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*Bodylands*: Inscriptions of the Body and Embodiment in the Novels of Lauren Beukes.  
Key terms: South African literature, inscriptions of the body and space, gender, abjection,  
the disciplined body, the grotesque and classical body.

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## **Declaration**

The Registrar (Academic)

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I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation and research and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree or to any other university. All citations references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged.

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## Abstract

This dissertation takes up the question of the body and embodiment(s) in contemporary South African fiction, paying particular attention to the novels of award-winning author, Lauren Beukes. In the first three fictional works published to date, namely *Moxyland* (2008), *Zoo City* (2010) and *The Shining Girls* (2013), the body emerges as a persistent focus of narrative interest and attention. My aim in this dissertation is to explore how these fictional bodies are imagined and constructed; to ask what kinds of bodies predominate in Beukes's texts and to consider their thematic, narrative, aesthetic and political significance. Taking my cue from contemporary cultural theory (the work of Foucault, Bakhtin and Scarry), and various studies in feminist theory (such as Gatens, Grosz and Butler), I hope to bring renewed attention to the body and its inscriptions within discourse by offering a reading of the body in Beukes's first three fictional works: *Moxyland* (2008), *Zoo City* (2010) and *The Shining Girls* (2013). By extending the existing critical literature on the body, as well as these novels, I aim to provide a reading of the body in these texts in terms of the following themes: the disciplined body, the body in pain, the gendered body, the body in relation to power and the vulnerable body.

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## Introduction

South African novelist, short story writer, journalist and television scriptwriter Lauren Beukes, born on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1976, has published four novels to date: *Moxyland* (2008); *Zoo City* (2010); *The Shining Girls* (2013) and *Broken Monsters* (2014). Her awarding-winning work in science fiction, dystopian fiction and urban fantasy in her first three novels become the focus in this dissertation, with my primary interest in depictions of the body. The body becomes my point of focus because of the unique way in which it is dealt with in each of these novels, her latest novel *Broken Monsters* (2014) being omitted from this dissertation due to the time of its release. In Beukes's second novel, *Zoo City*, for example, the sins of a person are physically manifested as an animal which becomes an extension of the human body. In such a way, the body is visually 'marked' with a signifier that alerts other humans to the transgressions of that particular person. Also pertinent are the ways in which the boundaries between the human and the animal are destabilized and subverted. The body then becomes a site of shame, thus linking with a long-standing Western philosophical treatment of the body as burden or disgrace. The body as a site of shame is an important point of focus in this novel is that the protagonist who attempts to navigate through society is female. In Beukes's novel, *Moxyland*, the body is manipulated or, more correctly, 'modified', through technological advances, and to such an extent that it is no longer clear that it is a human body. What is interesting about the ways in which the body is inscribed and represented in this work is that the technology which enhances the human body changes the mechanics of the human function, thus transforming the body into something almost 'superhuman' and unnatural. The physical appearance of the body is also altered, since the modification of the body causes the skin to glow green. In *Moxyland*, the tattooing of the body emerges as a corporate tool used to create a kind of human advertisement, in which the female protagonist's skin is marked by the technology embedded within her. The corporate signature is embedded and branded onto the skin of the protagonist, which to other characters is reminiscent of a 'light tattoo' (a tattoo which emits a glowing light under the skin), a conception existing in the futuristic context of the novel. The notion of body tattooing is also an interesting aspect of this novel, since the tattoo functions as an alternative means of marking the body. In this case, however, it is not unequivocally regarded as a point of shame, as it is in *Zoo City*, but rather can be

understood as an extension of identity, and becomes a mark of corporate dominance. No longer associated with her own singular identity, she is 'branded' by a corporate identity whose technology she hosts.

In *The Shining Girls* (2013), Beukes employs images of the wounded body and identity, the body in pain, the female body, the male body and finally power and the body. As in her other novels, the protagonist is female. In *The Shining Girls*, the body is figured in terms of mutilation; the female body is scarred as a result of an act of male violence, an attempted murder. Unlike *Zoo City*, however, the wounded body of *The Shining Girls* is not represented as a site of shame or vulnerability but, paradoxically, becomes a site of survival. Another interesting point is how the female body which has been attacked, violated, and wounded becomes a source of strength and validation as well as a site of change. As in the other texts discussed above, much of this novel's narrative interest in bodies is directed towards the female body.

### **Review of Literature**

The current emphasis in the existing critical literature on Beukes's novels is on establishing affiliations and connections in terms of genre. Various critics map affiliations with genres such as science fiction, cyberpunk, slipstream, dystopia, magical realism, fantasy, film noir and the comic book: speculative fiction and melodrama. Cheryl Stobie (2012), for example, reads the novels as a form of a 'critical dystopia' with an emphasis on redemption: "despite the grimness of the worlds described, critical dystopias allow for some hope, or 'social dreaming' within the reader" (2012:368). Stobie goes on to explain that there is a mixing of modes in the novels, which renders them generically unstable (2012:369). Stobie also makes reference to the novels' amalgamation of different genres, which gives rise to what she refers to as "muti-noir" (2012:375). Another dominant critical focus is on the dystopian genre; here critics pay attention to the representations of space and the post-apartheid city. Louise Bethlehem (2013), for example, values the novels for their representations of a new form of social divisions, as based on class rather than race, thus highlighting the differences between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' (2013:2). Bethlehem also brings attention to the novel's negotiations of "citiness" and the intersecting notion of spatial regulation (2013:2). Similarly Konstantin Sofianos's (2013)

comments on the regulation of space in Beukes's novels – “mobility, in its exercise, channelling, and confinement, constitutes one of the prime modalities through which power is lived” (2013:115) – become useful to my discussion, as he pays attention to spatial negation in relation to corporate power. What have also been areas of interest for some critics are the employment of social surveillance and the exploration of technology specifically as a form of control. According to Bethlehem, “the technology facilitates a certain configuration of social relations that produces the highly repressive spatial order” (2013:6). The movement through the various spaces in these novels is also explored. For example, Sofianos comments that the movement through city-space provides an “electric thrill [and] affords its readers the continually recurrent pleasure of spatial trespass” (2013:114,115). Extending the notion of boundaries, other critics – e.g. Henriette Roos (2011) – offer a reading of dystopia in the novels, perceived as a collapsing of the boundaries between the human and the non-human. Like Stobie, Roos focuses on the ways in which these boundaries can be renegotiated and redrawn (Roos, 2011:53). Other important themes in the current critical literature are the treatment of history and the novels' engagement with semiotics and style, their rich intertextuality and the treatment of 'surface' and 'depth'. For Sofianos, the novels use history as an informative tool which allows for an exploration of the consequences of the past in the present and places emphases on entrenched social difference (2013:112).

Very little attention has been given to questions of the body and its representations in the novels. The one exception is Bethlehem, who mentions that the novels' employment of the comic book-format conventions enables them to “explore the anomalies that emerge from the very real differences in the scales of an industrialized society on the one hand, and the scales of embodied experience on the other” (2013:8). In my project, I will be expanding this kind of interest with a particular focus on textual representations of the abject body, the disciplined body and the gendered body in *Moxyland* (2008), *Zoo City* (2010) and *The Shining Girls* (2013).

## **Theoretical Framework**

This dissertation engages with a number of different theoretical traditions which take the body as their primary focus. The first is the significant contribution made by

feminist philosophers and cultural critics such as Moira Gatens (1992), Elizabeth Grosz (1994), Sarah Bartky (2000) and Susan Bordo (2003), who have given impetus to the growing field of 'body studies'. The extent of this interest in the body amongst feminist scholars is evident in the publication of two critical readers – Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price's, *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader* (1999), and Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994) – both of which have been important in mapping the theoretical terrain for my study.

Much recent feminist work has understandably begun with challenges to the long-standing Western philosophical notion of the dualism of mind and body, which as Elizabeth Grosz explains, is "a common view of the human subject as a being made up of two dichotomously opposed characteristics: mind and body, thought and extension, reason and passion, psychology and biology" (1994:3). According to Grosz, this bifurcation is not a neutral process. Rather, dichotomous thinking creates a hierarchy between the two polarized terms, so that the mind becomes associated with reason and rationality, and the body becomes aligned with irrationality, passion and uncontrollability. For Grosz, the body is then viewed as something that must be controlled and disciplined (1994:5). The resulting denigration of the body, a form of "somatophobia" (Grosz, 1994:5), leads to a profound distrust of the body and of various efforts of reclamation and revalorization. As a result of this dualistic thinking, the body has not only been denigrated but also ignored. As Grosz puts it, the body has remained "a conceptual blindspot in both mainstream Western philosophical thought and contemporary feminist theory" (1994:1). Grosz is particularly concerned with the ways in which discussion of the body, in mainstream Western philosophical discussion, has attempted "to minimize or ignore altogether its formative role in the production of philosophical values – truth, knowledge, justice etc," (1994:4). Like Grosz, Susan Bordo (2003) draws attention to the pervasiveness of negative constructions of the body in mainstream Western patriarchal thought. In a close reading of the poem, "The Heavy Bear" by Delmore Schwarz, Bordo explores the pervasive view of the body as, "stupidly unconscious, dominated primarily by appetite, [something which gets in the way of a] finer, cleaner self" (2003:3). In addition, to these forms of body negation and erasure, the mind/body dualism has given rise to other distinctions – "between reason and passion, sense and sensibility, outside and inside, self and other, depth and surface, reality and

appearance” (Grosz, 1994:3). What has been most relevant to feminists, however, “is the correlation and association of the mind/body opposition with the opposition between male and female, where man and mind, woman and body, become representationally aligned” (1994:4). Because of the long-standing association of males with the mind – reason and sense (1994:5) – and of females with the body – passion, emotion and uncontrollability (1994:13) – the main work of second-wave feminist theory has been to bring the body back into focus, in order to work against these rigid associations.

Second-wave feminism, having emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, has encouraged a profound distrust of the body, a kind a “somatophobia” (Spelman, 1998). According to Alexandra Howson in *Embodying Gender* “second-wave feminist engagement with the female body has undoubtedly been shaped by the legacy of cartesian dualism in which the material (body) and immaterial (mind) are split” (2005:44). Howson suggests that “at best, the female body has occupied an ambiguous place within second-wave feminist theory” (2005:44). For earlier feminists “[t]he materiality of gender has been denied within liberal feminism in order to liberate women from the burdens of the female body (de Beauvoir, 1972 cited in Howson, 2005:45). Howson also goes on to argue that “feminist debate has discernibly shifted from material body struggles that involved concerns about reproductive and sexual control towards efforts to insure the body’s inclusion in theory” (2005:45). Despite the second-wave’s distrust of the body, particularly the female body, it still brings the body into focus in Western philosophical thought the third-wave seeks to enhance the feminist movement.

Given the limitations of second-wave feminism in relation to the treatment of the female body, I have chosen to situate my analysis of Beukes’ work within the arena of third wave feminism. According to Susan Archer Mann and Douglas J. Huffman, in *The Decentering of Second Wave Feminism and the Rise of the Third Wave*, “third wave feminism is a new discourse for understanding and framing gender relations that arose out of a critique of the second wave” (2005:56). Mann and Huffman suggest that third-wave feminism (1980s and 1990s) arose as a reaction to rather than a following on from second-wave feminism (1960s and 1970s), and “did not seek to undermine the feminist movement, but rather to refigure and enhance it so as to make it more diverse and inclusive” (2005:57).

Mann and Huffman offer the suggestion that there are four main perspectives which have contributed to third wave feminist discourse. These perspectives include: “intersectionality theory as developed by women of colour and ethnicity; postmodernist and poststructuralist approaches; feminist postcolonial theory, often referred to as global feminism and the agenda of the new generation of younger feminists” (2005:57).

According to Shildrick and Price, “feminism has long seen its own project as intimately connected to the body, and has responded to the masculinist convention by producing a variety of incompatible theories which attempt to take the body into account” (1999:1). Shildrick and Price recognize that the mind/body dualism is gendered and that it is a site from which patriarchy draws its power to subordinate women: “In short, women just are their bodies in a way that men are not, biologically destined to inferior status in all spheres that privilege rationality” (1999:3). For Shildrick and Price, “the body has become the site of intense inquiry, not in the hope of recovering an authentic female body unburdened of patriarchal assumptions, but in the full acknowledgement of the multiple and fluid possibilities of differential embodiment” (1999:12).

In her introduction to *Feminism and the Body* (2000), Londa Shiebinger takes up a similar perspective. She argues that the dualism of mind and body, which has “long underpinned Western culture, [has] made males the guardians of culture and the things of the mind, while it [has] associated women with the frailties and contingencies of the mortal body” (2000:1). In Shiebinger’s view, women are “subject to unruly humours, unpredictable hormones, and other forces, [and] have been identified [...] closely with nature” (2000:1). Similarly, Grosz explains that patriarchal oppression justifies itself by connecting women to the body, by arguing that “women are somehow *more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural than men” (1994:14). In an egalitarian society “gender traits of masculinity and femininity would, ideally, be transformed and equalized through a transformation in ideology” (Grosz, 1994:17). For Grosz, the task is not to overcome the body, but to give it “different meanings and values” (1994:17).

Contemporary feminists such as Sandra Lee Bartky (2000) and Moira Gatens (1992) draw on Foucault’s reading of the body as cultural and political, not just biological. Bartky and Gatens, amongst others, draw attention to the sex/gender distinction in order to

refute claims that a certain kind of body predisposes one to a certain kind of experience. But feminist philosophers have gone further to show that sex/physiology is not a neutral site, instead the body is also made, shaped and marked by particular 'disciplinary orders'. Thus the body itself bears the mark of gender norms. In her essay, "Body Politics" (1992), Bartky draws on Foucault's argument concerning the relationship between power and the body. Bartky argues that for Foucault, the body is not a possession; nor is it centralized or exercised from above. Rather, the body is disguised as it "circulates throughout the body politic" (Bartky, 2000:326). Bartky suggests that 'normative' femininity is imposed upon the female body: a process which requires modes of training that are properly described as 'disciplinary practices'. By this Bartky suggests that Foucault refers to the systems of "micropower [that ultimately become] disempowering to the woman so disciplined" (Bartky, 2000:326). Foucault is important for Bartky as he analyses "the ways in which power gains control of both bodies and minds" (Bartky, 2000:326). She goes on to explain that, if feminist theory is to gain insight from Foucault's argument about the 'disciplined body' then "a thorough examination of the disciplines of normative femininity would have to explain not just why and how they are oppressive, but why they are, for women themselves, seductive" (Bartky, 2000:326). Furthermore, feminist theory would also have to explore the idea that in order to be recognised in modern society one must be a body that is either masculine or feminine. Bartky's insight – gleaned from a feminist reading of Foucault as mentioned before – is that "biological sex is not the bedrock on which gender is erected; rather, it is part of the Gestalt that is performed as 'gender'" (2000:327). By conforming to the idea of disciplining the body (where women subordinate their own basic human need to eat, for example) in order to conform to the ideals of the expected female body type (Bartky, 2000:326), women put an enormous strain on themselves, as well as on their time. Such behaviour includes dieting, morning beauty regimes and, in extreme cases, cosmetic surgery (Bartky, 2000:328). What also emerges in Bartky's argument is that the importance placed on women's appearance produces "a narcissistic preoccupation with the body which fluctuates between infatuation and self-disgust" (2000:328). Also important is the insight that, in pursuit of the ideal disciplined body women evince a combination of self-indulgence and self-hatred since the 'disciplined body' cannot be attained. In *Unbearable Weight* (2003), Bordo gives close attention to the body under control. She

brings an important perspective to those arguments about the disciplined body, which trace their source to Foucault.

Moira Gatens (1992) also recognizes the importance of Foucault's argument around ideas of power for the examination of gender 'power' relations. In "Power, Bodies and Difference", Gatens defines power as "something which is intimately connected with authority, domination and exploitation" (1992:123). In Gatens's view, "[i]t is the male body, and it's historically and culturally-determined powers and capacities, that is taken as the norm or the standard of the liberal individual" (1992:125). For Gatens, Foucault's work is useful because of its focus on "the body-power relation and on the discourses and practices which he takes to involve productive operations of power" (Gatens, 1992:127). Furthermore, according to Gatens, women can only "achieve this standard by either eliding their own corporeal specificity or by juggling both their traditional role in the private or domestic sphere as well as their new found 'equality'" (1992:125). This attempt to examine and reconceptualise power relations in order to bring forth an alternative account of power has been an important focus for feminists. For Gatens, this "emphasis on the body allows one to consider not simply how discourses and practices create ideologically appropriate subjects, but also how these practices construct certain sorts of body with particular kinds of power and capacity; that is how bodies are turned into individuals" (1992:128). In Gatens's view Foucault analyses the production of power as well as its repressive function of disempowerment (1992:130), and in this way can be helpful in analysing how bodies become marked as male and female, as well as provide a platform on which feminists may dislocate existing power relations between the sexes, and provide a possible alternative account of power.

Another area of critical work on the body, which informs this dissertation, is centred on the notion of the 'abject' body, as it is explored in Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). According to Kristeva, the 'abject' is something that disgusts us, something that evokes a bodily reaction of nausea (1982:2). Lynne Segal (1994) summarizes Kristeva's notion of abjection as,

the process whereby the child takes up its own clearly defined ('clean and proper') body image through detaching itself from – expelling and excluding

– the pre-Oedipal space and self-conception associated with its improper and unclean, ‘impure’, connection with the body of the mother. (1994:109)

The ‘abject’ body, therefore, comes into being through the rejection of the maternal body as, according to Kristeva:

Nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. ‘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 food is not an ‘other’ for ‘me’, I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which ‘I’ claim to establish myself. (1982:3)

Through such rejection, an affirmation of self-identity is made. Nausea is provoked when the individual is reminded of the ‘constructedness’ and instability of the boundary which separates the ‘self’ and that which has been expelled. Kristeva also goes on to explain that the body’s borders come into being through the ‘abjection’ of its own defiling acts of normative bodily functions of expelling wastes (1982:3). Defining the body’s borders is important when attempting to define what constitutes bodies. As Kathleen Lennon (reading Kristeva) suggests, “this process of establishing boundaries is itself a bodily process, manifest in bodily responses” (2010:12). ‘Abjection’, in Kristeva’s view, is not caused by the lack of cleanliness or health, it is caused by what disturbs identity, system and order; it is that which does not respect borders, positions and rules. It is the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite (Kristeva, 1982:4). Here Kristeva is suggesting that the ‘abject’ body is constructed, not out of what the body expels, but out of that which is considered to be ‘other’.

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler takes up Kristeva’s notion of the ‘abject’ body, but adapts it in order to refer to the body that fails to conform to social ideals: “the inner and outer worlds of the subject is a border and boundary tenuously maintained for the purposes of social regulation and control” (1990:182). By broadening Kristeva’s notion of the ‘abject’ body to the construction of gendered borders, Butler shows how the ‘abject’ becomes that which threatens our sense of

‘normal’ or ‘normative’ gender boundaries. For Butler, gender is performed and imposed upon the biological sex of a person. It is through the continued performances of gender that it becomes ‘natural’. Drawing on Butler’s ideas on gender, Lennon suggests that “these gendered performances are acted out in accordance with social scripts prescribing ideals which are unrealizable, but which nonetheless provide the framework for our activities. These dominant ideals reinforce the power of certain groups; e.g. men and heterosexuals, over others” (Lennon, 2010:14). Thus, these ‘others’ who do not conform to the dominant ideals – women, homosexuals, transsexuals or those with differently abled or differently shaped bodies – are treated socially as outsiders. As ‘object’, they become subject to social punishments; Butler’s view of the ‘object’ thus differs from Kristeva’s, as the ‘object’ for Butler is not, “a bodily response anchoring the formation of the psyche [rather it is, as Lennon says] a category of exclusion created by discursive norms” (Lennon, 2010:15). For Butler, the ‘object’ body is that which occupies the space of the abnormal and fails to conform (either bodily or performativity) to social ideals (1990:179).

What is revealed by both these accounts of the ‘object’ body is the significance of the body’s boundaries, their role in identity-formation, and the way in which they are constructed in relation to dominant social norms. Most important, however, is the way in which the ‘object’ body may disrupt these boundaries. The notion of the body’s boundaries is also central to Donna Haraway’s argument in “A Cyborg Manifesto Science Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” (1991): a link is drawn here as the boundaries that protect the ideals of the dominant social order are breached through the conception of the idea of the cyborg. For Haraway, the cyborg is “a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (1991:149). The ‘cyborg’ thus breaches the boundaries between nature and culture, animal and machine, the ‘self’ and the ‘other’. Against a model in which culture and nature (and machine and animal) are posited as antagonistic and mutually exclusive, Haraway argues for, “a confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction” (1991:150). Resisting the pure nature which constitutes our bodily being, Haraway suggests that there is no clear boundary between what is ‘natural’ and what is ‘constructed’. The ‘cyborg’ takes up the space between boundaries and breaches them, and thus destabilizes the socially-constructed boundaries, which distinguish human from machine (and, indeed the object and

the normal). According to Haraway, the 'cyborg' is a creature in a post-gender world, one that also has the potential to disrupt the socially constructed boundaries of gender (1991:150). As a post-modernist strategy, the 'cyborg' is then potentially an even greater danger to these boundaries than the 'abject', as she suggests it is "oppositional, utopian and completely without innocence" (1991:149). Thus, as Haraway suggests through the "breaching of boundaries the cyborg enables a space where nature and culture can be reworked, where the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other" (1991:150).

My reading of the novels also extends beyond an explicitly feminist project, to include work on the body and body inscriptions from other intellectual traditions. These include a more general reading of, Foucault's disciplined body in *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* edited by Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan (1992), Bakhtin's reading of the 'grotesque' and the 'classical' body in his work *Rabelais and His World* (1984), and Elaine Scarry's work in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985). As has been previously suggested, Foucault's theory of the 'disciplined' body is especially useful for what it reveals about how the disciplined body comes into being that is, through the functioning mechanisms of power. According to Easthope and McGowan, Foucault describes the mechanisms of social ordering, as they occurred in the context of a seventeenth-century plague where towns became "immobilized by the functioning of an extensive power that bears in a distinct way over all individual bodies" (1992:84). Here, Easthope and McGowan identify two forms of disciplinary power mechanisms in Foucault's terms: first, "binary [division and] branding" (1992:84) and, second, forms of "coercive assignment, of different distribution" (1992:84). According to Easthope and McGowan, Foucault details:

The constant division between the normal and the abnormal, to which every individual is subjected, brings us back to our own time, by applying the binary branding and exile of the leper to quite different objects; the existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal brings into play the disciplinary mechanisms to which the fear of the plague gave rise. All the mechanisms of

power which, even today, are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him, are composed of those two forms from which they distantly derive. (Easthope and McGowan, 1992:84)

Foregrounding the idea of power and surveillance, the Panopticon mechanism of power emerges as the architectural form in which this disciplining takes place most effectively. The Panoptic mechanism reverses the principle of the dungeon: instead of enclosing, depriving of light and hiding somebody; according to Easthope and McGowan, the Panopticon “arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately” (1992:85). The major effect of the Panopticon is to “induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power [in which the inmates] should be caught up in a power situation of which they themselves are the bearers” (Easthope and McGowan, 1992:85). This mechanism of power is useful in this thesis because it “automatizes and disindividualizes power [in that the machine] assures dissymmetry, disequilibrium, difference” (Easthope and McGowan, 1992:86). Consequently, the Panoptic mechanism of power creates a situation where it does not matter who exercises power for the ‘disciplined’ body. The Panopticon, for Foucault, is a machine that produces the homogeneous effects of power and so it becomes unnecessary to employ force to maintain good behaviour (Easthope and McGowan, 1992:86). Thus, the Panoptic institution can be light without bars, chains and heavy locks: “all that was needed was that the separations should be clear and the openings well arranged” (Easthope and McGowan, 1992:86). The Panopticon must be understood then as “a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men” (Easthope and McGowan, 1992:87). Discipline is thus identified, not as an institution or apparatus, but as “a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a physics or an anatomy of power, a technology” (1992:87). Through Foucault’s Panoptic principle, society in the modern age has become one of surveillance not spectacle. If we follow Foucault’s theory of the ‘disciplined’ body, what emerges is an understanding of the modern mechanisms of power. What is important to note then is that the modern employment of the panoptic principle assures an “infinitesimal distribution of the power relations [which causes a sort of] social quarantine” (Easthope and McGowan, 1992:88) in

which each individual, “becomes the principle of his own subjection” (Easthope and McGowan, 1992:86).

Foucault’s reading of the disciplinary mechanisms of power as notion, as understood by Easthope and McGowan, is not the first time we encounter a binary division between the ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’. In *Rabelais and His World* (1984), Mikhail Bakhtin examines the fundamental attributes of the “grotesque body” (1984:318) and “grotesque style” (1984:306), and traces the emergence in sixteenth-century Europe of a new bodily canon defined in strict opposition to the ‘grotesque’. According to Bakhtin, “exaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness” are generally considered the fundamental attributes of the grotesque style (1984:303). The grotesque body, for Bakhtin, “is a body in the act of becoming” (1984:317). As Bakhtin suggests, it “outgrows its own self, transgressing its own body, in which it conceives a new, second body” (1984:317). If this body “ignores the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and complete phenomenon [and] displays not only the outward but also the inner features of the body [then it is a body that can] merge with various natural phenomena, with mountains, rivers, seas, islands, and continents” (Bakhtin, 1984:318). Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘classical’ body seeks to close off the orifices of the body. This new image of the human body is no longer in a state of becoming; rather it is conceived as one single, sealed off, individual body where the ‘grotesque’ bodily functions have been transferred to the private sphere and associated with shame (Bakhtin, 1984:321).

Finally, my reading of the body, in the selected novels by Beukes, draws not only on Bakhtin’s distinctions, between the classical and the grotesque, but also on Elaine Scarry’s notion of the body in pain. According to Scarry – in *The Body in Pain: the Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985) – “physical pain destroys language and reverts people to a childlike state of un-intelligibility, where primal sounds replace language, to make the invisibility of physical pain, visible” (1985:4). For Scarry, “the inexpressibility of physical pain creates a split between one’s sense of one’s own reality, and the reality of other people” (1985:4). If the body is restricted, limited, disciplined and enclosed in the way that Bakhtin describes, then the communication of this body’s physical pain becomes impossible. A reading of the body in relation to notions of physical torture, and the

infliction of pain (with the associated ideas of wounding, scarring and amputation) provides the final angle from which I explore body inscriptions in Beukes' novels.

## Chapter One: *Moxyland*

### Introduction

*Moxyland* (2008) is a multi-generic novel that incorporates elements of fantasy, science fiction, cyberpunk, film noir, postmodern ‘slipstream’, magical realism, speculative fiction and the comic-book genres. Recent critical literature – Sofianis (2013), Bethlehem (2013), and Foucault (1992) – has given attention primarily to the interplay of genre in this novel. Recent critical literature has also paid significant attention to the novel’s ‘critical’ dystopian reading of the post-apartheid city – including questions such as the architecture of space, spatial/social division, the role of technology as a means of social control, and the bio-political dimensions of state surveillance. Further points of interest have also included questions of ‘urban identity’ and ‘citiness’, as well as boundary-making and the breaking of boundaries. Another aspect central to this novel’s exploration of the dystopian post-apartheid imaginary is its focus on the plight of the body. My aim, in this chapter, is to illustrate certain aspects of the post-apartheid imaginary and to show that the power of what could be called a dystopian state of mind is played out on the site of the body (both on its ‘surface’ and in its ‘depth’). In this reading, I focus on explorations of bodily inscriptions in this novel, with a particular emphasis on the body in relation to power and social engineering.

