

**REPRESENTATIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN WOMEN IN FARIDA  
KARODIA'S *DAUGHTERS OF THE TWILIGHT* AND SHAMIM SARIF'S *THE  
WORLD UNSEEN***

By

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is my own original work and that where use has been made of the work of others, it has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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## ABSTRACT

In this article I examine the representations of South African Indian women in Farida Karodia's *Daughters of the Twilight* and Shamim Sarif's *the world unseen*. My contention is that each author chooses a different mode of representation and that certain features of these representations suggest both the different relationship each author has with South Africa and the differences in the times of production of the novels. Thus while both novels are set in the 1950s, Karodia, whose site of enunciation is the 'interregnum' in the 1980s, imagines the agency of her women quite differently from Sarif, who writes from a 'post-anti-apartheid' site of enunciation in the late 1990s. I analyse and compare the relationships between characters (men and women; women and women) and look at the cultural and political significance of mixed-race figures, concentrating on uncovering the mechanisms of power and their effects. I read these against a politico-historical context of the setting and that of the times and places of production.

## INTRODUCTION

In *Daughters of the Twilight* and *the world unseen* Farida Karodia and Shamim Sarif explore the resistant formation of cultural and sexual identities during the early years of the official institution of apartheid – the 1950s. It was a time when individual identities were being framed within cultural and political measures which were designed to interpellate ‘non-white’ people as easily categorised and controlled subjects.

‘I told you you’re a South African. That’s the only thing that matters. The government’s little tricks to keep us locked into our own comers won’t make a damn difference when the time comes. What’ll count then is who we are. Being black, green or blue will be an insignificant factor.’ (Karodia, 1986: 74)

There is a note of defiance in this statement made by a grandmother, Nana, to her granddaughter as she asserts both an individual and a national identity in response to a system which is denying the black majority of South Africa the right to either identity or to feeling at home in the land of their birth.

As a diasporic people, South African Indians have had to negotiate cultural and political minefields in forming their collective and individual identities from the time they settled in South Africa. In the stratified South African society, both before and after apartheid, their labour was desired, but their competition resented, the former by white farmers and businessmen, the latter by white businessmen and black African labour. Apartheid sought to isolate all racial groups and generally achieved some success, but equally forced a degree of identification between racial groups which were designated non-white. Since the beginning of the 1990s when apartheid finally started to crumble, Indian South Africans have found increasing difficulty negotiating the various designations of their identities and have felt the need to counter, in particular, efforts to consider them as an homogenous group. The concept of ‘Indianness’ is increasingly being brought into question. After the 1994 elections, Nana’s prediction that the Nationalist government’s bag of tricks would finally be exhausted and colour would become an insignificant factor seemed a possibility. However, apartheid’s attempts to create discrete racial identities had had sufficient impact to sustain ethnic, cultural and class divisions that could not be glossed over quite so easily. Politicians and other public figures, in an effort to counter this, resorted to a ‘unity

in diversity' approach and colour remained in focus as the South African people were called to form the 'rainbow nation' - a name which also captured the general mood of hope and sense of deliverance. All South Africans were called upon to redefine their places within the nation and their national identities on both a collective and an individual level. Desai sees the call for an Indian identity as a mechanism for maintaining the status quo of both patriarchy and the economic interests of a wealthy elite at the cost of an impoverished majority (1996: 121-22). Govender (1999: 1) claims it pushes Indian women even further into the margins by constructing a sense of not belonging.

The effects on identity of the measures apartheid instituted in its bid to control racial groups created particular difficulties for women. Literature is a valuable resource in recuperating or exploring identities: Michael Chapman views story-telling in literary history as "an attempt to capture, re-order, and even re-invent a sense of the self in society" (1998: 2), and there is a considerable body of writing by Indian women writers attempting precisely this process. Govinden points out that this writing is a "useful lens with which to read and reread the important issues of our time" (2000: 2). Yet when I initially started looking for an approach to my topic, I realised that despite this body of writing, little of it features in mainstream research. (This seems rather ironic, studying at Natal University). A quick survey of literary critical resources turned up little on the subject. It seems that South African Indian women have been doubly written out of the canon: on account of both race and gender.

South Africans have diverse experiences of our (un)common history and any attempt to rewrite history reflecting that diversity must guard against privileging certain histories in the official version. Both aspects of rewriting must define "the South African nation in terms that fully recognise its complex cultural and linguistic diversity, the 'plural', the particular, the mode of difference" (Wade, 1996: 4). Despite this call, literary studies have thus far failed to reposition Indian and coloured writing; rather, excavation has generally followed an 80s trend – polarising instead male black (African) voices and male white voices.

