



# DeraciNation: Reading the Borderlands in the Fiction of Zoë Wicomb

Cynthia Lytle

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**DeraciNation: Reading the Borderlands  
in the Fiction of Zoë Wicomb**

Tesi doctoral en  
Construcció i Representació d'Identitats Culturals

\* \* \*

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the fiction of South African author Zoë Wicomb (1948- ) through her two collections of short stories: *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* (1987) and *The One that Got Away* (2008) and two novels: *David's Story* (2000) and *Playing in the Light* (2006). Using an interdisciplinary approach, the concept of deraciNation, which is the uprooting and discrimination of peoples as a way to uphold the notion of Nation, and an adaptation of Gloria Anzaldúa's borderland theory in an investigation of the coloured community in its construction as an intermediary group between black and white and its locations in the margins of society, this dissertation investigates how discrimination has not only played a role in the construction and representation of coloured identities, but also how it was adopted and incorporated within the community. Wicomb calls attention to oppression in both external and internal forms, exemplifying the failures of the struggle against apartheid and the self-contradictions that can also be violent. Specifically, this dissertation analyzes the spaces of home, neighborhood and nation, which were locations of deracination through external forces of imperialism and colonialism. Moreover, it examines oppression, which has led to these spaces being gendered and racialized, has persisted in coloured identities in post-apartheid South Africa and transnationally into Europe, two areas in which Wicomb's fictional writings take place as sites of both home and displacement. Furthermore, this dissertation scrutinizes the notion of truth, through an examination of violence, memory and his/herstories as a way of bringing lesser-known stories to the light.

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## CHAPTER I. Introduction

### I. Borderlands

When I started my master's, I had not yet heard of Zoë Wicomb nor had I known what South African literature or even what postcolonial literature was. My undergraduate degree and professional background are in journalism, and it was during my undergraduate studies that I became interested in representations of race in the media, and later I became interested in identities and their constructions and representations. I did not, however, pursue further study in this area; instead I left my home in Texas to explore the world through teaching English in South Korea.

Living and working in the land of my mother's birth was an eye-opening experience. I first taught English in Daegu, the fourth largest city in the nation with a population of about 2.5 million. My knowledge of the language was virtually nonexistent. Of course I knew a few curse words, and I could ask for rice and water. Apart from that I knew the words "sleep" and "study," perhaps indicative of the extent of my relationship with my maternal grandparents who moved to the U.S. when I was young. As I had only a few English-speaking friends, and everyone I knew wanted to learn English in Korea, I was able to pick up *Hangeul*, the language. I studied the dictionary to learn the alphabet and constantly looked up words. After a few months, I could have basic conversations and impress everyone who was very happy to hear a foreigner attempt to speak their language. I also read *The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyong: The Autobiographical Writings of a Crown Princess of Eighteenth-Century Korea* and the *Samguk Yusa: Legends And History Of The Three Kingdoms Of Ancient Korea*, from which I could get a sense of this



strong sense of filial piety and other Confucianisms that shaped my mother but were indecipherable to my brother's and my understanding.

I eventually got a job at a national daily in Seoul and would later work in both web and print publishing. My time in the capital city was culturally challenging. Not only did it teach me the injustices of the social, professional and class hierarchies, which all worked together and often overlapped, but I also came to understand why my mother did not want me to be there: because I was not uncommonly considered *tweggi*, an offensive word used to refer to someone who is not “full-blooded” Korean, or more specifically, a person who has a foreign father and a Korean mother.<sup>1 2</sup>

There were a few instances of this sort of racism that affected me, but it was not until I started researching for my master's thesis that I discovered the profound prominence of the politics of blood in Korean identity<sup>3</sup> and society that partially explained the racism I experienced. My thesis was a comparison of mixed-race identities<sup>4</sup> in the literatures of Nora Okja Keller, a biracial Korean-American author and Zoë Wicomb, a South African coloured author. I had learned of “coloured” through a friend who was doing research on elections in Cape Town. As Americans, we were appalled by the term, and as a researcher, I was eager to learn more about this peculiarly named group

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<sup>1</sup> The general term *honhyeol* basically translates to mixed-race or *mestizo*. Yet remarkably, the English dictionary on Naver.com, Korea's most popular portal, includes these notable examples: 1. mixed-blood, (offensive) half-breed, (offensive) half-caste 2. There are many mixed-blood people in the Western world. 3. There are no half breeds in the Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> In the past decade, it has been a trend for Korean men, particularly from rural areas, to go to countries such as China and Southeast Asia to find a bride. Interestingly, the children of a Korean man and a foreign woman are referred to as *Kosian*, as an emphasis on the Korean-Asian relation as opposed to a Korean-Western relationship since the latter is reminiscent of Korean female U.S. male relations (Lee 2009: 57-58). For more on language in the construction and representation of mixed-race Korean-American identities, see Lytle 2013.

<sup>3</sup> The singularization of identity is not to describe one, monolithic Korean identity but instead, I refer to the great importance that is placed on blood and lineage in Korean culture and society.

<sup>4</sup> The terms race, mixed-race, multiracial, biracial, etc. have become common usage for description. My use of these words is not intended to categorize nor ascribe identity.

that I had never heard of. I looked for coloured authors, and without really knowing anything, I found Wicomb and immediately ordered *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* (1987), *David's Story* (2000) and *Playing in the Light* (2006).

Wicomb's novels were foreign in that I knew very little about South African history and culture, yet surprisingly I could identify with many of the racial and gender characterizations and the questioning of them. As a teenager, I had read books associated with Asia such as Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) and Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1997), but I could not identify with them. In a strange way, these novels made me feel shame and uncomfortable about how the female characters were portrayed. I guess I did not realize how the former perpetuated stereotypes of Chinese women (monolithically read Asian women) and the latter objectified and exoticized Japanese women (again, a monolithic representation for Asian women). The only books I felt had talked to me were *Screaming Monkeys* (2003), which evaluated images of Asian Americans in the media and *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981), a collection of essays and creative writing. Before then, as a young woman of color, I had never really felt a connection to feminism as I just could not relate to it. Gloria Anzaldúa poignantly expresses this feeling in *Borderlands* (1987):

They thought that all women were oppressed in the same way and they tried to force me to accept their image of me and my experiences. They were not willing to be open to my own presentation of myself and to accept that I might be different from what they had thought of me so far ... gender is not the only oppression. There is race, class, religious

orientation; there are generational and age kinds of things, all the physical stuff, et cetera ... They wanted to apply their notion of feminism across all cultures ... I was asked to leave my race at the door. (Anzaldúa 1999: 230-31)

Thus, when I again felt such a connection to Wicomb's writings, which seemed so familiar although they dealt with a culture and community so completely foreign, I quickly became hungry for more. Thus, after I received good feedback during my master's defense, I decided I wanted to continue my research but with a focus solely on Wicomb's writings.

## **II. Purpose**

“O my body, always make me a [wo]man who questions!”  
(Fanon 2008: 206, change added).

Twenty years have passed since the first free elections in South Africa, but where is the country now? The country has seen the longest platinum strike in its history. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission broadcast testimonies throughout the country and granted amnesty until 2001. Moreover, Nelson Mandela died in 2013, and Jacob Zuma was elected to another five-year term with the ANC receiving an overwhelming majority with 62 percent of the votes and 249 seats in parliament. Yet what has changed? Eugene Terreblanche, a leader of the white supremacist paramilitary group Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (Afrikaner Resistance Movement, or AWB) that used terrorist tactics to fight for the “pure race” against the ending of apartheid and the first democratic

elections, was killed. Terreblanche's death sparked racial tensions since the perpetrators were two black farm workers, causing President Zuma to call for peace and calm (Fihlani 2010; Obituary 2010). Jacob Malema, the ousted leader of the ANC Youth League who formed the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) has advocated for land reform, which would entail taking land from white farmers. He assures, however, there would not be genocide in the process (Ngoepe 2013: "Malema Assures Whites"). Both famous figures are symbols of continued racial unrest that is widely portrayed by the media; however, the political jargon and media sensationalism make it difficult to distinguish from true racial conflict. Are contemporary causes in South Africa still fueled with racial ideologies waiting to pounce?

Is truth, after centuries of such trauma and violence, decipherable? Is there an instrument to indicate the mercury levels of freedom and oppression in society? In his critique of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, James Baldwin writes:

But that battered word, truth, having made its appearance here, confronts one immediately with a series of riddles and has, moreover, since so many gospels are preached, the unfortunate tendency to make one belligerent. Let us say, then, that truth, as used here, is meant to imply a devotion to the human being, his freedom and fulfillment; freedom which cannot be legislated, fulfillment which cannot be charted. This is the price concern, the frame of reference; it is not to be confused with a devotion to Humanity which is too easily equated with a devotion to a Cause; and Causes, as we know, are notoriously bloodthirsty. (1998: 12)

Baldwin's warning of the intention of truth, its implications and perceived devotions must be heeded when considering the state of South Africa and representations of freedom and oppression. He also cautions against accepting a story at face value without examining and contemplating its contents and objectives. Although Baldwin refers to American protest novels, his advisory can also be applied to contemporary narratives that have a self-serving agenda. On both sides of the continually portrayed black/white binary, leaders call for groups (of the confused, the powerless, the dreamers) to rally behind them while they push for equality, rights, freedom and against oppression. Yet what really is behind the calls of figures such as Zuma, Malema or Terreblanche? This comparison is not to put Stowe on the same level of politicians or vitriolic speakers but to suggest the real possibility of similar outcomes. Such power is also present in the media, whose goals are promotions, ratings and market power. Baldwin writes, "It is the peculiar triumph of society—and its loss—that it is able to convince those people to whom it has given inferior status of the reality of this decree; it has the force and the weapons to translate its dictum into fact, so that the allegedly inferior are actually made so, insofar as the social realities are concerned" (1998: 16).

As a way to continue the fight against oppressive narratives, it is therefore crucial to include stories that come from within the communities. These stories have the power to not only disseminate information and dislodge inaccuracies and false representations, but they also have the potential to create both an approach to and acceptance of alternate possibilities. As part of a memorial in the *New Yorker* after Nelson Mandela's death, Wicomb writes:

But what did Nelson Mandela say to the widow Verwoerd, when he visited her, in 1995? In the scramble for alterity that followed the demise of apartheid, forty unreconciled Afrikaner families, led by Verwoerd's son-in-law, retreated to Orania, an enclave established in the northern Cape. It was there that Mrs. Betsie Verwoerd retired. In Orania, people lead pure white lives, free even of black servants. We know that when Mandela visited, tea, coffee, and Afrikaner *koeksister* pastries were served, presumably by white hands. Then Mandela was left alone with the widow. Almost certainly, they spoke in Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor, as it was dubbed by blacks in the Struggle era. Mandela learned the language in prison, while children in Soweto protested against its imposition. What passed between them? Mandela reported nothing. Betsie Verwoerd has never spoken of it. In South Africa's Karoo, there is no point speaking about the weather, because it never varies. The meeting in Orania must remain the stuff for fiction. (2013: 27)

Stories not only make us question, they are also sometimes the solutions to that which has no answers. Just as they must be told and retold, they also must be continually scrutinized.

### **III. Object of Study**

Based on the constructs of race and gender, this dissertation focuses on discrimination that not only has led to the displacement of peoples, but it has also contributed to prejudice and bigotry within the South African coloured community. “Coloured” was initially a term used to describe those who were of mixed-race parentage, usually, but not limited to, the father being white or a European colonizer and the mother being black or of a native African community. After centuries of subjugation and decades of segregation in South Africa, apartheid officially incorporated the term “Coloured” to refer to one of the four racial classifications: Black, White, Coloured and Indian, which will be explored in the following chapter.

Through selected works of South African author Zoë Wicomb, this dissertation will investigate the marginalization that the coloured community endured and later played a part in the community’s own identity construction. Furthermore, such relegation not only happened from external sources but also occurred internally with contributing factors such as physical characteristics, family history and class. Thus, the coloured community was pushed into the borderlands, or margins of society in ways that made them to be somewhat of an intermediary racial group between black and white. Moreover, in a similar fashion, some members participated in or had their own racist ideologies that upheld hierarchal thinking while maintaining their own inferior societal position as non-white. Thus, an aim of this dissertation is to identify the contributing factors in the construction, representation and intra-discrimination of the coloured community with the goal of bringing attention to narratives that do not cover up but acknowledge prejudices and injustices while advocating for a more comprehensive

representation of marginalized identities. Wicomb calls attention to oppression in both external and internal forms, exemplifying the failures of the struggle and the self-contradictions that can also be violent and subjugating.

This dissertation uses an interdisciplinary approach and analyzes such discrimination, identity construction and representation through an investigation of space and truth. Specifically, the spaces I focus on are of home, neighborhood and nation, which were locations of deracination through external forces of imperialism and colonialism leading to segregation and later apartheid. Such tyranny of space has persisted in post-apartheid South Africa and transnationally into Europe, two areas in which Wicomb's fictional writings take place as sites of both home and displacement. In these physical areas, space also becomes gendered and racialized and is therefore also a marginalized space. Regarding truth, my research delves into memory and history as influenced by violence, patriarchal, racial and nationalist oppression and the ensuing trauma.

How can truth be looked at? Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen argue it is important to understand where "story" means the making or the telling (1996: 17). I argue that an absolute truth of historical events is impossible as it has been largely written from a Eurocentric, male-dominated viewpoint (making), and as memory is fallible, especially in spaces of violence and trauma, "truths," which are steps closer to the truth, may one day be achieved (making and telling). For any truth to be considered, the story not only must be told but it must be listened to, and it is through Wicomb's novels that lesser-known hi/stories are transmitted to the reader.



Through an investigation of patriarchal, racist and nationalist oppression and their effects on space and truth in the works of Wicomb, the objective of this dissertation is to show the great significance of such lesser-known works in a much-needed move toward transnational literature that break the tyrannies of categorizations and that are indicative of and remark on contemporary society and its transnational histories. Wicomb has written two collections of short stories: *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* (1987) and *The One that Got Away* (2008) and three novels: *David's Story* (2000), *Playing in the Light* (2006) and *October* (2014). She also has published the short story "In Search of Tommie" (2009) in literary magazine *Wasafiri* and numerous critical writings.

As Wicomb's published fictional writings have been published by small, independent publishers, her works are not widely known. Yet this is not to suggest that she has little recognition; on the contrary, Wicomb has received the Yale University Windham Campbell Prize (2013) and South African M-Net Fiction Award (2001); has been shortlisted for the M-Net Fiction Award (2009) and Commonwealth Prize (2007) and has been nominated for the Neustadt Prize (2012). In addition to being recognized by renowned author Toni Morrison, Oprah Winfrey's book club, academic critic Gayatri Spivak and fellow South African author J.M. Coetzee, among others, she has had a series of three conferences dedicated to her writings: "Zoë Wicomb: Texts and Histories" held September 2008 at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), "The Cape and the Cosmopolitan: Reading Zoë Wicomb" held April 2010 at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa and "Zoë Wicomb and the Translocal: Scotland and South Africa," held September 2012 at the University of York. Her fiction has been translated into Czech, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Swedish.

#### **IV. State of the Field**

The most prominent scholars who focus on Zoë Wicomb's work are mostly from South Africa: Derek Attridge (University of York), David Attwell (University of York), Dorothy Driver (University of Adelaide), Kai Easton (SOAS) and Meg Samuelson (Stellenbosch University), to name a few, dedicate their research to South African, African and postcolonial literatures. They worked on the three aforementioned Wicomb conferences, reflecting the importance of Wicomb's work and demonstrating the growing transnational interest in not only her work but also in South African literature. Moreover, the published research from these scholars have given me a great insight into Wicomb's fiction, as many culturally specific aspects would have escaped me. Topics regarding Wicomb's fiction include themes such as identity, trauma, reconciliation, race, and violence.

My research also incorporates these topics but differs through the consideration of these themes in the overall construction of multiracial identities, which in this case is specific to the coloured community, and how these motifs have not only led to the oppression of but also discrimination within the community. Furthermore, I approach Wicomb's works from a transnational point of view, and as complement, I incorporate multicultural works of fiction and literary theory. I argue it is the deraciNation, which is the uprooting of people in name of nationalism and patriarchy that forces people into the Anzalduan borderlands, where cultures, languages and identities overlap and coexist. Such unstable forces can make spaces such as home, neighborhood and nation confining, and participation and pressure or desire to belong aid in this limitation. In addition to

Wicomb's texts, I include literature from authors such as Toni Morrison and Nella Larsen to show parallels in literatures and ultimately to argue for a transnational approach as a way of understanding histories and literatures. Wicomb also integrates literatures in her texts, and this functions not only as a way to write back to oppressive narratives, as Wicomb does with works by Sarah Gertrude Millin or H. R. Haggard, but also develops an interplay with words and ideas, sometimes contesting and other times supporting or reviving, as Wicomb does with Thomas Pringle, James Joyce, Toni Morrison and Homi Bhabha.

On a university level, there is currently no course dedicated to South African or African literature in the Department of English and German Philology at the Universitat de Barcelona. The department currently offers courses in American, Australian, British, and Irish literatures. The lack of South African literature teaching has resulted in extremely few doctoral dissertations at UB written about South African writers with the last one being "The Theme of Apartheid in the Novels of Black South Africans" by Dr. Brian Worsfold in 1986, his master's thesis "A Study of Tension in Athol Fugard's Port Elizabeth Plays" in 1982 and Dr. Maria Vidal-Grau's master's thesis "The Writings of Bessie Head" in 1985; all were researched and defended before the fall of apartheid. The implications of a lack of South African or African literature course and/faculty are highly significant for reasons that affect the university and the students.

- First and foremost, for the university in an educational system that has suffered a great blow due to the extensive cuts resulting from the economic crisis, the absence of South African (or African) literary studies has meant missed

- opportunities of financial support. There are countless foundations and organizations that offer funding to university departments that uphold South African cultural studies. Such funding would have not only supported courses—and possibly new professors—but also resources such as film and books. There might have also been available funds for doctoral students to study abroad or to organize conferences, which might attract more attention and funding to the university.
- Second, both the university and students have missed meaningful cultural and academic exchanges, which might have enabled the university to have visiting professors that have different educational experiences and perspectives. Such exchanges not only increase diversity and quality of education but they also refine thinking and aid in research. Of course, with more resources and better research programs comes more funding. Academic exchanges not only give a different perspective, but commonalities can also be found. Interesting examples might be a comparison between Catalan and South African narratives during times of censorship or language oppression in Spain and South Africa as a tool of violence.
  - Last, the lack of South African (or other African) faculty at the philology department deprives students of a world of literature, film, history and fine arts. There is a section on African literature in the Biblioteca de Lletres that although is small, it serves as a doorway to cultural richness. I was lucky enough to find Wicomb through my interest in mixed-race identities, and it was in my research

that I found Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, J.M. Coetzee, Bessie Head, Alex La Guma, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, among others. Furthermore, students researching subjects such as censorship, trauma, violence, racism and nationalism might also find parallels in their research with South Africa. Without having a course to expose students to such great authors, unfortunately, it is more than likely that they are missing out on potential research possibilities.

Despite the great lack of resources, which will be further addressed in my methodology, my transnational approach with guidance from my supervisor Dr. Rodrigo Andrés González, who specializes in 19th century American literature, and co-supervisor Dr. Susan Ballyn, who is head of the Australian Studies Centre at the UB, enabled me to continue with my research on Zoë Wicomb and South African literature, showing a truly transnational, universalist approach to the topics my dissertation undertakes.

## **V. Research Hypothesis**

My original hypothesis was based on the historical implications of imperialism and colonialism on the construction of representation of coloured identities, but after further research, my investigation moved to a interdisciplinary, transnational approach of the borderlands as to not confine Wicomb's work to South Africa or coloured identity, but to include these themes while moving toward a greater, more all-encompassing methodology. Although identity is a significant motif in Wicomb's fiction, she has a clear stance against making identity problematic. My argument then is that her writings suggest moving on from identity politics, which can lead to oppression of oneself or one

another through deconstructing “old world” views that can be applied to everyday images and working toward a better understanding of gendered and racial thinking to provoke a re-presentation of these confining constructs.

As contended throughout this dissertation, there is no one coloured identity, but there are many factors that shape and contribute to the multiple coloured identities and experiences. At the beginning of my research, I wanted to focus on the construction and representation of coloured identity through Wicomb’s stories. Yet the more I read, my research went away from a sole focus on coloured identity and toward coloured identity being an aspect of her greater work. I realized that while her stories are culturally specific, her social commentary, or what I read as her critique, is not; instead, her stories speak across borders, transnationally and transculturally. Wicomb’s fiction creates, recreates and transmits stories that recount childhoods, love, family, injustice, violence, traumatic encounters and struggle as a way to portray that which was not or could not have been uttered. In addition to the telling of his/herstories, she uses her words to contest the stories and images that have contributed to the centuries-long oppression, empowering not just those South Africans affected by them but making a connection with anyone who has felt marginalized.

Wicomb’s fiction is so intricate that it is simultaneously alienating and relatable. The deraciNation within the pages of *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town*, *David’s Story*, *Playing in the Light* and the selected short stories in *The One that Got Away* is not just through forced gender roles, removals or racial classifications, but it can happen within one’s own community in a bout to either maintain position or head to the top. Moreover, the borderlands are not necessarily a confining area, but instead, they can be a space

where many can find common ground, regardless of whether or not it is believed so. Additionally, it is through the transmission of stories that re-place textbook History by adding other accounts and points of view that empower the uprooted, the marginalized, the oppressed, to reclaim their his/herstories. Stories can also help to begin the healing process of those who have been affected by violence and trauma. Thus, instead of having one-sided interpretations, future generations on all sides of a story can have multi-sided views to ask questions and form their own understanding. In this way, Wicomb's fiction works toward a society that is not an unrealistic utopia but an achievable place where understanding is common and acceptance is universal.

## **VI. Methodological Framework**

### **Data Collection**

As my undergrad and professional background is journalism, a large part of the preliminary research process was to read historical texts and theory as secondary sources. In addition to the countless historical accounts in academic journals, a great reference tool was historian Leonard Thompson's *A History of South Africa* (1990) and various nonfictional writings by Saul Dubow. Research for my master's exposed me to literary criticism, and I wanted to read more postcolonial and Africa-based scholars, so I read Etienne Balibar, Franz Fanon, Paul Gilroy, Achille Mbembe, Anne McClintock, Es'kia Mphahlele and Edward Said, among others. I also found writings by James Baldwin, Zygmunt Bauman, Judith Butler, Angela Davis and Slavoj Žižek very helpful.

Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) clarified perspectives of violence and resistance that can be applied outside of the colonizer/colonized struggle,

Moreover, Fanon's assessment of national culture in that it is not a folklore, but "the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence" (Fanon 2001: 188) is radical in its inclusivity. Here he does not reject folklore per se but moves from the notion of a solely abstract concept of national culture to one that is concrete and inclusive of current events and reality. He contends the culture of the nation is popular, not exclusive or made only of customs and argues to fight against colonial domination and cultural obliteration (2001: 180-188). Along these lines, Wicomb argues, "Perception of culture as something divorced from the performative and curiously defined as that in which you do not participate is typical of this mode; more worrying is the metaphysics of race which allows difference to exclude an individual from what others in her own community intuitively know" (Wicomb 1998: 101). It was from these perspectives I began to think of that complex role of fighting for one's national liberation while balancing the level between nationalism and community/national exclusion.

It was reading *Orientalism* (1978) that I immediately agreed with Said's argument that it is essential to any socio-literary study (1995: 27), as I realized when I had first moved to Korea. His work also compelled me to read more about social theory and how it applied to literature. Furthermore, in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Said places importance of understanding how past events have affected present-day cultural attitudes (1994: 17). He writes,



We are all taught to venerate our nations and admire our traditions: we are taught to pursue their interests with toughness and in disregard for other societies. A new and in my opinion appalling tribalism is fracturing societies, separating peoples, promoting greed, bloody conflict, and uninteresting assertions of minor ethnic group or group particularity. Little time is spent not so much in “learning about other cultures”—the phrase has an inane vagueness to it—but in studying the map of interactions, the actual and often productive traffic occurring on a day-by-day, and even minute-by-minute basis among states, societies, group, identities. (1994: 20)

The United States, Texas, Korea, Spain, Catalunya: these are all places where I have lived that have such national pride, at times some more than others, which has led to the marginalization of others. Furthermore, with the economic crisis still affecting Europe, this “appalling tribalism” that Said describes has sparked xenophobia that has at times blinded the community from looking at the evils done within or performed by its leaders. Thus, in order to have a complete look of the “map of interactions,” not only did my methodology in data collection involve theory or history, but I also had to indulge in reading works by South African authors J.M. Coetzee, Achmat Dangor, Nadine Gordimer, Antjie Krog, Alex La Guma, Sindiwe Magona, Alan Paton, Sol Plaatje; African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Mphahlele, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o; and non-African postcolonial authors Aimé Césaire, Randa Jarrar, Sally Morgan, Naguib Mahfouz, Salman Rushdie and Zadie Smith, to name a few. Of course

not all that I read was directly used for this dissertation, but I believe these readings have given me tools to think critically and an overall understanding about the wide range of writings we group onto this shelf called postcolonial literature.

My selection of Wicomb's fiction writings was meant to be comprehensive,<sup>5</sup> thus I chose to examine her works that were published both during and after apartheid. Although *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* is considered a collection of short stories, it reads like a novel and thus I examined it as a whole. Of course, as *David's Story* and *Playing in the Light* are both novels, they were also considered as complete works. In Wicomb's second collection of short stories, *The One that Got Away*, the characters are all linked in some way that I believe is a Wicombian device revealing the interconnectedness of humanity despite countries of separation. From this collection and for the purposes of this dissertation, I chose the stories "Neighbours," "Friends and Goffels," "In the Botanic Gardens," "The One that Got Away," "There's the Bird that Never Flew" and "Trompe l'Oeil" for the recurring motifs such as home, belonging, stereotyping, and authority.

The body of Wicomb's fiction that I have chosen to incorporate covers the periods of apartheid, the transition and the "new" South Africa. The collection *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* takes place during apartheid South Africa; *David's Story* is set during the fall of apartheid, but the story jumps generations back to the 19th century during the Griqua treks led by Andrew LeFleur; *Playing in the Light* occurs during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings and the stories in *The One that Got Away* take place after the fall of apartheid. In all of these works, there is movement between

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<sup>5</sup> Although I have read it, Wicomb's latest novel, *October* (2014) was not considered due to time considerations.

countries, denoting the emigrations and relocations that have taken place and that continue to shape not only characters but also the spaces that are both left and reached. Furthermore, in the selected works, a common theme is the question of telling of another's story, which is Wicomb's cautioning against the authority of words in the writing of his/herstories.

The intertextuality of Wicomb's fiction works to not only contests colonial narratives that have constructed and represented, but it also uncovers connections with other stories. Thus, as part of my background reading, I read or revisited the likes of colonial narratives such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), Millin's *God's Step Children* (1924) and Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and found works useful like Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and *Home* (2012), Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and Larsen's *Passing* (1929).

### **Challenges**

A major challenge in completing this dissertation was the lack of support I had. Due to the crisis and my national status, I was not able to get any grants or scholarships. Furthermore, as I am not a citizen of the European Union, it has been extremely difficult to work in Spain. Needless to say, this has proved to be an interesting setting in which to undergo and finally complete my research.

Unfortunately, I was not able to perform part of my research in South Africa. I have contacted the University of Cape Town and the South African Institute of Race Relations, both of whom offered support through archives and resourcing, but to my

disadvantage I could not obtain the funding. I have managed, however, to attend conferences throughout Europe and in the U.S. that were very useful in the academic exchange.

I have been told that getting a PhD is a long, lonely process. This has come from peers who have been able to work as teaching assistants and be a part of research teams. Regrettably, despite repeatedly inquiring, I have not been able to do either, which I feel has hurt this experience as I have not been involved in such academic settings.

Last, a great challenge has also been the lack of access to academic sources such as books and journals. As previously mentioned, the philology library at the UB has a small section of postcolonial literature. Additionally, as I have searched for particular English-language novels at the library, sometimes the only editions made available were in either Spanish or Catalan, or both. Although I can read novels in either, as I am researching Anglophone authors and writing in English, it is essential to employ the original language of the work and not a translated version. It is understandable that translations be made available, but it is lamentable that at least one of the copies of a novel is not in English. Furthermore, there is an increasingly inadequate access to online resources such as Taylor and Francis. Oftentimes I had to burden colleagues in other countries to send me particular articles.

Regardless of these challenges, my research and experiences have been very rewarding, and the interest and unrelenting belief in my work by Dr. Andrés and Dr. Ballyn have kept me going. Without their guidance and their encouragement, I would not have been able to finish.

## VII. Structure of Dissertation

The following chapter includes a selected historical overview of some of the pertinent factors that led to the construction of coloured identities, starting with the colonizers for obvious reasons and ending with selected apartheid legislation. I chose not to include the major events during apartheid or after, as I hope to go into detail with my analyses in chapters four and five. This section is not in any way comprehensive, as there are countless sources of the numerous facets of coloured identity.

Chapter Three includes the theoretical structure of this dissertation. Here, the notion of deraciNation is explained in its formation and application. In this section I also hope to clarify my use of Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of borderlands and how it pertains to my reading of Wicomb's fiction and coloured identities.

Chapter four explores the spaces of home, neighborhood and nation through Wicomb's creative writings. The first section focuses on de/constructing the trope of home, which can be racialized, gendered and divided, in *Playing in the Light* and *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*. It then moves to the larger space of neighbor/hood and considers the role of the neighbor in the space of the community and questions the right to belong. In addition to *Playing in the Light*, this section uses the short story "Neighbours" from *The One that Got Away*. Finally, the last section in this chapter deals with the concept of nation and its role in community formation. Through *David's Story*, *Playing in the Light* and the short stories "Friends and Goffels" and "In the Botanic Gardens" from *The One that Got Away*, topics such as nationalism, national identity and belonging, identity performance and Othering are examined.

Chapter five investigates the trope of truth in Wicomb's creative writings. The first section focuses on deracination and dismemberment with a focus on the violence, which was at times gendered, that occurred during the struggle, the difficulty in finding truth through fallible memory and unreliable narrators, in the light of truth, and the truths somewhat uncovered after being shrouded in secrecy. Using Wicomb's works, particularly selections that deal with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, this chapter also looks at the (im)possibility of truth through trauma, shame, witnessing and violence, which is seemingly ever-present. Finally, after assessing such factors that contribute to the theme of truth, which may or may not be feasible, this chapter moves to the creation of spaces through the deconstruction of patriarchal narratives so that herstories may be made and heard. It closes with the notion that truth is sometimes stranger than fiction, and argues, through a short story by Wicomb, that in order to reach a better understanding of truth, fiction must also be considered.

### **VIII. Terminological and Formal Considerations**

Such complex topics require careful consideration when choosing terminology, as words themselves can contribute to violence and Othering. When I first heard the term "coloured," I was shocked as its usage in the U.S. is mostly outdated and oftentimes offensive, although not completely eradicated. This being explained, usage of "colorful" language cannot be avoided in a dissertation such as this, particularly when the notions of history and race are involved. I would like to stress that the usage of racial language is not to further instill binaries or social constructs such as that of race but, instead, it is to clarify and extrapolate on the topics I have outlined as a way to deconstruct.

As apartheid legislation tyrannically created four racial categories, this dissertation will include the capitalized Black, White, Coloured and Indian to indicate the time period and/or legislative reference. Otherwise, black, white and coloured will be written in lowercase to suggest either post apartheid or the general (socially constructed) group. Moreover, as the word “coloured” used to describe people is offensive in the U.S., I retain the “u” used in South African/British English spelling of “coloured” and use “color” such as in the example, “a woman of color,” to distinguish from the coloured community and to denote a “non-white” person. Use of the word “color” in this way is currently generally accepted in the U.S. in academic and activist writing.

## CHAPTER TWO: Defining Spaces

### I. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to give pertinent background information on South Africa starting with its colonization. The first section starts with the start of colonization and then explores how it affected the native peoples of southern Africa. The second section covers how the population was categorized starting with the first official census in 1865 and later in racial constructions leading to apartheid. It then turns to an overview of the construction of a white nation comprised of Afrikaner and British, whose respective ideas of nationalism and imperialism clashed yet worked to create and maintain white supremacy and promote racialist ideologies. The section will later explore the complex formation of the racial category that would become Coloured under apartheid. This chapter aims to show how racial constructions were subjective and problematic. Furthermore, although such beliefs were based on superficial observances that were exaggerated and perpetuated throughout the centuries, their repetition and reinforcement engendered the racial categories that eventually became communities that also participated in marginalizing practices.

As Zoë Wicomb ingeniously and elaborately incorporates countless historical events and figures into her works, it is impossible to include even near-complete narratives within the pages of this dissertation. Thus, events have been selected to illustrate a basic history and extrapolate on occurrences that have led to the construction of race and nationalisms, particularly those that are pertinent to Wicomb's creative writings that will be discussed in this dissertation.



## II. The Landing and Control

What is present-day South Africa was first settled by communities of African peoples thousands of years ago<sup>6</sup> (Thompson 1990: 6). These peoples were the ancestors of the Khoekhoen herders<sup>7</sup> and San hunter-gatherers, who are believed to have settled the land nearly 2,000 years ago (Rhode and Hoffman 2008: 189). Historian Leonard Thompson argues that the history of the first communities is as intricate as they were dynamic: “People interacted, cooperating and copulating as well as competing and combating, exchanging ideas and practices as well as rejecting them” (1990: 11). Moreover, Thompson argues against racial ideologies that were (and still likely are) held about black South Africans. He contends, “Until recently, white South Africans in particular assumed that ‘Bushmen,’ ‘Hottentots,’ and ‘Kaffirs’ were pure racial types and that the basic process that lay behind the outcome was migration...They portrayed the ‘Bushmen’ as aboriginal hunters and gatherers who had been subjected to two great waves of migration from central Africa: first ‘Hottentot’ pastoralists and then ‘Kaffir’ mixed farmers” (1990: 10-11).

Colonization in South Africa began in 1652 with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck, whose quest was to create a trading post for the Dutch East India Company. Van Riebeeck began by building a border through the planting of wild almond hedge. This border would serve to mark the area of the company’s station, protect the station from invaders, block the route used by Khoekhoen herders, and create an environment similar to that of Europe (Mountain 2003: 48-49). Parts of the original barrier can still be seen at Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden in Cape Town. Van Riebeeck’s border enclosed

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<sup>6</sup> For practical purposes, this dissertation will not delve into the rich pre-colonial history of southern Africa.

<sup>7</sup> The Khoekhoen are also known as the Khoikhoi, meaning “men of men” and Khoena, which is gender neutral (Wells 1998: 417).

the settlement, creating distinctive boundaries that separate the white colonists from the native “Hottentots<sup>8</sup>” (Grove 1995: 136). The fence would become a great symbol of what would eventually lead to segregation and then apartheid.

The Dutch brought slaves from faraway places such as South and Southeast Asia and other parts of Africa such as Madagascar and Mozambique (Thompson 1990: 36). This frequent import of slaves in the early 1700s resulted in a slave population that was greater than that of free burghers (Thompson 1990: 36). Slavery was justified through the belief that Africans were sons of Ham and thus they were savages and barbarians unlike the civilized men of Shem and Japheth. As George M. Frederickson explains,

The notion that degeneration into savagery was the result of an inherited curse that God had placed on at least some non-European or nonwhite peoples may be placed alongside [Juan Ginés de] Sepúlveda’s association of natural slavery with ‘inborn rudeness’ and ‘barbarous customs’ as an early anticipation of the racist doctrines that would later emerge as a justification for slavery and colonialism. (1981: 10)

Yet this was not always logical for some Christians who believed that all men, regardless of “degeneracy,” were children of God and thus, in lieu of enslaving they must civilize Africans (1981: 10-11). Both arguments placed Europeans as higher, civilized beings; therefore, they took the authority to create a hierarchal order of beings.

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<sup>8</sup> It is noteworthy that some of the sources I scanned regarding this story made use of the derogatory word “Hottentot,” as opposed to the community’s indigenous name or reference.

In addition to mainly British and Dutch colonizers, European settlers were from Germany, Scotland, France and other European countries that came for various economic and religious reasons, and their laws and ideologies were based on European laws and values that reinforced European dominance.<sup>9</sup> Slaves were controlled through violence and threats, and some women were forced into prostitution, with owners reaping the profits (Thompson 1990: 42-43). One reason for forced prostitution was the high male to female ratio. For example, as V.A. February notes, in 1663 there were only 17 white females in the Cape (1981: 12). As the Cape was a major trading post, sailors would patronize prostitutes. Such interaction, along with sexual relations between burghers and slaves, sometimes led to the fathering of biracial children who were born slaves. Thompson explains:

As a result of relationships, the 'black' population of the colony became considerably lightened, and the 'white' populations became somewhat darkened. It has been estimated that approximately 7 percent of the genes of the modern Afrikaner people originated outside Europe and that this occurred mostly during the [Dutch East India Company] period. (1990: 45)

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<sup>9</sup> These laws, for example, ensured slaves could not make legal contracts nor have property, the right to marry or rights over their children (Thompson 1990: 42). Additionally, laws were created against miscegenation such as the banning of interracial marriage in 1685, under the influence of the Dutch Calvinist Church. These laws created a further racial divide with the strong belief by Calvinist settlers that they were from the Chosen People (Bloom 1967: 140-141).

The Dutch East India Company was responsible for the continual importation of slaves from Asia, Madagascar and Mozambique. Furthermore, in addition to taking land and livestock from the indigenous people, they also used natives as slaves (1990: 45).

Although, as Thompson suggests, the coloured population and Afrikaners often lived together in the same terrestrial spaces, the Dutch Reformed Church decided to separate the congregations and created a “subordinate mission church” for coloured people in the late 1850s (1990: 66). Moreover, in 1861, coloured children were prohibited from attending public schools although some children of mixed descent were accepted into the Afrikaner community (1990: 66). These actions from the church helped steer Afrikaners away from racial cohabitation and toward separation.<sup>10</sup>

For the British settlers, colonization and separation were not as religious issues as they were for Afrikaners. Martin Legassick argues the basis for segregation was created between the South African War and World War I (1995: 44).<sup>11</sup> In “British Hegemony and the Origins of Segregation in South Africa, 1901-1914,” he contends that the prominent

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<sup>10</sup> In his essay “The Chastening of the English-Speaking Churches in South Africa,” John W. De Gruchy boldly states, “The extent to which the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) helped give birth to the ideology of apartheid and supported its implementation has undoubtedly severely tarnished the image of Christianity” (2000: 37). His essay explores what he calls differing Christianities such as those English-speaking churches that found a common aversion to Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid, despite whether or not they were active in their contention. De Gruchy argues the failure to be “clear, unanimous or active in their opposition...[reflects] the reality that their white members were as much beneficiaries of apartheid as other white members of society” (2000: 38). Furthermore, he explains that the uniting of the Church of England with the Dutch Reformed Church was based on the idea that it would bring together Christians with European descent, and that although there were church leaders who were against the exclusion of black people, primary importance was placed on creating a single, white Christian nation (2000: 42-43). He writes, “Racial segregation was regarded as preordained by virtually all whites, whether Afrikaans or English, so national unity and reconciliation certainly did not embrace more than those of European lineage...[and] accepted the new white Union of South Africa as a divine blessing and participated in its celebration” (2000: 42).

<sup>11</sup> The South African War (1899-1902) is also known as the Boer War or the Second War of Freedom. Although the Afrikaners had an advantage through knowledge of the land, the British had more reinforcements and used scorched earth tactics. In addition to some Africans, approximately 28,000 Afrikaner women and children were sent to concentration camps (Marx 1998: 86). Blacks, coloureds and Asians were among the southern Africans that supported the British in hopes of reforming the country; however, the finalizing peace treaty did not grant franchise. Instead, the British extended a hand to the Afrikaners and strengthened the white community (1998: 88-89).

goal of British authority in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State starting in 1900 was to end the feudalist system and create an environment based on cheap black labor that would sustain the mining industry (1995: 45-46). Legassick's paper explores the idea of creating a "native policy" that would include segregation policies in land, labor and representation and guidance in "civilization."

In a similar notion regarding segregation in South Africa, Saul Dubow asserts that it was the somewhat liberal, English-speaking theorists who set the foundations of segregationist policies rather than the Afrikaans speakers (1995: 147). He explains that as opposed to an Afrikaner platform, Prime Minister Hertzog endorsed white supremacist ideologies and approaches through strategists such as J. Howard Pim and Maurice S. Evans who based their critiques of segregationist "native policy" on social Darwinism, eugenics and fears of racial degeneration (1995: 148-151). Dubow explains Pim recommended keeping Africans in reserves, as a form of disciplinary control that might furthermore help with industrial development; however, he denied the creation of a native policy that would exploit Africans (1995:148-149). Moreover, Evans argued for white governance over segregated races, yet heeded caution against greed in land settlements and use of Africans as a cheap source of labor (1995: 151).

### **III. Dividing the Land, Constructing Races**

In 1865 the first official census was taken of the Cape Colony, yet as Thompson contends, there was a great margin of error (1990: 66). It was reported there were 181,592 Europeans, 81,598 "Hottentots," 100,536 "Kafirs" and 132,655 "Others"

(Southey 1866: 11).<sup>12 13</sup> As seen from the census, there were three general categories that perhaps led to the distinguishing of the native Southern Africans. Yet the terminology chosen was not indicative of the distinctive native communities that inhabited the Cape Colony. The word “Hottentot” is a derogatory term for the Khoikhoi people (Magubane 2001: 822). The Dutch used the term in reference to their click language. The OED makes a parallelism that in German, the word *hotteren-totteren*, means “stutter.” Furthermore, the word “kafir” or “kaffir” is a racial slur with Arabic origins meaning “infidel” used to describe Xhosa (Magubane 2001: 822) or Zulu (Lindfors 1996: 2). The OED defines it as a general offensive term for “a black African,” and Thompson explains, “Kaffirs” were “people of African farming stock who were becoming the main labor force in the eastern districts” (Thompson 1990: 66). Furthermore, in the article “Taxonomic Tendencies in Nineteenth-Century Racial Iconography,” Bernth Lindfors argues that “Hottentot,” “Kaffir” and “Bushman” were separately identified as a way to put each in their own category of savageness.<sup>14</sup> He explains,

Hottentot, morphologically deviant yet sexually potent, represented man’s link to the animal world. The Bushman, stunted in stature and devoid of culture, stood as an example of human degeneration. The warlike Kaffir

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<sup>12</sup> Although the report itself does not clarify “Others,” Thompson notes it means “Coloureds” (1990: 66). Yet under the sections “V. Education,” “VI. Attendance at School” and “VII Occupation,” the only two racial categories listed are “White” and “Coloured,” which might suggest the sole distinguishing of white and non-white.

<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note that the category “Deaf and Dumb, Blind, Lunatics and Idiots” was also part of the census (Southey 1866: 13).

<sup>14</sup> As part of his report on *The Dutch Reformed Church: with Notices of Other Denominations*, McCarter writes, “Within the *Cape Colony* there are 278,000 Europeans, and 733,000 coloured people. In *British Kaffraria*, 8,200 Europeans and 78,000 Kafirs [sic]. In *Natal*, 17,000 Europeans and 170,000 Zulus, besides 6,665 Indian Coolies. Beyond the Colonies in *Kaffirland* and north of the *Orange River*, the population is estimated at 750,000...It thus appears that white inhabitants are largely outnumbered by the native races” (McCarter 1869: 107, original italics and capitalization).

symbolized mindless anarchy, bloodshed and brutality. The three together could thus be viewed as emblematically recapitulating stages in the eternal life cycle: Birth, Decline and Death (1996: 24).

Such labeling not only constructed and imposed such ideologies on native southern African communities, but it also led to beliefs in levels of and differences in “savagery.”

### **i. Imagining the White Nation**

Afrikaners are mostly descendants from 17th and 18th century settlers and have continued to live and work in rural settings rather than in towns or cities (Thompson 1990: 112). Those who worked in the country farmed or worked for farmers, with the latter being of the poorer class of whites. Nonetheless, native Africans were often used as a source of cheap labor and were always considered subordinate to whites (1990: 155), as many Afrikaners considered themselves to be superior. As followers of the Dutch Reformed Church many Afrikaners believed they were guardians and in control of other groups, and Afrikaner duty was to ensure that intermixing, which would degenerate the white nation, would not occur (Dubow 1992: 213-216).

In “Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid and the Conceptualization of ‘Race,’” Saul Dubow explores how Afrikaner ideologies, based on Christian values particularly from the Dutch Reformed Church, gestated racial ideologies that served to uphold a racial and social hierarchy that would ensure white dominance. He argues that Afrikaner nationalist mythology constructed the concept of Boer trekkers<sup>15</sup> as God’s “Chosen People;”

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<sup>15</sup> In his 1983 essay, “No Chosen People: The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology,” André du Toit boldly concludes “Afrikaner nationalism is less the product of its unique

however, this ideology was traced to having been generated by David Livingstone<sup>16</sup> (Dubow 1992: 224; du Toit 1983: 939). Dubow argues that such romanticism was created in the Afrikaner mythology as a truth, and such myths, along with tradition were upheld through the notions of lived experience and collective memory as Afrikaner history, which in turn supported racial ideologies (1992: 224- 225).

These racial ideologies reinforced white supremacy and supported the use of natives to white advantage, contributing to the animosity between the Afrikaners and the British colonists. The latter were increasingly against slavery and pushed for citizenship rights for Africans; however, this does not mean that the British believed Africans were equal to Europeans (Marx 1998: 36-37). Anthony Marx explains British policies in dealing with Africans were contradictory (1998: 36). For example, although the British overturned laws that obliged coloureds to carry passes, prohibited blacks from owning land, freed slaves without compensation to owners, and permitted some Africans to vote in the late 19th century; they also set tribes against each other and used military force as control methods, barred coloureds from Cape schools and established segregation in some areas (1998: 36-37).<sup>17</sup>

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cultural roots than the result of the ideological labors of a modernizing elite seeking to ensure social cohesion in transitional times. The historical myth of a primitive Afrikaner Calvinism is a quite different story. As long as this nineteenth-century myth serves to give spurious historical weight to twentieth-century social ideology, both the practice of history and the practice of politics will suffer” (du Toit 1983: 952).

<sup>16</sup> Dr. David Livingstone (1813-1873) was a Scottish missionary and explorer. He traveled across Africa and named bodies of water such as the Zambezi River and Victoria Falls (Delaney 2007: “David Livingstone”). As he linked the Christian mission to “civilizing”, he also supported imperial expansion and colonization. André du Toit explains Livingstone justified colonization in believing that Europeans had a “superior right of more civilized peoples to settle territory inefficiently occupied by nomadic peoples or hunting communities” (1983: 939). Yet it must be noted that he was against slavery, which contributed to his aversion to Afrikaners, who he saw as slaveholders and “vagrants” (1983: 942, 945).

<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, although capturing people for slavery was made illegal in 1806, settlers were allowed to buy and sell humans (O’Malley, “Pre-Transition”). The slave trade ended in 1807, legally in 1833, and slaves were emancipated in 1838 (Marx 1998: 47).



Of course the Afrikaners were against allowing natives to have basic rights, and it was the British abolishment of slavery that motivated the Afrikaners to trek north and establish their own independent states where they could rule. After the Boer treks, the Afrikaners established independent republics The Transvaal and Orange Free State, which had an Afrikaner majority and restricted black Africans through the enforcement of pass systems and color requirements (Marx 1998: 38). Furthermore, it is on these treks that the Afrikaners ironically created a narrative of being uprooted and forced to leave their own lands. In this way, they were able to uphold their nationalism and struggle against oppression by creating a national imaginary. Rob Nixon explains “Afrikaners, while busy subjugating black South Africans, elaborated an ethnic-nationalist narrative that centered on their own territorial dispossession and sufferings at British hands” (Nixon 1997: 84). According to Nixon, this narrative, along with memories of concentration camps where 28,000 Afrikaners died under British internment during the Anglo-Boer War, deepened Afrikaner nationalism through accounts of oppression and deracination. Yet, as Nixon points out, 14,000 of the recorded deaths at the camps were of native Africans who worked for Afrikaners (1997: 88)<sup>18 19</sup>. Thus, it is interesting to see how memory is adjusted to create ideologies and defend causes.

Soon, diamonds and later gold were discovered in the Transvaal. With their eyes on the mineral wealth, the British began to change their attitudes, increasing the

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<sup>18</sup> According to Gregory Fremont-Barnes, these concentration camps were meant as a British military necessity and humanitarian solution to the women, children and elderly who would otherwise be left to their own devices while the men were at war and/or displaced due to the scorched earth tactics (2003: 64, 79). Fremont-Barnes connects these camps to those created by the Spanish in Cuba from 1896-1897 during the Cuban insurrection (2003: 79). Contrasting with Nixon, Fremont-Barnes contends that deaths of native Africans were apart from the deaths of 28,000 Afrikaners (2003: 80). He writes that although the official recorded deaths of black Africans is 14,000, the number is believed to be approximately 20,000 (2003: 80).