This chapter thus extends the existing critical literature (Stobie, 2012 and Roos, 2011) on the dystopian post-apartheid imaginary by giving detailed consideration to the place of the body in the social world constructed in *Moxyland*. My goal is to consider the body in the following terms: as the ‘disciplined’ subject of strict spatial division, as the ‘abjected’ figure of routinized state violence, and as the site of corporate-scientific experimentation. Although attention is given to the ‘disciplined’ body and the ‘marked’ body, the primary preoccupation of this study is with the novel’s inscriptions of the body, with an emphasis on how the inscribed body relates to the post-apartheid imaginary. By foregrounding the body and body inscriptions in *Moxyland*, I also give attention to what I see as a pervasive concern with boundary-marking/boundary-disruption, and the significance of the ‘cyborg identity’. In this discussion I also bring to the fore a concern with the body’s relationship with space, including both “Realspace” (Beukes, 2008:177) – a

term referring to the ‘natural’ space that all physical bodies inhabit – and “Gamespace” (Beukes, 2008:41) – a term which refers to an ‘alternate’ reality created in ‘cyber’ space. By focusing on the body (its place and significance) in this novel, I aim to exploit a gap in existing critical literature, by bringing attention to a new perspective of the body as not only ‘marked’, ‘mutated’ and ‘disciplined’, but also as that which inhabits various kinds of space. Emerging from this reading of *Moxyland* is a fresh understanding of the workings of Western corporate society, and this kind of society’s effect on the body, and on its relation to power, space and discipline.

### **The Body and Social Position**

*Moxyland* is set in a futuristic version of the city of Cape Town. The social world described in this novel is one which has been constructed out of various divisions (e.g. spatial, social, physical and economical) that are not harmonious, but sites of oppression. Spatial divisions – referring to the tangible spaces of the city in *Moxyland* – are based on class; with the ‘Communique Corporation’ (occupying the city centre and being the main enforcer of social control) holding the position of the ‘high-class’, and everything existing on its outskirts making up the ‘low-class’. Corporate space (city centre) then becomes an unattainable ‘holy land’ for those who are excluded from it. The borders of this militaristic city are extensively controlled, and people are required to carry what is known as a ‘BioID’, encoded into their cell-phones. The ‘BioID’ details a person’s personal information, but what is significant is that it functions in the same way as a ‘passbook’, a document carried by racially excluded groups during the apartheid era. Outsiders to the city centre in the novel therefore must be granted access to the city; however, the level of access is based on the person’s class position, instead of their racial category. A person’s cell-phone becomes the basis not only of access to the city, but of identity as well. Such a situation shows that technology is used to create a rigid social apartheid which has its basis in class rather than race. As Bethlehem suggests, “*Moxyland* satirizes what Beukes has termed ‘a corporate apartheid state’: a regime that maintains rigid social divisions on the basis of class rather than race” (2013:2).

Individual movements of people throughout the city are strictly controlled and regulated, through technological devices – e.g. technologically enhanced police dogs

known as “Aitos” (Beukes, 2008:2), a process referred to as “defusing” (2008:125), “disconnection” (2008:83), as well as viral-weaponry. For example, a temporary access grant only allows a ‘low-class’ person to enter the city space, but does not grant walking rights. A person’s transgression of such boundaries results in “disconnection” (2008:83). Disconnection of one’s SIM card is a punishment that leads to complete social marginalization, in which case all access to the city is denied and the person is completely cut off from society. This is exemplified by Toby (one of the four narrators), as he explains: “It’s a disconnect offence to tamper with a defuser. You can’t play nice by society’s rules? Then you don’t get to play at all. No phone. No service. No life” (2008:21). The dystopian state represented then mimics the atrocities of the apartheid era, the difference being the category of division. Furthermore, divisions are heavily enforced primarily through the use of disproportionate violence by the state (Communique Corporation).

According to Stobie, the use of the technique of multiple narration is an important aspect of the novel’s social critique: “*Moxyland* exemplifies the twenty-first century usage of the critical dystopia in South African writing [as] Beukes offers the sense of multiple nodes of protest suggested by the use of four first-person narrators” (2012:373). *Moxyland* is narrated by four main characters: Kendra, Toby, Tendeka and Lerato - all of whom are linked through personal relationships, across social (class) categories. All four narrators express the desire for social change through their individual accounts of resistance (both passive and active). The novel first introduces Kendra, who is described as an “art school dropout reinvented as shiny brand ambassador. Sponsor baby. Ghost girl” (Beukes, 2008:1). She is classed as ‘civilian’ (an outsider to the city) and she represents the corporate “sell-out” (2008:20). Kendra becomes a ‘sell-out’ because she voluntarily allows her body to be possessed, and, by extension disciplined by the Communique Corporation, through being injected with their experimental nano-technology. By doing this she is mutated and becomes a ‘cyborg’ which – as Haraway (1991) understands it – is a fusion between human and machine, thus creating an ‘other’. Kendra’s ‘cyborg identity’ thus excludes her from the body politic; however, it also grants her advantages, as she possesses extraordinary capabilities that extend beyond the human norm. This is evident in the novel, as she is not infected with the M7N1 virus (which I will detail in the section on the disciplined body). This female character seeks liberation, and aims to expose society by

reflecting the city in her photography, thus representing a kind of quiet (passive) resistance. However, she shows very little interest in actively resisting the state's mechanisms of power. Instead, her photographic exploration of the city space brings to light the harsh realities of the novel's post-apartheid state.

In a similar fashion, the novel's second narrator, Toby, presents the reader with a significant form of social commentary. Toby negotiates the novel's corporate state through cynicism, only forging relationships with others in order to benefit his own needs. He simply exploits situations to his own advantage. The physicality of Toby is not as important as his staple item of clothing – a “BabyStrange coat” (Beukes, 2008:9) – which he constantly wears. This futuristic coat is infused with technology that can record and project images (both photographic and video), of the external world. It is through this coat that the atrocities committed by the state are represented and reflected. The fact that he walks through the city space reflecting it (back to itself) gives a constant commentary on the dystopian post-apartheid imaginary, and especially its mechanism of power. Through his social commentary, Toby represents a sense of passive resistance to the state's mechanisms of power, in that he does not actively participate in protests, but rather reflects on the societal discrepancies and enforcements of discipline.

Active resistance is shown through, the novel's third narrator, Tendeka, as he actively resists the state's mechanism of power (active protests, violent acts of resistance). He attempts to alter the city's state control through a series of resistant acts. Tendeka shows a strong desire to change the power mechanisms of the state as a whole. However, it is significant that he does not succeed, because he is murdered by the Communicate Corporation, as a result of the company's release of the M7N1 virus. His role in the novel then becomes apparent through the inscriptions of his body, and particularly of his dying body, as it is used to show the ultimate control of the post-apartheid imaginary. However, his death is recorded and broadcast by Toby (through his ‘BabyStrange’ coat), and in this way Tendeka becomes a martyr. Passive resistance, via reflection, then is shown to be an effective method of social change, which is reinforced in Lerato's narrative.

Lerato is the final and only one of the four narrators who is in the ‘right’ class category, as she inhabits the corporate space. In Lerato's narration the primary focus is on

the constant surveillance to which each individual in the city is subjected to, even those who are part of the corporate world. Through Lerato's narrative, the novel engages with the ideas relating to the boundaries of state control and power, and reveals the effects of such 'omniscient-like' surveillance. Her narrative perspective opens with her description of the Botswanan town of Gaborone, "the teenage blank-heads who hang out in strip malls all desperately trying to conform. It feels like a shabby wannabe cousin of Jozi – trying too hard, too much hair gel" (2008:44). Here, Lerato is commenting on two things: firstly, spaces such as cities have personalities, and secondly, that conformity to state mechanisms of discipline is a priority for the people living in these spaces. Lerato wants to make a difference in society and she wants to have an impact on the system (2008:144). Here, her intentions of resistance are clear.

As has been suggested, *Moxyland* is divided into segments focussing on individual character narratives, rather than on the traditional chapter format of the realist novel. The use of multiple-narration produces a composite view of the dystopian society that the novel imagines, and is an important part of the novel's social critique. Each of the four (first-person) narrators provides a personal account of their experience in this strange society, and although they offer individual accounts they all aspire to activate social resistance/change. Each narrator wishes to alter or comment on his/her experience of society. What is notable here is the need and desire for change: with each narrator offering a detailed description of the ways in which this social world has an impact on the body. Class distinctions and the discrimination against lower classes are emphasized; the 'higher' corporate class as described as "suits" (Beukes, 2008:144), and the 'lower' rejected class of outsiders – "civilians" (2008:1) – are marked as "street" (2008:125). This kind of class distinction is also seen in Lerato's narrative. As I have mentioned, she inhabits the corporate world and is therefore a part of the corporate class. Thus, Lerato is privy to the corporate perspective, which becomes evident when she goes to a place called "Gravity" (2008:142), on a date with Stefan. However, she says: "Gravity isn't my first choice of afterhours, but in its favour, entry is strictly corporate pass, so you don't have to deal with pleb civilians" (2008:142). In this way, *Moxyland* explores the extent to which clothing, body marks, body shape and the body's posture become signifiers of social rank: "the woman's ravaged face and clothes mark her as street" (2008:125). This is one example in which the novel

suggests that each body is marked and then catalogued into a specific social group/class. Another example is Toby's unease with Unathi's (a member of the rejected class) wearing of the same leopard print vest: "Unathi is still wearing the same leopard print vest. I study it carefully to make sure, but even the stains look identical" (2008:146). Due to Toby's discomfort with the idea of wearing the same clothes every day, one gets a greater sense of the importance of social positioning. This, in turn, gives a new meaning to the concept of 'face value'. In the constructed world of the novel face value determines everything, from class rank to job opportunities, to access to the city, and even to relationships. The prevalence of 'face value' in relationships seems to erode the actual value obtained by individuals in the relationships as 'depth' and interconnection are disregarded. Thus relationships become less about the connection between individuals and more about what each individual may gain. This is exemplified by Toby's reaction to Kendra's mutation into a brand ambassador for the Communique Corporation. Instead of Toby being concerned about the impact it may have upon Kendra as a person, he immediately recognizes her as his ticket to syndication, as he catches "a glimpse of a faint glow [on Kendra's arms] which means an exclusive [for him, and] maybe even syndication" (2008:17). In a similar way Tendeka also shows little concern for Kendra's well-being, instead he is more concerned with the fact that she has become a corporate 'sell-out', by electing to become a cyborg for Communique. Instead of showing concern, or care, he 'others' and rejects her by calling her a "prototype" (2008:7). While expanding on Tendeka's rejection of Kendra, Toby on the other hand wants to exploit Kendra's situation by documenting her experience to get an exclusive story and enhance his own social position. Social divisions are emphasized as Toby considers using Kendra's mutation to heighten his own ambitions of social resistance. Both reactions suggest dissatisfaction with such social divisions, while also reinforcing them.

The notion of self-interest is explored in the novel's account of Toby's relationship with Tendeka. As Toby explains: "It's a mutual beneficial. I score some quality vid that'll push up my streamcast's rankings, and he gets his exploits recorded for posterity, faces blanked out, of course" (2008:14). It can be seen here that the importance of people in terms of relationships depends on the extent of the benefits they have to offer. Self-interest is also evident in Tendeka's relationship with Emmie: Tendeka (a South African man)

marries Emmie (a Malawi national) in order for her to gain citizenship in South Africa. In exchange Emmie offers her unborn child to Tendeka and his partner Ashraf. Via such a convoluted situation it is suggested that relationships in this corporate city become business transactions, rather than real human connections. As Bethlehem comments, “[t]he novel cannily circulates within, rather than merely depicts, the flows of consumption, transaction and exchange that the city offers” (2013:3). It is in these instances that we see the effect of these extreme social divisions and boundaries, as well as the extent to which they affect individual bodies. It is also seen from such a comment that the extreme social control heavily impacts the body’s ability to interact with the dominant social architecture, as these bodies strongly resist such control.

### **The Body Moving in Space**

To understand the inscriptions of the body in *Moxyland*, it is important first to engage with the novel’s treatment of space, and then explore the ways in which bodies are able to relate to it. Two main conceptions of space are explored throughout this novel. The first one is what will be referred to as “Realspace” (2008:177), which is the ‘natural’ reality that all physical bodies inhabit. The second is “Gamespace” (2008:41), which refers to an ‘alternate’ reality created in ‘cyber’ space. These two spaces exist in tension with one another, and both compete to be occupied by ‘real’ bodies (the bodies of the natural world). As I go on to suggest these two spaces are also intricately entwined and the boundary between them is often blurred, each space being seen to reflect and affect the other. What becomes most interesting about these two spaces, as I explore in this section, is the way in which the boundary between them is forged and then breached. These aforementioned spaces are seen to interact in such a way that the boundary which divides them is blurred, which causes these spaces to merge.

The city’s ‘natural’ environment (Realspace), for example, is seen to be significantly altered by (human) technological enhancement to such an extent that it has begun to merge with that of Gamespace (in which humans have complete control). One example of the technological intrusion into natural space is the flattening of the sea in Realspace by tide drives, which are artificial man-made mechanisms that control the tides

of the ocean, to ensure that the hover trains can run efficiently. Another example can be seen in Tendeka's narrative below,

I hadn't even noticed the roar of the highway, like the ocean before they installed the tide drives that levelled it off and keep the hover trains running. And six lanes across, in the central island, the N2 Communique-108x billboard, playing out various aspirational vignettes featuring unobtainable crap. I am itching to take it down. (2008:87)

In the above example 'natural' spaces, even the massive power of the ocean, have been manipulated and significantly changed to suit humanity's needs. The fact that the natural ocean (a massive expanse of unpredictable tides and power) is brought under the control of man is significant, because it emphasizes the extent of Communique's power. The fact that 'natural' spaces can be altered to this extent suggests that the boundary which divides the two spaces I have mentioned is one which is permeable and flexible, thus paving the way for the ability of these spaces to merge.

In a similar fashion, Gamespace (existing in cyber space) is created to resemble and mimic Realspace, in order to give the player a more 'real' gaming experience. Within the novel, the primary experience of Gamespace is through what is known as "Pluslife" (2008:38). Through his narrative, Tendeka gives us an insight into this particular game world. Pluslife is inscribed as an opportunity to reinvent oneself and also to have an impact on the world, because reality is so heavily disciplined and restricted. By connecting to Pluslife, a person may reimagine themselves in their own terms through an avatar (a digital body created and existing in cyberspace). For example Toby emphasizes this as he describes some of his Pluslife clan members:

But I *am* worried (not much, but they're only paying me the second instalment after mission accomplished) about the rest of Clan Stinger in my wake. Doyenne especially. That girl is built sumo. But a backwards glance reveals that she's just ploughing that construction worker bulk through, the crowd sensibly parting for her, while Ibis (aka Julia from the barcade) slipstreams in her wake. I've lost view of Twitch, but I'm sure the little shit

can take of himself. In Realworld, Doyenne is a taxi driver in her mid-40s- maybe a tad decrepit for fun and games, but who am I to thwart her recreational? Cos that's what it's about, right? Re-creations of lives you could never live. (2008:190)

From this example, it becomes clear that Pluslife is an escape from reality, an opportunity for people to reimagine themselves in a life over which they have complete control. The desire for control is seen throughout the course of the novel. Gamespace allows people a chance to have an influence on the world around them. This is illustrated by Tendeka, as he describes one of his experiences in Pluslife:

There's a flickering on the horizon, and at first I think it's some bug in the software, but as it spreads, multi-coloured, I figure that someone has hacked the sky. It's doing a northern lights thing. And that's the beauty of Pluslife. That here you can actually have an influence on the world. (2008:41)

It is evident here, that in the world of the novel Pluslife (Gamespace) is the only area in which people can have an influence on the world around them. The fact that Pluslife is the only space in which people have the ability to control the world around them illustrates the extent of this society's control over Realspace. In such a way, Gamespace becomes more than a mere escape from the harshness of Realspace, and actually becomes a virtual space of being, a preferred alternative reality. Realspace then becomes that which must be escaped. The merging of the boundary between these two spaces is illustrated by the fact that Realspace is changed to make the transition between these two spaces easier for the player, who must alternate between them. Such an event can be seen in Toby's experience of this transition:

I toss the plug-in to one side in disgust and wedge myself out of the gamewomb and into the barcade, lit cosily dim so that pulling out into the realworld isn't so jarring. (2008:139)

From this example it is suggested that Gamespace has become an immensely prominent feature of the novel's real world. By saying that the arcade has been "lit cosily dim so that pulling out into the Realworld isn't so jarring" (2008:139), Toby is highlighting

this dramatic influence that Gamespace has on Realspace. Gamespace then, is seen to have a profound, and arguably, negative impact on the Realworld, in that reality is changed in such a way that it begins to resemble Gamespace. Therefore, the boundary between these spaces becomes blurred, and the way in which bodies are able to interact with the real world is significantly altered. The fact that real space has to be altered and changed to enable the body to transition more comfortably between these spaces suggests the low level of regard for Realspace, and therefore also of real human experience. The overlapping of these two spaces is seen not only in the merging of the boundary that divides them but also in the reflections of each space in its counterpart. For example, Realworld fears are felt in Gamespace as Toby describes his virtual encounter with a monster in “the special hell that is Moxyland” (2008:106):

I'd like you to imagine the gurgling of a drain remixed with the metal screech of the garbage disposal, only more organic – as if it were coming from somethings larynx. Something big. And alien. And very fucking scary. Let's just say it's not encouraging, kid's, especially when I can't tell if it's getting closer with all the ambient noise. (2008:137)

It is evident here how these two spaces merge, as real fear is felt by the body while engaging with Gamespace and it is seen to have a real impact on the body. It is in this way that the boundary between these spaces is merged.

Moving on from the discussion of boundary blurring, the novel's concern with bodies in relation to various kinds of spaces comes into focus primarily through Toby. In his narrative, Toby – like Kendra – also approximates a ‘cyborg-like’ identity through his constant use of the ‘BabyStrange’ coat. It is in such a way that Toby becomes a social commentator, as his coat draws silent attention to various forms of social injustice. Toby's narrative is therefore important, because it highlights the social imbalances and the class segregation in this post-apartheid city. Here, it is evident that with the help of technology, the body is able to transform into a tool of resistance, in that Toby uses technology as social commentary through reflection. Toby's resistance becomes apparent as he goes to meet his mother, an event which interrupts his “morning streamcast” (2008:9). As he details:

I smoke some more on the way to the Nova Deli, just to bring me up enough to handle, and switch my BabyStrange, currently displaying images from the gore folder, to record. You'd be amazed at what compelling viewing even the most arb of daily interactions can make – or then, if you're watching this, maybe you already know. (2008:9)

Toby does not attempt to alter his society; rather, he reflects on it as he moves through the city. Toby also exercises his limited freedom by altering his experience of the city through drug use. Such an experience is seen in his jealousy over Kendra's addiction to the 'Ghost' drink,

It's beautiful to see it kick in. Someone who wasn't paying close attention, someone without my consummate experience, might not even have registered. But I am and I do. It's a textbook special. The breath catches in her throat as it hits, her shoulderblades tightening like she's been punched in the chest, and then it starts to fray away into her system and she goes all loose. I am overwhelmed with jealousy. Even occasional viewers will know I'm a waster – in more ways than solo, if you were to ask my motherbitch. But I'm a functional skeef. It's not like I'm the kind of junkie freak sporting a tongue-piercing applejack. But I have notched up most of the pharmacologicals. Supersmack, kitty, halo, you name it. I can ID the flavour of the bliss by the rush. But in truth, it's all cheap shit. Black-makt. Ill legit. Not like this girls high. (2008:18)

From the above example we get a sense that the body may become the site of an alternate reality, subject to that individual's experience. In addition, Toby's narrative draws attention to the way in which individuals attempt to navigate through the intertwined spaces depicted in the novel. It is through Toby then that we become aware of the spatial dynamics of this strange world. As I have suggested, the body's experience of Realspace is hijacked or impeded by corporate restrictions on movements, restrictions which are determined by class. The city space in the novel is heavily controlled and invisible boundaries emerge all over the place. However, there is a significant lack of public space, almost all space is owned and regulated. The bodies that inhabit the city and its margins are shown to have a

fearful relationship with the city spaces they encounter. Such a relationship, can be seen in the opening passages of the novel, as Kendra humourously reflects on her lack of status and access,

I could get used to this, seats unmarked by the pocked craters of cigarette burns, no blaring adboards, no gangsters checking you out. But elevated status is not part of the program. Only allocated for the day, to get me in and out again. Wouldn't want civilians hanging around. (2008:1)

In this instance, class is shown to determine social status and the level of access to the city. It is in such a way, that the 'real world' of the city is seen largely as a hostile environment to its inhabitants. An example of the city being viewed as a hostile environment is in the description of the loft dwellers that never go outside, as pointed out by Tendeka:

The loft dwellers are all locked away. All the stuff they need is inside, cafes and laundros and private gyms, so they go direct from garage to apartment, never venturing out on the street unless it's in the security of their cars. (2008:82-83)

In the above example, we see how the city is feared by the bodies that interact with it. Because technology has enabled humans to exist exclusively indoors, there seems to be no real need to venture into the 'outside' environment. The novel's dystopian vision is evident in its depiction of a general retreat from 'outside' space, into the realm of cyber-reality. The only time a seemingly positive relationship is forged between bodies and the spaces they occupy occurs at an activist event organised by Tendeka. In this instance the disenfranchised children living in the margins of the city are allowed to make a mark on the city by spraying graffiti on corporate walls (2008:32). Here, Tendeka attempts to help others make a mark on a city that 'filters' them out. Both examples are important for the novel's concerns because with such extreme controls – over spatial negation, surveillance, access, employment opportunities and extreme control over individual expressions of self – there is little opportunity for defining the 'self' as an entity that is part of the city scape.

However, these examples show that through certain activities these bodies may possess some kind of power of influence on the city in which they live.

One can escape this corporatized space in two ways: the first is through the use of drugs, as Toby demonstrates. The second, and more common route, is via entering the world of Gamespace. As I have mentioned, Gamespace exists only in the world of cyberspace. It provides an escape from reality due to the restrictions on movement and agency which characterise the real world. The novel's concern with 'making a mark' on the world is exemplified through Tendeka's efforts to give disenfranchised children the ability to make a mark on the city through graffiti murals (2008:32). Tendeka's efforts at active resistance extend beyond graffiti murals and are seen through his use of smear boards, which disrupts billboards as illustrated in the quote below,

The great thing about smear is that the tech is straight out of the box, compliments of my friend in Amsterdam, so there aren't preventative measures in place yet. Smear's not the technical word, of course; it's a TSR-3 signal delay device that interferes with the data packet transfer, so the image that gets displayed is garbled and incomplete like that painting with the melted clocks. It was invented in America to try and shut down streamcasters who were getting too vocal in criticising the administration. It's nice to be able to turn it around. (2008:90)

Active resistance seen here becomes a reaction against the "culture-jamming society" (2008:86), which shows a lack of respect for culture and diversity. Therefore, the novel expresses social commentary centering on the dystopian post-apartheid imaginary.

Moving on from this discussion, both Kendra's and Toby's narratives highlight the issue of 'urban identity'. In Kendra's case, urban identity is forged in two important ways: the first is through her mutation as a result of the insertion of nanotechnology. The second is through Kendra's reading of the city and construction of herself through the mechanism of photography. Kendra's Zion camera becomes an extension of her urban identity, and thus of her physical body. Through the documentation of the world around her the filters of her camera allow Kendra a unique perspective on the city. In such a way, she gives

meaning to the city's space and maps out the city for herself: "I specifically didn't want to photograph the usual club crap. It was about decontextualizing the space" (2008:24). In another instance, Toby comments that the camera 'composes' Kendra, "she's completely composed now, as if it's the camera rather than the nanotech inside that smoothes out her edges" (2008:27). Toby constructs Kendra's identity as that which is defined by the body's extension of the camera. Just as the infusion of the "nanotech" (2008:27) separates Kendra from the dominant social order by defining her body as 'other', so the photographs also separate her in terms of filtered experience. These are seen in Kendra's experiences of the external world through the lens of her camera. Therefore, Kendra's urban identity is constructed out of her relationship with her camera.

Toby's social commentary throughout the novel, by contrast, is frequently spoken in the second-person and is directed to readers themselves: "Those of you who have been paying close attention may have noticed that I haven't mentioned my streamcast. This is not accidental omission, kids" (2008:24). Toby's choice of images and the videos he displays on his 'BabyStrange' coat provide for a more wide-ranging form of social commentary,

My BabyStrange is set to screensaver mode, so it clicks into a new image every two minutes. Here's a random sampling to give you an idea of what's displaying on the smartfabric that is so bothering Ten: close-ups of especially revolting fungal skin infections, 18th-century dissection diagrams and, for a taste of local flavour, a row of smileys – that's sheep's heads for the uninitiated – lips peeled back to reveal grins bared in anticipation of the pot. (2008:14-15)

By juxtaposing all these horrific images, Toby articulates a silent commentary on the existing social system, while exposing the social atrocities that everyone else ignores (the public being unable to filter his displays, is thus forced to face them). An instance of this is suggested when Tendeka asks Toby: "Can you tone down the coat? We don't want to draw too much attention" (2008:14). What is also suggested is the general desire to avoid facing reality. Another example (of the exposure of the social atrocities) is Kendra's photography, as it destabilises aspects of social reality through an aesthetic of

‘decontextualisation’ (2008:24). In a similar fashion, Toby articulates a form of protest (despite his obvious self-interest) through the use of recording to produce a reflective social commentary. As we have seen, Tendeka’s mode of protest is, by comparison, more direct. For him, as I have detailed, it is not enough simply to reflect society or to challenge conventional views; instead he wants to have a real, tangible impact on the life around him.

