betsy's narrative focuses on what has happened to her father in the past, we see in rare moments that her present anxieties are a major driving force. The occasional moments where she cannot conceive of a future without her father are seen to be almost overwhelming. This is most noticeable on one occasion where she appears to realise that her father will never meet her unborn child: "Suddenly it grips me, the

one fact I can't think about. This child of mine is a face you will never see" (*RL* 215). Dlamini would, therefore, appear to be correct when he asserts that "it is usually when people feel themselves adrift in a world seemingly out of control that they come down with nostalgia" (16).

Originally identified as a pathological illness by Swiss doctor Johannes Holfer in the seventeenth century, the term "nostalgia" was used to describe:

> an epidemic of longing among displaced Swiss students and soldiers. It shared some of the features traditionally associated with Hamlet's disease, melancholia, which however was an ailment of intellectuals, whereas nostalgia was more democratic, affecting soldiers and sailors displaced from home, and country people who had moved to the cities. (Walder "Writing", 939)

As Boym argues, however, this is frequently "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed," meaning that nostalgia is not only "a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy" (xiii).

But, as Dlamini realises, nostalgia "does not have to be a reactionary sentiment. It does not have to be a hankering after the past and a rejection of the present and future" (17). The key lies in what Svetlana Boym identifies as the difference between "restorative" and "reflective" nostalgia. "Restorative nostalgia" is that which "manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past," as opposed to "reflective nostalgia", which Boym argues "lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and time" (42). Here, restorative nostalgia can be differentiated from reflective nostalgia in the premise that the former attempts to cling to what is already lost, while the latter is able to reflect on the past with a critical eye. This distinction is similar to the contrast that Durrant makes between mourning and melancholia, these concepts being defined as "a 'healthy' process of remembering in order to forget and an 'unhealthy' process of remembering that seems to have no end other than the perpetuation of the process itself" (9). The danger of restorative nostalgia is that it "attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home … [and] protects the absolute truth", while reflective nostalgia "explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones" (Boym xviii). In this manner, restorative nostalgia can be said to instil stasis, while reflective nostalgia promotes flexibility. Furthermore, reflective nostalgia "allows us to distinguish between national memory that is based on a

single plot of national identity, and social memory, which consists of collective frameworks that mark but do not define the individual memory" (*ibid*).

I would argue that *The Rowing Lesson* exemplifies reflective nostalgia. In his analysis of the text, Medalie argues that Landsman uses "a nostalgia which links past and present and, in doing so, transforms both. There is no element of determinism in it, only the freedom conferred by reinvention and the fashioning of new, rather than received, meanings" (42). In the course of the novel, Betsy and her father change roles: parent and child, doctor and patient, storyteller and traveller. These transformations are aided by Landsman's use of nostalgia to create connections between past and present. The clearest example is the extended metaphor that the act of rowing itself provides. Landsman explains:

> When you row, you move forward by looking backwards, which describes Betsy's death-bed summation of her father's life. In order for her to move on with her life, she's looking back at his. (Qtd in Venezia, n.p.)

As Betsy's address to her father envisions: "You reach forward, into the past, then pull your arms and the boat back into the longer future, the older beaches" (*RL* 241). The meaning of this action is further expanded on when rowing becomes synonymous with breathing, and Betsy begins allowing her father to let go of his life.

The obverse of a nostalgic memory that cannot let go is the traumatic memory that will not go away. Shane Graham argues that because there is an intimate connection between "land" and the "human body," trauma frequently registers as a response to land, where it is "paradoxically both inscribed on and perceived as external to the body/land" (42). He explains that because of such externalisation, "the memories generated by the inscription are involuntary, arising in the survivor almost like a demonic possession" (*ibid*). The suggestion that watching Harold die may be traumatic for the whole Klein family is implied when Betsy remarks: "Ma's eyes are shut, her cheeks have lengthened and she has her legs spread out stick-straight in front of her. We are all dying too" (*RL* 216). As Van der Kolk & Van der Hart put it, traumatic memories are "the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences," and for these memories to be released, they "need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language" (176). Unless it is narrativised, the traumatic event is split off from an individual's psyche and persistently affects how the individual is able to function in daily life. Being unable to mourn is, therefore, something that

could create stasis in Betsy's life. Anne Whitehead argues that the very act of storytelling can be liberating, as "fiction offers the flexibility and the freedom to be able to articulate the resistance and impact of trauma" (87).

Natural passages

In writing her novel, Landsman says she wanted to "capture Harry Klein's last day as one long, protracted dying breath" (Qtd in Venezia, n.p.). This metaphor of the passage of time is carried throughout the novel from what Ken Barris calls "patterns of migration" (149), to the point where Betsy's action of rowing becomes indicative of her taking control of her father's last few breaths. Landsman comments:

> The book is really in the shape of a river … It needed to be written in that way … I guess it's part of the grieving process, which is quite an internal, ambiguous, complicated thing in and of itself. When someone passes away they don't disappear, they're not gone. My father became a collaborator. We were doing this project together. (Qtd in de Waal, n.p.)

Boym suggests that "[u]nlike melancholia, which confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups and nations, between personal and collective memory" (xvi). In the act of "collaboration", Landsman then hints at the possibility that this narrative has the ability to establish connections between individuals that can weather the passages of time, much like the river which features in the novel. Nadine Gordimer for one believes that literary culture can effect change simply through "the power of the imagination to bring the individual to re-examine his/her life, to restore the healing and humanising faculty of empathy – living beyond your own mind and flesh to identify with those of other people" (101).