In representing the problems of South African Indian women, Karodia and Sarif choose different representational modes for particular identities and consequently imagine varying degrees of agency for characters. Each author occupies a different

position in the Indian diaspora, but each is also positioned quite differently in relation to South Africa: Karodia, who was born in and grew up in South Africa, went into exile where she began writing; while Sarif is British-born, to parents who are relocated South African Indians - her experience of South Africa comes from a working visit and her grandmother's stories (The Africa Centre: *Old Words, New Images*, [www.africacentre.org.uk/habarioldwords.htm](http://www.africacentre.org.uk/habarioldwords.htm)). The novels' times of production are similarly distinct: *Daughters of the Twilight* was written during the period of intense political struggle, the "interregnum" (Gordimer, 1988: 261) that characterised the last years of apartheid, while *the world unseen* was written in the more hopeful context of a "post-anti-apartheid" period (Kruger, 2002: 35). Flockemann contends that the comparison of diasporic women writers who use similar elements in their representations, despite differences in the positions they might occupy in the diaspora, is valuable in the project of democratisation. She claims that Agnes Sam and Olive Senior "use representations of 'Asianness' to destabilise the dominant discourses of identity" (1998:72). In similar vein, Karodia and Sarif employ 'South African-ness' to destabilise cultural and political identities of South African Indian women.

I would like to contend that certain features of Karodia's and Sarif's representations of South African Indian women suggest the different relationship each has with the country and the differences in the times of production of their works. Gordimer quotes Gramsci's definition of "interregnum" as a time when "the old is dying and the new cannot be born," and in which "there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms" (1982: 263). In Karodia's case, her 'interregnum' position does not allow her to imagine the same degree of agency or freedom that Sarif's 'post-anti-apartheid' position allows her. *Daughters of the Twilight* gives evidence of a number of morbid symptoms even as it moves towards the possibility of the new being born out of the hybrid - Karodia's challenge to apartheid attempts to categorise people in terms of racial purity. While both authors portray the complexity of South African (Indian) racial identities and locate resistance in the liminal spaces between cultures and races, Sarif extends this to gender. Sarif belongs to a period that Kruger designates "post-anti-apartheid" rather than post-apartheid, "because the moral conviction and commitment of anti-apartheid solidarity have waned, while in its place has come postcolonial uneven development rather than radical social transformation" (2002: 35). (A "post-anti-apartheid" outlook can be seen as a development through and beyond "anti-apartheid"

and extends the range and complexity of modes of resistance and representation.) Kruger also suggests that understanding the identity as “syncretic” offers “authors and protagonists ... a certain performative agency to appropriate and transform subaltern personas; roles; languages such as the language of black solidarity; the Indian diaspora; or international Islam” and “challenges readers to think beyond the black/white opposition that has structured *anti-apartheid* as well as apartheid discourse” (2002: 36). The identity politics of *the world unseen* are syncretic in the articulation of their multiplicity and complexity, crossing or blurring boundaries of culture, race and gender.

Just as the novelist’s vision has to be situated in a socio-political and historical context, so too must the feminist critic develop an awareness of his/her context. Mohanty warns that feminist scholarship is a political praxis that “counters and resists the totalising imperative of age-old ‘legitimate’ and ‘scientific’ bodies of knowledge” and as “feminist scholarly practices ... are inscribed in relations of power” – there can be no apolitical scholarship (1997: 256). The researcher needs to subject her/his analytical strategies and principles to careful scrutiny to avoid homogenising women, in this case South African Indian women, because this would constitute them as helpless victims of patriarchy or apartheid (1997: 258). Similarly, Spivak expresses concern about the position of the researcher in the act of representation, an act which she says has two meanings: “Representation as ‘speaking for,’ as in politics, and representation as ‘re-representation’ as in art or philosophy” (1988: 275). These are related but discontinuous and, in a project such as this, must be held constantly in conscious tension with each other. She advises a symptomatic reading of texts as this will expose the appropriating interests of the representing subject: “how the staging of the world in representation – its scene of writing, its *Darstellung* – dissimulates the choice of and need for ‘heroes,’ paternal proxies, agents of power – *Vertretung*” (1988: 279). In order that I might avoid the danger of appropriation, I intend to analyse and compare the relationships between characters (men and women; women and women) and look at the cultural and political significance of mixed race figures, concentrating on uncovering mechanisms of power and their effects. I shall read the novels against both the politico-historical context of the setting and that of the times and places of production. It is also necessary to point out that the term ‘Indian’ is contested within the local Indian community and although I refer to ‘South African Indian women’ this is done with the understanding that this is a

strategic construction complicated by a wide variety of differences in class, generation, degree of ethnicity, caste, religion, language etc.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT - THE 1940s & 1950s**

The National Party was elected to power in 1948 – to the horror of the black South African population and the surprise of much of the white population – and began codifying and systematising an already racially discriminatory government policy. Thus was apartheid brought into existence. Throughout the first half of the century a number of organisations, many of which were political, had sprung up to address the inequalities affecting the majority of South Africans: the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), and the South African Communist Party (which was to be banned early in the Nationalists' rule) among others.