What is most interesting about how bodies relate to the spaces they occupy in this novel is the apparent tension that exists between Realspace and Gamespace. Real-world bodies seem to want to escape into Gamespace, in order to avoid dealing with and having to face the reality of their no longer real world, for, the real world is altered to suit human ambition. Thus, people in this society always seem to be in search of escaping Realworld in favour of the imagined alternative world of Pluslife. Gamespace is created to approximate and reflect Realspace, as I have already mentioned, in Gamespace. However, individuals are permitted the freedom to have an influence on the environment that surrounds them, even if that environment is only an imitation of reality, a “simulacram” (2008:41). Gamespace allows individuals to re-create lives they could never live. This ability to create an identity which is separate from the biological ‘self’ that is allocated a social/class identity, by society, is what makes Gamespace so alluring to the inhabitants of this dystopian society. What is suggested, in the novel, is that the real world is so heavily restricted and controlled that real bodies have almost no control over their own experiences. Game-world, although also restricted and controlled, is not controlled to the extreme extent that the real world is, and so real bodies have the ability to determine their own experience. Kendra’s comments on the mutable nature of the human experience offers another perspective on the relationship between bodies and space:

The way your brain works it’s always rewiring itself; the layers of association tangled up with different people and places recontextualised by new experiences. You can map out a whole city according to the weight of memory. (2008:58)

The space of the real world is controlled in terms of access to areas based on social ranking, and human experience is created through ‘recontextualisation’, as new experiences are mapped onto old ones. Game-world, by contrast, offers the freedom of expression

movement and imagining which has become unthinkable in the world of this post-apartheid state. As the novel suggests, however, the experience of Gamespace also acts as a form of sedation. Gamespace as sedation is seen in Kendra's description of Mr Muller's apartment in an area known as District Six. Mr Muller's underground apartment is described by Kendra as follows:

His wall2wall set on Karoo; pale light over scrub hills complete with windpump, metal blades turning idly in a breeze you could almost convince yourself you felt. It's an idealised version of the Rural, peaceful, as far removed from the real thing as you can get. At least Mr Muller keeps the display reduced, so it only takes up half a wall, more painting than wraparound. He doesn't like to forget it's not legit. He says it's just another kind of sedation. (2008:73)

From the above example it is clear that, in the context of the novel, the real world has been rendered meaningless. It has been reduced to mere projections of itself. Those occupying Realspace have been completely shut off from experiencing it fully. As the above example suggests the simulated Realworld acts as a form of sedation. What is indicated here is that these projections of Realspace convince the viewer that he or she is participating in 'reality'. Interestingly, Mr Muller insists on using only half the wall so that the "wall2wall" (2008:73) appears more like a painting. Mr Muller's gesture suggests, an awareness of the dangers of socially imposed 'sedation'; the dangers of replacing the real with the projections of pseudo reality. The notion of pseudo reality is reinforced by the idealisation of space which is filtered by individuals. An example of this is evident in a conversation Tendeka has online with a cyberspace character known as Skyward\*:

>>skyward\*: terrorists? drugs? come now, are you saying we're on the same level? i expected more of you. what we have here is a world that is more apathetic and more violent than ever. the newscasts are so filtered to individual tastes, people only ever hear what they want to hear. And the model of peaceful African democracies, not only doesn't make the front page of the news sites, it barely ranks a mention. (2008:118)

Such an example highlights the extent to which people's experiences of the city are filtered and individually engineered. Therefore, resistance, particularly that expressed by Tendeka and Toby, is effective in promoting change and providing social commentary.

### **The Disciplined Body**

Foucault's notion of the 'disciplined' body is useful for an understanding of the operations of corporate/state power, as they are explored in this novel. Foucault's theory, as set out by Easthope and McGowan (1992), is useful for what it reveals about how the 'disciplined' body comes into being through the functioning mechanisms of power. For Foucault, as suggested by Easthope and McGowan, the mechanisms of power render societal constructs to an immobilised state "by the functioning of an extensive power that bears in a distinct way over all individual bodies" (1992:84). In this way, discipline is identified as "a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a physics or an anatomy of power, a technology" (1992:87). It is apparent that the novel engages with Foucault's idea in that the police services exert power over the citizens through an extreme form of body discipline that also serves as punishment. Much of the narrative is taken up with depictions of the many ways in which individuals are brought under the control of the state. The first, as previously mentioned, is the control of the individual through strict spatial relations. The second is the enforcement of discipline on the body through violence and intimidation. What the novel suggests, through its inscription of the 'disciplined' body, is that what marks the post-apartheid society is the excessive use of force against which the individual has no recourse. In this way, the corporate state is imagined, in the novel, as all-powerful and pervasive.

With the extensive level of control over the body's movements the notion of the 'disciplined' body comes into explicit focus. Such an interpretation is supported by Sofianos (2013), who comments on the regulation of space in Beukes's novels: "mobility, in its exercise, channelling, and confinement, constitute one of the prime modalities through which power is lived" (2013:115). The control over the body in the novel is not limited to simple movements around the city. Rather, it extends much further to include cutting the body off from all access to city life, as well as to the extreme violence used by

the police force to maintain control over individual bodies. These modes of control are seen in what Beukes refers to as “defusing” (2008:125), a process in which a person who transgresses the law or exhibits any opposition to the system is ‘defused’ by being electrocuted with tazers. Toby explains that the body is primarily disciplined by the police force through the same three steps:

It’s all strict by-the-book procedure. Verbal warning. Defuse. Dogs. It never takes more. Even the most defiant bloody-minded idiot tends to shut up and give up when facing down those teeth. (2008:203)

An early encounter between Tendeka and the police provides a detailed sense of these disciplinary processes:

The Aito barks in warning, echoed by a bleep from Ten’s cellphone as the cop isolates his SIM from all the others in the room with the scanner. ‘Yeah, fuck off! Don’t you fucking log a warning on me. I have the constitutional right to express my fucking opinion. Ever heard of fucking freedom of expres-‘ The cop doesn’t bother to register a second warning he goes straight for the defuser. Higher voltage than necessary, but when did the cops ever play nice? Tendeka drops straight away, jerking epileptic and setting off the damn dog with excited yipping. I’m reckoning that’s 170 to 180 volts right there. Anything over 200 requires extra paperwork to justify the use of potentially lethal force, but that doesn’t meant the cops don’t push the limits. (2008:21)

Another example is seen in Kendra’s description of a ‘street woman’ being defused for alleged robbery:

The woman’s ravaged face and clothes mark her as street. She’s as scrawny as a sparrow. Harmless, surely? The defuse seems to be trailing off. The manic tempo of her dirty feet drumming the concrete is slowing down, and this seems to calm the Aito a little. It stands quivering in excitement, shoulders hunched, ears pricked forward, intent on her. More like cat than

dog. Although who knows what goes on in that re-engineered brain?  
(2008:125)

What is suggested in the above examples is the extent of the disciplinary power of the police services. These instances show the control of the state over personal identity, space in the city, personal and public spaces. Freedom of speech, for example – which Tendeka attempts to invoke – becomes a pseudo right which, although a constitutional right, is disrupted in exercise. In the novel social commentary is articulated via Toby, as he explains above, individual, as well as collective discipline overrules constitutional rights. As resistance to the corporate state increases, the methods of social control become ever more extreme. Tendeka's resistance goes well beyond attempts by Toby, Kendra and Lerato. After the protest – set in motion by Tendeka – that results in the mass exposure to the M7N1 virus, deployed by police as an extreme form of social control, Tendeka refuses to adhere to the system's attempt at disciplining the body (2008:207). In order to obtain the vaccine an infected individual must turn themselves in to the authorities thereby maintaining social control (2008:208). However, Tendeka takes a very public stand against the system as he tells police:

'Your weapons are useless. We defy your attempts to regulate society. We're voluntarily disconnected! Voluntarily disenfranchised! You cannot control us!' He holds up the remains of a smashed phone, then drops it to the ground. (2008:203)

From the above example, it becomes clear that Tendeka takes the strongest stand against the disciplinary power mechanisms of his society. His active resistance results in the body's relation to the state becoming an interesting point of focus. Tendeka's refusal to conform thrusts him into the role of a martyr, and his dying body emphasises the extreme form of control in the dystopian society. Tendeka's death is detailed by Toby below:

When do I finally tweak what's happening? Not when he snatches my wrist, so tight I can feel it bruise. Not when he starts shaking violently or when his eyes roll back and his jaw clamps and he starts making hideous sounds through his teeth, wet, vicious shrieks. No, kids, the indicator for yours truly

that this is some serious fucking shit is when he starts bleeding from every exit point. At first I laugh, cos I can't help it. Because it's so overboard gruesome, total B-grade horror, and so badly done, it starts oozing out in thick dark runnels, and then it's pouring out, gushing, and I try to pull my hand away, and he won't fucking let go. It's like someone turned on a liquidiser inside him. (2008:287)

From such an instance, the disproportionate disciplinary mechanisms of the novel's society become apparent. A relatively harmless protest is shut down through the use of viral-weaponry (2008:207), thus showing the complete intolerance of any form of expression which disagrees with society's view. Also significant to mention here is Mr Muller's comment on the effect of the resistance expressed by Tendeka:

'Anarchy? Undermining our way of life? And what's that going to prove? More to the point, what's it going to change? This is only going to lead to more severe controls. But we need them, Kendra, I'm telling you, humanity is innately damaged. It's a flaw in the design code. We're weak. We're fallible. We need to be told what to do, to be kept in line.' (2008:254)

From these examples, we see that some characters support the disciplinary mechanisms of the state, because humans need to "be kept in line" (2008:254). Tendeka's destruction, thus, also supports existing power mechanisms and disciplinary practices in that his resistance achieves no change. It is entirely unsuccessful and only ends in the horrific death of his body. What can be suggested is that resistance to existing power mechanisms of the post-apartheid imaginary are shown, in the novel, to be ineffective.

Through the depiction of Tendeka, the novel also gives attention to the 'abject' body – the body which has become degraded – in relation to state power. The body here becomes 'abject' in accordance with Kristeva's notion as expressed in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). Here Kristeva offers the suggestion that the 'abject' is something that disgusts us, something that evokes a bodily reaction of nausea (1982:2). The body can be 'disciplined' through 'abjection', as for example when Toby witnesses Tendeka's gruesome death. It is a moment in which he considers turning himself in (to the

authorities), to “get to a clinic. Get the vaccine. Turn myself in. How long do I have?” (Beukes, 2008:288). This enforced destruction of Tendeka’s body by the state is a comment on the post-apartheid imaginary, as for instance in Toby’s reaction of revulsion: “I’m frantic to get away from it. I’m wrenching his fingers. Bending them back. Gagging.” (2008:288). It is in such a way that the body (specifically the ‘abject’ body) is seen to have a significantly negative relationship with the dominant social architecture of state control. The body’s inability to resist this form of control and discipline suggests that, in this social context it has no power, being at the mercy of its own corporeal functioning. The forced infection of the virus, although an extreme form of discipline and control, is effective in eliminating resistance as the body cannot transcend its corporeality, becoming a victim of its own biology as well as of the state. Therefore, violence against the body is very much a part of the state’s control mechanisms, through which bodies are paralyzed, disabled and infected by disease.

Another technique of state power, as implemented in the novel – a technique used to enforce and maintain social control – is seen through the use of technology to create a form of surveillance echoing Foucault’s Panoptic principle. The idea of an omniscient presence that is always watching everybody mirrors Foucault’s theory of the Panoptic principle which is the most effective mechanism for disciplining, because it “arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately” (Easthope and McGowan, 1992:85). The major effect of the Panopticon is to “induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power [where the inmates] should be caught up in a power situation of which they themselves are the bearers” (1992:85). This mechanism of power is useful because it “automatizes and disindividualizes power [as the machine] assures dissymmetry, disequilibrium, difference” (1992:86), and consequently creates a situation where it does not matter who exercises power. The panoptic principle assures an “infinitesimal distribution of the power relations [which causes a sort of] social quarantine” (1992:88), in which each individual “becomes the principle of his own subjection” (1992:86). The novel explores this notion through the conception of “Moxy” (Beukes, 2008:104) – a fictional cyber figure – who is always watching, always surveying. The figure of Moxy lives, or rather exists, within the space of Pluslife. As has been suggested this surveillance also carries over into the real world; this is

also the space in which it has the most effective disciplinary power. The question of surveillance is explored in Toby's description of Moxy: "The wall blanks suddenly and Moxy fills the screen. Cos Moxy is always watching" (2008:104). Technology is, therefore, used to create a Big Brother concept of surveillance.

The idea of technology as a tool for discipline and social control is extended to the depiction of Kendra. Through Kendra, the novel explores the notion of the 'disciplined' body in *extremis*: namely that which has been 'disciplined' in relation to dominant social norms, through the rearrangement of its fundamental biological makeup. We meet Kendra as she is being injected with experimental nano-technology, which will make her a permanent brand ambassador for the 'Ghost' brand. The novel's opening sequence concerns Kendra's attempts to calm herself as she is about to be injected with the nano-technology that will transform her into a kind of cyborg: "IT'S NOTHING. AN INJECTABLE. A prick. No hospital involved. Like a booster shot with added boost. Just keep telling yourself" (2008:1). Kendra hints at some of the reasons for her decision to undergo the procedure in her self-description as an "[a]rt school dropout reinvented as shiny brand ambassador. Sponsor baby. Ghost girl" (2008:1). Once the body has bonded with the nano-technology, the mutation is considered successful (2008:121). The cyborg (Kendra) is created by Communique Corporation as a new form of branding, with the added benefit of almost full body control. Being in such a state, Kendra's entire biological makeup is altered by this bond, and therefore becomes the property of Communique Corporation. Once the procedure is complete, she can never remove the nano-technology, as the contract is signed with a "bio-sig pen" (2008:4) which mixes tiny skin scrapings with the ink, making it impossible for the contract to be broken. From this point on, Kendra's physical body is the property of the Communique Corporation, which developed this technology. With the nano-technology's effects and changes made to her biological makeup; she bears the company's logo on the surface of her skin (in the form of a light tattoo on her wrist), and becomes a walking advertisement for the 'Ghost' brand. As the nano-technology makes its imprint, Kendra remarks: "all I can do is document the cells mutating on the inside of my wrist, the pattern developing, fading up like an old school Polaroid as the nano spreads through my system" (2008:8). Kendra's body here becomes an emblem of the 'Ghost' brand, but she is also branded and 'marked' by the nano-technology

which illuminates her skin. The novel details the cosmetic changes which occur as a result of her mutation. The most obvious of these changes are evident on the epidermal level: her skin seems like “velvaglow” (2008:61) – a term for a South African brand of paint which connotes a smooth, velvet-like texture – the chemical insertion making her skin so radiant that she no longer needs make-up. However, what is notable here is what is not seen: the changes that occur at a cellular, mitochondrial level. Kendra’s body is manipulated and altered on a physiological level. What is being suggested here is that this biological manipulation may lead to a new level of invisible state control, as the nano-technology contract removes Kendra’s possession of her own body, and allows for it to be assumed by the Communique Corporation. In this way her corporeal body becomes an object and is able to be owned by a corporation, something outside of herself. The most disturbing implication of this body mutation, however, is the loss of body ownership, Kendra’s body no longer being the possession of her ‘self’. This removal of an individual’s ownership over their own biological body could be seen as the ultimate form of the ‘disciplined’ body. By signing the contract that allows Kendra to transform her identity from art school drop-out to shiny brand ambassador, she also signs over her freedom to make her own individual, independent choices. What is striking here is the novel’s exploration of the dystopian possibility of the body as corporate possession, the body as a form of property, the ‘rights’ to which are claimed by someone else. In this sense, the novel reflects on the possibility that ownership and control over the body can be removed from the responsibility of the person who inhabits it. As Kendra signs over the ownership of her own body, the novel opens up a path for the body to be understood not only as a subject of its inhabitant’s, but as a tradable commodity. In this way the body is understood and explored as something which can be separated from the person ‘inside’ it, that it may be owned and controlled by other individuals outside of itself.

Adding further impetus to the novel’s attempts to unsettle conventional views of the body, therefore, is the notion of boundary-marking. By imagining a body that is both ‘private’ and ‘corporate’, the novel challenges the conventional boundaries between the body and the world ‘outside’. In my reading, the boundaries of the body are no longer fixed, but blurred and vulnerable to being breached, rather than sealed and impermeable. The depiction of the body as a corporate possession has implications for the understanding

of the ‘disciplined’ body itself. Although disciplined by her own will and fear, Kendra’s body is also disciplined by the nano-technology inside her. She has no control over what changes the nano-technology makes in her cells. The changes to the body occur at the ‘deep’ cellular level. One example, is in Toby’s description of the change to Kendra’s skin:

None of the signature goosebumps of an LED implant blinking through the ink of a conventional light tattoo. Cos this isn’t sub-dermal. This *is* her skin. The double swirl of the Ghost logo in mint and silver shines luminously from cells designer-spliced by the nanotech she’s signed up for. (2008:17)

However, these changes are not limited to the surface of the body, but extend beyond it to the mitochondrial level and even deeper, to the level of the immune system. Therefore, the novel’s exploration of the ‘disciplined’ body extends beyond the Foucauldian sense of conformity to social rules and surveillance, to reach the interior level of the body. However, Kendra elects to be injected with such technology and voluntarily signs the right over her body to the corporation, thus redefining the ‘disciplined’ body as that which is chosen rather than externally imposed upon the subject. However, the nano-technology has positive effects as well, in that it is capable of altering the body’s biology on the level of the body’s coding system (DNA). Thus, it is able to manipulate the immune system to be completely resistant to all infections. Kendra’s new identity can be said to liberate her from one form of body ‘discipline’ (illness), thus making her immune to any infection, including those used by the state in order to control and contain protests. Such a concept is seen in the opening of the novel, in which Kendra is going through a procedure during which the nurse explains this change:

That’s it. It’ll take four to six hours for the tech to circulate. Do you want me to run through it again? You may experience flu symptoms: running nose, headaches, sore throat in the first 24 hours. Then it’ll stop. Enjoy it. It’s probably the last time you’ll ever get sick. (2008:7)

However, such a procedure also subjects her to the control of the state. Rather, than the technology (within Kendra) becoming her possession, it remains the possession of Communique, therefore her body then becomes the property of Communique as well.

Another negative consequence of Kendra's bodily mutation is that her body becomes locked into external constraints and is forced to adhere to the company's commands. Similarly, a further negative result of the change within her body is that it subjects her to an addiction to the product 'Ghost', the Communique brand she endorses as a result of her mutation caused by the nano-technology. Via a literal 'branding' of Kendra the Communique Corporation is able to exert an extraordinary amount of disciplinary power over her body.

In Kendra's narrative, the novel engages with: body boundaries, boundary-marking and the breaching of boundaries, and takes a particular interest in the conventional distinctions between the human and the non-human. The novel does this, most obviously, in the instance in which the boundaries that protect the ideals of the dominant social order are breached through the conception of the "cyborg" (Haraway, 1991:149). *Moxyland* explores this distinction – between the human and the non-human – through Kendra, who becomes a 'cyborg' figure that exceeds the capabilities of 'natural biology'. The human/machine hybrid is created via experimental nano-technology that is injected into the bloodstream, thus enabling it to alter the biological make up of Kendra's body. My reading of the 'cyborg' (Kendra) is informed by Haraway (1991). Haraway's 'cyborg' is a "hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (1991:149) and is that which breaches the boundary between nature and culture, animal and machine (1991:151). Against a "model in which culture and nature (and machine and animal) are posited as antagonistic and mutually exclusive [Haraway argues for] a confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction" (1991:150). The 'cyborg' takes up the space between boundaries (between the human and non-human), while also breaching them. The conception of the 'cyborg', in the novel, thus destabilizes the socially-constructed boundaries, which make distinctions between the human and the non-human (machine). Haraway reads the 'cyborg' as "a creature in a post-gender world" (1991:150) one that also has the potential to disrupt the socially-constructed boundaries of gender. As a post-modernist strategy, the 'cyborg' is then potentially an even greater danger to these boundaries than the abject can be, as it is "oppositional, utopian and completely without innocence" (1991:150). Via the "breaching of boundaries, the cyborg enables a space where nature and culture can be reworked, where the one can no longer be

the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other” (1991:150). Following Haraway’s arguments, one could argue that the creation of the ‘cyborg’ figure in the novel offers a means of destabilising conventional social boundaries, as Kendra is part human, part machine. Kendra’s very existence then provides a challenge to the conventional social order in which the distinctions between these spheres are carefully maintained. The ‘cyborg’ figure in *Moxyland* thus enables a space where natural boundaries are reworked. Kendra’s (‘cyborg’) identity could be seen as constituting a breach of the boundaries that protect the ideals of the dominant social order – given the emphasis it places on the corporate or ‘normal’ body, as opposed to those bodies marked as ‘street’.

Another possible reading of boundary-breaking can be discerned in relation to conventional notions of the female as fundamentally associated with the body. In her introduction to *Feminism and the Body* (2000), Londa Shibinger argues that the dualism of the mind and body (central to mainstream Western patriarchal thought) constructs men as associated with the things of the mind and women as associated with limitations of the mortal body. From such a perspective, it becomes possible to read the ‘cyborg’ (Kendra) as that which offers a significant disruption of the dominant notion that women are inherently connected to the body. The conception of the female ‘cyborg’ can be seen as challenging one of the central boundaries from which patriarchy draws its power. The ‘cyborg’ therefore, can provide an understanding of how identity is formed, how the body navigates the post-apartheid imaginary as well as the dominant social ideals that enable patriarchal domination and subordination.

What I suggest, however, is a reading of the novel which emphasises not only the subversive potential of boundary-breaking, but also one which explores how the breaking of one boundary – such as the boundary between the human and the non-human – can also lead to the formation of another. As Kendra becomes a ‘cyborg’, the boundary between the human and the non-human is breached. However, a new boundary is forged between the ‘normal’ and the abnormal ‘other’. Kendra’s mutated body is no longer accepted as ‘normal’ in the dominant social order, and she therefore she becomes ‘other’. Kendra’s body has been enhanced, modified and improved to supersede the capabilities of the natural biology of the human form. There is now a definite distinction between bodies. Tendeka

exemplifies this distinction in the novel by rejecting Kendra. He says to her: “come to protect the technology? Cos that’s all you are, baby. A freakshow prototype” (Beukes, 2008:20). By calling Kendra a prototype, Tendeka ‘others’ her, and thus emphasises the boundary between the normal and the abnormal body. The ‘mutated’ body, which has broken the boundary between the human and the non-human, is outcast and a boundary is forged between ‘mutated’ bodies and ‘normal’ bodies. This then reinforces Foucault’s notion that the binary division between the normal and the abnormal functions on a disciplinary level.

Returning to the question of boundary-marking, it could also be argued that rather than challenging the ideals of the dominant society, the ‘cyborg’ figure in *Moxyland* actually works to reinforce the boundaries that protect the ideals of the dominant social order, by creating a new form of social control. The new form of control is interesting, as the ‘cyborg’ becomes a figure of corporate infiltration in which human bodies are put to work by companies in order to increase profit. By breaching the boundaries on a physiological level the body is removed from the ownership of the person inhabiting it, becoming a part of the corporate landscape. The individual body ceases to be controlled by its inhabitant, so that it becomes the property of a corporate company. It could also be argued that the ‘cyborg’ figure is used simply to reposition the existing socially-constructed boundaries. Instead of the ‘cyborg’ as a means of destabilizing the boundary between the human and the non-human, it is used to forge a new boundary, one between the ‘othered’ body and the normal body. In these ways, it could be argued that the cyborg figure in the novel both forges and disassembles boundaries.

## **Conclusion**

In my reading of the body in *Moxyland*, the body emerges as the signifying marker that determines the subject’s social status in the post-apartheid imaginary. What is seen is that this status determines not only the subject’s degree of access to the city, or the level of power the subject may possess, but also the ways in which this subject interacts with law enforcement mechanisms of state-sanctioned social control. The body, in this novel, is a signifier of social class and ranking. It could be concluded that the extreme social control heavily impacts the body’s ability to interact with the dominant social architecture, as these

bodies are seen to resist such control through passive as well as active resistance. However, these efforts to alter the post-apartheid imaginary's power mechanisms are shown to be completely ineffective, suggesting that the body is seen to have no significant impact on the external world surrounding it. Thus, in relation to social positions the body is unable to transcend its designated social position in the post-apartheid imaginary. The state-enforced destruction of Tendeka's body exemplifies this ineffective resistance to the imagined post-apartheid state.

Linking to my reading of the body in *Moxyland* in terms of the 'disciplined' body, Foucault's notion of the 'disciplined' body is seen to be useful for understanding the operations of corporate/state power as they are explored in this novel. What emerges from my discussion is that the novel engages with this notion in several ways. First, the body is shown as 'disciplined' in terms of spatial restriction; second, the body is shown as 'disciplined' in terms of social expectations and the need to conform; third, the body is seen as 'disciplined' in terms of biological makeup; and finally the body is presented as 'disciplined' through violence and intimidation. What emerges from this examination is that the notion of the 'disciplined' body, as it is explored in this novel, goes beyond the existing Foucauldian understanding. The novel's inscription of the post-apartheid state reinforces Foucault's idea of the Panoptic principle of constant surveillance. Through the conception of 'Moxy' (a fictional cyber figure who is always watching, always surveying) the novel engages in detail with the role of technology as a means of social control, and thus the broader question of the bio-political dimensions of state surveillance. However, the novel also goes beyond Foucault's Panoptic principle to include the control of the individual through the application of excessively rigid spatial relations and the enforcement of discipline on the body through extreme violence and intimidation. What the novel suggests, through its inscription of the 'disciplined' body, is that what marks post-apartheid South African society is the excessive use of force against which the individual has no recourse. The corporate state of this post-apartheid imaginary state is envisioned as all-powerful and all-pervasive. Its control over the body is not limited to simple movements around the city; rather, it extends much further to include cutting the body off from all access to city life, as well as the extreme violence of the police force that maintains control over individual bodies. The destruction of Tendeka's body also explores the all-powerful

control mechanisms and disciplinary practices of the state, in that his resistance achieves no change, being entirely unsuccessful and thus ending in the horrific destruction of his body.

By foregrounding the body and body inscriptions in *Moxyland*, I have also examined this novel's pervasive concerns with boundary-marking and boundary-disruption, as well as the significance of the 'cyborg identity'. The idea of technology as a tool of discipline and social control is seen in the novel's depiction of Kendra. Through this character the novel explores the notion of the 'disciplined' body as that which has been controlled in relation to dominant social norms, through the rearrangement of its fundamental biological make-up. What is suggested in the novel's exploration of the 'cyborg identity' (via Kendra) is that this biological manipulation may lead to a new level of invisible control, which again extends beyond the limits of Foucault's notions of power mechanisms.

Other concerns of the novel, I have examined, are boundary-crossing, and the breaching of boundaries. One important example of these concerns is the 'cyborg'. In the novel the 'cyborg' is seen as that which crosses the boundary, between the normal and the abnormal, and out of this conception comes a new category of bodies. In *Moxyland*, the 'cyborg' becomes an exemplification of the extent to which these boundaries can be crossed and breached. The novel can thus be said to engage, to a large extent, with boundaries, boundary-crossing and the breaching of boundaries; particularly the conventional distinctions between the human and the non-human. Adding further impetus to the novel's attempts to unsettle conventional views of the body, therefore, is its engagement with the concept of boundary-marking. By imagining a body that is both 'private' and 'corporate', the novel challenges the conventional boundaries between the body and the 'outside' world. In my reading of *Moxyland*, the boundaries of the body are no longer fixed but blurred: they are permeable and penetrable, rather than sealed off. The conception of the 'cyborg' in this novel thus destabilizes the socially-constructed boundaries, which make distinctions between the human and the non-human (machine). As a post-modernist strategy, the 'cyborg' is then potentially an even greater danger to these boundaries than the object. In these ways, it can be concluded that my examination of *Moxyland* provides a reading of the body which extends beyond the notions set out by the

existing critical theory, offering a means of redefining the terms in which the body can be understood.

## Chapter Two: *Zoo City*

### Introduction

Like *Moxylant*, *Zoo City* (set in Johannesburg) explores questions of dystopia and the post-apartheid imaginary, through its depictions and representations of the body. Aside from concerns with the ‘abject’ body, the ‘disciplined’ body and the ‘marginalized’ body, *Zoo City* is characterized by its focus on the ‘marked’ or the ‘animalled’ body. In the novel, the body is constructed in terms of its relationship to the dominant social architecture, with a primary focus on the body’s interactions with the laws of the post-apartheid society depicted. In *Zoo City*, the characters’ negative interactions with the law (illegality or infringement) become the point of social division. Those who disregard social mores and engage in illegal activities are then ‘marked’ with an animal, and are relocated to an area known as “Zoo City” (Beukes, 2010:59) – existing on the margins of central Johannesburg. Social divisions therefore become a central theme of this novel, an idea explored in the way in which new boundaries (particularly between ‘normative’ society and ‘Zoo City’) are formulated.