<sup>19</sup> It would be interesting to do a comparative study on the historic portrayal of the concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer War. For an examination from a social point of view, see *The Concentration Camps of the Anglo-Boer War: A Social History* by Elizabeth van Heyningen.

competition with Afrikaners and becoming less concerned with the human rights of Africans (Marx 1998: 38-39). Thus, like the Afrikaners, the British saw native Africans as a means of cheap labor, and it was capitalism that drove both to take advantage of the African labor force. After the Boer War ended in 1902 with a British victory, both groups were distinctively nationalistic and pitted against each other; however, as a way of making amends with the Afrikaners, the British gave up their liberal racial policies to promote white unity, setting the stage for an exploitation of resources and broader segregation (Marx 1996: 194).

South African nationalism among whites also emerged from a common white settler identity that agreed on what it meant to be South African, and this in turn was bolstered by an envisioned connection with the land (Foster 2003: 659). In this way, Jeremy Foster argues, white South Africans detracted from their differences and found common ground in the land as a means of looking toward the future of South Africa. He who controlled it, owned it, and, as Foster explains, a way of portraying such an imaginary of South African territory was through the railway and photography (2003: 660).

Starting in 1910, the South African Railways and Harbours (SAR&H) helped unify four regions into a modern, independent nation, played a large role in developing infrastructure as well as the economic and social aspects of life and became a tool in fostering a need and desire to travel (2003: 661-664). Through such a modernization and mapping of South African life, the SAR&H not only created an image of the landscape, it constructed the land, and travel through it, as a territory of whites and for whites. It further instilled such images through its photography and publicity campaigns, including

viewer photo competitions that ranged from showing South Africa's Europeanness to its Africanness (2003: 667-670). Such campaigning also served to attract tourism. Foster explains,

South Africa's first National Park was located within the most "un-European" part of the country, the hot, humid, malaria-ridden Lowveld, which stretches from the foot of the Escarpment to the Portuguese East African border. Nevertheless, this ostensibly African region, which immediately became a centerpiece of the Railways' early package tours, tapped into Americans' fascination with South Africa's "wildness," as well as "imperial" memory; the Lowveld had often been cast as an exotic no-man's land in the novels of Rider Haggard, Kipling and Buchan (2003: 673-674).

Of course such a view of the African land as empty and timeless supported the early colonialist notions that it was free for the taking and in need of civilization, such as the claiming of land in Australia by the British through the doctrine of "Terra Nullius."<sup>20</sup> Thus, through traveling and moreover inhabiting the land, whites could claim ownership and prove a belonging, resulting in inventions of memory and narratives of nationhood (2003: 678).

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<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, the Hegelian view of Africa as an empty, uncivilized land is still perpetuated in the media as exemplified in Thomas Fessy's article, "Mali Conflict: Desert Fighting on 'Mars'" published by the BBC. The article is set in Northern Mali during combat between French-led forces and Islamist rebels, yet the main enemy seems to be the alien landscape. Fessy describes: "When we finally landed, we could feel the sharp rocks under our boots but still could not see anything. It felt like we were cut off from the rest of the world. Later the first light of dawn revealed the vastness of a rocky desert, with mountain crests and sandy lines cutting through the landscape like human veins. I don't think I have ever felt that small, that insignificant" (2013: "Mali Conflict").

## ii. Creating ‘Coloured:’ Miscegenation to Separation

In lieu of repeating the events already mentioned in this chapter that describe the creation of a multiracial population in southern Africa, this section will focus on the construction of the concept of coloured, which perhaps became more ambiguous in its definitions during apartheid. Before the 1950 Population Registration Act, coloured was generally regarded as those who were of European and African and/or Asian descent. Mohamed Adhikari points out that coloured group consciousness was engendered during Dutch colonial rule, yet contemporary coloured identities emerged in the mid-to-late 19th century around the time of the mineral revolution (2006: 469). At this time, Africans began heading toward the Western Cape in search of work, creating competition and thus a stress on separate identification as a means of gaining social position (2006: 469).<sup>21</sup> Such rivalry and the passing of discriminatory laws<sup>22</sup> contributed to the development of a common history that placed those who identified as coloured into an intermediary social position between black Africans and white Europeans.

Escalating segregationist laws prompted a heightening of coloured political organizations. The prevalence and dynamics of political parties such as the African

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<sup>21</sup> Adhikari explains, “These developments drove acculturated colonial blacks to assert a separate identity in order to claim a position of privilege relative to Africans on the basis of their closer assimilation to western culture and being partly descended from European colonists” (2006: 469).

<sup>22</sup> While laws discriminating against black Africans were written and passed, coloureds were sometimes excluded from being targeted by the laws. For example, the 1828 Ordinance No. 50 excluded coloureds from being whipped as punishment for violating labor laws (O’Malley, “Pre-Transition”). Moreover, the Parliamentary Registration Act of 1887 and the Franchise and Ballot Act of 1892 were among the first British segregationist laws restricting voting rights in the Cape Colony (Adhikari 2006: 470). By creating legislation that treated racial and ethnic groups differently, a separation of these groups was also created. This division would continue throughout the labor, land and education laws and expand even further under Apartheid.

Political Organization (APO),<sup>23</sup> Coloured Men's Political and Protectorate Association, Afrikaanse Nasionale Bond (ANB),<sup>24</sup> National Liberation League (NLL),<sup>25</sup> and Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM)<sup>26</sup> enabled the representation of many voices within the diverse coloured population. Yet the APO was one of the most influential, and as Adhikari explains, although the organization advocated non-racial ideologies, in practice it sponsored separatist policies for coloureds (1993: 98). The APO's upholding of a coloured platform was based on their inferior position to whites despite their achievements or wealth (1993: 98). Furthermore, as party leaders realized the importance in maintaining a hierarchal position above black Africans, they worked to keep their distance. Adhikari suggests that since APO leaders recognized that the great difference and number of black Africans threatened white supremacy, coloureds emphasized their "civility" and similarity to the white settler background as a way to rise above blacks (1993: 99). Thus, although perhaps coloured political groups sought equality, more importantly, they fought to maintain a degree of order above the native black population that in fact reinforced racist ideologies of the early 20th century onwards. This complex positioning and racial thinking, as the following chapters in this dissertation attempt to demonstrate, not only enabled the deracination of racialized communities (including the

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<sup>23</sup> The APO was established in 1902 in Cape Town to unify the "Coloured Races of British South Africa," (Adhikari 1993: 93) essentially through the advocacy of quality education for coloured children and equality in voting for coloured men. It operated for almost 40 years (1993: 93). They adapted to European bourgeois culture and operated under the platform that civilization, as opposed to race, was that which should decide one's rights (1993: 95).

<sup>24</sup> The ANB was started in 1925 and was led by Cape nationalists to influence the Cape coloured population to support the National Party (Adhikari 1993: 94; Adhikari 1997: 128).

<sup>25</sup> The NLL was a radical movement founded in 1935. Associated with Trotskyists, it worked to form a servants' union in 1937 (Vanqa-Mgijima, et al. 2013: 287).

<sup>26</sup> The NEUM was created in 1943 by activists, who were labeled as Trotskyists by the South African Communist Party. It sought to create political solidarity as a way to combat white supremacy and to redistribute land (Kayser and Adhikari 2004: 319-320).

coloured community) but also boosted the very subjugating nationalisms that begat violence and discrimination as tools of such exclusion.

To subdue miscegenation and enable political segregation, legislation such as the 1927 Immorality Act and the 1936 Native Representation Bill was passed. The former prohibited sex between Africans and Europeans. This was part of broader laws aimed at controlling prostitution (Hyslop 1995: 65). It was amended in 1950 and 1957 to outlaw “immoral or indecent acts” to include sexual activity not limited to sexual intercourse and further regulate interaction between Europeans and non-Europeans (Wallenstein 2002: 252; Sachs 1973: 175-176). Trials under the Immorality Act were widely publicized, instilling shame and aiding the goal of racial purity (Sachs 1973: 176).

The Native Representation Bill separated Africans qualified to vote to a list where they were allowed to choose only three white parliamentary representatives (Van den Berghe 1970: 126). In their article written shortly after the bill was enacted, Stuhardt and Le Grange explain, “To cover those Europeans who have a slight touch of the tar brush, it is clear that when the present population of South Africa is to be sorted into “native” and ‘non-native’ groups, ancestry only as far back as the grandparents will be considered” (Stuhardt and Le Grange 1940: 209). Thus, unlike the “one-drop rule” in the U.S., enforcement of the legislation would not trace generations to distinguish between the two groups. This bill defined a native as:

- (a) any member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa, other than a race tribe or ethnic Union representing the remnants of a race or tribe of South Africa which has ceased to exist as a tribe or race;

(b) any person whose father or mother is or was a native in terms of paragraph (a);

(c) one who associates generally with natives under native conditions

(quoted in Stuhardt and Le Grange 1940: 208)

As Stuhardt and Le Grange argue, the bill worked to create a definitive line, but this proved impossible considering those “of mixed blood will always be able to take advantage of the civilization test and thus be allowed to cross the line” (1940: 209). They go on to explain the advantages of education and participation of some in politics demonstrated that they were not “void of innate ability” (1940: 209). Furthermore, through the racialized language of the time, their article points out the inconsistencies of defining race and argues colouredness is neither static nor monolithic and poses the question of women’s suffrage that enabled European women to vote but denied the rights to coloured women (1940: 210-211).<sup>27</sup>

The nature of the increasingly segregationist legislation was not only to advance white supremacy, but it was also to subdue the feared degradation of the white race due to miscegenation, which some feared would be the white man’s demise. This belief, to a lesser extent, was sometimes sustained in ostensibly liberal academic reports. Pierre van den Berghe compares the early engagement in interracial sex (largely in the form of rape

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<sup>27</sup> An interesting example of racialized language is the comparison Stuhardt and Le Grange use to explain the diversity of the Cape coloured. Based on “Miscegenation” by G. Findlay, they write, “Throughout the Cape definite strata in [the coloured people’s] make-up are evident. Differences which exist in physical characteristics are determined by: (a) Primary Miscegenation: the crossing of pure stocks. (b) Secondary Miscegenation: the crossing of the pure with the mixed stocks. (c) Tertiary Miscegenation: the union of different admixtures of mixed stocks” (1940: 209-210).

or prostitution of slaves)<sup>28</sup> to fearing “bastardization” in the 20th century as a shift from “paternalistic” to “competitive” racial relations. In his 1960 article “Miscegenation in South Africa,” he contends

Today, miscegenation is viewed by the vast majority of South African whites as a vile and debasing practice, indeed, almost as a form of bestiality. Preserving one’s “racial purity” is now regarded by most whites as a sacred duty, and is linked, illogically enough, with the survival of “Western Civilization.” Whether miscegenation decreased in frequency as consequence of this change in attitudes cannot be determined with certainty. Indeed, this feeling of revulsion is not incompatible, at deeper and more repressed level, with sexual attraction towards the woman of colour as the “forbidden fruit.” In any case what sexual relations continued to take place across racial lines became more clandestine, commercialized, transitory and probably less fertile (1960: 70-71).

He continues with his interesting choice of words and argues,

In 1955, only 11.3% of the Coloured population lived in the three northern provinces (Natal, Transvaal and the Orange Free State) where European settlement started around 1840. This fact indicates (though it does not

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<sup>28</sup> Or, as Van den Berghe later describes, “interracial concubinage” was regarded with “tolerance and amusement” (1960: 83).



prove) that miscegenation declined in the 19th and 20th centuries, or, at least, that interracial relations became more sterile (1960: 71).

Although Van den Berghe's report seems to be liberal,<sup>29</sup> the usage of "less fertile" and "sterile" proves problematic in its eugenic undertones. Furthermore, in analyzing figures presented in "Type of Relationship between Partners in 'Immorality' Cases, 1958-1960," he concludes that as only five out of 17 long-term relationships resulted in children, non-marital miscegenation in South Africa at the time was largely sterile and that although some women might have been pregnant, "it is doubtful that this factor affects the conclusion about the sterility of most unions" (1960: 80).

Van den Berghe's report shows the subtle reinforcement of eugenic ideologies that instill shame and fear in miscegenation. Such upholding of white supremacy and subjugation of coloureds is exemplified in his final conclusions that "Europeans are the most endogamous of the four groups, and the Coloureds the least so," and "Intermarriage is almost entirely confined to persons belonging to groups of adjacent or equivalent racial status, according to the South African 'pigmentocracy.' African-Coloured marriages alone account for over 3/4 of mixed unions in 1946" (1960: 84). Although he reports that less than one percent of marriages are interracial (1960: 83), these deductions locate Europeans as the most righteous and Coloureds as the least, and moreover, that coloureds and black Africans are equally low in the racial hierarchy.<sup>30</sup> His findings also imply that

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<sup>29</sup> Van den Berghe's progressive leanings are exemplified in his statement that "non-marital miscegenation is found more frequently among highly prejudiced Europeans who treat non-whites as tools for the white man's convenience, than among liberals preaching racial equality" (1960: 82). Also in his conclusion regarding age difference that "the white partner, whether male or female is dominant in the relationship, and is the 'sexual exploiter' of the non-white partner (1960: 83).

<sup>30</sup> Van den Berghe also writes, "The Coloureds on the other hand probably are the least 'corporate' of the four racial groups. They are a *residual* category in relation to the other groups. In language and religion

interracial couples cannot produce children, in accordance with the racist narratives that have long subjugated people of multiracial descent and have marked them as degenerates.

A contemporary example of the continual degradation of multiracial people can be seen in the term *mulatto*. It is not uncommonly used in Spanish- and English-speaking countries. As the word “mulatto” comes from the Spanish word for mule, usage historically denoted its “hybridity” and thus sterility marked its usefulness only as a beast of burden. Elsewhere I have argued, “Ironically, it is the imperialist man in his bout to conquer, who creates this ‘problem’ and paradoxically negative view of ‘mixing races’ or ‘impure blood.’ Although history perhaps is not considered when using such racial epithets, the racial significance still haunts and dehumanizes those of multiracial backgrounds regardless of their heritage” (Lytle 2012: 218-220). In his brilliant investigation, “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature,” Sander L. Gilman explains, “It was a fear not merely of interracial sexuality but of its results, the decline of the population. Interracial marriages were seen as exactly parallel to the barrenness of the prostitute; if they produced children at all, these children were weak and doomed” (Gilman 1985: 237). Such a view is expressed in the literature of Sarah Gertrude Millin in *God’s Stepchildren*, which advocated against racial mixing and portrayed the “tragic mulatto.”<sup>31</sup>

After decades of increasingly segregationist laws and heightened racist politics, the elections of 1948 resulted in the introduction of apartheid under the leadership of D.F.

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they are almost completely acculturated to the white group with which many Coloureds identify themselves. This lack of cultural distinctiveness coupled with the desire of many Coloureds to ‘marry white’ combine to make the Coloured group less endogamous than expected on the basis of their relative size” (1960: 74, emphasis added).

<sup>31</sup> Eugenics and the works of Gilman and Millin are further discussed in the following chapter.

Malan. Before 1948, there were no laws specifically against mixed marriages in the Union of South Africa or in earlier states, but in Transvaal, the separate marriage laws for whites and blacks made it impossible to validate interracial marriages, although those that were officiated in the other provinces were recognized (Hyslop 1995: 65). Among the first major legislation to be passed was prohibition of interracial marriages under the 1949 Mixed Marriages Act.<sup>32</sup> Then in 1950, the Population Registration Act, the backbone of apartheid, divided people into three racial classifications: White, Black and Coloured. The category of Coloured was officially created and defined as follows:

(iii) “coloured person” means a person who is not a white person or a native;

(x) “native” means a person who in fact is or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe<sup>33</sup>

(xv) “white person” means a person who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person...

19. (1) A person who in appearance obviously is a white person shall for the purposes of this Act be presumed to be a white person until the contrary is proved.

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<sup>32</sup> 1948 Asiatic Law Amendment Act repealed the 1946 Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act that granted Transvaal and Natal Indians the right to elect whites as representation. Coloureds, however, still kept the right to have their own coloured representatives. See Index II for a list of selected apartheid legislation.

<sup>33</sup> It is important to note that Native, Black, African and Bantu were all used interchangeably during apartheid.

## –1950 Population Registration Act (excerpts)

This act defined coloureds through what they are not: neither white nor black. Moreover, those who were classified Coloured or Native were further divided “according to the ethnic or other group to which he belongs” (5.1 Population Registration Act). Furthermore, as Deborah Posel points out, a clause that states “habits, education and speech, deportment and demeanour in general shall be taken into account,” highlighted the emphasis placed on both physical and social signs in considering racial appearance (Posel 2001: 56). She argues that “appearance” and “general acceptance” were the two determining factors of race, with the latter a defining factor in distinguishing Coloured from White. In 1959 Indians were categorized under their own separate racial group through an amendment to the Population Registration Act. The Act was also amended in 1962 and 1964 to further emphasize physical appearance for discrepancies with cases of “passing” or “playing white,” and later “descent again to prevent assimilation” (Clark and Worger 2013: 49). Race was also determined through education, employment, religious beliefs, language, friendships, sports and even food and drinks (Posel 2001: 60-62). Furthermore, marriage could force the reclassification of some such as if a Coloured married a Native, as in the case of Sandra Laing, who will be discussed in chapter five.

In 1959 Proclamation 46 created seven Coloured subcategories: Cape Coloured, Malay, Griqua, Chinese, Indian, Other Asiatic, and Other Coloured (Erasmus and Park 2008: 100), creating Others and even an Other of Others in the Coloured classification, which essentially was an Other to the black/white binary used in apartheid categorization. Thus, there was a hierarchy within the Coloured classification, inciting the group to

“regulate” itself through de facto discrimination in the concept of apartheid, whose concept was to promote and instill racial hierarchy and separation. Moreover, as suggested by Posel, the creation of such harsh racial legislation promoted anxiety and fear of racial mixing so that this propaganda also affected other groups. She argues, “Such hierarchies of privilege and reward attached to the racial classification exercise extended the anxieties of race more widely, particularly within Coloured communities. Many of the appeals from people who considered themselves Coloured but were classified as 'native' speak of the ‘deep sense of shame’ felt by those who found themselves officially downgraded a rung on the country's racial ladder” (Posel 2001: 66). Furthermore, by defining differences in terms of race and insinuating levels of superiority,<sup>34</sup> ruling Whites were able to set the groups against each other, resulting in the native majority at the lowest social order. As the Coloured group was rather diverse, its separate and group identities proved complex, as will be further extrapolated throughout this dissertation.

Apartheid ideology aimed at constructing boundaries that would ensure each designated racial category recognized and adhered to its place, which was marked geographically, socially, politically and economically (Posel 2001: 52). Thus, with legislation to dictate and police how a race should act and where a member should live, such racial ideologies were persistent and often repeated, which meant that people within a certain category or in a lower racial strata were marginalized by non-Whites. According to Adhikari, the “strong emotional attachment to whiteness was a product not only of the

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<sup>34</sup> For example, in early apartheid, the 1948 Asiatic Law Amendment Act No. 47 allowed Indians in Transvaal and Natal to elect white representatives (O'Malley, “Pre-Transition”), and in the later years the Tricameral Parliament included Coloureds, Indians, and Whites but not Blacks to represent their respective groups.

belief that western culture was superior but also of the assumption that their acculturation legitimated coloured peoples' claims to full citizenship rights" (2006: 476). This urge to gain acceptance demonstrated that inclusion into a white dominated society mattered more than color (2006: 475), and bourgeois values and lifestyle were emphasized. The possibility of upward social mobility led to some even changing their identity. For example, to avoid the ensuring subjugation of being classified as Coloured, some who had lighter phenotypes reclassified themselves as white. This process, referred to as "playing white" in South Africa involved giving up one's past completely: cutting ties with old friends and family members, leaving one's neighborhood and culture behind, changing one's identity and constantly living in a performance of fabricated whiteness. Such an endless performance included not only the physical aspects such as using skin bleachers and hair straighteners and avoiding the sun and dampness, but it also included social interactions and behaviorisms that mimicked that which was thought to be "white" behavior and speech, all under the unremitting fear of being discovered.<sup>35</sup>

Not every coloured person felt the need to play white or assimilate, but most were aware of their position in the racial hierarchy. This understanding led some to feel the need to protect their intermediate status and stress a distinct coloured identity, such as equating colouredness with being "brown" (Adhikari 2006: 478-80). Moreover, their status as a minority in addition to the lack of political power perpetuated the fear of being "lowered" to a black or African status. For this reason, the European ancestry and/or culture of coloureds was sometimes emphasized not only by the group itself, but by those who seemingly supported them. For example, Mary Attlee, sister of former British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, discussed coloureds and their close relation to Europeans:

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<sup>35</sup> The perpetual surveillance and self-surveillance of playing white will be discussed in chapter four.

“Some of them have gone overseas for advanced education and returned to South Africa as doctors, teachers, clergymen, and lawyers, having appreciated the cultured life of England, and feeling very deeply being cut off from European society on their return to South Africa” (1947: 149). She later questions the discrimination they experience asking, “Is it any wonder that these people grow up with an inferiority complex?” (1947: 149). Interestingly enough, this is questioned after her explanation of the importance of coloureds in South African society: “These people, despised and rejected, contribute very greatly to the prosperity of the European people. There are large suburbs of South African cities with prosperous European households entirely dependent for domestic help on the women and girls of the coloured population” (1947: 148). As a European, Attlee could somewhat identify with the “positive,” European attributes, and simultaneously she was unable to ignore the “negative,” African status of coloured.

White domination coupled with *swart gevaar*, or black peril, was also a factor in supporting coloured. Abe Desmore’s speech to League of Coloured Peoples in London is noteworthy in demonstrating the British stance and influence on this position. He concludes, “If, however, white South Africa continues to reject the claims of the Coloured people for equal treatment, they will unhesitatingly side with the Bantu and play a leading role among that restless multitude of black people that will bode no good for white domination in South Africa” (Desmore 1937: 356).

As many coloureds were subjugated because of their native roots, some placed less stress on or even denied their African or slave heritage, of which some felt ashamed, and more emphasis on the white European ties which thus reinforced coloured self-identity in terms of apartheid (Adhikari 2006: 480). Since colouredness was not affiliated

with positive qualities (2006: 481), it created a stigma on being racially mixed. It is this shame that continues to pervade coloured identities, even after the end of apartheid.

Wicomb writes:

Miscegenation, the origins of which lie within a discourse of ‘race’, concupiscence, and degeneracy, continues to be bound up with shame, a pervasive shame exploited in apartheid’s strategy of the naming of a Coloured race, and recurring in the current attempts by coloureds to establish brownness as a pure category, which is to say a denial of shame. We do not speak about miscegenation; it is after all the very nature of shame to stifle its own discourse (1998b: 92)

#### **IV. Apartheid and Control**

In the 1930s Nazi propaganda and eugenic literature<sup>36</sup> also influenced Afrikaner nationalist and racist ideologies. Saul Dubow argues that in addition to warning against miscegenation, eugenicist Gerrie Eloff created the notion of the *boerevolk* as of unique biology and distinctive race, pointing to their northern European heritage and ability to adapt well to the South African climate (1992: 227). Eloff’s theories were published in a book and became a part of the nationalist movement and mythology that promoted the

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<sup>36</sup> For centuries, eugenics has been used to argue the superiority of a particular group over another. Most notably, in Chapter Four (III.i), this dissertation discusses eugenicists starting in the 18th century. In the 20th century, eugenic-based policies were not uncommon. For example, in Western Australia A.O. Neville pushed for what would become the *Native Administration Act of 1936*, which prevented sexual relations between “Europeans” and Aborigines, prohibited intermarriage and required Aborigines to have permission to marry (Short 2008: 90). Neville believed that eventually Aborigines would die out, and those who were considered “half-castes” would be “bred out,” which was ensured by the removal of children and the consideration of all children under the age of 21 as property of the Department of Native Affairs (Short 2008: 90).



superiority of the Boers, whose purity must be protected and who must reproduce with other white races (1992: 227). L.J. du Plessis promoted Eloff's ideas and Pretoria University sociology professor Geoff Cronjé applied these theories to support the importance of "pure" Boer blood and the duty of Boers to watch over non-white races, both of which could be done through apartheid (1992: 229). Moreover, the adoption of a "Missionary Policy," which emphasized segregation in 1935, played an important role in establishing bases for what would become apartheid. Furthermore, as Saul Dubow contends, Christian nationalism became more of a collective concept as opposed to an individual one. He explains, "The Afrikaners' 'traditional' fear of *gelykstelling* (equalization) was said to have originated in their aversion to *rasservermenging* (miscegenation). Notably, separation was justified on 'traditional' and historical rather than theological grounds" (Dubow 1992: 214).

Ethnic tensions were further generated by the First and Second World Wars. World War I saw a drop in gold prices and thus an increase in mining costs, causing employers seeking to weaken the color bar<sup>37</sup> and replace white workers with cheap black labor (Krikler :41; Marx 1998: 99). The white workers went on strike, known as the Rand Revolt, and Prime Minister Jan Smuts sent in armed forces, killing approximately 220 (Marx 1998: 99). This brought about more ethnic and class friction among whites and contributed to the election of Afrikaner J.B.M. Hertzog of the National Party as Prime Minister, leading to more stringent racialized policies and cautioning against *swart gevaar* (1998: 99-100). Jeremy Krikler illustrates the impact of the Rand Revolt:

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<sup>37</sup> The 1926 Mines and Works Amendment Act, also known as the Colour Bar Act, enabled discrimination based on color in occupations that required special skills and responsibilities (Stuhardt and Le Grange 1940: 207).

It was a time when red flags, red rosettes and a highly-developed class consciousness jostled with racial idioms and ideology in a movement that linked racial privileges for white workers with a campaign against capitalist prerogatives ... Central to that notion [for which strikers fought] was an order in which white *labour* would have a special claim, one that protected it from the cost-cutting operations of capital (Krikler 2005: 52).

In other words, the white workers should be immune to being replaced by black workers who were much lower paid and not unionized (Krikler 2005: 52).

Antagonism between the Afrikaners and British continued into the World War II era, with many Afrikaners in disagreement in fighting in a war against Germany, for this was against the notion of white unity (Marx 1998: 102). Regardless, non-whites continued to suffer with more racial legislation being enacted such as the 1930 Native Urban Areas Amendment Act, the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act<sup>38</sup> and the 1936 Native Representation Act (Marx 1998: 102; Van den Berghe 1970: 126). The latter two were Hertzog's solution to the "native problem" (Van den Berghe 1970: 126). Apartheid solutions were a way to protect labor power of the white working class, but as Hermann Giliomee explains, more important was upholding Afrikaner identity. He contends,

The appeal of the apartheid platform to classes such as the workers and the farmers was no doubt an important factor in attracting support for the National Party, but equally important were the party's demands for South

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<sup>38</sup> The Native Trust and Land Act separated white and black rural areas, purchased reserve land through the South African Native Trust (SANT) and created a system for controlling land tenants that enabled evictions ("Control").

African national independence, its promotion of Afrikaner business interests, and its championing of the Afrikaans culture. Or to put it differently, apart from ‘putting the Kaffer in his place,’ 1948 also meant to the Afrikaners—particularly the professionals, educators and civil servants—‘getting *our* country back’ or ‘feeling at home once again in *our* country’ (Giliomee 1995: 199).

Giliomee goes on to explain that the dominant ideology was *volkseenheid*, or folk unity, and it surpassed classisms and regionalisms (1995: 200-201). As ethnic identifications heightened, so did apartheid ideologies leading to the aforementioned Mixed Marriages Act, Population Registration Act, and a further amended Immorality Act.

Additionally, the Group Areas Act passed in 1950 (and amended on many occasions) sectioned off areas for each color classification to live, requiring permits for ownership and occupation of land and meaning Coloureds and Indians who were living in an area designated for Whites were forced to leave or were removed (Van den Berghe 1965: 128; Matas 1994: 90). According to the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), a combined total of 5,410 housing units for Whites; 14,195 units for Coloureds and 3,376 units for Indians were built by the Community Development Board and local authorities in 1971 for those who qualified.<sup>39</sup> These numbers indicate a great shortage in houses, which were very small “matchbox” houses, with the sub-economic units being substandard (SAIRR 1972: 131). Furthermore, the private sector built 20,908 houses for Whites; 3,344 for Coloureds and 804 for Indians (SAIRR 1972: 129-130). Natives were

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<sup>39</sup> Qualifications were divided into sub-economic, lower-economic, economic and higher-economic housing (SAIRR 1972: 129).

not included in the figures since they were regulated by the Department of Bantu Administration and Development (SAIRR 1972: 130).

In an article entitled “The Crime—Apartheid: The Group Areas Act,” Muriel Horrell, a research officer for SAIRR, describes the situation as “disproportion in sacrifice.” She writes, “Non-Whites are, naturally, resentful because so many of them but so few Whites are affected by the group areas proclamations. In many towns the entire built-up area has been allocated to Whites” (1963: 11). She portrays the economic and working hardships by explaining the difficult situations of waiters who, with only a few hours off per day, would not be able to return home to rest, since their homes would be located too far away and too expensive to travel to in terms of transport. Her piece was published in a newsletter for the Black Sash, a white women’s organization aimed at speaking out against apartheid by embarrassing Nationalist politicians and attracting media. They protested in front of Parliament buildings and provided legal advice to non-white Africans who encountered problems with the law (Thompson 205).

Under the Group Areas Act, the multicultural, multiracial District Six in Cape Town was declared a White area, resulting in nearly 60,000 residents, most of whom were coloured, being forced to leave or forcibly removed between 1966 and 1982 into designated townships<sup>40</sup> (Jackson 2003: 62, Beyers 2009: 79). No one would redevelop until District Six and several neighboring areas were officially declared “free settlement areas,” which meant they could be purchased by anyone. However, most Coloureds felt that the redevelopment would render the properties inaccessible to former residents. The

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<sup>40</sup> For more on coloured removals under the Group Areas Act, see Trotter, Henry 2009. Although major dislocations were through force under apartheid, as seen in an analysis of Wicomb’s short story “Neighbours,” dislocations can occur within a community or even a family.

lack of agreement between property owners, developers, former residents, and municipal officials kept the area locked in struggle for more than 20 years (Jackson 2003: 63), and a large portion of the area is still undeveloped (Beyers 2009: 79). In “Identity and forced displacement: community and coloured in District Six,” Christiaan Beyers explains that although initially multiracial, District Six’s post-apartheid memory is that of a coloured space or as liberal media put it, “coloured homeland” (2009: 79, 84). He argues that there, “the impetus for identity construction comes from the deep sense of injustice of forced removals, and a rupture with a past way of life, as well as the possibility of restitution” (2009: 83). His research demonstrates the complexities of coloured identities in relation to District Six through: a 1974 general memorandum where Coloureds deny pre-colonial origins and refer to themselves as “step-children” as a way to gain attention from and perhaps find a common ground with Whites (2009: 85-86); the nostalgia for gangsterism that was “innate to the coloured people,” as illustrated in the autobiographies of Noor Ebrahim’s *Noor’s Story: My Life in District Six* (1999) and Hettie Adams’s *William Street, District Six* (1988) (2009: 90); and the exclusion of Africans in the memory of District Six (2009: 93-99).

Other legislation that escalated the apartheid plan to create a separate, white-dominated South Africa include the 1952 Pass laws<sup>41</sup> that required all Natives to carry passbooks and limited their movement and the 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, which was passed to legalize the already present signs that created “Whites Only” areas after a court ruled it was unconstitutional if the areas were not equal (Thompson 1990: 190). Moreover, as such laws mostly targeted Blacks, some Coloureds sought to

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<sup>41</sup> Also known as the 1952 Natives Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act. For more information, see Index III.

maintain or uphold their higher social position through social marginalization. Adhikari points out the use of variations on the word “brown,” such as *bruinman*, *bruin man*, and *bruin Afrikaner* or *kluerling* (coloured) exemplifies the desire to express an identity of color that was distinguished from black and more closely related to white in the use of Afrikaans as a medium<sup>42</sup> (Adhikari 2006: 478). The underscoring of a higher-than-Black status and promoting such a concept of colouredness were due to anxieties of losing even more rights under apartheid and being lowered to the level of Blacks (2006: 478). Thus, as Coloureds were oppressed through racist ideologies, they also participated in such prejudices and subjugation, leading to the perpetuation and instilling of apartheid values.

## Conclusion

As I hope to have been able to convey in this section, the area of southern Africa has undergone violent, drastic changes, starting with the landing of the first colonizers in the 17th century. Not only was the land physically affected through settling, building and later mining, but spaces were also gendered and racialized. Moreover, the population of the southern Africa was also altered through colonization and imperialism that introduced different peoples and cultures through the violence of slavery and human trafficking. In addition, the presence of diverse cultures, the discovery of precious minerals and stones and the desire for power and white supremacy were among the major aspects that led to

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<sup>42</sup> Language was also a large part of coloured identity. As Adhikari points out, although Cape Dutch was the major language of the coloured community, coloured elitists spoke more English. He contends, “In general English enjoyed far greater prestige amongst coloureds because it was an international language with a rich literature and was identified as the language of ‘culture,’ ‘civilization’ and ‘progress.’ Most importantly, there was a general perception that proficiency in English held much better prospects for social and occupational advancement. The emergent Afrikaans language, on the other hand, was derided as a ‘vulgar patois fit only for the kitchen’ because it lacked a formal grammar or a significant literature” (1993: 95). Adhikari also notes that English was correlated with racial tolerance and liberal values whereas Cape Dutch was linked to racism and the lower and working classes (1993: 95).

segregation and eventually apartheid. All were historical, traumatic factors that shaped what is present-day South Africa, and in particular regard to this dissertation, what is now the coloured community. Thus in many ways, the intricacies involved in the construction of the coloured category, were based on racial ideologies engendered through religious beliefs and historic and scientific “truths” created with a white supremacist mindset.

Yet it must be reiterated that in no way do I wish to convey that there is one set coloured identity or that it is static. On the contrary, as with most identities, coloured identities are multifarious and always changing. In order to better extrapolate upon this, this section included some of the factors that have contributed to the subjugation, displacement and later nationalism that pushed some to fight against and others to hide from apartheid in what I refer to as deraciNation.

As the coloured racial category was slowly constructed and then legislatively designated under apartheid, many who were labeled as and identified with coloured were steadily—and sometimes precipitously—pushed into the borderlands or racialized spaces between White and Native. Using the notion of deraciNation in looking at the borderlands in Zoë Wicomb’s works, the following chapters aim to explore the intricacies of coloured identities amid the generations of violence, trauma and nationalism upheld through racism, colonialism, imperialism and patriarchy. Not only do her works illustrate coloured experiences, they serve as accounts of coloured histories, which are lacking in representations. Wicomb argues this absence of accounts perpetuates shame. She writes:

This failure or inability to represent our history in popular forms and consequently the total erasure of slavery from the folk memory

presumably has its roots in shame: shame for our origins of slavery, shame for the miscegenation, and shame, as colonial racism became institutionalized for being black, so that with the help of our European names we have lost all knowledge of our Xhosa, Indonesian, East African or Khoi origins. (Wicomb 1998: 100)

Finally, as experiences are different, there can be no essential coloured identity, an argument that I hope to make clear through an exploration of Wicomb's works. In discussing the complexity of creating a fixed meaning of the term "coloured," Wicomb explains, it "exemplifies postmodernity in its shifting allegiances, its duplicitous play between the written capitalization and speech that denies or at least does not reveal the act of renaming—once again the silent inscription of shame" (Wicomb in Attridge and Jolly 1998: 93-94). Perhaps it is through literature that not only can lesser-known stories be transmitted but also a better understanding of communities that have been marginalized for centuries be reached, and moreover, the shame be replaced with colorful stories that celebrate the multiple histories and identities of the community without reinforcing racial constructs.



## **CHAPTER THREE: Theoretical Framework**

### **I. Introduction**

As I have attempted to convey in the previous chapter, the construction of “coloured” in South Africa is highly complex. Moreover, there is no one set coloured identity but there are multiple coloured identities, which are not concrete but always changing. It is generally agreed upon that race is a social construct (Young 1995: 90-117), and it has been strongly but erroneously argued many times that the election of President Barack Obama brought the U.S. into a post-racial era. Yet racialized and racist images are still notably present in the mass media and in public arenas such as in opposition rallies. Even heads of state have commented on President Obama’s “color” (Donadio 2008: “Obama Joke”). Perhaps these factors contributed to his choice of checking the “black” box under race in the 2010 U.S. Census (Roberts and Baker 2010: “Obama Checks Black”). Could this be a statement that no matter what he chooses to call himself, he will always be viewed black?, reminiscent Fanon’s “Look, A Negro!” (2008: 93). Does his self-description of black make his mother’s whiteness and white background any less important? Are these questions even relevant?

The example of Obama represents a marker of how racial discourse has changed. It also raises questions in an international arena as to how race is considered in a world that has seen the election of a black U.S. President to two terms and the mourning of the loss of a great leader, Nelson Mandela, who was once considered a terrorist. Is the world still stuck in this black/white binary, or is it ready to break free and open the borderlands between two extremes? This section looks at the construction of such binaries and the

resulting oppression, particularly in the construction and representation of the coloured community of South Africa. Here, I extrapolate on the main themes of this dissertation, deraciNation and the borderlands, and I explain how I apply them in my analysis of Wicomb's creative writings.

## **II. What is DeraciNation?**

The Oxford English Dictionary defines deracination as “the uprooting of someone from their natural geographical, social, or cultural environment” (“deracination” 2014 OED). Deracinated peoples are, for example, migrants, the dislocated or those forced into slavery or exile. Although deracination refers to the removal from one's roots, I employ the term deraciNation to highlight such removal in the name of nation. Here, nation can be a country such as South Africa; an ethnic group such as the Zulus, a community such as the coloured of South Africa, a neighborhood or an imagined community. Each of these groups share a set of common cultural, social or locational characteristics complete with rules (stated or unstated) that allow one to be considered a member. Through various events, one may then be expelled from the group and as a result, deracinated.

I also use deraciNation in the sense of what Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou describe as dispossession. Athanasiou argues it “involves the subject's relation to norms, its mode of becoming by means of assuming and resignifying injurious interpellations and impossible passions” (Athanasiou 2013: 2). In this way, deraciNation can mark the dispossession of one's body from one's self, as in the case of sexual violence and rape or in militaristic activities where the body becomes property of the nation and possibly resulting in displacement from oneself through patriarchal oppression. Such dislocation

occurred during apartheid and in the Struggle against it, as will be discussed in this dissertation. Through both her creative and critical writings, Wicomb calls attention to such occurrences, showing they can happen in larger, evident sites of oppression (apartheid South Africa) and in more secretive or inconspicuous locations (within the Struggle).

DeraciNation is also characterized after the fall of apartheid. As shown in *Playing in the Light*, for example, John and Helen Campbell become deracinated from their families through “playing white” which although it is a choice they make, is an implication of apartheid. Their performance of course affects their child Marion, who becomes displaced from her socio-cultural environment after learning that she has a coloured heritage rather than the English-Afrikaner background that she was taught she had. Through *Playing in the Light*, *David’s Story* and Wicomb’s short stories in *The One that Got Away*, truth, reconciliation and memory are common tropes that affect the deraciNation the characters experience.

In a transnational setting, deraciNation is illustrated in the short story “In the Botanic Gardens” when Arthur, a South African exchange student, disappears in Glasgow. It is uncertain whether or not Arthur is in exile, yet his yearning to be in his land is implied from his frequent visits to the botanic gardens that are modeled to represent his homeland. When his mother travels to Scotland to look for her son, she finds that there is no real investigation, leaving the suspicion that there are outside forces involved in Arthur’s disappearance. In the story “The One that Got Away,” objects are also displaced or lost, as shown through the misplacement, defacing and dislocating of a

library book, representing histories and herstories that are written, misrepresentative, destructive and disseminated across the world.

DeraciNation can also cover the alienation one experiences in his or her own home, as in John in *Playing in the Light* and Jeff in “Neighbours.” The latter character places great importance on land and protects the sanctity of his neighborhood through imposing rules. Jeff later has an accident and loses part of his memory. Not only is he alienated by his memory loss, his own wife essentially rejects him after seeing him as an “eejit,” displacing him from Self to Other. In this way, he is uprooted from his wife and his community, which he also rejects, leading to a question of belonging and remarking on how radically one’s position can change.

As I have tried to show, not all circumstances of dislocation in Wicomb’s fiction are similar nor are they the result of violent forces. Other cases in point are those of Andrew le Fleur who led the Griquas in search of their own Griqua nation apart from the blacks and whites, which is explored in *David’s Story*,<sup>43</sup> or in Frieda’s choice to study abroad in England and her somewhat alienating return in *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town*.<sup>44</sup> DeraciNation in this dissertation also points to the authoritative notions of race and nation involved in the concept of community. Both race and nation, along with class, have been major factors in the inclusion and exclusion of people in the coloured community, and the question of who is both able and permitted to belong has been

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<sup>43</sup> Andrew le Fleur led the Griquas on treks in search of a land especially for Griquas and others of mixed-race descent. His quest to establish a separate nation resulted in settlements such as present-day Beeswater, but ultimately ended in failure. Wicomb reinvents the story of le Fleur, showing his illusions of grandeur and prophet-like persona. For more information, see Edgar and Sanders (1982). Also see the following chapter of this dissertation under “Deracing Nations” for an analysis of le Fleur in Wicomb’s *David’s Story*.

<sup>44</sup> Frieda leaves South Africa to study abroad in England. Upon her return, she feels alienated and displaced. For more information, see the following chapter under “Home Lost” and “De/parting the Lands.”

constructed and changed throughout the centuries since the first Europeans arrived in southern Africa.<sup>45</sup>

Such admission and denial have also been contingent upon conformity to community standards, and which include requisites like physical or linguistic obedience. For example, as racial legislation in colonial and apartheid South Africa helped engender shame in certain physical characteristics such as the straightness of hair, consequently physical non-conformity and compliance can be exemplified through the fixation with hair. Curly hair was a symbol of blackness, and for coloureds, it could mean a lower position in the gradient of colouredness. Moreover, hair texture was used as a way of determining racial classification during apartheid, particularly using the infamous pencil test.<sup>46</sup> During the Black Power Movement, the Struggle and even today, a disconformity to straightening hair through the wearing of natural hairstyles such as Afros has been a symbol of black beauty and pride. Attempts at physical compliance are also exemplified through the use of skin lightening creams and weight control.<sup>47</sup>

Linguistic obedience and language identity are explored in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* where English skills are particularly emphasized as a way to get a better

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<sup>45</sup> Note that coloured populations exist throughout the region. For example, the Basters are still in present-day Namibia after settling there in 1868 during a trek north. This group was formerly known as the Baasters, Dutch for “bastards,” and a part of this group became the Griquas. They changed their name following the advice of Scottish missionary and explorer John Campbell, who warned them the name was derogatory (Hastings, 2004: 216).

<sup>46</sup> For an analysis of hair texture, including how it was affected by apartheid legislation, see “Bringing Dark Secrets to Light” in Chapter V.

<sup>47</sup> An example of physical conformity through the female body is seen in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* when Frieda's father encourages her to eat: “you must grow up to be big and strong. We are not paupers with nothing to eat. Your mother was thin and sickly, didn't eat enough. You don't want cheekbones that jut out like a Hottentot's” (Wicomb 1987: 24); however, the consequences are the discomfort she feels from her “slow-motion, elephantine, as [her] lumbering thighs rub together” (Wicomb 1987: 52). In this case, his demand is an implication of the desire to show wealth above other Coloureds and Blacks, treating his daughter's body as a symbol; however, as they were all forced to relocate to the Coloured district, social class did not necessarily matter in the broader sense of Apartheid. Physical compliance is also exemplified through the performance of whiteness, as illustrated in *Playing in the Light*, which is examined in the following two chapters.

education and position in life. As coloureds typically spoke Afrikaans, English was a way to open doors and possibly leave South Africa and its restrictive laws. Moreover, English served as an alternative and sometimes a rebellion against the authority of Afrikaner culture since language was a decisive feature in cultural identity. Despite being at a hierarchal disadvantage for being Coloured, Frieda is fortunate enough to start studying at a private white school that has decided to allow the admission of coloureds, which was not usual during apartheid. As her father wanted the best for his daughter, he did all he could to ensure she would get the best education since “ignorance, laziness and tobacco have been the downfall of [coloured people]. It is our duty to God to better ourselves, to use our brains, our talents, not to place our lamps under the bushels” (Wicomb 1987: 32). In addition to providing her with a private education, her father ensures she does not “lower” herself and forbids her to make friends with people outside of her class, such as with Henry Hendrikse, who is also coloured but attends the Afrikaans high school. Later in the novel, Frieda runs into Henry after years of being in England and finds herself uncomfortable and feeling guilty, as if she has left her country and culture behind: “Now his contempt will be a grown-up silence. Or his words, in a language I ought to know, will fall on my uncomprehending ears. Or perhaps I, sealed off from the eloquent world around me, will not be worthy of his notice” (Wicomb 1987: 117). Although Frieda has studied abroad in England and is well educated, she lacks knowledge about her own country, and her distance from South African culture makes her feel alienated. This is further emphasized when she mistakes Xhosa for Zulu when she hears Henry talking (Wicomb 1987: 119; Richards 2005: 24). By contrasting Frieda’s alienated disposition with Henry’s comfort and knowledge in their homeland, Wicomb represents different

coloured identities while questioning the superficial linguistic hierarchies that are present in daily life, even among old friends.

As Henry can speak English and native languages in addition to Afrikaans, he represents a different coloured identity: a freedom fighter. His position, however, creates mixed feelings among other coloureds that see him as either suspicious and someone who should be avoided or as an inspiration for solidarity with black liberation. Wicomb explains:

That black nationalist struggles gained an unstable popularity amongst coloureds is not simply a matter of postmodern skepticism of grand narratives of emancipation. There is the question of language or the ways in which political discourse relates to the figuration of colouredness in cultural texts. For instance, apartheid education ensured coloureds don't speak indigenous languages, and the Soweto uprising of 1976, characterized as a revolt against Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor, produced a movement amongst coloureds in the Cape to rescue their first language from its association with oppression. (Wicomb 1998b: 97)

The Soweto Uprising, which began on June 16, 1976, started as a demonstration against legislation that would require Afrikaans to be used as the language of instruction. The protest soon turned violent as police began shooting into the crowd of students killing many (the numbers vary from the hundreds to the thousands, as accurate records were not

kept). This led to a number of demonstrations throughout the country and is now commemorated as a national holiday on June 16, known as Youth Day in South Africa. Moreover, as Wicomb explains, it persuaded some to promote Kaaps as a “racialized variety of Afrikaans [and] as a literary language ... to assert a discursive space for an oppositional colouredness that aligned itself with the black liberation struggle” (Wicomb 1998b: 97). Therefore, mixed-race identity was not only dependent on the cultures and ethnicities that make up a given racial category; it could arguably be constructed and identified through language and the way the language is spoken or used.

DeraciNation is thus a trope that explores the displacement of people from their lands and communities with an emphasis on the intersection of violence and power with race and gender that are contingent upon the overall, sometimes tyrannical, notion of Nation. Nation thus encompasses multiple meanings to include bordered areas such as South Africa or Scotland, which are the main settings of Wicomb’s stories, or a broader, malleable concept of community or a group of people with common identities or goals. Of course nation becomes tyrannical when, in its name, one becomes dispossessed of his or her land, body, identities, power, etc. Athanasiou argues, “dispossession works as an authoritative and often paternalistic apparatus of controlling and appropriating the spatiality, mobility, affectivity, potentiality, and relationality of (neo-)colonized subjects” (2013: 11). Therefore, through such control, the Nation can dispossess individuals and essentially take over lives.



### III. What are the Borderlands?

Gloria Anzaldúa describes the borderlands as “physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy” (1999: 19). Geographically she refers to the border area between the U.S. (Texas) and Mexico, yet she does not restrict the borderlands here. She uses the metaphor of *la herida abierta*, the open wound, and describes it as “a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary [that] is in a constant state of transition” (1999: 25). Those who inhabit the borderlands are the “prohibited and forbidden, ... those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the ‘normal’” (1999: 25). Anzaldúa poetically illustrates the difficulty of living between such distinctive, commanding spaces. Moreover, with her concept of the new mestiza, she calls for a reconsideration of the borderlands, which are not empty but lively, culturally interactive spaces. Anzaldúa’s borderlands argued for an acceptance of distinctive, sometimes-clashing cultures that created binaries, and its application is still very much valid as not only many of these binaries have yet to be overcome, but they are also sometimes strengthening. Just as there is still racial strife at the border of Texas and Mexico, the separating prejudices are still very real in areas such as South Africa.