By the time the Nationalists came to power these groups had already had some experience in organising mass campaigns; experience which in the 1950s could be well utilised. Women were extensively involved in the increased political resistance of the 1950s and this was for two reasons: in the 1940s more women joined either political organisations or affiliated groups (for example, The African National Congress's Women's League); and the extension of Pass Laws to women and the Bantu Education Act had a direct impact on the lives of women. These laws obviously affected African women more materially than those of other race groups, but the main political organisations had pledged themselves to work together through the Congress Alliance which was formed in 1952/3 (Walker, 1991: 165) based on a commonly experienced discrimination. The polarisation of black and white political organisations became more obvious in the 1950s especially once the Communist Party was banned. Towards the end of the decade the gaps between all racial groups were widening as a result of a series of laws which affected groups differently, thereby manipulating a subtle hierarchy among black people with Africans at the bottom, Indians and coloureds in the middle, while whites remained on top. Desai remarks that the geo-political features of Durban reflect this hierarchy (1996: 12). It became obvious when cracks began to show in the Congress Alliance, following the rise of an 'Africanist' element in the ANC.<sup>1</sup>

When the Nationalist Party proceeded to institute apartheid in 1948, an environment was created in which patriarchal hegemony flourished, for the Calvinistic principles of apartheid placed great emphasis on male values. If the top of the heap was the white Afrikaner paterfamilias, then the bottom of the heap was surely the black woman. Given the fact that African women were the most severely disadvantaged and far outnumbered any other racial group, it is understandable that their plight has demanded the greatest attention. Many were forced into a public resistance because of issues specific to their condition. The dire poverty which faced rural women in particular, increased as traditional structures gave way under, or were manipulated by governmental policies aimed at controlling the black labour force. Many black African women became heads of their households as men became migrant workers and the fates of their families became the women's immediate responsibility. To some extent this compelled them to re-present their own position, while Indian women by comparison remained under the protection of men and were represented by them. The major women's movement of the 1950s was the Federation of South African Women (FSAW) to which women were affiliated both as individuals and as members of various other political organisations. FSAW was closely linked to the Congress Alliance and membership was drawn from all races and classes. The representation of Indian women was, however, very small – consisting of a tiny group of elite, university trained women. Even the prominent radical SAIC activist, Dr Goonam, had little to do with FSAW and it seems that this may have been due to pressures from within the SAIC (Walker, 1991:140). Consequently, there was little mass resistance by Indian women. They had banded together only very rarely on issues directly connected with them (the campaign of passive resistance (1906-13) countered a Transvaal pass law, the poll tax in Natal and a Supreme Court ruling which effectively nullified Muslim and Hindu marriages). The majority remained isolated in their homes. Reflecting this isolation, both Karodia and Sarif have created non-politicised and isolated protagonists, who resist apartheid from their capacity as individuals rather than as part of any co-ordinated political movement.

Generally the Indian congresses (the Natal Indian Congress, the Transvaal Indian Congress and then the umbrella body of the South African Indian Congress) had not favoured mass involvement. The mass movement, which had campaigned successfully from 1906-1913, had died down once it had achieved its objectives and Gandhi had left South Africa. The SAIC continued to represent the interests of a small

wealthy merchant elite, shunning militant action and tending to adopt a more compliant attitude toward government policies in the hope that the government would have a change of heart. Only in the 1940s did it gain a broader base, drawing in more working class members because of the intervention of a growing radical faction who were competing for leadership. These radicals also encouraged the alliance with the ANC and other groups across the racial divides, as well as greater active involvement by women. By 1946 the SAIC had launched its first national passive resistance campaign against the Asiatic Land Tenure and Representation Act.

Despite this marking a "high point of activism within the SAIC" (Walker, 1991:107) the campaign failed to effect any concessions, resulting in a fall off in membership in both the SAIC and its provincial affiliates. However, the Passive Resistance Campaign was important, because it opened a space for Indian women within political resistance that had previously not been available and allowed a number of women to attain positions of leadership in a previously male domain. It also indicated a greater willingness on the part of the South African Indian leadership to pursue more radical and militant avenues. In 1952, the Defiance Campaign was launched by a planning committee of three SAIC leaders and four ANC leaders. On the other hand, although various organisations and their leadership were prepared to work with one another, this willingness did not always extend to the rank and file, and inter-racial tensions simmered in the cauldron of discrimination and economic deprivation, occasionally spilling over as they did in the Cato Manor riots in 1949. In general though, the 1950s ushered in a new era of co-operation between black political groups and by 1955 they had jointly formulated and adopted the Freedom Charter.