Betsy's empathetic capabilities are hinted at from the first page of the novel, when she arrives by her father's bedside and begins his narrative by telling him:

> I can hear the dirty blood inside you, the way that old fish, the coelacanth, spins on its head and can hear the heartbeat of its prey. I can hear the sea sweeping up onto the beach and back out again, as you breathe, and with it comes all of your past, the good and the bad, washing up around us like empty Coke cans and bits of driftwood and dead jellyfish. (*RL* 1)

Beginning at the river mouth, Betsy finds that she can hear her father's blood pumping through his veins, and his breath leaving his lungs as if the air is the water sweeping onto the beach. Not only that, but his memories appear to wash ashore as well; only now his past is comparable to driftwood. Here Betsy also makes her first comparison between her father and the coelacanth[13], which becomes a recurring motif in the novel. Sean B. Carroll notes that the "coelacanth holds a special place in natural history. The animal is the only living link to an ancient tribe of fishes that swam the oceans 360 million years ago [and] for that, it has been dubbed a 'living fossil'" (50). Barris would agree with this historical perspective, suggesting that within the novel, the "significance of the coelacanth is not only that it is an atavism, as representative of a lost world as Harold, but that it is a fearsome atavism" (150). Harold himself appears to be a throwback at times, but Betsy is not inclined to abandon something apparently lost to the world, as demonstrated by her painting a series of extinct animals which feature "the quagga, the bandicoot, the potoroo, the Great Auk, the rat kangaroo, the gelinote and the kaka" (*RL* 29). Harold, however, writes her paintings off and asks to see her nude works. Betsy recalls: "the Great Auk looked at me with a beady eye and I wondered why I bothered with him, big lug of a bird lost more than a hundred years ago" (*ibid*). Saddened by this unsuccessful visit, Betsy may realise later why she "bothered" with her paintings of creatures long since extinct.

Furthermore, the connection between Harold and the coelacanth serves to illustrate distance between father and daughter – something which is also mirrored topographically. Barris notes that the novel "encodes a polarisation of time as well as space, in that Betsy's present is an urban/e American one … while her father's past, and by extension her own, is provincial and South African" (149-50). This diasporic element of the novel only serves to highlight Boym's assertion that nostalgia is "a symptom of our age" (xvi) and "a feature of global culture" (xvii). Betsy's return in the novel is, therefore, two-fold: she returns not only to her father, but to the country of her birth. As Boym is careful to mention though, "[h]omecoming does not signify a recovery of identity; it does not end the journey in the virtual space of imagination. A modern nostalgiac can be homesick and be sick of home, at once" (50).

[13] First discovered in East London by Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer in December 1938, the coelacanth mentioned in *The Rowing Lesson* was identified by J.L.B. Smith as "a member of a group of fishes with paired fins thought to be closely related to the first four-legged vertebrates. Palaeontologists thought the fish had been extinct for more than 65 million years" (Carroll 50). This discovery promised to establish "links to former, now vanished ways of life. When geneticists realized that certain non-coding DNA sequences had at one time been functional genes, they knew that they had discovered a valuable new window on the past" (Carroll 51).

This tension is clearly present in Betsy, who harbours some trepidation at being surrounded by her family. At the hospital, she tells her father that she senses "all [his] thoughts and [his] stories and [his] bad moods swirling around the room" (*RL* 128). Only later in the narrative does Harold's past mirror Betsy's present when he hears news of his father's death. Like his daughter, Harold must make the journey home for the funeral. While Betsy flies from New York, Harold returns from Cape Town to George via car. These pilgrimages would suggest that the process of travel itself plays an overarching role in the novel. Landsman notes that "Four trips up and down the same river capture Harry Klein's life at these different moments. The river stays the same, but the man changes" (Qtd in Venezia, n.p.). The process of returning then appears to be a means of showing the changes that occur over time; the very impulse of nostalgia is called into action here, as an individual may begin to long to return to a place when the true desire is a return to a specific time. "Time, unlike space," elucidates Linda Hutcheon, "cannot be returned to – ever; time is irreversible. And nostalgia becomes the reaction to that sad fact … Nostalgia, in fact, may depend precisely on the *irrecoverable* nature of the past for its emotional impact and appeal" ("Irony, Nostalgia", n.p.).

Body, memory and landscape

> "The human body is radically open to its surroundings and can be composed, recomposed and decomposed by other bodies" (Moira Gatens 110)

While nostalgia may reach after memories long gone, there is a tangible connection: the human body. Elizabeth Grosz suggests that "the body is conceived as a fundamentally historical and political object; indeed, for many it is the central object through which relations of power and resistance are played out" (81). In *The Rowing Lesson*, however, we see the body as a distinctly personal object. Betsy literally reconfigures her father's body, allowing it to merge and form intimate connections with the land, mirroring the type of intimate connections Harold had already established between memory and land. Bronwyn Davies suggests that novelists may play a key role in highlighting these connections:

> writers open possible landscapes in which bodies might be released from old folds in which they have been caught; folds, for example, in which they could not see or feel their coextension with the landscapes in which they found themselves. (16)

Reliving her father's life may, then, be seen as Betsy's attempt at re-establishing these connections for her father, as well as providing some type of cleansing experience, as if she were releasing him from the "old folds" mentioned by Davies. The descriptions would furthermore appear to correlate with Lacan's notion of the "imaginary anatomy", defined by Grosz:

> a psychical map or *image* of the body which is internalised by the subject and lived as real. It is a specular and psychical construct, a representation of the subject's lived experiences of its bodily parts and organs […] it is a fantasized image, the complex result of the subject's internalisation of its specular image and its acceptance of everyday social and familial beliefs about the body's organic structure – a product, that is, of cultural and libidinal investments in the body. (84)

This "imaginary anatomy" is the virtual map Betsy creates of her father's body, in order to navigate her narrative journey. While Lacan's theory pertains to an individual's lived experience of their own body, Landsman uses a similar technique to allow her narrator to project an imagined experience of both Harold's physical condition, and his imagined life story. This is in keeping with Merleau-Ponty's argument that sight should not be considered our primary means of association between body and world. Rather, the physical sense of touch denotes a closer connection between body and body, and body and world, the pure corporeality being able to generate conversation between the exterior and interior of the body (Punday 76). In this way, Harold's body is deployed to access what would otherwise remain inaccessible landscapes. At one point, Betsy says:

> We're back in the sea of bad blood and I wish I had a net, a fish net or any kind of net to clean up the mess, to strain the poison out, to fix you up. The great saphenous vein, the inferior vena cava … all your roads are buggered up. I make a left, taking the carotid artery, and now we're driving a car together, the new turquoise and white Vauxhall you bought from Frank de Vos when you turned forty. (*RL* 47)

Having already established her father's blood as "dirty", Betsy finds herself swimming amongst the forgotten items, wishing she could she could remove them and "fix" her father. Almost immediately, however, she finds herself journeying through Harold's body; his veins and arteries are compared to roads, and sure enough, after making this comparison, Betsy finds herself travelling in the family car. This happens several times in the novel, with Betsy accompanying Harold on all the major trips he made during his life, only now it would

appear that these experiences are almost etched onto Harold's anatomy. As Harold leaves for medical school, Betsy tells her father: "I can't help going with you … We're all crammed into [the car] and we just travelled along the hepatic flexure, the beginning of the transverse colon. Whoopsa-daisy, there's the sharp downturn, the splenic flexure" (*RL* 84). Here, every bend of the road travelled is represented as a part of Harold himself.