This dissertation applies a reading of Anzaldúa’s concept of the borderlands to selected creative writings of Zoë Wicomb. Her works have a focus on the coloured community before, during and after apartheid. Her first three published works, *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town*, *David’s Story* and *Playing in the Light* are primarily set in South Africa with some traveling to Europe, while the stories in *The One that Got Away* take

place in both South Africa and Scotland. Through an exploration of such cultural and geographical locations, the borderlands in Wicomb's works stretch far across national, communal, cultural, racial and temporal boundaries to encompass greater aspects of coloured identities and postcoloniality.

My interpretation of the borderlands in Wicomb's literature does not pinpoint an exact location but spotlights areas such as the spaces of home, neighborhood and nation such as, but not limited to, a territory or a cultural community that contribute to and reflect the construction of coloured identities. Furthermore, this dissertation finds relevant factors such as violence, both external and internal, that build separating fences that prevent the expansion of *la frontera*<sup>48</sup> as a pluralist space, impeding the formation of a more inclusive, welcoming area. It is such inclusion rather than exclusion in the borderlands that sets the path to freedom, and only through the deconstruction of patriarchal narratives and the assertion of herstories may doors be truly opened.

*La herida abierta* found in Wicomb are David's green eyes (Wicomb 2000: 12) that represent the history and shame placed on the coloured community through miscegenation or the green-eyed paperweight that represents the dead weight and watchful eye of patriarchy holding Bev down (Wicomb 2008: 133). For Helen, childbirth and motherhood during apartheid in a constant state of surveillance represent the open wound. Yet in such situations, *las heridas abiertas* begin to close with the fall of apartheid; however, caution must be taken to prevent the continual oozing of pus from pain created through factors such as racism, patriarchy, violence and shame. Thus, as I hope to demonstrate, Wicomb's stories and characters lay bare the horror and injustices

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<sup>48</sup> *La frontera*, translates to "the border" in Spanish; however, Anzaldúa describes it as where two distinctive cultures meet, overlap and interplay, as mentioned in the beginning of the section.

that have happened, while problematizing actions that might keep the pain alive, preventing wounds from healing. Thus, although it is essential to understand the his/herstorical narratives, it is crucial to not dwell on the traumas of the past that would in effect prevent progression.

A conceivable difficulty in locating the borderlands lies in the severity of *las heridas abiertas* and the threat of causing further harm to those wounds that have already begun to heal but remain open. Wicomb's novels caution against the possible creation of risks and resulting wounds that whisper the screams of apartheid. These concerns are expressed through, for instance, the juxtaposition of characters in their ideologies and actions that lead to similar consequences of oppression while under the cover of equality, such as the rape and torture of female guerillas by their comrades in Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC, or the search of a separate racial nation by Andrew le Fleur. Furthermore, although apartheid has ended in South Africa, it is not to say that the borderlands have opened up and the nations (or Nation) are all welcoming, as in the dream of Desmond Tutu's call for a Rainbow Nation. On the contrary, the rebuilding is still underway with the weight of the traumas of apartheid and the present, ongoing violence.

### **Location of Borderland Culture**

The application of the concept of borderlands in this dissertation differs from Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity. In *The Location of Culture* he explains,

the moment of aesthetic distance that provides the narrative with a double edge, which like the coloured South African subject represents a hybridity, a difference 'within', a subject that inhabits the rim of an 'in-between' reality. And the inscription of this borderline existence inhabits a stillness of time and a strangeness of framing that creates the discursive 'image' at the crossroads of history and literature, bridging the home and the world. (2005: 19)

Here, Bhabha refers to a passage in *My Son's Story* (1990) by South African author Nadine Gordimer. Use of the word "borderline" suggests a negative connotation (i.e. borderline personality, borderline remarks) or better, a characteristic that is debatable or not necessarily acceptable. Furthermore, the idea of a "stillness of time" resonates of a Hegelian view of Africa. In her essay "Shame and Identity: The Case of the Coloured in South Africa," Wicomb extrapolates on Bhabha's assessment. She humorously and decorously writes:

Bhabha makes an ontological leap from the mytho-geographical, so that the "borderline existence" for the coloured marks a "deeper historical displacement" and represents a "hybridity, a difference 'within' a subject that inhabits the rim of an inbetween reality." Here, surely, are echoes of the tragic mode where lived experience is displaced by an aesthetics of theory. How, one is tempted to ask, do people who live in communities inhabit, spookily and precariously, a rim of inbetween reality?

Symbolically, of course, and therefore, according to Gordimer, in silence, the shame of it all encoded in the word taboo. Surely relegation to such a space relies on an essentialist view of which posits a “pure” reality that is experienced in the space inhabited by the racially pure. (1998b: 101-102)

As Wicomb explains, Bhabha’s notions of hybridity rely on a concept of pureness, which would translate to the space of a dominating culture such as in colonialism and defined by racial purity. Regarding liminality, Bhabha writes:

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. The interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (1994: 5)

The stairwell represents the space between black and white or colonized and colonizer, and thus it is an “in-between” space. Yet what this analogy does not consider is the stairway itself that, on the contrary, does indeed suggest hierarchy. Here, the black, the colonized, must move up in order to achieve a “higher” position while the white, as a colonizer and through privilege, has the upper hand and thus an easier, mostly downhill

path. Thus, not only do Bhabha's theories seem to be self-contradictory, they also appear to be too static and limiting in comparison to Anzaldúa's concept of borderlands. Although Anzaldúa's theories date to roughly a decade earlier, her concepts are more progressive, malleable, dynamic and accepting.

### **Constructing the Borderlands**

To reiterate what has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the category of coloured was constructed through colonialism and apartheid legislation. Such laws include the 1950 Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act.<sup>49</sup> Yet the Population Registration Act was somewhat ambiguous and proved problematic as exemplified in the case of Sandra Laing who, although was born to White parents was reclassified as Coloured because of her dark features.<sup>50</sup> Loopholes, amendments and simple contradictions led to inaccuracies and complications in enforcement. These ambiguities also enabled people to reclassify themselves to other racial categories as explored in the novel *Playing in the Light*.

In a racial and cultural setting, the borderlands might initially be that which was constructed through apartheid legislation: neither native nor white. My reading of the borderlands in coloured identities rejects such a binary, and in Anzaldúan fashion, extrapolates on such borders to illustrate that within the larger coloured community are microcommunities, hence coloured identities are neither static nor monolithically definable. Anzaldúa writes:

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<sup>49</sup> See Index II selected list of apartheid legislation.

<sup>50</sup> Sandra Laing's story will be further explored in Chapter V.II.iii.

To live in the Borderlands means you  
 are neither hispana india negra española  
 ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed  
 caught in the crossfire between camps  
 while carrying all five races on your back. (1999: 216)

Wicomb's work does not focus on the importance of explaining identification in the way that Anzaldúa says she is "male and female," "two in one body" or a "fusion of opposites" (Anzaldúa 1999: 69). For such identification, in the case of South Africa, might seem too reminiscent of apartheid ideologies whereas for Anzaldúa, it is meaningful in its cultural, folkloric connection with an Aztec god (Reuman 2000: 10-11). The Aztec god that Anzaldúa refers to is Ometecuhtli, who is both a female god and a male god in one and both the mother and father of both gods and humanity (León-Portilla 1990: 83-90)

Anzaldúa contends in an interview that "identity is relational, that it exists in relation to some Other. And so it's always in this in-between zone, the *nepantla* or the borderlands. And that in being in this in-between zone it's saying your fixed categories are permeable" (Anzaldúa in Reuman 2000: 12). These "in-between zones" are not to be confused with Homi Bhabha's spaces, which suggest being in the middle of and thus defining oneself based on binaries. He describes the liminal space, for example, between the colonized/colonizer as part of a "disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness—the white man's artifice inscribed on the black man's body" (Bhabha 2005: 64). On the contrary, for Anzaldúa they are overlapping spaces such as the

purple area in a red and blue Venn diagram, and in this all-encompassing purple area there are identities based on multiple sources. Anzaldúa's borderlands theory, in particular the notion of new *mestiza* and hybridity, is not exclusive but "inclusive of white people and people from other communities" (Anzaldúa in Reuman 2000: 6). Thus, as Bhabha's notions of hybridity are seemingly restrictive and more concrete, Anzaldúa's concepts are malleable and welcoming.

My reading of the borderlands in Wicomb's works deals with the blending of spaces (cultural, physical, colonial, racialized, gendered) and stems from questioning the problematization of identity. In response to an article in the *Mail and Guardian* where the author says that coloureds must find out who they are, Wicomb states, "I thought that surely you know who your Mommy and Daddy are. What is this business about finding out who you are? Why have we turned this into a problem? When is it not a problem then? When you've got 'pure blood?' Isn't it replicating the old identities of apartheid? This is in the past, we're in the avant-garde" (Wicomb in Willemse 2002: 147). In lieu of making identity problematic, Wicomb's writings challenge larger issues such as nationalism and oppression through racism and patriarchy that might result from such questioning and subsequent exclusion. Furthermore, to do so, the author links space and memory while inserting her own postcolonial voice showing the existing, active connection in postcolonial literature. Yet no solutions are offered; Wicomb's writings present stories that require critical readings that question and incite further investigation.



#### IV. Re-constructing and Re-presenting through Literature<sup>51</sup>

The contrary to deraciNation would not be moving someone into their homes but to validate the fluidity and multiplicity of belonging, especially when it refers to being a member of a group or community. Furthermore, as Wicomb contends through both her creative and critical writings, the problematization of identity ought to be rethought. A start might be ceasing those ideologies that enforce a single cultural or national belonging and reinforce blood politics. Moreover, through literature, Wicomb expands on histories that are known, often giving another interpretation, and fills in the spaces that have been left untold. She also stresses the importance of folklore in the creating such histories and herstories and which, at the same time, replaces images constructed by colonialism. In “Shame and Identity: the Case of the Coloured in South Africa,” she discusses the need for folklore and legendary historical figures since

virtually nothing by way of folk-talks, stories, or songs has been retained and ... the only sources are records of the Court Of Justice covering the period of the Dutch East India Company rule. [For example, the story] of the rebel slave Leander Bugis and his band of runaways at Hanglip, [and] their insurrection including an attempt to burn Cape Town to the ground in 1736, is indeed a figure ripe for legend and mythology, but such stories have not found their way into folk history. (1998: 99-100)

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<sup>51</sup> A version of this section is published under the title, “(Re)presenting ‘Coloured’ Identity through Figures and Folklore in Zoë Wicomb’s *David’s Story*,” in *Weaving New Perspectives Together: Some Reflections on Literary Studies*. Ed. María Alonso Alonso, et. al. See Lytle, 2012.

By bringing these important figures from the past and alluding to their stories through use of character, Wicomb creates a sort of coloured folklore that produces a memory of coloured history. Moreover, by creating a mythical illusion about the characters, she opens the doors for interpretation, inviting a further process of narration and a legacy of cultural memory. Wicomb continues this storytelling with the tale of the Rain Sisters, “who had been shaped by God into the perfect vessels for collecting and carrying back radical moisture from the rain-soaked Cape peninsula with which to temper the radical heat of Namaqualand” (Wicomb 2000: 153). In *David’s Story*, Le Fleur, who starts the tradition, chooses five women to complete the task of bringing water. Wicomb links this folklore to David’s ancestor, Auntjie Cloete as among the women chosen by the Le Fleur, and when it is mentioned that she is not a virgin, the “Chief growled that this was not what Rain Sisters were about” (2000: 153) and dismisses the vulgarities. Through this image, Wicomb denounces the fetishization of steatopygia and coloured women, contests the stereotypical views of the coloured female body and re-presents the power and beauty of the coloured female figure. In this way, she places significance on female figures in South African history and cultural memory, mythically illustrating the life that women bring to the community.

Using the symbolic meaning of water, Wicomb illustrates the Rain Sisters as the creators and sustainers of life of both the Griquas and the nature of the land. The creation of life is also exemplified through Antjie, who although is barren, becomes pregnant after completing her duty as a Rain Sister. Antjie’s husband Gert has a metaphoric premonition of both great events: “And before his parched eyes rose the image of water, a burn tumbling down a mountain gorge, dashing against the rock its cool white spray, atomised

into radical moisture that would be transported to the desert to spring over the entire volk and coax the stubborn trees into fruitfulness” (2000: 152). Antjie’s pregnancy is a miracle, and the narrator describes it by alluding to the Immaculate Conception likening Antjie to Mary and Le Fleur to God. Wicomb uses this narrative to write back to racist authors such as Sarah Gertrude Millin, whose novel *God’s Stepchildren* (1929) portrayed the shame and abhorrence of miscegenation. Through the similarity of Le Fleur’s brilliant green eyes with those of the baby and David, Wicomb denounces the racist ideologies that have subjugated mixed-race people for centuries by asserting the characters are all Griqua and descendants of God—and are not his stepchildren. Thus, the mysticism of the Rain Sisters and later Antjie’s conception also give birth to a coloured folklore that can be embraced, revisited, reworked and retold as a form of cultural identity.

Although the Rain Sisters are primarily Griqua figures, Wicomb connects their story with an Afrikaner poem called *Die Dans van die Reën*, or the *Dance of the Rain*. To compensate for the differences found between the stories, the narrator explains “the legendary flower-fairy-cum princess image is a cultural translation, a severely Calvinised version culled from Eugene Marais’s poem, that it is one of the many signs of the Chief’s confused adoption of a narrative voice that was in fact produced by a European” (2000: 159). By linking the two mythical figures together, Wicomb bonds the Griqua and Afrikaner culture showing similarity between those considered historically distinct. Furthermore, in this way, Wicomb creates a feminine connection linking the culturally important female figures and also implies a new basis of folklore that might be useful for a new South Africa. In addition, as Dorothy Driver points out, the reference is “a smart joke about hybridity, authenticity, and the impossibility of true origins” (2000: 243-244).

Through such a reinforcement of figures<sup>52</sup> and folklore, Wicomb underlines an important facet in the folk histories of the coloured community. Furthermore, her linking with other communities in South Africa reifies the importance of an all-encompassing approach to rebuilding and reconstruction. The author does so with a powerful stance of a postcolonial feminine voice without being authoritative. Moreover, contesting Barthes's death to the author in her essay "Setting, Intertextuality and the Resurrection of the Postcolonial Author," Wicomb contends, "Human characters are shaped by the places they occupy" (Wicomb 2005: 145), the author includes different settings such as Glasgow, Scotland; Liguria, Italy; and Macau<sup>53</sup> in her works, highlighting the "transformative effect of intertextuality" (2005: 146) and the presence of her voice. In this way, Wicomb further links historical, cultural and folkloric spaces that challenge the Nation through opening the borderlands.

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<sup>52</sup> For a further analysis on historical figures, see Chapter V.II.ii and V.III.i.

<sup>53</sup> Macau is briefly used as a setting in Wicomb's novel *October* (2014), which is not analyzed in this dissertation.

## CHAPTER FOUR: Contesting Spaces: Home, Neighborhood and Nation

### I. Introduction

This chapter marks the beginning of the textual analysis of the dissertation. It starts out with an exploration of the symbol of “home,” which, as will be argued in this section, can become a prison or a sick space. People leave home for opportunity, whether it is education or a chance at equality, and a return to home might make a loss of home apparent. Home can also be the land where one lives or that is colonized and divided. From home, the chapter moves to the motif of the neighbor and neighborhood, where “neighborliness” is an obscure concept and new neighbors can pose a threat. As neighborhoods can be like nations, security is sometimes an issue, and attempts at protection can lead to Othering. This Othering, a tool of nationalism, not only has the power to marginalize but it can also turn one against another. Thus, the final section of this chapter discusses Othering and other tools of nationalism. Through an examination of these spaces in the selected fictional works of Wicomb, this chapter hopes to deconstruct the instruments used to promote nationalist, racist and patriarchal platforms that divide and create borders.

### II. De/constructing Home

“...Say, who owns this house?  
It’s not mine.  
I dreamed another, sweeter, brighter...”  
—Toni Morrison, *Home*

Home is “sweet,” and it is “where the heart is.” When people “feel at home,” it means they feel comfortable. If something is good enough “to write home about,” it means it is

important enough to share with those closest to you. The home is also a gendered space, clearly illustrated with “a woman’s place is in the home,” and it is the man who “brings home the bacon,” which of course is cooked by the woman. But where is home, and who creates it? Zygmunt Bauman describes home as a place that is “always attractive as an idea [and] enjoyed most in the bittersweet emotion of homesickness” (2000b: 216). Thus it is not until we leave home, whether forced or by choice, that we yearn for it. Then, how do we understand definitions of home such as in the Oxford Dictionary, whose principle definition of home is: “the place where one lives *permanently*, especially as a member of a family or household” (Oxford Dictionary Online, emphasis added). What ideas are generated with the notion of home? When is a home permanent and not permanent?

Avtar Brah questions the location of home, which in a diasporic imagination is a “mythic place of desire...[and] of no return” (1996: 192) and in a less imaginary sense is in “the lived experience of a locality.” In this way home is neither permanent nor set but a place or feeling that is variable and malleable. She continues, contending “[home] is intrinsically linked with the the [sic] way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances. It is centrally about our political and personal struggles over the social regulation of ‘belonging’” (1996: 192). Brah later asserts ‘feeling at home’ and calling a place home are different as politics play a role in each situation (1996: 197). An example would be the definition of home through nationalist discourse, which as Brah points out in her introduction, can serve to place people out of the nation. Specifically, she gives the example of Britons of Asian and African descent as being considered outside the nation (1996: 3-4). Home as a

narrative of the nation is a simplified and unfortunately common method in marking the Other, as will later be discussed in this chapter.

In his essay entitled “The World and the Home,” Homi Bhabha discusses what he calls the “unhomely,” “which is a paradigmatic colonial experience ... in fiction that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in range of historical conditions and social contradictions” (1992: 142). Wicomb’s works do indeed see history in the construction and representation of certain realisms (1992: 144), but she contests Bhabha’s argument that the South African coloured community, as representations of hybridity and displacement in the struggle for liberation, dwell or are “unhomed,” in an “in-between” temporality.” Bhabha argues,

Private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy ... that questions binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed. These spheres of life are linked through an “in-between” temporality that takes the measure of dwelling at home, while producing an image of the world of history. This is a moment of aesthetic distance that provides the narrative with a double-edge which like the colored South African subject represents a hybridity, a difference “within,” a subject that inhabits the rim of an “in-between” reality. And the inscription of this border existence inhabits a stillness of time and a strangeness of framing that creates the discursive “image” at the crossroads of history and literature, bridging the home and the world. (1992: 148; 1994: 19)

In her essay “Setting, Intertextuality and the Resurrection of the Postcolonial Author,” Wicomb refutes Bhabha arguing his position denies the voice of the author. She contends, “By invoking a metaphoric field of spatial ambiguity the concept indeed dissolves self-other polarities, but the term also denies the postcolonial writer’s corporeality in much the same way as does the foreign culture that hosts her invisibility, and thus legitimizes incivility” (2005: 153). Wicomb argues the author introduces dialog between spoken and/or written texts. In this way, the author acts as a bridge that brings the reader or audience to the society or setting that is being addressed. As Gloria Anzaldúa describes, although a downside to being such a connector is being walked on, a positive outcome is getting the best of both worlds (2000: 206). Thus, through her illustrations of cultures and their communities, worlds that might seem far apart, not only as a postcolonial author but as a human with lived experience, Wicomb is able to share her knowledge to not only call out to the various sides, she and her works act as a bridge to connect the worlds so that the best can be shared and the worst can possibly be worked out through sharing, what Anzaldúa explains are “conocimientos” (2000: 206). Using the literature of Wicomb and critics such as Zygmunt Bauman, Anne McClintock and Slavoj Žižek, this section will discuss the notion of home in its construction and deconstruction and how this notion fits into the greater schemes of neighborhood and nation before, during and after apartheid. It will also be argued that Wicomb counters the “in-between” reality in which Bhabha places South Africans and reinforces their real, complex identities that very much exist, along with the position of the author.



### **i. Coloured Homes, Picketing White Fences<sup>54</sup>**

The wording of the 1950 Population Registration Act allowed people to re-categorize themselves, resulting in some who were considered Coloured to reclassify themselves to the White racial group. To do so, not only did individuals have to have the physical characteristics to be able to pass for White, they had to be accepted by others in the white community. This performance is commonly known as “passing” in the United States, and in South Africa it is largely referred to as “playing white.” Coloured reclassification to White enabled some coloureds to have a higher status; however, doing this would mean giving up all ties to their pasts: their family, their childhood home, their neighborhood, their history, etc. Although it was not easy as both a personal and bureaucratic process and came with major consequences, some people did indeed choose to change their identity.

Wicomb explores the trope of “playing white” in *Playing in the Light* (2006) through the Campbell family. Through a constant performance of whiteness, Helen and John manage to raise Marion, their daughter, Afrikaner. The efforts of doing so produce a cold, sterile home environment and a loveless marriage. Set during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, after some research, Marion discovers the truth about her past. Wicomb problematizes the performance of race that perpetuated its very own construction and representation through prejudicial ideologies. Throughout her investigation, Marion realizes some of her own racist beliefs, which have been largely based on a nationalistic Afrikaner identity, and questions her own history and home in her search for a truth. Through Marion’s characterization and investigation, Wicomb criticizes the nationalistic, Othering discourse involved in this sense of home as it works

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<sup>54</sup> See Lytle, 2013b for a published version of this section.

against unity and toward separation, the very issue that the struggle for freedom was against. Through the novels *Playing in the Light* and *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*, this section will examine the symbol of home as a racialized space that was constructed and destroyed during apartheid. Furthermore, it aims to demonstrate the complexity of histories affected by apartheid cannot be represented by symbols deemed complete nor can all-embracing truths be reached.

*Playing in the Light* opens describing Marion's home, which is a modern, luxurious property in a gated community on the beachfront with views of Table Mountain and Robben Island. As her home is gated, Marion feels secure despite it being unsafe to walk on the beach at night. Consequently she is left with only vistas of either side, imprisoned in her own home and myopic world. She spends most of her time on the balcony, which the narrator describes is "the space both inside and out" (Wicomb 2006: 1). This scenario illustrates Marion's life in the borderlands of not only passing her time where two spaces meet (Anzaldúa 1999: 19), but her home itself is also in the borderlands, in the space between the sea and the continent of Africa. It is in the area between the symbols of the vast lands that were once an explorer's dream and an island that marked a place of confinement. Furthermore, the opening scene describes Marion's life in its current stage in a space before the journey of discovering her family's secretive past and after the confined childhood, both implications of her parents' decision to reclassify from Coloured to White.

This space in time is interrupted with the entrance of the guinea fowl that flies into Marion's house and falls at her feet. In her essay, "Five Afrikaner Texts and the Rehabilitation of Whiteness," Wicomb explains

[the guinea fowl] carries a particular significance ... in the iconography of an informal and popular anti-apartheid movement of dissident, urban whites in the 1980s ... it signified liberation, and the very speckled black and white pattern of the bird's plumage came to represent an alternative to whiteness, a new multiracialism that chose to embrace indigenous blackness. In other words, an image of desire. (Wicomb 1998a: 370)

Hence, the guinea fowl's entrance marks a death to the white privilege and freedom allowed to Marion and creates room for a new chapter in Marion's life. This privilege is often left unnoticed by South African white women, some of whom were able to find their freedom by giving their work to their black house workers. Wicomb argues in "To Hear the Variety of Discourses," "The experience of white women's liberation therefore in material terms represents the oppression of black women for whom, in the context of restrictive apartheid laws, the notions of home, motherhood, and the family have become constructs characterised by desire" ("To Hear Discourses:" 1990). This image is further alluded to when Marion leaves the dead bird for the cleaning girl and imagines what "such people" might do with the bird (Wicomb 2008: 1). Not only does Marion's attitude toward her "cleaning girl" paint the white picket fence that racially separates women, but it also illustrates the power structure that was created under apartheid, remained during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hearings and can still be experienced today. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty further explains, the relationship of the white working class to the black lower class is so dependent that the

equation of the color line with the power line with the poverty line encapsulates the contours of racial formation under apartheid, and it is this context that determines the particular emergence of the struggles of South African women: struggles around racial, political, and economic liberation, work, domestic life, housing, food and land rights. (1991: 27)

Thus, in order to critically discuss racial relations, it is crucial to look at both gender and class and how the nation plays a role in the correlation of each constructed category (1991: 27-28).

By having the bird die in her novel, Wicomb also puts an end to popular icons and ideas that support one race over another and the notion that the suffering experienced by Afrikaners is equitable to that of blacks (Wicomb 1998a: 370-372). Furthermore, as Stéphane Robolin contends, the death of the fowl destabilizes its iconography and contests the acceptance of history and the present, establishing the tone of the novel (Robolin 2011: 350). The guinea fowl also represents the penetrable safety of Marion's success, as it is able to enter her home and cause alarm. The foundation of the façade of security Marion has at home is constructed by her parents John and Helen, who instilled apartheid ideologies that believed the races must be separated and controlled and emphasized a strong Afrikaner identity as she was growing up.

Marion's seemingly safe world changes when she is haunted with the childhood image of their old beloved coloured servant Tokkie, who would visit their house once a week. As her father is elusive to her questioning, Marion begins to think he is hiding

something important about her past and believes she may be adopted. It is in her search for Tokkie that she discovers John and Helen reclassified their race from Coloured to White, and Tokkie was actually Helen's mother, her own grandmother. Marion is shocked to discover her life was based on lies and hurt in imagining the pain and humiliation her grandmother Tokkie endured in playing the role of servant so that she could visit her family, and worse, that her own mother, Tokkie's daughter, forced Tokkie to do so. As the narrator reveals, Tokkie was proud of Helen's lighter features, and in fact it is Tokkie's idea to pose as the servant to keep the neighbors without suspicion and provide a way to orally transmit family history to Marion.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, Tokkie also prevails because it is the richness of the experience that Marion remembers so fondly, and in this way, Tokkie is able to reap the reward as she negotiates between the racialized, gendered spaces of the home during apartheid and in post-apartheid South Africa. Moreover, Tokkie's space, which is illustrated both through the narrator and Marion's memory, is outside of the house, and therefore, the comfort of a home for Marion is outside of the space created by her mother, of whom she has no fond memory. Through this imagery, Wicomb portrays the family and home divisions fostered by apartheid. Consequently, the empty domestic space of the Campbell's home and Helen's failure are also exposed through not only her lost relationship with her husband, but through the void of a loving bond with her own daughter. By making the decision to reclassify, Helen seemingly abandons her own family and wholeheartedly opts to become part of a nation that would otherwise reject her.

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<sup>55</sup> This detail is kept from Marion, exemplifying the difficulty in reaching truths when stories are fallibly remembered and subjectively created. Unreliable memory will be explored in the following chapter.

John and Helen's efforts are aimed at giving Marion a life unburdened by history and creating opportunities and freedom from discrimination, which ironically they subscribe to in doing so. Their achievement builds a colorless home that is white, clean and sterile; it is a state that is achieved and maintained through constant work and awareness. Yet John knows that they are incapable of reaching the privilege that whiteness bestows since they must be incessantly mindful of their actions. In this way, they are alone in their carefully constructed house and apart from others in the community, which represents the threat of possibly being uncovered and later rejected. For should the Campbell's secret be revealed, they would be cast out of the white community and their perceived freedom would be lost, as the 1950 Group Areas Act warranted that racial communities be physically separated.

In *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*, Zygmunt Bauman argues freedom is the power to do things according to one's desires without the threat of resistance (2011: 22). In order to pass as White, John and Helen must leave the comforts of their former selves by abandoning their own childhood homes and families to construct a new, "white" identity. To do so requires a 24-hour performance regardless of place and removing the intimacy that a normal family or couple would enjoy. As the narrator explains, "Not even in the privacy of their home, between their own four walls, could they let up, act the fool, laugh at those who'd been duped, or mimic their public selves. In the blinding light of whiteness, they walked exposed: pale, vulnerable geckos whose very skeletal systems showed through transparent flesh" (Wicomb 2006: 123). Although apartheid laws would have removed any freedoms John and Helen would have had as Coloured, playing white also hinders their freedom through a constant fear of

being revealed. Thus, in their bouts to become a part of the white nation, they experience a deracination through their loss of family, privacy and normalcy.

Covering their vulnerabilities, Helen's house is a stage of their whiteness, ensuring all details down to their laced curtains are props reinforcing their illusion of privilege. With the exception of her mother Tokkie, who pretends to be the coloured servant, Helen restricts family from visiting. Through taking on this role, the couple has no alternatives but to continue their act, and the absence of options leads to the resentment and later hatred between John and Helen. Moreover, it is the lack of security through fear of being discovered that controls their actions, requiring the couple closely scrutinize every facet of their lives. Wicomb writes: "If there were cold shivers when colleagues talked about hotnos or uppity coloureds, they did not tell each other, did not giggle about it in their bedroom, for that space had lost its privacy too; instead they learned to use the vocabulary of the master race, were the first to note with distaste the traces of native origins in others" (Wicomb 2006: 124).

In this way, the Campbell home becomes a racialized institution that was under constant self-surveillance. It develops into the panopticon, where they lived in constant fear of being watched, an automated execution of power (Bentham 1791; Foucault 1995: 201-205). Bauman explains the home becomes a prison if leaving or getting out is difficult or impossible (2000b: 216). He argues that "being prohibited to move is a most potent symbol of impotence and incapacitation—and the most acute of pains" (2000b: 217). Elsewhere, he also contends, "It is the 'no alternative' situation, the no-exit fate of the ghetto dweller which makes the 'safety of sameness' feel like a steel casing—tight, cumbersome, incapacitating and impossible to get rid of" (Bauman 2011: 118). Although

in this case, Bauman is referring to the resentment felt between those who live in ghetto, which according to Loïc Wacquant, is a homogenous space of confinement and closure and whose inhabitants cannot escape (Bauman 2011: 116-117). As such, this definition of the ghetto can also be used to describe John and Helen's home, which restricts their lives to maintaining their lifelong performance. They trapped themselves in a labyrinth of racial ideologies, navigating through the recitals of Whiteness and an atmosphere based on lies and resulting in a constructed identity constantly under threat.

Wicomb thus questions the concept of freedom by juxtaposing "playing white" with "remaining coloured." Although Helen erases her former self in the construction of her whiteness, John keeps ties with his sister Elsie, to whom he would secretly escape on Sundays. He realizes his house with Helen is not his home, and even when, later in life, he reluctantly agrees to talk to his daughter about the past, he cannot do it in the space he had created with his late wife. For John, the house is a racialized space devoid of life and happiness, which ended with reclassification. In order for John to talk somewhat truthfully about his past life and history he must leave the sterile space where he is not at home, showing the extent of his deracination. He and Marion travel to a park, where John does his best to explain the past, but he can only justify their actions were in accordance to the difficult times. He turns to describe the loving relationship he had with his brothers and sister and the difficulty of losing his family by signing the affidavit proclaiming his whiteness. It is through this action that John had destroyed his own home, his childhood farm, and betrayed his family.

To learn more, Marion visits John's sister Elsie, who questions the freedom and privilege of the whiteness accessed by Helen and John. She explains the emphasis placed



on skin color clouded Helen and John's perception. She tells Marion, "because of shame, your poor father had nothing: no people, no politics, no wife to speak of, and because he thought of skin as the alpha and omega, he grew stupid and couldn't think properly about the world beyond passing for white" (Wicomb 2006: 171). Elsie places blames on whiteness, or the desire of it, as that which has broken the family and her brother John, yet it is also Helen's preoccupation with playing white and achieving her understanding of a white household that unsettles her home and divides her family. In this reconstruction of a home that is gendered and racialized, it also becomes an extension of the apartheid state. Anne McClintock argues,

Households are ruptured by a gendered conflict within the domestic economy over women's work and by an overdetermined and uneven racial, class and gendered conflict between the household as a dynamic community and the apartheid state. The household economy thus remains paradoxical for women, for it can be both a place of community resistance to the state and a place of internal gender conflict between men and women—over work, food, sexuality and power. Family households are thus situations under contest. (McClintock 1995: 323)

The irony in Helen's defiance to the apartheid state is an actual reinforcement of the racial and gender ideologies that contribute to the discrimination that separated families and plagued the lives of many. The conflict that such a household entails as described by

McClintock is contrasted with that which is described by bell hooks in reference to African-American womanhood. hooks argues:

Since sexism delegates to females the task of creating and sustaining a home environment, it has been primarily the responsibility of black women to construct domestic households as spaces of care and nurturance in the face of the brutal harsh reality of racist oppression, of sexist domination. Historically, African-American people believed that the construction of a homeplace, however fragile and tenuous (...), had a radical political dimension. Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist. Black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship, and deprivation, where we could restore ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world. (1990: 42)

This household of freedom was not what Helen created and hence her actions contribute to her own racial oppression. Although she resists apartheid laws through their ambiguity to afford a better life, her success is at the expense of others around her, particularly her own family. In this way, the home that Helen represents is contrary to that which her mother Tokkie embodies, and thus, although Tokkie's space is mostly outside the home,

her “visits are a relief” (Wicomb 2006: 152) to the silence and behavior that playing white requires since she can “shout and crow all she wishes; that is what coloured people, servants, do” (2006: 152). On the other hand, when John even slightly behaves outside of the stage of whiteness, Helen puts him back in his place.

The decision to reclassify comes after John is mistaken for a Boer, which becomes the role of whiteness he falls in to play. Helen later chooses to be of English heritage and questions “why settle for being Boer when you could be anything at all? By which she meant English” (Wicomb 2006: 127). In this way, class also participates within the careful, controlled construction of the white home with the white picket fence placing Englishness over Boerness, a hierarchal difference that also played a role in the construction of whiteness, which is not monolithic, in South Africa. This emergence of class in such a setting of “play whiteness” is an early catalyst for division in the Campbell household and can be exemplified in their disagreement over the garden, which John wants to utilize to grow vegetables but Helen forbids him, arguing gardens in the city are for flowers only. Symbolized through the garden as land, the reinforcement of such class symbols (city flowers or country vegetables?) mirrors the larger issue of land control in South Africa and demonstrates the extent that apartheid affected daily life.

As Helen prevents John from using their garden to grow vegetables, not only do their home and terrestrial space symbolized through the garden lose the possibility of fruitfulness, they become merely representations of fertility through the flower, a symbol of beauty that serves only for aesthetics as opposed to offering the nourishment that would come from a vegetable garden. Thus, the Campbell household is left unnourished, and the house becomes the symbol of a sick body. Through her focus on appearance,

Helen falls deeper into her role of playing white and loses the bond with her husband, who is engaged in his own battle of keeping the remnants of his former identity as he sneaks off to Sunday lunch at his sister's house "into the nest of the jolly hotnos" (Wicomb 2006: 150), where he can nourish himself in mind and body through family. Yet unfortunately, John eventually relinquishes himself and falls into the sterility their home and lives have become.

As Žižek explains, the Heideggerian definition of essence (*Wesen*) "refers to a stable core that guarantees the identity of a thing...[and] is something that depends on the historical context, on the epochal disclosure of being that occurs in and through language. He calls this the 'house of being'" (2008: 57-58). As the histories of the Campbell family are unutterable, the house's identity becomes not that which is suppressed but the empty, disinfected enclosure whose structure is the only unifying aspect of home. It is the essence of the sickness of the house that pervades the household and perpetuates the violence that Helen and John deemed necessary for the sake of their daughter's future. After Marion leaves for college, Helen begins talking to herself, and her utterances fill the "silence [that] grew so heavy that even ghosts spurned that house of choked history" (Wicomb 2006: 149). Thus the sickness of the house affects Helen, who expels her "impurities" so that she may pass for white. By removing what society considers improper or unclean—her colouredness, Helen is the abject (McClintock 1995: 71, Kristeva 1982: 2-3). Through talking to herself, she reminds her self of her situation in ambiguity in the apartheid-engendered racialized spaces, which are zones of abjection, and the abject between "condemnation and yearning" (McClintock 1995: 71). As McClintock clarifies, "For Kristeva, however, these expelled elements can never be fully

obliterated; they haunt the edges of the subject's identity with the threat of disruption or even dissolution" (1995: 71). In this way, Helen's utterances mark the remnants of her former identity and are signs of her as the abject, which will be further discussed later in this chapter.

As Helen has expelled her former identity, she does indeed achieve white sociability in an apartheid setting, but the lack of communication in the house becomes that which kills it and the social interaction in her family, removing any would-be intimacy. As a result, Helen and John become among the first victims of this ontological violence. Heidegger contends,

The violence-doer knows no kindness and conciliation (in the ordinary sense), no appeasement and mollification by success or prestige and by their confirmation...Essential de-cision [sic], when it is carried out and when it resists the constantly pressing ensnarement in the everyday and the customary, has to use violence. This act of violence, this de-cided [sic] setting out upon the way to the Being of beings, moves humanity out of the hominess of what is most directly nearby and what is usual. (qtd in Žižek 2008: 59)

Therefore as Helen and John's actions of violence have laid forth the Campbell identity or state of being as (play) white, they experience the ensuing violence and deracination without whatever visions of enjoyment they entertained would be the outcome. The whitewashed walls of the house become a domestic enclosure gasping for life, creating a

space that is sick, sterile and full of an emptiness that is ultimately not lived in but wasting away in. Furthermore, it is this sick home environment of perpetual suffocation that forces John into compliance and thus, as previously mentioned, when he wishes to discuss the past on Marion's request, he must leave the home in order to communicate with his daughter.

## **ii. Home Lost**

In *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*, home is not the structured building that houses a nuclear or extended family, but it is South Africa itself to which the protagonist Frieda Shenton returns as the description on the back cover of the 1987 edition explains, as "a reluctant visitor to the land of her birth." The stories in this collection take place during apartheid and the implementation of the Group Areas Act (1950), which forced 150,000 people classified as Coloured to leave their homes from 1957 to 1985 (Trotter 2009: 49). As there was a Group Areas Board (GAB) that decided which space was suitable for each racial classification (2009: 51), apartheid law not only constructed race but it also racialized spaces. For example, after it became a "whites-only" space in 1966, most residents of District Six, which is a symbolic space of coloured identity, were forced to relocate to the Cape Flats (Beyers 2009: 79).

Frieda is a young girl of a "respectable" family, the only English-speaking family in a small town. Frieda first leaves her childhood home to attend a prestigious school that is forced to admit non-white students. Her father, who is a schoolmaster, stresses education as a way to succeed and gives her fatherly guidance by instructing her to avoid boys and advising her about her period telling her to "fetch a bucket of water in the

evenings and wash the rags at night...always be prepared ... it does not always come on time. Your mother was never regular” (Wicomb 1987: 22). In this way, the father, despite his lack of knowledge of the availability of sanitary napkins, plays the role of both parents, illustrating the strong patriarchal Shenton household. He also convinces her to leave home for a better education to ensure she would not become a servant. He asks her, “How would you like to peg out the madam’s washing and hear the train you once refused to go on rumble by?” (1987: 24). Imagining the task of washing the menstrual rags of the madam, Frieda, who is also the narrator, admits, “I am grateful to be going hundreds of miles away from home; there is so much to be grateful for. One day I will drive a white car” (1987: 24). Frieda’s vision of driving a white car instead of cleaning the menstrual rags of a (most likely white) madam represents her visualization of overcoming both sexual and class differences and looking toward a future of equality where she would drive her own car, without the help or service of others. In this way, Frieda takes control of her own body and future, leaving behind the impurity of corporeal waste (Kristeva 1982: 70) and racial, gender and class oppression of not only cleaning such unmentionable waste but touching that of someone else.

Although her vision is hopeful of an equal playing field, Frieda knows there is a threshold living under apartheid. For example, although an education might enable her to escape being a maid, her Coloured racial classification limits her future to that of being in service or in lower status to White. Therefore, she might drive a white car, but it does not necessarily mean the car will be hers. This is juxtaposed with the opening story’s image of Mr. Weedon, the English gentleman whose modesty is demonstrated when he chooses “to sit alone in the back of his own car” on the way to inspect the gypsum mine (Wicomb

1987: 6). Frieda's narration demonstrates the irony in the perception of what it is to be a gentleman and the ignorance demonstrated by her mother who marvels at him and describes him as "a gentleman, a true Englishman" as opposed to an "uncouth Boer" (1987: 2).

In the title story, "You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town," Frieda lives in Cape Town where she attends school. She takes the bus, which makes her uncomfortable, to meet her boyfriend. When she gets off, she finds herself out of place. She explains, "For the first time I long for the veld of my childhood. There the red sand rolls for miles, and if you stand on the koppie behind the house the landmarks blaze their permanence: the river points downward, runs its dry course from north to south ... In the veld you can always find your way home" (Wicomb 1987: 73). As Sue Marais points out, this feeling is only a romanticization because, as will be discussed in this section, Frieda's home on the veld is discomfoting, particularly at times with her family (1995: 35). Marais explains the family uses clichés to "gloss over the harsh realities of apartheid, of dispossession and racial segregation, which have actually determined their existence" (1995: 36). This escaping from life under apartheid is also illustrated through the family's instructions for Frieda on what is and is not respectable behavior, especially for a young lady.

It is not the home as a house that Frieda longs for, it is the childhood innocence that reads the land and memorizes the landmarks that she craves while lamenting the loss of their lastingness. The story "Home Sweet Home" opens with the family at the table having a meal before Frieda leaves for college in England. Aunt Cissie reads a letter from Uncle Hermanus, who has emigrated to Canada, and they begin discussing leaving South Africa and what life might be like in cold, foreign places. Frieda imagines the day of



Uncle Hermanus's departure. Before boarding the ship, Hermanus imagines there will be no problem, and that he will be accepted as "Juroepen" (Wicomb 1987: 84). He immediately starts coughing and vomits on Cousin Lettie's new shoes. The vomit is not representative of his fears and nervousness of leaving for a new country, but it is the Kristevian act of the expulsion of his colouredness, which he will leave behind in South Africa in order to be accepted as a European in Canada. By vomiting the "barely masticated meat and carrot" (1987: 85), he marks the separation of his identities and embarks on a new, personal journey. Kristeva writes:

"I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; "I" do not want to listen, "I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it. But since the food is not an "other" for "me," who am only in their desire, I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish myself. That detail, perhaps an insignificant one, but one that they ferret out, emphasize, evaluate, that trifle turns me inside out, guts sprawling; it is thus that they see that "I" am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death, During that course in which "I" become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit. Mute protest of the symptom, shattering violence of a convulsion that, to be sure, is inscribed in a symbolic system, but in which, without either wanting or being able to become integrated in order to answer to it, it reacts, it abreacts. It abjects. (1982: 3)

Although in this case, Kristeva refers to food loathing, I argue that Uncle Hermanus is not vomiting only his food, but he is ridding his self of racial loathing—not that he loathes his race, of which no indication is given in the text, but that he abhors the discrimination and inequality that being coloured entails and wants to liberate his life from it. Thus by leaving what was once his home and going to Canada, he can be considered European, or of equal status, and create a new home, or so he imagines.

Frieda's departure is not as accepted by the family as Uncle Hermanus's emigration was. Particularly, Uncle Gerrie comments about Frieda's leaving not only the veld but even Cape Town, "the most beautiful city in the world, you know, and the richest" (Wicomb 1987: 86). Regardless if the city is one of the richest, the riches are not available to the Shenton family so the wealth is of no consequence. Frieda recognizes the beauty of the city but cannot care less for the "postcard beauty of the bay and the majesty of the mountain, the pretty white houses ... And the District Six I do not know and the bulldozers, impatient vultures that hover about its stench" (1987: 86). She knows it is only a picture, one that is not available to her under apartheid and that "At the base of this hollow edifice of guilt rattles the kernel of shame" (1987: 86). Thus, she does not respond to Uncle Gerrie who reproaches her for wanting to leave. He takes his criticism a step further to scold her for eating without a knife, since she was "brought up decent" (1987: 84). Aunt Cissie also bombards Frieda with advice on how to behave like a lady and warns her against indecent people on the ship, "where there's no laws or police. Just poor whites, you know, so remember you're an educated girl. There are skollies amongst the English as well" (1987: 87). By warning Frieda against English hooligans and poor whites, Aunt Cissie locates class above race, discriminating against the poor and

uneducated. Her ideas about who will be on the ship differ from the time when Uncle Hermanus leaves. After he vomits on her, Aunt Cissie reacts by hugging and consoling him, reassuring him that he has loved ones waiting for him and that there is “some nice Coloured person on the boat” (1987: 85). By juxtaposing these scenes with illustrations of the family’s behavior, “Uncle Gerrie licks his fingers loudly...[and] Aunt Cissie laughs her running-water laugh” (1987: 87), Wicomb depicts the irony in discrimination, whether it is against class, race or gender, commenting it is equally erroneous regardless of where it originates and to whom it is being directed.

The home Frieda decides to leave is a space not only racialized through apartheid laws and discriminatory attitudes within the family, it is also a gendered space governed by patriarchal, classist beliefs and values reinforced by even the women in the family. This is exemplified in the title story when cousin Marge is referred to as a disgrace in the family because she has been with a white man of a lower class. Frieda recalls Aunt Trudie, Marge’s mother, explaining, “Poor whites...She can’t even find a nice rich man to go steady with. Such a pretty girl too. I won’t have her back in this house. There’s no place in this house for a girl who’s been used by white trash” (Wicomb 1987: 66). As Marge has been “adulterated” by a poor, white man, any association with her would bring disgrace to the household. Thus, she is ousted from the family to protect the name. The gendered space of the house is also constructed by Aunt Nettie, who describes it as a place where Frieda will work one day, contrary to what Frieda’s father has told her. She advises Frieda, “A girl should help to keep the house tidy. And when you meet a nice man you’ll have the experience of housework” (1987: 101). As Frieda is bestowed with a steady stream of instructions from her aunts such as the importance of carrying a purse

and keeping a clean house, she finds it difficult to relate to her family that has been educated under the instruction of not only apartheid but also patriarchy.

After her return, Frieda feels overwhelmed by her family and decides to visit the river she used to play at, but she does not fully recognize the area. Her feelings of dislocation are intensified when she realizes she has little knowledge of the land as things have changed. She imagines there was a flood and tells about a past flood that destroyed a lot of the land and animals. As Frieda describes the flood, the narrative point of view changes. She starts with her point of view in dislocation while visiting the river and imagining a recent flood that she supposes happens, to describing a flood that she experienced, to retelling a story of a flood or area floods:

There must have been a flood and I wonder why Father did not write to tell me. Rainfall in the distant Bokkeveld mountains would have filled the river head with a swirling orange-brown water that raged its way for miles downstream. And here it surprised us on a morning as unremarkable as any other, without warning except for the muffled roar travelling a mile or more ahead...It would sweep along uprooted trees, monstrous swollen logs, a sheep or goat caught grazing in the river bed. (1987:91)

Through Frieda's narration, Wicomb illustrates not only how the protagonist has recognized the area and now feels out of place but also how different points of view of the same story—in this case flooding—are and are not transmitted. Moreover, this narration stresses the importance of herstories, as Frieda later describes how the local

women gather to look for firewood and tell stories. As Frieda's father does not tell her about the flood despite it being evident and a great change to the land, she loses part of her connection to her home. In the recounting of the floods, Frieda also describes the decomposing body of a dead woman:

I had not seen her, the strange dead woman who passed so swiftly through the plains to be tossed under the eyes of fishermen into the sea at Papendorp. But at night in bed I saw her glassy eyes staring out of the blue-black face swollen with water. And the breasts like balloons bobbed on the water. She would have torn her clothes in the first struggle, and I buried my head in the pillow and squeezed my palms into my eardrums to fend off that death. (1987: 91)

This dead woman is also in the legend of the floods chronicled, repeated and transmitted by the local women. Yet in their retelling of the story, the dead woman's "glassy eyes" change to "glass eyes [that] still glinted from every wave" (1987: 91). Through the retelling of her story, the woman's eyes are no longer glassy and dead but have life through the prosthetic eyes given by the women in their remembrance and visions.

As Frieda the narrator describes the "orange-brown liquid" of the flood, she compares it to the "sun-cracked bank [and] the orange growing red-brown and viscous in the sun. [It is then she] "would see her black body bobbing in blood" (Wicomb 1987: 91). Although Frieda did not see the woman, she remembers her and recounts her story. The woman also alludes to Saartjie Baartman, who lived in Papendorp in the Western Cape

before she was taken to London in 1810.<sup>56</sup> Baartman lived and worked as a servant for Pieter Cesars. Furthermore, as Baartman's own baby died, she acted as a wet nurse for Cesars's baby (Crais and Scully 2009: 40). Clifton Crais and Pamela Scully explain that Baartman's own children died as infants (2009: 38, 47), thus not only was her body for the use of others, she was exploited to the extent of feeding her own milk to another's child, making her "breasts like balloons." Thus, Baartman, even before she became known as the "Hottentot Venus" (Crais and Scully 2009: 1-7) was used for her female body parts, and perhaps it was in Papendorp, as narrated by Frieda, where she was first deracinated and first died by the flood of colonialism and patriarchy that ravaged the land, appropriated many women making them speechless and forever changed what was "home" to many. Not only was the land lost but many women were as well. As the land becomes more unrecognizable, not just from the physical changes but with the implementation of apartheid laws, Frieda becomes further alienated and does not want to be a part of this lost land and the continual flood of racism and patriarchy.