This volatile state of social turbulence is the context in which *Daughters of the Twilight* and *the world unseen* are set.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVELS

Both *Daughters of the Twilight* and *the world unseen* are set in South Africa in the 1950s, a crucial decade in South African politics for women as it was the decade of their greatest resistance (Daymond, 1996: xxviii). Both novels use national politics, culture and gender as the matrices within which the protagonists must negotiate all aspects of their individual identities. However, each author's own temporal context impinges upon her vision and provides its own lens with which to view the period of the 1950s. Karodia, resisting apartheid in the 1980s would have found support for her position in the theories and philosophy of womanism and Black Consciousness. Ogunyemi outlines a literary aesthetic based on writing by a number of black women novelists who, to her mind, have rejected a radical feminist position:

[m]ore often than not where a white woman writer may be a feminist, a black woman writer is likely to be a "womanist". That is, she will recognise that, along with her consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, national, economic, and political considerations into her philosophy.

(1985: 61-2)

She identifies a black womanist aesthetic as distinct from the feminist which, in its protest against sexism and the patriarchal power structure, is both "unapologetically propagandist or strident or both" (Ogunyemi, 1985: 64). By contrast, the womanist aesthetic has as its "ultimate aim ... the unity of blacks everywhere under the enlightened control of men and women" (Ogunyemi, 1985: 71). In line with this "the intelligent black woman writer, conscious of black impotence in the context of white patriarchal culture, empowers the black man" as she is "not limited to issues defined by [her] femaleness but attempt[s] to tackle questions raised by [her] humanity" (Ogunyemi, 1985: 68). In positing racism as more urgent than sexism, she moves very close to the position of Black Consciousness as enunciated by Steve Biko who claimed that South African black society was a "true man-centred society whose sacred tradition is that of sharing" (1996: 96). In recovering such a society, the woman's role, according to Dorothy Driver who instances Vernon February, is to restore their masculinity to black men who have to face daily humiliations in an apartheid world (Driver, 1990: 236).

Sarif, writing 20 years later than Karodia, is located in a very different context. She relates in a more general way to the Indian diaspora, born as she was in London. She writes in an era in which gender has become the new global outpost in the quest for democracy. Indian women are less easy to place in Ogunyemi's paradigm of activism. These women have suffered the inequities of apartheid, racism and the effects of patriarchal cultural traditions, whether Hindu or Muslim. Walker, discussing the lack of public involvement of Indian women the first half of the twentieth century claims:

[T]he reasons for this [absence of South African Indian women in mass resistance movements] must take into account the particularly lowly status occupied by women in the Indian community, a status which reinforced and compounded the obstacles put in their way, as blacks and as women, by the wider society. Culturally, Indian women could be regarded as the most subjected group of women in South Africa. Both the Hindu and Moslem religions sanctioned an extreme form of submission and passivity among women. Prejudice from within the Indian community against women participating in any form of activity outside the home was deeply rooted. (1991: 106)

Denied an education and imprisoned in domesticity, the majority of these women were effectively silent, with only a few women from a wealthier, educated elite making any impact on the political scene. One of South Africa's foremost pioneering Indian woman activists, Dr Goonam, records the resistance of her community which had to be overcome, before she was able to realise her dream of becoming a doctor instead of settling for marriage (Goonam, 2002: 113-118).

Despite her personal experience of growing up in South Africa, Karodia, like Sarif, is imaginatively constructing the 1950s from a distance in both time and space and it seems that it was exile that allowed her to find a voice with which to speak back to South Africa (Chetty, 2002: 347). The escape from the daily degradations of racism is likely to have a liberating effect on anyone, but, as Seidel points out, it should also be acknowledged that:

'So many writers, whatever their personal or political traumas, have gained imaginative sustenance from exile [...] that experiences native to the life of the exile seem almost activated in the life of the artist: separation as desire, perspective as witness, alienation as new being. (1986: x)