Having a doctor for a father, it seems plausible that both Betsy and Landsman are as familiar with the human body as they are with a road map, but the connections appear to go much further. Migration plays a key role in the novel, and Betsy's movements around her father's body seem to be as fluid and natural as her memories of the area where she grew up. Even the smallest exterior surface of Harold's comatose form evokes some response and can somehow remind his daughter of a place they both visited. For instance, Betsy tell her father, "I'm standing at the foot of your bed again, staring at the cliff of your nose, the folded swallow's wings of your black and silver hair. We're on the beach at Lentjiesklip and you're showing me a bluebottle lying dead on the sand" (*RL* 83-4).

Witnessing how malleable Betsy finds her father's life to be, we can understand Davies's intention when she argues that bodies and landscapes "are not impervious to language and are shaped through our acts of reading and writing them" (16). Harold's body, then, is shaped into something far more substantial than flesh, something that both Betsy and the reader must confront. Punday believes that "narratology has failed to theorize moments when character corporeality will exceed individual bodies and provide a general hermeneutic atmosphere for the reader's contact with the narrative" (77). Harold's body, one could argue, becomes a living text, one of far greater literary worth than simply the character of Harold himself. Naturally, if language renders bodies as living texts, then by extension, these "texts are volatile, liable to change and movement, capable of action, capable of rupture and disruption" (Davies 16). The reader witnesses these changes in Harold as he moves closer to death, and his body begins to seemingly merge with the landscape, his biological functions appearing to actually be replaced with natural elements:

> This sea is the breath in your body, the tide going in as you breathe in, the tide going out as you exhale. Now and forever. You are bound here, caught in this crook of land. The river runs straight into your heart, the vena cava bringing blood without oxygen, to be renewed and restored, renewed and

> restored.
> (*RL* 73)

The sea from the river mouth replacing his breath, and the river itself running directly into Harold's heart speak to the place that seems to have a preternatural connection with him from the first to the last page of the novel: Ebb 'n Flow. Harold's journey in the novel both begins and ends at his favourite section of the river, the suitably named Ebb 'n Flow.

With four different journeys up and down the river, the novel questions the relationship that Harold establishes with the water. Davies argues that even before we are born, we develop intricate connections with our surroundings:

> The first landscape we encounter, as animals born as sentient beings, is the internal landscape of our mother's body folded around us … The body is not separate from landscape, in this example, but is itself, in the case of the mother, a landscape with/in which another being dwells … This original body/landscape relation is ideal … in troubling the easy assumptions of separation and easy distinctions between where bodies begin and end and where landscapes take up. Bodies and landscapes might be said to live in such complex patterns of interdependence that landscape should be understood as much more than a mere context in which embodied beings live out their lives. (32)

This understanding that body and landscape begin existing in symbiosis is the basis for my argument that human relationships are created via a dialectic, whether it be between two people or a person and his or her connection to the land. While Davies makes it clear such a bond first begins in the womb, Landsman's novel is both about a relationship with the land, and especially with the father, who introduces one to the landscape that father and daughter share.

The central plot of the novel revolves around Betsy and the imminent loss of her father, but one of the most poignant moments is when she recalls the day he taught her to row. Of that day, she says: "You look at me and I stare back at you. I have black eyes too, black hair and a long nose that won't be as long as yours, thank God" (*RL* 75). Followed by: "There's nothing in the world like looking at the face of your own child but you can't tell me that" (*RL* 76). Seeing the physical similarity his daughter bears to him, evokes an emotion so deep that Harold cannot articulate it. Despite this, Betsy seems to recognise the feeling years later, commenting: "Nothing happened but you know this rainy afternoon will paste itself into your

life as a special day, the day you taught me how to row and you and I got stuck in the boat in the rain” (*RL* 79-80). This particular moment exemplifies the manner in which Betsy finds that she cannot separate her memories from her father from either the physical connection they share, or from the landscape that binds them.

Even Harold losing his own father draws striking parallels to the central narrative. Of that memory, Betsy says: “You’ve lost a leg or an arm, a big chunk of Harold has just gone down the drain … Dad’s Dead. It sits on top of you all the way to George in the car” (*RL* 144). The death of his father also prompts a visceral response from Harold, with him feeling the loss so literally that he believes part of his own body to be gone. Furthermore, like Betsy, he must make the pilgrimage back home and attempt to renegotiate a world in which his father is no longer alive. Fittingly, on this journey, Harold passes the train carrying the newly discovered coelacanth to Cape Town, a symbol of how displaced he feels at that moment. The death of Joseph Klein at forty-seven forces Harold to confront his mortality in a way that the medical school cadavers never have.