### **iii. De/parting the Lands**

Precursors to apartheid include the 1913 Natives' Land Act, which segregated the land, restricted access and limited ownership rights to African reserves to approximately seven percent of the Union's land, and the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act, which controlled black access to white urban areas, allowing mostly only laborers to enter (Beck 2000: 115). Furthermore, as aforementioned, apartheid legislation such as the 1950 Group

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<sup>56</sup> Baartman is originally thought to have been born by the Gamtoos River, but Crais and Scully's investigation indicates she lived further north (2009: 21). On and off, she lived in Papendorp (2009: 39-47), a village in the Western Cape located near the mouth of the Olifants River. In *David's Story*, the figure of Baartman is also connected to Dulcie Olifant, a female guerilla for MK, the armed wing of the ANC.

Areas Act led to the physical separation of the four constructed races. Other laws that helped enforce the separation of land and public spaces are the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act (1951), which allowed the removal of Blacks from both public and private land and created resettlement camps; Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (1953), which segregated public areas such as restrooms, seating, beaches, transport, etc.; and the Natives (Prohibition of Interdicts) Act (1956), which denied the ability to appeal against forced removals (Benningfield 2006: 310-312).<sup>57</sup> As a way to escape from such division, those who could, including author Zoë Wicomb, left South Africa.

In the title story *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*, Frieda takes the bus to meet her lover Michael so that he may take her to a clinic at Table Mountain to carry out an abortion. As he gives her directions, he tells the frightened Frieda, “You can't get lost in Cape Town” (Wicomb 1987: 73). This assertion, as Cólín Parsons argues, echoes throughout the novel (2011: 115) and attributes Michael's confidence to his sense of direction and is the basis of Frieda's attraction. He explains,

[Michael] can, as she cannot, fluidly cross the boundaries of the landscape, finding illicit spaces in which to transgress with her. His blithe confidence in his own ability, combined with his impatience at Frieda's inability, to conceive of the landscape in abstract terms and through cardinal points is the ultimate marker of difference in this story. (Parsons 2011:115)

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<sup>57</sup> For a comprehensive list on racial legislation before and during apartheid, see the O'Malley Archives (O'Malley, 2010).

Although Parsons fleetingly acknowledges race or class might also be present, he asserts “cartographic literacy” is the main difference between Michael and Frieda. He argues Frieda’s inability to cross boundaries deals mostly with navigation skills, but as apartheid regulations limited Frieda’s rights in her classification of Coloured in comparison to Michael’s position of White, anything placing little emphasis on race and class as decisive factors for difference cannot be effectively argued. This is clearly reminded when Michael proposes marriage to Frieda and tries to persuade her that they can find a safe place, but she reminds him of the laws against them. As they sit and discuss their situation they admire the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, which unlike them, are able to unite in peace.

Michael’s white privilege enables him to look at the land as indisputably conquerable as he is free to move about. Frieda explains, “This country is vast and he has an instinctive sense of direction. He discovers the armpits of valleys that invite us into their shadows,” (Wicomb 1987: 76). As aforementioned, Parsons reads this narration to demonstrate Michael’s navigational skills. While this is agreeable, it can be taken a step further to argue Frieda is alluding to imperial history that Michael has inherited in her narration of the land as a body. Thus, his sense of direction can be attributed to his interest in the land and literacy in mapping it, as it is an inherited. Jennifer Beningfield explains, “The dependence of national identity on particular parcels of tribal lands raises questions about these lands themselves; what their physical characteristics were and what the nature of the boundaries were that encircled them. Maps offered a way to imagine the divided landscape” (Beningfield 2006: 133). By dividing the land, colonialism and later apartheid made it easier to control through its separation and creation into communities.



These communities led to small neighborhoods and eventually nationalism, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Of course the division not only created difficulties in mobility for those who were not classified as white, but it also led to contradictions. Beningfield contends,

The city and the bodies within it were so circumscribed by laws which overlapped and sometimes contradicted one another that the veneer of a rationalized modern state became undermined in the act of governing. The bodies of people who were not classified as white were caught in a profound contradiction. Not only did the legislation require the registration of their race, location and employment, engendering a state in which the person was controlled and “known” through a wealth of documentation, but also the city closed its face to their presence, rendering them invisible, unable to penetrate the city. (2006: 212)

The difficulties of a person not classified as White is also exemplified by Frieda and Michael’s perceptive planning, choosing rush hour in hopes of being unnoticed (Wicomb 1987: 73). Thus, Parsons’s argument that Michael’s “spatial logic of apartheid and [ability to] pass easily into other social spaces” (Parsons 2011: 115) is contradicted as it overlooks the white privilege historically based on colonialism and later on apartheid that has given him access to the land and city.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> In his essay “Scaling the Gifberge: Cosmopolitanism, Cartography and Space in Zoë Wicomb’s *You Can’t Get Lost in Cape Town*,” Parsons writes that he does “not wish to ignore or sideline questions of identity and subjectivity in relation to space, but to ask what we can see if we concentrate solely on the interactions between local and global space in the stories” (2011: 109). In a space such as Cape Town,

The lack of such privilege sparks Frieda's yearning for the veld, her longing for the familiarity and freedom of the landscape where the frontiers of color are principally represented by the red sand (1987: 73). She knows there are laws against marriage and the union for the baby and doesn't consider herself a loved one. Love is for "Whites Only" (1987: 76), and as the land is divided, so must be love and marriage, the latter of which is ensured through apartheid law.<sup>59</sup> Frieda comes upon a dried-fruit store and reminisces of the South African land and the fruits it produces. Just as she assesses the fruit that is not quite fresh or at its full flavor, she has come to realize that neither she nor her baby will be able to live life at its full potential under such conditions. "Desire is a Tsafendas tapeworm<sup>60</sup> in my belly that cannot be satisfied and as I pop the first fig into my mouth I feel the danger fountain with jets of saliva. Will I stop at one death?" (1987: 77). She desires both love and marriage and the fruits they produce, but she must abort this desire as she ends her pregnancy. Moreover, as to avoid this desire, or insanity, that talks to her as it eats her away, she must leave the land.

In the story "Ash on My Sleeve," on a return visit from England, Frieda visits her childhood friend Moira who lives in a new Coloured neighborhood. Frieda first mistakes a neighbor's unkempt house for Moira's, when in fact her house has a well-kept garden,

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which was divided and constructed as a racial space for centuries, it seems omitting such a crucial component while considering the local area is unmanageable.

<sup>59</sup> The 1949 Mixed Marriages Act, which prohibited marriage between Whites and non-Whites and the 1968 Amendment to the law that nullified any marriage abroad between a South African man and a woman of a different racial background (O'Malley, 2010).

<sup>60</sup> Here Wicomb refers to Dimitri Tsafendas, who stabbed and killed Hendrik Verwoerd, the mastermind of apartheid. Tsafendas completed the act in front of parliament on Sept. 6, 1966 and was found not guilty for reasons of insanity. It was reported he claimed there was a giant tapeworm that talked to him, but this was found to be an exaggeration as transcripts showed he only mentioned the tapeworm in passing (Bell and Ntsebeza 2003: 56-58). Interestingly enough, as Tsafendas's background was African and Greek, he would be considered "Coloured" under apartheid legislation. He was, however, classified White, thus he was able to pass for white (Lodge 2011: 192-193).

lace curtains and an “efficient” fence (1987: 148). Frieda later expresses her alienation to the newness and asks if Moira finds it strange.<sup>61</sup> She responds,

Ag Frieda, but we’re so new, don’t we belong in estates like this? Coloureds haven’t been around for that long, perhaps that’s why we stray. Just think, in our teens we wanted to be white, now we want to be full-blooded Africans. We’ve never wanted to be ourselves and that’s why we stray ... across the continent, across the oceans, and even here, right into the Tricameral Parliament playing into their hands.<sup>62</sup> Actually ... it suits me very well to live here. (1987: 156)

In this way, not only does Moira justify her comfort for living in a new Coloured suburb and enjoying finer things, she reifies the multiplicities of coloured identities while defending her own identity. Furthermore, she refutes Frieda’s idealization of the past, her need for a past identity. In what Immanuel Wallerstein refers to as pastness, he argues, it “is a mode by which persons are persuaded to act in the present in ways they might not otherwise act. Pastness is a tool persons use against each other ... a central element in the socialization of individuals, in the maintenance of group solidarity, in the establishment of or challenge to social legitimation” (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 78). Thus, although

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<sup>61</sup> In his chapter on the impact of forced removals, Henry Trotter explains, coloured removees oftentimes shared similar narratives about the past in relation to their shattered homes as a way to counter the apartheid rational and removal, compare the difficulties of the present to the idealized past and commemorate their lost homes and communities (2009: 56). The traumatic impact of being forced to leave her neighborhood is not illustrated through young Frieda, who does not understand the negative aspect in comparison to electric lights and running water (Wicomb 1987: 30). Yet as she becomes older and returns, she reconsiders her life away from home and as a result, she idealizes and commemorates her young life on the veld, even before leaving for Cape Town. Memory and trauma are further discussed in Chapter Five.

<sup>62</sup> From 1984-1994, the Tricameral Parliament represented Whites, Indians and Coloureds under apartheid. Blacks were excluded from having their own representatives (Durrheim 2011: 31, 208).

Frieda left the veld and later South Africa for England, by expressing her disdain for the Coloured suburbia in which Moira lives, she is also nostalgic for home, whatever that might be, and makes her sentiments a political statement.

The collection closes with Frieda returning home and visiting her mother, who is reluctant to see her due to her derision from Frieda's stories about Cape Town that will soon be published. Frieda's mother scornfully questions, "What do you know about things, about people, this place where you were born? About your ancestors who roamed these hills? You left. Remember?" (Wicomb 1987: 172). Despite Mrs. Shenton's disinclination to see her daughter, the two take "A Trip to the Gifberge," as the title of the story suggests. The section is filled with vivid descriptions of the land in its formations, flora and fauna. Frieda knows very little about the region, while her mother remembers *ysterbos* is a remedy for kidney problems and proteas do indeed grow in the mountains, despite Frieda's argument they do not. When they nearly reach the edge of the mountain, they find the remaining area fenced and locked. Mrs. Shenton is very disappointed as she had hoped to view the city from this point. Despite the land and its flora's disregard of the border created, the fence's power to divide is still great enough to make Frieda uncomfortable for "hanging about idly" (1987: 179) and later jumping over it for fear of trespassing. This refusal shocks her mother, who looks for a way to overcome the boundary. In this way, the symbol of the fence represents the way time and space have created differences between mother and daughter, the former who remained under apartheid and the latter who had the opportunity to depart to live elsewhere, away from the oppressive regime.

The differences in points of view are also illustrated as Frieda protests when her mother wants to take a protea bush for the garden, as it was a symbol of Afrikaner nationalism. Her mother responds, arguing

You who're so clever ought to know that proteas belong to the veld. Only fools and cowards would hand them over to the Boers. Those who put their stamp on things may see it in their own histories and hope. But a bush is a bush; it doesn't become what people think they inject into it. We know who lived in these mountains when the Europeans were still shivering in their own country. (Wicomb 1987: 181)

In her own way, Frieda's mother refuses to permit the wrongful appropriation of South Africa, particularly through its flora and land. As Dorothy Driver contends, Frieda's mother refuses to accept the ideology placed on the bush while Frieda rejects the bush itself (Driver 2010: 528). Yet in the end, it is the memories of the land through growing nostalgia and yearning for home that lead Frieda to consider returning to Cape Town.

### **III. Neighbor/hood**

“The story is our escort; without it, we are blind. Does the blind man own his escort? No, neither do we the story; rather it is the story that owns us and directs us. It is the thing that makes us different from cattle; it is the mark on the face that sets one people apart from their neighbours.” (Achebe 1988: 114)

Land was majorly sought in campaigns of empirical expansion and colonial settlement, and, as aforementioned, it was also divided and racialized into areas as part of the effort

to control particular populations. Apartheid legislation racialized and grouped populations in order to separate and control them, resulting in not only the deracination of peoples from their homes and neighborhoods but also in a re/construction of identities. In “African Modes of Self-Writing,” Achille Mbembe contends, “There is no identity without territoriality—the vivid consciousness of *place* and mastery of it, whether by birth, by conquest, or by settlement” (2002: 266). Mbembe locates this territoriality in the home and through memberships such as familial relations or in community spaces where membership might be based on citizenship, which, as he points out, are ways to exclude foreigners (2002: 266). Thus, if one is removed from his or her home or neighborhood, with what can they identify?

Although “foreigner” commonly indicates one who does not have citizenship from a particular country, it often refers to those whose backgrounds differ from the majority so that the foreign person is alien, strange, outlandish. The efforts to protect identity through territoriality then become the concentration of identities that are alike, resulting in the separation of spaces and a creation of borders. As the familiar is associated with purity and thus security and the foreign with pollution and therefore danger, Bauman explains the effort to keep the former close and the latter far away is normal (2006: 108-109). Consequently, those who share similar identities must defend their spaces against any threats, and as Bauman argues, protecting ethnicity is the most convenient form of identity, and this method of belonging precipitates the pressure to choose loyalty to fit into the community or face rootlessness and homelessness (2006: 107, 173). As the former section of this chapter focuses on the space of home, this portion of the chapter, through Wicomb’s fiction, will be dedicated to the neighbor and

neighborhood. In particular, through an analysis of Wicomb's short story "Neighbours" from her collection *The One that Got Away* and the expulsion of the Boshoff family in *Playing in the Light*, it will be argued dislocations often entail relocations, heightening tensions in neighborhoods and leading to what Žižek terms as the Neighbor.

### **i. Re/locating Neighbors: Garden Making and Weed Eating**

For Žižek, the abyss of the Neighbour is marked through a "wall of language," which not only separates but also creates its image (2009: 62). In *Violence*, he argues violence is ultimately begat through fear of the Neighbour and begins with language, which is also the method of defeating direct violence (2009: 174). It is the fear of the Other and its closing distance that lead to aggression towards the Neighbour. In "Neighbours," the sixth short story in Wicomb's collection, *The One that Got Away*, language is an important factor in not only creating or relocating the Other but also in the very representation of the neighborhood itself through naming and renaming. The story opens describing "Jeff 'n' Marie" and their house in Glasgow, with solid foundations of granite built by the Church of Scotland. As Jeff 'n' Marie represent a unit that hails from a firm base backed by the Church, they easily claim belongingness in their neighborhood in Scotland. They are residents who belong; they represent the neighborhood and officially, the Residents' Association. Through this claimed power, Jeff 'n' Marie's shared point of view is ascribed to the area by referring to the public greens as private gardens and off limits. Through their use of language, they set the standards, and thus through the act of renaming, they mark their ownership. This act is further exemplified in the interchangeable names of Bilsland Street, Bilsland Square and Bilsland Road to address

their street. The couple is retired and their routines consist of scheduled nights of gin and tonic and weekend afternoons of sex until their lives become inconvenienced by the arrival of their new neighbor Ben, a single mother from South Africa who does not keep her garden according to the couple's requirements.

The garden is a symbol for land and territory, and Jeff 'n' Marie attribute her weeds and perceived untidiness to being foreign, and speculate on how "such people" are able to afford the house (Wicomb 2008: 85). As a way to convince Ben to tidy her yard, Marie offers to loan her tools and treatments. She explains, "The damp's the devil for spreading moss, and then it chokes out the grass. But weeds, they won't let anything choke them; there's no getting out of hard graft, and what with summer on its way, there'll be a riot of weeds" (2008: 83). Through this characterization that is reminiscent of the scientific racism and apartheid categorizations, classification is problematized with a focus placed on miscegenation, as exemplified in the U.S. under the one-drop rule, where a drop of "black" blood meant the tainting of the white race and the classification of the said person to be "black." Yet Ben resists this violence in classification and contests the branding of weeds with what she sees as dandelions. She cleverly contends, "weeds are not the end of the world. Has Marie noticed how wonderful the dandelion looks this year? One can't imagine how they came to be classified as weeds, especially with the leaves being so good in salad as well" (Wicomb 2008: 83). Thus, through the act of renaming, an object, or the Other, is re-presented and a new meaning is constructed, relocating the object to be a subject.

The problem with weeds also arises in *Playing in the Light* when Marion visits her father's house and sees the garden taken over by weeds. The narrator explains John



does not see the issue with a few weeds, and doesn't "mind things going a little wild" (2008: 12). Marion is annoyed and offers to send over a gardener because "nature means not only weeds, but also mice, rats, snakes even, who'd have no regard for the threshold of the back door," (2008: 13), referring to the idea that once things begin to get out of hand, they can only get worse if not taken care of, soiling the sanctity of the home. This also alludes to the evils of miscegenation, which, as is the premise of Sarah Gertrude Millin's *God's Stepchildren* (1924) (Wicomb 2000: 63, 161; Olassen 2009: 151), will ruin generations of whites. Thus, as Millin warned, producing offspring not only degenerates white purity, it opens the doors for infestation and other problems to arise. Millin's answer, as Lucie Graham points out, is that "'half-castes' have a duty *not to breed* so that they may die out in order to restore purity and health to the collective," (2012: 83), as does Millin's character Barry Lindsell.

Wicomb's illustrations evoke the theories of scientific human classification such as those by Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus, German anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Scottish scientist Robert Knox. Such theories were transmitted throughout history as proof of white superiority.<sup>63</sup> One of the most notorious was French scientist Georges Cuvier, who is also included in *David's Story*. He was interested in Saartjie Baartman, who was brought to London and put on display for her steatopygia

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<sup>63</sup> In the 18th century, Carl Linnaeus contended "Hottentots" and Europeans came from different origins, and later in *Systema Naturae*, he created individual descriptions for four categories of man: European Man, Asiatic Man, African Man and American Man (Dubow 1995: 22, 26); Johann Blumenbach first named the races of humans to be Caucasian, Mongolian and Ethiopian and later added American and Malayan based on a comparison of cranium and leading to conclusions that certain races were degenerate of caucasians (1995: 26, 28); and in the 19th century Robert Knox worked in comparative anatomy and the correlation to national differences. Knox was one of the first to describe Khosians as "yellow skinned" and was later involved in a scandal for purchasing 17 cadavers for dissection from William Burke and William Hare (Dubow 1995: 27-28; "Robert Knox"). For more information, see Dubow 1995, particularly Chapter 2: "Physical Anthropology and the Quest for the 'Missing Link.'" Here, Dubow writes "The Great Chain of Being" and "Nature" were precedents to late 19th century evolution. He explains that sea voyagers contributed to the construction of images of the "Hottentots" and later Australian Aborigines, who were "commonly seen as the 'lowest' of the savage races" (1995: 21).

and elongated labia in Piccadilly Circus. Baartman was also displayed in shows in Paris and later forced to work in prostitution. After her death, Cuvier recovered her remains for scientific use. Based on drawings made of Baartman while she was alive, Cuvier, along with his assistant Henri de Blainville, compared Baartman's anatomy to that of an orangutan and concluded she was the missing link between humans and apes (Gilman 1985: 213, Crais and Scully 2009: 135). After her death, Cuvier made a cast of her body and dissected it. It is this representation of Baartman<sup>64</sup> that was used worldwide as a base of how "the primitive" was represented (Crais and Scully 2009: 135). Cuvier then cut out her brain and genitals and preserved them. Crais and Scully, in their groundbreaking investigation, contend his actions are exemplary of "science as rape institutionalized" (2009: 140) and describe that after the dissection, the scientists dismembered Baartman to dissolve her tissues in order to extract her skeleton to add to his collection.

The cast of Baartman, along with her preserved parts and skeleton were put on display at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris to show racial difference (Gilman 1985: 206, 216, Dubow 1995: 23), and they were exhibited until 1985, when she was later put in the museum's storage area. Upon the request of Nelson Mandela, she was finally returned home in 2002. Sander Gilman argues, Baartman as the primitive, along with the representation of prostitutes as the primitive coalesced to construct both the prostitute and black woman as degenerates and therefore, a threat to the white (European) race through their unbridled sexuality and diseased uncleanness, which were based on perceptions of

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<sup>64</sup> A statue with the sole description of "Mujer Hottentot" or "Hottentot Woman" similar to the cast of Baartman is on display in the "Sala de Orígenes," at the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Madrid. This statue, along with a male counterpart, is displayed next to a case with the skeletons of a female and infant orangutan. Moreover, the case also contains the skeletal remains of a human female from Luzon, Philippines, and just outside of the case is a statue representing a Filipina. It is remarkable that such images from European, imperialistic gaze continue to represent full cultures in such an absolute manner.

their genitalia (1985: 218-237). He explains the threat of miscegenation thus “was a fear not merely of interracial sexuality but of its results: the decline of the population. Interracial marriages were seen as exactly parallel to the barrenness of the prostitute; if they produced children at all, these children were weak and doomed” (Gilman 1985: 237). Such conclusions were constructed by not only the deductions of Cuvier and the representations of artists but also through concrete images such as Baartman’s physical body parts and skeleton on display.

Eugenics later became a method of examining class differences and ultimately race, with the duty later placed on the government to “weed out or neutralize inferior breeding stock [which] could justify a variety of policies, including immigration restriction, prohibition of interracial marriage, the forced sterilization of undesirables, and ultimately the euthanasia of entire categories of people” (Fredrickson 2002: 86). Bauman also applies the analogy of weeds to racial and ethnic purification. He explains the Nazis advanced such racial hatred against Jews as to regard them as evil beyond repair and thus deserving extermination as weeds and vermin are naturally sinful and incurable (Bauman 2000: 220). Eugenics not only aided in the discrimination, criminalization and attempts at extermination of specific groups, it also enabled the dehumanization of groups, as was the case in Australia where the Aboriginal peoples and Torres Straight Islanders were not considered citizens until 1967, which before then they were regarded as flora and fauna under the Flora and Fauna Act (May 2012: 288). Furthermore, eugenics played a role in the forced removals of children from aboriginal parents, also known as the Stolen

Generation, in an ethnic cleansing process that sought to control “aboriginality” (Briskman 2003: 5-8; Huggan 2007: 96-98).<sup>65</sup>

Of course eugenics was also used in apartheid ideologies in South Africa. As Saul Dubow points out, based on eugenics, Afrikaner scientists promoted the idea that “through the weeding out of inferior characteristics, the quality of the Boer race as a whole would be improved” (1992: 226). Weeding out not only worked to ameliorate the Afrikaners, it also warned against the interracial marriages and its racial repercussions. Dubow explains that as part of the Boer nationalist movement, geneticist Gerrie Eloff worked to biologically define Boer, explaining marriage between white races, such as Boers who were Dutch, German and French created a hybrid that could adapt to Cape weather while racial mixtures between black and white races proved to have unhealthy offspring that were mentally, physically and morally inferior (1992: 227-228). Thus, going back to Mbembe’s assertion of the direct correlation of identity and territoriality, as identity is based on the mastery of place, the figure of the neighbor or *anyone* or *thing*, where thing might be a being dehumanized, that might pose a threat to such power over space, must be controlled and then taken out to protect the sanctity and control of the territory. Calling the neighbor a weed makes the task of ridding the space of a threat much more digestible, and through the language of eugenics, weeding is made to be noble and done in the name of the greater community.

By questioning the classification of dandelions as weeds in the short story “Neighbours,” Wicomb problematizes eugenics and taxonomy, showing such grouping is subjective. Furthermore, her illustration shows how his/herstories are linked through the

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<sup>65</sup> For more information, see the report “Bringing Them Home,” *The Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, April 1997.

intertextuality with the scenario in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, where Pecola the young female protagonist recognizes the beauty in dandelions and the ways they are enjoyed while others see only weeds. She ponders this labeling since to her, dandelions are pretty and can be used to make soup or wine. Pecola wonders if the hatred toward dandelions is due to their strength in numbers and the quickness in which they come, an allusion to the fear of miscegenation. Soon, after a shopkeeper treats her as if she were an aberration because of her blackness, Pecola begins to question herself and her own beliefs:

[She] feels the inexplicable shame ebb. Dandelions. A dart of affection leaps out from her to them. But they do not look at her and do not send love back. She thinks, 'they *are* ugly. They *are* weeds.' Preoccupied with that revelation, she trips on the sidewalk crack. Anger stirs and wakes in her; it opens its mouth and like a hot-mouthed puppy, laps up the dredges of her shame. (Morrison 1970: 41-43)

Pecola slips into believing such prejudices, but soon catches herself and finds her sturdy ground. Through the symbol of the dandelion, the two authors work to reverse the violence that naming can lead to while empowering the female characters to contest such dehumanizing oppression. By paralleling these scenarios, Wicomb also suggests a connection in the struggles of women of color against racial ideologies, and that together this discrimination can be overcome. Moreover, although there is a difference between the Othering communities in each story—in this case, Ben's is a new community to

which she has relocated and Pecola's is her own—and despite whether the Othering comes from a new community or from within one's own community, the result is the same. As Morrison argues in *Playing in the Dark* (1992), the racism and prejudicial attitudes reflect upon the person or community who is Othering as opposed to that who is being represented.

Jeff and Marie fear Ben's demeanor and foreignness, like weeds, will infiltrate the sanctity of the community, to which Ben does not belong. They question how people like her could afford to live in such a neighborhood. Marie equates Ben's darkness as non-British (2008: 87), and therefore Ben's foreignness and race not only disqualify her as being a legit member of the community, but they also place her in a lower class, farther outside of the imagined community. Benedict Anderson distinguishes nationalism from racism by arguing the former originates more from "historical destinies" while the latter focuses on "eternal contaminations transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside history ... The dreams of racism actually have their origin in ideologies of class, rather than those in nation" (Anderson 2006: 149). Yet as scientific racism has historically argued Africans are closer to animals or are even the "missing link" between humans and animals,<sup>66</sup> Anderson's argument is thus proven problematic given in some cases skin color or racialized characteristics were a dividing factor rather than social class and that racism worked to uphold nationalism. Although imperialism indeed divided communities into social classes, it is difficult to

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<sup>66</sup> In *Black Bodies, White Bodies*, Sander L. Gilman demonstrates how art and scientific racism have contributed to the subjugating ideologies that compared black women to primates. In particular, he uses Georges Cuvier's analysis of Saartjie Baartman as a prime example of this comparison.

completely separate racism from nationalism.<sup>67</sup> While Anderson finds nationalism and racism distinct, Balibar contends:

racism first presents itself as super-nationalism...[and] sees itself as an 'integral' nationalism, which only has meaning if it is based on the integrity of the nation, integrity both towards the outside and on the inside. What theoretical racism calls 'race' or 'culture' (or both together) is therefore a continued origin of the nation, a concentrate of the qualities which belong to nationals 'as their own'; it is in the 'race of its children' that the nation could contemplate its own identity in the pure state. (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 59)

As Jeff and Marie's children have left, they believe it is up to them to protect the integrity of their neighborhood, which they too have recently moved into. Ben and her son, on the other hand, represent a threat that disturbs their mini-nation with their blackness and strangeness. To maintain this imagined, idealized community identity, the couple first pressures Ben to conform her yard to their standards, which represent the whole of the community, and later in the story when they demand she leave the public communal gardens where she is hosting a housewarming party. Jeff explains, "Oh no, not public at all; they're private gardens that belong to the house-owners of this square, out of

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<sup>67</sup> Anderson prefaces this argument through an analysis of racial epithets such as "slant," derived from "slant-eyed." He argues such words remove "nation-ness by reducing the adversary to his biological physiognomy" (2006: 148). Although I agree that this act removes a person from his or her nation, culture, community, etc., it could be argued that by grouping people such as Asians and Pacific Islanders from various nations together, the oppressor is actually facilitating a monolithic Other, placing the racially subjugated people into a single nation created or imagined through racial ideologies.

bounds because of a communal decision taken by the Residents' Association ... As for staking out your boundary, it just isn't possible, it's against the spirit of communal gardens" (2008: 93). In this case, the boundary is created by the residents, which do not include Ben, who herself, in her Otherness, is against the spirit of the community.

As figures of the stranger, Ben and her son are not only "different" from Jeff and Marie, they are alien and represent a threat through the potentially drastic change to the neighborhood. To prevent this shift, the couple attempts to remove her rights by not fully accepting her as a legitimate homeowner. Thus, Jeff regards her as the owner of a house in the neighborhood, which is not and cannot be her "home." Regarding the perception of a safe neighborhood, Zygmunt Bauman explains, "community means *sameness*, while 'sameness' means the absence of the Other, especially a stubbornly *different* other capable of a nasty surprise and mischief precisely by reason of their difference" (2011: 115). Ben's mischievousness lies in her failure to take seriously Jeff and Marie's suggestions about how to behave. Her refusal, although extremely polite and logical, represents rebellion to the norms the couple has established for the neighborhood. Furthermore, Jeff and Marie make it nearly impossible for Ben to be a part of the community because they are the ones who perform the surveillance and create the rules, which can be changed to keep her "out of bounds" and powerless to create her own space. Bauman contends that were there no strangers in a community, they would be created (2011: 115). Indeed, strangers are created through symbols, constructed and presented by (mostly male) historians and transmitted through media.

For Žižek, Ben is what he calls the Neighbor: "primarily a thing, a traumatic intruder, someone whose different way of life disturbs us, throws the balance of our way



of life off the rails” (2009: 50). If the Neighbor treads too close, it can result in violence as a means of removing the disturbance (2009: 50). Along these lines, through her characterization of Ben, Wicomb highlights the irony in the concept of “neighbor” and “neighborliness.” She writes, “[Ben] had always wondered why such a category should exist, how it could be different from just being a decent human being who would readily lend a hand or a cup of sugar. Now she understands the underlying concerns of ownership, the need for uniformity that neighbourliness must police” (Wicomb 2008: 86). It is perhaps this neighborliness that Hendrik Verwoerd was referring to when he explained apartheid was better described as “a policy of good neighborliness” (“Hendrik Verwoerd Defines Apartheid” 2010). It is only through conformity that a community may sustain its uniformity and sense of security. An aberration from the imagined community such as the stranger or Neighbor equals the Other, which must remain so and be controlled to keep stability. In order to evade this construction of the stranger or the Other, Wicomb argues for a reexamination of these symbols such as through renaming a weed a dandelion and points to the absurdities of accepted nationbuilding tactics that promote the exclusion and removal of persons from a community, as exemplified through the ridiculous definitions of boundaries and community rights of land and space.

By keeping the strange at distance or out of the community, the Other is placed in a limbo that maintains its location outside the nation’s borders and perpetuates this position as infinite (Butler 2006: 34). Yet as Butler explains, there is a common goal for acknowledgement in the action of and request for recognition. She puts forth her interpretation of the Hegelian struggle for recognition:

Each, in a different way, is compelled by the same need, the same requirement. This means that we are not separate identities in the struggle for recognition but are already involved in a reciprocal exchange, an exchange that dislocates us from our positions, our subject-positions, and allows us to see that community itself requires the recognition that we are all, in different ways, striving for recognition...To ask for recognition, or to offer it, is precisely not to ask for recognition for what one already is. It is to solicit a becoming, to instigate a transformation, to petition the future always in relation to the Other. (2006: 43-44)

Thus to request or give recognition is to incite a form of change, which depends on the subject/community and how it views itself and expresses power in relation to outside the community (2006: 25).

To Jeff and Marie's dismay, Ben has her housewarming party in the communal gardens. The couple finds this unacceptable because the garden should be kept orderly and exclusive, and regular use might attract hoodlums. Of course Ben cannot understand the problem and refuses to leave. Through the larger, complex issue of landownership, Wicomb questions the rules and rights of community membership. Who has a right to own land? What rights do landownership grant? Is this landowner allowed in the community? Who is allowed to belong? Jeff uses his authority as member of the homeowners' association to enforce his sovereignty and rules of the nation, which is not open to difference. By attempting to expel Ben from the garden, Jeff symbolically

demarks her from the community (Butler 2007: 34). Yet Ben stands her ground; after all, she is a former ANC revolutionary in exile.

The night of Ben's party, the scenario changes when Jeff has a heart attack. Ben, who is a nurse, hears the commotion and calls an ambulance. Marie is left powerless and does not know what to do, so Ben accompanies her to the hospital. Jeff does not fully recover and instead has caught an infection that affects his memory, resulting in what Marie sees as an "eejit" with an unusual politeness toward Ben (Wicomb 2008: 96). Through this characterization, Wicomb demonstrates the location of the Other can precipitously change, as well as the perception of belonging. As Marie does not recognize her husband in his old ways, he has become the Other.

Jeff only remembers their old flat and not their new neighborhood. Ironically, he looks to Ben for comfort and questions her: "Where is home?" Jeff's alienation from his environment not only indicates his estrangement from home, it also alludes to the sense of separation and vulnerability that is felt when one is forced to leave one's land, as in the case of Ben's exile. This question of home echoes through Wicomb's novels and short stories, and through the alienation of Jeff, who represents the colonizer with his sexual gaze towards Ben (2008: 85, 97) and his staking of territory, the basis of belonging is juxtaposed. What is it to belong, to have a home? In "Crossing Over," from his collection of short stories *In Corner B*, Es'kia Mphahlele, Mama explains it is a place where ancestors are, a place that has been taken away. Mphahlele writes:

But human beings must always have a place to go to where their forefathers lie buried, not so? The ground that holds them is holy and now

the whiteman has dragged us out and away from them. And now in my old age I feel I have no strength to support me—like a river whose mountain source has been blasted by dynamite and now must choke on its own silt and rocks and who knows what else. I already feel like a mere echo even while I still breathe, and this should not be...because either you live in a place and you and the earth give out an echo, or you are an ancestor who is in an echo out of a certain place and a certain time. (2011: 217-218)

In Mama's description of her land, her home, it is not only a place where family is and has been, but it is a place where stories are learned and passed down, a land of support and meaning. Yet as the echo of stories is now empty, both Mama in "Crossing Over" and Jeff in "Neighbours" find difficulty in the purpose of return.

Jeff particularly is hesitant after his wife is unable to describe home and instead, she repeatedly gives him directions. As she is unable to explain their home and what they do, Jeff questions: "Do I want to go home?" (2008: 97). As a man who has lost his memory, Jeff has been dislocated from his mind, implicating a displacement from his *self* and his history. Being neighborly (or just humane), Ben attempts to explain the couple's routines to Jeff, but she knows little about her neighbors who have done nothing but complain. She describes activities such as "weeding, or rather gardening" and drinking gin and tonics. As Marie focuses on the fence, Jeff reemphasizes his question: "No, he says emphatically, my question is: what do I do there?," revealing the difficulty in the concept of home and its correlation to his sense of individual worth. Yet Marie cannot answer and gives up.

Marie can only think about her idealistic community and focuses on directions and borders, symbols that reinforce the broader nation. For her, the importance is belonging and community, from which her husband has been deracinated. She sees Jeff as an “eejit” and thus he can no longer belong. Jeff’s infection has raised his thinking into more of an individual, humanistic level. Upon hearing the details of his life, he can no longer see its worth amid the superficialities of their everyday routines. He sums it up, “Gin. Tonic. Weeds. Birds. Cats...Some Bloody Life” (2008: 99). This reexamination of his life, albeit after an accident, has revealed the foreignness Jeff has found within himself and altered the subject/Other positioning of the Neighbor. Moreover, through Jeff’s reconsideration and later rejection of such an exclusive lifestyle, Wicomb problematizes the figure of the stranger in nationbuilding and the creation of communities, arguing the location of either can change at any time and the separating borders can and should be questioned and overcome.

Readers are reminded of the symbols and signs created through imperialism that have constructed the Other. These symbols have permeated time and exist in the present, perpetuating the figure of the strange or what Žižek calls, the “Neighbor.” If this Other cannot be controlled and assimilated to fit the demands of the exclusive community, the Other must be contained and separated, as illustrated with Jeff and Marie’s attempts to force Ben to conform. As Ben refuses, she is under constant surveillance and suspicion, but she also rejects the imagined community’s hostilities and refuses to participate in the struggle of the nation/Other binary. Moreover, as Jeff later loses his memory, he is made the Other by his own wife, showing the precipitous change that can occur to anyone

without warning. In this way, Wicomb illustrates the borders of belonging are blurry and often ephemeral.

## **ii. The Neighbor: an Other Within**

As illustrated through the scenario of Jeff 'n' Marie, being a member of a community can be exhausting, and furthermore, the demanding requirements can easily push members outside the boundaries, making them the Others. In the maintenance of a community, especially one that is exclusive, nobody is safe or outside the risk of being made a stranger. One day a person can be accepted in a community and the next day fully ousted to be a complete stranger. Thus, in fear of being ejected, one must protect oneself, as Helen and John Campbell do in *Playing in the Light*. As the Campbells live in a designated white neighborhood, they must constantly be careful to not do anything that would jeopardize their whiteness. "Vigilance is everything; to achieve whiteness is to keep on your toes" (Wicomb 2006: 152). This anxiety controls their lives, going so far as to deny John's wish to have another child in case he or she is born with non-white characteristics and to disallow Marion to have friends as a way to guard family secrets. Despite Helen's mistrust and suspicions, Marion is permitted to have one friend, her schoolmate Annie Boshoff, provided she does not hold hands with her nor say anything about the Campbell family. The two remain friends until Annie is forced to leave, but Marion never learns why.

As Marion's search for the truth about her own background continues, memories of Annie begin to haunt her. It is later revealed that the Boshoff family was forced to leave the neighborhood because Mr. Boshoff was found having sex with a coloured

woman. This act, however immoral to the sanctity of marriage, was not the scandal. The disgrace lies in Mr. Boshoff's admission that he was a "play white" and wished to be reclassified again because he loved the woman. As the narrator explains, he would not be charged under the 1957 Immorality Act, which forbade intercourse between a White and non-White person and carried a maximum penalty of seven years in prison.<sup>68</sup>

Helen's response to the incident is a feeling of betrayal—not for Mr. Boshoff's infidelity to his wife but for his deceitfulness to herself and the community. She imagines Mrs. Boshoff's position:

And poor Mrs. Boshoff, Helen wondered aloud, betrayed by that rat—or had she known all along, herself guilty of immorality? In which case, the family deserved the scandal, the just deserts for unlawful behavior...[Mrs. Boshoff] would have to move, she could surely not stay in that respectable area with her brood, who were, of course, strictly speaking, coloured, and strictly speaking should be taken away from her. Unless it turned out, and Helen pursed her lips, that Mrs. Boshoff herself was coloured, and thus would also be reclassified. (Wicomb 2006: 194)

Here, the irony lies in the subjectiveness of immorality. What is considered immoral is not infidelity to a spouse but to the community. Furthermore, it is paradoxical that Helen, who herself and her husband have reclassified to White, sees the shame of the incident, which of course could happen to her as well. Yet as Bauman explains, "In order to fulfill

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<sup>68</sup> As Bowker and Star explain, police patrolled areas using equipment such as binoculars, tape recorders and cameras to catch offenders of interracial sex, which included a kiss (2000: 198).

the communitarian project, one needs to appeal to the selfsame ('self-disencumbering?') individual choices whose possibility has been denied. One cannot be a bona fide communitarian without giving the devil his due, without on one occasion admitting the freedom of individual choice denied on another" (Bauman 2006: 170). He continues by contending a paradoxical situation incites such a paradoxical response. Thus, in the case of apartheid existed the paradox of creating legislation to separate racial populations as a means to ensure white superiority, while having policies and loopholes that allow non-white members to reclassify as a means to increase the white population. As Wicomb further explains in an interview, "We don't even know how many of them there are. There's no discourse, nothing in the library, because officially they don't exist. Yet the truth of the matter, because of their history, is that many Afrikaners are mixed race. Even [Hendrik] Verwoerd had a wife who looked African" (Robinson 2006: "Under the Skin").

Bauman contends that in these times of liquid modernity, where the present is fast changing and the world is less secure, relationships between humans are becoming more and more fragile as individuals seek to achieve their goals and in turn, there are difficulties or obstacles to face in order to succeed (2006: 170). In other words, for Helen's project of playing white to succeed, she must do whatever she can to remain a part of the community, even if it is to go against her neighbor, a woman who has a story and background similar to her own. In their racial relocation, Helen and her family must remain far from the scandal, for proximity places them too close to the threat and thus in danger. To empathize would mean to do harm to herself and face the possibility of being expelled from the neighborhood, the community she gave up so much for in order to



become a member. It would also entail Helen to lower herself and her family down to a level that breaks the purity and sanctity of their home, which, as previously argued, she has worked long and hard to make perfect. Furthermore, through prohibiting Marion from remaining friends with Annie, Helen influences her daughter's attitude and thinking to become more like hers. This is exemplified when Marion remains inside the security gate as Annie sneaks to deliver Marion the scrapbook of memories they made together. Marion simply discards the scrapbook, erasing the memories of her only childhood friendship.

Helen's attitude also exemplifies her own betrayal to the female community as she places blame on both Mr. Boshoff's coloured lover and Mrs. Boshoff, who is in a catch-22 predicament of immorality: if she is white, she is involved in a mixed marriage, which is illegal; and if she is not white, she is a coloured playing white, or lying to her neighbors. In her refusal to sympathize with Mrs. Boshoff (whose first name is withheld, emphasizing her identity is based on her marriage), Helen not only removes her neighbor's voice but also disallows her to be a victim of betrayal on both a spousal level and in racial legality. Furthermore, her racial ideologies reinforce the subjugation of coloured women under patriarchy by removing fault from the male and directing it toward the female. As the narrator explains, Helen cannot comprehend what Mr. Boshoff sees "in the little trollop. These coloured girls may not be oil paintings—the girl's mouth was distinctly African—but they certainly knew how to tempt a man, to ruin his life" (Wicomb 2006: 194). Through this description, the narrator alludes to the reduction of

non-European women to their body parts, which have been racialized through the violence of patriarchy and imperialism and thus rendering them silent.<sup>69</sup>

As Helen's behavior towards Mrs. Boshoff indicates, subjugating women of color did and does not only stem from masculine sources but also from feminist ones, particularly white women.<sup>70</sup> In her essay "Racism and Feminism: The Issue of Accountability," bell hooks writes:

To black women the issue is not whether white women are more or less racist than white men, but that they are racist. If women committed to feminist revolution, be they black or white, are to achieve any understanding for the "charged connections" between white women and black women, we must first be willing to examine women's relationship to society, to race, and to American culture as it is and not as we would ideally have it to be. That means confronting the reality of white female racism. (2000: 376)

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<sup>69</sup> In Chapter V, I discuss the roles imperialism and patriarchy play in the creation of history. Through her works, Wicomb calls for "herstories," feminine voices to counterbalance the distortions that have been written and studied for centuries.

<sup>70</sup> As the female body of color was and still is hypersexualized, a practice which, as Lola Young points out is less accepted for white women, it is interesting to note that "even into the twentieth century, the story was different when it came to white women who wished to exercise their privileged racial status through the right to look [at African males]" (Young 2000: 271). As Franz Fanon explains, through white women, the black male can somewhat be accepted. He writes, "Out of the blackest part of my soul, through the zone of hachures, surges up this desire to be suddenly *white*. I want to be recognized not as *Black*, but as *White*...who better than the white woman to bring this about? By loving me, she proves to me that I am worthy of a white love...[which] opens the illustrious path that leads to total fulfillment..." (2008: 45). These descriptions illustrate gender differences in love or lust by white man or woman to a man or woman of color: the male achieves a form of acceptance (from the white woman) while the (colored) female remains an object.

Gloria Anzaldúa amplifies the discussion, removing it away from the black/white binary and into a larger arena, arguing that oppression found within the white feminist community can be far reaching:

They thought that all women were oppressed in the same way and they tried to force me to accept their image of me and my experiences. They were not willing to be open to my own presentation of myself and to accept that I might be different from what they had thought of me so far.... gender is not the only oppression. There is race, class, religious orientation; there are generational and age kinds of things, all the physical stuff, et cetera ... They wanted to apply their notion of feminism across all cultures ... I was asked to leave my race at the door. (1999: 230-31)

On the other hand, some white feminist women have admitted to their lack of attention to the racial aspect of inequality. In her essay “‘We Cannot Live without Our Lives:’ White Women, Antiracism, and Feminism,” Ann Russo explains the difficulty some white feminists might have in seeing racism as a topic of concern. She writes:

Part of the problem is that many of us white feminists still do not see racism as our issue, as significantly affecting our lives and survival. Typically when we (white women) raise the issue of racism, we tend to focus solely on the lives and experiences of women of color-black, Puerto Rican, Mexican American, Asian, and American Indian. As a result,

working on the problem of racism becomes a matter of “helping” *these* women out, as if the problem of racism were “their” problem. Focusing on white supremacy means that we look at racism as a white problem and issue. (1991: 299)

Although it is agreed that racism is also a white issue that stems from privilege, to argue “racism originates with and is perpetuated by white people” (1991: 300) is too bold and generalized of a statement. As Wicomb illustrates in her creative writing, the tyrannies of racism, sexism, patriarchy, etc. can occur in any community and even within, against community members. What she does is go beyond pointing the finger to problematize marginalization and question what can be done as possible solutions, which will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Wicomb takes the issue of marginalization of women of color a step further to show this brutality was not only exhibited by colonizers, whites, or black males but, as is seen from Helen’s reaction, anyone who feels their position in society is threatened could participate in this violence against women of color and their bodies, including if the woman herself was a woman of color. Thus, through the character of Helen, Wicomb juxtaposes the discriminatory racial and gender ideologies that were used to control and condemn women of color but also that ironically, women of color themselves employed these prejudices against their sisterly neighbors, continuing the chain of oppression.

Wicomb thus not only calls attention to the oppression that happens against women of color but also to the racism that occurs within the communities of women of color. Moreover, through the paradox of Helen’s racism, Wicomb raises the question of

accountability. If one can participate in the oppression against another, especially that of a neighbor, whether directly or indirectly, how can responsibility be placed on others without first looking at oneself, in one's own neighborhood?

It is through racial thinking that Helen herself becomes an oppressor and devalues women of color. In this way, she not only tries to put herself above through her own (play-)whiteness, she makes herself believe in the politics of beauty that devalued non-European bodies as historically portrayed such as in art.<sup>71</sup> As the narrator explicates,

the pursuit of whiteness is in competition with history ... If the whiteness they pursue is cool and haughty and blank, history is uncool, reaches out gawkily for affinities, asserts itself boldly, threatens to mark, to break through and stain the primed white canvas that is their life. For, having primed it, they do not know where to start, how to make a mark. They are alone in the world, a small new island of whiteness. (Or so they think; they do not know, or perhaps they do not want to know, that the neighborhood is full of people like them.) Thus they are steeped in its silence. (Wicomb 2006: 152)

Rather than go against the grain of history and fight the oppression that racial ideologies perpetuate, Helen chooses to play it safe and not only apply these prejudicial beliefs but also construct her own version of whiteness to protect her project of passing. Therefore, she chooses to focus her energies on her own mission and at all costs, avoid any obstacles

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<sup>71</sup> In his significant essay entitled "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature," Sander Gilman questions the perception of artistic representations and how they influence societal views of race.

that may threaten her livelihood. Moreover, in order to avoid the dangers of competing with history, Helen creates a new history that although is precarious is also malleable. Fortunately, she does so along with the help of her mother, Tokkie, who “brings colour and sound. Sitting in her old wicker chair in the backyard, she offers an invented past for the family, a history for the neighbours (other play-whites, as it happens, who are envious), a history for her granddaughter” (2006: 152). By doing so, she protects herself and her family from becoming the Other in a neighborhood of secrets and risks.

Wicomb’s characterization does not paint Helen as a powerless victim, which as hooks explains is a product of sexist ideology stemming from male-supremacist thinking that is meant to promote shared victimization as an approach to female bonding (hooks 2010: 397). Instead, Helen is illustrated as a multifaceted character who, although is a victim of patriarchal and racial oppression, manipulates the very system that impedes her freedom and is fully aware of the actions she takes to live the life she chooses and without moral dilemmas. Thus, it is difficult to judge Helen’s character or actions much less feel pity for her. Through this characterization and that of the coloured women around Helen, including her daughter Marion, Wicomb successfully shows the complexities of coloured women and identities before, during and after apartheid. Moreover, in this way Wicomb also shows the intricacies of the borderlands of race and culture, especially in the face of community that is overlooked by the nation. In these lands of ambiguities, to what community, if any, does one belong? What does acceptance require? What are traditions, and is it possible to participate in such cultural bonding without underscoring the historical continuities that led to oppression?