Certainly all three of those elements have impacted on Karodia's representation of South Africa. Hers is a narrative of childhood and innocence lost in a world that is increasingly isolating and fragmenting. It is the story of a mixed South African family retrospectively recounted in first person by Meena Mohammed. Hers is the only Indian family living in a small platteland town which appears to be populated largely by white Afrikaners – the Africans are confined to a location and the coloured population seems to consist mainly of farm labourers. Meena's mother, Delia, and Meena's grandmother, Nana, hold the family together through worsening circumstances. Abdul Mohammed, Meena's father, runs a general store the success of which is hampered by the preference that locals have for the white-owned stores and by the farmers who also force their black labourers to support these stores. Meena's family is harassed by the son of the local member of parliament, Cobus Steyn, in incidents which range from smashing a doll to raping Meena's older sister, Yasmin. While the story is that of the family, the central character is Yasmin and so Meena records mainly the events particular to Yasmin and the repercussions that they have on the family unit. Alongside these is the family's forced removal to the isolated area of McBain. It is only after Yasmin's rape, subsequent pregnancy and her refusal to love the baby, Fatima, that the integrity of the family is damaged and its effectiveness as a refuge is called into question. We are shown this through the gradually developing consciousness of a teenager, who comes to realise that there is no private space untouched by the violent intrusions of racism: "I tried to force myself out of this miserable environment into the tranquil world of my childhood, but it seemed impossible to make the transition" (1986: 147). Karodia appears to offer two options to relieve the family's besieged condition: the individualistic option of running away, or the self-sacrificial one of joining the militant struggle. They are not, however, easily given options, which resolve into neat conclusions, either happy or tragic. Yasmin runs away and we have only Nana's assertion that she is a survivor to offer a hint of resolution. Meena does not enter politics, but continues living at McBain.

The retrospective account of events is given by Meena, age unknown, from an undisclosed location (it is not possible to ascertain whether she is in the country or not). It is by situating the narrative voice in limbo in this way that Karodia successfully removes any need for or possibility of resolution, evoking rather a general sense of loss and isolation.

While we cannot define Sarif as a South African exile, her site of enunciation in the Indian diaspora overlaps that of an exile. She too must look elsewhere for roots other than in the country of her birth. Her personal experience of South Africa has been brief in physical terms, yet she is re-calling a place which is not entirely foreign to her. Seidel points out that the "[e]xilic mind, no matter where it projects ... emanates from familiar or local territory" (1986: 2). In Sarif's case, this familiar territory comes to her through her grandmother's memories – it is both intimately hers as part of her family history and yet also not hers. Her legacy puts her in a different imaginative position from that of Karodia and yet, as with Karodia, it has to have had some influence on her sense of identity-formation. In this respect, it is significant that she chooses to set her novel in South Africa, a novel which, although open-ended, conveys a sense of personal and spiritual freedom achieved within the severe restrictions of the 1950s. *the world unseen* pulls together two protagonists, Amina and Miriam, who would seem to have little in common other than having been born in India and having moved to South Africa at roughly the same time. Yet this physical border crossing is developed in other dimensions as both cross cultural, gender and sexual boundaries. Amina runs a popular restaurant with a coloured partner, Jacob Williams, in defiance of the Group Areas Act. She flouts convention by dressing like a man, doing odd jobs (chauffeur-ing businessmen on long trips and outdoor manual labour) usually reserved for men, and by her lesbian sexual orientation. Miriam, by contrast, is the conforming daughter and wife, accepting her arranged marriage to Omar which necessitates her emigrating to South Africa. She does not initially challenge her traditional position of deference to her sister-in-law, nor question her husband's actions. She first meets Amina in her restaurant where, she says, Amina is the first person to smile at her in ten days. They meet again some time later when Miriam's sister-in-law, Rehmat, who has to live abroad because she is married to a white man, returns to visit her family. Their relationship develops from this point as Omar hires Amina to prepare a section of their smallholding for a vegetable garden.

Sarif's narrative does not reflect the same unified location of voice and consciousness that characterises *Daughters of the Twilight*. Instead, the action shuttles between Pretoria and Delhof. Similarly we are shuttled back and forth through time, shifting to include even the presence of Amina's maternal grandmother, Begum (2001:

91-98). Begum is an indicator of the strength available to women and her story gives a measure of the impact of several intersecting, hegemonic discourses on women. Begum was successfully married at fifteen because of the lightness of her skin and subsequently bore a son. At nineteen Begum was raped by one of her husband's African employees and gave birth to a baby girl, who was rejected by Begum's husband thanks to her gender and because she was visibly not his child. Begum's mother-in-law and family beat her brutally when they realised that the baby was of mixed race and forced Begum to return to India. They promised Begum that the children would go with her, but at the train station her husband snatched back their son. Her resultant bitterness focused on South Africa and it was only after her death that Amina's father was able to move his family to South Africa. Amina is greatly influenced by her grandmother's tale and injunction to be independent (2001:47) even though Amina does not share her sentiments regarding South Africa. In contrast to Karodia's focus on race, resistance in *the world unseen* is directed against all forms of oppression, suggesting that Sarif judges that blind adherence to traditional cultural prescriptions is as oppressive as apartheid and in some instances is complicit with apartheid. She represents tradition as a static and stultifying force which alienates both men and women. Liberation can only be achieved through fluid perspectives which create instabilities within and between gendered roles, and through a consequent relocation of women's actions from a private to a public sphere.