As previously argued, the focus of my interest in *Zoo City* is on the representations of the body. My examination also extends to exploring how bodies are inscribed, and to how bodies relate; both with regard to the spaces they occupy and the dominant social architecture. The way in which the body engages with space is important to examine, and attention will also be given to the body as it is seen to navigate the repressive social structures depicted. Concerns with the body form an important aspect of the novel’s more general concerns both with the formation of identity, and the nature of the post-apartheid state. As in *Moxylant*, *Zoo City* also engages with the forging and deconstruction of boundaries with regard to the body and space. In the novel, severe and solid boundaries are erected between ‘marked’ and ‘unmarked’ bodies. In turn, questions are raised about the formation of urban identities and the links between bodies, identity and urban space.

*Zoo City* pulls into focus Kristeva’s notion of the abject body (1982) as a central aspect of its concerns, while also bringing attention to Foucault’s notion of the ‘disciplined’ body (1992). The novel foregrounds questions about the formulation and destabilization of

identity, with a particular focus on the female identity. The abject body, in *Zoo City*, is that which is marked and ‘marked out’, as it is that which must be cast out of ‘normative’ society, and excluded from the body politic, because it threatens the sense of ‘normal’ boundaries. A further focus of my discussion in this chapter is on the questions of gender and gender dynamics. Gender becomes important when discussing the body as it has an instrumental effect on the construction of identity, within particular social and cultural contexts. The dynamic between the genders is important in understanding the social constructs of power in this novel, particularly in the ability of the female protagonist (Zinzi) to progress, whereas the male (Benoît) is unable to do so. In all these ways, this chapter builds on the existing critical literature on the dystopian post-apartheid state by examining the construction of the body and embodiments, as well as by further extending the examination of the inscriptions of the body.

### **The Marked Body**

*Zoo City* is a multi-generic novel that incorporates elements of: science fiction, fantasy, slipstream, film noir, dystopia, magical realism, and melodrama. The novel traces the survival of one woman, Zinzi December, as she experiences life in ‘Zoo City’. Her body is physically marked by her mangled left ear, which has been damaged as a result of the murder of her brother; Thando. This is also the event that ‘marks’ Zinzi as ‘animalled’, as a result of being convicted of and imprisoned for Thando’s murder. The animal that Zinzi is ‘marked’ by, and thus burdened, with is a sloth named Sloth: animals are referred to throughout the novel by the name of their species. Sloth also seems to be a moralizing force for Zinzi, as will be detailed later. Zinzi resides in a run-down block of flats within ‘Zoo City’, known as Elysium Heights, where she lives with her refugee boyfriend, Benoît. Benoît’s character is important; he is a refugee from Rwanda seeking asylum in ‘Zoo City’ and is also ‘animalled’ with a Mongoose. Zinzi survives in the city through the use of her *Shavi* (a special power which is assigned to those who have been ‘animalled’). She uses this talent to find the lost things of others, a service for which she charges a monetary fee. Zinzi’s narrative begins with her relationship with Vuyo, a corrupt drug dealer who forces Zinzi to defraud good-hearted people of money because she is indebted to him due to an old drug habit. Zinzi is then employed by Mrs Ludistky to find a missing ring. However,

her life takes a turn for the worse when she is accused by Inspector Tshabalala of murdering Mrs Luditsky, as she is the last one to have seen Mrs Luditsky alive. Zinzi's story is seen to develop, as an important point of focus, when she is employed by the well-known music producer Odi Huron, to find one of his clients, Songweza (a teenage girl who is a professional singer), who has gone missing. Zinzi, along with two of Odi's accomplices (Marabou and Maltese), embarks on a journey to find Songweza. During the trip she discovers Odi's true identity as a "Zoo" (2010:15): a name referring to an "animalled" (2010:338) person. The novel culminates with Zinzi finding Songweza and witnessing her murder by S'bu – an event orchestrated by Odi in a desperate attempt to be rid of his animal (which will be detailed later). During this event, Zinzi also exhibits superhuman strength in saving Benoît. Through Zinzi's journey, the body comes into focus as a means of 'marking' for social discipline.

Much like the cyborg figure in *Moxyland*, the marked bodies of *Zoo City* foreground questions of social division and hierarchy. The basis of social division in *Zoo City* differs from that explored in *Moxyland*, as bodies are socially categorized into divisions determined by social position or class category. In *Zoo City*, however, bodies are organized into socially categorized spaces on the basis of whether or not that body is 'marked'. 'Marked' bodies are allocated social living space outside of normative society and are thus excluded from the body politic. It may be argued that this space exists on the margins of normative society in the area known as 'Zoo City'. Bodies are 'marked' in this text not by reputation or physical scars but by a physical manifestation of their criminal or anti-social activity in the form of attachment to an animal. These animals must accompany their unwilling owners permanently and in all activities. They become an extension of the 'marked' or socially rejected human body. 'Marked', or what will be referred to as 'animalled', bodies are heavily restricted within the physical spaces of the city. They are unable to relate completely, or in any meaningful way, to 'unmarked' or 'normal' bodies. 'Zoo City' houses all of these 'animalled' bodies. These bodies are seen to be separate, distinct and utterly rejected by the general body politic and 'normal' society. The physical separation of people based on one's relation to the law, is reflected in the difference between 'marked' and 'unmarked' bodies.

The representation of social division in the novel is reminiscent of the material effects of the Group Areas Act of 1950, as enforced during the apartheid era. However, whereas apartheid divisions were based on race, Beukes depicts a post-apartheid society which is divided between those who obey the law and those who do not. The boundary created through this division suggests that the post-apartheid state may not be an improvement on apartheid; instead, what is revealed is that segregation has not ceased but has simply shifted to another domain of exclusion. The novel could thus be seen as passing social commentary, perhaps hinting that post-apartheid South African society is not better or more progressive than the apartheid regime. Rather, post-apartheid society is characterized by a new ruling regime which simply seeks out a different basis on which divisions can be made. What is important to note, is that social segregation is still very much a part of the way in which the post-apartheid society is imagined within the novel. In both *Moxyland* and *Zoo City*, the post-apartheid communities that are constructed simply mirror apartheid; only the focus of distinction has shifted either from race to class, or from race to legality. What could be suggested is that Beukes is attempting to highlight the fact that the segregation of humans will not cease, but rather will adapt itself to new conditions, formulating new boundaries according to which bodies can be categorized and consequently marginalized. A possible reason for the new modes of division is that despite the advent of democracy, poverty and inequality both still persist.

### **Discipline and the Body**

In order to explore the way in which *Zoo City* engages with the notion of the ‘disciplined’ body, I draw on the works of Foucault (1992), Bordo (1993), and Bartky (2000), to examine the ways in which subjects in the novel regulate their bodies in relation to the dominant social ideals. In my first chapter, I explored the ways in which bodies were ‘disciplined’ in *Moxyland*: primarily through the execution of brute force as applied directly to the corporeal body itself, in order to maintain social and individual control. However, in *Zoo City* ‘discipline’ is imposed upon bodies in a far more subtle way: it is imposed upon the consciousness of the subject in addition to its corporeality. Although the presence of the animal is an example of corporeal ‘discipline’ (in that it forms an extension of the body) what is important to explore here is the way in which power operates in

society to regulate bodies, to conform or not to conform to the dominant social norms. Foucault's conception of the operation of power – as taken up by Bartky – is important to note here, as it is more complex than the model of victim and victimizer. According to Bartky:

Subjectivities including, of course, gendered subjectivities, are constituted through individual surveillance and obedience to norms that arise with 'regimes' of knowledge/power – 'discourses'. In this view gross violence is not necessary to subjugate women, just a gaze. (2000:326)

In *Zoo City*, two social worlds are depicted, each with its own cultural or social ethos governing the norms imposed upon bodies within the two spaces. These social spaces are 'normative' society, and 'Zoo City' existing on the border of this so-called 'normal' world. Both of these worlds are constructed out of a culture that governs the forms of power that rule over bodies in these worlds. Power, in both these spaces functions in the same way as Foucault understands power mechanisms. In the novel, power circulates silently, working on the subconscious of the subjects in such a way that it prompts bodies to a form of self-discipline. Unlike the world represented in *Moxyland*, the city space of *Zoo City* is not surveyed by the Big Brother 'concept', and individual movements are not monitored by an omniscient presence. Rather, the body is disciplined and controlled by the individual subject. An example of such power mechanisms is evident in Zinzi's reaction to the interrogation room of the police department after the murder of 'normal' citizen Mrs Luditsky. Zinzi is accused of Mrs Luditsky's murder, since she, having been employed by Mrs Luditsky to find a lost ring, is the last person to see her alive:

There are two things in the interrogation room with me and Inspector Tshabalala. The one is Mrs Luditsky's ring. The other is twelve and a half minutes of silence. I've been counting the seconds. One alligator. Two alligator. 751 alligator. She's forgetting I've done jail-time. 766 alligator. That if you're smart, prison is just a waiting game. I can wait when I have to. I can wait like nobody's business. 774 alligator. Sloth is the one who gets fidgety. He huffs in my ear and shifts his butt around. 800 alligator. It's

supposed to make me nervous. Nervousness hates a vacuum. 826 alligator.  
(Beukes, 2010: 28)

Here, Zinzi is seen to be almost comfortable in the interrogation room, as if she has been conditioned not to fear the possibility of physical confinement. It is in such a reaction that the cultural difference between the two city spaces is highlighted. In a general view of Western society, the possibility of prison is a concept that induces a sense of fear in an individual. Looking at it from such a perspective, the body is then disciplined not to commit crime or be associated with it. However, in the cultural construct of *Zoo City*, individuals are no longer deterred or disciplined by the concept of forced physical confinement; instead, those who disobey the law are physically and permanently marked via an animal, and thus no longer fear being on the ‘wrong’ side of the law. Through Zinzi, the fragility of social and cultural constructs is expressed: “It’s a fragile state – the world as we know it. All it takes is one Afghan warlord to show up with a Penguin, in a bulletproof vest, and everything science and religion thought they knew goes right out the window” (Beukes, 2010:29). Through such a statement, the novel brings into question the stability of cultural and social constructs. In the novel’s post-apartheid imaginary, Beukes essentially turns the ‘normal’ world on its head.

According to Butler, the material shapes of our bodies are ‘disciplined’ to correspond to a social ideal, and those which fail to do so are ejected from the ‘body politic’ (1990:182). In the novel, the bodies of ‘Zoo City’ become part of the rejected social landscape Butler describes, because they have failed to correspond to the social ideal of obedience to the law. By failing to correspond to the social ideal, these bodies are physically relocated to ‘Zoo City’ – a poverty- stricken, outcast society – existing on the fringe of the dominant city, Johannesburg. By creating an entire social structure that can exist outside of the borders of the dominant cultural construct, Beukes works against dominant Western social and cultural ideals. Instead of the conventional prison system, Beukes creates one of exclusionary surveillance mimicking the Panopticon. What is interesting, however, is that the excluded society does not exist autonomously from normative society, as its inhabitants must rely on the tolerance of ‘normal’ society. Bodies of ‘Zoo City’ are thus ‘othered’ from ‘normal’ bodies, as they are verbally discriminated

against and excluded. Such exclusion is illustrated as Zinzi asks a man in a carpark, where her car was broken into if he saw anything: “He flicks an offcut of rubber at my feet. It’s as eloquent a gesture of contempt as spitting. ‘Fuck off, apo’” (2010:204). The term ‘apo’, is a discriminatory word used by normal people to describe those who have been ‘animalled’. By depicting encounters such as these, the novel sheds light on the social mechanisms of power. Social power is seen here to be held by those who are untarnished and ‘unanimalled’ regardless of their class rank, as is seen in the same scene where Zinzi turns to the ‘yellow-eyed car guard’ and questions him about the whereabouts of her cellular phone and he responds: “‘There’s no phone, lady. Now *fokkof*,’” (2010:205). These two encounters exemplify that the social mechanisms of power in the novel work on the conscious level of the individual through explicit discrimination.

As I have previously mentioned, power in the novel parallels Foucault’s theory of the Panopticon. In Foucault’s theory, power mechanisms are shown to work on the level of individual consciousness, where bodies voluntarily discipline themselves in order to avoid a life in ‘Zoo City’. The social micro-politics of the novel are not based on obvious disciplinary power such as a police force; instead people are disciplined through the attitudes of others. An example of this kind of disciplinary power is evident in Odi Huron’s attempts to conceal his animal (a large crocodile), and his desire to cast it off onto S’bu. For the majority of the novel, Odi is able to conceal his animal; however, because it is so large, he is forced to become a recluse. Odi’s secret is revealed towards the end of the novel, as Zinzi discovers Odi’s true identity. In her attempts to find and save Songweza from Odi’s exploitation, Zinzi finds herself at the mercy of Odi, along with Benoît, who gets attacked by Odi’s crocodile. The burden of the animal becomes clear as Odi desperately wants to thrust his animal onto S’bu after he forces S’bu to kill his sister Songweza:

Huron repeats the words after her, dully. His hands shaking. ‘I offer this boy in my place. Let him not be animalled. Let him take mine. Bound by flesh, bound by blood.’ He lunges forward and slices the crocodile’s snout with the knife, as it tears at Songweza again. It yanks its head away in fury and hisses at him with open jaws. ‘Now you,’ Odi screams at S’bu. ‘Say: I take this animal.’ (2010:338)

Odi's desperate attempt here to be rid of his animal suggests the effectiveness of such a punishment. The punishment of being 'animalled' is effective because it impacts not only the human's social standing, but even extends to the person's physical body. The effect that an animal has on its human becomes evident as, in her attempted escape from Odi, Zinzi says: "I creep out of the water as quietly as I can so as not to disturb the Crocodile, which is still head-butting S'bu. I've seen animals live for months after their humans have died. But they're never quite the same" (2010:340). Although Odi is successfully released from his 'animalled' life, it does not last long, as the crocodile kills Odi (2010:342). It is clear, from these examples, that one can assume that the power mechanisms of this fictional world are such that once a person is 'marked' with an animal, there is simply no escape from this punishment. Therefore, the power mechanisms, in this world circulate silently and on a subconscious level; however, they also work on a physical level. While the body itself is not subjected to the forms of extreme physical punishment we saw in *Moxylant*, it is subjected to the inescapable burden of the constant companion of its animal. This kind of punishment here also works on the level of physical health, as although 'animalled' subjects can leave the animal behind, they will suffer forms of physical illness.

Moving on, the 'marked' body in this novel can also be read in terms of Kristeva's notion of the 'abject' body (1982:2), as well as the 'abject' body as understood by Butler (1990:182), the body which fails to conform to normative social ideals. As previously mentioned, the 'marked' or 'abjected' body is created through its specific, individual, and unfavourable, interaction with societal laws. Consequently, once a body is 'marked', it then becomes 'abjected', as it fails to conform to normative social ideals and is subsequently excluded from the body politic entirely; both from other 'normal' people, as well as from the 'normal' geographical city space. In the novel, however, the body is not only excluded from the 'body politic', it is also geographically repositioned to an area that exists entirely separately from the dominant social architecture ('Zoo City'). It is, therefore, obvious that 'marked' bodies have a distinctly negative relationship with this dominant social architecture which, like they are, is rejected.

The way in which the body is inscribed in the novel is important in understanding how and why it has a deleterious relationship with dominant society. Most importantly, the ‘marked’ body is profoundly, painfully and obviously ‘othered’ in the text. Not because it has been changed or deformed, but rather because it has been made different by the forced extension (and addition of) an animal, with which the body is constantly burdened. For the protagonist, Zinzi, this animal is not small but a relatively large and heavy sloth (accompanying her in all of her daily activities), which is not only a punishment but also an important signifier of difference. Thus, the ‘animalled’ person then forges the boundary between ‘normal’ bodies and “zoos” (2010:11) – another derogatory name referring to those who reside in ‘Zoo City’. It is through the division and boundary-marking that society can exclude these bodies from the body politic. They (‘zoos’) are deemed abnormal, and therefore unworthy of engaging with the rest of the population: ‘normal’ bodies and ‘normal’ social spaces.

The question of bodies in space thus brings into focus the question of identity. The body’s identity, in *Zoo City*, is heavily dependent on its relation to the dominant social ideals and city space. As abject bodies ‘zoos’ are placed in a lower social category, thus pre-determining their geographical location. In this way, your identity, the place in which you live and where you are able go all depend on the particular social ranking in this world. Unlike *Moxyland*, the physical space of the city is not strictly controlled by physical boundaries; rather, it is regulated by the marking of bodies, which then creates social boundaries. In *Zoo City*, the social boundaries are invisible and are not policed, so that bodies are not as physically restricted as in *Moxyland*. Rather, those who are ‘animalled’ are psychologically aware of their lack of place in this seemingly normal space, and so choose to avoid engaging with it. Therefore, the city space in *Zoo City* works in the same way as Foucault’s Panopticon (Easthope and McGowan, 1992:85). The Panopticon’s style of external surveillance work on an individual level to control and discipline bodies, rather, than to threaten extreme violence as in *Moxyland*.

In order to understand the way in which the body is disciplined, in *Zoo City*, we must relook at Foucault’s theory of the Panopticon as a mechanism of power. The Panopticon is a machine that produces homogeneous effects of power and so it becomes

unnecessary to employ force in order to contain the subject and maintain good behaviour; thus the Panoptic institution can be light without bars, chains and heavy locks: “all that was needed was that the separations should be clear and the openings well arranged” (1992:86). The Panopticon must be understood as “a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men” (1992:87). Discipline is thus identified, not as an institution or apparatus, but as “a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a physics or an anatomy of power, a technology” (1992:87). The novel’s social construction resembles this kind of power mechanism as it reinforces Foucault’s idea “that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers” (1992:85). With the constant signification of ‘zoo’ status through the physical animal, the Panoptic principle of power is achieved. The animal is not only a signifier to others of the person’s criminal activity, but it also serves as a constant reminder to the subjects themselves of their deviancy. This kind of deviancy is seen in chapter seventeen where Beukes provides us with an abstract explaining the experience of being ‘animalled’ and the psychological phenomenon known as “shadow-self absorption” (Beukes, 2010:180), a kind of ‘Grim Reaper-like’ figure that evokes fear in ‘zoos’. This threatening phenomenon commonly known as the “Undertow” (2010:11) reveals that ‘zoos’ are subjected not only to the stigmatization of others, but are also victims of their own trauma that they “experience as a result of lifelong anticipation of shadow-self absorption” (2010:180-181). The trauma of experiencing this Panoptic-like surveillance and self-discipline is depicted in the novel as exemplified below:

Whilst the sensationalism of animal sex and death has provoked the media into ever-increasing coverage of the exoticism of ‘zoos’, society has largely ignored the true meaning of these acts: a desperate rallying cry from Aposymbiots who wish to take charge of their own existence rather than waiting to be led like the proverbial lamb, duck or llama to the divine slaughter. (2010:181)

Another instance of this trauma is seen through Zinzi's detailing of her experience of being 'animalled', particularly her desire to be free of Sloth, even if only for a while:

Sloth huffs grumpily, sprawled out on the floor with a bunch of cassava leaves I got at the market downstairs to placate him (along with a tub of wood lice for the Mongoose). If I could leave Sloth behind, I would. But the feedback loop of the separation anxiety is crippling. Crack cravings have nothing on being away from your animal. (2010:142)

In the above examples, Beukes reveals the kind of relationship an Aposymbiot (2010:142) has with his/her animal, that it is an extension of the subject's body and not only a form of social punishment and discipline. Therefore, the Panoptic principle is evident in the social power mechanisms, as external surveillance is overshadowed by individual discipline. The person that is 'animalled' cannot escape the external stigmatization, and is also constantly self-aware: not only through the presence of the animal itself, but also through the physiological and psychological effect that the animal has on the individual. Self-discipline is also seen through the Sloth itself, which is seen as a moralizing force when Zinzi escapes the yellow-eyed car guard:

It takes a long time to find the strength to stand up and carry on, and when I shrug Sloth onto my shoulders, he is so waterlogged, it feels like he's put on ten kilos. Sloth is ominously quiet. It's my indication of how much shit we're in because normally he's the first to complain, bleating rebukes in my ear. The worst is that I don't know where we are. It's not like I'm the world authority on Joburg's storm drains, but I've been down here enough times looking for lost things to know the basic lie of the land. This is all unfamiliar. (2010: 212)

Here, Zinzi mentions that Sloth is normally her moral compass, and his silence in this instance is an indicator that she is in a lot of trouble. In this way, the Panoptic principle of power is reinforced; as the animal serves not only as a reminder of past wrongdoing, but is also seen to be a moralizing agent who attempts to prevent future wrong doing. Another example can be seen in Odi's experience as he had successfully hidden his animal status;

however, he had to live a life of reclusion in order to do so. We see the extent of his desperation to be freed from his animal in the final chapters, as he transfers his animal on to S'bu. Although he is successful in removing his own animal status, the crocodile ultimately kills Odi, suggesting that in this society there is no escape from one's actions.

The 'marked' and 'abject' bodies in *Zoo City* are inscribed in a way that seems to create a Panoptic-like system out of the dominant social formation. Rather than the 'other' being contained in a single cell and persistently surveyed, the 'marked' bodies here are surveyed everywhere and at all times in the city space, allowing these bodies to be disciplined and punished simultaneously. The distinctly negative relationship between these bodies and the dominant social architecture is thus created, and which as a disciplinary technique differs dramatically from *Moxyland's* treatment of the 'othered' body. In *Moxyland* the body is substantially and agonizingly punished, extending even to the extreme state of enforcing bio-weaponry; instead, *Zoo City* takes a deceptively passive approach to punishment in the imagined post-apartheid state. To punish bodies by enforced relocation and through the constant burden of an animal does not seem as aggressive or harmful as the vehemence used in *Moxyland* to enforce social control. However, it could be argued that, in some ways, this is a more effective and detrimental punishment as it affects the mind as well as the corporeal body.

In *Zoo City*, the body is physically 'marked', therefore allowing it to be relentlessly surveyed, as well as disqualified from the city and normal streams of society. The physical marking of the body may not have a dramatic impact on the body itself, but it could be argued to be a more effective means operative way of social control, as it has a damaging psychological impact upon the individual. The body is constantly made aware of its otherness, and therefore the punishment could be seen as to be far more penetrating than the physical pain seen in *Moxyland*. The presence of pervasive surveillance, in *Zoo City*, thus becomes a determinant of identity. Identity then becomes based purely on social position, instead of individual merit of character. The self is disqualified as important in the generation of identity, and the body, evidently, becomes the sole source of identity construction. Individual identity is no longer important; rather, where you are placed in the city space determines your social value. In this way, the body is inscribed, in *Zoo City*, as a

site of disempowerment – reinforcing the idea that the segregation experienced during the apartheid regime has simply shifted in the post-apartheid imaginary. Although the focus has shifted from race to legal status, segregation is still informed by the physicality of the body, as this physicality determines a body's position in the class system. Therefore, segregation can be said to be still based very much on the corporeal self in the post-apartheid imaginary.

### **The Abjected Body**

As has been suggested, Kristeva's notion of the 'abject' body (1982) – and its subsequent treatment in the work of Butler (1990) – provides a useful tool to explore the inscriptions of the body in *Zoo City*. The mind/body dualism which underpinned so much of mainstream Western patriarchal thought has resulted in a denigration of the body – a profound distrust of the body – which amounts to a form of "somatophobia" (Grosz, 1994:5), which has led to the body being regarded as that which must be controlled and disciplined. The notion of the 'abject' body, as has already been suggested, is explored in *Zoo City* through the notion of bodies that have become 'animalled'. These bodies are excluded from the body politic due to their 'otherness', being different from the norm and therefore having to be rejected and removed from normal society. 'Abjection', for Kristeva, refers to the body which provokes disgust because it reminds us of everything that has had to be suppressed in order to form the self (1982:3). The 'abject' therefore is that which has been expelled and excluded from the self and becomes its 'other'. Kristeva suggests that the abject body is constructed not out of what the body expels but out of that which is considered to be 'other' (1982:3). The 'abjection' of the body, through 'marking' or being 'animalled', renders the bodies of 'Zoo City' incapable of transcending their corporeality. Therefore, these bodies are more biological and less rational than those belonging to the mainstream society. The inability for the body to transcend its corporeality is the presiding form of social control in this fictionalized world; therefore those who are 'animalled' are seen as doubly locked into the body and incapable of transcendence. Conventionally, the mind has been associated with the male and the body has been associated with the female making the dualism distinctively gender-focused (Shiebinger, 2000:1). However, in the

novel this distinction is undifferentiated through gender channels; rather, the split focusses on distinctions between 'normative' bodies and the bodies of 'zoos'.