Mortality and abjection

Throughout the novel, Betsy, Harold and the reader undergo numerous encounters with the abject, that which can only be defined as “unacceptable, unclean or anti-social” (Grosz 86), and is often represented as corporeal waste, or that which must be expelled. From Betsy’s desire to purify her father’s “dirty blood” to Harold’s long remembered encounter with Gertrude’s menstrual blood staining her skirt, these experiences serve to establish means of navigating the symbolic order. As Grosz notes:

> Kristeva explores the ways in which the inside and the outside of the body, the spaces between the subject and the object, and the self and the other become structured and made meaningful through the child’s taking up a position in the symbolic order. These pairs need to be oppositionally coded in order for the child’s body to be constituted as a unified whole and for its subjectivity to be definitively tied to the body’s forms and limits. They are the conditions under which the child may claim the body as its own, and thus also the conditions under which it gains a place as a speaking being and point of enunciation. (86)

Having already discussed the ways in which Harold’s body functions as a liminal space in which Betsy unites memory and landscape, we can understand the importance of the process

of abjection. Studying her father's body, Betsy finds a corporeal threshold that delineates what lies within and what lies outside of the body, something crucial to her subjectivity. If the abject is what the subject requires expelled in order to maintain a position within the symbolic, then Betsy could be said to establish a negative dialectic with her father's body. According to Brian O'Connor, it is through the negative dialectic that "we are offered ways by which, for instance, we might question 'the given' or recognise distortions of experience" (ix). Building on Theodor Adorno's seminal work *Negative Dialectics* (1966), O'Connor argues that "experience is the process in which ideally, that is, in its fullest possibility, one (a subject) is affected and somehow changed by confrontation with some aspect of objective reality (an object)" (2). Following this line of reasoning, O'Connor sees experience to possess "a structure of reciprocity and transformation" (3).

For such reciprocity to be possible there needs to be interaction and transformation. Although not a commonly drawn connection, abjection functions on similar principles. In both cases, the subject engages in a confrontation with the object, leaving one or both in an altered state. In a pattern that repeats or parallels the processes of splitting and projective identification, abjection, according to Gail Weiss, involves "[e]xpelling (parts of myself) to establish myself as a member of the Symbolic order, [creating] corporeal boundaries between myself and what is not myself, and, in doing so, actively constitut[ing] myself as an idiosyncratic entity" (44).

What is most threatening to this self-affirming act, however, is the very form of corporeal waste which disavows life itself: the dead human body. As Kristeva argues:

> The corpse (or cadaver: *cadere*, to fall), that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance. A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not signify death. In the presence of signified death—a flat encephalograph, for instance—I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver. If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. (*Powers of Horror*, 3)

In the same way that Joseph Klein's death forced Harold to confront his mortality, Betsy finds her father's body doing that and more. Literally witnessing the breath slowly leaving him, she needs to place her living body in direct relation to a man who is neither quite alive nor dead. In this case, as the active subject, Betsy needs to interact with the abject object, which is not just a corpse, but what will soon be the corpse of her own father. Kristeva suggests that the corpse "is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life … It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (*Powers,* 4). Betsy, however, finds herself directly engaging with her father's body, establishing herself in relation to him, creating the type of dialectic which does leave her transformed by the experience.

Furthermore, Grosz notes that that the corpse "signifies the supervalence of the body, the body's recalcitrance to consciousness, reason or will. It poses the danger to the ego in so far as it questions its stability and its tangible grasp on and control over itself" (92). It is fitting then that Betsy is utterly absorbed in her narrative, nearly to her own detriment: she refuses to leave the hospital and practically neglects to eat. At one point, she comments: "I'm hanging onto your every breath, the faint whistle as the air escapes from your lips. The pause, where time stops, and so do you, and then the next inhalation and the merry-go-round spins around and around, and I'm flying backwards with you, leaving Ma and her newspaper and the screens and machines behind" (*RL* 109).

In his discussion of the depressive position, Steiner notes that "[e]very interest is abandoned by the mourner except that connected with the lost person, and this total preoccupation is designed to deny the separation and to ensure the fate of the subject and the object is inextricably linked" (54). What Boym suggests, however, is that "[n]ostalgia charts space on time and time on space and hinders the distinction between subject and object" (xviii), implying that Betsy's narrative may at times consume her, conflating and confusing the identity between father and daughter. The nostalgic impulse, nonetheless, is indicative of the nature of abjection, which "testifies to the precarious grasp of the subject on its own identity, an assertion that the subject may slide back into the impure chaos out of which it was formed … an avowal of the death drive, a movement of undoing identity" (Grosz 90). As Ken Barris's review notes, "[i]n the objective present, characterised by a conventional first person

narrative, Betsy is contained, and the boundary between her own body and the world is tightly maintained. It is a fitting part of this dualized symbolic structure that she consistently rejects her mother's attempts to get her to eat, refusing foods that she finds distasteful, and symbolically rejecting messes of the past" (151).

Within this notion of troubled symbolic status, there is still, however, the prospect of meaningful dialogue. Earlier chapters of this thesis make reference to Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of dialogism, something which influenced Kristeva's own understanding of discourse and subjectivity. In "Word, Dialogue and Novel", Kristeva writes that Bakhtin "does not see dialogue only as a language assumed by a subject; he sees it, rather, as a *writing* where one reads the *other* … Bakhtinian dialogism identifies writing as both subjectivity and communication" (39). Ann Jefferson notes that, according to Bakhtin, "[s]elf is placed in relation to Other via the body because the body is not a self-sufficient entity … Without the Other the body has neither shape nor form because the self has no direct or coherent access to it" (154). For his part, Bakhtin believed that:

> Linguistics studies 'language' and its specific logic in its *commonality* ('*obschnost*') as that factor which makes dialogical intercourse *possible*, but it consistently refrains from studying those dialogical relationships themselves … Dialogical relationships are not reducible to logical or concrete semantic relationships, which are in and of *themselves* devoid of any dialogical aspect … Dialogical relationships are totally impossible without logical and concrete semantic relationships, but they are reducible to them; yet they have their own specificity. (*Problems,* 151-2)

The interaction between Betsy and her father, and between Betsy and her father's body, serves to establish a dialogical relationship; the former restoring communication between Betsy and a historically-distanced other, while the latter develops a negative dialectic in which Betsy may mould a future identity based on that which she is not. Ultimately, this experience is transformative, as any interaction between subject and object should be, but it is Betsy's ability to establish a dialogue with her father that transcends the liminality of the abject which makes this encounter so unique. While the prospect of physical proximity to her father's dying body should repel Betsy, the corpse being that which Kristeva considers most abject, she is still able to establish her communality with her father, making for a truly dialogical relationship that is not restrained by time, narrative or death.