*Daughters of the Twilight* does offer limited political agency for its protagonists within the anti-apartheid frame, but this agency is mired in a world of inflexible physical realities and the story ends on an uncertain note which offers no clear picture of a better future. While Karodia's story is that of strong women in the womanist tradition of the 1980s, it deviates from two key points: it does not empower black men and it cannot envisage a positive future.<sup>ii</sup> *the world unseen* goes far beyond the divisions and allegiances which shape *Daughters of the Twilight*: in it the physical realities of oppression are more complicated and less clear-cut than the monolithic evil of apartheid. Women face greater combinations of violently oppressive conditions, yet the possibilities for agency lie within each individual's ability to develop her own sense of identity and autonomy independently of prescribed patterns of traditional behaviour. In *the world unseen* it is the individual's refusal to question and challenge the discourses of patriarchy and apartheid that are ultimately destructive. These differences of vision seem

to indicate the temporal positions of the authors. Karodia, writing in the 'interregnum', was living through the "dying" of an era in which alternatives were struggling to be "born" and while the desire to envision a hopeful future is there, it is stuck in breach position. Sarif looks back over an era which has (officially) been laid to rest, while living in the present of its hopeful possibilities, and the difference in her temporal location is most immediately signalled by both her protagonists' recognition of new possibilities offered by South Africa when they first arrive. For Amina the country whose coastline rises up "from nowhere, out of the ocean as clean and as bright as the edges of a map" (Sarif, 2001:12), is the place in which she can grow in independence and self-sufficiency, and find love. Similarly for Miriam: "It was a new life in a new country - she had felt as if she had been wiped clean, that her life until now had been a specific, enclosed block, and that now she could start again, a different life, in a different place" (2001:33). Given this view of the country through her protagonists, we could consider Sarif a spiritual exile. The freedoms established in the 'post-anti-apartheid' South African constitution clearly resonate for her in a very personal way. There is no such resolution for Karodia who, writing as she was in the period of 'interregnum', can only use the imaginative space that exile confers on her to suggest that a more hopeful future will eventuate in the natural order of life, while her protagonists must weather the siege in the not always certain security of family:

"There was nothing here for Yasmin," Nana remarked. "This place is like a desert."

"I thought that together we could provide a small oasis of happiness," Ma remarked, eyes brimming.

Nana shook her head. "Not here, not in this country. It won't be long before they'll be back again with their dogs and their guns." (1986: 150)

## WOMEN IN RELATION TO MEN AS THEY COPE WITH SUBORDINATION.

Both novels play out against a background of apartheid, yet it features differently in each: in *Daughters of the Twilight* it is the central intervening force, while *the world unseen* takes a step back, so that apartheid becomes part of a very complicated matrix of oppression. *Daughters of the Twilight* primarily places men and women on the same side – that of all oppressed South African black peoples - collectively fighting a common enemy. It simultaneously neglects some of its implicit questions regarding men and women who are also negotiating identities in a patriarchal culture. Although apartheid remains the common enemy in *the world unseen*, there is no consistent resistance against it and no easy identification with Black Consciousness. Consequently, there are marked differences between the novels' handling of significant men-women relationships and the way the characters respond to subordination. The State is represented as aggressive, coercive and male in both novels (policemen and other State agents are all men) and it is largely through women that effective resistance is expressed to State oppression. This male state is set in clear opposition to black men as well as women in *Daughters of the Twilight* and has the effect of neutralising black male power. In *the world unseen* the same opposition exists, but the collusion of various characters with apartheid blurs any clearly gendered line of division and men appear to take a more acquiescent role. I have focussed on a minor woman character from each novel, Nana and Farah, in this section because although it is for different purposes, both seem to be opportunistic manipulators operating within patriarchy. Nana appears to support patriarchal values on behalf of her son-in-law Abdul<sup>iii</sup>, while Farah reveals the way in which complicity with patriarchy damages both oppressor and oppressed. Both characters provide a yardstick against which the main characters' development and achievements can be measured.

The women in Karodia's novel may be caught up in the political situation, at a racial disadvantage, but they are never really dominated by the head of the house. Certainly the household of women feel more at ease when he is away (1986: 9), but they decide how best to deal with almost all situations that govern their daily lives and if need