#### IV. The Nation

“One must distinguish between citizenship of a country and...what the components of a homogenous nation are. There is no doubt that the Coloureds are citizens of this country. There is just as little doubt that they are not part of this homogenous entity that can be described as ‘the nation.’”

—Hendrik Verwoerd in parliament on April 13, 1962 (February 1981: 10)

What is a nation? Who is allowed to belong? What happens to the Others? This Otherness is in the eye of the beholder, and for centuries that beholder was constructed through imperialism, which defined other parts of the world through a dehumanizing lens that justified the need to conquer and “civilize.” The imperialist eye not only created the colonizer/colonized binary through the belief in superiority, it contrived the superficial social construct known as race. In South Africa, centuries of imperialism engendered a nation of hierarchies, putting the majority native population at the lowest possible caste. This system advanced to apartheid, whose oppressive structure perpetuated racial ideologies that still exist in the New South Africa. Using Wicomb’s novels *David’s Story* and *Playing in the Light* and the short stories “Friends and Goffels” and “In the Botanic Gardens” from *The One that Got Away*, this section will examine the concept of nation and how it constructs and represents the Other, whether constructed through relocation or through being disowned. Wicomb’s voice not only criticizes the subjugating imperialistic eye but also the othering actions of those who have been oppressed such as within a marginalized community. In this way, her work questions nationalism and prejudicial ideologies that serve only to continue the chain of marginalization. Moreover, through her short stories, Wicomb explores and denounces factors such as race and language that can be used as tools to perpetuate the us/them binary and thus continue the state of Otherness.

For centuries, the coloured community was what Hannah Arendt (1973: 275-287) and later Butler describe as stateless since they were a national minority and moreover, not considered valid. Butler explains:

The nation-state assumes that the nation expresses a certain national identity, is founded through the concerted consensus of a nation, and that a certain correspondence exists between the state and the nation. The nation, in this view, is singular and homogeneous, or, at least, it becomes so in order to comply with the requirements of the state. The state derives its legitimacy from the nation, which means that those national minorities who do not qualify for “national belonging” are regarded as “illegitimate” inhabitants. (Butler 2007: 30-31)

As the coloured in South Africa were not fully white European (read less than human) due to miscegenation, they were not considered members of society. This exile was furthered with the development of racial legislation that led to apartheid, and they became what Butler calls a “wanting one” through their status, or lack thereof. Although this racial rejection affected some into highlighting their Europeanness as a way of belonging and some coloureds with lighter phenotypes reclassifying their racial status from Coloured to White,<sup>72</sup> as previously mentioned in this chapter, still many chose to fight in a violent struggle against apartheid which ended in 1994.

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<sup>72</sup> As a reminder, in this dissertation, capitalization of the words Coloured, White, Black or Native indicate their construction under apartheid. Otherwise, the lowercase is used.



### **i. Deracing Nations**

*David's Story* chronicles the life of David Dirkse, a former guerilla soldier for the Movement, the ANC's armed resistance, also known as Umkhonto we sizwe (MK), or Spear of the Nation.<sup>73</sup> As the Movement has disbanded, David decides to look into his own life story and hires an amanuensis to write it. His story is traced back to his coloured ancestors, and the novel is told, through the narrator/amanuensis, paralleling the present with the past. Through jumping in time from the Griqua treks to recounting incidents during the struggle against apartheid to explaining David's post-apartheid quest to learn more about his personal history, not only is David's life story reported but also the stories of those around him—especially women—are also narrated and included in the bigger picture of a man's story.

The novel opens in the New South Africa with the story of Sarie Meintjies, David's mother-in-law, who worked cleaning the Logan Hotel during apartheid. She visits the hotel to see the renovations that have taken place, only to see the decorating has appeared to either have regressed to the olden times complete with portraits of old men with horses or have remained the same. As Aryn Bartley points out, the longstanding, only modified décor of new chairs and painted walls of the hotel indicates in the bigger picture that change is merely a façade, implying the original structures of apartheid remain intact (Bartley 2009: 116). Using this scenario as a basis of the novel, Wicomb, through the amanuensis, warns things might not be what they appear and a deeper

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<sup>73</sup> Umkhonto weSizwe, Zulu for the Spear of the Nation, was the armed wing of the ANC. Also known as MK and the Movement, it was founded as a response to the banning of the ANC and the injustices and violence that took place during the Sharpeville Massacre (Cherry 2011: 9-14). It consisted of members from all racial groups and was soon labeled a terrorist organization (2011: 16-17, 55). Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma are among the famous members of MK. The title character in *David's Story*, is a former MK guerilla, as are his wife Sally and his comrade Dulcie. For more information on MK, see Cherry, 2011 and the TRC Reports.

analysis must be approached in examining the new nation of South Africa. What has really changed? Furthermore, in opening David's story with not only a feminine voice but a female character, Wicomb asserts the transmission of herstories<sup>74</sup> of not only educated, white women but of women of all races and classes, the latter of whose voices are rarely, if ever, heard. In this way, Gayatri Spivak's question "Can the subaltern speak?" (Spivak 1988) might be affirmed, but it also asserts that not only must a platform be given and the voices be listened to but furthermore what has been uttered must likewise be disseminated.

After introducing Sarie and describing her life, the amanuensis/narrator stops and starts a new line: "This is no place to start," she explains, skips a space in the text and restarts. Through this break, the narrator denotes the herstories that have been silenced but moreover, absolute origins are contested, conveying the existence of multiple perspectives and beginnings. She explicates:

But let us not claim a beginning for this mixed-up tale. Beginnings are too redolent of origins, of the sweaty and negligible act of physical union which will not be tolerated on these pages and which we all know comes to nought but for an alien, unwilling little thing propelled damp and screaming into this world to be bound in madam's old, yet still good, terry cloths. (Wicomb 2000: 9)

The narrator's explanation alludes to the idea of miscegenation, and the "birth" of racial ideologies in the fathering of multiracial children between European colonizers and

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<sup>74</sup> An analysis of herstories in Wicomb's works can be found in Chapter V.III.i.

African women. As the resulting children were neither white European nor black African, they were in the borderlands, which in South Africa, as apartheid has defined, became to be known as Coloured.

In his chapter entitled, “The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity,” Immanuel Wallerstein discusses the politics of labeling and particularly extrapolates on the concept of colouredness. Published just before the end of apartheid, Wallerstein cites an exchange started by a letter to the editor by novelist Alex La Guma about colouredness published in the official journal of the ANC (1991: 72-76). Wallerstein uses this discussion to not only show the passion but the difficulty in the construction of such a group. He asks, “Is there a Coloured people, or a Coloured national minority, or a Coloured ethnic group? Was there ever?” (1991: 71). The concept of colouredness is still widely debated with borders and definitions ever changing, depending on the definer. Wallerstein later argues: “If we find that we cannot come to terms about this name designating a ‘people’ or indeed about virtually any other name designating some people, maybe this is because peoplehood is not merely a construct but one which, in each particular instance, has constantly changing boundaries” (1991: 77). Yet do the boundaries expand, regress or merely change in time? Roughly 20 years after apartheid, which officially created the category of Coloured, the exactitude of coloured is still ambiguous. Political analyst Eusebius McKaiser explains in an opinion editorial,

In South Africa I’m referred to as “colored<sup>75</sup>,” a term that does not have the same derogatory denotation here as it does in the United States when it

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<sup>75</sup> Although McKaiser uses the American spelling of “colored,” this dissertation will use “coloured” to distinguish the community that was constructed by apartheid.

is hurled at black Americans. I am not black. I am of mixed racial heritage, as my parents are and their parents were. (...) Our discriminatory skills [in South Africa] are so fine-grained that Barack Obama would not pass as colored here; the U.S. president is “biracial.” My own half-brother, whose mother is Xhosa but whose father — our father — is colored, is also not colored; he is “mixed race,” the local linguistic marker for biracial. The criterion for being classified as colored is clear: both your parents must be colored. (McKaiser 2012: “Not White Enough”)

McKaiser’s explanation of colouredness, exemplifies the neglect to acknowledge the social (and at some unfortunate points in time, lawful) construction of race and reinforces the oxymoronic concept of racial purity in colouredness, which is appropriately labeled only if both parents have multiracial heritages. Moreover, by labeling President Barack Obama “biracial” McKaiser’s interpretation overlooks, if not further perpetuates, ascribed racialization as the president declared himself “black” in the 2010 U.S. Census although multiple selections could be chosen.

Wicomb’s novels not only problematize race but the definitive, imperative labeling that dominated apartheid legislation and eventually led to nationbuilding. In *David’s Story*, the coloured label is problematized particularly through the figure of Andrew le Fleur, David’s father Dawid and the title character himself in their self-contradictory racial beliefs. Through the characterization of each, Wicomb shows the absurdity in the subscription to such racial ideologies. As exemplified through le Fleur and Dawid, whether white, black or coloured supremacist, it is the belief in a supreme, a

reification of race and the Othering of people that contribute to the marginalization of one's own community, and in this way, as it will be argued, Wicomb calls attention to the hazards of the Nation, which, although may unify may also separate.

Andrew Le Fleur was a Griqua leader who founded Namaqualand (Wicomb 2000: 24, Edgar and Saunders 1982: 215-217). As Edgar and Saunders explain, Le Fleur's aim was to unite those of multiracial heritages under one nation: the Griquas. On December 11, 1924, LeFleur told the publication *Die Burger*, "We want all 'coloureds' to place themselves under the banner of the Griquas. We want them to feel that they are one people, then there will be three nationalities in the country, the Africans, the Griquas, and the Whites" (Edgar and Saunders 1982: 217). Le Fleur, who wanted to create a homeland due to the rejection of the Griquas, followed the same racist philosophies of apartheid by seeking a separate, racially homogenous community. As Griquas are of multiracial descent, Wicomb employs these self-contradictory ideologies to caution against the continuance of racist nationbuilding. She explains, "I was interested in the ideology ... his invention of the nation, his ludicrous notion of pureness which seems to me to resonate with some of the New South Africa-speak, also to do with the new notions of 'colouredness' and essentialism" (Wicomb in Willemsse 2002: 145-146).

Balibar reminds us, "No modern nation possesses a given 'ethnic' basis, even when it arises out of a national independence struggle" (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 93). He incorporates the term "fictive ethnicity" to describe communities that are created by the nation-state, and he argues that although these ethnicities are unnatural, they are created to support or concretize the nation and imagine the concept of a preexisting unity within the community (1991: 96). Moreover, Balibar contends the ideologies of the

nation not only aid in population regulation but they also lay bare the nation's demands upon those who wish to belong (1991: 96). Thus, to be considered part of the "decent coloured people," which will be discussed later in this section, one must meet behavioral requirements.

Wicomb cleverly characterizes Le Fleur through the illustration of his own conflicting racial dogma exemplified when Le Fleur sets out to look for runaway mules. Annoyed at the arduous task, he thinks: "Why should God allow such breeding, I do not know. I'd trade twenty of these wretches for a good horse...Stupidity and laziness, that's what made them wander off; they deserved no better than to be used as beasts of burden" (Wicomb 2000: 42-43). Thinking of his Khoi ancestors, he later realizes just as his ancestors tried to flee from slavery, it is the desire for freedom that made the mules leave. Furthermore, as the Dutch saw this refusal to work as lazy, Le Fleur realizes such racist ideologies have roots in imperialism and colonization. Despite this connection, he still endorses these racist beliefs by prohibiting his wife Rachael to nap since "sleep was the downfall of the Griqua people" (2000: 47). These racist ideologies have not only infected Le Fleur's mind, but they transgress generations and are repeated over and over again, as exemplified in David's father's views, as argued below. Thus, Wicomb demonstrates how racist constructions and representations can pervade time and become commonly held beliefs that lead to the basis of forming nations and the creation of dividing nationalisms (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 44-45). Furthermore, as Driver reminds us, Le Fleur's "reactive behavior does not free him from the racist symbolic order at root" (2000: 245), and thus, he reinforces this message to his Griqua nation.

Le Fleur's racial ideologies vacillate as his quest to find a land for coloured people undergoes changes. His fluctuations vary in which ancestries to claim, at times highlighting his native Khoisan features while denying his possible Malagasy, Malayan and European heritages (Wicomb 2000: 88). Moreover, he denies connections to native Xhosa, stating, "we are a *pure* Griqua people with our own traditions of cleanliness and plainness and hard work" (2000: 94, emphasis added) and distinguishes the Griquas, as a "real volk, a nation who had no need to claim kin with either whites or blacks" (2000: 130) and thus a nation separate from coloureds (2000: 146, 149). These vicissitudes of racial claim prove not only the ludicrousness in blood politics but also problematize its feasibility in the creation of a pure nation and moreover, the concept of a pure nation itself. By exemplifying the ironies in Le Fleur's beliefs of a pure Griqua people, as they are of multiracial heritage, and a pure Griqua nation, Wicomb demonstrates the absurdities in racist thinking, particularly in nationbuilding. Le Fleur's obsession with purity surpasses nationalism and becomes what Balibar refers to as "a 'racist internationalism' or 'supernationalism,' which tends to idealize timeless or transhistorical communities," (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 61), also further exemplified in Le Fleur's belief that Griquas are a chosen people (Wicomb 2000: 85, 162). Ironically, Le Fleur does not realize that his ideology of chosen people is parallel to that of the Boers.<sup>76</sup> Le Fleur considers Griquas to be superior, yet continues the shame constructed by colonial racial ideologies to support his cause: "Since they cannot look upon their shame, since they must discriminate against their own flesh, we whose very faces are branded with their shame will remove ourselves from their sight. Here good people, is the solution for God's stepchildren: absolute separation. From white and from black" (2000: 161).

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<sup>76</sup> The Boers as the "chosen people" is discussed in Chapter II under "Imagining a White Nation."

This shame is passed from generation to generation, constructing philosophies against interracial relations, as illustrated through Dawid's gross conception of colouredness that largely relies on shame. He is upset about his son's behavior and politics and scolds his son after disappearing and not knowing about his mother's death:

It's people like you who give coloureds a bad name. What do you think I worked so hard for, getting us out of the gutter, wiping out all that Griqua nonsense, just so you can tumble the family right back into the morass? ... Going against the law, getting up to all sorts of terrible things and associating with people who are not our kind. What has been the fruit of my labour but shame? Yes, it's like a tree in the front garden just laden for all to see with the shiny apples of my shame. (Wicomb 2000: 21-22)

Through his accusation that his son is soiling the family's good standing and returning it to the morass, or marshy, muddy grounds, Dawid expresses his shame in miscegenation by referring to the family's European, Griqua and native roots. Through this shame, he also subjects himself to the racist ideologies that constructed the "bad name" in being coloured. Moreover, through Wicomb's clever use of language such as the word "morass," from the 15th century for the Dutch word *moeras*,<sup>77</sup> she alludes to the power and influence of Dutch colonial ideologies, including Calvinistic beliefs, which have contributed to the construction of racial ideologies, showing that such prejudicial

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<sup>77</sup> The Oxford Dictionary's entry for the etymology of morass is "late 15th century: from Dutch *moeras*, alteration (by assimilation to *moer* 'moor') of Middle Dutch *marasch*, from Old French *marais* 'marsh,' from medieval Latin *mariscus*."



ideologies are complex and marked with overlapping layers of marginalizing constructions that have persisted for centuries.<sup>78</sup>

These constructed racial ideologies contribute to the shame that clouds Dawid's understanding of his son. When he is summoned to speak with the school principal about David's "condition" and keeping it from the officials, Dawid first understands "the coloured condition—drunk, lawless, uncivilized," (2000: 22) as opposed to the condition of living undercover and working secretly as a freedom fighter. Even when Dawid discovers his son's involvement, he blames who he calls the "kaffirs," who he believes are looked after by his son and not that they fight side by side since David and his family are "decent, respectable coloured people," which he contrasts with Griquas (2000: 22-23). Dawid teaches David to stay away from blacks, and to not "smile or laugh with them" (2000: 23), but David cannot understand because he sees resemblances to native peoples within the family. Dawid instructs his son: "You must do your Christian duty but don't ever let a kaffir see your teeth" (2000:23), demonstrating that despite one's religious beliefs, "love thy neighbor" is consistent only with racial discrepancies. Dawid's othering ideologies not only ensure that he and his family are members of the nation, but also that they are at a higher status than those who have darker skin or of a lower social class, which to him are one in the same.

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<sup>78</sup> It might also be argued that Wicomb is alluding to the work of J.D. du Toit (1877-1953), or Totius, founder of the First Afrikaans Language Movement, professor of theology and known as the Afrikaner "people's poet" (Marx 2008: 4). His work promoted Afrikaner nationalism, representing Africa as barbaric and passive (2008:4). Based on biblical stories such as Babel, he advocated separation of nations and created the notion of Afrikaners as higher beings due to their European backgrounds and abilities to adapt in the "black morass" of Africa (Dubow 1992: 217-218).

## ii. Using the Gendered, National Body

“So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don’t tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks.” (Hurston 1990: 14)

David’s racist ideologies emphasize his African roots (Wicomb 2000: 27-28), and although he fights for liberation, gender equality does not enter his battlefield. He upholds gender roles, and on an early date with Sally, he thinks it is odd that she helps him push the car instead of sitting in the car like a decent young lady. He realizes it is convenient that she is a cadre so he need not lie about his work, but after they marry, he arranges to have Sally work in a community center as opposed to the underground work she was trained to do. Thus, as a woman Sally represents an object of exchange between the Movement and her new husband. In discussing social semiosis, Spivak argues the passing of the female body from the father to a lover as part of a dowry, represents a symbolic object of exchange: “it is dowry that is the invariably mentioned social demand that allowed the demands of nature to devastate the peasant via the demands of empire” (1996: 227).<sup>79</sup> She questions the debate in the subjectivity of the subaltern in light of the prevalence and importance of exploiting gender differences. Sexist attitudes are reflected not only in David’s personal life but also in his work for MK. Despite his attraction for his comrade in the Movement, Dulcie, David defeminizes her so that she may be used for the struggle, and moreover, he does not submit to his feelings, which at times he denies he has, so that he does not betray the Movement.

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<sup>79</sup> The symbolism of the female body for exchange is also evident in *Playing in the Light* when Helen allows herself to be defiled by Councillor Carter in order to get an affidavit stating she and her husband were known white community members, an act which is representative of the drastic measures women take, in the case, to obtain a form of freedom.

Dulcie is inviolable, and as the narrator describes, David places her “beyond the realm of the human,” (2000: 177). By placing her on a pedestal, the narrator argues, she is left without protection and must fight for herself (2000: 177). Thus Dulcie’s feminine body, as that of other female guerillas in the Movement, belongs to the *sphere of objects*, which Achille Mbembe points out, as an animal, can be destroyed by the colony in whatever way desired or deemed necessary (2001: 26-27). He explains:

For, being simply a ‘body-thing,’ the colonized was neither the substratum nor the affirmation of any spirit. As for his/her death, it mattered little if this occurred by suicide, resulted from murder, or was inflicted by power; it had no connection whatever with any work that he/she had performed for the universal. His or her corpse remained on the ground in unshakeable rigidity, a material mass and mere inert object, consigned to the role of that which is there for nothing. (Mbembe 2001: 27)

In this same spirit, it could also be argued that female bodies were not only colonized bodies by imperial and colonial powers, but they were also tools of resistance utilized by the Movement. As colonial powers used the natives, who in many ways were disposable, the armed struggle had female guerillas at their disposal. This attitude is reflected in the treatment of Dulcie, as “it is clear that she cannot be killed; that instead they rely upon her being driven to do it herself” (Wicomb 2000: 179).

When the amanuensis/narrator attempts to inquire about the conditions for female guerillas in the Movement, David responds that it is “irrelevant...in the Movement those

kinds of differences are wiped out by our common goal. Dulcie certainly would make no distinction between the men and women with whom she works” (Wicomb 2000: 78). By speaking for Dulcie, David shows that she has no voice and no say in the matter, and furthermore, that the “common goal” is created by males in the struggle and no other goals exist. Yet David is mistaken, and Dulcie is left to fend for herself as she is tortured. She endures what she must from her comrades to advance her own cause of overthrowing oppression:

She will not ask for an explanation, will not protest, since they can only offer lies. She has done nothing less than her duty, nothing less than fighting for freedom and justice—even though these words have now become difficult. That too, then, is why she cannot speak. Uttering such tarnished words makes them sound at best foolish, at worst, false. (2000: 179)

Dulcie has no voice in the Movement, the nation for which she sacrifices herself, and despite the trauma at the hands of her own comrades, she refuses to submit.<sup>80</sup> She understands that “fucking women [is] a way of preventing them from rising in the Movement” (2000: 179). The same violation proves true for Sally. She realizes it is her turn to be “trained,” and she does not resist because she would rather force herself than be forced, and besides, “there were more important things to think of, there was freedom on which to fix her thoughts” (2000: 123). In this way, it is shown how the female body

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<sup>80</sup> Trauma will be discussed in the following chapter.

is contradictorily both a symbol of the nation and sacrificed for the “well-being” of the nation.

In “To Hear the Variety of Discourses,” Wicomb argues that it is necessary to take a closer look at black feminine discourse. She contends: “Black patriarchy, deciding on legitimate portrayals of black gender relations, does so in the name of racial solidarity. Those who control discourse, whom a culture authorizes[sic] to speak, will not tolerate exposure and, indeed, will construct it as treacherous and politically unsound” (“To Hear Variety” 1990). She uses the inequality in power of white patriarchal culture to warn against its mimicking and problematizes the oppression of black patriarchy, particularly in its ironic stance in the struggle for freedom (“To Hear Variety” 1990). Her arguments are reflected in the portrayal of the female guerillas, who although were fighting for a free nation were never to be free themselves.

In her critique on gender, race and nationalism, McClintock argues nationalisms, which are all gendered, constructed and perilous, reduce political, female beings to social relations to men, thus affecting the female national status as a citizen (2010: 89-91). McClintock explains:

Not only are the needs of the nation typically identified with the frustrations and aspirations of men, but the representation of male *national* power depends on the prior construction of *gender* difference. All too often in male nationalisms, gender difference, between women and men serves to symbolically define the limits of national difference and power between *men*. (2010: 89)

Women thus are not only symbols of the nation (McClintock 1995; Baida 2008), something for colonials to conquer, but they are also tools for men in times of revolution. McClintock examines Fanon's diminution of Algerian women revolutionaries to being domestic and later to male designation and contends his masculinization of female fighters in his essay "Algeria Unveiled (1959)," creates them as "phallic substitute[s], detached from the male body but remaining, still, the man's 'woman-arsenal'" (2010: 98). Even the most revolutionary critics of nationalism undermine women and their role in fighting for freedom. Thus, it is important that power and oppression be closely examined in the contexts of nationalisms and resistance (Al-Kassim 2007: 106). With such limited acceptability, the non-white woman, regardless of her position in the struggle for her nation's freedom, remains in her own battle against gendered and racial oppression from white male and female colonists and her own male comrades. Thus, as Wicomb wittily writes, the value in black feminine discourse can boil down to "the possibility of being able to put your feet up for five minutes and being given a cup of tea" ("To Hear Variety" 1990).

### **iii. Racial Boundaries and Performance**

As Wallerstein argues, a peoplehood has endlessly shifting borders and as these boundaries are fluctuating, the role of pastness plays an important role in the safeguarding of not only the group but also an individual's position within the group (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 77-78). The de facto and later de jure construction of "coloured" created a peoplehood that has varied throughout the centuries and thus has

expanded the identities that make up colouredness. Perhaps it is such tyrannical constructions that explain why, as previously argued, coloured identity is not simply definable, meaning there is not only one identity but multiple identities. Furthermore, topics such as Balibar's concept of "fictive ethnicity," which is formed to uphold the nation through unity (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 96), and the not-so-talked-about "play whiteness" must also be included in the complexities of colouredness in order to get a better understanding of the multifaceted construction.

Along with the oppression of racial constructions came the hierarchies of class and ensuing struggles. Mohamed Adhikari explains that despite such strict, discriminatory legislations, some people in the coloured community still felt the need to be accepted into the white middle class and thus maintained their hopes of belonging. He asserts,

this desire for assimilation into the dominant society was evident in its most acute form amongst those individuals who were not only willing to disown their identity as coloured and turn their backs on friends, family and former lives, but were also prepared to take the risk of exposure in an attempt to pass for white. The durability of these yearnings for acceptance to a significant degree explains the eager response of so many coloured people to National Party overtures in the 1994 general election.<sup>81</sup> (2006: 476-477)

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<sup>81</sup> The first democratic, multiracial elections were held in South Africa in 1994 with the African National Congress winning nearly 63 percent and the National Party winning about 20 percent of the votes. Of this 20 percent, 30 percent of the votes came from the coloured community (Fessha 2010: 92).

Thus, the psychology behind playing white cannot be reduced to reasons of escaping racial oppression, but factors such as class and the possibility of upward mobility must be examined.

Wicomb superbly explores these complexities in *Playing in the Light*, particularly through Helen, whose character is not particularly likeable, as illustrated, for example, in the creation and maintenance of her home. Although it remains unrevealed to Marion and John, Helen goes to great lengths to reach whiteness. This includes several trips to the chancellor, who, after a series of corporal compromises by Helen, eventually gives her an official document claiming her Whiteness. Helen uses her body as a site for negotiating freedom from racial restrictions under apartheid law, although as aforementioned, she remains captive in her own house under her own restrictions. She does not think twice about reaching her goal but realizes and accepts the inevitable patriarchal grip on her body, or corpse in Kristevian terms of abjection. It is that which Helen “thrust[s] aside in order to live” (Kristeva 1982: 3) that enables her to obtain the affidavit, for which she does not feel guilty since what she has done was out of necessity. The narrator explains, “She may have been defiled, but she’d also been obliterated, and believing the miracle of rebirth, her own thoughts had remained pure. Not once did Helen doubt her actions” (Wicomb 2006: 144). In this way, she retains control over her body but her actions later result in an obsession with not only whiteness but also cleanliness. As McClintock explains,

Purification rituals prepare the body as a terrain of meaning, organizing flows of value across the self and the community and demarcating



boundaries between one community and another. Purification rituals, however, can also be regimes of violence and constraint. People who have the power to invalidate the boundary rituals of another people thereby demonstrate their capacity to violently impose their culture on others. (McClintock 1995: 26)

Helen's preoccupations are not only indicative of her own social discipline but later contribute to the cold, domineering relationship she has with John. She erases her former, impure self as coloured, and her new identity becomes an endless role of racial performances. By playing white Helen tries to push the limits and cross the socially and lawfully constructed borders of apartheid. As coloured identity was not only constructed but nationally mandated, and with the creation and enforcement of apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act that led to further separation and destruction of homes, Helen did what she could to prevent further loss of what little freedoms she did have.

Helen is the abject, yet her abjection does not begin when she decides to play white. Her abjectness stems from her liminality in that her social position is defined as neither native nor white, neither object nor subject. By playing white, she expels her former self, and although her decision to play white mimics her perception of whiteness and might indicate that she is subscribing to racial ideologies of apartheid, by playing on the inconsistencies and vulnerabilities of the system, Helen in fact breaks the social order that confines the coloured community, who according to their racial assignment under apartheid are also abject through their perceived ambiguity and impurity (Kristeva 1982: 4). As a coloured woman who has successfully gained access to the privilege being White

entails, she defies the gender and racial differences the nation limits in terms of power (McClintock 1995: 354). In doing so, however, she also constrains herself, and thus she becomes a mediator of nationalism that not only keeps her under control, it makes her a vigilant agent that secures her family's continual performance.

The act of playing white does not rid Helen of her abject state. Her reclassification from Coloured to White does not equate to the removal of her abjectness; however, it signifies the continuance of an abject state not only in her betrayal in disownment of her family but also in the space of playing white. Kristeva explains, "There is nothing either objective or objectal to the abject. It is simply a frontier, a repulsive gift that the Other, having become *alter ego*, drops so that 'I' does not disappear in it but finds, in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence" (Kristeva 1982: 9). Therefore, Helen never enters pure whiteness, but continues on her stage of play whiteness. Although she benefits from being White during apartheid, she lacks the white privilege of being born white and thus living without fear of being caught for reclassifying. She cannot be fully accepted into the white nation because she is constantly under self-surveillance. In this way she surrenders *herself* to the nation, which forces her and consequently her family to uplift it through uniformity. Yet this compromise does not mean Helen is defeated, on the contrary, in Kristevian terms, she is vindicated:

The abjection of self would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural loss that laid the foundations of its own being. There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is in fact

recognition of the want on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded. (Kristeva 1982: 5)

This confirmation is epitomized in that when Helen dies her project is still in progress. It is through her performance that Helen insists on having the same liberties as the highest citizen, despite the consequences of her actions. As she cannot enjoy the same rights, she seizes them through a necessary means, which for her entails racial reclassification and performance. Hence, Helen takes advantage of the loosely constructed laws and makes sacrifices to give what she thinks would be a better life for her daughter, and in this way, regardless of the implications, it is her own method in fighting against the tyrannical system of apartheid.

#### **iv. Nationalism and the Other**

In her first three novels, *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*, *David's Story* and *Playing in the Light*, Wicomb illustrates the complexities of being coloured and abiding by a nation's rules, whether being under the tyranny of imperialism, colonization, apartheid or the nationalisms of coloured identities. She continues this motif in her collection of short stories *The One that Got Away* but expands on the transnational and nationalisms and warns against a possible consequential Othering, which can happen equally in Europe or South Africa, underscoring the unsteadiness and variability in the perception of belonging. Who or what nation defines the Other? As Calhoun argues, "The categorical nature of national identities is linked strongly to ideas of purity and normalizations of the 'correct' way to be a member of a nation. Nationalisms linked to state power are often

repressive, thus, not only of the members of ‘alien’ nations or ethnic minorities (like Jews in Europe) but of their own members” (1993: 231).

Wicomb comments on intra-community discrimination in “Friends and Goffels,” when coloured protagonists Julie and Dot are ridiculed in their high school classroom. Despite their academic aptitude, the girls are Othered by their classmates who also are coloured and belong to the higher “A” English-medium Latin class as opposed to the Afrikaans-medium woodwork class. In particular, it is Angus Geddes, the student with a Scottish name who calls them *goffels*, which is a derogatory term for a mixed-race person. Although the girls are unfamiliar with the word, they know it refers to them:

In the class of posh coloureds Dot and Julie were the only ones who were very dark, had short frizzy hair and flat noses with prominent cheekbones. Everyone knew the indexes of worth amongst coloureds, knew the acceptable combinations of facial features, and that good hair would always override the other disabilities. Dot and Julie did not qualify. (Wicomb 2008: 103)

Their dark phenotypes not only give them grounds for being ostracized, their characteristics place the girls into a lower hierarchy due to the coloured community’s self-subscription to the prejudicial ideologies. Through their ridicule, Wicomb illustrates how the girls’ bodies are branded by the “pigmentation of miscegenation” and thus politicized and ascribed a class (1998: 93).

Julie relocates to Scotland to study on a postgraduate, Presbyterian scholarship. She also marries Alistair Baines, who is from Scotland, and, as the narrator explains, is the “author of [Dot’s] misery” (2008: 101). Dot dislikes Alistair because of her prejudices and perception of his anger and how it affects Julie, who has changed and become weak. Yet Julie’s memory of their childhood is different, with Dot’s stubbornness the problem as opposed to Alistair, who only means well.

Through these characterizations, Wicomb establishes memory as unreliable, selective and subjective, and it is this memory that shapes the present. Moreover, through Alistair’s name and origin, Wicomb historically connects him to Andrew Geddes Bain, a Scottish explorer, who created Kaatje Kekkelbek, a satirical character ridiculing indigenous South African women. Wicomb also links Bain to Angus Geddes, Julie and Dot’s former classmate and shows how these prejudicial ideologies from South Africa’s colonial past still permeate the present. Furthermore, she shows how the concept of *self* in regard to the Other can equally occur from within a community, creating a further subjugated division and hence another model of nation.

The concept of the Other is not just symbolized through racial markers. Through the story “In the Botanic Gardens,” Wicomb shows how flora and fauna can represent an entire nation regardless of whether or not they are native to that nation. Here, Dorothy Brink travels to Scotland to look for her son Arthur, who has mysteriously gone missing from his scholarship at Glasgow University. She arrives in a strangely gray atmosphere that is contrasted with her comfort zone in Namaqualand.

As Homi Bhabha argues, the English weather—in this case the Scottish weather—can mark national difference. It also “revives memories of its daemonic

double: the heat and dust of India the dark emptiness of Africa; the tropical chaos that was deemed despotic and ungovernable and therefore worthy of the civilizing mission” (1999: 319). It is in this environment that Dorothy encounters officials that silence her by ignoring her emotions and are rather uninterested in finding her son. During her meeting with Mr. MacPherson, a British Council representative donning national dress, Dorothy is unable to get any valid information other than that a young man fitting Arthur’s description was last seen by a guard at the Botanic Gardens. Instead, MacPherson continues marveling about the gardens with plants from Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, India and America—Britain’s former colonies (2008: 161) and suggests she visit them.

Alienated through the unfamiliar surroundings and Scottish accent, and upset over the disappearance of her son and lack of information, Dorothy quietly panics. This alarms MacPherson, who imagines the South African women he saw on TV howling distressingly and stamping their feet. He advises that Dorothy accept her son’s death and to “keep going, and you’ll keep in control” (2008: 163). Through a position of authority as a British Council representative, MacPherson Others both Arthur and Dorothy through his failure to recognize them as humans (Butler 2006: 44). Instead, reminiscent of European colonizers, he aims to control Dorothy and her Africanness (Wicomb 2008: 163). Moreover, MacPherson’s lack of interest in Arthur’s disappearance can be seen as a violent act against Arthur as it is a way of disregarding and discarding him. In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Butler explains: “Violence renews itself in the face of the apparent inexhaustibility of its object. The derealization of the ‘Other’ means that it is neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral” (2006: 33-34).

Although Arthur is considered unreal as the Other, and has physically disappeared, he continues to live in spirit, as he is revived by Dorothy's trip to Scotland to retrieve her son, or at least, his body (2006: 33). Butler continues by questioning who counts as human. She argues:

the term and the practice of 'civilization' work to produce the human differently by offering a culturally limited norm for what the human is supposed to be ... dehumanization becomes the condition for the production of the human to the extent that a 'Western' civilization defines itself over and against a population understood as, by definition, illegitimate, if not dubiously human.

(2006: 91)

In the end, MacPherson tells Dorothy to be realistic and for her to give up hope. She responds: "Yes sir. No hope. I have no hope at all. But it's the body. It's, please, the body sir. I am his mother; I must see Arthur's body" (Wicomb 2008: 163). Through the act of reminding MacPherson of the familial relationship, and reinforcing her position as a mother, Dorothy realizes and humanizes herself and her son. Moreover, by traveling to Scotland to find Arthur, she reclaims her son and his worth, removing his statelessness and reinforcing his being, his humanness.

After their talk, Dorothy takes a taxi to the Botanic Garden, and the driver teases her that 20 pounds must be a lot of money. Her change includes a 10-pound note, where on one side, two African men are sitting in chains with a naked woman in between and

the words “Clydesdale Bank,” which was what the note looked like from 1971-1990. Unfamiliar with the money and distrusting of the driver, she asserts, “Listen, man, here in England the notes say Bank of England.” Enraged and insulted, the driver leaves, and confused, Dorothy thinks, “But surely Scotland was part of England...Ag, She couldn’t understand *these* people; she would have to speak to the official man in the kilt and if there were any problem with the money, perhaps he could sort it out” (Wicomb 2008: 167, emphasis added). Through her language and actions, Dorothy Others the driver believing he is dishonest and stealing from her, a stereotypical image found in African literature (Schipper 1999: 38-39). Her distrust stems largely from his social class, and ironically, she ascribes authority and honesty to MacPherson, the official.

When Dorothy arrives at the Botanic Garden, she sees a sign claiming the exhibition is representative of South Africa, but she does not recognize many of the plants. Through this scenario, Wicomb shows the bank note and the exotic plants have come to not only represent South Africa despite their unreliable symbolism, but additionally, they have constructed images of the nation, the land and its people, however inaccurate they may be. Thus, the image of South Africa as an exotic Other is upheld and reinforced. Moreover, through the use of symbols such as Scottish names and kilts or images of primitive African slaves and exotic plants that present an essentialist notion of a nation, Wicomb shows how the repetition of signs reinforce prejudicial ideologies and continue marginalization. When coupled with nationalist and subjugating language, however slight, these acts perpetuate the us/them binary. Yet through the action of locating similarities amid diversities, this binary can be overcome. Wicomb offers no



solutions but paints a larger narrative of interconnected histories that are all subjective through memory, showing a future world of infinite possibilities, regardless of location.

## **V. Conclusion**

This chapter has argued home, neighborhood and nation, are not permanent fixtures but notions that continually change throughout time and history. Each concept addresses inclusion and belonging and questions the authority that might allow for exclusion. For centuries, oppression through imperialism, colonialism and apartheid banished people from their homes, pushing them to new, foreign neighborhoods and essentially ousted them into separate nations. Such tyranny not only Othered those who were not among the privileged white minority but also stimulated divisions that mimicked and enforced Othering within these communities that were constructed by apartheid ideologies. These Otherings beget nationalisms within such fictive ethnic communities as a way to promote unity in a fight against oppression and injustice. Yet, as Wicomb has shown, these unwieldy nationalisms also lead to subjugation within the community, as with the discourse of black feminism. Thus, she warns against all discriminatory ideologies and promotes a unified culture of acceptance. Furthermore, oppressive signs and symbols, particularly those that foster or are fostered by imperialism have constructed and represented the marginalized such as the coloured community and thus continue the subjugating racial ideologies; however, as Wicomb illustrates, it is up to the individual to overtake these violent images and re-present them and the space they characterize. Just as images can be reinterpreted, so must stories be, especially history, which has been passed down and authored by old men with long white beards (Wicomb 2008: 42). Therefore, it

is essential that history be retold, with various beginnings and possibilities, and overall, that herstories are also uncovered and passed down so that the road to a closer truth may be unearthed. Wicomb contends that memory is not only subjective it is also fallible, as will be discussed in the following chapter. In this way, the author does not pass judgment on the characters but opens the discussion to not only the horrors of apartheid but also paints a picture of what those affected did in order to cope. Furthermore, Wicomb also illustrates the complex components that construct coloured identities, insisting all facets and multiplicities of multiraciality the community enjoys should not only be acknowledged but celebrated as diverse histories that comprise colouredness. She writes:

Instead of denying history and fabricating a totalizing colouredness, “multiple belongings” could be seen as an alternative way of viewing a culture where participation in a number of coloured micro-communities whose interests conflict and overlap could become a rehearsal of cultural life in the larger South African community where we learn to perform the same kind of negotiations in terms of identity within a lived culture characterized by difference. (1998b: 105)

## CHAPTER FIVE: To the Light/house of truths

### I. Introduction

This chapter is centered on the motif of truth. The first section explores the notion of truth in violence. By airing the hearings, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission sought to support national healing by bringing to light violence and heinous crimes that occurred during apartheid on both sides. In particular, *David's Story* paints pictures of some of the violence that occurs within the Movement, including rape and torture of women cadres. Yet in attempting to tell such stories, the problems of memory and trauma make transmission difficult. Through her unreliable narrator, Wicomb poses the questions of trust and truth in giving an account of another's story. The second section continues with the notion that truth is (im)possible after such trauma, but through investigation and re-presentations, important steps closer to the truth are taken. The third and final section in the textual analysis of this dissertation argues that such steps must be taken so that untold or lesser-told histories and herstories are revealed. This requires deconstructing oppressive narratives that have been instilled for centuries and questioning the authors of such stories so that new, open spaces have room.

### II. Deracination and Dismemberment

“One did not need to be a political activist to become a victim of apartheid; it was sufficient to be black, alive and seeking the basic necessities of life that whites took for granted and enjoyed by right.” (TRC Report 1:2:46, 35)

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“Truth does not bring back the dead, but releases them from silence” (Krog 1999: 35).

Through ideologies engendered by imperialism and patriarchy, the land of southern Africa was repeatedly partitioned and dismembered throughout the centuries following the arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck. Furthermore, its peoples were uprooted from their lands and displaced through colonization, slavery, segregation and later apartheid. Reverberating ideologies and resulting trauma are still present even after the Truth and Reconciliation Hearings and 20 years after the first elections. In her works, Wicomb illustrates possible scenarios that have been concealed and repressed, bringing them out into the open and one step closer to a truth. Thus, the use of the term dismemberment not only refers to the physical violence that many experienced throughout imperialism and apartheid but it also includes the violence in the removal of membership from a community, whether that community be the coloured or the community of those participating in the armed struggle, to name a few. This section will argue that through an unreliable narrator, difficulties in memory, and evidences of historical and cultural trauma, the notion of truth is questioned in the light of a dismembering violence that remains and continues into post-apartheid South Africa. Moreover, these issues engendered through violence and oppression ultimately contribute to the construction of coloured identities. By raising these questions and revealing histories that are lesser known to the Western world, Wicomb gives a voice to the dispossessed, reclaiming that which is and those who are deracinated by centuries of violence and opening up the borderlands in which they exist. It is only through the unsilencing of such inconvenient, dark truths that a light may be eventually created.

### **i. Violence Unsilenced**

The carefully structured racist policies leading to and passed under apartheid perpetuated violence that was not only derived from racist and imperialist ideologies and their imposing oppression, but it also emanated from patriarchy within the fight for freedom, particularly from male comrades and resulted in beatings, torture, killings and other extremely violent acts such as “necklacing,” which will be further extrapolated upon later in this section. Although human rights violations during apartheid have somewhat surfaced through the hearings held by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which also determined what was and was not a “gross violation of human rights,” (TRC Report 1: 12-13) they are only the surface of the violence that occurred. Through an examination of the Truth Hearings and the novel *David's Story*, this section will explore such violence and brutality that has largely been left untold.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created in 1995 to “promote national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding which transcends the conflicts and divisions of the past” (“Promotion of National Unity” 1995: 4) in post-apartheid South Africa. It investigated what took place in southern Africa beginning with the Sharpeville massacre<sup>82</sup> in 1960 to the end of apartheid in 1994. In the first volume of the report, it shows how deeply rooted such racial tenets were by contending the National Party (NP) did not introduce racial ideologies and practices, but it was the first European settlers starting in 1652 to do so (TRC Report 1:16; 1:25). Nonetheless, the report

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<sup>82</sup> The Sharpeville massacre occurred when officers opened fire on mostly peaceful people protesting the pass laws that required Blacks to carry passbooks. Some threw stones (Lodge 2011: 103-106). The massacre resulted in 69 dead and 178 wounded (2011: 330; Orkin 1992: 649). Among them were women and children. For more information on the Sharpeville Massacre see Lodge, 2011. For an explanation of the pass laws 1952 Natives Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act, Index II of this dissertation.

acknowledges discrimination in apartheid was distinct. The report also explains that a gross violation of human rights “does not deal with morality. It deals with legality” (TRC Report 1:12), and that “the vast majority, if not all, of the gross violations of human rights that were perpetrated in this period happened at the hands either of those who sought to defend the unjust apartheid and racist dispensation or those who sought to resist and ultimately overthrow that system” (TRC Report 1:15). About 21,300 persons made petitions against gross violations of human rights and 7,124 persons applied for amnesty “for acts they committed, authorised or failed to prevent” (TRC Report 2:1).<sup>83</sup>

Antjie Krog reported on the TRC Hearings for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), and she later published her coverage in *Country of My Skull* (1998). In the second chapter, she questions “Will a Commission be sensitive to the word ‘truth’?” and replies:

If its interest in truth is linked only to amnesty and compensation, then it will have chosen not truth, but justice. If it sees truth as the widest possible compilation of people’s perceptions, stories, myths and experiences, it will have chosen to restore memory and foster a new humanity, and perhaps that is justice in its deepest sense. (Krog 1999: 23)

Krog explains that Queenstown was known as the “Necklace Capital of the world,” and the first person to die from the act was Bill Mentoer, who was killed in August 1985 for not participating in a consumer boycott called for by the ANC Youth League. She explains that although murder in this manner occurred there nearly once a month with an

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<sup>83</sup> For an accurate record of those who were granted amnesty, see “TRC Amnesty Hearings and Decisions.”

approximate total of 39 necklacings, many South African towns do not believe they even happened (1999: 203).

Necklacing is one of the many cruel acts used to torture and kill during apartheid. It involves placing a tire around the victim's neck and dousing him or her with petrol and lighting the victim on fire. First uses of this method started in the 1980s to kill suspected informers and collaborators, yet the reasoning for later targets became unclear (TRC Report 2:277). With information based on a combination of first and secondary sources, the Commission Report discloses that of the reported 5,707 killings related to political violence, an estimated 700 were deaths carried out through necklacing or burning (TRC Report 2:389).<sup>84</sup> Of these reported numbers, only 2,870 related to political violence and 191 cases of burning or necklacing were recorded in the Commission database (TRC Report 2:389), showing the immense difference in figures and therefore raising the question of actuality.<sup>85</sup>

As Wicomb explains in her critical essay, "Culture Beyond Colour?," necklacing is a very public, communal event, as is the Afrikaner cultural gathering of the *braaivleis*, or barbecue (1993: 31). She compares the two as acts of survival: trekking Boers ate the barbecued meat and communities involved in the struggle removed any possible threats of government spies (1993: 32). She continues:

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<sup>84</sup> See Index I.

<sup>85</sup> When a question regarding necklacing was raised at a talk I attended, it was approached with the notion that the number of cases was not very great. Although the speaker clarified that he was not referring to the consequences, it is remarkable that death in such numbers, regardless of whether they were unofficial or recorded by the TRC (700 or 191) can be considered not high. It brings to mind Judith Butler's question, "When is life grievable?" (Butler 2009).

Necklacing then is about displacing Boer culture both physically and symbolically. It is about positioning: placing the victim as the other within an isolating circle of fire and outside of the community; replacing the decorative necklace with the destructive tire, a symbolic reminder to the victims of where they have placed themselves as they embraced the enemy with its lure of lucre ... Necklacing does not tell us about communities pitted against each other, but about cohesion within communities who take collective responsibility for such a death and who honor the death with sympathetic ululation as if it were a natural one. The barbarism of such cultural activity speaks of a topological process, a generative transformation in the barbarism of official white culture. (1993: 32)

Necklacing is alluded to in *David's Story* when in describing the act of ironing a shirt. Sally has not been taught to iron, but when presented with the work, she knows how to complete it. The articles that need ironing “lose their identity” (Wicomb 2000: 30) and become “the ironing” just as a target of necklacing or other acts of torture come to lose his or her humanity and become the act. In what Mbembe refers to as part of the Hegelian tradition, he describes the colonized as becoming an object of no importance. He writes:

As such, he/she belonged to the *sphere of objects*. They could be destroyed, as one may kill an animal, cut it up, cook it, and, if need be, eat it. It is in this respect that, in the colony, the body of the colonized was, in its profanity, assimilated to all other things. For, being simply a ‘body-



thing,' the colonized was neither the substratum nor the affirmation of any spirit. As for his/her death, it mattered little if this occurred by suicide, resulted from murder, or was inflicted by power; it had no connection whatever with any work that he/she had performed for the universal. His or her corpse remained on the ground in unshakeable rigidity, a material mass and mere inert object, consigned to the role of that which is there for nothing. (2001: 27)

Just as the colonizers or apartheid powers dehumanized the colonized, some involved in the struggle were also guilty of violence. In this way, those who fought for the struggle did so in the name of the Nation, which can precipitously turn against any member, as I have argued in the last chapter and will further discuss in the torture of Dulcie and Sally. In such torture, the concentrating on the act is important in its completion. The narrator reasons: "To call so many stages of transformation by the single name of laundering is to take the difference out of washing and ironing—and how else do you get through your days, your life, without dwelling on such differences, without probing their meanings" (2000: 30). Here, the amanuensis acknowledges the significance in removing the humanity of a person, so that duties such as torture may be carried out with less difficulty. In this way, it is also suggested that Sally, as a guerilla, might have been involved in violent acts.

As the undertaking of necklacing and/or torture is so heinous and unmentionable, David cannot utter the word and so the act is left to a metaphorical description, as the amanuensis explains: "shirts are the most demanding but the key lies in the collar ... start

at each edge in turn, burrow the hot arrowhead of the iron into each collar tip, resisting the temptation to carry on” (2000: 31). The act is something that Sally, also referred to as Saartjie in this scenario, and the female generations around her are aware of and must live with: both the physical violence that might have been experienced (historically, as represented by the allusion to Saartjie Baartmann) and the violence of and the silence surrounding such torturous acts that have been occurring for generations to black women. Thus, Sally as a former cadre, must “block out all else while she concentrates on physical tasks, the minutiae of things that have to be done...even for a wife that training has its uses” (2000: 31).