### **The Body in Abjected Space**

As has been suggested, the historical resonances of the injustices of the apartheid regime that appear in Beukes's imagined post-apartheid state are hard to ignore. The geographical and social division of bodies is distinctly reminiscent of the Group Areas Act. This can be seen, in the novel as a rejected 'zoo's' presence in the mainstream city is very unwelcome:

It takes us an hour and a half to get to Midrand and the golf estate where S'busiso and Songweza Radebe share a townhouse next door to their legal guardian, Mrs Prim Luthuli, all generously sponsored by their record label. Another ten minutes to get past the gate guard, who grills us and insists that we all step out of the car to be photographed by the webcam mounted on the window of his security booth. 'Animalists everywhere,' Mark says through clenched teeth, as the guard raises the boom and waves us through. 'They'd bring back the quarantine camps if they could.' (2010:99)

From the above example, it is clear that spaces in *Zoo City* work in a similar way to those in *Moxyland*, as they are still a form of boundary-making and social division. The physical space of 'Zoo City' is described as a rejected space inhabited by equally rejected people. The rejected space of 'Zoo City' is evident in Zinzi's description of her flat in Elysium Heights below:

Leaving the Mongoose to scrolf at its flank, I duck under one of the loops of rope hanging from the ceiling, the closest I can get to providing authentic Amazon jungle vines, and pad over the rotten linoleum to the cupboard. Calling it a cupboard is a tad optimistic, like calling this dank room with its precariously canted floor and intermittent plumbing an apartment is optimistic. The cupboard is not much more than an open box with a piece of fabric pinned across it to keep the dust off my clothes – and Sloth, of course. (2010:8)

It is clear from such an example, that the physical space of ‘Zoo City’ is as rejected as those residing within it. The bodies that inhabit this rejected space are not only ‘marked’ by the animal they carry, but also by the word used to characterize them: ‘zoos’. The name ‘zoo’ signifies that these bodies are of ‘Zoo City’; they not only inhabit this space but they are representative of it as well. The social and spatial divisions force these bodies, or ‘zoos’, to exist and survive in extremely inhumane physical spaces:

The blackened walls of Elysium Heights’ stairwell still carry a whiff of the Undertow, like polyester burning in a microwave. The stairway is mummified in yellow police tape and a charm against evidence-tampering, as if the cops are ever going to come back and investigate. A dead zoo in Zoo City is low priority even on a good day. Most of the residents have been forced to use the fire-escape to bypass this floor. But there are faster ways to the ground. I have a talent not just for finding lost things, but shortcuts too. I duck into number 615, abandoned ever since the fire tore through here, and scramble down through the hole in the floor that drops into 526, which has been gutted by scrap rats who ripped out the floorboards, the pipes, the fittings – anything that could be sold for a hit. Speaking of which, there is a junkie passed out in the doorway, some dirty furry thing nested against his chest, breathing fast and shallow. My slops crunch on the brittle glitter of a broken lightbulb as I step over him. (2010:11)

In the above passage, the physical space of ‘Zoo City’ is again reinforced as a rejected space. Here, Zinzi describes the unimaginable process she follows just to exit her house on a daily basis: she must scramble through a hole in the floor, almost as if she is a rat. She must then drop down one story to access the floor below hers, a flat that has been gutted by “scrap rats” (2010:11) who have stolen pipes, floorboards, etc. to sell for drugs; it is in this instance that we are able to glimpse at the physical space of ‘Zoo City’. It becomes apparent early on in the novel that the people of ‘Zoo City’ are categorized as a very low caste. In essence, the space of ‘Zoo City’ becomes an informal prison, where the punishment does not take the form of constraint; rather, inmates are punished through rejection. Through such rejection, the novel highlights the particular mechanisms of power

which operate in this dystopian post-apartheid society. Furthermore, the name of the apartment block in which Zinzi resides is also interesting to note, here, as it is ironically called 'Elysium Heights'. The word 'Elysium' has two meanings: either as a place or condition of ideal happiness, or as the place of the blessed after death. In both versions, the word itself alludes to a place of ideality and happiness, forming an ironic contrast to the actual physical space of 'Zoo City'. Elysium Heights is in fact a dilapidated, run-down, rejected, and 'abjected' space. The passage above describes the particularly 'abject' character of such a space which, in turn, draws our attention to the harshness of the social environment. What is also striking about these scenarios is the inscribed relationship between bodies and space. A further description of 'Zoo City' reinforces the aforementioned idea:

People who would happily speed through Zoo City during the day won't detour here at night, not even to avoid police roadblocks. They're too scared, but that's precisely when Zoo City is at its most sociable. From 6pm, when the day-jobbers start getting back from whatever work they've been able to pick up, apartment doors are flung open. Kids chase each other down the corridors. People take their animals out for fresh air or a friendly sniff of each other's bums. The smell of cooking – mostly food, but also meth – temporarily drowns out the stench of rot, the urine in the stairwells. The crack whores emerge from their dingy apartments to chat and smoke cigarettes on the fire-escape, and catcall the commuters heading to the taxi rank on the street below. (2010:132)

Although Zinzi speaks almost endearingly about 'Zoo City' – as in the above example – the passage also hints at the negative relationship between people and this space: "But the sickness in Elias's lungs could just as well be asbestos or a reaction to the black mould. Proper diagnoses are as rare as real doctors round here" (2010:133). Here, the body is described as having a negative physical reaction to the space it occupies, which goes beyond consciousness, suggesting that the bodies themselves reject the space as much as the space rejects the body which occupies it.

## **Mind vs Body**

To understand fully how the body is inscribed in *Zoo City*, an examination of the way in which the novel engages with the mind/body dualism is vital. According to Grosz, “[d]ualism is the assumption that there are two distinct, mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive substances, mind and body, each of which inhabits its own self-contained sphere” (1994:6). According to mainstream Western patriarchal thought, the mind/body dualism means that these two substances exist in two separate, self-contained spheres. Essentially, they are two individual distinct entities, which can exist independently of each other. However, I suggest that this assumption cannot always be true; for example in the modern world the body may be able to survive without the presence of the mind inhabiting it, as advances in technology have made life support possible through the invention of biologically aiding machines. However, this assumption is not necessarily true for the mind, as the mind cannot exist outside, or independently of, the body; rather, it is due to the commonly held assumption that the physical location of the mind and/or soul is unknown. What is known is that the mind exists somewhere within the corporeal body. As Grosz points out, the body has been regarded as a tool or machine at the disposal of consciousness, as the possession of a subject (1994:9). It has also been “considered a signifying medium, a vehicle of expression, a mode of rendering public and communicable what is essentially private (ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc). [The body is] a vehicle for the expression of an otherwise sealed and self-contained, incommunicable psyche, [...] it is through the body that he or she can receive, code and translate the inputs of the ‘external’ world” (1994:9). From such a standpoint, it becomes clear that the basis on which misogynist thought and patriarchal oppression rests is problematic. Mainstream Western patriarchal thought has essentially denied or ignored the existence of the corporeal male body, evaluating male capacity in terms of the mind, reason and rationality exclusively. As critics have suggested, the mind/body dualism has particular consequences for women as it provides the main justification for the disciplining of the female body: Men are ‘of mind’, thus associated with reason and rationality, and women are ‘of body’, thus connected to irrationality and passion (Grosz, 1994:3). The implication is that men exist independently of the body. Patriarchal oppression and misogynist thought has justified itself on the basis

of assigning all that is 'body' to the female, and therefore has failed to integrate its own (male) corporeality.

It is important to examine *Zoo City*, as it offers graphic depictions of the male body. It may be possible to argue that this depiction of the male body and the emphasis on the corporeal self in the text serves to destabilize this dualism. In the novel, the depiction of the male body is primarily seen through Benoit. Benoit, as I have mentioned, is a refugee whose physical body has been through many experiences on his journey from Rwanda to Johannesburg. The effect of his journey is evident in the description of his feet which are calloused, "like knots of driftwood" (Beukes, 2010:7) from walking from Kinshasa to Johannesburg. Benoit's journey was an escape from his experience in Kinshasa where the FLDR (The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) scarred his body, turning his skin into a cellophane-like texture (2010:65), as a result of their attack on him five years earlier. It could be argued that the novel highlights the corporeality of the male body, emphasizing its vulnerability to pain and the potential for it to be marked and disciplined, via Benoit's scarring. The male body then is not only brought into focus, but is established as being on the same biological level as the female body, as it is not beyond the physical and can therefore feel and experience pain. However, the novel's exploration of the male body is not limited to the depictions of Benoit's. Other male bodies, particularly the seemingly powerful ones, are shown to be as vulnerable as female bodies: for instance, Odi Huron's, Thando's, S'bu's and Gio's bodies. Yet another example is Thando's body, which is seen to be far more vulnerable than his sister's (Zinzi) as the bullet which only mangled her ear destroyed his skull: "There is a man with plastic gloves and a facemask picking out globs of brain and pieces of Thando's skull from the Daisy bush" (2010:198). Similarly, the body of Gio (an old boyfriend of Zinzi's) is also seen as vulnerable; his vulnerability is evident as Zinzi meets him at a place known as Counter Rev (2010:216), in order to follow up a lead on Songweza (as her latest boyfriend, Ronaldo, is said to work there). In Zinzi's words, about Gio: "Someone beat him ugly. His face is bruised, his right eye is a watering slit in a purple sack. There are cigarette burns on the inside of his wrist where he is gripping my arm. Perhaps the splinted fingers aren't boxing damage after all" (2010:225). As I suggest, this could be read as challenging entrenched views of the male and female body. What is interesting to note here is the comparative lack of focus in the novel on the

vulnerability of the female body. Zinzi's body is only mentioned as bearing the scar of her mangled ear and the sloth she must always carry; no attention is given to her other features, such as skin, hair, and eyes. Whereas Zinzi's body is physically marked through her mangled left ear, which is (relatively) concealable, however, large portions of the surface of Benoît's body are significantly marked by the plastically burnt skin of his face, neck and chest: "Benoit doesn't say anything. His hand goes absently to the burn scars on his throat where the skin is Barbie-plasticky and shiny under the collar of his t-shirt" (2010:57). What could be deduced from such an example is that the novel is perhaps attempting to challenge the traditional mind/body dualism by rendering the male subject as equally vulnerable as the female body. Benoît essentially wears the pain to which his body has been subjected, and it becomes the ultimate marking of the body. Benoît's body is a constant reminder of his traumatic passage from Kinshasa to Johannesburg. What is also an issue, therefore, is the impact which social/historical structures and experiences have upon the physical body. As the body cannot exist apart from the mind, so the body cannot exist apart from society and culture. Benoît's scars are the signification of a larger conflict taking place in his native Rwanda:

The full story only came out later, and then only in snapshots, images caught in a strobe. The last time he saw his family, they were running into the forest, like ghosts between the trees. Then the FLDR beat him to the ground with their rifle butts, poured paraffin over him and set him alight. That was over five years ago. (2010:67)

Of further interest to this discussion of the representation of the wounded body is the fact that the reader is constantly reminded of Zinzi's mangled ear: "a lime green scarf tied over the little dreadlock twists that conveniently hide the mangled wreckage of my left ear" (2010:8). We are constantly aware of the marking of her body not only by the Sloth, but also through her body in pain. Zinzi's mangled ear not only represents the 'marking' and 'abjection' of her body, but is also a signifier of her mangled life. Although Zinzi is also 'of mind', her body becomes a barrier because not only is she rejected (as a 'zoo'); she is also inscribed as being 'of body'. The corporeal self (manifested in the presence of the animal) makes her more 'biological' than other 'normal' citizens, and she is marked out as

different and separate; she is an outcast, unable to transcend her corporeality. Therefore, she cannot engage with the dominant social architecture in any meaningful way, which leaves her with a largely negative relationship with the space around her. Although her redemption at the end of the narrative seems fantastical – as she is able to save Benoît and also transcend her ‘zoo’ status – it suggests that the novel is attempting to place the female body in a greater position of power. Similarly, Zinzi’s ability to save Benoît in the end is again a reinforcement of the novel’s general attitude to the dynamics between the sexes. Such dynamics are evident as Benoît’s body is brutally and grotesquely distorted by the Crocodile:

His arm hangs grotesquely from his side, but if it’s broken, it hasn’t torn through the skin. Maybe just dislocated. The tooth punctures that run in a massive arc down the right side of his body from his collarbone to his groin are something else. I just hope the fucker didn’t puncture an organ. I tie his shirt round his side the best I can to stanch the blood, haul Sloth over to the wound that’s bleeding the most, over his appendix, liver, spleen?  
(2010:334)

From the above example, Zinzi becomes the heroine who not only has the mental strength to solve problems effectively, but also the physical strength to pull a fully grown dead weight male body out of water and, in so doing, saves his life. Here the male is inscribed in a very vulnerable role, and the female is elevated to hero status. The most prominent reaction against the mind/body dualism, as we know, has come from mainstream Western feminist thought. Feminists have attempted to map the position of women in Western society outside of the bounds of dominant patriarchal constructs. According to Shildrick and Price, for example: “the body has become the site of intense inquiry, not in the hope of recovering an authentic female body unburdened of patriarchal assumptions, but in the full acknowledgement of the multiple and fluid possibilities of differential embodiment” (1999:12). A similar standpoint has been taken up by Londa Shiebinger (2000), who argues that the dualism of the mind/body has constructed men as the guardians of culture and things of the mind. The objective of the feminist movement is to bring the body back into focus as that which can be assigned new meaning in culture. The body as a

point of focus is precisely what we see in *Zoo City*, as Beukes constructs her female protagonist in terms of having a stronger position of power than that of her male counterpart. The elevated power position allows her to transcend not the body itself, but the cultural context which determines her social position. Beukes thus depicts her female protagonist in a way which calls into question the mind/body dualism. Therefore, *Zoo City* opens up an opportunity to renegotiate the meanings of the female body, as well as of the male body through the detailed depictions of both the male and the female protagonists. The male body, as we have seen, is depicted as the site of extreme physical pain and marking, which thus brings into question the validity of the mind/body dualism as the basis on which patriarchal power and domination rests. By presenting the male protagonist as someone who is unable to transcend his corporeality, Beukes brings the issue of the male body into the foreground of discussion. The vulnerability of male corporeality is evident, for example, in the description of Benoît's near death encounter with Odi's crocodile:

Benoît is still in hospital. Critical condition, the doctors say. They speak in medical terms, but what I understand is broken ribs, a bruised heart, a punctured lung, nerve damage to his dislocated arm. He will need months of physiotherapy. He may never recover the full use of it. But the worst is the bite. It's the magic. Animal wounds take longer to heal, come with stranger side effects. He sways between fevered moments of wakefulness and unconsciousness that's borderline coma, but with more erratic brain activity, like he's still fighting the monsters in there. The Mongoose paces the corridors, looking thin and miserable. (2010:347-348)

The vulnerability of the male body is also seen in the representations and explorations of the fragility of the other male characters' bodies. The most obvious other example is that of S'bu and Odi. Unlike Benoît, they are not saved by the heroine Zinzi; instead, both S'bu and Odi succumb to corporeal death. Thus, the novel accentuates the vulnerability and corporeality of the male body, suggesting that it (like the female body) is a victim of its physical form, which not only can feel pain, but is also unable to transcend its own form.

## The Vulnerable Body

Although we see Zinzi's body assimilate to a higher position of power (through her saving of Benoît), this privilege is not extended to all female bodies in *Zoo City*. Other female bodies are subjected to, and experience, physical domination – particularly at the hands of males – on a far greater scale than that of Zinzi. The domination of female bodies is most evident in the sport-like murders of Carmen (Odi Huron's assistant/unofficial girlfriend) and Songweza. Carmen's murder is particularly cruel as she essentially kills herself under the influence of drugs (administered to her by Odi), as she stabs herself repeatedly, with no indication of feeling: "She sighs sulkily, picks up the flick knife from the table and simply jabs it into her side. She pulls it out again and looks down at the bloodied tip of the knife with interest, but no indication of feeling" (2010:320-321). Similarly, Songweza's murder by the hands of her twin brother, S'bu, is exacted in a video game-like style:

Song and S'bu are circling each other, no longer handcuffed together, working around the giant reptile, while Huron and the Marabou watch from the bottom of the stairs. Or rather he's circling her. She's standing there, pressing her hand to the deep gash in her arm. 'Ow, what the hell S'busiso?' 'Die, Cthul'mite!' S'bu shouts, slashing frantically at her, video game style. He slices her hands, her arms, as she tries to cover herself. She drops her knife. 'Seriously, *doos*. Cut it out. You're hurting me.' (2010:335)

Both these murders are unnecessary and are carried out with more violence than required to kill these women. Such violence against female bodies by the hands of males leads us to the question: how might we understand these deaths in relation to the novel's critical engagement with patriarchal power mechanisms? Both of these female bodies are influenced and suppressed by the patriarchal power expressed by Odi Huron. The extreme violence used to dominate and disempower these female bodies suggests the extent of patriarchy's dominance held by Odi. Male power and its subordination of women here seems to reinforce the mind/body dualism; however, Odi's death re-establishes new meanings for the female body, as Zinzi's body is able to assimilate into a position of power without the threat of Odi. Although these female bodies do ultimately succumb to

patriarchal oppression, their deaths do not go unpunished, as Odi is killed by his crocodile, suggesting that Beukes is attempting to destabilize these long-standing power mechanisms. The fact that these two (female) bodies do not transcend their corporeality should not be regarded as confirming a damaging gender binary. What I would argue instead is that through these incidents, Beukes is able to explore the devastating physical effects that male-dominated power mechanisms have on that vulnerable female body. Although Beukes does this in an extremely gruesome and shocking way, I feel that the message is clear: patriarchal power mechanisms are both harmful and outrageous, affecting the female body in an explicitly negative way.

The vulnerability of the female body within a patriarchal system is further reinforced by contemporary feminist theory such as Bartky's appropriation of Foucault's theory of power as a means of understanding the systems of 'micro-power' "that are ultimately disempowering to the woman so disciplined" (Bartky, 2000:326). The mind/body dualism then, is an important point of discussion in analyzing *Zoo City*, as it calls into question not only the validity of the dualism, but also how it may be destabilized to allow for new negations of the meanings of the body. Extending this discussion, it is important to state that the body in this novel cannot be entirely separated from its socially gender-specific associations, as the novel merges feminine with masculine features in its characters. Such an idea then opens up the question of why Beukes may have chosen to inscribe the predominant body in *Zoo City* as female; it could be seen as an attempt to make a political statement about the body and gender stereotyping. As Shiebinger argues, the gendered associations of mind and body are set up in conjunction with the dominant cultural distributions of power between the sexes, as "gender differences are not fixed in the character of the species but arise from specific histories and from specific divisions of labour and power between the sexes" (2000:1).

An understanding of corporeality as inextricably linked to the mind helps to shift the way in which we can read the inscriptions of the body in *Zoo City*. The body, seen in these terms, can be read as the host of the mind, the physical barrier between social ideals and the person who inhabits the body; this physical boundary, however, is not a protective layer. Rather, it becomes the permanent reminder of the pain an individual experiences.

Similarly, the female body attests to this pattern of thought. As Grosz explains, “the specificities of the female body [also become its limitation, as they determine] women’s access to the rights and privileges that patriarchal culture accords to men” (1994:15). Therefore, the very biology of female bodies becomes the basis on which the inequality between the sexes rests. For Grosz, “the female body limits women’s capacity for equality and transcendence; it is a hindrance to be overcome, an obstacle to be surmounted if equality is to be attained” (1994:15). Such theory is challenged in *Zoo City*, as Beukes inscribes her male bodies in ways which emphasize their vulnerable corporeality. As I have discussed, Benoît is the primary male body and who best exemplifies the novel’s challenge to the mind/body dualism. His extensively ‘marked’ body is ‘abjected’ in relation to the ‘normative’ male bodies of the Johannesburg body politic. His body is ‘othered’, and therefore must be transcended in order to achieve equality within normative society. In this way the male body is also presented as a limitation in the quest for equality: it is simply a different equality which the male body seeks. The way in which the twins (Songweza and S’bu) die is important in analyzing the power dynamics between the two genders, as, although the female (Songweza) is killed by the male (S’bu), he is also at the mercy of his own corporeality, and is unable to transcend it: “She [the Marabou] puts the muzzle of the Vektor to the side of his head and pulls the trigger. S’bu falls onto his knees and tips slowly forward onto the remains of his face” (2010:339). It is here that the novel really brings into question the validity of the mind/body dualism. Patriarchal culture has relied upon the mind/body dualism to maintain its irrational rule over females, but by bringing the body back into focus Beukes is able to redefine the body in terms of its importance in the construction of identity.

Extending the previous discussion, it is important to note that throughout *Zoo City*, Beukes does not make an explicit attempt to free her female protagonist from conventional gender stereotypes. Therefore, even though the mind/body dualism is not presented as gender-specific, the conventional gender distinctions (on which it rests) remain, thus making it difficult to determine whether or not the mind can be transcended. Such a dilemma brings back into focus the notion of the ‘disciplined’ body, in that the kind of discipline the ‘othered’ bodies experience in *Zoo City* relies largely on the mind. Therefore, can it be concluded that the mind and body are distinctively separate constructs? In the case

of *Zoo City*, I am inclined to determine that they are not individually established constructs; instead, they are two binary sections that make up one corporeal structure. The mind cannot exist independently from the body and vice versa; they must both correspond in simultaneous harmony, in order for the entire structure to survive. Therefore, it can be said that the mind is not self-contained and should work with the body, rather than the body being an obstacle through which the mind must transcend.

### **The Body and Identity**

As suggested, the issue of identity is a prominent theme throughout the novel. Identity, in the imagined world of *Zoo City*, is fluid, interchangeable, and transferable; the authenticity of individualism is rendered unimportant. Several subjects of the ‘Zoo City’ area display the fluidity of identity. Benoît for instance, is an illegal immigrant in South Africa, originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and thus he has no official identity, enabling him to move easily in and out of others’ identities. He mainly assumes the identity of Elias – a Zimbabwean immigrant living in ‘Zoo City’– who often calls in favours from Benoît on account of being critically ill with tuberculosis. The novel suggests that within ‘Zoo City’ there is a greater freedom of identity. An example can be seen in the fluidity of Zinzi’s identity as she assumes the identity of multiple people in order to carry out scams on unsuspecting good Samaritans, for her former drug dealer, Vuyo. Zinzi is seen as being able to move in and out of different identities without any consequences to her own identity; however, she is limited to identities that correspond with her biological make-up (African, female). The fluidity of identity can be seen in Zinzi’s detailing of her experience of assuming Frances’s identity:

Frances is a refugee in a camp in Cote d’Ivoire. Twenty-three years old. Suitably flirtatious if the *moegoe* on the other end of the line is a man, a good chaste Christian girl if it’s a woman. More or less. Most characters are designed to be slightly flexible depending on the operator, although Frances is fairly one-dimensional. After the rebels attacked, she fled to safety, got stuck in the refugee camp, and now she can’t access her father’s fortune. Bog standard format. That is to say, not one of mine. (2010:40)

Here, she has assumed the identity of Frances, as a favour to Vuyo, who is attempting to use Zinzi's enactment of Frances as a way of manipulating unsuspecting 'good samaritans', out of large sums of money. Zinzi describes the whole affair as "grotesque" (2010:45), yet she enjoys the thrill of being someone else. What is important to note here is how Zinzi exploits a feminine gender identity in order to manipulate others: as she states above, she will adapt her mode of communication in order to gain sympathy. From such an example, the novel can be said to attest the theory put forward by Shiebinger, that the body is gender-specific and can also be used as a manipulative tool in the construction of social identity. The theme of identity is also explored through Benoît's character, and his need to document his life through photographs (2010: 135). Benoît, as we know, is a refugee and so his identity within the city itself is unknown. He does not exist in the system and therefore his need to document his journey photographically may be read as a need to construct some form of concrete existence. It is in these ways that *Zoo City* engages with the body in terms of space, discipline, marking and identity. What comes to light through my exploration is that the body in the novel is seen to be redefined as well as assigned new meanings.

## **Conclusion**

*Zoo City* offers an engagement with questions of dystopia and the post-apartheid imaginary by means of a specific engagement with the body; more specifically, the novel assigns new meanings to the body, offering new ways in which the body can be imagined and understood. New meanings are assigned particularly to the female body, and are evident through the description of the main characters, Zinzi and Benoît, whose relationship challenges conventional notions of the female body as influenced by dualism of mind (male) and body (female). Of particular interest, here, is the way in which Zinzi assimilates into an elevated position of power, whereas Benoît's body regresses into further forms of vulnerability. Although the elevated power status assigned to Zinzi cannot be ascribed to other female bodies such as Songweza and Carmen, I would suggest that through Zinzi the novel offers an opportunity for a radical redefinition of the female body in terms that transgress conventionally gendered readings of body.

Similarly, Beukes also redefines the male body in *Zoo City*, primarily through Benoît; however, these new definitions are also seen in the depictions of Odi Huron and S'bu. In the treatment of these male characters, Beukes renders them incapable of transcending their corporeality, thus reducing them to the mercy of their own vulnerability. By doing so, Beukes challenges conventional readings of the gendered body, as she elevates her female body to a position of power while reducing her male bodies to a state of complete vulnerability with regard to their own physical limits. However, it can be argued that in attempting to challenge conventional readings of the male and female body, Beukes in fact simply reverses them and therefore does not actually offer a constructive alternative. Thus, in attempting to redefine the female body, the novel has in fact imposed the same patriarchal domination on male characters as on its female characters.

The novel's exploration of the post-apartheid imaginary also brings into focus new forms of social discipline which work on an individual level to maintain control. Through the notion of the body as 'marked' or 'animalled', the novel brings to light new forms of power mechanisms in post-apartheid society. These bodies are rejected and displaced, and are only able to exist as a result of the tolerance of conventional society. Through the power mechanisms explored, it can be argued that the Panoptic-like principle of social control evident in *Zoo City* is more effective than that seen in *Moxyland*, as there are no apparent challenges to the system. The relationship between the body and the law is what creates the foundations of the 'Zoo City' space and leads to the rejection and othering of its inhabitants. Such social division then forces the body to be experienced in new and generally negative ways: seen through the extensive physical damage to Benoît's body, as well as in Zinzi's struggle to survive. Here, it can be argued that although the Panoptic-like type of power mechanism is more effective in maintaining social control, it also enables the fluidity of identity, which allows for other forms of 'micro-power' mechanisms to emerge, as is evident in Odi Huron's ability to exert his patriarchal power over other characters particularly that of Benoît, Carmen, Songweza and S'bu. These characters are all subjected to Odi's cruelty and are thus disempowered by his domination. At first Odi's domination seems to reinforce the privileges which patriarchal culture awards to men, specifically, in that he is able to exert his dominance and subject others to a complete state of disempowerment without any legal repercussions. However, the novel does in fact attempt

to remove power from its male characters as a challenge to the patriarchal culture it imagines. As I have argued, the novel's challenge to patriarchal power is evident in the depiction of Zinzi as having an elevated power status. Not only does she save her male counterpart, Benoît, in a fantastical show of physical stamina and strength (unlikely for a small woman to muster), but she is also able to avoid being disempowered by Odi. Thus, the novel is seen to challenge the power mechanisms held by this patriarchal culture; at the same time, it gives new meaning to the capabilities of the female body, as Zinzi is depicted as not only having physical strength but also the mental ability to save herself, as well as Benoît. Although not all the female bodies are granted power in the novel, I would suggest that through the character of Zinzi, the novel succeeds in assigning new and more positive meanings to the female body. It can then be said that the novel offers a limited challenge to existing philosophical thought in relation to the male and the female body and their conventional associations with intellect/strength and body/vulnerability, respectively. However, I would also suggest that the novel's exploration of the imagined power dynamics and social control mechanisms in the post-apartheid state not only pulls the body back into focus, but also offer new ways in which the body can be re-imagined and re-defined.

## Chapter Three: *The Shining Girls*

### Introduction

My final chapter explores the representations of the body in Beukes's novel *The Shining Girls* (2013). The novel, set in Chicago, moves away from themes of the post-apartheid imaginary and dystopia, and focuses more centrally on the body itself. In this chapter, I draw attention to the following themes: the body as a site of experience, the representation of male and female bodies; the relationship between the body and power and the body in pain. The treatment of the body in this novel is significant, as the body is approached on a far more intimate and physical level than seen in Beukes's previous novels that I have examined. In contrast to *Moxyland* and *Zoo City*, *The Shining Girls* brings the wounded body and identity into focus, thus moving away from the body's relationship to the dominant social architecture. *The Shining Girls* also explores the sexuality and gender of the body, and considers the relationship between sexuality and gender on the one hand and the materiality of the body on the other, while also exploring the female body, the body in pain, the male body and the body in relation to power.