Rowing Lessons

I have already commented that Landsman referred to her novel-writing process as an act of "collaboration" between herself and her late father. Within the novel, one scene in particular epitomises the act of transgenerational dialogue: the lesson which gives the novel its title. Not only is the river itself an important motif in the novel, the act of rowing also serves as an over-arching structural device, adding to what de Waal calls the "tidal feel" of the novel (n.p.). An early episode sees Harold teach his young daughter how to row by herself, and later the roles are reversed as she makes rowing synonymous with his last breaths.

Initially Betsy has to beg her father to teach her to row, and he finally yields. Remembering that day, she says:

> I sit on the seat next to you, and you put my hand on the left oar and cover your hand with it. I can't see my own fingers. We dip the left oar in the water together. At first, it skitters in and out of the water, bouncing unevenly … I feel your warm, dry hand tightening on mine, my fingers slowly going numb. Your mouth tightens too, as if I should know how to do this already. But your movements are slow and steady, and I try as hard as I can to follow them, bracing my feet against the wooden bar set up on the seat in front of us. Hold water! you shout, when a speedboat comes to us … Back pedal, back pedal, you hiss when we start drifting towards the reeds. All the time, your hand stays clamped on mine, small and square, the skin a reddish-brown, hairs crisscrossing the knuckles. I can smell the scent of Prell in your hair, the sweat dampening your armpits, mixed with the whiff of petrol coming from the orange fuel tank on the floor of the boat. (*RL* 74)

Despite it being years later, Betsy can recall precisely the shape her father's mouth made, as well as the scent in his hair. The encounter provides a perfect metaphor for the lessons children need learn in order to enter into the symbolic order, or to truly become subjects themselves. As Landsman intuits: "Coming to terms with one's own identity involves knowing who your parents are, and were" (Qtd in Venezia, n.p.). Here, we also have Betsy still emulating her father, following his instructions, and attempting to mirror his actions. Harold, for his part, has his hand clenched tightly over his daughter's, reluctant to let her grow up and take control of her own life. After some time, Betsy comments, "Finally, you let go of my hand, and I start rowing by myself, just with the left oar. You have the right one, and every time we dip the oars into the river, you say, Catch, and then Pull, Catch and Pull,

Catch and Pull" (*RL* 75). Seeing his daughter rowing by herself is bitter-sweet for Harold, who realises that his little girl is becoming "her own little animal" (*RL* 79).

In the final chapter of the novel, the act of rowing returns, but this time Landsman reverses the parent-child roles, making it clear that Harold is about to die and has become entirely reliant on his daughter. For Betsy, these last few moments appear harrowing, particularly as the hospital's machines take on a life of their own:

> The sphygmomanometer is whispering secrets to the ECG machine, and the ECG machine is spitting out swear words on paper in between globs of black ink. The IV stand and its hanging plastic bag jiggle in time to the sighing of your blood pressure cuff and the catheter is the biggest moany-groany of the lot, saying over and over again, you left me high and dry, *boetie*. You gave up the ghost … You've finally had enough. (*RL* 262)

She knows that her father, being a country doctor, hated hospitals, and watching the machines come alive, conspiring against Harold only confirms something for her: "You've finally had enough" (*RL* 262). He is barely breathing and the mechanical noises obscure what life he has left, and somehow make Harold appear even more lifeless. Betsy, however, will not be content to allow her father to die in a moment like this. Her entire narrative seeks to circumvent, even as it comes to terms with, the finality of death. As Medalie argues:

> Harold, whose life [and career as a doctor], has been dedicated to healing the body and preserving life, sees death as a form of defeat … But the novel as a whole is not content to accept this view. Confronted with the dying body of Harold, it makes a concerted effort, even while acknowledging the stubborn corporeality of bodies, to finds ways in which they may be permeated by the alternative logic of metaphor and, in so doing, in becoming a different mode of existence, survive their own extinction. (41)

Having created a powerful narrative voice, able to transcend the temporalities of time and space, collapse and expand chronologies, and even penetrate the thought processes and memories of her comatose father, Betsy's storytelling enters a magical realist dimension. Here, she dismisses the noisy machinery, conjuring up a blizzard of abjection, and watches as Harold disappears "in the eye of the storm," only to re-emerge when "a deep quiet flows into the room" (*RL* 263).

Landsman's use of magical realism affords the narrative opportunities that are not confined by the usual temporal strictures one might expect. Despite being confined by his infirm body, Harold would want nothing more than to return to the river. For this reason, Betsy tells her father, "Your pillows are filling up then emptying out, like giant white bladders. Your sheets are shifting and flapping, sails on a boat that's coming around. I can hardly see in the blizzard of spit and piss that's flying around the room" (*RL* 263). Moving beyond the fixed locale of the hospital room, Betsy joins Harold on his final journey up the river; a journey which strings together various temporalities and points of historical reference. Medalie remarks:

> These concluding pages present us with a range of imaginative collisions: between Betsy Klein's life and that of her father, between past and present, between possibility and impossibility, between exhilaration and sorrow, between utopia and dystopia […] And it depicts, crescendo-like, a reunion which cannot occur literally, but which a supreme effort of imagination brings to life, thereby making the impossible possible, and the Ebb 'n Flow a place of endless possibility. (42)

Medalie succinctly captures the essence of both the rowing metaphor and the journey that encapsulates the entirety of the novel. In weaving together the elements that defined her and her father's life, as incongruous as they may seem, Betsy establishes the type of reflective nostalgia which enables her to mourn her loss. Moreover, she takes what she has learnt from her father, and "in that moment of transfer she is no longer the initiate, being taught how to row, but the one in control, who has … become the custodian of the lives of the dead" (Medalie 42).