Through the unsilencing of such violence, Wicomb and Krog, through TRC testimonies, offer illustrations to some of the horrors of apartheid. Krog, through a mixture of her account of the TRC Hearings and creative writing, and Wicomb, through the refusal of simplifying the violence by leaving it to the imagination and investigation of the reader, reify some of the gross violations of human rights that occurred during apartheid, and in Wicomb’s works, also during colonization. Through the inclusion of such violence in both creative and critical writings, deaths that have been once considered trivial or not considered at all may perhaps be given at least attention, and above all, be recorded in lesser-told histories.

Both comrades within the Movement and police assaulted black women. The TRC Report says women and children were mostly indirectly hurt or killed rather than targeted; yet those who were targeted were done so because of their activism or their relation, stating “The Commission heard that both ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) supporters were guilty of extreme violence against women” (TRC Report 3: 315).

Some of the violence happened due to proximity, as in the case of Bajabulile Nzama, who, at the age of 16, was abducted and repeatedly raped by members of the ANC who accused her of being IFP sympathizers due to the location of her house, which was next to a bridge where IFP members would meet (TRC Report 3: 315-316). In Nzama's case, as well as others, authorities refused to believe or cooperate in filing charges against the perpetrators, illustrating the role the State had in the violence against women (TRC Report 3: 315-318).

Violence against women included gendered and sexual violence, which at times targeted the body and reproductive areas. In her questioning of whether truth has a gender (1999: 271), Krog relays Gender Commission Chairperson Thenjiwe Mtintso's<sup>86</sup> speech of special women's hearing and gives an account of gendered violence committed by the police. Mtintso, who was also a commander in MK (Goldblatt and Meintjes 1998: 231), asserts that men locate feminine bodies "as a terrain of struggle," and explains that while under interrogation, a man who withheld information was respected for his masculinity, but should a woman have done the same, she would be tortured and labeled a whore because "a black *meid*, a *kaffermeid* at that, had no right to have the strength to withstand them" (Krog 1999: 271-272). Such misogynistic thinking also sought to protect or uphold masculinity and as a result, patriarchy. Elsewhere in an interview, Mtintso also explains in addition to being punched in the face and body like men, women were attacked at their wombs (Goldblatt and Meintjes 1998: 231).

In "A Gender Perspective on Violence During the Struggle Against Apartheid," which was taken from a report they submitted to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in May 1996, Goldblatt and Meintjes explain methods of torturing women

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<sup>86</sup> In *Country of My Skull*, Thenjiwe Mtintso's family name is written as "Mthintso" (1999: 271-272).

turned from house burnings in the 1950s to psychological and physical torture in the 1960s (Goldblatt and Meintjes 1998: 229). The 1970s saw a form of torture that was more violent, and later, along with the intensified role of women in the struggle against apartheid, sexual torture in women's testimonies also increased in the 1980s with evidence that "women's sexuality was used to undermine their identity and integrity as human beings during interrogations" (1998: 230, 233). Both works from Krog and Goldblatt and Meintjes include testimonies of gendered torture and cruelty such as electric shock to Joyce Dipale's bare breasts, buttocks and genitals (quoted in Goldblatt and Meintjes 1998: 231); Elaine Mohammed's humiliation while menstruating (quoted in Goldblatt and Meintjes 1998: 233), the forcing of rats into the vagina as a means of torture (Goldblatt and Meintjes 1998: 233-234, Krog 1999 271-272); and the shooting of Nomatise Evelyn Tsoobileyo who was first shot in the vagina, where she still has bullets lodged, and later shot in the leg and other parts of her body, where bullets also remain (Krog 1999: 273-274).

In their report entitled "Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," which was submitted to the Commission, Goldblatt and Meintjes give further accounts that it was not only male police officers that contributed to such gendered violence but female officers also participated. Here, Elaine Mohammed gives testimony of female police officers forcing her to do jumping jacks and putting their hands into detainee's pants and bras and explains:

I felt very betrayed by what the women police did to me in prison, because I expected more of women. I always liked my breasts because they are

very firm. The policewomen would flick them with their nails on my nipples, saying, "It's a shame nobody wants you. You've obviously never had a boyfriend. No one touched these breasts, else why are they so firm?" I found this incredibly humiliating. (Goldblatt and Meintjes 1996: "Gender and Truth")

These real examples of torture have been included here to realize the gendered violence that took place during the struggle against apartheid and to remove some of the silence that has shuddered the victims of these criminal acts. On the other hand, Wicomb illustrates the sacrifice female guerillas endured in their struggle against apartheid without narrating a concrete testimonial. In *David's Story*, as discussed in the previous chapter, gendered violence is described through the characters of Sally and Dulcie. As female guerillas, for example, the women know that they must submit their bodies to their comrades (Wicomb 2000: 123, 179). In particular, Dulcie, despite being a commander, is treated very harshly as she is not only forced to allow her body to be occupied through the repeated sexual violations and other uses by the movement, she is forced to prove her strength (2000: 82-83). She is defeminized and, as described by the narrator, her body is dehumanized as her limbs become "solid trunks of muscle (2000: 81)" and "her muscles into ropes of steel" (2000: 179). Throughout the novel, Dulcie's torture by her comrades weaves in and out of the story, which, although David cannot quite recall it, it exists and persists. Wicomb employs the narrator, who, throughout the text's twists and turns, incorporates traumatic accounts that come and go like memory.

Such narrative maneuvering also simulates the unexpectedness of harassment and violence, which were always imminent.

The narrator illustrates Dulcie's body as a testing ground (Wicomb 2000: 80-81). It is a canvas that can be shaped and carved (2000:18-19) or the meat that her comrades can "tenderize, baste, sear, seal, sizzle, score, chop," (2000: 178) after which she is "marinated in pain," (2000: 179). The illustration of Dulcie as a body-thing, as meat or wood, is paralleled with the images of the Griquatrekkers huddling around the fire, "rejoicing in the smell of roasting meat and the curled smoke of mutton fat" (2000: 92) and their attempts at making *ramkies*, South African musical instruments made of large tins and wood. The narrator describes the instruments with patterns of zigzags and waves burnt into the wood, alluding to Dulcie's crisscrossed tattooing on her thumb and marking how she was sculpted, turned into an instrument for the Movement.

Dulcie's body is sectioned into parts, alluding to the dissection of African women by European scientists such as Cuvier did to Baartman. David furthers the dismembering of Dulcie through his disjointed memory of her. In this way, he is also complicit in the violence against her. Christa Baiada takes the comparison further and argues that David, as Cuvier, both reduces Dulcie to her parts and also distorts her (Baiada 2008: 37). Such displacement locates Dulcie's story in his own, and moreover, David's erratic disclosure upholds the amanuensis's unreliable narration of his own story. She thus gives her version of his role in the violence against Dulcie:

Once, only once, did David come close enough to place his hands on her shoulders. His fingertips pressed precisely into the wounds under her shirt,

plunged intimately into her flesh, caressed every cavity, every organ, her lungs, liver, kidneys, her broken heart, with a lick of fire. She would not have been surprised to see those hands withdraw dripping with blood. (2000: 199)

Through the amanuensis's inventions of David's story, she implicates him in torture and as one of Dulcie's oppressors. In this way she describes an atmosphere that was not only swathed in violence but also in doubt and suspicion. Furthermore, through such an unreliable narration of Dulcie, the amanuensis not only illustrates the (im)possibility of truth but also argues for the inclusion of female voices and multiple beginnings.

It must be reiterated that both men and women participated in such gendered violence, as illustrated by Mohammed's testimony. In *David's Story*, it is also alluded to through Sally, as aforementioned in the ironing scenario, and through Dulcie, who is first introduced as washing blood from her hands. Her hands, described by the narrator as beautiful, are symbols of torture: that which is suggested she has performed and that which she has received. Meg Samuelson points out, "Her hand washing distinguishes her from stereotypical representations of women as victims, without obscuring the violence enacted upon her" (2007b: 136). Furthermore, as Samuelson argues, Dulcie "makes the sacrifice of and for herself" (2007b: 135), representing a complex position of women who fought for the Movement and for their nation. Not only must they participate in violence against others, who also might be women, they also choose to sacrifice themselves in whatever manner is deemed appropriate by their fellow comrades. Thus by becoming cadres, women such as Dulcie exercise their choice, but in doing so they equally sacrifice

not only their bodies but also their voice. As female guerillas they are a part of the borderlands of the Movement, which enables them to fight for freedom from apartheid while using their bodies as tools. Thus, as Meg Samuelson contends, “Caught between two systems of surveillance—apartheid and ANC intelligence—Dulcie must assent to the covering of her wounds in order to align herself with one, even as she is violated by both” (2007a: 850).

The oppression of figures such as Dulcie then, is both intricate and multifarious. The violence surrounding her is ever present and moreover, in the telling of her story, it is continued by the amanuensis, who becomes complicit through not giving Dulcie a voice. The narrator is furthermore duplicitous for excluding and including information according to her own desire, continuing the cycle of violence and exemplifying the problem of telling another’s story. Thus, as Samuelson argues, the narrator is among the women who both disrupt and shape David’s story (Samuelson 2007a: 835). In the next section, it will be argued the amanuensis as an unreliable narrator creates a story that is questionably true, leaving a desire for further explanation. Therefore those who have experienced violence are not only dismembered through torture but are deracinated by the not telling of their stories and left silent in the borderlands.

## **ii. Unreliable Truth and Desire**

From the first page in the preface of *David’s Story*, the reader is warned, “This is and is not David’s story” (Wicomb 2000: 1). The narrator directly addresses the reader and explains her disposition to David’s story.<sup>87</sup> David chooses his amanuensis because she is

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<sup>87</sup> The preface is seemingly written by the narrator. However, as a preface is usually written by the author of the work, through the device of placing the narrator as the author, Wicomb inserts her voice as a very



“literate and broadly sympathetic to the liberation movement” (Wicomb 2000: 2), and he does not expect her to understand his views nor express hers. Yet, describing him as a philistine, the narrator confesses, “it is comforting to know that my occasional flights of fancy, my attempts at artistry, would not be detected by him: proponents of plain writing are notoriously vague in their definitions of that category” (2002: 3) and admits that she “took liberties with the text” (2002: 3). These freedoms include the reinforcement of women in David’s hi/story and attempts to decipher secrets and extrapolate on the Movement during and after apartheid. Thus, David’s intellect and words are undermined while doubt is placed in the reader’s mind, compelling him or her to question nearly everything that will be communicated within the text. This section will argue that Wicomb’s use of an unreliable narrator refutes the notion of a unilateral truth, particularly when considering South African politics and history. As the reader is left with only the desire for more knowledge, an appeal is made for further investigation. Furthermore, since stories can be and often are manipulated for a countless number of reasons that are not always clear or evident, it is important for the reader to exercise caution when being presented with a single “true story.” The employment of an unreliable narrator not only allows for the deconstruction of history and racial ideologies that were instilled before apartheid and continue to marginalize coloured identities, but it also reclaims historical female figures and combats the continued subjugation that pervades the coloured community in South Africa.

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real, pertinent part of the work. In “Setting, Intertextuality and the Resurrection of the Postcolonial Author,” Wicomb argues that in “Kidnapped,” Ivan Vladislavić, through the use of intertextuality, resurrects the author that Roland Barthes has claimed the death of, resulting in a symbiotic author-reader relationship (2005: 149). Through this and other examples, Wicomb claims the presence of the corporeal author in the conception of texts. Thus, Wicomb, as the postcolonial author, is also present in the creation and narration of *David’s Story*.

Through the use of a female narrator/amanuensis, Wicomb emphasizes the important role of women in the history of South Africa. Not only is the feminine narrator the recorder of David's story, she also acts as a cultural preserver in the transmission of the narratives comprising David's story, which includes important historical figures and narratives of the community. The role of women is also highlighted in the novel's opening with the mentioning of Eva/Krotoa, a KhoiKhoi woman who worked as a servant for the Van Riebeeck family. The narrator "David's story started at the Cape with Eva/Krotoa, the first Khoi woman in the Dutch castle" (Wicomb 2000: 1) and confesses parts of this story have been omitted, but she gives no further information. Eva/Krotoa was also an interpreter for the Dutch and became the first native African to marry a European. She married Pieter Van Meerhoff, a Danish surgeon who arrived at the Cape in 1659 with the Dutch East India Company. She is seen as the mother of the "coloured nation" since both her marriage and children were acknowledge under Dutch law, and it is through her that many claim their ties to the land in post-apartheid South Africa (Distiller and Samuelson 2006). Moreover, as Eva/Krotoa played an important role in late-17th century Cape society, she also contributed to the current Afrikaner language and culture (Distiller and Samuelson 2006). Thus, as she helped engender the meeting of Dutch and African cultures, she also was a foundation to both David's story and that of many Southern Africans, and her acceptance into Dutch culture and image as an interpreter contests the ideologies and "scientific proof"<sup>88</sup> of inferiority of African women.

Since Eva/Krotoa's image has been constructed through what has been written about her in the journals of van Riebeeck and her husband, her life can only mostly be

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<sup>88</sup> For more on scientific theory of inferiority, see Chapter IV.

speculated upon (Lytle 2012: 221-222)<sup>89</sup>. Julia C. Wells explains, while holes in records allow for interpretations, most representations of Eva/Krotoa portray her as a casualty of cultural conflicts (1998: 418). Focusing on Eva/Krotoa's power and importance in her essay "Eva's Men: Gender and Power in the Establishment of the Cape of Good Hope, 1652–74," Wells writes, "[Eva] exploited gender stereotypes which cast her as a 'safe' person to be entrusted with full access to the Van Riebeeck household. Her life also reflects both high levels of acceptance within Dutch society, as well as the frustrations and limitations a transcultural person faced" (Wells 1998: 418). Eva took advantage of her position and sought to appease the Dutch and native communities. For example, she strategically dressed in Dutch clothes or Khoena skins while conducting business, demonstrating her ability to understand, adapt and appeal to each community and increasing her importance as a delegate of trade (Wells 1998: 426; Conradie 2000: 468). Unfortunately, after her husband was killed in Madagascar, she began to have problems that included accusations of adultery, drunkenness, being a bad mother and inappropriate behavior (Conradie 2000: 468-489). She was confined to Robben Island several times and died there in 1674. Despite her indispensable aid to the Dutch, after her death, she was still considered a lesser being. For example, the Cape governor compared her to a dog in her obituary and Van Riebeeck, who although once expressed personal concern for her in his journal, commented that she was proof that civilization could not overcome her Africanness (2000: 469).

Opinions and portrayals of Eva/Krotoa's life greatly differ, but her key role in the negotiations between southern African and European cultures cannot be denied. Wicomb emphasizes the duality of Eva/Krotoa's nature, by using both her Dutch and Khoena

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<sup>89</sup> A version of this paragraph and the following paragraph appear in Lytle 2012.

names instead of choosing one name over the other or renaming her altogether. By doing so, Wicomb reinforces the power of multicultural progression embodied by Eva/Krotoa and re-presents her as a figure for South Africans of all heritages without adding any further speculation. Thus, Eva/Krotoa is at the forefront of not only David's story or coloured history but also in many South African stories. Moreover, by mentioning Eva/Krotoa, her image and story is recorded once again, and her legacy lives on in South African cultural memory, and although brief, the representation of Eva/Krotoa not only contests the racist, imperialist ideologies that downplayed her importance in South African history, it enabled a connection between racial histories.

Another relevant female figure incorporated in David's story is Saartjie Baartman. Her inclusion not only reinforces her importance in cultural memory, but it also contests the racist ideologies she was used to represent, reclaiming the colonized body through the empowerment of women in Wicomb's novels. As the narrator explains, "One cannot write nowadays, [David] said, without a little monograph on Baartman; it would be like excluding history itself" (Wicomb 2000: 1). The women throughout David's Story have Baartman's famous characteristic of steatopygia that led French scientist Georges Cuvier to dissect her and "prove" the inferiority and concupiscence of African women as binary opposites of their European counterparts. The legacy of Baartman is even found in the narrator, who describes herself as "a clumsy, steatopygous woman," (2000: 201), but her spirit is most evident in Dulcie, the mysterious ANC guerilla of superhuman strength who, ironically, is tortured by her comrades while fighting for freedom. Dulcie's evasiveness perpetuates an unrelenting curiosity that affects Sally, David's wife who also shares Baartman's name; the narrator, who is "determined to crush [her mystique] with

facts: age, occupation, marital status...necessary details from which to patch together a character who can be inserted at suitable points into the story” (2000:78); and David, who cannot or will not discuss her.

Through the bits of information she receives from David and her own imagination, the narrator illustrates a perception of Dulcie: “What they do understand is that she has supernatural powers. It is as if the rumors about her legendary strength, her agility, her incredible marksmanship, her invincibility that have circulated for some time between friend and foe alike have taken root within her, have grown into the truth” (Wicomb 2000: 180). By creating this image of Dulcie, members of the Movement are able to use her as a tool, removing her feminine qualities when needed. Although David contends there are equal conditions in the Movement in its mutual objective (2000: 78), his words are contradicted with the utilization of Dulcie’s feminine qualities. The amanuensis creates an account where “a polite knock will be followed by the gentle turning of the handle, as if they do not wish to disturb her” (2000: 81). What follows is not completely described, but it is evident that Dulcie is tortured as her comrades sneak into her room at night and one carries a doctor’s bag with instruments. Although one of the primary steps in torture is to catch the victim off guard such as during the early morning hours so that the shock is so great, there is difficulty in responding to the situation (Krog 1999: 58-59), the narrator’s description of the scenario indicates that it is not an unusual event, and the highly-trained Dulcie, in anticipation, has even arranged her room and herself. Upon listening to the scene the narrator invents, David is left emotionless but does not deny it. Instead, he remembers a story shared by Dulcie about the time when her comrades coerced her into getting honey from a beehive, leaving her

swollen and in agony for days and without even a drop of honey. Dulcie attempts to show David her scar from the incident, but he refuses to acknowledge what happened and sees “no evidence of that savage attack” (Wicomb 2000: 83). His response reveals his own unreliability—not only through his masculinist bias but also through his fallible memory. Moreover, his recollection of Dulcie’s reaction on how the “body recovers and renews itself” (2000: 83), remarks on how she can withstand pain from not only nature, but also from the physical torture (2000: 82, 178-181) and possible rape from her comrades. In this way, David removes her femininity and reinforces her superhuman qualities. Furthermore, his refusal to Dulcie’s mistreatment exposes a bigger picture of his own participation, whether directly or indirectly, to violence within the Movement.

It is not clear whether or not David has participated in Dulcie’s torture, and his relationship with her is vague and kept secretive. When the narrator presses David to describe Dulcie, he says: “I don’t see the need to flesh her out with detail, especially the kind invented by you. You see, she’s not like anyone else; one could never, for instance say she’s young or old or middle-aged. I think of her more as a kind of...scream somehow echoing through my story” (2000: 134). David’s description of Dulcie as the ageless personification of a scream connects her with the women of the past, present and future, representing those who were silenced by racist ideologies, patriarchy and violence and the continuance of this subjugation despite the end of apartheid. Thus, as Dulcie represents a historical connection, David represents the patriarchal voice that although fights for freedom, it contributes to oppression, which is exemplified by the abuse Dulcie endures from her comrades. By showing these echoes of history across time, Wicomb demonstrates the historical trauma experienced by coloured and black women under

colonialism, patriarchy and apartheid still continues. Thus, Dulcie's scream is not just an echo in David's story, but it is the resonance of oppression of South African women of the past and present that has no age; it is the sound of stories left untold and the truth that, if attainable, has yet to be uncovered.

Since David cannot speak about Dulcie, he agrees to write notes about her for the narrator, yet he is also unable to complete this task and instead writes about Baartman (Wicomb 2000: 134). His notes include scribbles, doodles and Dulcie's name written and crossed out, further denoting the connection between the women while exemplifying the absence of truth and a definitive beginning. From David's notes, the narrator explains: "Truth, I gather, is the word that cannot be written. He has changed it into the palindrome of Cape Flats speech—TRURT, TRURT, TRURT—the words speed across the page, driven as a toy car is driven by a child, with lips pouted and spit flying, wheels squealing around the Dulcie obstacles" (2000: 136). As truth is illegible and randomly scattered all over the paper, the amanuensis, not knowing where to start or end, can neither re/present nor repeat it (2000: 135). Furthermore, by making it difficult for David to discuss Dulcie, Wicomb removes his authority over her story and the patriarchal figure that he has come to represent; therefore, his connection not only comments on the colonized female body as represented by both Dulcie and Baartman, but also on the marginalization of women under patriarchy. In her essay, "To Hear the Variety of Discourses," Wicomb argues:

Black patriarchy, deciding on legitimate portrayals of black gender relations, does so in the name of racial solidarity. Those who control discourse, whom a culture authorises to speak, will not tolerate exposure

and, indeed, will construct it as treacherous and politically unsound ... It could be argued that black solidarity would be more solid if men behaved in such a way that there were nothing to expose. In South Africa the orthodox position whilst celebrating the political activism of women, is that the gender issue ought to be subsumed by the nationalliberation struggle. (Wicomb 1990)

The treatment of Dulcie reveals the gaps in the solidarity for liberation. Moreover, by making Dulcie unrepresentable and by not giving her character a voice, Wicomb refuses to dissect her as has been done by her comrades in the struggle for freedom. Thus, as Dulcie cannot be represented, both the narrator's and reader's craving to know more about her is perpetuated, she remains more like a spirit or "a protean subject that slithers hither and thither, out of reach, repeating, replacing, transforming itself..." (Wicomb 2000: 35), leaving only desire by giving the reader the responsibility to piece the story together to find a truth.

Strategically illustrating confusion and indeterminacy, Wicomb's use of language demonstrates the trauma and obstacles that have haunted the Cape for centuries and continue into the new South Africa. She also uses flashbacks, dramatic changes in time and voice and silence breaks to embody that which cannot be pinpointed but only alluded to or estimated. Furthermore, through the narrative voice of the amanuensis, who also cannot fully be trusted as she purposely changes David's story by adding description and commentary despite his protests, the reader is thus left to contemplate the possible truths that have been offered and whether any of the narratives are mostly factual or fiction.



Even David blames the narrator of being perfidious: “You have turned it into a story of women; it’s full of old women for God’s sake, David accuses. Who would want to read a story like that? It’s not a proper history at all” (2000: 199). Despite David’s patriarchal protests, the amanuensis/narrator remains in control of his story. In this way, the narrator is the character with the most privilege in the novel in that not only does she hear David’s story firsthand, it is at her discretion as to what is communicated and through her eyes that the story is illustrated (Booth 1983:160-161). She is the writer and the editor of David’s story and is the main witness of David’s testimony, making judgments of truth based on his words; therefore, it can be argued her unreliability is dependent on or a reflection of David’s unreliable memories. Through the various re/presentations of narratives based on David’s testimony and memories and through their recording is it possible to reach a form of the truth that is possibly “truer” than that which was initially conveyed. This argument, the (im)possibility of truth, will be further extrapolated upon later in this chapter.

Remembering and hearing testimonials as a method for truth is part of the underlying logic of the TRC, which was formed as a step toward a unified, new South Africa, but as *David’s Story* reveals, interpretations, memory lapses, and other obstacles make testimonials problematic. Thus, it is no surprise that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s success is highly debated. As Ayn Bartley argues, despite the use of social memory as a unifying force to find truth through witness testimonials from victims and perpetrators (Bartley 2009: 106), the fallibility of the TRC is in the very foundation of its structure. She particularly discusses the definition of “gross violations of human rights”

as individual bodily damage and highlights the absence of an explicit consideration of rape, arguing:

Rape's status as a human rights violation and its use against women, therefore, is not thoroughly examined. This historical record becomes primarily a story of how men experience and perpetrate violence. Women become bearers of the emotional, not the physical, effects of violence; rape, and women's endurance of it, are forgotten. (2009: 115)

Forty percent of the 446 cases that were categorized as involving sexual abuse were women, and rape was specifically mentioned in more than 140 cases. (TRC Report 4: 298). Within liberation movements, women who were sexually abused were pressured by to remain silent about it. Otherwise, they would have been considered traitors (TRC Report 4: 296).

The TRC considered rape as "severe ill treatment" (TRC Report 1: 81) and coupled its categorization as being put into solitary confinement. The fourth volume of the TRC Report focuses on the gendered violence that women experienced and concludes:

The chapter suggests further that the definition of gross violation of human rights adopted by the Commission resulted in a blindness to the types of abuse predominantly experienced by women. In this respect, the full report of the Commission and the evidence presented to it can be

compared to reports on South African poverty, which make it very clear that while women are not the only sufferers, they bear the brunt of the suffering.

(TRC Report 4: 318)

Although the Commission admitted to “a blindness” in the violence women faced, through the careless comparison of reports of such gendered violence against women to reports on poverty and the way the volume seems to abruptly end, it appears that the issues were merely mentioned and left hanging. The failure to comprehensively scrutinize gendered violence during apartheid thus becomes an erasure or refusal to accept certain truths in terms of violence itself and impedes the understanding of human rights violations that occurred during apartheid. Furthermore, in effect, it further subjugates women by giving a hierarchy to suffering, hindering both their ability to overcome trauma and abuse and their opportunities for equality. In regard to David’s inability or unwillingness to discuss Dulcie, the continued pursuance of forming a truth by the narrator, ensures Dulcie’s spirit and story are not left in the margins. As the narrator defiantly explains: “Her story is of no relevance to his own, he says weakly, but he has already betrayed the belief that some trace of hers is needed for his to make sense; he has already betrayed the desire to lose her story within his own. So I persist” (Wicomb 2000: 78).

Unfortunately, it is this persistence and the uncovering of evidence that reveals the perilousness of truth, which the narrator begins to realize as she questions David: “Harm? I turn the word round in my head. Harm, I suppose, is a category that I ought to

take more seriously in relation to this story” (Wicomb 2000: 200). Furthermore, it exemplifies the possible harm in telling another person’s story, which leads the narrator, who is writing David’s story, to renounce her authority at the end of the novel (Wicomb 2005: 150). Danger and its proximity is substantialized when David is found dead and the narrator returns from his funeral to find some of her work missing and the message: “*this text deletes itself*” (Wicomb 2000: 212). Furthermore, the violence is literally closer to home when her computer is shot by a male intruder, marking not just an intrusion but also a blocking of female work and voices by patriarchal henchmen. The narrator epistemologically questions: “Will I ever know what’s going on? Does no one care what I think? Will I ever be heard above the rude buzz of bluebottles?” (2000: 213). It is also the vague position of the author-narrator-subject that further obfuscates her role in David’s story and questions the possibility of both reaching and portraying a truth. The threat and violence lead her to disown the story, concluding, “I wash my hands of this story” (2000: 213), leaving the reader in mystery and perpetuating the desire to know what happened. Additionally, as emphasized by Bartley, the difficulty in finding a truth is due to the danger in storytelling (Bartley 2009: 117), and she particularly focuses on “the discursive and physical violence that attends national storytelling as it pertains to the construction of the new nation” (2009: 118).

The intricacies of attaining truth during the violence and aftermath of apartheid are further complicated with manipulations and threats. As a way of undertaking this complex task, Wicomb adopts the unreliable narrator to question the possibility of reaching truth in the light of such darkness and secrecy, forcing the reader to also doubt that which is communicated in the narratives and look for possible contradictions and

underlying meanings. Through literary devices such as changes in the narrative voice depicting threats of violence and the amanuensis/narrator's unreliability and later renouncement of her role in the telling of the story, Wicomb cleverly employs the reader through what might be called a literary *verfremdungseffekt*<sup>90</sup>, which distances the reader from the story as a way to incite critical thinking about that which Wicomb has presented. Just when the reader's imagination starts to grasp such horrifying illustrations created by the narrator, the voice or scenario changes, leaving the reader distant, unable to sympathize and possibly confused at times. Moreover, a reader who is not familiar with intricate details of apartheid such as gendered violence and violence within the liberation movements is further alienated through such narrative devices. Thus, in a Brechtian style the narrator can be compared to an actor who "reports" to the reader what is occurring but does so with her own freedom, planting doubt and thus a desire in the reader to learn more (Willett 1964: 136, 198-200). In this way, it is also demonstrated to readers who are more familiar with the details of apartheid that while fingers are being pointed, it is also imperative for communities to acknowledge their own evils for a better understanding of what might be true.

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<sup>90</sup> German playwright Bertolt Brecht departed from traditional dramatic theater and created epic theater, which counted on the audience's intellect to question society. He used the *verfremdungseffekt*, which were theatrical devices that were meant to distance the audience from the characters so that they would not become immersed in the story but instead think the social and/or political commentary and perhaps act accordingly through social change (Brecht in Willett 1964: 48, 71). Brecht explains: "I give incidents badly so that the audience can think for itself. That's why I need a quick-witted audience that knows how to observe, and gets its enjoyment from setting its reason to work" (1964: 14). Through the distancing of actors and the audience through devices such as signs, symbols and reporting, Brecht argues the spectators will recognize and contemplate the problems posed as opposed to feeling catharsis (Brecht in Willett 1964: 57). After completing *David's Story*, it is most probable that the reader to feel uncomfortable and left ruminating rather than a sense of closure, and in this way, the reader is left with a need for more information.

### iii. Bringing Dark Secrets to Light

Gendered violence and violence within the liberation movements are not frequently mentioned when broadly discussing apartheid. Another topic seldom considered, as explored in the previous chapter, is reclassifying one's assigned race such as from Coloured to White, also known as "playing white."<sup>91</sup> Apartheid legislation generally placed children with parents of different racial classifications in the "lower" race category. Yet this sometimes conflicted under the Group Areas Act, which categorized the child under the same race as the father (Bowker and Star 2000: 203).<sup>92</sup> A prime example of this conflict is Sandra Laing who was born in 1955 to Afrikaner parents, both of whom had white ancestry. Laing, who was born with darker features, was forced to reclassify and leave her white school and parents to attend a boarding school (February 1981: 207, Carroll 2003: "Black woman, white parents"). The law was later amended and permitted Laing to change her racial classification back to White as she was biologically born to two White parents. Still, Sandra Laing had already been treated differently by the Whites in her neighborhood, and the racial stigma not only affected her social life, it created suspicion of her mother's infidelity, which would also have been illegal under the Immorality Act. It was not until her father got a blood test proving he was Sandra's biological father did he believe his wife was faithful. The pressure led Sandra to become more comfortable around non-white people. She later ran away with a man classified as Black and was thus forever shunned from her family, with the exception of speaking to

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<sup>91</sup> "Playing white" in apartheid South Africa cannot be fully compared to "passing" in the United States during segregation due to differences in each country's racial legislation and enforcement of the laws.

<sup>92</sup> For an interesting investigation on race relations, see Horrell, 1968. Here Horrell discusses hardships created due to the Population Registration Act, including differences of opinion in race. She gives the example of a man who successfully appealed his Coloured classification with a ruling that he was "a White of the Mediterranean type" (qtd. In Horrell 1968: 22). She also examines other appeals, the 1967 Amendment that sought to clarify the Population Registration Act and themes such as terrorism, employment and displaced people.

her mom a few times in secrecy (Carroll 2003: “Black woman, white parents”). Sandra Laing’s two brothers still refuse to speak with her, including her younger brother Adriaan, who has similar physical features but due to his lighter skin tone had a different experience than his sister. The most recent interviews published around the release of Anthony Fabian’s biographical film about Laing entitled *Skin* (2008) indicate her longing to have contact with her brothers and apologize.

Sandra Laing’s story on a rudimentary level problematizes racial classification and the construction of race, demonstrating the ease in deracinating a person from his or her home due to superficial motives. Yet it also exemplifies how racism, which in this case was constructed and enforced by law, operated on such a level that it pitted members of a nuclear family against one another and that such an act of disownment, removing Laing as a member of the family, can endure the test of time even after the end of apartheid. Furthermore, when looking at Laing’s story as an apartheid narrative, it should be questioned why her story is sad: because of the displacement of a (white?) person belonging to two white parents who was ejected from the white community to live a poor, sad life in a lower class, or is it that she suffered due to the rejection by her community and family as a result of something beyond her control? Is Laing’s deracination unfortunate because of her banishment or because by a few “shades” she missed the privilege that her younger brother, who disowns her, has enjoyed due to his slightly lighter skin tone?

The complexities and contradictions in apartheid legislation opened the door for many contradictions in racial classification such as the case of Sandra Laing. Such loopholes also enabled reclassification as a political tactic. Wicomb explains, “The weird

thing ... was that there was this legislation for racial purity at the same time as the whites were tacitly boosting their own numbers by allowing some people to cross over” (Wicomb in Robinson 2006: “Under the Skin”). Other methods used by the Nationalists to increase the White classification include giving free contraceptives such as Depo-Provera to Blacks<sup>93</sup> and campaigns to encourage whites to make “Babies for Botha” (Wicomb 2006: 122).

In order to make judgments of race, the Group Areas Act enabled police to exercise authority based on phenotypes such as skin color and hair texture (Frankental and Sichone 2005: 129). Deborah Posel describes the policing of racial classifications:

Some officials read racial differences into the texture of a person's hair, the notorious pencil test being used to determine the boundary between ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ ... For others, it was a matter of the pallor of a person's skin — ‘a shiny face being the emblem of continuity of race,’ or the feel of an ear lobe (‘softer in natives than Coloureds’), or the appearance of the cheekbones (high cheekbones being seen as the sign of a Coloured). One official insisted that he could ‘tell a Coloured with absolute certainty by the way he spits.’ Questions put to individuals subject to racial classification tests also sometimes included physical details about family members... At other times, various ‘stigmata’ of race were invoked, as in ... the examination of genitalia (the degree of

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<sup>93</sup> Population controls led to the threat of some black women who refused the controversial injections of Depo-Provera to be fired from their jobs (Holloway 2011:53). Moreover, while many black women had little or no choice as to use birth control, many white women were not even offered the possibility (Baldwin-Ragaven, et. al. 1999: 32-33).



pigmentation of the penis or scrotum in the case of men and the pubic mound in the case of women). All in all, almost any aspect of a person's size or shape was potentially a signifier of race, in unpredictable and idiosyncratic ways.

(Posel 2001: 59)

As mentioned above, pencil and water tests were used to measure hair texture. The former placed a pencil in a person's hair to see if it remained intact, which meant the person did not have "white" hair and thus failed to be white, and the latter, as Wicomb describes, measured the curling of the hair when wet. Hair was so much of a litmus test to indicate non-whiteness that its state became a common preoccupation, and water became a big threat. This is demonstrated in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*, when Frieda, despite being out of South Africa, is worried about what she will do when her hair "matts and shrinks in the English fog" (Wicomb 1987: 93).<sup>94</sup> Such testing not only affected the everyday life of many classified as Coloured by giving such a fixation based on racial aesthetics<sup>95</sup> as to remain a part of the "higher" echelon of the coloured community, but it also stimulated self-vigilance, as explored in the previous chapter with Helen and the performance of whiteness in *Playing in the Light*. In the case of the Campbell family, it is John and Helen who are careful to monitor Marion's whiteness, as Marion has no idea about their reclassification. John, for example, advises young Marion against cutting her

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<sup>94</sup> Straight hair as a symbol of beauty (and whiteness) is contested at the end of the novel when, to her mother's dismay, Frieda expresses she is comfortable with her boskop, or frizzy hair. Frieda explains, "Some perfectly sensible people ... pay pounds to turn their sleek hair into precisely such a bushy tangle" (Wicomb 1987: 178).

<sup>95</sup> Unfortunately such beauty aesthetics are still very present. An investigation by the University of Cape Town shows one out of three women in South Africa uses a form of skin bleaching (Fihlani 2013: "Africa: Black Not Beautiful").

“light-coloured hair that waved like the sea ... [and] of how the modern cropped Jezebels would come to various sorry ends” (Wicomb 2006: 46) so that it remained long.

Yet in John’s mind and Marion’s child imagination, she is his little mermaid who does not have to worry about the effects of water on the hair. Thus it is Helen’s vigilance that keeps their dark secret under control by reminding, “No good being half woman and half fish, half this and half that; you have to be fully one thing or another, otherwise you’re lost” (Wicomb 2006: 47). Helen’s disdain for the mermaid stems from the considerations that it is half human, half animal and thus it is a half-caste that is bound and unable to move, representative of that which the Campbells are evading. On the contrary, Marion views the mermaid as a symbol of liberty, without constructs that bind her into everyday society, for “free, without awkward genitals, she had no need to pee” (2006: 47). According to Meg Samuelson, the mermaid:

references gender violence (in the little mermaid’s sliced tail and Marion’s bound legs), and the ways daughters find themselves entrapped, fixed or rendered immobile in the prophetic visions of fathers and forced to surrender their voices. It is suggestive of the negative construction of the identity from which Marion’s family ‘passes’ away (not ‘fully one thing or another’), and of the experience of ‘passing’ itself.

(2010: 554)

She continues by explaining that Hans Christian Anderson’s “Little Mermaid” paralleled his passing into high society and the pain (discomfort in bound feet) in familial separation

(Samuelson 2010: 554). In slight contrast with Samuelson's point, it might be argued that Marion was entrapped not by her father's visions per se but by the obligatory racial performances enforced by her mother. This is exemplified when one night Marion pretends she is a mermaid, disrobing and rolling around in the grass. Upon finding Marion, Helen looks in horror and castigates—quietly: “What kind of child was she? Where had she come from? How could she behave like a disgusting native, rolling half naked in the grass?” (2006: 60). Although Helen's racialized views regarding what is and is not acceptable behavior slowly have influence over her young daughter, Marion becomes free and her imagination transgresses borders making her a horse, bird and seahorse when she is on vacation to her father's family farm without her mother. Yet her spirit eventually changes as she grows into a strong Afrikaner woman. Thus, as a mermaid, Marion finds comfort in in-between spaces of the shore, between Table Mountain and the sea and the balcony, located in both the outside and inside of her home, as argued in the previous chapter. Through the lack of having playmates and a childhood free of constant surveillance with even her imagination cut off, Marion is dismembered. She is uprooted from society not only through apartheid but also through the performance of playing white and the threat of being discovered.

Through her parents' performance of whiteness, Marion is dis-membered or separated from her family, and as a result, she experiences deraciNation. Helen, however, does not experience such loss since through her mother Tokkie's plan she is able to continue an important relationship. Helen chooses not to see her brother or visit her in-laws for fear of becoming “black” by association. Such trepidation stems from racial boundaries amid the performance of passing as “a contagion transmissible through

proximity” (Butler 1993: 171), which thus jeopardizes her whiteness, and is also stimulated from the varying apartheid laws that police the ever-changing construct of whiteness. Despite such malleability, to have one’s whiteness even questioned would mean that one’s “level” of whiteness was low on the hierarchy and thus problematic. Therefore, to keep her game, Helen has to play up her whiteness to the best of her ability, although it means forcing her husband and daughter to give up any relationship with extended family and heavily patrol the way her daughter plays. For example, Helen scolds little Marion for playing in the grass (Wicomb 2006: 60), leading to the question of whether or not it would be forbidden for white children to roll around in the grass? Did Boer children who lived on farms not play in the veld and get dirty? In this scenario class might be questioned, but whiteness would not be an issue. Thus, the extreme high standard at which Helen sets whiteness is illustrated.

In *Playing in the Light*, the dismemberment faced by the Campbells is catalyzed by apartheid legislation, which brings them to the decision to separate from their family, friends and coloured past to become white. Yet, as argued in the previous chapter of this dissertation, their choice cut them off from their own neighbors and neighborhood so that they were self-confined to their house. This is contrasted from the Shenton family, who is forcefully separated from their home. After receiving the official letter that would force them from their land, Mr. Shenton expresses his discomfort and declares: “All my life I’ve lived in the open with only God to keep an eye on me, what do I want with the eyes of neighbours nudging and jostling in cramped streets? ... We’ll got to Wesblok, we’ll put up our curtains and play with the electric lights and find a corner for the cat, but it won’t be our home” (Wicomb 1987: 29). Through such an illustration of the deracination

of two coloured families during apartheid, these novels explore the intricacies in the violent role that racial legislation played in the construction of race, home and belonging. It is such violence and such gendered violence and torture that occurred within the armed struggle that contributed to the dis-memberment and deraciNation within a community and, on a larger scale, a nation. Thus, returning to the quote from Antjie Krog at the beginning of this chapter, perhaps the dead is not released from silence through truth, but it is memory through narration in search of truth that frees that which has been buried under tyrannical, patriarchal narratives.

## II. The (Im)possibility of Truth

“While many women told the Commission of what happened to them, thousands came to the Commission to tell of what had happened to others—to their husbands, their children, their parents and their friends. These women tended to underplay the suffering that they had themselves experienced as witnesses and survivors of these tragedies.” (TRC Report 3:315)

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“To pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people’s feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilisation so wantonly, so brutally, was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency that, without replying, dazed and blinded, she bent her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter her unrebuked. There was nothing to be said.” (Woolf 2002: 23)

In *Violence*, Slavoj Žižek contends the need to distinguish factual truth from truthfulness. He explains that the truthfulness in a report of, for example, a trauma narrative is its “very factual unreliability, its confusion, its inconsistency” (2009: 3); otherwise, if the victim remembered such events clearly and calmly, its truth would be under suspicion and the victim would be disqualified (2009: 3-4). With a history such as that of South

Africa, where violence under the policies of imperialism intertwined with patriarchy and racism withstood centuries and eventually turned into a systematic approach of separating the society, trauma exists on multiple levels making truths difficult if not impossible to reach. This section will explore the (im)possibilities of truth in Wicomb's fiction, particularly through *David's Story*, *Playing in the Light* and her short story "In the Botanic Gardens," taken from collection *The One that Got Away*. If, in any case, the truth seems near, this notion is clearly reduced by factors surrounding the story but not always apparent to the protagonist. Frequently, another character is impeding the truth, whether accidentally or on purpose. For example, based on David's traumatic memories and testimonies, the amanuensis in *David's Story* cannot write "truth" and instead creates "TRURT," illustrating its unrepresentability. In *Playing in the Light*, the family truth is kept from Marion, who, by the end of the novel, has still yet to uncover the truth and doubtfully wishes to know. Finally, it will be argued the shorty story "In the Botanic Gardens" demonstrates how prejudices and constructed truthfulnesses can diminish the importance of a life deemed ungrievable, leaving the quest for truth an unattainable mission.

### **i. Truth and Trauma**

Historical trauma in South Africa is not only felt from the structured, discriminatory laws that led to events such as abductions, forced removals, diaspora, and racial classification and separation during apartheid, but as Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* (2000) illustrates, it has transgressed centuries and generations starting with the history of colonialism and its ensuing oppression. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) success is

arguable as the residual violence and trauma are left unrecognized, leaving reconciliation questionable. Wicomb's post-apartheid narrative recognizes these (im)possibilities of truth and demonstrates that literature can re/represent history and the unspeakable as a way of investigating historical trauma, giving a more in-depth understanding, awareness and hope to some form of recovery for victims and future generations. To begin to understand trauma and the effects of apartheid, it is important to look farther back into history and realize racism existed for centuries in South Africa leading to historical trauma that still affects the present. Trauma and literary critic Cathy Caruth argues, "through the notion of trauma ... we can understand that a rethinking of reference is not aimed at eliminating history, but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, of precisely permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not" (Caruth 1991: 182, author's emphasis). Through the exploration of Wicomb's *David's Story*, this section will argue that literature can re/represent history and traumatic topics such as apartheid as a way of investigating truth, which may not be absolutely reached but a more in-depth knowledge, understanding and awareness can be achieved, giving hope to some form of recovery.

At the beginning of *David's Story*, David discovers:

a gash, a festering wound that surprises him, precisely because it is the turning inward that reveals a problem on the surface, something that had stared him in the eye all his life: his very own eyes are green of sorts—hazel, slate-quarry, parkside, foliage ... greenish for God's sake—and that, to his surprise, he finds distasteful, if not horrible.

(Wicomb 2000: 12)

The description of David's eye color as a "festering wound" suggests his coloured heritage is a sort of trauma, which stemmed not only from being from the classification defined as neither black nor white but also from being raised in a community with deep social and racial hierarchies that contributed to oppression of its own peoples. Such repulsion to different backgrounds within the community is exemplified by David's father Dawid, who reprimands him for his politics:

I'll tell you something about the kaffirs and the Hotnos, they just don't want to work. Look what it's taken your mother and me, sweat and blood, to shake off the Griquaness,<sup>96</sup> the shame and the filth and the idleness, and what do you do? Go rolling right back into the gutter...to speak with old folks about old Griqua rubbish, encouraging the backwardness.

(Wicomb 2000: 23)

Although David has fought against apartheid, his racialized upbringing gives him mixed feelings about his own heritage; therefore, he decides to investigate Griqua history, a part of his identity denied by his parents, who are self-described "decent, respectable coloured people" (2000: 24). Through the triggering of his green eyes and their sudden recrudescence reminder of his ancestry, David chooses tracing history to deal with his

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<sup>96</sup> The Griquas were an early group of mixed-race peoples in South Africa. Under their leaders, particularly Adam Kok and Andrew LeFleur, they trekked across the country in hopes of settling in a homeland away from both natives and Europeans. Le Fleur's own racial ideologies portray the absurdities of racial and ethnic hierarchies and how they are similar to the foundations of apartheid belief. For more information on the Griquas, see Ross, 2009 and Cavanaugh, 2011.



trauma, which although might not be self-evident, it is illustrated through the novel's narrative strategy. Furthermore, David's investigation shows how figures from the past greatly, yet sometimes inconspicuously, affect contemporary racial ideologies and circumstances such as the cultural trauma experienced by the coloured community. The employment of the amanuensis in David's search for the "truth" about his past comes to include a history of colonialism, historical female figures such Eva/Krotoa and Saartje Baartman and Griqua leaders Adam Kok and later Andrew LeFleur. These narratives form a part of David's personal history including his time as a guerilla fighter for the ANC.

Yet, as the amanuensis explains, "David was simply unable/unwilling to disclose all" (2000: 2). Both his incapacity and refusal to remember past events are indication of the trauma he faced not only as a coloured man during and after apartheid but also as a guerilla soldier faced with difficult and traumatic situations, none of which could be considered "simple." David's trauma is evident in his memory lapses, which largely center on Dulcie, who is abused, raped and tortured by their ANC comrades and possibly even David himself (Wicomb 2000: 18-9, 81-2, 178-9). Complete memories of her remain buried, making David dissociated and unable to speak fully about her. As Caruth argues, "it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that [the traumatic event] is experienced at all" (Caruth 1991: 187). Thus, David experiences his trauma through his inability to speak about Dulcie, who has had a great impact and importance in his life.

David experiences both historical and structural trauma. The former can be tied to the complexity of David's background, which includes being coloured, growing up

during apartheid and fighting in the armed struggle; and the latter trauma can be linked to the aftermath, or life in post-apartheid South Africa. Dominic LeCapra explains:

The traumatizing events in historical trauma can be determined (for example, the events of the Shoah) while structural trauma (like absence) is not an event but an anxiety-producing condition of possibility related to the potential for historical traumatization. When structural trauma is reduced to, or figured as, an event, one has the genesis of myth wherein trauma is enacted in a story or narrative from which later traumas seem to derive.

(1999: 725)

David's experiences make him both a victim and a perpetrator. His victimhood stems from the racial subjugation and resulting intricacies of colouredness and coloured identities that were present before, during and after apartheid. Of course through his participation in the struggle as a guerilla and the ambiguity in such involvement, particularly in Dulcie's abuse, David is a perpetrator. The duality of being both a victim and a perpetrator not only exemplifies multifarious implications of racial and patriarchal ideologies, it also shows the complexity of trauma under such conditions. Moreover, as Caruth claims the location of trauma is not from a single event but from its incognizance and later haunting revelation (Caruth in Alexander 2004: 7), which is illustrated in David's fragmentary memories of Dulcie, it can also be argued that such recurring recollections of Dulcie and her current absence mark the structural trauma that David

undergoes. He even admits to the amanuensis, as we saw earlier in this chapter, “I think of [Dulcie] more as a kind of a scream somehow echoing through my story” (Wicomb 2000: 134).

As David is unable to speak about Dulcie, the amanuensis suggests he write things down to help bring out his memories. Yet instead, he writes about Saartjie Baartman, linking her with Dulcie and thus exemplifying the subjugation and oppression of South African women has been ongoing throughout time. Although the amanuensis objects and suggests omitting her from their story, David disagrees and insists on her inclusion, concluding “Baartman belongs to all of us” (2000: 135). In this way, David also associates the oppression of these women to his own story and trauma, marking how the coloured community has been victimized through imperialism and racial oppression; however, by claiming ownership to Baartman (and as a result, South African women like Dulcie), he simultaneously acts as a perpetrator.