Set in Chicago, the novel spans over sixty two years: between 1929 and 1993, and thus shifts between the contexts before and after World War II. The shifts in time are particularly significant since the historical periods have dramatic implications for women's power and emancipation. The novel weaves in and out of several character perspectives (the main three being: Harper Curtis, Kirby Mazrachi and Dan Velasquez), as well as multiple time periods. What links these perspectives is the primary narrative of Harper Curtis, the novel's antagonist. Harper is a crippled serial killer who walks with a significant limp and crutch, and wreaks havoc in the city of Chicago, particularly for the woman he calls "the shining girls" (2013:34). These women – Jin-Sook (killed: 22/03/1993), Zora (killed: 28/01/1943), Willie Rose (killed: 15/10/1954), Kirby (attacked: 23/03/1989), Margo (killed: 2/12/1972), Julia (killed: 30/07/1984), Catherine (killed: 9/06/1993), Alice (commits suicide: 1/12/1951), Mysha (13/06/1993), Jeanette Klara (killed: 28/12/1931) – are all chosen in childhood by Harper, who is able to travel through time via a magical house he discovers on the outskirts of Chicago in 1929. The house enables Harper to travel back and forth between the above-mentioned dates to find, and then later kill these women

in their adulthood. While Harper is committing these crimes, Kirby's narrative takes place between 1992 and 1993. Kirby, the only surviving victim of Harper, embarks on an investigation of her own attack, during which time she discovers links to some of the other victims. Her investigation is made possible by her relationship with Dan, *The Chicago Sun-Times* sports columnist, who is Kirby's internship supervisor. Through this investigation, and with the help of Dan, Kirby is eventually able to locate and exact revenge on Harper, in 1993. The novel interrupts these events with short narratives of the murders of the shining girls. The novel eventually culminates with joint narratives of Harper, Kirby and Dan, and ends with the death of Harper and a surmised romance between Kirby and Dan.

The female body becomes a particularly important point of focus in my reading of this novel as – through the inscriptions of the shining girls – Beukes both reinforces and challenges dominant Western female stereotypes, particularly those pertaining to the body,. As suggested above, it is important to mention the issue of time in the novel, as the earlier victims seem to reinforce the traditional Western stereotypes of subordinated women, whereas the later murders challenge these with the embodiment of female power and resistance. Drawing on the works of Gatens (1992), Butler (1990), Grosz (1994), Scarry (1985), and Bakhtin (1984), I will argue that the novel, *The Shining Girls*, can be seen to support, as well as challenge existing theories of the body.

### **The Wounded Body and Identity**

For Grosz, the body is figured primarily as a site of communication; a medium through which we communicate private experiences. According to Grosz,

[T]he body is commonly considered a signifying medium, a vehicle of expression, a mode of rendering public and communicable what is essentially private (ideas, thoughts, beliefs, feelings, affects). [It] is a vehicle of expression of an otherwise sealed and self-contained, incommunicable psyche [and it is thus] through the body that the subject can express his or her interiority, and it is through the body that he or she can receive, code, and translate the inputs of the 'external' world. (Grosz, 1994:9)

In my examination of the body in *The Shining Girls*, I shift the focus of Grosz's reflections to a consideration of the body in relation to identity; I explore the ways in which the body is manipulated or changed, as a result of its interaction with other (violent) bodies; and I give detailed attention to the effects of violence on the protagonist's (Kirby) sense of self. Taking up Grosz's ideas around the body as a signifying medium, I also go on to explore the effects of physical violence on the subject's ability to communicate with the external world. The focal points of this discussion are the interactions and encounters that occur between the characters of Harper and Kirby. The novel's movement in time between historical contexts is an important point of focus for me, as it has a profound effect on the dynamics of power between the sexes. As I have mentioned, the novel spans over the years between 1929 and 1993, and thus shifts between these years, through Harper's time travel. Harper is able to travel through these years because of his access to the magical house referred, to throughout the novel, as "the House" (Beukes, 2013:26).

Kirby is the only surviving victim of Harper, being the only one to have escaped his mutilating attack. She meets Harper on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 1974, as a seven-year old girl, when he gives her a plastic pony and promises he will come back for her: "I'll see you when you're all grown-up. Look out for me, okay, sweetheart? I'll come back for you" (2013:11). After a number of years, Harper fulfils his promise on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1989, when he comes back into Kirby's life and attempts to kill her. Meeting the girls in childhood and then re-entering their lives in adulthood, to murder them, is a system Harper repeats with all of the shining girls. We meet Kirby as her seven-year old self in the novel's opening chapter; however, we then meet her as a young woman of twenty-six between 1992 and 1993, during which time the majority of her narrative takes place. It is in these sections that Kirby's significance is brought to light, as she interns at *The Chicago Sun-Times*, under the guidance of Dan Velasquez. As I have mentioned, Kirby is able to embark on an investigation to find her attacker, as Dan had previously been a columnist in the homicide section of *The Chicago Sun-Times* and had reported about her case (2013:60). The unlikely relationship between Kirby and Dan becomes a pivotal point in the novel, and leads to Kirby's pursuit and eventual murder of Harper. Harper is described in the novel as a small thin man, who walks with a severe limp that requires him to use a crutch. Coming from the context of 1929, Harper represents mainstream Western patriarchal power.

In the novel, patriarchal power comes into focus because of the attention that is given both to the impact of violence on the subjective experience of the body, as well as to the way in which the subject experiences the bodies of others. Another major focus of this chapter is on the ways in which the body is experienced at a subjective level; and the ways in which it is impacted, changed and affected by other bodies, particularly interactions which are physically violent and negative. Such interactions are evident in the character of Harper and his pursuit of the shining girls. Harper not only affects and changes the forms and functioning of other bodies, but he also removes the body's ability to experience at all, via the act of murder – as seen particularly in the murders of the shining girls. Although Harper's body holds power over other bodies in that he is able to alter experience and cause the death of the body, it is interesting that his body is not inscribed as a stereotypical male body embodying male power. Instead, his body is described as small and thin; he walks with a noticeable limp and needs a crutch to aid him in walking (2013:32). His face is mangled by one of his victims causing him to become even more disfigured, suggesting that his body is physically weak; however, it has the power to affect and do physical and permanent harm to other bodies.

In *The Shining Girls*, Harper is seen to affect the body of Kirby above all others. Although he does not succeed in killing her, he manages to alter her experience of her own corporeality, severely – through mutilating her body and scarring it. As a result, she is forever reminded of her body's negative physical interaction with his. Butler's arguments (drawing on Kristeva's notion of the 'abject' body) are usefully applied to a reading of Kirby's experience of violence at the hands of her would-be killer, Harper. According to Butler,

[T]he boundary of the body as well as the distinction between the internal and external world is established through the ejection and transvaluation of something originally part of identity into a defiling otherness [and] the construction of the 'not me' as the abject establishes the boundaries of the body which are also the first contours of the subject. (1990:181-182)

What I suggest is that the exchange between Kirby and Harper can be read in relation to body boundaries. Harper permeates the body's surface (which should remain

impermeable), thus destabilizing the boundary between the self and the other. What is particularly striking about this example of boundary breaching is that it alters Kirby's experience of her own corporeality. An example is seen as Kirby is socializing with the staff of *The Chicago Sun-Times* and has to leave a bar because the cigarette smoke (of others) affects her body negatively; as she says: "I can't do it anymore. It hurts my stomach too much when I cough" (2013:97). Here, the extent of the body's altered experience is seen to be a direct result of the interaction between Harper and Kirby back in 1989, an event which is seen to have had a negative effect on her experience in 1992. Another example of the future effect of the violent interaction between Harper and Kirby, is seen as she describes her experience of her sexual encounters in the years after the attack:

The last guy was someone from her philosophy of science class, spiky and smart and good-looking in an interesting way. But in bed, he turned out to be unbearably tender. He kissed her scars as if he could magic them away with the ministrations of his tongue. (2013:98)

It is clear from the above example, that Kirby's experience of her own body has been drastically and negatively changed and that she no longer experiences herself as she did before, but rather as an 'abject' 'other'. Kirby's body has been 'abjected' in terms of Kristeva's notion of 'abjection', as that which is altered and, as a result of such alteration, becomes 'other' to the 'self'. As a result of her 'abjection', Kirby experiences an identity shift. In order to explore the idea of identity, I will draw from Grosz, who states that: "Corporeal fragmentation, the unity or disunity of the perceptual body, becomes organized in terms of the implied structure of an ego or consciousness, marked by and as a secret and private depth, a unique individuality" (1994:141). Due to the fragmentation of Kirby's corporeality, she must redefine herself in terms of the new, 'abjected' body she now inhabits. An instance of Kirby's shifted identity is suggested in the incident when Kirby leaves the bar and Chet, from *The Chicago Sun-Times*, offers to walk her to the train station, "she can't stand the thought of trying to continue conversation on the walk to the station. She should know better by now than to try and connect with people" (Beukes, 2013:99). From such an example it can be concluded that Kirby's experience of her corporeality in 1992 is directly affected by the violent encounter with Harper's body in

1989. Kirby's experience of her body in pain results in the shift in identity seen in the previous examples. The attack alters her representation of her own corporeality, and thus of how she constructs her own identity. The attack alters not only her perception of 'self' but also her ability to interact efficiently with others; this is evident particularly in how she is able to experience the physical act of sex. Prior to the attack, she experiences sex in a 'normal' way, as she details her experience of her first time with Fred Tucker in 1984:

They don't even notice when the tape runs out and the screen turns to  
bristling static, because his fingers are inside her and his mouth is hot  
against her skin. And she climbs on top of him and it hurts, which she  
expected, and it's nice, which she'd hoped, but it's not world changing.  
(2013:38)

However, her experience changes dramatically after the attack, an event that has forever inscribed her surface with reminders of it. She crosses paths with Fred Tucker in 1992 and attempts to have sex with him again. However, this time, her corporeal change shifts the way in which she experiences sex: "she feels him freeze at the raised spiderweb of scars [and says] 'Did you forget?' It's her turn to pull back. Every time. The rest of her life. Talking someone through it" (2013:142). Here, it is clear that the attack results in an identity shift of Kirby's sense of self, as well as a shift in the way in which she is able to experience 'normal' physical activities such as sex. The attack also affects the way in which others respond to Kirby:

It shouldn't have surprised her, the way conversations veered away. People  
changed the subject, played down their curiosity, thinking they were doing  
the right thing, when actually what she needed more than anything was to  
talk. (2013:44)

Kirby's ability to interact with the external world and with other bodies, in particular, is permanently transformed, as "whole relationships fell into the fissures of awkward silence. If the horror show of her injuries didn't stun them into silence, she could always talk about the complications from the faecal matter that leaked into her intestinal cavity" (2013:44). It is clear, from these examples, that Kirby is never afforded

freedom from her corporeal existence: her body becomes her identity, both to the outside world and to herself. Here, I return to Butler's argument that "the construction of stable bodily contours relies upon fixed sites of corporeal permeability and impermeability" (1990:180). In terms of Butler's argument, Kirby's bodily contours can be seen to have been disrupted, as a result of physical violence; so that she must redefine them in terms of her new corporeal reality. This is so because Harper has rendered what should be impermeable, permeable. Thus, reinforcing my hypothesis that the novel explores the ways in which physical violence has an impact on the body.

A similar example of corporeal trauma is observed in the body of the perpetrator (Harper); however, there are important differences to note in the way in which it affects his experience and identity. During his attack on Zora, Harper's body is also subjected to physical pain, as Zora fights back, smashes and disfigures his face. However, his experience of such pain does not have the same detrimental effect on his identity as it is seen to have had on Kirby. Rather, it simply changes Harper's modus operandi in his crimes. The shift in his criminal operation comes as a direct result of his experience of the body in pain, brought about through his murder of Zora:

He struggles to raise the knife again and she punches him so hard in the side of his head that she dislocates his jaw and breaks three of her fingers, the knuckles crunching like popped corn on the stove. 'Yew unt!' he screams, his consonants mangled, jaw already swelling up like an orange. She grabs hold of a handful of his hair and smashes his face into the gravel, trying to get on top of him. (Beukes, 2013:91)

Here, his experience of the body in pain seems to alter nothing, except that "the wiring around his teeth will curtail his ability to find the girls [because] he needs to be able to talk. [For this reason, he] will have to reassess the way he does things [and] will need to find a way to restrain them" (2013:100-101). From such an example, it can be seen that his experience of wounding and physical pain does not change or manipulate his identity in anyway, nor does it change the construction thereof. Instead, it only changes the way in which he conducts the killings, because "he's not going to get hurt again" (2013:101). These examples reveal that the novel explores the body in pain through the male and the

female body; however, they show that the body in pain is experienced differently in the two sexes. The male body is seen to be far less affected by its experience of pain as opposed to the female body, which is seen to have been severely affected, particularly in terms of its experience and identity construction.

Apart from exploring the various impacts of violence, both on identity and the perceptions of others, *The Shining Girls* also foregrounds how the body can be experienced in various ways. Such is evident most prominently in the depiction of Jeanette Klara. Jeanette – aka “the Glow Girl” (2013:62) – experiences her body in two very distinct ways: the stage body and the body in everyday life. Jeanette’s character comes from the context of a 1930s showgirl, who became somewhat famous through her use of radium paint on her body. She uses the paint to create the illusion of a glowing butterfly in her show. As the *Chicago Star* newspaper article details this situation on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December 1931: “Miss Klara was under the observation by doctors who suspected that she was a victim of radium poisoning from the powder that lit her up like a firefly, anointed before every performance” (2013:62). The example here paves the way for the body’s multiple experiences, as Jeanette’s experience of her body on stage is different from, but affects, her body’s experience off stage. The way in which Jeanette experiences her body on stage, as the intoxicating “Glow Girl” (2013:62) – who gets the name from the radium paint she uses in her shows – is dramatically contrasted with the way in which she experiences it in everyday life. On stage, Jeanette experiences her body in a positive way:

She wore dainty wings underneath, and a costume beaded with insect-like segments. She fluttered her fingers and winked her big eyes, dropping into a contorted pose among the coils of fabric like a dying moth. When she re-emerged, she had slipped her arms into sleeves in the gauze and was swirling it around her. Above the bar, a projector flicked to life, casting the blurry silhouettes of butterflies on the gauzy cloth. Jeannette transformed into a swooping, diving creature among a whirlwind of illusory insects. (Beukes, 2013:66)

It is evident from this description that the body’s experience on stage is a positive one. The “swooping, diving creature” (2013:66) that Jeanette transforms into becomes a

positive identifier (2013:63). The example above reveals that the body's stage experience is shown to be a positive one for Jeanette Klara; however, her experience of her body off-stage is vastly different:

He was waiting for her when she emerged from the back door of the club, dragging her suitcase of props. She was hunched against the cold in a thick coat buttoned up over the spangled costume, her face streaked with sweat through the glow paint which she had only made a cursory attempt to wipe off; the light of it cast her features into sharp relief, hollowing out her cheekbones. She looked fraught and exhausted, with none of the verve she'd had on stage, and for a moment Harper doubted himself. But then she saw the treat he'd brought her and a brittle hungriness lit her up. (2013:66)

From the example above, it is clear that Jeanette has different experiences of her corporeal self, depending on whether she is on or off stage. When on stage, she is able to perform and adapt to the role she plays; however, her performance has a detrimental effect on the experience that Jeanette has of her body off stage. The detrimental effect of her use of radium paint is seen in the article as it goes on to highlight the effect of the radium poisoning which Jeanette attempts to deny as she tells the *Chicago Star*:

I am not dyeing, I am not even seeck [however, she does admit] to getting 'leetle bleesters' that would come up on her arms and legs, and told her maid to hurry with her bath after every show, because of the sensation that her skin was 'on fire'. (2013:63)

Jeanette's body off-stage is depicted as a complete juxtaposition to that of her on-stage body, in that, after the show: "she looked fraught and exhausted with none of the verve she'd had on stage" (2013:66). Therefore, the body is seen to have multiple and varying experiences which depend, quite evidently, on the external world the body inhabits. Jeanette's body is changed through its violent interaction with Harper, as:

It was no great thing to break her. And if she screamed – he wasn't sure because the world had narrowed to this, like looking through the lens of a peepshow – no one came running to see. Afterwards, when he bent to wipe

his knife on her coat, his hands shaking with excitement, he noticed tiny blisters had already formed under her eyes and around her mouth, her wrists and thighs. (2013:67)

It is in the (violent) interaction, detailed above, that Jeanette's body changes as a result of death. Through the depiction of Jeanette Klara's body, in this example, the novel brings to light a possible new reading of the body in terms of the wounded body and identity. As I have suggested, Jeanette's body has two facets, namely the 'stage body' and the 'ordinary' body. Here, the body's experience is seen to be adapted depending on the situation that the external world presents to it. On stage, Jeanette embodies a particular kind of body, the body of entertainment and the spectacle that is "the Glow Girl" (2013:62), where she paints her naked body with radium-based paint in order to create the illusion of a glowing human-butterfly, 'cyborg-like' creature:

On stage, the hands crept up to the veiled hood and unclasped it, letting loose a tumble of curls and revealing a sharp little face with a bow mouth and giant blue eyes under fluttering lashes, tipped with paint so they glowed too. A pretty decapitated head floating eerily above the stage. Miss Klara rolled her hips, twisting her arms above her head, waiting for the suspense of a dip in the melody and the sharp clang of the cymbals she held between her fingers before she removed another piece of clothing, like a butterfly shrugging out of the fold of a black cocoon. (2013:65)

Linking to the ideas of the cyborg I explored in *Moxyland* and *Zoo City*, the female body of Jeanette, in *The Shining Girls*, is displayed for the pleasure of males; this kind of male entertainment reduces the female body to a mere object of desire, and therefore downplays the reality of the body's actual experience. Jeanette's body on stage adapts to, and ignores, the physical ramifications of the effects of the radium paint; her body is marked by the "[l]eetle bleesters' that would come up on her arms and legs [and she experiences the] sensation that her skin was 'on fire'" (2013: 63). In such an example, in which the novel explores the pressures (imposed on female bodies) of social conformity, and the ways in which the female body was made to conform to unrealistic ideals of beauty for entertainment value. This conformity, despite its severe detrimental effects on the body

itself, can be seen in the body of Jeanette. Two further important issues arise from the novel's exploration of the female body here. The first being the idea of the body in pain, as it pertains specifically to the female body, and the way in which women are expected to deny bodily pain in order to maintain an imposed ideal of femininity. The second being how the body, particularly that of the female, is affected by its interaction with other bodies.

As I have suggested, Jeanette's body can be seen to play different roles. While on stage, she completely conforms to traditional expectations and transforms her physical appearance to entertain an audience. Although her act appeals to both women and men, the fact that she is naked under the thin layer of glowing paint suggests that it is primarily directed towards men. However, when the show is over, Jeanette's bodily experience can be seen to contrast her experience on stage. Far from being a magnificent 'Glow Girl', off-stage Jeanette's body is riddled with painful blisters, as a result of wearing the paint that causes her to endure a cruel slow death as a result of the radium poisoning. In turn, such poisoning prevents her from physically interacting with male bodies, due to the fact that they fear that she is poisonous and that the contamination of her body could be contagious. This fear then forces her body to have a particular kind of (negative) experience. On stage, Jeanette's body is a kind of female exhibition for the momentary pleasure of others; after the attack, however, the mutilation of her body not only removes her from her corporeal 'self', but also destroys her corporeal identity, which then becomes the ultimate example of female subordination. By drawing on Grosz's reflections of the body as a vehicle for expression, I have explored the body in relation to identity. By examining the ways in which the body is manipulated or changed as a result of its interaction with other (violent) bodies, I have given detailed attention to the effects of violence on the body. Through Kirby, we see the body in relation to identity and communication as her identity shifts as a direct result of the violent interaction between her and Harper. However, through the novel's depiction of Jeanette, we see how the body's ability to experience is affected as a direct result of the external world it inhabits.

## **Bringing the Female Body into Focus**

As suggested in the previous section, the female body becomes a particularly important point of focus in the novel. The various descriptions of the shining girls reveal that the novel both reinforces and challenges mainstream Western female stereotypes, particularly those pertaining to the body. It is important to mention the issue of time here, as the earlier victims (killed between 1931 and 1954) seem to reinforce the traditional Western stereotypes of subordinated women, whereas the later female victims (killed between 1972 and 1993) challenge these stereotypes of gender, power and resistance.

The question of gender and the female body comes into focus through the depiction of Zora. According to Bartky, “Gender itself is understood as a performance in which an important role has been scripted for the body” (2000:327), suggesting that the female body is expected to embody all that is socially and culturally defined as feminine. However, Zora embodies a seemingly masculine persona, in that she is “built like a wrestler” (Beukes, 2013:89) and performs the conventionally male occupation of welding ships, for which she wears “thick men’s overalls” (2013:88). From these examples, it could be said that Zora performs the expectations of the masculine gender, as she is masculine in appearance and holds a male occupation. She has “arms like a wrestler” (2013:88), and she also embodies strength, as it is suggested that she was ‘tougher’ than her co-worker, Blanche (2013:87). Blanche is described as “a lovely girl, even if she is skinny and pale with a weak chin, and once let her hair catch on fire because she was vain” (2013:88). Zora is also shown to have masculine-like physical strength during Harper’s attack on her as: “she grabs hold of a handful of his hair and smashes his face into the gravel, trying to get up on top of him” (2013:91). However, the vulnerability of her female body is still starkly apparent in her encounter with Harper:

Panicked, he stabs her under her armpit. It’s a clumsy blow, not deep enough to reach her heart, but she cries out and pulls away, instinctively, clutching at her side. He seizes the opportunity and rolls onto her, pinning her shoulders down with his knees. Zora might be built like a wrestler, but she has never been in the ring. (2013:91)

From the above examples, it is revealed that the female body is presented as inherently vulnerable as compared with the male body; despite what physical strength a woman might possess, it is not enough to overpower the male body, as evident in this instance. Coming from the context of 1954, Zora's ability to fight back is revealed as limited, due to her female body, and despite its obvious physical strength. It can be said then that although Zora, in many ways, denies her femininity and takes on a masculine-like gender, her body betrays her during Harper's attack on her, as he stabs her stomach and she "gasps and doubles over [and when he pulls the blade out,] her legs collapse like a shoddy weld [and Zora becomes] furious, with him and her body for betraying her" (2013:91). From such an example it can be seen that the novel is suggesting that the body's sex betrays its gender as the female body remains vulnerable to the power of the male body. However, it is also pertinent to consider that Harper is granted an advantage over Zora as he possesses a weapon in this attack. It is not only his biological sex that provides him with power. Although Zora's body betrays her she is also placed in a significant position of disadvantage due to her lack of a weapon.

A similar notion is articulated in the depiction of Alice (aka Lucas Ziegenfeus), a transgendered woman who performs in a production called "Girly Show" (2013:172); a production designed to warn against the dangers of female sexuality. Through the transgendered body, the conflict between biological sex and gender is brought into focus, as well as the theme of sexuality. From the context of the 1940s, Alice's body is an extremely important one to examine. Her body, although biologically male, is displayed as female in the theatrical production which warns against the dangers of female sexuality. The announcer (Joey) states:

'Fair ladies, good gentlemen. This is not one of those low carnie shows designed to titillate and inflame you. This is a warning! About the dangers of decadence and desire and how easily the fairer sex may be led astray. Or do the leading...' (2013:175)

Here, the sexuality of the female body is suggested as a dangerous entity. In the 'Girly Show', female sexuality is exposed as something that should be denied, being considered deviant (as the temptation of women is considered wicked). Female sexuality is

presented as deviant throughout the production, but especially through the descriptions of Eva and Vivian. Eva plays the role of a nymphomaniac, and Vivian is presented as embodying female sexuality as a whole. Both examples of female sexuality are demonised in this show. On stage, Vivian “throws open the curtain and struts out wearing bright red lipstick and a pencil skirt, her hair tied up in a bun” (2013:175) and she represents:

‘The strumpet! The hussy. The harlot. The wicked temptress! The ambitious young office girl, with her eye on the boss. Intent on coming between husband and wife. Women, learn how to spot her. Men, learn how to resist her. This lascivious predator in lipstick is a danger to society!’ (2013:175)

By representing female sexuality as a ‘danger to society’, the novel can be said to support Western ideals of the mind as superior: “In terms of intellectual activities, the body seems to have been regarded always with suspicion as the site of unruly passions and appetites that might disrupt the pursuit of truth and knowledge” (Shildrick and Price, 1999:2). By supporting the above notion, the novel suggests that women who express sexual desire, and are seen to embody, sexuality are “lascivious predators” (Beukes, 2013:175) and will corrupt not only themselves, but society as a whole. In essence, female sexuality is suggested here to be a threat to the Western patriarchal system, and therefore it must be denied entirely. Joey, the presenter of the show goes on to claim that women are “victim[s] to their own quivering desires! Insatiable black widows and sweet young innocence tainted” (2013:175). In these remarks, women are made victims of their own sexuality and sexual identity is regarded as something that will ultimately taint innocence, and by extension will corrupt the patriarchal paradigm. Female sexuality is defined here as a betrayal of the body, while female bodies are corrupted and betrayed by their sexuality and the sexualized body. What the novel also suggests, however, is that female sexuality is exploited and displayed for male entertainment. As a result males first destroy female sexual innocence in women and then damn them for possessing sexuality at all. Within ‘Girly Show’, Alice embodies the ‘All American Girl’, a female ideal of innocence to which all women should conform, those who express sexuality are deemed predators who wear, “lust the way other women would strut a mink coat” (2013:175). In a similar fashion, the affliction of female sexuality turns an innocent virgin into “the hussy, the harlot, and the

wicked temptress” (2013:175). In the above examples the novel suggests that female sexuality is tangible, visible, and is not only a danger to the women possessing it but to society as a whole. What is ironic here, however, is that Alice is not biologically female; she is in fact male.

The transgendered body then becomes a means by which we can explore the way in which sexuality and sexual desire are embodied in the novel. As I have suggested, such an idea is explored in the depiction of Alice, as she denies her masculine identity:

She has fought against this her whole life. Against Lucas Ziegenfeus, who lives inside her. Or she lives inside him resenting his physical body, the despicable hateful thing dangling between her legs that she straps down but doesn't have the courage to cut off. (2013:178)

The sexual identity and sexual desire of her body are important to examine, because they explore the way in which gender and sexuality function in the subject's formulation of identity. The fact that Alice performs certain acts associated with the feminine gender supports Butler's notion that gender is a performative act that can be independent of the subject's material or biological sex. Despite being biologically male, Alice wears female clothing in 'Girly Show'. Her costume for her role as an innocent teenage cheerleader is: "a pleated wool skirt with green insets, a white jersey embroidered with the motif of a green megaphone and a collegial 'V' [as she plays the role of] the all-American girl. Sweet sixteen and never been kissed" (2013:174), who becomes the "fallen-woman" (2013:178) after sex. Although the materiality of her body is male, she embodies the sexual desire of a female in that she fanaticizes about sex in a stereotypically (female) romantic way:

She has played it out in the cinema in her head, rewind the reel, played it again and again. *He steps into the chocolate factory and all the machines grind to a halt in mechanical sympathy, and all the other girls look up as he strides towards her and dips her low, and before he presses his mouth against hers and takes her breath away, he says, 'I told you I'd come back for you.'* Or he leans rakishly across the cosmetics counter, while she is

*applying rouge to some society lady who will spend more money on a lipstick than she earns in a week and say, 'Excuse me, miss, I've been searching all over for the love of my life. Can you help me?' And he will reach out his hand for her and she will climb over the counter, past the tutting matron. He will spin her round in his arms and set her on her feet, looking at her in delight, and they will run through the department store, hand-in-hand and laughing, and the security guard will say, 'But, Alice, you're still on shift,' and she will unclip her gold name-tag and fling it at his feet and say, 'Charlie, I quit!' (2013:238)*

In the above example, Alice has a stereotypically feminine outlook on sexual desire in that “[s]he wants a Sunday kind of love” (2013:239). Here, the male body experiences sexual desire in a feminine way, echoing Butler’s notion of gender performativity. Gender is shown – through Alice’s embodiment of female sexuality – to be something which is socially performed and not a direct result of the body’s biological sex. Another conclusion can be made here, as Alice’s sexuality is seen to reinforce the novel’s use of time as it highlights the subordination of women. Such a conclusion is evident in Alice’s interaction with the show’s presenter, Joey. After the show is over, Joey calls Alice to his caravan and requests that she remove her clothes and “she’s still wearing her Fallen Woman outfit, the red heels and the slinky dress” (2013:178). Alice protests and Joey details that he is aware of the fact that she is male when he says: “‘You think I don’t know? Why you get dressed in the toilet all by yourself? Why you carry rubber bands around everywhere you go?’” (2013:178). The exchange between Joey and Alice here, reveals the extent of the subordination of women, as Joey fires Alice for being transgendered. Such an event is interesting to note as it suggests that patriarchal subordination of women is based on the embodiment of gender rather than biological sex; Joey knows that Alice is actually male, yet he still exercises patriarchal domination over her. Gender therefore functions as that which determines sexual identity, rather than the body’s sex. In this way through the depiction of the transgendered body, the novel reveals that gender is more closely linked to sexuality than to biological sex, suggesting that sexuality is chosen and performed, rather than biologically determined.