As this "custodian" of memory, Betsy navigates the last stage of Harold's journey for him, telling him, "You've got to keep breathing. Downstroke, upstroke, downstroke, rounded wave. You can't stop at the top. Downstroke, backpedal … Upstroke! Upstroke! We've got to finish before the sun comes up" (*RL* 277-8). Furthermore, as suggested by Medalie, Betsy refuses to allow Harold to view his death as a defeat. Collapsing the roles of father-daughter, doctor-patient and teacher-student, she declares:

> I am your very last patient … You said you wanted to die in the middle of seeing a patient … Cut me with this stone, and we can both rest. Look, I've got your hand in mine. I'm doing all the work for you. There's blood all over us, all over the white sheets, all over your rocky face. (*RL* 278)

In this imaginative dimension, Betsy is able to give her father the death that she knows he wanted. Allowing the narrative to move towards this closure also means that eventually they "can both rest". Furthermore, "since he's been reduced to a body in a bed in the ICU, it's her way of giving him a 'good death', by giving him his identity back" (Landsman qtd in Venezia, n.p.). Several times in the novel, Betsy recalls that her father wished to take his last breath in the middle of tending to a patient, and with the use of this makeshift scalpel, she is determined to see this last wish fulfilled.

Acknowledging the end, Betsy does not shy away from the abject, as she takes her father's hand in hers in order to cut her body open, simultaneously mirroring and contrasting the nurturing moment of Harold holding Betsy's hand over the oar. The description that follows is reminiscent of many earlier passages:

> I'm basting you with my liquor sanguinis, colouring you with my heart. There are red tears streaming down your cheeks. I can't stop now. I'm wading in the river, pulling the broken boat up through the carotid artery and it's choked with paper and wine bottles, all the mess that's collected in every corner of your body. The only way to keep moving is to cut through the undergrowth, to let all the solids flow. There. It wasn't so hard to find the right place, the only way through. Now you're anointing me with your history, the fountain of old salts, metals, nitrogenous extracts. All the old doctors are riding waves, Hippocrates, Galen and even an old witch doctor in Zimbabwe. (278)

Still using medical terminology, Betsy navigates Harold's body the same way she would travel the river, only now it becomes clear how explicitly intertwined their lives are. While Betsy admits to "colouring [Harold] with [her] heart", both literally and figuratively, she also acknowledges that her father is "anointing [her] with [his] history". In this manner, she accepts "the mess that's collected in every corner of [his] body", the history that we all inherit from our parents. This strangely visceral encounter could be explained by Kristeva's argument that "[a]bjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectial relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (*Powers* 10). Betsy fittingly finds herself conflating the roles she and Harold have played in each other's lives, using the abject as a means to collapse the boundaries between liminal zones.

In conclusion, these final moments truly capture the affective quality of Landsman's elegiac prose. While Betsy transcends the apparent melancholia which has preoccupied her narrative, she still demonstrates narrative's power to circumvent the finality of death. Allowing Harold's body to constitute a habitat for the intermingling of place and memory, Betsy reworks the interior and exterior surfaces of the human form in a manner that suggests that nostalgia is capable of being a mode of being and thinking, while still acknowledging Durrant's conception of mourning as the "impossibility of retrieval" (8). This is ultimately a movement completely towards Klein's depressive position, as Betsy relinquishes control over her father as object and is willing to say goodbye.

In the very final paragraph, Betsy's blood mingles with her fathers, and she declares:

> I'm soaking your pillow and you're spraying my face, my hair, my breasts. Death is fierce after all. It's not a muddy river but a volcano. You're not sinking anymore. You're blowing your stack. We're walking up the old road together, and the sunlight is divine. (*RL* 279)

After all the days of watching her father in the hospital bed, this moment allows Betsy to decide that "[d]eath is fierce after all", and that Harold's life amounts to more than a few quiet moments as he passes away.

For the reader, however, the experience of reading a novel like *The Rowing Lesson* might provide the basis for a process of self-reading. Just as Betsy is able to construct a narrative which melds elements of the real with parts that are clearly allegorical, the reader can recreate such experiences in his or her own life, or at least is as much involved in the sculpting of Harold's body as Betsy is. The entire narrative hinges on an imaginative reconstruction of a reunion which can never literally happen, but it is through the process of both reading and writing that the figure of Harold is summoned on the page. While I have discussed why Landsman has personal reasons for writing this novel, one thing that becomes clear in retrospect is that Harold will exist in some form or another with each subsequent reading.

Ultimately, this type of novel does offer some type of therapeutic effect. While a typical trauma narrative may involve resolving a particular incident, a novel such as *The Rowing Lesson* shows that its greatest value is in learning how to let go of incidents that one may, in fact, find traumatising. If a reader is to experience change, the faculty of empathy is

necessary, and Landsman demonstrates how effective a tool nostalgia is in stimulating such a response. The possibility for imaginative identification is shown in Betsy, who completely disentangles her physical body from her experiencing self and journeys across the country, using her father's sense of body and memory as a guide, before returning to a position of complete empathetic identification. In the end, the reading process works as an emotionally replenishing tool. Much like Harold's breath, the empathy gained through imaginative identification can serve a r estorative or even reflective process for the reader. As Betsy describes it:

> This sea is the breath in your body, the tide going in as you breathe in, the tide going out as you exhale. Now and forever. You are bound here, caught in this crook of land. The river runs straight into your heart, the vena cava bringing blood without oxygen, to be renewed and restored, renewed and restored. (*RL* 73)

Conclusion

At the outset of this thesis, I began by positing the TRC as an impetus for emerging literary voices, as well as asking how this may have influenced conceptions of the commonly referred to "new" South African identity. But, after eighteen years of democracy, such a term has become both outdated, and rather problematic with its suggestion that time-periods are apparently easily divisible. When this category is applied, South Africa is only allowed two relatively innocuous sounding states of being: the old and the new. An individual's conception of time, however, is not as easily separated into this type of official, demarcated chronology. In other words, the way in which an individual recalls the past cannot be expected to conform to a binary of experience. The history of South Africa has been permeated by the ubiquitous experience of loss, and these dispossessing memories are present either side of this "new" divide. Moreover, as I have argued, experiences of loss can, upon closer inspection, be refracted into either traumatic memory or nostalgic longing.