be, they will act subversively and deceive him. In her article on womanism, Ogunyemi states that "[p]atriarchy, as it manifests itself in black ghettos of the world, is a domestic affair without the wide reverberations it has in white patriarchy where the issue is real world power" (1985: 69). As a representative of patriarchal power, Abdul is negligible, he serves merely as an obstacle that needs to be negotiated on the domestic front. However, on the other side of the broad racial divide that Karodia draws, white men are a force that threatens every area of black women's lives. Alongside the more obvious instances of brutality when the police enter their home and shop to forcibly remove them, and when Cobus Steyn rapes Yasmin, there is the insidious threat in Hermanus Steyn's flirting with Delia - something which threatens the structure of the family and the protection that it provides against a harsh environment (1986: 30). Delia herself appears to be both angered by Hermanus's obvious interest in her, but simultaneously drawn to him. Nana questions Delia's fidelity to Abdul and later accuses Delia of prostituting herself when she goes to Hermanus, who is the local M.P., about the forced removal (1986: 67). The tension that Hermanus's attention generates may suggest a prior trespass on Delia's part if Nana's response is considered: given the supposed inequality of their respective positions under apartheid and the powerful coercive force this grants Hermanus, it seems odd that Nana blames not Hermanus, but Delia. While there is a disturbing sense of Nana's collusion with the patriarchal dictum that female chastity is linked to family honour, her attitude also suggests that sexual agency remains in the hands of the woman. Similarly, despite Yasmin's predicament being the result of a rape, Nana later considers Yasmin's life choices and not racialised power to be the foundation of her misery:

'...She's always been deep. You never quite know what she's thinking even when she's hankering for something beyond her reach.' ... Nana sighed. 'Deep down I knew that someday she'd get into trouble but, Dear Lord, I never expected anything like this.' (1986: 135)

Nana resolutely refuses to see any of her family as helpless victims of an irresistible force or of any man. Circumstances may make life difficult, but personal choices and actions count for more and it is this autonomy which allows an individual to overcome adversity:

'It's a period of darkness,' Nana explained. 'It comes into everyone's life. Yasmin chose her own course a long time ago.'

...

'Yasmin is strong-willed,' Nana said. 'She's a survivor.' (1986: 150)

While it seems that Nana's outlook might provide a means of resisting apartheid, Karodia finally offers little hope, however, for a fulfilling future, despite the women's drawing support from their community. They can through strength of will survive the dark times of apartheid, but the present is so filled with "their dogs and their guns" that a future beyond it cannot be discerned. Nana is perhaps an indication of Karodia's desire to suggest a strong political stance, but she is also an acknowledgement, rooted in reality, that it was simply not possible.

Although Nana sees personal choice as a shaper of destiny, she has also experienced the complete lack of autonomy entailed in having her life disrupted by the Group Areas Board:

'Fight with what?' Nana demanded. 'They'll come with bulldozers and flatten all of this whether you're in it or not. I've seen how the Group Areas Board operates. They declare an area white and then they come and take over. ...'

(1986: 60)

She is subsequently dependent on her daughter and her husband. She would prefer to define her own position and is "secure in her belief that she was indispensable" (1986: 23), but she does occasionally have to acknowledge that hers is not the only perspective:

There were times when Nana resented the way her position was defined.

'But what can you do when you're dependent on a daughter and son-in-law?' she asked. 'It's okay for now, because I'm still of some use, but where do you go when you've outlived your usefulness?'

(1986: 24)

Despite this pessimistic note, overall she prefers self-definition and in this she can imaginatively create a space for herself in which she can be an effective member of the family. She carries this same positive mode of operation through to the broader political structure, where her approach is to make use of whatever concessions that loopholes in the law afford her, while waiting out the inevitable end of apartheid. Although a minor character, Nana is central to the theme of survival as she sets the womanist values of her community, and any deviations can be measured against her. In a strange way she both supports and undermines patriarchal hegemony, yet this makes

no material difference to her or the position of women in general.<sup>iv</sup> Nana is the marker to the overall strategy of survival: family alliances. Empowered positions within the family unit depend on the various and unstable alliances which are constantly being formed, dissolved and reformed. She is also aware of the instabilities of these alliances and is capable of working through them, unlike Abdul, who appears more dependent on the other members' sympathy. The strongest alliances throughout the novel remain those between the women, and Abdul often feels excluded and out-numbered, relying on Daniel for support.

Unlike *Daughters of the Twilight*, men within the family can be a tremendously oppressive presence in *the world unseen* and are capable of acts of extreme violence if their sense of family honour is threatened or their sense of control is undermined. But whether it is effective or not depends on the woman's own choice to submit or resist. Resistance within the family, however, is not the simple deviousness of women indulging a man made impotent by a hostile environment that we encounter in Karodia's novel. I have already mentioned the shocking story of Begum who was beaten and had her son stolen from her by her husband. Similarly, Rehmat's father beats her when he finds out about James, and when she runs away she understands that she could be killed if she goes missing for more than a day. It also seems that Miriam had expected Omar to eventually hit her:

She had always dreaded this moment- not out of physical fear, though certainly she had been scared. But because she knew it would be a terrible thing to know about your husband – that he really would hit you – and she had always thought when she was younger that hitting was the one thing she would never tolerate. (2001: 151)