## **The Body in Pain**

To extend my reading of body figuring in *The Shining Girls*, it is pertinent to pull its depictions of the ‘body in pain’, into discussion. By taking up Bakhtin’s theory of the grotesque body (1984), Scarry’s notion of the ‘body in pain’ (1985), and finally Grosz’s notion that females are aligned with the body (1994), I will examine the body in pain in three ways. Firstly, by exploring how the body experiences pain and whether or not it in fact has an effect on the subject’s ability to express their experiences through language, as Scarry suggests. Secondly, by an examination of the effect biological sex has upon the way in which the body experiences and expresses pain, as well as whether or not Scarry’s notion applies to all bodies or only to female bodies. Finally, I will explore the descriptions and representations of the body in this novel in relation to the notions of physical torture and the infliction of pain (and the associated ideas of wounding, scarring and amputation). Scarry’s argument – that physical pain renders the subject unable to communicate its experience of pain (1985:4) – has significance in this section. Similarly, Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘classical body’ as singular and sealed off, and no longer in the state of becoming (1984:320), is also important to note. The notion of the sealed off, classical body suggests that the body is incapable of communicating its experience of physical pain to the external world. Using these notions as a point of departure, I aim to focus on the way in which the body experiences physical pain and the ability of the self to communicate such experiences.

Kirby’s experience of corporeal pain is the primary example of the body in pain, as depicted in the novel. Harper’s attack on Kirby seems to echo Scarry’s notion in that her physical body is reduced to a state of “incommunicable (un-)intelligibility” (1985:4), unable to express or protest the body’s experience of pain. Such reduction is seen during the attack; Kirby is described as, “sobbing something incoherent [and she is unable to communicate because] the words don’t make sense in her head, let alone her mouth” (2013:132). My earlier discussion of the impact of physical violence on identity (particularly in relation to the character Kirby) suggests a reading that goes further than Scarry’s notion of mute unintelligibility. What Kirby’s narrative suggests is that the damaging effects of violence can also be linked to the subject’s construction of its identity; in this way we see how the subjective identity is shaped by the body’s experience of pain.

In this study, I am taking up Grosz's concept of the (female) body, which she defines: "as an intrusion on or interference with the operation of the mind, a brute givenness which requires overcoming, a connection with animality and nature that needs transcendence" (1994:4). The novel describes Kirby's body as "a separate animal to her mind" (2013:133), thus echoing Grosz's definition of the body. The female body in the novel (through the example of Kirby) and particularly the female body in pain, are represented as that which must be transcended; as is evident in the depiction of Kirby as she draws from her own mental strength to overcome her body's pain:

She painstakingly works one hand free and then passes out when she tries to sit up. It takes her four minutes to get up onto her knees. She knows because she counts the seconds. It's the only way she can force herself to stay conscious. She wraps her jacket round her waist to try to staunch the blood. She can't tie it. Her hands are shaking too much, her fine motor skills shot. So she tucks it into the back of her jeans as best she can. (Beukes, 2013:134)

Linking to the ideas of the mind/body dualism – set out in chapter two – the above quotation illustrates that Kirby is able to use her mental capacity in order to overcome her body's corporeal pain. Kirby's mental strength is evident as she is able to reach help, despite the extent of damage done to her body (2013:135). Here, the body in pain is shown to be something which is an obstacle that the subject's interior (mind) must overcome in order to survive. What can be concluded from these examples is that the novel suggests that the body in pain is a condition that becomes detrimental to the subject's survival, as well as the subject's ability to interact and communicate with the external world.

As I have suggested the depiction of the female body in the novel seems to mimic the notion of the mind/body dualism as put forth by Grosz:

[W]omen's bodies are presumed to be incapable of men's achievements, being weaker, more prone to (hormonal) irregularities, intrusions, and unpredictabilities [and that patriarchal oppression has justified itself by] connecting women much more closely than men to the body [as women are] more biological, more corporeal, and more natural than men. (1994:14)

This idea suggests that female bodies are weaker than males and prone to hormonal irregularities, thus allowing them to be aligned strictly with the body and to be excluded from the capacity of the mind. Leading on from such ideas it is important to examine how Kirby's reaction to her attack is shown to defy this notion, as evidenced in the novel, when Kirby is able to survive as a result of her own mental strength:

Kirby lies there, waiting to die. For the pain to stop. But she doesn't and it doesn't, and then she hears Tokyo give a little grunt, like he's not dead either, and she starts getting seriously pissed off. *Fuck* him. She shifts her weight onto her hip and swivels her wrists experimentally, reawakening the nerves that blast her brain with a shrieking morse code. [...] *Fuck* this. She painstakingly works one hand free and then passes out when she tries to sit up. It takes her four minutes to get up onto her knees. (Beukes, 2013:134)

In the above instance, the female body is able to defy the notion that women are aligned with the body (passion, emotion and uncontrollability). As shown through Kirby's use of her mental capacity, the novel indicates that she is not only able to command her body to get to safety, but that she is also able to carry her large dog out of the sanctuary with her: "she kneels next to Tokyo, who rolls his eyes at her and tries to wag his tail. She lifts him up, levering onto her forearms and then hefting him up to her chest. And almost drops him" (2013:134). What can be deduced from these examples is that the novel's treatment and depiction of the female body (shown through Kirby's character) challenges stereotypical notions of women being defined as weak bodies, by offering a portrait of Kirby's incredible physical and mental strength, traits uncommon to the Western philosophical definition of the female body.

In a similar fashion, Bakhtin's notions of the classical and the grotesque body also have relevance to my discussion. As Bakhtin sets out, the 'grotesque' functions of the body have been transferred to the private sphere and associated with shame (1984:318). Kirby's experience of the body in pain then can be read (in terms of his theory), as illustrated during the attack:

She screams as loudly as she can, the sound muffled by the ball, and instantly despises herself for obeying him. And then grateful he let her. Which makes the shame worse. She can't help it. Her body is a separate animal to her mind, which is a shameful, bargaining thing, willing to do anything to make [the pain] stop. Anything to live. (2013:133)

From the above instance, it can be seen that not only is the body hosting the physical pain of being cut, as Harper “slides the knife home and twists it across” (2013:132) Kirby’s stomach, but the body in this case is seen to experience its natural function of screaming as a “shameful, bargaining thing” (2013:133), thus echoing Bakhtin’s notion that the grotesque functions of the body are associated with shame (Bakhtin, 1984:321). In this example, the body in pain is portrayed as a betrayal of the subject, echoing Grosz’s statement: “The body is a betrayal of and a prison for the soul, reason or mind” (1994:5), Kirby’s body being described as “a separate animal to her mind” (Beukes, 2013:133). The body’s physical needs, here, override mental processes in that the body is described as that which is “willing to do anything to make it stop. Anything to live” (2013:133).

Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘grotesque body’ (1984:317) again informs my reading of the novel’s representation and description of Julia’s mutilated body. Julia becomes an important focus point; a victim of Harper, her body is mutilated and murdered. Julia’s body is seen to be in the process of becoming undone; this reminds us of Bakhtin’s theory of the ‘grotesque body’ as a body “in the act of becoming [as it] outgrows its own self, transgressing its own body, in which it conceives a new, second body [and] displays not only the outward but also the inner feature of the body” (1984:317,318). The description of Julia’s body is extensive in the novel detailed as follows:

She could be sleeping. At first glance. If you were squinting into the sun dappled through the leaves. If you thought her top was supposed to be a rusty brown. If you missed the flies as thick as midges. One arm is flung casually above her head, which is tilted fetchingly to one side, as if listening. Her hips are twisted the same way, her legs folded together, bent at the knee. The serenity of the pose belies the gaping wreck of her abdomen. That

carefree arm that makes her look so romantic lying amongst the tiny blue and yellow wildflowers, bears the marks of defensive wounds. The incisions on the middle joint of her fingers, down to the bone indicate that she probably tried to grab the knife from her attacker. The last two fingers on her right hand are partially severed. The skin on her forehead is split from the impact of multiple blows by a blunt object, possibly a baseball bat. But equally possible the handle of an axe or even a heavy tree branch, none of which have been found at the scene. The chafe marks on her wrists would indicate that her hands were tied, although the restraints have been removed. Wire probably, by the way it has bitten into her skin. Blood has formed a black crust over her face, like a caul. She has been slit sternum to pelvis in an inverted cross, which will lead certain factions among the police to suspect Satanism before they pin it on gangbangers, particularly as her stomach has been removed. It is found nearby, dissected, the contents spread on the grass. Her guts have been strung from the trees like tinsel. They are already dry and gray by the time the cops finally cordon off the area. This indicates that the killer had time. That no one heard her shouting for help. Or that no one responded. (Beukes, 2013:35)

Although the body is not experiencing pain in this moment, it has previously experienced pain. The description of Julia's mutilation has striking links to the grotesque body, as it too is in the process of becoming undone. By permeating the sealed-off surface of the body and removing the body's internal systems of functioning, Harper brings the 'grotesque body' into being, and "displays not only the outward but also the inner features of the body" (Bakhtin, 1984:318). Also interesting to note here is that the experience of a single body in pain is not limited to one subject, but also extends to the lives of others as well. The novel pays a great deal of attention to the effects of Julia's murder on her parents, giving particular attention to its effects on their bodies:

Her father will never recover. His weight drops away until he becomes a wan parody of the loud and opinionated estate agent who would pick a fight

at the barbeque about the game. He loses all interest in selling houses. He tapers off mid-sales pitch. (Beukes, 2013:38).

It is seen, in the above quotation, that the death of his daughter has sent Julia's father into a state of unbecoming; he is no longer the man he once was, both physically and mentally. A similar affect is expressed in Julia's mother's grief over the murder of her child: "her mother draws the pain into herself: a monster she keeps caged in her chest that can only be subdued with vodka" (2013:39). Both parents' bodies are negatively affected by their daughter's death, thus showing that the singular body in pain has an effect beyond itself. Julia's death is also shown to impact other bodies not connected to her own (in any specific way) as the novel details that:

In another part of town, an eleven-year-old girl who has only read about the case, only ever seen Julia's valedictorian photography from her school yearbook, takes out the pain of it – and life in general- very precisely with a boxcutter on the tender skin inside her upper arm, above the line of her T-shirt sleeves, where the cuts will not be seen. (2013:39)

From the example above, it is illustrated that one subject's body in pain can directly cause the pain experienced by another. The novel's description of Julia's body shows that it "outgrows its own self, transgressing its own body, in which it conceives a new, second body" (Bakhtin, 1984:317). Julia's body that is depicted as displaying of the outward and the inner features of the body can be seen to also have the extended function of (negatively) impacting the bodies of others.

The representation of the (male) body in pain is brought into focus in the novel through the descriptions of Dan. As detailed in my introduction, Dan is a sports columnist for *The Chicago Sun-Times* and he supervises Kirby's internship. Dan and Kirby form an unlikely relationship, during which Dan assists Kirby in her pursuit and location of Harper. Once Dan and Kirby track Harper down, there is a physical fight between the two men in which both Harper and Dan inflict pain on each other. The aforementioned fight is evident in the extract below:

Dan brings the poker swinging down with force, but Harper, who is more experienced with violence, intercepts it with his forearm. It still cracks bone. He howls in pain and punches the knife into Dan's chest. There is a bright spray of red. The momentum carries both men up against the door. (Beukes, 2013:288)

The above quotation shows that the male body, despite its elevated power status in the novel (detailed in the section on Power and the Body), is vulnerable to physical pain, in the same way that the female body is. Neither gender, nor sexual difference, are applicable here; rather, it is the way in which the body itself responds to pain and whether or not the biological sex of the body has an impact on its ability to communicate this pain to the external world. It is interesting that the ability to communicate the body's experience of pain is not affected in males. An example is seen in Dan's response to the pain inflicted on his body: "I don't know what the fuck you're talking about, man,' Dan says, hauling himself up. 'But you're making me angry.' He shifts his weight onto his right foot, ignoring the pain in his side, winding up" (2013:289). The (male) body in pain sits in contrast here to that of the female body. This can be seen, in the subject's responses to the body in pain: the female body is seen to be rendered into a state of unintelligibility (as seen in Kirby's response particularly), and therefore the body in pain is seen to impact the subject's ability to communicate pain significantly. However, what emerges from a study of the male responses to the body in pain is that, in my reading, Scarry's notion seems only to apply to female bodies; the male's (Dan) ability to communicate is not seen to be hindered in any way, in the above example. Instead Dan is seen to be able to formulate speech clearly as detailed above, thus allowing him to effectively communicate his experience. Therefore, the body in pain is seen to only have a negative impact on the female's ability to communicate its experience of pain; whereas the male body is seen to still be able to communicate its pain.

### **Bringing the Male Body into Focus**

Although given less attention in the novel, to that of the female body, the male body also becomes an important point of focus in *The Shining Girls*. Two specific male bodies emerge as important: Harper Curtis (the novel's antagonist), and Dan Velasquez (the

novel's male protagonist). Extending my existing discussions of gender, power, and resistance, these two bodies are seen as representing opposing sides of masculinity, as they project different kinds of (male) power and (masculine) sexuality. In order to examine the ways in which (masculine) sexuality is depicted I draw on Grosz's notion: "We are not so much surfaces as profound depths, subjects of a hidden interiority, and the exhibition of subjectivity on the body's surface is, at least from a certain class and cultural perspective" (1994:138). An important point of focus then emerges from the novel, is the vulnerability of the male body – presented by both of the male bodies – which can be examined in relation to female vulnerability. I aim to explore the vulnerability of male bodies by drawing on the notion, that "women just are their bodies in a way that men are not, biologically destined to inferior status in all spheres that privilege rationality" (Shildrick and Price, 1999:3). In this section I will explore these points of focus, as they relate to the male body in *The Shining Girls*.

The theme of masculine sexuality comes into particular focus through Harper's sexualisation of his female victims. The specific kind of masculine sexuality which Harper represents is shown to be of a deviant nature; thus linking back to my earlier discussion of the novel's depiction of feminine sexuality as that which is considered deviant and dangerous to society. Harper is seen to sexualize his female victims through the sexual act of masturbation. He uses the memories of these murders to generate his sexual arousal:

He relives it [Jeanette's murder] in his head, again and again, lying on the mattress in the master bedroom [of the House] where he can reach out and trace the whorls of sequins on the wings while he tugs at his cock, thinking of that flicker of disappointment in her face. (Beukes, 2013:72)

In a similar fashion, Harper gains sexual gratification – again through masturbation – as illustrated when Harper visits the crime scene, where he killed Willie Rose:

Harper tips his hat at the black doorman of the Fisher Building and takes the stairs up to the third floor. He's thrilled to see that they have not been able to get all the blood out of the glassy tiles outside the door of the architect firm. It makes him achingly hard and he grips himself through his pants, stifling a

little moan of pleasure. He leans against the wall, pulling his coat around him to obscure the unmistakable jerky movements of his hand, remembering what she was wearing, how red her lipstick was. Brighter than blood. (2013:162)

From these examples, it can be seen that Harper embodies a deviant-like masculine sexuality. Although encompassing sexual deviancy, with such acts, Harper does not sexually violate his female victims. Rather, he is seen to physically violate these (victims') bodies through murder and mutilation, as a result of which he is able to gain sexual gratification. Such an idea is reinforced as Harper's (deviant) sexuality becomes even more apparent in his attempted relationship with Etta, a nurse who tended to his dislocated jaw in 1932 (after Zora's attack on him). His unusual sexual appetite is emphasized again in his inability to gain the same level of sexual gratification through 'normal' sex, with Etta:

[H]e wrenches her hands behind her back [and he] closes his eyes and summons the images of the girls. Opening up under him. Their insides spilling out. The way they cry and struggle[, however,] it's over too soon. He groans as he rolls off, his pants round his ankles. He wants to hit her. Her fault. Slut. (2013:214)

Here, Harper's clear dissatisfaction with stereotypical sexual encounters suggests that the novel could be attempting to destabilize the notion that women are their bodies exclusively – in a way that men are not – through the depiction of Harper's sexuality; as he seems to be at the mercy of his own bodily (sexual) desires. In the above extract, it is clear that the novel reveals one perspective of masculine sexuality. Another instance of the dynamics between Harper and Etta (during sex) is seen when:

[H]e takes his unease out on her [and Harper's dominance of Etta is seen as] they fuck in the parlor. He will not allow Etta upstairs. When she needs to pee, he tells her to do it in the kitchen sink and she hoists up her dress and squats there. (Beukes, 2013:235)

The kind of male domination of women, exemplified in this relationship, is brought to a climax when Harper kills Etta: "It takes a long time of hitting her head against the

metal bedframe before her skull splits open” (2013:237). It can be suggested then that, as a result of Harper’s deviant sexual specificity, he is unable to achieve full sexual gratification through normal sexual practices. In order to achieve full satisfaction he must therefore kill Etta, because it is only through the exertion of his dominance over women that he can release his sexual frustration. It is apparent then that Harper becomes “a subject of a hidden interiority” (Grosz, 1994:9), which plays out on the surface of his body. His motivation behind the murders of ‘the shining girls’ is then specifically linked to his sexuality. For Harper, the act of murder (particularly mutilation and disembowelment) becomes a sexually arousing event, suggesting that Harper’s (male) power and (masculine) sexuality are based on, and can only be experienced through his complete subordination of women. In this way, Harper can be seen as representing a form of sexual sadism. By becoming sexually aroused through the disempowerment and ultimate subordination of female bodies, Harper exposes the deviancy that (masculine) sexuality can possess.

Linking back to my earlier discussion in which I examined the female body in relation to the mind/body dualism (Grosz, 1994:4), my exploration of the male body reveals that on one hand seem to support this dualism. However, on the other hand what can also be deduced is that the novel’s depiction of (masculine) sexuality and (male) power – as shown in the example of Harper – also challenges the mind/body dualism. The deviant sexual specificity (represented by Harper) is contrasted, in the novel’s depiction of masculine sexual innocence (represented by Dan). Dan presents us with an opposing perspective of masculine sexuality that is more stereotypical, through his sexual desire for Kirby. On several occasions Dan is depicted as being sexually attracted to Kirby. However, he resists these feelings out of respect for Kirby’s situation (as a survivor of Harper’s attack), and also because of their age difference as he details:

It’s completely inappropriate. He’s too jaded, she’s too young, they’re both too fucked up. He’s confusing sympathy with infatuation. If he waits it out, it will numb itself. It will go away. He just has to be patient and avoid being a reckless idiot. Time heals. Crushes let up. (2013:189)

In the above instance we see Dan attempting to resist his sexual attraction to Kirby, while also rationalising his bodily desires; something Harper does not attempt to do.

Through Dan's rationalization of his biological urges, it can be said that, the novel reinforces the notion of the mind/body dualism; the male body (Dan) is able to transcend its sexual specificity through the process of reasoning. In his account Dan's sexuality comes across as a romantic notion, as he struggles with himself between bodily instinct and rational thought. Another instance, of Dan's sexual attraction to Kirby, is seen when they are in Kirby's apartment sorting through evidence boxes: "She lifts up her t-shirt to pinch at her belly. 'You'll work it off on the stairs,' Dan says, not looking, definitely not, at the way her waist curves in from the hard knob of her hip above her jeans" (2013:161). Dan's sexual attraction is seen again later in this instance where their bodies become physically close and he almost kisses her (2013:161). However, Dan controls his sexual urges as "he stops himself in time. Being relative. In time to stop himself from being a deluded idiot" (2013:161). From these examples, it can be concluded that Dan denies his sexual 'self' in favour of rational thought, thus enabling him to exhibit appropriate behaviour. Dan's ability to control his sexual urges stands in contrast to Harper's inability to do so. In its depiction of Dan the novel suggests that males are indeed able to transcend their bodies. However, this cannot be taken as a general assumption of the male experience of sexuality, as Harper's inability to control his (violent) sexual desire's presents a challenge to the notion of the mind/body dualism, in that it suggests that males can also be victims of their own biology.

### **Power and the Body**

To further extend my discussion of gender, power, and resistance, I examine these themes in this section as they relate specifically to the female and male bodies depicted in *The Shining Girls*. According to Gatens, "[p]ower is conceived as something which is intimately connected with authority, domination or exploitation" (1992:123). Drawing from Gatens's definition, I aim to explore the power dynamics between the male and female bodies as they are represented in the novel. The female body, as depicted in the novel, occupies a subordinate position in relation to the male body, and therefore is seen to be limited in its possession of power. Male bodies, on the other hand, are accorded the most power – seen specifically through the characterization of Harper Curtis. Male power is embodied by Harper, and is particularly evident in his domination of his female victims, as well as in his violent exploitation of their bodies. I aim to explore the power dynamics

between male and female bodies through the representations of ‘the shining girls’ – with particular reference to my notion of ‘female resistance’ as exhibited by Zora, Margot and especially Kirby. I also wish to explore the lack of female power; evident in the (male) subordination of Willie Rose, Julia and Jeanette, specifically. The power held by the transgendered body is also a major point of focus in this section and will be examined with specific reference to Alice. The theme of time as it relates to the body’s possession of power is important to note, because it directly informs my discussion of the power dynamic between the sexes. I intend to examine this theme with particular reference to female power and resistance.

The discussion around the power dynamics, between male and female bodies, begins with an examination of the male body, in the novel, and how it functions in relation to power as defined by Gatens. Since power is “intimately connected with authority, domination or exploitation” (Gatens, 1992:123), the primary male body (Harper) is seen to possess this kind of power, in accordance with mainstream Western patriarchal thought. In existing critical literature the male body is shown to have an elevated power position (in stereotypical Western culture), whereas the female body can only achieve the same power level provided that it elides its own corporeal specificity (1992:125). This idea is illustrated in Gatens’s exploration of this power dynamic:

It is the male body, and its historically and culturally determined powers and capacities, that is taken as the norm or the standard of the liberal ‘individual’. Women can achieve this standard provided that they either elide their own corporeal specificity or are able to juggle both their traditional role in the private sphere and their newfound ‘equality’.  
(1992:125)

Drawing on this idea I aim to explore the notion of power and the body in *The Shining Girls*. However, my examination of this notion also extends to the depictions of female resistance, as females react against male power. The theme of time becomes an important point of focus; Harper’s fantastical physical power (seen in his attacks detailed in: *The Body in Pain*) despite his weakened corporeal state could be said to be aligned with his place in history. Harper is depicted, in the novel, as a relatively young man from 1929.

The fact that he comes out of the time period prior to World War II could provide a rational explanation for his elevated power state. As during this period, in Western history, the male body was taken as the norm with its culturally determined powers and capacity. Similarly, the female body's subordinated position of power is also seen to be directly related to its position in Western history. Mainstream Western patriarchal thought has limited female power:

[W]omen's corporeal specificity is used to explain and justify the different (read: unequal) social positions and cognitive abilities of the two sexes. By implication, women's bodies are presumed to be incapable of men's achievements, being weaker, more prone to (hormonal) irregularities, intrusions, and unpredictabilities. Patriarchal oppression, in other words, justifies itself, by connecting women much more closely than men to the body and, through this identification, restricting women's social and economic roles to (pseudo) biological terms. (Grosz, 1994:14)

The male body and how it relates to the theme of power in the novel comes into focus through the representation of Harper. Although Harper is shown to hold a significant amount of power it is, nevertheless, surprising that he should possess the power and strength to kill the shining girls, given that his body is physically weakened. Harper's body – as previously discussed – is inscribed with significant corporeal vulnerability. Harper's body is depicted as the opposite of the stereotypical masculine ideal of Western culture. Described as a “horribly thin man leaning on a crutch” (Beukes, 2013:116), Harper's body is physically crippled shown through his reliance on a wooden crutch, which becomes an extension of his body as well as his identity. The extent of Harper's physical limitations is evident on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1931, when he discovers ‘the House’. As he explores this space his “gimpy foot [severely limits his mobility as] he swings his crutch wide [in order to avoid Bartek's (one of Harper's male victims) decomposing body, and he] limps past the corpse” (2013:7,31). Harper's limited mobility is emphasized throughout Harper's exploration of ‘The House’. Instead of relaxing in this space Harper is shown to deny his physical needs in that:

He resists the chair, even though his leg is aching from the walking [and he] hauls himself up the steps, hanging on the balustrade [and] has to swing his foot up and round every time, his crutch dragging behind him [thus causing him to pant] through his teeth at the effort. (2013:32)

From the above example the novel suggests that – from a physical standpoint – Harper’s body is one which is physically weakened, and even possesses a level of corporeal vulnerability. Despite his physically weakened state, Harper retains his significantly high level of power and is shown to be able to exercise domination and exploitation over women.

Extending my discussion it is important to examine the Western model of patriarchal subordination of women. Patriarchy’s denial of power in women, which justifies itself by reducing the female to a physically weaker body – in relation to the male body – as explored by Grosz (1994), and Gatens (1992), is the main focus of examination here. I will also draw on Bartky’s (2000) use of Lingis’s (1970) ideas around the disabilities of pregnancy, to further examine the lack of female power, as well as female resistance.

The power dynamics between the male and female bodies and female resistance, in Beukes’s *The Shining Girls*, can be explored through a reading of Willie Rose. Willie Rose (one of Harper’s ‘shining girls’) is killed on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 1954. Willie is described as “a woman who has come to terms with her ambitions” (Beukes, 2013:111), and in a similar way to Zora is able to acquire a position in the (predominantly male) corporate sphere and works at MIT. Although Willie is shown to be capable of men’s achievements in the corporate sphere she is, ultimately, still denied an equal level of power. An example of her powerlessness is evident when she is subjected to the sexual harassment of her co-worker, Stewart:

She should have just shut up about it [...]. It’s because she laughed at him when they all went for drinks in her first week and he got a little tipsy and followed her into the ladies’ room. He tried to kiss her with those thin dry lips, pressing her against the sink with its gold-plated faucets and black tiles, trying to hike up her skirt while reaching into his pants. The ornate nouveau

mirrors reflected endless iterations of fumbling. She tried to push him away and when he didn't give, she reached into her purse, propped on the sink because she'd been applying a fresh coat of lipstick when he'd come in, and grabbed her silver-and-black deco cigarette lighter – the present she bought herself on getting into MIT. (2013:112)

Willie Rose is unable to challenge the kind of harassment, illustrated above, as “[s]he works through lunch, so she doesn't have to run into him on the way out, even though her stomach is growling like a tiger” (2013:113). The extent of female subordination in this context is demonstrated here, as Willie is seen to be significantly disempowered due to her historical context. However, the novel also attempts to reinsert power into the female body through Willie Rose. An example is evident when she is seen to use the sexual power of her body to manipulate her way into acquiring the position:

She would have liked to do public buildings. A museum or a hospital, but she had to fight for this job like she fought to get a place at MIT. Crake & Mendelson were the only firm who invited her back for a second interview, and she made it count, wearing her tightest pencil skirt, armed with her brassiest humour and a portfolio that showed she was more than that, even if they hired her for those other reasons. You take whatever advantages nature and wile afford you. (2013:112)

However, from the above extract, it can be seen that female power is limited to the sexualised body. In the pre-war context female power can be said to be based exclusively on the female body's sexual appeal. As the novel suggests, women who exhibited free thinking during this time were targeted by their male counterparts, emphasized in the interactions between Willie and Stewart. The female resistance that Willie exhibits becomes a further justification for her subordination by male power. This is seen in Willie's realization that she has made a mistake by resisting Stewart, because “[h]e'll be the first to put her up against the wall. Because that's what people do these days” (2013:112). The novel suggests, here, that female resistance is not only ineffectual in female pursuits of equal power status, but also provides males with a further justification for female domination. By saying, “[s]he should have just shut up about it” (2013:112) the novel

highlights that female power, in this historical context, is dependent on their intellectual silence.