It is within this political and social climate of multiple unresolved forms of loss that I argue that the process of writing offers a therapeutic function. The TRC itself, after all, was a form of storytelling which hoped to achieve such an aim. Within literature, however, an individual reader is able to consider what makes one novel more efficacious than another. Often the answer lies in the novel's narrative aesthetic quality, or its ability to convey experience truthfully. A feeling of truthfulness within a story is that quality which could make a personal tale resonate with a wider audience, but when the wider socio-political context involves the TRC, any definition of truth must also have moral and legal connotations. Of course, the very conception of truth is something purposefully questioned by my selection of novels, each of which features a narrator who is not entirely reliable.

Certainly, with the three novels discussed, this poses problems in our final interpretation. In *The Devil's Chimney*, the narrator spends nearly the entire novel in an alcoholic stupor, weaving her own life's story with that of another woman who may never have even existed. Then, despite following prompts from the TRC to tell the truth, Connie's sister, Gerda, receives no form of amnesty. Even when Connie recognises that she herself has also been a perpetrator of pain, no effort is made to reconcile with her sister. On the other hand, amnesty

is an issue never tackled in *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*. When Faith finally remembers that she is responsible for Nomsa's death, the guilt she experiences seems to have very little to do with Nomsa or the fact that her mother was incarcerated in her place. Oom Piet, the rapist, also never faces any consequences during the course of the novel. Both of these novels certainly call into question the very possibility of any kind of efficacy in reconciliation. Only *The Rowing Lesson* offers a clear chance for father and daughter to reconcile, even if the reader is fully aware that the entire encounter does not occur on a literal level. Here, narrative is the only means through which Betsy can make contact with her comatose father, demonstrating that telling stories can alter previously established chronologies, and in some cases, prove to be therapeutic, due to the ability of storytelling to circumvent experiences which could otherwise have a far more devastating effect on the individual.

Furthermore, the very process of storytelling is used to displace concerns about authorial influence restricting meaning to a unitary value, by evoking an active response from the reader, who is willed to participate in making his or her own connections between events in the novels. Landsman in particular blurs the lines between author and narrator, allowing her novels various voices through which meaning can be interpreted. While Landsman is the author of *The Devil's Chimney*, it is Connie who is narrating the story of Miss Beatrice, a woman who may, in fact, be the fictional creation of a delusional alcoholic. In establishing a parallel narrative, the two fictional women are frequently able to interact with one another, reinforcing the manner in which author, character and reader are roles which encourage dialogue, and are, at times, even conflated.

In *The Rowing Lesson*, Landsman's Betsy leads such a strikingly similar life to the author that it becomes difficult to separate which experiences are biographically true, and which are fictional invention. Of course, whether or not the reader is aware that the death of Landsman's own father sparked the writing of the novel is not important. What does resonate with the reader, though, is the veracity of the prose, something which the magical realist elements in fact enhance, allowing the human interactions in the novel to appear even more truthful. Even Zadok's construction of the fairy world in *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* serves to alter Faith's reality so drastically that, at times, the fairies appear to be influencing Faith's actions. Within Faith's story, there is an implied conversation between narrator and reader, and often what she tells the reader hints that the narrative encapsulates parts of the story that

Faith herself cannot tell. In this manner, narrative technique itself has become a highly effective medium for capturing the overwhelming effects of trauma.

Frequently, these effects also make themselves known in the novels through means of physical representation across the landscape. *Devil's Chimney* demonstrates trauma's prevalence as a wound through which consciousness can make itself known. The trope of caves, for instance, is used to visualise the repression experienced by the characters. Faith's return to the farm in *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* registers her trauma as part of her split psyche, and also shows how her sense of unbelonging is experienced both physically and politically, as the farm to which she returns has become the home of the caretaker, Petrus, who greets Faith with hostility and mistrust. *Rowing Lesson* also features a returning daughter, but, for Betsy, the landscape which she encounters is not immediately accessible. Rather, she needs to use her father's body as a corporeal mapping of the land, demonstrating that memory, body and landscape cannot be separated in the mind of the nostalgiac.

Looking at these inextricable tropes, this thesis has begun to make some speculative commentary with regard to the direction in which South African literature is heading. During the time of writing, the term "post-transitional" has gained immense popularity.[14] While the literature that emerged after the end of apartheid has been viewed as that of a period of transition, it becomes clear that newer novels are looking beyond this time. When Samuelson notes that "literatures of the transition were largely invested and implicated in national, often nation-building, processes which found their symbolic and moral centre in the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission" ("Scripting Connections", 113), it becomes clear that literary concerns are shifting with the times. When examining a novel such as *Devil's Chimney*, the impact of the TRC is still evident in Landsman's thematic concerns, but ten years later, her second novel is radically different and even encompasses a transatlantic migration.

Samuelson would suggest that attempts at deriving a national narrative have not been abandoned, but have rather been extended to include South African literature within the transnational. Using *The Rowing Lesson* as an example, Samuelson notes that such a novel:

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[14] See Chapman (2009), Flockemann (2010), Frenkel & MacKenzie (2010), Medalie (2010), Narunsky-Laden (2010), Samuelson (2010), Thurman (2010).

> is fundamentally shaped by its production of a narrative temporality able [to] draw together past, present and future. This is not the Janus-faced temporality of the transition … one whose fluidity is conveyed in Landsman's leitmotif of the river. What is emphasised, then, is the scripting of temporal connection, rather than a sense of temporal discontinuity. ("Scripting Connections", 114)

Leon de Kock agrees, naming *The Rowing Lesson* one of the two best novels of 2008 written by South African citizens, and comments that what makes Landsman's work gesture towards the future is "precisely the transnational cusp and the way this bi- or multi-directional conjunction plays out" ("Judging", 31). For Samuelson and De Kock, then, a newer South African literature might be the type that examines national issues by interpreting them through a transnational lens, or by highlighting South Africa within a larger literary world and not just as a country with purely self-contained concerns.