Comparing Dulcie to a scream marks the trauma her memories recall. Citing Caruth, Christa Baiada connects Dulcie’s voice with the wound that beholds a truth that is difficult to know (2008: 38). Although stories of her are uttered, mostly by David through the amanuensis and through comparisons with Baartman, her images remain superhuman (Wicomb 2000: 78-9, 178-80) or through “her scarred, female body [that] is too disturbing, and the story behind the scars exceeds the limits of representation” (Baiada 2008: 38). Moreover, the telling of Dulcie’s story is hindered through allegiance to the Movement, exemplified as David refutes the notion of having had a relationship with her: “To indulge in such passion is to betray the cause, and there is far too much of that already. You see, he says condescendingly, it’s a different world out there, one you’ll

never understand” (Wicomb 2000: 137). In this way, David indicates his refusal and the possible danger (such as being considered a traitor or running the risk of being necklaced) in revealing information about the Movement, and that if he were to choose to disclose anything, what would be conveyed might not be fully comprehensible.

The amanuensis soon realizes that although some facts might be revealed, truths would probably never be fully reached due to the inability stemming from trauma and/or unwillingness to discuss past events in South Africa. Instead, there is the “trurt,” which cannot be understood, only memorized like a Latin lesson. The “trurt,” furthermore, conjures up images of tortured spaces; it is that “which cannot be said the thing of no name...” (2000: 136). Upon describing the indescribable with such difficulty, the amanuensis/narrator addresses the reader: “Who, dear reader, would have such patience with this kind of thing? My computer has none; it has had enough, is embarrassed and mysteriously refuses to process the elliptical dot-dot-dots, which I have to insert by hand” (2000: 136-137).

It is important to note that by not being able to present the truth, the amanuensis/narrator is not presenting an anti-truth or falsehood, but instead she is presenting other possibilities of truths, hypotheses, or educated estimations of what David has presented her. She realizes she cannot fully trust David—not because she believes he is dishonest per se, but because she has insight into his world as a witness to both his testimony and his behavior. As she illustrates, David’s story is not clearly black or white, and it is definitely not a rainbow, but it is a plethora of both colorful and dark memories that must be sorted out. What is also not clear is whether or not making a truth from it all is possible.

Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen contend, “Any adequate conception of truth must accommodate the fact that truth is something speakers *aim for* in some (most) of the things they say” (1996: 9). Thus, perhaps David attempts to tell the truth, but his traumatic memory and the present danger surrounding him prevent him to do so. Lamarque and Olsen explain that sincerity aims for truth but it does not necessarily equate with the truth because sometimes sincerity can be false. Yet how can it be known if David is being sincere?

It must be kept in mind, as Lamarque and Olsen suggest, what “story” indicates: whether it is the making or the telling of something. They write, “While making applies to objects and descriptions, and generally to content, it does not apply directly to mode of utterance. An utterance is fictive not in virtue of being made up, or in having a made-up content, but in the virtue of its role or purpose” (Lamarque and Olsen 1996: 18). In *David’s Story*, the role of the amanuensis/narrator was not to only *tell* David’s story, but it was to question that which was/is being presented—the novel takes place during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hearings—and to act as a witness to testimony while attempting to decipher what, if any, the message is as a way to understanding or finding a truth. In this way, Wicomb also questions the telling of another’s story while cautioning against accepting absolute truths and, perhaps above all, discounting those stories yet to be told. Thus, what is presented can only be the “trurt.”

Strategically illustrating confusion, Wicomb’s use of language demonstrates the trauma and obstacles that have haunted the Cape for centuries and continue into the new South Africa, making even a translation difficult. She also uses flashbacks, dramatic changes in time and voice and silence breaks to embody that which cannot be pinpointed

but only alluded to or estimated. Furthermore, through the narrative voice of the amanuensis, who also cannot fully be trusted as she purposely changes David's story by adding description and commentary despite his protests, the reader is thus left to contemplate the possible truths that have been offered and whether any of the narratives are factually based or mostly fiction.

The narrator/amanuensis prefaces the story with this doubt: "If there is such a thing as truth, he said, it has to be left to its own devices, find its own way, and my role was simply to write down things as he told them" (Wicomb 2000: 2). Therefore, by recording testimony and memories such as those of David, it might be possible to reach truth. This is part of the underlying logic of the TRC, which was formed as a step toward a unified, New South Africa. Yet as the amanuensis reveals to us, interpretations, memory lapses, and other obstacles make testimonials problematic.

The TRC used testimonials as part of the healing process and a way of atonement. The testimonies were broadcast on South African television all day throughout the hearings, and recounting the traumatic events was to be a form of the "talking cure," allowing both victims and perpetrators<sup>97</sup> to negotiate their past and work through their traumatic memory (Bartley 2009: 119). Aryn Bartley, however, argues, as we saw earlier in this chapter, that the TRC's method is problematic in its definition of violence as direct bodily harm and failure to explicitly consider rape and other violence as a "gross violation of human rights" (2009: 115). She suggests although cultural memory is a

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<sup>97</sup> It is important to note, as LaCapra argues, a distinction should be made between victims, perpetrators and bystanders, particularly in historically traumatic events such as apartheid (1999: 723). Furthermore, not everyone who is traumatized is a victim. He states: "The fact that Himmler suffered from chronic stomach cramps or that his associate Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski experienced nocturnal fits of screaming does not make them victims of the Holocaust" (1999: 723). Yet regarding David's trauma, he could be considered both a victim of racial oppression under apartheid, a victim of torture as a guerilla soldier (Wicomb 2000:12) and a perpetrator of torture and patriarchal oppression.

unifying force that could promote a new South Africa (2009: 106), violence is present in other ways and effectively impedes the truth the TRC by name seeks. Bartley explores *David's Story* as it relates to the philosophies of the TRC that fail to acknowledge the present violence that obfuscates and obstructs testimonies due to threats made to storytellers (2009: 118-121). David's storytelling could itself be seen as part of a talking cure, as he attempts to reconcile and record his past, but as Bartley argues, his murder at the end of the story exemplifies viable threats to truth. Therefore, the system of reaching a truth and later reconciliation is neither successful nor effective (2009: 117). Moreover, as the amanuensis finds part of her manuscript missing and her computer shot leaving her screen shattered, she writes, as mentioned earlier, "I do not acknowledge this scrambled thing as mine. I will have nothing more to do with it. I wash my hands of this story" (Wicomb 2000: 213), showing her anxiety of the implications of witnessing testimonies amidst a violent present. Thus, she clarifies in the Preface, "fearing that historical events would overtake us ... I took liberties with the text" (2000: 3), as a way to emphasize the presence of fabricated elements in the story. Her reaction to the story represents her trauma from the story itself and the attention it has so far received (Bartley 2009: 118). As a secondary witness to the inner workings of the Movement and as a coloured South African female, she is also affected by historical and cultural trauma.

Although the response to trauma can often be delayed and uncontrolled (Caruth 1991: 181), in order to deconstruct historical trauma and its implications, it is important to examine surrounding events. In the case of South Africa and apartheid, this attempt was made by the TRC by inviting and publicizing testimonies of both victims and perpetrators, although reparations were never an offer of relief to the victims. The only

feasible relief was through the possible catharsis of recounting the memories and consequently revealing some sort of truth to the terror of apartheid. Unfortunately, this is not always possible for victims of trauma, as shown by Wicomb, who illustrates the sides of the victims, perpetrators and bystanders. As Dulcie never speaks for herself, she is the tortured woman oppressed throughout the history of southern Africa and whose story is left untold, transgressing time.

David represents historical and cultural trauma as a coloured man carrying the shame from miscegenation and ensuing racism, and also as a perpetrator oppressing his own comrades. Furthermore, the amanuensis is not only a bystander who experiences trauma as a witness; she embodies the oppression of coloured women and the (im)possibilities of truth and recovery amidst present violence. Through the (attempted) recovery of memory, the legacies of trauma depicted are not from only apartheid but also from a history of colonization and patriarchy. In creating this multifarious novel, Wicomb conveys the complexities of trauma in South Africa, and through the use of character and narrative strategies, she warns of problems in reaching complete truths and the difficulties involved in recovering from trauma, especially while oppressive violence is still present. Moreover, through the use of literature, the public can therefore begin to be aware of stories “that cannot be told, that cannot be translated into words, into language we use for everyday matters” (Wicomb 2000: 151), enabling an exploration of culture, society and difficult histories without claims of absolute facts but only possibilities of what occurred, closing gaps to truth and giving way to recovery.



## ii. The Light of Witnessing

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission also serves as a background setting for *Playing in the Light*, where Marion, like David, searches for the truth about her own personal background. Marion's characterization demonstrates the violence and tyranny of cultural whiteness and its subsequent ideologies that led up to and survived apartheid. Marion was not taught how to be "white," but for the most part, she grew up in what to her was a white culture. Unlike her parents, she was familiar with no other culture, and thus learning that her parents were "play whites," she begins to question nearly everything about her reality.

*Playing in the Light* does not only tell the story of Marion's search and discovery about her parents' dark pasts, but it also tells the story of Marion's own past and present that are painted with the influence of racist ideologies. It explores the complexities some coloured families faced and the difficulties they were willing to undergo during apartheid. There is a need to tell and retell the story of "playing white," and the Campbell's story is not only told by Wicomb; it is also told by the father himself to Brenda, and in turn she as the narrator tells the story to both Marion and the readers. This multiple telling of the story is meant for multiple audiences, and as a result, it is made concrete despite its resulting vagueness and secrecy. Stephen Knadler argues, "Trauma is an assault on subjectivity, in which one is annihilated from within, and ... compelled by the need to tell and retell an experience to make it real to the self and to the community" (2003: 65-66). Recounting the narrative of "playing white" not only makes such a performance real, but, as illustrated in Wicomb's novel, it is also a traumatic performance that not only affects those directly involved (Helen, John and their families) but those

who are implicated—whether complicit or not—and as result, they also experience trauma (Marion).

In discussing Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Laurie Vickroy contends the "traumatic experience of social powerlessness and devalued racial identity prevents the African American community from joining together and truthfully evaluating the similarity of their circumstances" (2002: 82). Looking at *Playing in the Light*, Vickroy's argument could also be applied to the Campbells and other coloured families who reclassified to White to escape the subjugation they experienced and would have to endure should they remain Coloured. Consequently, "play whites" were so focused on themselves and their performances that they rejected the notion of community. As they have chosen this route, they must adhere to the rules. Hence, "play whites" kept their situations separate, behind closed doors regardless if their neighbor needed help or support. This is exemplified in the way Helen treats Mrs. Boshoff after her husband's affair is discovered, as discussed in the previous chapter. Although Helen's situation of playing white was like Mrs. Boshoff's, any acknowledged similarity would threaten the Campbell's whiteness, thus their community position, not to mention racial classification, would be in danger.

The complexities of the neighborhood are unknown to Marion, who as a child wanted to live in Annie Boshoff's neighborhood, where "people could spend all day outside in the ambiguous space between private house and public street" (Wicomb 2006: 9). As an adult, these desires, as well as those of being a mermaid are forgotten, left in the past. Marion, as the narrator describes, "has advanced in the world precisely because she presses on," (2006: 3) and she chooses to live far from her father to avoid the memories

and past. She becomes her parents' construction of whiteness and even votes for the Nationalists, although "she'd never really supported apartheid" (2006: 28). Marion's feelings reflect the notion of standby guilt of white South Africans,<sup>98</sup> who after apartheid, and coloureds, who despite being oppressed during apartheid, still voted for the National Party in the 1994 elections.<sup>99</sup> Yet, through the narrator's questioning and possible reasoning: "what could one do, short of joining the hypocritical English voters and betraying your own?" (2006: 28), she briefly but illuminatingly expounds on Marion's thinking and the ideologies that surrounded the shame and questions of betrayal during and after apartheid.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Apartheid denial ranges in methods of expression. Incorporating denial theory of Stanley Cohen to Barney Pityana, former Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission, contends denial of apartheid ranges from honest belief, which is acknowledged when corrected; outright lying as a way to manipulate or cover up; only partially knowing what was happening; and rationalizations as a way to defer moral responsibility (Kistner 2003: 99-100). For an interesting assessment of memory in apartheid archives, see Stevens, et. al. 2013, and for a range of narratives, see "Apartheid Archive Project." Also noteworthy is a 2013 study by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation that found four out of 10 white South Africans believe that apartheid did not oppress black South Africans ("White South Africans" 2013).

<sup>99</sup> This voting pattern reflects the complex coloured positioning and the hope for being accepted by society. Wicomb argues it pertains to "postcolonial hybridity" and identity and the inability to achieve the "grand narrative of liberation." She argues, "Our electoral behavior, which ensures that the Western Cape is the only region without an ANC parliamentary majority, coincides with the resurgence of the term *Coloured*, once more capitalized, without its old prefix of *so-called* and without the disavowing scare quotes earned during the period of revolutionary struggle when it was replaced by the word *black*, indicating both a rejection of apartheid nomenclature as well as inclusion in the national liberation movement... Yet, within the new, exclusively coloured political organizations that have sprung up in the Cape since the election, attempts at blurring differences of language, class, and religion in the interest of a homogenous ethnic group at the same time seem to defy the decentering thrust of postmodernism" (Wicomb 1998b: 93-94). She continues, "And the shame of [the Cape coloureds' vote for the Nationalist Party] lies not only in what we have voted against—citizenship within a democratic constitution that ensures the protection of individual rights, the enshrinement of gay and lesbian rights, the abolition of censorship and blasphemy laws—but in the amnesia with regard to the National Party's atrocities in maintaining apartheid" (1998b: 99). Mohamed Adhikari also argues that the voting pattern is characteristic of the complexities of coloured identities. He contends, "The durability of these yearnings for acceptance to a significant degree explains the eager response of so many coloured people to the National Party overtures in the 1994 general election" (Adhikari 2006: 477).

<sup>100</sup> Yet, as Wicomb points out, it must not be forgotten that this national narrative of shame was created long before apartheid and promoted through imperialist and racist literature such as Millin and on a larger extent Conrad and Haggard (Charos 2009: 286-287).

For Marion, forgetting the past was key to moving on as indicated through her advice to Brenda after she confessed to lying on her job application. Marion responds, “No need for you to feel guilty any longer, let’s just carry on as if nothing’s happened. She deliberately didn’t ask what the degree was in; that would have had quite the wrong effect” (2006: 27). Marion’s method of coping with Brenda’s distress denotes a denial: of grief, truth and the reality of classification, albeit in this case it is not Marion’s personal situation, but it is indicative of her way of thinking. This scenario can be paralleled to the post-apartheid coping methods of some who were classified as White. In “Five Afrikaner Texts and the Rehabilitation of Whiteness,” Wicomb argues that

white is an empty signified, both everything and nothing, that being invisible to itself it cannot acknowledge its existence, that it can only articulate itself in terms of the markedness of black, the contrast which supplies the meaning of white as the norm. Its refusal to acknowledge itself as an examinable category at the same time asserts the unthinkability of itself as object or other.

(1998a: 371)

Thus, Marion cannot imagine Brenda’s difficulty in being hired for a job that she is qualified for due to factors such as race, nor does she care to investigate the situation, which white privilege ensures she would never have to deal with such a scenario. For white privilege also enables Marion to choose to dismiss such circumstances due to racial displacement, which of course, was created and enforced by the State; it allows the act of

forgetting.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, as Caitlan Charos argues in her “States of Shame: South African Writing After Apartheid,” the idea of ‘closing the chapter of history,’ which is repeated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners in the Report, suggests a form of complicity in shaming. She contends,

moving over and out of shame, repeating apartheid’s censorship by once more ‘passing over’ that brutal history. Containing the violence of apartheid within a closed narrative that displaces shame and yet ostensibly serving as a forum for voicing shameful history, the TRC became ironically complicit in stifling a discourse on shame while exposing those who had been ‘shamed’ to the public eye.

(2009: 280)

Charos contends that the displacement of shame on others who are deemed illegitimate contributes to the formation of nation through a national narrative of shame as seen through apartheid laws such as the 1949 Mixed Marriages Act and the 1950 Immorality Act (2009: 277).

John and Helen resort to slurring blacks and coloureds as a way of uplifting their whiteness and perhaps displacing the shame of their own coloured background and sacrifices in order to “play white.” Marion’s manner of coping with such situations, like her parents,’ is superficial, as reflected in the way she was raised and her childhood house

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<sup>101</sup> Forgetting can also be contrasted with the TRC Report: “Many victims justifiably insisted that they were not prepared to forgive if this meant that they must ‘close the book on the past’, ‘let bygones be bygones’ or ‘forget about the past and focus on the future’. Forgiveness is not about forgetting. It is about seeking to forego bitterness, renouncing resentment, moving past old hurt, and becoming a survivor rather than a passive victim” (TRC Report 1:116).

was kept; as long as everything seemed fine on the outside, there was no problem inside. John and Helen's concealing and later John's refusal to acknowledge the performance of "playing white" to their daughter becomes their way of dealing with trauma and truth. Dori Laub contends,

The "not telling" of the story serves as perpetuation of its tyranny. The events become more and more distorted in their silent retention and pervasively invade and contaminate the survivor's daily life. The longer the story remains untold, the more distorted it becomes in the survivor's conception of it, so much that the survivor doubts the reality of the actual events.

(1995: 64)

As John was under the surveillance of apartheid, the neighborhood and Helen, his silence becomes his refuge. After the end of apartheid and the death of his wife, it is easier for him to remain quiet about his life and that which he had given up. In this way, his silence from trauma not only alters his conception but it also, as Laub explains, operates "both as a sanctuary and as a place of bondage. Silence is ... a fated exile, yet also a home, a destination, and a binding oath. To *not* return from this silence is rule rather than exception" (Felman and Laub 1992: 58). Later, when John does eventually explain under obligation, he must leave home and dresses in his former uniform as a traffic officer. He is lucid and arranges his story based on the traffic of the city, alluding to the crossing of racial classifications. Yet, it is not necessarily a healing process for John, who must relive

the trauma of abandoning his brothers and sisters for under his oath, he had none, and this is a lived action that is irreversible. In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Butler explains the difficulty in authority and narration when telling one's own story, particularly in regard to the events leading to the story when one was not yet present. Although one gives several accounts of the same story, there cannot be a single one that is true (37-38). She writes

At this point the story that I tell, one that may have a certain necessity, cannot assume that its referent adequately takes narrative form, since the exposure I seek to narrate is also the precondition of that narration, a facticity, as it were, that cannot yield to narrative form. And if I tell the story to a 'you,' that other is implied not only as an internal feature of the narrative but also as an irreducibly exterior condition and trajectory of the mode of address.

There are, then, several ways in which the account I may give of myself has the potential to break apart and to become undermined. My efforts to give an account of myself founder in part because I *address* my account, and in addressing my account I am exposed to you. (2005: 38)

Although his narrative attempts to realize, form and convey a truth of his world at that particular moment in time, John can only give an account of the events leading up to the decision to reclassify. In this way, he only exposes himself and perhaps makes himself vulnerable to interpretation. He cannot heal anyone, and there is no reunion with those whom he has lost or that which he has relinquished. Instead, "the testimony in its

commitment to truth is a passage through, and an exploration of, difference, rather than an exploration of identity” (Laub 1995: 73).<sup>102</sup> Thus, through John’s revelation to his daughter, we see that telling one’s own story is also an account and the truth (im)possible. Furthermore, it must be taken into account that the reader learns the story through a narrator, not from John.

As most of John’s adulthood identity revolved around “playing white,” the performance becomes his norm and the standardness of routine permits him to fall back into his despite disclosing the truth about his past to Marion. In this way, he does not return from his silence, he appears but then disappears back into his routine. This is exemplified when he refers to himself as Boer and later refuses to let the man knocking at his door wash his car in exchange for food. He warns Marion’s boyfriend Geoff, “You mustn’t let them touch your car, these spiteful skelms will scrub it with steel wool” and tells Marion, “Don’t give my things to these lazy kaffirs” (Wicomb 2006: 181). Marion responds, “Christ, Pa, ... don’t you have any manners? It wasn’t a kaffir, it was a hotnot” (2006: 182). Although her remark is meant to be a correction, it is equally racist and is not only indicative of how she considers black South Africans but also that knowing she has a coloured background changes little, if anything, in her societal outlook. In lieu of comprehending that racism is oppressive and simply wrong, Marion clings to the ideologies of apartheid by reducing the man to racial slurs. Furthermore, her actions

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<sup>102</sup> In his work of testimony and the Holocaust, Dori Laub explains “the commitment to truth, in a dialogic context with an authentic listener, which allows for a reconciliation with the broken promise [of truth as the return to a sane, normal and connected world], and which makes the resumption of life, in spite of the failed promise, at all possible. The testimony cannot efface the Holocaust. It cannot deny it. It cannot bring back the dead, undo the horror, or reestablish the safety, the authenticity and the harmony of what was home. But neither does it succumb to death, nostalgia, memorializing, ongoing repetitious embattlements with the past, or flight to superficiality or to the seductive temptation of the illusion of substitution” (Laub 1995: 73-74). As John reveals truths about his coloured past, he is unable to take away the pain from either his daughter or himself. He also does not try to pretend that his narrative will change their lives nor does he memorialize it. Instead, his narrative serves to explore what happened and how it affects who they both are.



emphasize the racism that continues after apartheid, including the intermediate positioning of the Coloured classification as less than White but better than Black (Adhikari 2006: 478). By resuming such racial ideologies, Marion continues her complicity in both ignorance and discrimination.

Marion's participation in the perpetuation of apartheid ideologies removes her as what Laub calls an emphatic listener. Thus, she is unable to actively witness, as a listener, the trauma that her father has undergone, making the truth unknown to her. Laub argues,

The absence of an emphatic listener, or more radically, the absence of an *addressable other*, an other who can hear the anguish of one's memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness, annihilates the story. And it is, precisely, this ultimate annihilation of a narrative that, fundamentally, *cannot be heard* and of a story that *cannot be witnessed*, which constitutes the mortal eighty-first blow.

(Felman and Laub 1992: 68)

In particular, Laub is discussing the audience's rejection of a man's recounting his hardships and suffering in a concentration camp in Haim Gouri's film, *The 81st Blow* (1975). Although Marion does not outright reject her father's harrowing vicissitudes and distress, it is through her refusal to listen, her thinking that she already knows everything about her father that she denies John's narrative. This is communicated at the end of the

novel when she tells Brenda, who is a narrator,<sup>103</sup> “I know my father’s fucking story,” (Wicomb 2006: 218). John’s story is therefore unknowable to his own daughter. Wicomb’s narrative strategy, which includes a feminine voice and unexpected changes in voice, exemplifies not only such difficulty in communicating truths and traumas to those who are as close as family, but the equal trouble in bearing witness and or listening. Such illustration, moreover, underscores those stories that have yet to (or perhaps are unable to) be communicated.

### **iii. Un/re-covering Truths**

The trope of difficulty in communicating truths is revisited in the short story, “In the Botanic Gardens,” where South African Dorothy Brink travels to Glasgow in search of her son Arthur, who has gone missing. The story opens with the vague explanation, “There were several accounts of his last movement. But she remembered only two,” (Wicomb 2008: 159) which not only indicates the ambiguity of a disappearance and lack of any real leads but also the fallibility of memory that can also affect an investigation.

The main explanation that is given to Dorothy is by Mr. MacPherson from the British Council. Speaking quickly and with an unfamiliar accent, Dorothy imagines it is her own misunderstanding that makes it difficult for her to grasp an understanding of the details presented; however, it is actually that Mr. MacPherson, a seemingly distinguished man through his title and national dress, offers very little information about Dorothy’s

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<sup>103</sup> It has been well argued that Brenda acts as a narrator (Roblin 2011: 357; Van der Viles 2010: 594) but with sudden, unexpected changes in narrative voice and points of view, it seems that Wicomb, as in *David’s Story*, also inserts her own authorial voice (Wicomb 2005)

son. Arthur has mysteriously vanished.<sup>104</sup> Nobody knows where he is nor do they seem to care. Instead, MacPherson suggests Dorothy visit the Kibble Palace, where Arthur may or may not have been seen by a guard at 11 p.m. Moreover, rather than extrapolate on what the guard saw or any details, MacPherson describes the history of the building and its exotic plants and tropical conditions.

The Kibble Palace is described as a warm, “fairy-tale house of glass and wrought iron painted silver” (Wicomb 2008: 167). It is a space based on fictitious narratives created through imperial curiosities; its plants have been collected to build a representation that fits the Eurocentric expectations and exoticizations in an unnatural, hothouse display. Thus, the botanic garden represents the condensed space of imperial collections, which objectified people and cultures that were considered exotic. This structure also served as a house of imperial power, promoting empirical ideologies. Zaheer Baber explains that during colonial rule in India, botanical research and the system of botanical gardens upheld the expansion of the British Empire (1996: 173). Moreover, as scientific comparisons of peoples during the Enlightenment promoted ideologies of European superiority and the need for colonization, specimens from colonies were sent to Europe to be studied. These samples, which included both people and plants, were put on display in museums and botanical gardens (Boomgaard 2013: 22). Thus, as argued earlier in this dissertation, these displays perpetuated stereotypes and

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<sup>104</sup> The name Arthur, or author, is an interesting choice of name and perhaps nods to both difficulties and violence involved in authorship. For example, during apartheid writing became problematic in that authorities, whether it was from the apartheid government or leaders of the struggle, required writers to report on events in a way to uphold either side’s philosophies or beliefs. As André Brink explains in his essay, “Interrogating Silence: New Possibilities Faced by South African Literature,” “Viewed from the opposite end, the very urgencies of a struggle against apartheid encouraged the imposition of other silences ... and produced a sense of priorities which made it difficult for writers — even for writers who refused to be explicitly harnessed to any ‘cause’ — to write about certain very ordinary human situations (like a love relationship without direct political connotations) without inviting accusations of fiddling while Rome burns, of suppressing more ‘urgent’ issues, of avoiding ‘reality’, or of self-indulgence” (1998: 15).

created prejudices that would be used for centuries to dehumanize and control colonized peoples. Furthermore, not only was botany used to make the colonies and its plants and peoples exotic, it was also used to create and maintain resources that would uphold the empire (Baber 1996: 171-173). In discussing the Kew Gardens, Peder Anker writes, “The ecological relations among the plants in the garden were a sub-language for relations among colonies” (2001: 33). This scenario is illustrated through the mix of plants that represented Australia, New Zealand, South American jungles, etc. with the plants representing South Africa not very recognizable and some completely foreign to Dorothy. In this way, everything was grouped together and fit it in an unnatural, decontextualized and enclosed space that was large enough to indicate how small and simple the world was. It is in and to this Eurocentric, symbolic space that Dorothy’s son is lost, and she realizes that he will not make it back.

As MacPherson discusses the palace, he chooses to divert attention from the principal reason for Dorothy’s visit: to learn more about and/or find her missing son. Through such a digression, MacPherson opts to remain quiet about Arthur through a silence that raises the unanswerable questions as to why he chooses to not speak about her child who has disappeared. Is MacPherson covering something up? Does he have something to do with Arthur’s vanishing? These questions will remain inexplicable with the sole conclusion that MacPherson’s silence and lack of help make him complicit in the disappearance of Dorothy’s son.

These unknowable facts illustrate the suspicion around Arthur’s case, just as there have been many sudden vanishings during the struggle—whether they were a result of oppositional forces or from within—and perhaps after the fall of apartheid. Furthermore,

such unsolvable questions demonstrate the alienation, loneliness and confusion experienced by Dorothy during her trip. She, as an Other and as a mother, remains powerless through the evasive, tyrannical silence that contains her. MacPherson's urging to "Keep going and you'll keep in control" (Wicomb 2008: 163), also mentioned in the previous chapter, alludes to the poster "Keep Calm and Carry On," which marked a message from the monarchy, a symbol of authority, to its subjects via the Ministry of Information. Such instructions were meant to boost support for the war, and here, MacPherson's directions indicate concern is not for Dorothy's missing son but ensuring she remains calm, "civilized" and under control.

Dorothy blames herself for not protecting her son from politics, indicating her inkling of foul play. As illustrated in *David's Story* through the hit list bearing David's name and the violence that surrounds his later death and destroys the amanuensis's computer, the suspicion and reality of foul play point to the atmosphere of threat and danger surrounding apartheid and the struggle against it (Bartley 2009: 111-115). Thus through the reality of risks and endangerment, Arthur's disappearance also mirrors the oppressive imposition of silence during the struggle. The perilous reality of such intimidations and violence make the reaching of a truth, like in a case of disappearance, impossible. MacPherson's reassurance is thus to be "realistic" and to not be "foolish to hold out too much hope," (Wicomb 2008: 163), leaving Dorothy to simply plead for him to find her son's body.

Arthur thus becomes a missing person whose last image remains in the botanic gardens, a space constructed by imperialist collections and imagery. He is not sought out, other than by his mother. He represents the voices that were silenced through centuries of

being subjugated and in the present through the continued racism and ideological constructs that uphold such images and continue to represent the colonized. Therefore, representations such as the naked male captives/slaves found on the back of the former £10 Scottish notes, as described in the previous chapter, and the flora —unfamiliar to Dorothy — found in the Kibble Palace under the declaration of being South African are narratives that speak for the missing who continue to be silenced. Arthur's story furthermore represents those who were silenced both in their own countries and while in exile during apartheid as well as those youth who are still oppressed despite living in the new South Africa. Thus, Arthur cannot author his own story not only because he has vanished, but because his story is missing, he was never permitted to tell it nor was there anyone to listen.

Arthur's mother Dorothy is also silenced as a coloured woman. In search of her son, she is the mother, looking for her son or at least to recover his body, which is evidence of him and his life, but nobody will listen to her. The alienation Dorothy experiences is not solely from being in a strange land; it also stems from the patronizing treatment she receives from the representatives of the British Council, one of whom shows her repeatedly how to turn the lights off and on. Although their reception of Dorothy may be viewed as "hospitality" (Richter 2011: 386), it might be better argued as a dismissal. The authorities will not listen to her. History will not listen to her. Thus, Arthur's testimony is not hearable. The truth cannot be heard; only the events that unravel in search of it, the events that are seldom illustrated or discussed are that which can be communicated.

The closure denied to Arthur Brink's mom mirrors the suspicion (or lack thereof, depending on the investigator) surrounding the death of South African poet Arthur Nortje (1942-1970), whose mostly posthumously published works include motifs such as alienation, community and political conditions in South Africa. Although Nortje's death was attributed to suicide, there is doubt in its truth. In his essay "Arthur Nortje and the Unhomely," Dirk Klopper contends, "If Nortje did indeed commit suicide, it may have been a last desperate attempt to free himself from his posturing self, and that this refusal of the social roles and rules defined by the European usurper left him unhomely, vulnerable to the unconscious drives whose allegiance is to death as much as it is to life. But such closure is denied us" (1998: 175). Through such an illustration and the linking of Arthur Brink to Nortje, Wicomb brings Nortje back to life by ensuring his story is not completely forgotten but waiting to be discovered, discussed or perhaps, if possible, recounted. As the deraciNated, both Arthur Nortje and Arthur Brink translocated and were eventually tragically lost, there cannot be an Author to their stories; only hunches about their lives, especially in their last/lost moments, can be made as the Arthurs forever linger in the distant.

As she enters the Kibble Palace and looks around the large, symbolic space, Ms. Brink imagines "Arthur who, never, never would have killed himself" (Wicomb 2008: 168). The reader is given no other clues but left with the picture of the young man who was engulfed in an unjust world where he was of no matter. The only other person who can give Dorothy information about her son is a South African Student called Tsiki, yet Dorothy cannot quite recall the scene. She imagines that the account had been whispered by the girl while she continuously smoked in a small room, as the story opens. Although

this scene, reminiscent of the questioning during an investigation or a secret account from an evasive witness, produces doubt, it gives the information that before Arthur disappeared he was brought to his room by a friend at 11:30 p.m., 30 minutes after a guard at the Botanic Gardens last saw a young man “who answered to the description of Arthur and whom [the guard] recognized as someone who frequented the Kibble Palace” (Wicomb 2008: 161). No more information is given about Tsiki, and Mr. MacPherson does not permit Dorothy to speak with her. Discounting Arthur as a student in his ignorant explanation, he rationalizes that Tsiki and the other students are taking exams and should not be upset, as it is difficult being a student in a new country with foreign ideas and language. MacPherson’s perception of the students is so far-off that his reports cannot be taken seriously. Thus, Dorothy is left searching by herself.

The description of the possible sighting of Arthur at the Botanic Gardens is also questionable in that it cannot be certain it was Arthur the guard saw. For upon seeing a figure labeled the “High Commissioner for Papua New Guinea,” Dorothy was taken aback by the resemblance of this figure to her son. Perhaps Arthur looked like the figure in the display, but as this story and others demonstrate, memory is subjective and fallible. What can be understood, however, is the representation by institutions such as the Kibble Palace not only constructed a sometimes monolithic depictions of the flora, fauna and inhabitants of very distinct former colonies to the point of Othering them while creating highly inaccurate yet believed images that would endure decades if not centuries of presentations. The failure to correctly represent the native plants of South Africa is indicative of the carelessness and lack of attention to South Africa. Therefore, what has come to be symbols of colonial power have created the likes of South African (and other)



imaginaries. Wicomb, through her texts, contests such Othering images and re-presents these signs, recovering space and making room for new narratives, as will be further discussed in the following section.

### III. Creating Spaces in the House of Fiction

You may write me down in history  
 With your bitter, twisted lies,  
 You may trod me in the very dirt  
 But still, like dust, I'll rise  
 (Angelou 1994: 163)

In the beginning pages of *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said explains that although imperialism dealt with land and commerce, issues such as rights and ownership were defined through literature (1994: xxi). These stories were illustrated through writers such as H. Rider Haggard, Joseph Conrad and in South Africa, Sarah Gertrude Millin that promoted a racial and/or imperial hierarchy that upheld European values and norms. Said explains such narratives “are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history” (1994: xxi). Thus, European literature becomes world literature, which in turn supports European mores as the norm while suppressing other cultures such as the colonized, which were considered uncivilized and therefore null or void. This section will look at the importance of creating new spaces in literature that open the doors to less-considered works from authors who are currently shelved in Other areas. To start, through Wicomb’s short story “The One that Got Away,” the deconstruction of patriarchal narratives will be explored. In this way, the door can be opened to including herstories, a term that feminist critics such as Hazel

Carby (Carby 2000: 396) employed to incorporate the stories of women in popular history often written by European men, as will be argued through the short story “There’s the Bird that Never Flew,” a continuation of the title story. Wicomb’s short story “Trompe l’Oeil,” will be examined to stress the importance of fiction and show how it, like historiographies, can reflect life. History is often authoritatively presented as complete fact, without room for questioning. By juxtaposing the two and focusing on the borderlands that are between what is considered fact and fiction, space for herstories must be created and expanded. Yet this arduous task is more complex than what is realized, as illustrated in this story within a story.

#### **i. Deconstructing Patriarchal Narratives, Making Herstories**

The empire’s desire to expand was illuminated through imagery that not only hypersexualized native women, it sexualized the land as a virginal space to be explored and inseminated with its glory. In the short story entitled “The One that Got Away,” the character of Drew illustrates such need for adventure and the desire and duty to conquer, all of which ultimately lead to defacement. As a student in history class, Drew would imagine his escape and arrival to “that alien landscape: mountain ranges with high snow-capped peaks, trees burning in autumnal colours that he had only seen in pictures, colours so distant and so subtle that they had never been named” (Wicomb 2008: 38). Drew’s Hegelian vision of Africa and landscape is based on historical accounts that painted the continent as strange, empty and anachronistic. As agents of imperialism represented the inhabitants as unshod, nearly unclothed and idle, the peoples represented another time: the archaic or prehistoric period. As Anne McClintock explains, “Africa came to be seen

as the colonial paradigm of anachronistic space, a land perpetually out of time in modernity, marooned and historically abandoned” (1995: 41). By evoking images such as snowy peaks and the Queen of Sheba (Wicomb 2008: 10, 39), Wicomb writes back to H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885), which was a driving force in the representation of sexualized, barren African lands. By constructing the image of Africa as an exotic yet empty space, Haggard, among other colonial authors violently removed the sanctity of the land and evoked desire for appropriation. McClintock argues King Solomon’s white, ostensible right to the wealth of the mines preceded the explorer’s conquest, and thus through history and “a poetics of blood inheritance” (1995: 244) the white explorers also had a right to the land and treasures it offered. Furthermore, Hannah Arendt explains that since the French Revolution, English nationalism has been influenced by the notion of inheritance and racial thinking as seen through feudalism (1976: 176). The concept of inheritance was later amplified by Edmund Burke, who extended the rights of the English nation to mean the English people and applied to all British subjects (1976: 176). Regarding “The One that Got Away,” the story explores ideologies of inheritance that recount past philosophies and imperialistic justifications, and in contemporary examples such as male domination through the characterization of Drew.

Drew is an artist with his mind set on a project to be completed in Glasgow. In order to justify his trip to Scotland from South Africa, he convinces Jane to wed by persuading her it will please her mother and remove the shame of being with an artist. Jane agrees despite her reluctance to the patriarchal institution of marriage, and he persuades her to spend their honeymoon in Glasgow. The couple imagines the city to be a

fashionable, luxurious place with fancy cafés, yet what they experience is quite different. This scenario alludes to the decision of many families to travel to and settle in distant lands with images of treasures and hopes of becoming rich although not really knowing what awaited them. Women were left to their own devices and expected to perform their domestic duties of housekeeping and child rearing, as is mirrored in a contemporary setting when Drew leaves Jane by herself on what is supposed to be their honeymoon. Jane's dilemma becomes how to behave under the label of marriage and not fulfill negative nagging wife stereotypes versus wanting to express her discontent because she is left alone and wandering. In this way, Wicomb shows how patriarchy not only has a direct effect but also a reverse psychological effect that can control women, who under patriarchal expectations must act carefully to please. Thus, through gendered expectations, whether of a colonial woman or a present-day "postcolonial" woman, the violence of patriarchy still retains power, whether directly or indirectly.

Drew keeps his project a secret from Jane. As the narrator explains, "he is forced into dissembling" (Wicomb 2008: 41), and in this case, his project involves a book that he found misplaced while researching mining<sup>105</sup> for a previous project. The book is a mystery novel entitled *The One that Got Away* by Helen McCloy. It is not its contents that have sparked Drew's interest but the object itself, as is the case under patriarchy and imperialism where the object of desire might be the female body or land, and Drew concentrates on the book's origin of Glasgow and its lending page that authoritatively states: "A book must be returned to the library from which it was borrowed" (2008: 45). As it is revealed, the textual authority comes not from the book but from the library,

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<sup>105</sup> The topic of mining as a project of Drew's research also alludes to the imperial project of exploitation and commerce. As mentioned in Chapter II, the discovery of gold and diamonds paved the way for a greater exploitation of the land and native peoples in southern Africa.

suggesting importance can sometimes be stronger from authoritative institutions rather than the literatures they produce. Drew takes the book, and as the narrator explains, “The text speaks to him: responsibility for returning the book does not remain with the one who borrowed it. Like any traveler then, the book will return, showing the scars of its journey, the markings of travel and adventure; it *should* return, flaunting its history and difference” (2008: 47, emphasis added).<sup>106</sup> Moreover, the sense of duty Drew feels reveals the power institutions can have over individuals and that can force them to carry out orders without question. Thus, he plans his marriage and honeymoon to Glasgow around the institution’s instruction of returning of this book, but before he returns the book, he violently defaces it. He changes the title to “Gold Mining in South Africa,” and plans to change the title page. The contents, which he gives no importance to other than thumbing through the book, remain. This can be compared to the violence and domination of racism, patriarchy and imperialism on women and land, whose core identities endure the oppression but are disregarded or forced into silence.

The book symbolizes an object that has not only traveled across the world to finally return home, it also represents stories that are ignored, changed, rewritten and denied throughout time and history. The book also embodies the transnational violence that contributed to the re-presentation of South Africa to meet the glorified grand narrative of the empire as taught in history class, which is alluded to through the

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<sup>106</sup> The important motif of return recurs throughout much of Wicomb’s works in various ways, all of which are not necessarily good. Emphasis is added to the word “should” to denote that that which ought to return or be returned does not necessarily mean that it will return, as witnessed in the sudden disappearance of Arthur Brink in the short story “In the Botanic Gardens” (Wicomb 2006). Return also calls forth images of Saartjie Baartman and the repatriation of her remains, the return of land, the return of homes, the return of freedom, and unfortunately, the return of overbearing nationalism as seen with the ANC. In the case of the novel in the story, the return date stamped is June 16, 1976, marking both Soweto Day and Bloomsday. This return date is meaningful as it signifies the “Day of the Revolution of the Word,” (Wicomb 2000: 35) and is also the day that David met Dulcie in *David’s Story*.

sexualized imagery set in Drew's high school history class at the beginning of the story. By vandalizing the book and renaming it, Drew disassembles the narratives that have represented sexualized, colonized lands and gives them a name: exploitation. Thus, by destroying the cover of this book, the imperialist narrative is no longer allowed to "get away" or escape. Yet Drew himself is not innocent in the role of exploitation. His vandalizing of the book and disregard for its contents in favor of his own project mirror the violence of indifference that patriarchy can have and produce, leading to the destruction of important stories and continuing the forced silence as it has usually been men who dictate what is and is not suitable to be considered history.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, this scenario illustrates that in the face of such destruction and being removed from home or one's space and relocated, and despite enduring the violence and journey throughout time, the true contents of a story remain. Thus, as the relocated object or person returns home (or not), the heart of the story exists with smaller narratives that contribute to the larger whole intact; the book only needs to be open and read.

A more obvious symbol of the grand narrative of the empire is the monument. In "There's the Bird that Never Flew," Wicomb focuses on Glasgow's Doulton Fountain. Jane comes across the monument, which employs animals and people to represent former British colonies. Ridiculed by Drew because of her lack of knowledge in art, Jane decides to learn more about the fountain. Her research reveals it was constructed as a memorial to Queen Victoria and imperial achievement for the 1888 International Exhibition that took place in Kelvingrove Park (Wicomb 2008: 70). Passing by the sheep and beaver, images to represent Australia and Canada, she notes, "without the scrolls with the names of the

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<sup>107</sup> Though not revealed to the reader, the book is mystery novel that is set in Scotland. In the novel Helen McCloy explores fascist thinking, which she argued was engendered through misogyny (Davin 2006: 374).

colonies, they are indistinguishable” (2008: 71). This alludes to the power and violence colonialism has in the removal of identity and forced conformance to an image to fit the desire and name of the empire. Through conformity, the strength of the nation is upheld.

Jane then sees the title *S<sup>TH</sup> Africa* and notices the images of the ostrich and exotic plants standing as representation of her own country. Emphasis is placed on the nomenclature used, exemplifying that through the reduction of the country’s name to an abbreviation, not only is the country’s identity diminished but the continent of Africa is also reduced to an essential whole. Thus, through the violent act of naming, South Africa as a country disappears or ceases to exist. Referring to Hegel, Slavoj Žižek explains, “There is something violent in the very symbolization of a thing, which equals its mortification. This violence operates at multiple levels. Language simplifies the designated thing, reducing it to a single feature. It dismembers the thing, destroying its organic unity, treating its parts and properties as autonomous” (2009: 52). Thus, South Africa and Africa as a whole are then replaced with the random images that have been chosen to represent it. As colonial powers have taken over the country—and for the most part, the continent—through symbols, the national and/or community identity is once again being defaced.

After examining the monument, Jane realizes the human figure used to represent South Africa is a young coloured girl, which at first she overlooks because the girl is “in all that elaborate Victorian detail and modeled in the same white stone as all the others” (Wicomb 2008: 71). Through the use of Victorian clothing, colonized women could be represented as conquered, “tamed” and “civilizable” thus providing proof of the need to

civilize and the success of the empire thus far (McClintock 1995: 31).<sup>108</sup> In this way, through forced assimilation and the “whitening” of the colored, hypersexualized body, the colouredness and resulting savagery can be faded away or, at best, hidden.

Used as a possible example of Homi Bhabha’s theory of colonial mimicry in that the girl is seemingly a “sign of double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (Bhabha 1984: 318), this image might illustrate that the girl in the fountain has been successfully Victorianized. Yet as Wicomb points out, the young girl nearly blends in, but with a closer look, the girl is “unmistakably coloured” (2008: 71). Although the girl is masqueraded in Victorian costume, the viewer is unable to determine whether or not she is compliant or mimicking the colonizer. Of course, seeing that the fountain was homage to Queen Victoria, the colonized girl’s expression is probably meant to be complacent rather than ambivalent. Wicomb, however, adds another possible narrative to the image as she describes Herbert Ellis, Doulton’s designer, and imagines him reading Scottish writer Thomas Pringle’s description of South Africa. Pringle, who is known as the Father of South African Poetry, gave sympathetic descriptions of South Africa, wrote against slavery and later became London’s Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society (Van Wyk Smith 2004: 190). Wicomb envisions Ellis, under the influence of Pringle’s narratives, filled with desire for adventure and love for the ostrich. Yet unfortunately, he must stay in Scotland after failing to convince his wife to travel to South Africa, and thus he constructs a compassionate image through his rendering of the girl and the bird. Through

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<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, Anne McClintock explains imperialism gendered different areas in various ways. Regarding the civilizing of colonial women, she points out North African and Middle Eastern women’s veils were removed while sub-Saharan women were clothed “in clean, white, British cotton” (McClintock 1995: 31). Thus, in addition to using the female figure as a representation of the empire’s conquests, like a doll she is dressed and undressed according to her owner’s desire and needs.



his art he corrects the misconception of these South African representations and “shows a visage infused with intelligence, a bird fitting for the beauty of the girl” (Wicomb 2008: 73).

Taken aback by Ellis’s unusual representation of a coloured woman, who is generally pictured with exaggerated, racialized features, Jane decides to call the girl Kaatje, after Kaatje Kekkelbek, which was a racist characterization of Khoi women created by Andrew Geddes Baines. He presented Kaatje with the common racist stereotypes of being drunk, idle, illiterate, promiscuous, and as having steatopygia (Shaw 2009: 8). Through this act of renaming, Jane introduces a counter narrative for Kaatje, the girl on the fountain and the stereotyped image of the South African female. In this way, figures such as Kaatje Kekkelbek and Saartjie Baartman are visualized not as sexually promiscuous but in their displacement by imperial powers. Applying the name Kaatje to the girl in the fountain, the narrator explains:

She is not a servant; she occupies her space with ease, not regally like Victoria, for she feels no need to claim space, no need to assume an imperious pose. Her limbs under the inappropriate, ridged attire are relaxed, feet planted firmly on the ground, as if savouring a rest from toil. Her slanted Khosian eyes gaze brightly at the world, with neither arrogance nor humility, rather, with calm curiosity as if she knows of her transportation to the metropolis and does not mind at all.

(Wicomb 2008: 77)

Also countering Bhabha's theory, Anne McClintock explains, "the mimic men are obliged to inhabit an uninhabitable zone of ambivalence that grants them neither identity nor difference; they must mimic an image that they cannot fully assume" (1995: 63). Through the creation of this account, Wicomb, through the narrator, promotes the girl in the fountain as the protagonist of her own story with neither the need to mimic and prove her worth nor claim her power. Although at first glance Jane notices the Victorian costume, which makes the girl seem to be compliant with the imperialist narrative, with a closer look the unshod girl in the fountain is self-assured with nothing to hide. Thus, Wicomb brings attention to the existence of multiple narratives, especially in the light of women who have been silenced under both imperialism and patriarchy.

The narrator goes further and asserts Kaatje and the bearded man next to her are "unmistakably a couple" (Wicomb 2008: 77). In this way she is neither mimicking nor ambivalent to the colonial discourse that has illustrated her, but in fact, as the narrator argues, she is fully aware of her position, whatever it may be, and accepts it. In this interpretation, Wicomb gives the silenced, colonized women a voice through both imagining and suggesting other possible histories, arguing there is no one grand historical narrative, which is usually engendered through patriarchy. Furthermore, by visualizing the young woman in the fountain as fully aware of her circumstances, an argument is posed against the simplification of colonial discourse to theories of mimicry and ambivalence. McClintock also problematizes Bhabha's theory arguing, "in the slippage between identity and difference the 'normalizing' authority of colonial discourse is thrown into question. The dream of post-Enlightenment civility is alienated from itself because in the colonial state it can no longer parade as a state of nature" (1995: 63). In

applying this to the scenario of the fountain, although Victorian clothing covers the native women as a way to instill a colonial normative, the introduction and enforcement of a norm depletes any significance of natural occurrence and makes it therefore a performance. Yet even before it can be argued that Kaatje is mimicking, the narrator argues that her figure is a re-presentation of colonial discourse, assuring that “she cannot be subjected to anyone’s gaze” (Wicomb 2008: 77).