Willie's physical reaction to Stewart reinforces the patriarchal justification of female disempowerment, as based on the inferiority of the female body. This kind of justification is exemplified in Willie's, negative physical reaction to Stewart's presence after the event: "Her heart is thudding in her chest like it's trying to bash its way right out of her chest. She wants to go home and curl up in her unmade bed" (2013:113). The lack of control that Willie is seen to have over her body, here, again reinforces the notion that women are 'of body', and in Willie's attempts to control her physical reactions to "act normal [and] get herself together" (2013:113). From these instances it can be concluded that females are seen to distinctly lack power in the pre-1960s period. In a similar fashion, although Willie attempts to resist patriarchal subordination, this resistance is seen to be completely ineffectual.

The novel's depiction of the lack of power, in females, is reinforced again through Willie's encounter with Harper. Although Willie is shown to possess some power in her ability to resist Stewart's advance (with the help of her lighter), she is unable to fight Harper. Her powerlessness to resist Harper is evident below:

She opens the door to find that it's not Abe standing outside, but a horribly thin man leaning on a crutch. He turns the corners of his lips around the wires between his teeth and screwed into his jaw in something that is supposed to be a smile. She pulls back in revulsion and tries to close the door on him. But he jabs the rubber foot of his crutch in the gap and shoves through. The door slams into her, bouncing off her forehead and cracking the glass. She falls backwards against one of the heavy Knoll desks. The metal edge catches her in the small of her back and she slides down onto the floor. If she can make it to Stewie's desk, she could throw the big lamp at him...

But she can't get up. There's something wrong with her legs. She whimpers as he limps in, grimacing around the wires in his mouth, and closes the door softly behind him. (2013:116)

What can be deduced from the above example is a reinforcement of my previous statement; that the historical context in which women live (in the novel) has a direct impact on the level of power that they are afforded. The disproportionate level of power that Harper is seen to possess, is also evident here. Harper, whose body is physically limited, should not, logically, possess the amount of physical power he is shown to embody in the example above. In turn, the novel seems to be supporting – at least in part – the patriarchal notion which strips females of the ability to possess (equal) power with males.

The lack of female power is also illustrated in the description of Zora, and particularly in her murder. The theme of time again becomes important in this section, as Zora's historical context is important in terms of power and resistance. Zora is depicted, as possessing a physically stronger (female) body than that of the stereotypical Western woman. Zora's strong body results from her occupation as a welder on ships in the 1940s and 1950s. Her resulting man-like strength is described in the novel as follows:

'No!' she yells, furious, with him and her body for betraying her. She grabs his belt, pulling him down with her. He struggles to raise the knife again and she punches him so hard in the side of his head that she dislocates his jaw and breaks three of her fingers, the knuckles crunching like popped corn on the stove. (2013:91)

From the above extract, my discussion on female power and resistance is brought back into focus. Female resistance to male power (as embodied in Harper) is evident in Harper's murder of Zora as although "Zora might be built like a wrestler, [...] she has never been in the ring" (2013:91). Thus, it can be seen that the novel attempts to reinsert power in the female body, through the female resistance exemplified in these instances.

The novel's depiction of Margot also represents an important dimension of female resistance, that deserves attention. Useful to this point of discussion is the notion of Shulamith Firestone as taken up by Bartky:

[T]he disabilities and dependency of pregnancy made women vulnerable to the domination of men in the past. What was past is also present: the disabilities of pregnancy are still a factor in our oppression. But progress in reproductive technology is preparing the way for women's liberation. (Bartky, 2000:322)

Firestone suggests that the female body is a victim of pregnancy, and therefore making it more susceptible to vulnerabilities. She also suggests that technology (in this case medical science) holds the key to women's liberation. An idea reflected in the novel through an underground abortion clinic known as "Jane's" (Beukes, 2013:201). The novel introduces Margot (one of the shining girls and a volunteer at 'Jane's') on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1972, as she aids a young girl (Jemie) home after her illegal abortion. Female resistance is expressed here through the attempt of women to regain the right to their own corporeal bodies, and to reclaim the power to choose whether or not they wish to terminate pregnancy. The novel reveals that, because female bodies are subject to "the disabilities and dependency of pregnancy" (Bartky, 2000:322), they then become more vulnerable to male domination. However, the novel does attempt to liberate its women – from this male domination – by employing the use of advancements in medical science to perform safe abortions. Female resistance comes forth as the reclamation of power, through the development of 'Jane's' abortion clinic. However, the reclamation of (female) power does not extend to the individual female body. This remaining lack of power is shown when Margot is unable to resist the power of Harper and remains in a subordinated position. Such an event is ironic given the fact that Margot is inscribed as being as tall as a man; she is "six foot tall with strawberry-blond hair parted down the middle" (Beukes, 2013:199). Even so, she is still no physical match to Harper's strength:

'Screw you,' she gasps, less strident than she imagined it in her head, and she tries to push him away. But all the strength has gone out of her and he has learned. Worse. He knows he is invincible. 'Have it your way,' he shrugs, still smiling. He wrenches her thumb backwards – it's unbearable – and uses it to shepherd her away to a construction site. He pushed her down into the mud of the foundation pit and binds her up with wire and gags her

and takes his time with the killing. When he is down, he tosses the tennis ball in after her. (2013:204)

The physical strength of the male body here, although disproportionate to Harper's physical size and limitation, is significant as he is able to completely overpower Margot. Thus, the novel seems to reinforce the patriarchal justification of female subordination based on the view that the female body is physically weaker, in comparison to the male body.

Moving on from, but still centring on the novel's exploration of power dynamics in relation to historical context, it is essential to examine instances of female resistance; such as those offered by Kirby. Kirby's resistance is expressed through her tenacious hunting down of her attacker, Harper. During the actual attack Kirby exhibits little physical resistance, and certainly does not compare to that displayed by Zora. Instead, Kirby's resistance is expressed through her systematic piecing together of evidence, and eventually climaxes in her finding and pursuit of Harper to 'the House'.

What is interesting to note, is that as Kirby enters 'the House' she is transported back in time to the year 1931. In such an event Kirby's level of power is shown to significantly diminish. In the context of the 1990s (post-1960s) Kirby is seen to have a relatively high level of power in the novel. During this time women are afforded a relative level of equality in the body politic. However, it is interesting that Kirby's presence in 1931 has completely stripped her of the power that she possessed in 1993. Such disempowerment is evident when Kirby is unable to exact revenge on Harper on her own, and instead of confronting him she hides (2013:276). Any power she had possessed, outside of 'the House', is reduced to simple fear: "The connections between her brain and her body have petrified. Her hand will not move to open the wardrobe door. Move, she thinks" (2013:276). Although Kirby is unable to react physically in the ways she desires:

[S]he should walk into the bathroom, take up the crutch, and smack him in the skull with it. Knock him out cold. Tie him up. Get the cops. But she knows – if he doesn't wrest it away from her – she won't be able to stop until he doesn't get up ever again. (2013:276)

She still thinks that she maintains power; however, it is clear that her physical body betrays her mind, thus in this instance the novel seems to reinforce the idea of patriarchal subordination. In these ways, although female power, and resistance are evident in the novel they are shown to be almost completely ineffective. Even though, Kirby eventually does succeed in exacting revenge against Harper by killing him, she is only able to do so with the assistance of her male companion, Dan. Not only does Dan provide the platform from which Kirby may conduct her search for Harper (through his occupation as a columnist for a newspaper), but he also provides Kirby with the power, and the weapon, she uses to kill Harper. It is also interesting to note here that Dan possesses more power than Kirby. However, Dan has a reduced level of power in comparison with Harper. When Kirby returns with Dan to ‘the House’, the two men struggle with one another and they fall into December 1929 (2013:289). Harper, who has the seemingly less powerful body, is able to overpower Dan’s body:

Dan’s shirt is wet. The cold cuts through it. Blood runs down his arm and drips between his fingers, blooming in the snow in pink crystalline fractals. He can’t even tell what it’s from any more, his ribs or the cut in his hand. It’s all gone numb and burny anyway. The killer pulls himself to his feet using the railing, still holding the knife. (2013:289)

The above example suggests that historical context has a direct impact on the amount of power that male bodies can possess. Being from a time where patriarchy ruled in all facets of life Harper is seen, in the novel, to possess more power than that of Dan. The novel reveals, here, that in the context of the 1990’s males seem to have lost a significant amount of power, resulting from the liberation of women. As I have suggested, particular evidence of this is in the depiction of Dan. When Harper re-enters ‘the House’, in this instance, and returns to the date in which Kirby and Dan entered (13<sup>th</sup> of June 1993). Kirby regains her earlier power, and she is then able to take control of the situation: “he [Harper] meets Kirby’s gaze as she levels the gun at him [and] she exhales slowly and squeezes the trigger” (2013:293). What is suggested here is that the power dynamics between the two sexes are directly related to the historical contexts in which the body exists; female bodies possess less power in the period before World War II, and male power has been to some

extent been curtailed after this period. Therefore, it can be concluded that female power has increased following women's liberation. However, female power is still limited, as seen in the novel where Kirby's power is shown to be dependent on the assistance of a male.

The power dynamics between the sexes are also usefully explored in relation to the transgendered body. As I have argued, Alice can be said to perform a feminine gender in that she dresses, behaves, and feels shame as a female. However, she possesses more power than that of the other female victims, due to her biologically male body. Alice can be read as embodying female resistance in that she is able to take possession of her power. Instead of allowing Harper to kill her, she commits suicide (2013:242). As previously mentioned Alice is a performer in the production, 'Girly Show', and her male body is described in the instance where Alice's boss Joey exposes her true identity:

Trembling, Alice peels off the dress, lets it slip to the floor, revealing her flat chest, the elaborate bondage of tape and elastic around her genitals. Joey's eyebrows furrow. She has fought against this her whole life. Against Lucas Ziegenfeus, who lives inside her. Or she lives inside him, resenting his physical body, the despicable hateful thing dangling between her legs that she straps down but doesn't have the courage to cut off. (2013:178)

The above illustration leads me to question whether, or not, Alice can be read as an example of female resistance. Although Alice is described as female, her male biology cannot be ignored. Therefore, I am lead to conclude that through Alice the novel is providing a sense of *feminine* resistance, as opposed to female resistance. It can then be argued that in relation to power the body is not exclusively bound by biological sex, instead it extends beyond this to include the power and resistance of gender. However, despite being biologically male Alice is still subordinated by Joey in the same way as (biological) females (2013:178).

## **Conclusion**

In my final chapter I have been concerned with the treatment of the body in *The Shining Girls*, and have given particular attention to the following concerns: the wounded body and identity, the female body, power and the body, the body in pain and the male

body. The novel can be seen to move away from a focus on the body in relation to the dominant social architecture, and directs its focus towards the treatment of the body in terms of experience and identity. As I have suggested, *The Shining Girls* offers a reading of the body in relation to trauma and wounding, and the consequences these have on the construction of identity. One of the major points of focus in the novel is the way in which the body is experienced on a subjective level, as well as the ways it can be manipulated or changed by its interactions with other bodies; this is evident in the story of Harper Curtis and his pursuit of the shining girls. Even though Harper's body is represented in the novel as physically weak and thin, it is shown to have the power to do permanent harm to other bodies. The novel emphasises this point through its depiction of the interaction between the bodies of Harper and Kirby. Kirby's body is evidently the most profoundly affected by its interaction with the body of Harper. Harper is seen to alter Kirby's experience of her own corporeality dramatically, through the mutilation and scarring of her body. In this sense, the novel can be seen to echo Kristeva's notion of the abject body as understood by Judith Butler, in that Harper renders Kirby's body to a state of 'abjection', through fragmentation, thus forcing her to re-define her identity. The connections between the wounded body and identity are shown to be gendered: what the novel suggests is that trauma affects the ability of the female characters to validate their experience through communication, as trauma hinders the body's ability as a vehicle for expression. Kirby's experience of violence reduces her to a state of incommunicable unintelligibility. Thus, the novel offers a suggestive exploration of 'the body in pain'.

My discussion of the impact of physical violence on identity (particularly in relation to the character Kirby), goes beyond Scarry's notion of 'mute unintelligibility', to include an examination of the extent to which the effects of violence can be linked to the construction of identity. In this sense, the novel shows how the body's subjective identity can be shaped by its experience of pain. In my reading I suggest that the body in pain is shown, in the novel, to be something of an obstacle that the subject's interior (mind) must overcome, in order to survive. What can be concluded then is that the body in pain is a state that becomes detrimental to the subject's survival, as well as the subject's ability to interact and communicate with the external world. The (male) body in pain here sits in contrast to that of the female body. This is seen in the subject's responses to pain; the female body is

seen to be rendered to a state of unintelligibility, especially in Kirby's response, and therefore the body in pain can be seen to significantly impact the subject's ability to communicate its experience. However, what emerges from my study of the male responses to pain is that Scarry's notion seems only apply only to female bodies.

As suggested above, the body as a site of violence is an important concern; significant here is the way in which violence is seen to impact both identity and the perceptions of the body. What is also explored, in my reading of *The Shining Girls*, is the way in which the body is experienced in varying ways. Linking to my exploration of the female body, the novel's various descriptions of the shining girls both reinforce and challenge traditional Western female stereotypes, particularly those pertaining to the body. As I have suggested, time in the novel has important implications for the power of the female body. These implications are seen as the earlier victims (killed between 1931 and 1954) are seen to reinforce these stereotypes. Whereas the later female victims (killed between 1972 and 1993) are depicted as challenging these assumptions, through the representations of female power and resistance. In the novel, women are seen to lack power in the historical context of the period prior to female liberation. What can be deduced then is that the novel's treatment and depiction of the female body challenges stereotypical notions of women as being physically weak, by offering a portrait of Kirby's incredible physical and mental strength. What can be deduced from this is a reinforcement of my previous statement, namely that the historical context in which women live (in the novel) has a direct impact on the level of power they are afforded. Such a deduction can be corroborated to my earlier statement in which I suggest the disproportionate level of power that Harper is seen to possess. Thus, the novel supports – at least in part – the patriarchal notion which strips females of the ability to possess (equal) power with males.

The male body, although given less attention in the novel, is seen as an important point of focus in my reading of *The Shining Girls*. Extending my existing discussions of gender, power and resistance in the novel, the two male bodies I have discussed are seen as representing opposing sides of masculinity, as they project different kinds of male power, sexuality and corporeality. What is important to note here is the significant vulnerability which is ascribed to male bodies. Although these two bodies are inscribed with significant

levels of power, they are also shown to be vulnerable to physical pain, in the same way as female bodies have been seen to be in the novel. The theme of masculine sexuality, in particular, comes into sharp focus through Harper's sexualisation of the shining girls. Alternatively, by representing female sexuality as a 'danger to society' the novel can be said to support mainstream Western patriarchal theory. The novel supports this notion, as it suggests that women who express, or are seen to embody, sexuality and sexual desire/expression will corrupt not only themselves, but society as a whole. In essence, the novel explores the way in which female sexuality is defined as a major threat to the Western patriarchal system, according to which this sexuality must be controlled. Male sexuality and power, on the other hand are represented through Harper's motivation behind his murders of the shining girls, and Dan's romantic-like attraction to Kirby. For Harper, the act of murder is a sexually arousing event, suggesting that Harper's (male) power and (masculine) sexuality are based on, and only experienced through, his complete domination over women. In such a way, Harper can be seen as representative of a form of sexual sadism. Harper's sexual urges, satisfied through violence, expose the sexual deviancy that males can possess. However, the novel's reinforcement of Grosz's notion of the mind/body dualism is made evident in my exploration of Dan's attempts to resist his sexual attraction to Kirby, as well as in his rationalisation of these bodily desires. In comparing the deviant sexuality of Harper with Dan's rationalization of his sexual desires, the novel brings the validity of the mind/body dualism into question. Thus, *The Shining Girls* can be said to be successful in bringing attention to new ways in which to read and understand the body which goes beyond the limits of existing critical literature.

## Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have expanded on the existing critical literature – Gatens (1992); Grosz (1994); Bartky (2000) and Bordo (2003) – on the body by means of a central focus on textual representations of the ‘abject’ body, the ‘disciplined’ body and the ‘gendered’ body in the first three fictional works of Lauren Beukes: *Moxyland*, *Zoo City* and *The Shining Girls*. What emerges from my study is that, in these novels, Beukes brings to the foreground new meanings and readings of the body. Through my reading of the body in relation to notions of the ‘disciplined’ body, the body in pain, the ‘gendered’ body, the body in relation to power and the vulnerable body, I bring renewed attention to the body, in the hope not only of extending the existing critical literature on Beukes’s work, but also of enriching the existing theoretical literature on the body itself.

My reading of the body in *Moxyland* has drawn attention to the architecture of space, spatial and social division, the role of technology as a means of social control, and the bio-political dimensions of state surveillance and questions of urbanity and ‘citiness’, as well as boundary-making and breaking. The novel is seen to bring attention to the dystopian, post-apartheid imaginary with particular emphasis on the plight of the body in this context. The body emerges as not only vulnerable to state violence, but also as a signifying marker which determines the subject’s social status in the post-apartheid imaginary. The body itself becomes thus a determinant of the subject’s amount of access to the city, the level of power the subject may possess and how this subject then interacts with law enforcement and other mechanisms of social control. In its exploration of those bodies which show resistance (passive and active) to such control, the novel suggests that efforts to alter the state’s power mechanisms are completely ineffective. In this sense, the body is represented as having no significant impact, as not only is the body unable to transcend its social position in the post-apartheid state, it also has no influence on entrenched configurations of power. By foregrounding the body and body inscriptions in *Moxyland*, I have also given attention to the novel’s pervasive concerns with boundary-marking and boundary-disruption, as well as to the significance of the ‘cyborg identity’. The idea of technology as a tool for discipline and social control expands existing ideas of the

‘disciplined’ body; an idea I later explore in my reading of the body in relation to social control in *Zoo City*.

My reading of the body in *Zoo City* is focused primarily on the ‘marked’ or the ‘animalled’ body. Through the ‘marked’ body, in this novel, it is clear that new forms of power mechanisms which characterize post-apartheid society are brought to light. These are bodies which have been rejected by and displaced from mainstream society: they are only tolerated by normal society, rather than accepted. Through my examination of the novel’s social power mechanisms it can be argued that the Panoptic principle of social control is a more effective form of discipline, as opposed to those seen in *Moxylant*, as there are no apparent challenges to the system. Also of interest in *Zoo City* are the inscriptions of the gendered body. In *Zoo City*, Beukes offers a redefinition of the male body in terms of its corporeal vulnerability to pain, as seen through its depiction of Benoît, specifically. The female body in this novel is elevated to new levels of power. Although not all female bodies are seen to be elevated in terms of power, the novel still redefines the female body, through its depiction of Zinzi, as it is seen to be able to transgress beyond the constraints set out in the mind/body dualism. What also becomes clear is that spaces in *Zoo City* work in a similar way to those in *Moxylant*, in that they still form boundaries and social division. However, unlike *Moxylant*, the physical space of *Zoo City* is not strictly monitored by physical boundaries; instead, it is regulated through the ‘marking’ of bodies, resulting in the formulation of social boundaries. The social boundaries constructed in *Zoo City*, are invisible and are not heavily policed, which results in bodies not being as physically restricted as they are seen to be in *Moxylant*. Instead of the extreme physical restriction, we saw in *Moxylant*, those who are ‘animalled’, in *Zoo City*, are consciously aware of their lack of place in this space, and thus choose to avoid engaging with it. It is in this way that, the city space in *Zoo City* works in accordance to the way in which Foucault’s principle of that Panopticon does.

The question of gender in relation to the power dynamics between the two sexes becomes an important point of focus in *Zoo City*, as the male body is also seen as a limiting its quest for equality; however, it is a different equality which the male body seeks. As I have shown the way in which the twins (Songweza and S’bu) die is important in analyzing

the power dynamics between the sexes. What emerges from my analysis is that, although the female (Songweza) is killed by the male (S'bu), he is also seen to be at the mercy of his own corporeality, and is unable to transcend it. Thus, the novel brings into question the validity of the mind/body dualism. By challenging the notion of the mind/body dualism and bringing the body back into focus, in *Zoo City*, Beukes is able to redefine the body, in terms of its importance in the construction of identity as well as its relationship with social mechanisms of power. It is also important to note that throughout *Zoo City*, Beukes does not make any explicit attempt to free her female protagonist from conventional gender stereotypes. Therefore, although my exploration of the mind/body dualism, in this novel, is not revealed as gender-specific, and the conventional gender distinctions are seen to remain. Therefore, it becomes difficult to determine whether or not the novel is suggesting that the mind can be transcended. The dilemma of the mind's ability to transcend the body then brings the notion of the 'disciplined' body back into focus. This is so because the kind of 'discipline' the 'othered' bodies experience in *Zoo City* is seen to rely largely on the mind. My examination of this notion in the novel leads me to question if it can be concluded that the mind and body are distinctively separate constructs? As I have previously stated, I am inclined to believe that they are not individually established constructs in the case of *Zoo City*. Instead, they are seen as two binary units that make up one corporeal structure.

From my reading it can be argued that in attempting to challenge conventional readings of the male and female body, Beukes in fact reverses them, and therefore does not really offer a constructive alternative. I suggest that in attempting to redefine the female body, the novel has in fact imposed the same patriarchal domination on males from which it attempts to liberate its female protagonist. Thus, in challenging the power mechanisms held by patriarchal culture the novel gives new meaning to the capabilities of the female body, through its depiction of Zinzi's physical and mental strength. Even though, the novel does not grant power to all its female bodies I suggest that through the character of Zinzi, the novel still succeeds in assigning new and more positive meanings to the female body. It can also be determined that my exploration, of the novel's imagined power dynamics and social control mechanisms, reveals that the post-apartheid imaginary of *Zoo City* not only

pulls the body back into focus, but also offers new ways in which the body can be re-imagined and re-defined.

My reading of the treatment of the body in *The Shining Girls*; however, differs from the previous novels I have examined. My exploration of *The Shining Girls* moves beyond a focus on the ‘disciplined’ body and the body moving in space, to include an examination of the wounded body and identity, the female body, power and the body, the body in pain and the male body. As I have suggested *The Shining Girls* directs its focus on the treatment of the body in terms of identity and trauma. The body, as a site of violence, is explored and violence is seen to impact both identity and the perceptions of the body as this novel foregrounds the ways in which the body can be experienced. Linked to my exploration of the previous novel’s depictions of gender, *The Shining Girls* is seen to explore the issue of gender and gender dynamics in terms of power, a concept which was only touched on in *Zoo City*. By bringing the male body into focus, Beukes also extends existing discussions of gender, power and resistance well beyond her attempts in *Moxyland* and *Zoo City*. Although all the novels I have examined bring the female body into focus, *The Shining Girls* is the one that imaginatively redefines the meaning of the female, as – unlike *Zoo City* – the wounded body is not represented as a site of shame or vulnerability, but paradoxically, becomes a site of survival. As I have explored Kirby is never afforded freedom from her wounded corporeal existence and her body becomes her identity. The novel shows that Kirby’s bodily contours have been disrupted as a result of physical violence, and she must redefine them in terms of her new corporeal reality, which reinforces my hypothesis that the novel explores the ways in which physical violence has an impact on the body. From my examination, physical violence is seen to have a dramatic and detrimental impact on the body, especially in terms of its construction of identity.

Unlike *Moxyland* and *Zoo City*, it suggested in *The Shining Girls* that female sexuality is tangible, visible, and is not only a danger to those who possess it, but to society as a whole. In terms of sexuality, however, the novel shows that it is not necessarily linked to the body’s biological sex. As I have explored, this is seen in the depiction of the transgendered body of Alice. By imagining a body that is biologically male that embodies a feminine gender the novel implies that sexuality and sexual identity are not bound by

biological sex, but linked more closely to the articulation of gender. The transgendered body then becomes an important tool with which we can explore the way in which sexuality and sexual desire is embodied the novel, an idea that is completely ignored in the previous two novels. Through Alice's embodiment of female sexuality gender is shown, in *The Shining Girls*, to be something which is socially performed, rather than being a direct result of the body's biological sex.

In a similar fashion patriarchal subordination of women is revealed in the exchange between Joey and Alice which reveals that male domination is based on gender difference, rather than on biological dissimilarities. In this novel it is suggested that gender functions as that which determines sexual identity, rather than the body's sex as revealed through the depiction of the transgendered body, suggesting that sexuality is chosen and performed, rather than biologically determined. It is also important to mention that the male body is also brought into focus in *The Shining Girls*, a notion largely ignored by *Moxyland*. *Zoo City*, however, does attempt to bring it into focus through the disempowerment of Benoit. However, *The Shining Girls* – unlike the two previously examined novels – brings the male body into significant focus, and redefines it in terms of power linking its level of power to its historical context. *The Shining Girls* through the attention it gives to the, previously, ignored corporeality and corporeal vulnerability of male bodies, redefines the male body in terms of its power status. Through the comparison between Harper and Dan the novel suggests that while women's liberation did afford more power to the female body, it also is seen to have had a detrimental effect on the power held by males. What is also revealed in the novel's depiction of these two male characters is that masculine sexuality has two perspectives. As I suggest, Harper offers a perspective of masculine sexuality that is deviant and uncontrollable (linking with my discussion of female sexuality), and Dan presents an opposing perspective of masculine sexuality that is overcome by rational thought. What I have also suggested in my examination is that through the novel's depiction of these perspectives of masculine sexuality, it calls into question the validity of the mind/body dualism. It becomes evident, in the novel's depictions of sexuality, that the notion of the mind/body dualism can be supported, but also challenged in various ways. Therefore, through the inscriptions of the body, in these three novels, Beukes brings renewed attention to the body. As I have demonstrated, the focus on the body can be said to

echo some of the concerns of theorists such as Foucault, Kristeva, Scarry, and others. However, my reading of these novels also points to the way in which inscriptions of the body and embodiment in *Moxyland*, *Zoo City*, and *The Shining Girls* also extends the existing literature, offering new ways in which the body can be read and imagined.

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