Ronit Frenkel and Craig MacKenzie concur with this redirection in literary energy, noting that the texts of the transition were highly invested in excavating the old stories, previously considered lost to South Africa (2). They regard post-transitional literature to be "newly invigorated, with a different relationship to the past, not cowed by tradition and what in the apartheid era drew respect (moral earnestness, political correctness and ethical high-mindedness), and willing to take risks (both ethically and formally)" (Frenkel and MacKenzie 4). If we consider *Devil's Chimney* with regards to the aforementioned criteria, it is the novel most clearly aligned to the conception of a transitional text. From the TRC influences to excavating the true stories of Connie, Miss Beatrice and Nomsa, the novel is invested in smaller, personal questions that relate specifically to a larger, national identity and its continued development. Landsman's later novel, however, is frequently lauded as a defining text of the post-transitional era.[15] Landsman takes risks by writing in the second-person, discovering a way of collapsing temporalities in order to communicate with her father, while simultaneously connecting past and present, and her pregnancy and husband gesture toward the future she will have in New York. In this manner, the novel also situates Betsy within a global perspective, while allowing her to reflect on the importance of maintaining connections with her loved ones and her home country.

[15] For further commentary on *The Rowing Lesson* as a post-transitional text, see De Kock ("Judging", 31), Frenkel and MacKenzie (8), Medalie (43), Samuelson ("Reflections", 114)

Gem Squash Tokoloshe, on the other hand, demonstrates that a change in terminology is in no way meant to establish a genre of novel that subsumes previously popularised motifs. Certain aspects of Zadok's narrative recall many novels of the 1990s: the particular use of farmland, the trope of disremembered childhood, the unearthing of silenced voices, and particularly Faith's struggles with racial perceptions. Of course, there are times when Zadok appears to be moving toward some other goals, as noted by De Kock, who includes her on his list of "newer SA writers" (25, "Judging). De Kock's listing her as such suggests that part of an explanation for a shift in focus is the age of the author, mostly because:

> For the newer generation of South Africans born in the 1980s, of those born in the 1990s, 'apartheid' would increasingly now become a refrain in the mouths of their parents and the pages of their school history books. Into the 2000s, writers were emerging who had little recall of formal apartheid as a lived experience. (De Kock, "Judging", 30)

For a writer like Zadok, and for many writing in the post-transitional moment, apartheid itself has become less and less of a focus. Even in her novel, Zadok's protagonist is only dimly aware of most of the racial implications, and never even uses the word "apartheid" despite the novel beginning in 1985. The second half of the novel is set in 2000, and Faith's daily interactions with people in Johannesburg reflect little of apartheid as a lived experience. Instead, Flockemann argues that the novel of the post-transitional might be plagued by dissonance and disjuncture, and focuses "on the little perpetrator, witness-bearing and intertextual play ("Little Perpetrators", 22). These comments, of course, are easily applied to Zadok's novel. Faith experiences extreme disjuncture in her life, between psychological splitting and being uprooted from her home, while most of the novel revolves around her accidental murdering of Nomsa when Faith was a child. It is only in the final moments of the novel, which encompass the necessity of a witness or a sense of community for any healing, that Faith finds closure.

Naturally, when academics begin applying terms like post-transitional or post-apartheid to a novel, many authors are reluctant to have their work narrowly defined by terminology. In one example, writer Ivan Vladislavić commented:

> Am I a post-apartheid writer? I might be in the sense that I write after apartheid, or the beginnings of the end of it, but I'm not a post-apartheid person – not in terms of my history. I think that's a false division anyway.

> It's part of an effort to establish frameworks for understanding things … But history doesn't work like that; no matter how spectacular the transitions and changes are, it doesn't fall into neat compartments and chapters. And certainly, in one's lived experience, it's a much greyer, more muddled process. (Qtd in Thurman 91)

Well beyond the scope of this particular thesis, Vladislavić's assertions broach what could be the beginnings of very fruitful research. His notion of a "lived experience" being something far more "muddled" than neatly compartmentalised resonates with Sarah Nuttall's work on entanglement, which she defines as:

> a condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with; it speaks of an intimacy gained, even if it was resisted, or ignored or uninvited. It is a term which may gesture towards a relationship or set of social relationships that is complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness. It works with difference and sameness but also with their limits, their predicaments, their moments of complication. (1)

This understanding of how human relationships function is particularly resonant within South Africa which continues to experience rapid social changes. Shared cultural memory is an effective tool for authors such as Landsman whose descriptions of the Karoo and the Cango Caves in *The Devil's Chimney* evoke a familiarity between a landscape that the reader may have visited, and the physical surroundings which the characters of Connie and Miss Beatrice experience first-hand. It is literature's appeal to the corporeal and the affective sensations of the reader that reflects this lived experience, and does, in fact, urge the reader to engage with both the similarity and the otherness found in a particular narrative. As Nuttall suggests, these situations offer opportunity for growth, both personally and for literature. In fact, utilising the concepts suggested, we may "dislodge or supersede the tropes and analytical foci which quickly harden into conventions of how we read the 'now'" (Nuttall 12).

Discussions of the entanglements of body, landscape and memory within a South African context articulate a means of exploring trauma and nostalgia in a manner which continues to acknowledge loss as a fundamental part of the lived South African experience, without allowing that experience of loss to displace all other events in an individual's life. The purpose of bridging a divide between psychoanalysis and literary analysis in this thesis has been to show how narrative is able to offer the therapeutic possibility to alleviate what could remain overwhelming effects in the reader or author's life.

In a rapidly-changing country, literature remains as necessary as always, but the way in which emerging authors are categorised and assessed requires some ongoing refiguring. The introduction of the thesis posited the TRC as a literary impulse in our shared cultural past, and the novels discussed have shown a steady disassociation from, and critique of the ability to establish an objective truth. Reconciliation, on the other hand, has been shown in these novels to be a problematic concept, but also one that may be possible with varying results and concentrated work on the part of the individuals and their ability to establish their embodied experience in relation to those people around them. Furthermore, my work has stressed the relationship between loss and its expression as either trauma or nostalgia, as these experiences are something which remain enduring in terms of the South African lived experience. South Africa is still a country which has been marked by overwhelming experiences of loss, and whether our literature is termed post-transitional or post-apartheid, it is how these experiences are represented that remains central to reader and author.

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