“Filling the space between” (Wicomb 2008: 77) the young woman and the man is an ostrich, representing the commodities of the colonized spaces that link the two from distant lands together. At the time of the fountain’s construction in 1888, ostrich farming was already becoming a popular industry in South Africa and the feathers quickly became a major export (Roth and Mertz 1997: 124), marking its economic importance. It is difficult to know whether the ostrich—or the young woman—was the former or latter of what the Lord Provost termed “an alliance of the useful and the beautiful” (“Doulton Fountain”) at the fountain’s official inauguration. It can safely be argued, however, that as the short story’s title borrows from the legend associated with Glasgow’s Coat of Arms, “There’s the Bird that Never Flew,” Wicomb uses the ostrich as a symbol connecting South Africa and Scotland. Furthermore, both the figure of the flightless bird and the coloured female body embody the transnational violence of imperialism and the colonization of South Africa, or what Doulton explained as “the greatness and glory of our empire” (“Doulton Fountain”).

Wicomb illustrates such oppressive symbols of grandeur can be reclaimed, reconstructed, deconstructed, and re-presented to take on new meanings as a form of cultural memory while not being a celebration or patriarchy and imperialism. Moreover,

as Jane discusses the fountain with Margaret, the hotel's cleaner, who has not seen "the tourist walkabout," (Wicomb 2008: 74) a present-day indifference and diminished importance to symbols that were once culturally great is demonstrated. Margaret "recalls the monument being a dump, all in a mess, the fountain dead, statues without noses, the Queen's head lopped off as the winos threw their bottles of Buckfast at the figures, and the dogs shat in the dry moat" (2008: 74). As Margaret claims to not have seen the fountain but is able to remember and describe it, Wicomb hints that memories are altered and unreliable constructions that characterize the past. Moreover, this scenario makes a case against dwelling in the past, which can perpetuate and prolong the life of past violence. Instead, an importance is placed on understanding the histories that have engendered the present and building a future that is not based on establishing or bolstering of nations but one that is formulated on the recognition of transnational similarities and the embracement of an accepting universalism.

Jane later loses her wedding ring and asks Margaret about it. Margaret reassures Jane that St. Mungo, Glasgow's patron saint, will watch out for her and recounts the corresponding rhyme, which also describes Glasgow's Coat of Arms. Paralleling South Africa and Scotland, Drew mockingly recalls a traditional Afrikaans song.<sup>109</sup> He laughs, arguing: "See how the Glasgow story seems to regret the difference between the real and the image, whereas our colonial version is upbeat, ready to celebrate representation, or one could say that the real..." (2008: 79) before Jane stops him. Through this connection,

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<sup>109</sup> As told by Margaret, Jane recites: "There's the tree that never grew/There's the bird that never flew/There's the fish that never swam/There's the bell that never rang." Drew recounts: "*Daar's 'n hoender wat 'n eier nie kan lê nie/ Daar's 'n hoender wat 'n eier nie kan lê nie/ Daar's 'n hoender wat 'n eier nie kan lê nie/En dis di haan wat op die kerk se toring staan.../Daar's 'n perd wat hmmm hmmm nie kan hmmm nie/En dis die perd wat op die whisky-bottel staan*" (Wicomb 2008: 78-79). The Afrikaans translates to "There's a chicken and an egg that cannot lay/And that's the cock at the church tower.../There's the horse that hmm hmm cannot hmm/And that's the horse that's on the whisky bottle."

the two cultures are not only linked but the patriarchal connection is stressed, as is emphasized through Drew who finds these re-presentations legitimate, as opposed to accepting the object's original state. Just as colonialism and imperialism have constructed representations of the women and land from South Africa, he has also contributed to the destruction of an object of desire and ignored its own history. Although I previously argue that Drew lays bare the imperialistic terror that has ravaged the African lands, he himself also defaces an object that has fascinated him, characterizing the contradictory actions of black patriarchy in the battle for freedom. Both forms of oppression—imperialism and patriarchy—force the female into passiveness and opening herself to the male fantasy of conquest and control. Through his ability to manipulate Jane, his disregard for property and his facility in destruction, Drew represents the patriarchal role in history. As the narrator explains, this is his story (2008: 41), and thus Drew, a symbol of patriarchy, is the one that got away in that patriarchal oppression has been largely overlooked in the fight for freedom and equality.

## **ii. Stranger Truth than Fiction**

Regardless of intention, those who are able to enjoy the comforts of patriarchy often overlook those on the other end, as is the case with many binaries. In some instances, as in “Trompe l’Oeil,” it is not until fiction is read that one can look at his or her own life, yet whether he or she chooses to accept the fiction as a mirror of the truth is another story. Furthermore, some of the historical accounts that students are taught, not only in South Africa but also perhaps throughout the world, are a sort of *trompe l’oeil* of the events that occurred. The history book is then a painting used to both portray and view

such reports but it must be understood that these are mere interpretations. Thus, a focus of “Trompe l’Oeil,” is the importance of fiction in the reading of history while a greater emphasis is placed on the unfortunate lack of feminine voices, which not only find difficulty in expression but also are furthermore challenging to mobilize.

The story centers on Gavin, a historian who deprecates fiction and scholarship involving it, and his wife Bev, who has endeavors to write but is mostly ignored by her husband. Upon describing Gavin, the narrator suggests, “the universities in [South Africa] are simply no longer the places of learning that they once were” (Wicomb 2008: 120). Although this statement vaguely—as it is unclear whether it is an explanation or the narrator’s interjection—reflects Gavin’s sentiment the characterization indicates nostalgia for life before the end of apartheid.<sup>110</sup> This statement also alludes to the deception of what is or what was taught (and learned), particularly in relation to history and its subjectiveness. Wicomb also refers to the deceptive, calculating history lessons in “The One that Got Away” when she mentions “Fowler & Smit,” authors of high school history textbooks during apartheid. Fowler and Smit, among others, wrote and re-wrote textbooks to uphold the United Party’s nationalist agenda and apartheid ideologies, creating an authoritative source for white supremacy.<sup>111</sup> They, the Authors of history who have operated under the authoritative and omnipotent commands of nationalism, are the ones that got away by creating history for their own purposes and propaganda, which, unfortunately, had become accepted as historical fact.

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<sup>110</sup> Gavin’s sentiments reflect the feeling of “white talk,” which, in the South African post-apartheid setting, is Afrikaner ethnic discourse on whiteness. Melissa Steyn argues white talk expresses ethnic anxieties and seeks to re-inscribe Afrikaner narratives as a way to reinstate belonging after their post-apartheid dislocation (2004: 143, 147-150).

<sup>111</sup> For an in-depth and insightful study on history textbooks and white supremacy, see Peter Da Cruz (2005).

Along this line, Gavin is possibly a promoter of such history scholarship, although not under apartheid, and considers himself an authority not only because of his position as Chair in History but also simply because he is a scholar of history. He is awarded a fellowship in Liguria, Italy, where he meets Roddy, a Scottish writer who is also a man he has come to despise. Regardless of the fact that both men were awarded the fellowship, Gavin has no respect for Roddy's work and questions: "Are writers not supposed to use their imaginations, invent, for God's sake? What is the point of simply transferring from the everyday, from what happens to be within view, or hearing, to the page?" (Wicomb 2008: 121). Gavin's authoritative assumption is that all that is needed to know has been seen, heard and recorded to historical texts, and his research contributes to this process, giving himself and his work importance. Yet he also does not realize historians can also be described as "inventing."

Bev, on the other hand, admires Roddy and welcomes the attention he gives her. Furthermore, he listens to her opinions and encourages her to write, consideration that Bev does not receive from her own husband. She decides to try writing but words cannot come out, indicative to the lack of attention given to not only female writers but to the female voice. This is also indicated through Gavin's positioning of Bev as the "Angel in the House," which also becomes her own self-positioning. Yet Bev cannot write despite trying to force herself, but, as the narrator explains, "that precisely was the problem—it was a matter of forcing out the words so lacking in flow that such a business could not be called writing" (2008: 123). These words do not form not because she has writer's block but because they are not permitted to flow. Writing one's story cannot be forced. Bev's business is in the home, where she makes dinner, cleans and does as Gavin wishes. When

he invites her to Italy, he cannot imagine Bev relaxing alone at home. He argues, “Oh, you should come, he said, it could be something of a holiday for you — no cooking or cleaning — and besides, what on earth will you do with yourself, kicking your heels here for two months on your own?” (2008: 123). It is not until she leaves her home on “holiday” and meets Roddy that she realizes that she wants to write. Writing escapes Bev because her words are not considered important. Finally after getting inspiration from Roddy, she becomes enthusiastic. Yet no matter how much she tries, she has only “a mess of half-finished sentences, vigorous scrubbing out, and so little left of her efforts. She would have to tear out the pages, destroy them; she kept her labour with words on the beach a secret” (2008: 127).

Becoming her role of “Angel in the House,” Bev looks to men for a confirmation and cannot or does not know how to stand on her own. She is paralyzed, unable to write her story despite Roddy’s encouragement. It is her domestication that prevents her from self-expression whether through writing, poetry or simple opinions and keeps her in silence. Discussing Sally and Dulcie in *David’s Story*, Samuelson writes, “both torture and domestication enact forms of violence on women’s sense of self,” (2007b: 137), and it is in this same strain that Bev is kept under control and unequipped to engage in female discourse. Although she imagines writers like Virginia Woolf and Nadine Gordimer, she cannot locate her self or her words as of equal importance. Wicomb, therefore, through the characterization of such female characters, comments on the difficulty of not only hearing marginal female voices, whether they are former guerillas in the movement, a woman who has chosen to “play white,” or the wife of an Afrikaner historian, but also in the expressability of such stories. The question therefore arises: Can Bev’s story be



written? Must she write it? The ignoring of Bev by Gavin mirrors the ignorance of many women's stories in history, which has deemed them unimportant or unworthy of history books. Thus, perhaps, it must be not only a project that happens within South Africa or a nation or a country's borders or a community, but an interest coming from a larger scale, a larger community that suggests not only that it is ready to listen but also that encourages the stories to be told.

Gavin's ignoring of Bev is representative of the disregard of women's stories from a micro level in a traditional, patriarchal home to a macro-historical level as demonstrated through textbooks and literature. Gavin sees only what he wishes to see, and thus he convinces himself of his illusory reality. He represents the old European male historian with an authoritative, absolute, Eurocentric stance on the world. His white privilege contributes to this confidence and strong self-justification, as Gavin is sheltered from the harsh realities of life that has been shaped by colonial thinking and apartheid values. His comfort is reflected in his home, where his wife makes him his favorite dinner of kingklip<sup>112</sup> and afterward he listens to Beethoven while in the sitting room, a space that gives the perception of being outside due to the replacement of a wall with sliding glass doors. Here, Gavin can enjoy the sounds and smells of nature while being protected from its elements. Through such a home and lifestyle, he has created an environment that houses and justifies his world and thinking through a false sense of security.

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<sup>112</sup> Gavin's food choice further exemplifies his social and class status while subtly highlighting the colonial aspect of his persona. Kingklip is a fish that was once exploited in the 1980s, and thus its supply is currently regulated. Three of the four types of kingklip are expensive and considered gourmet, and the name itself means "king of the rocks" in Afrikaans. It is also interesting to note that the fish was first recorded as *Xiphiurus capensis* (sword tail) by Scottish zoologist Andrew Smith in 1847, but the Afrikaner name is that which is commonly used ("*Genypterus capensis*," 2007). Thus, the kingklip can also represent the politics of transnational colonial history that are involved in food.

Bev yearns for her own personal recognition but is too discouraged and left voiceless. She has no room of her own and thus must look for places such as the beach to form her words that end in incomplete sentences. As the narrator explains, Bev's accomplishment is in that such a considerably successful man like Gavin chose her, and it is this traditional idea that has been planted and passed down for generations:

[Bev] lists the things that others must have foreseen: for bearing the name that appears on the cover of the well-reviewed books, for foreign travel that comes with a prestigious Chair in History, for the issue of marriage, their lovely boys, both away at university—all these things must have been there as embryos, little bloody specks, contained in the albumen of brightness. She tosses the word about and summons its synonyms: vivid, luminous, brilliant, blazing. Blazing, as in blazer.

(Wicomb 2008: 123)

Bev's duty, as a good Afrikaner woman, is to marry well and have good children. Yet as turns out, this is not a perfect life and she and Gavin do not have a perfect marriage, as uncovered through the infiltration of their intimate space: the bathroom.

“Trompe l’Oeil” is a mimesis. It includes a story, authored by Roddy, within the story, authored by Wicomb. Roddy's story, which Gavin finds odious and struggles to finish it but cannot stop reading, breaks the image of the perfect marriage as portrayed by Gavin. He believes Roddy's story, “like mosquito bites, ...will eventually disappear without trace” (2008: 130). By comparing it to “swollen sacs of poison that drag his face

into skew-whiff distortions,” he cannot accept that the story was short-listed based on merit but attributes the achievement to “positive discrimination” and will vanish perhaps based on the idea that Roddy has fewer advantages than he, assuming that Roddy, whose mother was a guerrilla that was possibly tortured during the Movement, is biracial or would be considered coloured, had he been South African. Unlike the oppression and discrimination endorsed through history books that possibly he himself has authored such as the award-winning monograph on the Eastern Cape, Gavin’s discomfort is temporary. Moreover, he is unable to relate to how his own work — or that of other Historians — might negatively affect those in which he writes about. Wicomb, as a resurrected, postcolonial author<sup>113</sup> not only questions accountability but furthermore poses the questions of writing another’s story (as she also does in *David’s Story* and *Playing in the Light*) and the politics and barriers—self and outer—involved in women’s writing (Wicomb 2005: 150). Through such continued prejudices that linger from the past and an inability to see realities, it is clear why progression is such a slow, stubborn process and why truth, particularly in the case of History created by patriarchal figures, can be stranger than fiction.

Gavin needs both Bev and Roddy in order to feel powerful. He must belittle them to create himself as the authority. His masculinity is then ratified by his wife’s submission and his status as department chair, a position above Roddy who is a mere fiction writer. Moreover, Gavin’s control of Bev upholds their purity in whiteness, and it is this whiteness that sets him not only apart but farther from Roddy, as exemplified in the displacement of his anger when he exclaims, “You know why he hates us? Prejudice.

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<sup>113</sup> In “Setting, Intertextuality and the Resurrection of the Postcolonial Author,” Wicomb refutes Roland Barthe’s death to the author, contending the author-narrator-reader relationship is complex, rich and very real, particularly in postcolonial settings.

We are white South Africans of a certain age, the ready-made pariah.” (2008: 132). Gavin’s reinforcement of his masculinity through his whiteness is comparable to the character of Bellew in his racist ideologies and treatment of his wife Clare, who he calls “Nig,” in Nella Larsen’s *Passing*. Butler contends, “[Bellew’s] watching, the power of exposure that he wields, is a historically entrenched social power of the white male gaze, but one whose masculinity is enacted and guaranteed through heterosexuality as a ritual of racial purification. His masculinity cannot be secured except through a consecration of his whiteness” (Butler 1993: 184).

At the end, what Roddy has written is no longer italicized as it is throughout the short story, possibly marking that it is no longer a separate story but has fused together with the narrator’s. In this way, it blurs the lines of distinction in fiction. Yet, as this final part of the text is physically printed in the margins between the narrator’s and Roddy’s stories and sectioned off, it could also perhaps be Bev’s story, or a blending of the three. Nonetheless, the text shows a mingling of the narrator-author-character and a movement toward an inclusion of marginal voices that are less, if at all, expressed. In an interview asking international writers who they write for, Wicomb explained she writes for nobody, not even herself. Rather, she argued, “The challenge is to capture marginal voices, thus not only a matter of *my* voice but, rather, one of polyphony, the many different, even contradictory, voices that engage with each other” (“Writer Interview” 2013).

The ending of “Trompe l’Oeil” does indeed capture Bev’s voice although she utters nothing in the last scene. To the score of Beethoven’s “Moonlight Sonata,” with “her hands, still youthful, [lying] serenely in her lap,” (Wicomb 2008: 133), an image contrary to her usual characterization of being non-stop busy as a way to “simply [shift]

the dark hole of time further on into the days, the weeks, the months ahead” (2008: 124), she is pictured resting in the sitting room. With the crescendo of the music, Bev picks up a paperweight and hurls it into the glass wall, shattering it to pieces and creating her own mosaic. Her actions represent the breaking of her role as “Angel in the House” and a defiance and diminution of Gavin’s comfort zone, as represented in the sitting room, of educated, white, masculine privilege. The scene closes with a star-spangled sky and a plane landing, nodding to a vision of freedom, mobility, and incoming opportunities.

Only at the end of the story is it learned that Bev was an athlete. Just as Dulcie, she has incredible aim. The story is also linked to David’s story in that in the center of the paperweight is a green eye, which for him is a “festering wound” (Wicomb 2000: 12). By shattering this object against the *trompe l’oeil* of the pretty picture and perfect landscape viewed from comfort, Bev breaks this objectification and that which has been holding her down, resulting in the making of her own art. Her shattering of this vision frees herself in her own home, a space that she has made and where she can truly show resistance. In this way, Bev’s voice is heard and her artwork is captured and portrayed. Similar in that Clare finds her own freedom through the window by breaking the whiteness in Larsen’s *Passing*, Bev’s shattering of the green-eyed paperweight along with Gavin’s picture-perfect window to the world also implicates liberty, although in her case she does not take her life but looks to the possibility of mobility, marked by the plane. She frees herself from her own performance of whiteness.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Although it is not outright said that Bev is “playing white,” through a comparative reading to *Passing*, it might be argued that Bev has a coloured background. For instance, knowing Roddy’s mother is from South Africa, she wants to ask him about “*the* revolutionary mother, but it would have been too difficult ... trapped by all that complicated history” (Wicomb 2008: 122). Here, use of the article “the” as opposed to the possessive “his” might indicate a female revolutionary held dear to and as representative of the struggle, of which Bev was sympathetic with. Perhaps it is this that “niggles” Gavin, that unimaginable, unutterable thing that he “can’t bring himself to draw out into the light” (2008: 130). Regardless if Bev is a “play

## V. Conclusion

In *Playing in the Light*, while Marion and Brenda are on a journey to learning a truth, they encounter an elderly man Outa Blinkoog, who, with “his curved, girlish lips,” (Wicomb 2006: 88) gives them an account of his story that is fragmented and difficult to comprehend. He is a figure who, ever since he was little, was given orders, as his name, “outa” meaning “servant,” reveals. Now he is a collector of “blinkoog,” shiny objects, which he shapes and uses to create other “Beautiful Things.” He also writes stories on white cloth that is then colorfully embroidered by women. His own story is difficult to utter; it is fragmented but never ending. He represents and records the various stories lived and created, but it is the women that must then make them colorful and give them life. He travels around the veld but must keep off the small and main roads for he is considered a danger, noting the fear and oppression that still remain. Moreover, his actions pose a threat to authorities since Outa Blinkoog is a collector and transmitter of narratives and information destabilizes power. Through the deconstruction of absolute narratives and the re-presentation of stories, light is shed onto darkness, leading to empowerment. Yet, this process is not easy for he and his stories must be sought out, found and shared. Despite restrictions, Outa Blinkoog is free and always on the move, representing the constant flow of stories. He and his actions are what push the limits of the borderlands; they are unrestricted, including and meant to be shared, which is why he gives them a lantern, “that neither the one nor the other will own” (2006: 92).

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white” or not, her exhausting performance of whiteness is undeniable and that which contributes to her imprisonment.

The vastness of the borderlands in Wicomb's fiction is engendered through the countless connections made in histories and literatures around the world. It is these borderlands that reveal important correlations that unify instead of divide, and it is imperative that more consideration and celebration be given to such a space that must be recovered from the outskirts. It is the crossing into the borderlands to the lighthouse of truths that is considered over and over again, and this long, arduous voyage must be undertaken to get closer to truths, which may or may not be possible in light of the sundering violence of the past and present, the countless absences that still must be sought out and silences that are left unheard. In a postcolonial space such as South Africa, where histories are openly constructed and manipulated, those that are less heard or not heard must be uncovered such as stories of women. Furthermore, these stories, however tragic or heinous they may be, must not be used to judge but to get closer to an understanding so that one step closer to the truth may be taken. In this way, many histories subjectively constructed through a Eurocentric, male-dominated view be deconstructed and space for lesser-told stories by lesser-known authors not only be created but put on center stage and given a more serious role in the understanding of world literatures and world histories.

When Marion leaves for Europe, she entrusts the lamp to Brenda to look after, as opposed to leaving it in an empty house (Wicomb 2006: 185), marking the importance of passing around stories and retelling them. The two wish to show the lamp to Brenda's mother, but there are no candles to reveal the light it transmits (2006: 183). They cannot send Brenda's brother, who is a representative of a male, patriarchal voice; thus the women must get some candles themselves. Here, Wicomb emphasizes the importance of

a collective feminine action in the transmission of stories since they have been constructed and disseminated through patriarchy and nationalism for centuries. Through such sharing and collaboration violence of the past can be lifted and freedom can be realized.

Paul Gilroy argues, “to comprehend the bleak histories of colonial and imperial power that besmirch the clean edifice of innocent modernity and query the heroic story of universal reason’s triumphal march, we must shift away from the historiographical scale defined by the closed borders of the nation-state” (2004: 114). It is through fiction that such difficult-to-digest scenarios often abandoned in the borderlands be not only taken in but also swallowed and digested so that the next spoonful of (sometimes bitter) histories that have been ignored may be scooped up. Perhaps in this way, not only writers such as Zoë Wicomb but also authors like Sol Plaatje, the first black African to have a novel published in English, Bessie Head, Es'kia Mphahlele and Sindiwe Magona might be included in the curriculum of world literature so that the “world” may equally include writers outside the canons of former (and neo-) empires. Gilroy continues by arguing stories of those who suffered should not be limited to victims. He contends, “If they were, the memory of the trauma would disappear as the living memory of it died away...because it is a matter of justice, it is not just an issue for the wronged ‘minorities’ whose own lost or fading identities may be restored or rescued by the practice of commemoration” (2004: 114-115).

With the exception of the complex, multifaceted *David's Story*, Wicomb’s stories are seemingly a straightforward read, yet upon further examination, under the surface of



her collections, histories are deconstructed and characters are tied in subtle ways that help decipher the intricate silences that History is keen to keep hidden. Only by unlocking the chest, freeing the silences into discourse and including feminine voices, can a better understanding of the past be reached. Wicomb writes back to contest marginalizing philosophies and gendered oppression as a way to put the colonized bodies to rest, highlights the continued oppression that currently exists and cautions against reinscribing such subjugating ideologies that work under the guise of building a new nation. Moreover, she puts women to the fore, giving them a voice and asserting their importance in history and the struggle for freedom. Through her writing, she demonstrates although the transnational and sexual violence of the past should not be forgotten, it is important to eradicate binaries and look beyond the oppression to open the doors to a future that is truly equal and universally embracing.

## CHAPTER VI: CONCLUDING REMARKS

“The consequence of the single story is this: it robs people of their dignity ... Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people but stories can also repair that broken dignity.”

— Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: “The Danger of a Single Story”

This dissertation opened with an explanation of the purpose of my investigation (I.II), which began as a project of continuing the protest against oppressive narratives that continue to construct and represent ideologies of the marginalized. Particularly, a focus is placed on representations of coloured identities (I.III) as seen through selected fiction of South African author Zoë Wicomb. Coloured identities were subjected to marginalization through centuries of imperialism and colonialism that eventually led to segregation and later apartheid. Such marginalization was aided through nationalist and patriarchal ideologies that sought to maintain groups separate and thus under control of white/European powers.

Before approaching the theoretical framework (III) and textual analysis (IV and V), I begin with selected historical information (II) to give examples of how coloured identities were constructed and represented. Here, I begin with the landing of Jan Van Riebeeck (II.II) and the constructions of racist ideologies that sought to uphold imperialism. Furthermore, through the creation of communities such as Afrikaner and coloured (II.III.i., II.III.ii), I show how race and ethnicity are constructed and used to not only subjugate peoples but also to overpower and control. Such divisions later paved the way for apartheid (II.IV), which began in 1948 and lasted until the first official democratic elections in 1994.

Among Wicomb's fictional works I analyze (I.VI) are her two collection of short stories *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* (1987) and *The One that Got Away* (2008) and her novels *David's Story* (2000) and *Playing in the Light* (2006). I attempt to approach coloured identities in Wicomb's works through a reading of Gloria Anzaldúa's concepts of borderlands that emphasizes an overlapping, all-encompassing reading (I.V, III.III) as opposed to theories that would re-inscribe apartheid notions of "in-betweenness" as being neither black nor white. Thus, instead of marking coloured identities as intermediary, I argue Wicomb's fiction employs various facets of colouredness that demonstrate this socially and later lawfully constructed category is not monolithic and simple but dynamic, complex and diverse. Furthermore, rather than accepting the construction of identity through the concept of origins tainted by blood politics, an emphasis is placed on personal experience that ultimately shapes identity. This is not to say that there are no commonalities in colouredness; on the contrary, there are indeed shared experiences. My investigation and reading of Wicomb's fiction argue against the use of Othering and other exclusionary tactics as a way to confirm identity and claim belongingness, as these methods only reinforce the same marginalization that one is fighting against.

My research also employs the notion of deraciNation (III.II), which is the uprooting and subjugation of peoples through oppression inflicted in the name of the Nation. Although I do agree that nationalism with a goal of freeing one's community from oppression is important and can be effective, as we have read in Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* and most recently seen with the Arab Spring, it is crucial to employ it strategically. In discussing nationalism in an interview, Wicomb asks,

Once the immediate goal is achieved, what do you then do with the unwieldy monster? Its toxic energy is a problem because it's not possible for people to just click into rejection mode once nationalism becomes redundant. Then it spirals into the ill-health of exclusion, intolerance of others, xenophobia, meanings that have always been contained within it, but have been happily overshadowed by the common purpose of liberation. (Wicomb in Meyer and Olver 2002: 192)

Thus, this unwieldy nationalism can spur communities to divide and compete, as illustrated in Andrew le Fleur and his belief in pure Griquaness or in Dawid Dirkse's warnings to his son against lowering himself through interacting with "non-respectable" coloureds like Griquas or blacks. Thus, while deraciNation can be exercised through the institution of slavery that brought, for example, Malays to the Cape, it can also occur within a community such as the marginalization of those with darker phenotypes as a way to hold power or the use of a woman's body through patriarchy. DeraciNation also includes an exercise of power and violence that results in an individual or group experiencing dispossession, which, for example, might include dispossession of one's body, family or community.

The first part of my textual analysis (IV) focuses on challenging borders and contesting spaces. Borders not only keep intruders out but through their creation and strict enforcement, they can also work to confine and separate those who are inside from the rest of the world. The spaces in question begin with the notion of home and move to the larger arenas of neighborhood and later nation, and the concept of belonging is

relevant throughout these spaces. The notion of home (IV.II) can be a building or a physical area such as a land or a country, and it is sometimes left for safety, opportunity or way to find belonging. Home can be sterile and prisonlike, as in the Campbell household in *Playing in the Light*, or it can be the land where one feels alienated, as in Frieda in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*. If one does not belong, then one can be made to be the Other. This Othering is particularly dangerous when used as a tool of nationalism. Such tools can deracinate one from his or her neighborhood (IV.III), such as what happens to Jeff in "Neighbours," and/or his or her community or nation (IV.IV), regardless of prior membership.

The second part of my textual analysis (V) moves to the question of truth, starting with truth in a time of violence through an examination of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report and *David's Story* (V.II). Wicomb's style and literary devices work to convey the violence that is difficult to or impossible to express, particularly with resulting trauma. Such violence was racialized and gendered, and as it was committed by men and women, black and white, it saw no boundaries (V.II.i). Moreover, Wicomb employs an unreliable narrator that deviates from David's instructions and storytelling to question the truth, which is often manipulated according to the storyteller's agenda (V.II.ii). The importance in telling stories is not only to find a truth but also to reveal important details that would otherwise remain hidden and be forgotten. Under regimes such as apartheid, narratives are important, as I argue (V.III) that the complete truth is not possible but instead little truths can be reached to understand the extent of oppression and to work toward aid in healing. Furthermore, narratives help in the search for truth, which is sometimes covered or considered unimportant, as in the case of violence against those

who are Othered or considered outside of a nation, as exemplified through the character of Arthur in the short story “In the Botanic Gardens.” Last, I argue that an important facet of Wicomb’s fiction is the inclusion of herstories, which not only include lesser-known stories but also work to contest patriarchy and include a well-rounded narrative (V.IV). Through the deconstruction of patriarchal histories, herstories challenge gendered symbols and subjugating representations while making room for new voices (V.IV.i). Without such space, voices such as Bev’s in “Trompe l’Oeil” remain unheard. Thus, the creation of fiction and other forms of storytelling are crucial in understanding not only histories and herstories but also in learning about cultures and a world (V.IV.ii) full of injustices.

In the years it has taken to write this dissertation, countless tearful streams have flown in reading the testimonies, hearing the voices and in imagining the horrors that have taken place in spaces not as far away and to people who are not as different as they have been portrayed by history. Throughout the research and writing processes I have felt shame, anger and deceived from the meager information that was given to us in school and that was a result of selective editing in media outlets. The lack of information is also a result of sensationalizing media that continues stereotypes for the sake of ratings. Fortunately, authors such as Zoë Wicomb are excellent at telling stories that re-construct desecrated, emptied lands; re-present the marginalized; re-member the female bodies and stories; and place demands on readers to research, all of which have the implication of change.

As borders fluctuate, walls fall, free elections are held, regimes are overthrown and wars stop and start, who transmits the narratives individuals throughout the world

need to find their place, to feel their belonging, and to learn that freedom does not entail removing someone else's rights to the same desired happiness? In his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela writes "A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity" (1995: 624). Those who work to continue such patriarchal, nationalistic and racist narratives perpetuate hatred and fear; they fight against freedom.

Through literature, another route in the exploration of history and culture can be taken. It is important to include a well rounded, or perhaps different account of histories that often leave out important details. This can only be done through the passing of stories, multiple stories, which include as many voices as possible. For although freedom may be won or gained, the struggle for it may be forgotten and its duration can sometimes be presumed as constant and ubiquitous. Thus, through fiction that not only tells a story but that also investigates and makes demands on the reader, such as that of Zoë Wicomb, can the unknowable be at least suggested, that loose ends be mended and light be shined on that which was once dark, terrible and/or (too) difficult to live. Through this path evils can be recognized and groups that were marginalized live freely and openly in harmony with those who once caused harm.

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"Light, he says, 'that is what we take too much for granted' coloured glass helps us to remember the miracle of light" —Outa Blinkoog (Wicomb 2006: 89).

## INDICES

### INDEX I: TABLE

#### Deaths Related To Political Violence and to Necklace/Burnings

Year	Total Political Violence Deaths	Necklace/Burning
1984	175 (164)	3 (3)
1985	922 (636)	67 (28)
1986	1,352 (834)	306 (84)
1987	706 (361)	19 (35)
1988	1,149 (401)	10 (20)
1989	1,403 (474)	(21)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,707 (2,870)</b>	<b>+/- 700 (191)</b>

This table is taken from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report using sources from the Indicator Project of South Africa (Ipsa), South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) and numbers from the Minister of Law and Order and SAP files. (TRC REPORT 2: 389)



## **INDEX II: Notable Laws**

### **1809 Proclamation**

Also known as the “Hottentot’s Code” targeting Khoi peoples, it required servants to have a place to live and a pass to move around. If no pass was produced, the person was considered vagrant. The law was created to prevent the Khoi from wandering (Dooling 2009: 163-164).

### **1828 Ordinance No. 50**

Sought to regulate relations between masters and servants by making ‘Hottentots and other free people of colour’ equal before the law with Whites (Thompson 1990: 60). It supported workers’ rights for the Khoi such as taking away charges for vagrancy for workers who were no longer under contract (Dooling 2009: 93). It limited oral contracts to a month and written contracts to a year, and children had to have parental consent for apprenticeships (93-94). It also excluded coloureds from being whipped as punishment for violating labor laws (O’Malley, “Pre-Transition”).

### **1887 Parliamentary Registration Act**

Disenfranchised voters who owned property under communal lease, hurting black voters (Adhikari 2006: 470, Strobel 2008: 149).

**1892 Franchise and Ballot Act**

Restricted voting rights in the Cape Colony (Adhikari 2006: 470). It increased property ownership qualifications and instilled measures such as a literacy test to further discriminate against black voters (Strobel 2008: 149-150).

**1894 Glen Gray Act**

Established segregation in the Eastern Cape through land tenure (Marx 1998: 37).

**1907 Asiatic Law Amendment Act**

Also known as the “Black Act,” it required Asians—Chinese and Indians—eight years old and above to register with the government and to surrender their registration documents to local officials (Herman 1999: 79). Moreover, they and their homes could be searched at any time and for any reason. Mohandas Gandhi called it a “crime against humanity” and was jailed twice for failing to register (1999: 79-80). After two months in jail for a second term, Gandhi made an agreement with Jan Smuts, who promised to repeal the law in exchange for voluntary registration, but was not kept, Gandhi called for further civil disobedience through passive resistance (1999: 79-80)

**1911 Mines and Works Act**

Allowed the regulation of work through the requirements of special certificates that demonstrated competency. In areas such as the Transvaal and Free State, these certificates were given to whites only, protecting certain labor fields such as mining (Wilson 2011: 8).

**1913 Native Land Act**

Regulated land ownership, restricting black land ownership to reserves that amounted to approximately seven percent of the union's total land area (Beck 2000: 113). This law compelled Sol Plaatje to travel around the country, resulting in his survey of the effects of the law in his writing, *Native Life in South Africa* (1916).

**1923 Natives Act**

Also known as the Urban Areas Act, it controlled who could enter cities, resulting in a stricter control over movement of natives into urban areas. The law was amended in 1936, 1945 and 1952, which eventually led to state control over all native labor between the town and country (Wilson 2011: 3, Kok 2006: 86) and led to advantages of whites in the mining industry (Wilson 2011: 3).

**1926 Mines and Works Amendment Act**

Also known as the Colour Bar Act, it allowed discrimination based on color in occupations that required special skills and responsibilities (Stuhardt and Le Grange 1940: 207).

**1927 Immorality Act**

Prohibited sexual intercourse between whites and natives. It was amended in 1950 and 1957 to outlaw "immoral or indecent acts" to include sexual activity not limited to sexual

intercourse and further regulate interaction between Europeans and non-Europeans (Wallenstein 2002: 252-256; Sachs 1973: 175-176).

### **1934 Slums Act**

Created a minimum housing standard and enabled local government to evict people and declare areas slums (Gibson 2009: 13).

### **1936 Representation of Natives Act**

Removed natives from the common franchise roll and gave them indirect representation (Morris 2004: 153; du Bois 2004: 37).

### **1936 Native Trust and Land Act**

This law separated white and black rural areas, purchased reserve land through the South African Native Trust (SANT) and created a system for controlling land tenants that enabled evictions (“Control 1910-1948”). It limited native landownership rights to reserves of 13.5 percent with most of the land in the east (Beck 2000: 113).

### **1948 Asiatic Law Amendment Act**

Repealed the 1946 Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act that granted Transvaal and Natal Indians the right to elect whites as representation. Coloureds, however, still kept the right to have their own coloured representatives.

**1949 Mixed Marriages Act**

Outlawed marriages between Whites and non-Whites and nullified any mixed marriages prior to the law. The law was justified based on the notion that non-whites would degrade the white race (Loveland 1999: 244).

**1950 Population Registration Act**

Separated the population into three categories: White, Native and Coloured.

**1950 Group Areas Act**

Divided the land into areas designed for each color classification. It restricted land ownership and occupation and led to forced removals.

**1950 Suppression of Communism Act**

Enabled the minister to ban people or organizations deemed communist (Beck 129). As this was passed during the second Red Scare, it helped the apartheid government create alliances with countries that sought to eradicate communism.

**1951 Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act**

Allowed the Minister of Native Affairs to remove natives from public or private land to resettlement areas. (Beningfield 2006: 310)

**1952 Natives Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents Act**

This law created the infamous pass laws that required all Natives to carry passbooks and limited their movement. It was designed to control migrant labor through limitation and supply to specific areas (Thompson 1990: 190; Kok 2006: 86).

**1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act**

Passed to legalize the already present “Whites Only” zones after a court ruled it was unconstitutional if the areas were not equal (Thompson 1990: 190).

**1953 Bantu Education Act**

Written by Hendrik Verwoerd at the time he was Minister of Native Affairs, this law was passed to create a separate educational system for the “nature and requirements of the black people” (Beningfield 2006: 311). It focused on teaching labor skills as preparation for a future in servitude (2006: 311).

**1956 Native Administration Amendment Act**

Allowed people to be banished without warning. Reasons for banishment were not completely required to be given (Badat 2013: 29-31).

**1956 Natives (Prohibition of Interdicts) Act**

Prohibited the appeal of those who were uprooted under the Native Administration Amendment Act. Those who wanted to appeal were forced to do so from the area of banishment (Badat 2013: 30-31)

**1956 Separation of Registration of Voters**

Removed Coloureds from the common roll in the Cape. For 100 years prior to this, people considered coloured were able to vote, yet this law allowed them to vote for only a White representative for the House of Assembly and the Cape Provincial Council (Beck 2000: 143). Coloureds never had the right to vote in the Transvaal or Orange Free State, and in Natal, those who had franchise were able to keep it, but no others were permitted on the roll (Dickie-Clark 1998: 62).

**1959 Proclamation 46**

Established seven Coloured subcategories: Cape Coloured, Malay, Griqua, Chinese, Indian, Other Asiatic, and Other Coloured (Erasmus and Park 2008: 100). The creation of smaller groups within the category of Coloured led to a further Othering that operated within the group, creating further marginalization and apartheid control.

**1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act**

Separated those classified as Natives into one of eight ethnic groups (later 10) that were to work to develop their own homeland (Terrill 2013: 279)

**1959 Extension of University Education Act**

Banned blacks from attending white universities and separated the educational system for Blacks, Coloureds and Indians. (Terrill 2013: 279)

**1963 Publication and Entertainment Law**

Limited the publication of materials considered indecent, obscene, offensive, immoral and blasphemous (Ziegler and Asante: 1992: 85).

**1964 Bantu Laws Amendment Act**

Further restricted native Africans, particularly women. It made it easier to determine natives were “idle,” which meant having been rejected for work three times or having lost a job more than twice in the last six months, and thus threaten them to imprisonment or deportation to a homeland. It also banned native women from entering cities without a permit and disallowed native women to be put on a waiting list for housing (Magubane 2004: 40-41).

**1970 Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act**

Assigned everyone classified as Native to one of ten homelands so that eventually “not one black man [would have] South African citizenship” (Matas 1994: 91). This led to forced removals regardless of whether the person had ever lived in the destination homeland.

**1971 Bantu Homelands Constitution Act**

Enabled the South African president to make homelands independent resulting in Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei being separated from South Africa. Citizens of these four homelands ceased to be South African citizens, and thus those who entered South Africa to work were treated as foreign nationals. As these areas were not



internationally recognized, many were unable to leave the homelands unless they had work permits, resulting in many women being forced to stay (Matas 1994: 91). Thus not only were these people uprooted, they became stateless and lived in these assigned borderlands.

\*As exemplified through some of these laws, the labeling of people as squatters or foreign nationals enabled the apartheid government to remove more rights and put even further controls on them.

### **INDEX III: Timeline of Selected Events**

#### **1652 Jan van Riebeeck lands at the Cape of Good Hope**

Van Riebeeck arrives with the mission of building a trading post for the Dutch East India Company. In the 1660s he constructs a border of wild almond trees to mark off and protect the Dutch settlement.

#### **1652 Eva/Krotoa joins the Dutch**

Eva, the name given by the Dutch, first appears in van Riebeeck's journal in January 1654 (Conradie 2000: 468).

#### **1771 Griqua leader Adam Kok I leaves Cape Colony**

Kok heads north and eventually settles in Piketberg. Linda Waldman points out that despite the Griqua claim for autonomy, they largely relied on the Cape Colony for recognition and support (Waldman 2007: 60).

#### **1806 Capturing people for slavery is made illegal (Marx 1998: 47)**

#### **1807 Slave trade is ended by Britain**

However, it is not legalized until 1833, and slaves are not emancipated until 1838 (Marx 1998: 47)

#### **1810 Saartjie Baartman taken to London**

### **1830s to 1840 The Great Trek**

*Die Groot Trek* started after black Africans were set free. About 10,000 Boers migrated northeast from the Cape in search of a new, separate land or as many believed, “a promise land.” Boers wanted to find a space that would be free from British rule, away from coloureds and Africans and provide better economic opportunities (Berger 2009: 60-63; Thompson 1990: 80). Thompson, who refers to the trekking Boers as emigrants, writes that “When Afrikaners began self-consciously to fashion a national historical tradition toward the end of the nineteenth century, they referred to the emigrants as Voortrekkers, and their movement as the Great Trek” (Thompson 1990: 96), exemplifying how this contributed to the Boer nationalist imaginary.

### **1853 Constitution**

In spite of the non-racial terminology of the 1853 constitution, the white rulers of the Cape Colony were treating the Coloured People as distinct and inferior community, dependent on white employers. (Thompson 1990: 66)

### **1861-1862 Griquas leave for Nomansland**

About 2,000 Griquas leave Philipolis trekked to Nomansland, which would later become Griqualand East (Waldman 2007: 77).

### **1865 First Official Census**

It was reported there were 181,592 Europeans, 81,598 “Hottentots,” 100,536 “Kafirs” and 132,655 “Others” (Southey 1866: 11).

**1867 Diamonds are discovered** The British took over the Transvaal in 1877 under the guise of protecting the Zulus (Marx 1998: 38)

**1875 Griqua leader Adam Kok III dies**

**1886 Gold is discovered** in the Transvaal. (Marx 1998: 38)

**1898 A.A.S. Le Fleur is imprisoned**

The son of Abraham Le Fleur, Adam Kok III’s secretary, is sentenced to 14 years of incarceration for activities that involved the organization and support of Griqua rights and against settlers who wished to racially segregate areas and divide land (Waldman 2007: 78-79). Imprisonment did not affect his work and he later led several failed treks in search of land and opportunity (2007: 79-80).

**1899-1902 South African War**

Also known as the Anglo-Boer War, the Second War of Freedom, the Boer War and the English War, depending on bias, it started on October 11, 1899 between the British and the Boers in the Transvaal Republic and the Orange Free State (Wessels 2011: 19, 23-24). Tensions escalated in the area after several British annexations and opposition to British rule. In hopes of reform, natives, coloureds and Asians mostly supported the

British. The war ended on May 31, 1902 with a British victory, and the finalizing treaty did not grant the non-white supporters the right to vote but instead sought to strengthen white cooperation (Marx 1998: 88-89).

### **1902 African Political Organization (APO)**

Created in Cape Town to unify the “Coloured Races of British South Africa,” through the advocacy of quality education for coloured children and equality in voting for coloured men. It operated for almost 40 years (Adhikari 1993: 93).

### **1907 and 1908 Mohandas Gandhi arrested**

Gandhi was arrested, tried and jailed for disobeying the Asiatic Registration Act. In 1908, he was released after two months, and after the agreement reached with Smuts was not kept, he called for continued nonviolent disobedience, or *satyagraha* (Herman 1999: 80).

### **1910 South African Railways and Harbours (SAR&H)**

Four regions are unified into a modern, independent nation, leading to developed infrastructure and improved social and economic aspects (Foster 2003: 661-664).

### **1912 South African Native National Congress is founded**

Its primary goal was to uphold rights for the “native people of South Africa” (ANC Constitution qtd. in Thompson 1990: 175). In 1923 it was renamed the African National Congress, or ANC.

**1922 Rand Revolt**

After employers sought cheap black labor despite the color bar, white workers went on strike causing friction between the British and Afrikaners after more than 200 strikers were killed (Marx 1998: 99).

**1925 Afrikaans is made an official language** (Marx 1998: 100).

**1948 Elections and start of Apartheid**

D.F. Malan is elected and introduces apartheid.

**1955 Forced removals begin in Sophiatown**

Sophiatown, a township located outside of Johannesburg, was an area where people of all races could own property before apartheid. It was the home of famous artists and writers such as Lewis Nsoki and Es'kia Mphahlele. As it was a target of the apartheid government, it later became a center of apartheid resistance. At night, 2,000 police surprised residents and began the removals of blacks to the Meadowlands in Soweto (Aguilar 5:21; McClintock 1995: 337-339). Anne McClintock argues the destruction of Sophiatown was followed by the “long silence” of writers in the 1960s, which was aided by the Publications and Entertainment Act, Suppression of Communism Act and the exiling of prominent writers and artists (McClintock 1995: 339).

**1960 South African Rand replaces British Sterling** (Louw 2004: 53)

**1960 Sharpeville Massacre**

On March 21 officers opened fire on a group of largely peaceful protestors speaking out against the pass laws. Some protestors threw stones, and the officers opened fire. The massacre resulted in 69 dead and 178 wounded including women and children. March 21 is now observed as Human Rights Day, a public memorial holiday (Lodge 2011: 103-106, 330; Orkin 1992: 649).

**1960 African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PNC) are banned**

Both groups decide passive resistance is futile and set up their armed wings (Cherry 2011: 14).

**1961 South Africa becomes a republic****1961 Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) is founded**

Translated from Zulu meaning the “Spear of the Nation,” MK, the armed wing of the African National Convention, is founded after the Sharpeville Massacre and largely gained members after the Soweto Uprising (Grisham 2014: 160-162, 176). The struggle was launched on December 16 using “symbolic sabotage” (Cherry 2011: 14).

**1964 Nelson Mandela is sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island**

During his trial, instead of taking the stand or calling witnesses, he delivers a famous speech from the dock (Limb 2008: 75-76).

**1976 Soweto Uprising**

On June 16 a group of 20,000 students protested against the heightening Bantu Education laws that would require education in Afrikaans. Prior to the new laws, education was given in the majority mother tongue (many knew multiple tribal languages) and later in English. Police opened fire. The uprisings spread to cities and rural areas, and after several months, 700 students were killed and hundreds injured (Ndlovu 2006: 326-327, 350; Van Wyk 2003: 21; Louw 2004: 128-129).

**1977 Steve Biko detained and killed**

Born on December 18, 1946, Biko became a great leader of the Black Consciousness Movement. He was South African Students' Organization (SASO) president and later chairman of SASO Publications. His outspokenness made him a target for police, who imprisoned him for 137 days with charges or a trial in 1975; arrested and placed him in solitary confinement for 101 days (Mzamane, et. al 2006: 120-124). Finally, after other arrests, his final was in August when he died on September 12, 1977 due to brain damage as a result of being beaten while in police custody (Mzamane, et. al 2006: 123-124; Cherry and Gibbs 2006: 586-593). After his death, demonstrations were held across the country.

**1984 Tricameral Parliament**

Inaugurated on September 3 and introduced by the National Party as a tactic to get non-White votes. Based on the 1983 constitution that distinguished between racial



communities, the Tricameral Parliament allowed Whites, Coloureds and Indians to individually take charge of their own schooling, neighborhoods and cultural issues while all other general issues were to be discussed jointly (O'Malley, "Pre-Transition"). Natives, who made up a majority of the population, were excluded from participation. The proportional make up, which was White-4, Coloured-2 and Indian-1, ensured that Whites maintained power (Löetter 1984: 49-50). The president, who was elected by the 88 members of parliament—of which 55 were White—signed legislation, delegated responsibilities of Native affairs and appointed an administrator for each province: Cape of Good Hope Province, Natal Province, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State (O'Malley, "Pre-Transition").

**1985 Saartjie Baartman's remains removed from display at the Musée de l'Homme**

Baartman's remains are moved to storage.

**1987 *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* published**

Wicomb's first collection of short stories is written and published before the fall of apartheid.

**1989 F.W. de Klerk becomes president**

(Del Testa 2013: 53)

**1990 Nelson Mandela is set free**

**1991 Apartheid laws end**

Legislation is passed by de Klerk and the National Party (Del Testa 2013: 53).

**1993 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk****1994 First democratic South African elections**

Nelson Mandela and the ANC win an overwhelming majority. Notable is that of the 20 percent of votes that went to the National Party, 30 percent were from the coloured community (Fessha 2010: 92).

**1996-1998 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hearings****1996 Constitution and Bill of Rights passed****2000 *David's Story* published****2002 Saartjie Baartman's remains are ordered to be repatriated to South Africa**

The French National Assembly unanimously passes “Loi no 2002-323 du 6 mars 2002 relative à la restitution par la France de la dépouille mortelle de Saartjie Baartman à l’Afrique du Sud” instructing the Musée de l’Homme to return her remains within two months. A memorial service is also held (Crais and Scully 2009: 154-155).

**2006 *Playing in the Light* published**

**2008 *The One that Got Away* published**

**2013 Nelson Mandela dies**

**2014 South African Elections**

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