Her expectation seems to indicate that beating women is culturally sanctioned, and domestic violence, which is linked to traditionalism, affects many women in the novel. This violence is not an exclusively male prerogative though. There are equally horrifying instances when women themselves wield the stick, slaves to traditions which they are unwilling to challenge. Again, this is evident in Begum's case: when her mother-in-law and her family beat her, her husband quietly sits in the next room (2001: 91- 92). Less seriously and not physically, Miriam is bullied by Farah during the time she and Omar live in his brother's household, because, in accordance with the rules of seniority, she cannot defy Farah, and Omar is not willing to disturb the status quo (2001: 18). The

maintenance of traditions which serve patriarchy relies on the collusion of women in their own oppression, particularly within the family. In *the world unseen* it is never simply a matter of women supporting men – women use tradition to empower (as well as oppress) themselves in a variety of ways. Amina's grandmother relishes the power she holds over Amina's mother and consciously sees her role as her granddaughter's match-maker as being both her rightful duty (2001:36) and a means to enhance her status in the community. Farah too operates within the confines of tradition: she asserts her agency by undermining the patriarchal value system, but this leaves her held within those values and denies her the right to an independent existence.

Farah deliberately runs rings around her husband, Sadru, who is a big, simple, generally good-hearted man. He is the figure in *the world unseen* that comes closest to echoing Abdul. Farah undermines any authority he might have with a sarcasm that he is unable to counter, and she seduces his brother and turns his sister over to the police. She represents the woman who submits on the surface to tradition's demands, but is frustrated by the limits and impositions this submission requires of her. Her responses to circumstances seem to have all the immaturity and self-centredness associated with the expression of the id - from her childish pleasure being allowed to join the outing to the Bazaar café (2001: 18) to her often senseless moments of uncontrolled spite. She resorts to malicious acts as a way of gaining some form of control over her own environment. She also conforms to the patriarchal archetype of woman as sexual predator: apart from seducing Omar she clearly has Sadru on a sexual leash too (2001: 193). Her underhandedness cannot be given the same status as the need to create a space for survival that is evident in *Daughters of the Twilight*, but is instead placed firmly in the minefield of sexual politics. Where the women in *Daughters of the Twilight* are protective of Abdul, if also impatient, Farah actively seeks to hurt, resenting anyone else's freedom while not prepared to give up either the petty exercises of power available to her, or the questionable security entailed by complicity. She collaborates both with apartheid, when she betrays Rehmat to the police, and with patriarchy when she bullies Miriam and abuses Jehan.

In contrast Miriam's eventual empowerment is derived from learning to decide for herself what is important to her and for her: "... for the first time since they had been married, she had felt that her life did not have to depend on [Omar's]" (2001: 203). We

sense Omar's defeat in the face of her choice not to back down before his threats of violence, despite her initial instinctive reaction of dodging his blow (2001:230). Her movement towards self-fulfilment can only be achieved through risking physical harm. This seems to speak the South African story of struggle against apartheid as seen from a 'post-anti-apartheid' position and it includes women as an important aspect of that struggle, as it is lived at a domestic level. Miriam signals the triumph of rational choice over a more 'natural' impulse. She will win through while Farah will be forever locked into her petty and dangerous games, which are potentially as self-destructive as they are destructive of the people around her.

The world within which Karodia's characters find themselves is firmly heterosexual. There are clear distinctions between men and women and their respective spaces. This reaffirms Karodia's identification with a black consciousness mind-frame. However, it also allows her to draw on familiar, if contradictory, symbols of women in African literature: woman as mother – the strength of the nation; woman as bleeding victim of rape which represents equally the rape of the nation (Matlou, 1987: 71; Wisker, 2000: 143). The further emasculation of the man through the conquest of his women is also evident in this novel. Abdul virtually fades away once the rape is revealed:

Papa was devastated. He shrank into the shadows, leaving the women to deal with the situation. He had aged considerably. His shoulders were stooped and his eyes had a glazed look which had nothing to do with his cataracts. He seemed to be miles away... (1986:131)

The women's world of pregnancy, abortion and birth takes over and he is squeezed out. He makes only five brief, silent entries in the rest of the narrative (1986: 131, 140, 142, 144, 149) and only finds his voice to claim his grandchild and suggest a name for her. Clearly while the women cope with the effects of apartheid, each new offence drains away the strength of the black man.

The association of sex with racialised politics is not, however, limited to the violence of rape and the stark contrasts between the sisters' sexual encounters seem to reflect Ogunyemi's womanist view that "[the black woman] has to ...knit the world's black family together to achieve black, not just female, transcendence" (1985:69). Meena's first sexual encounter is linked to resistance politics. The young man, Yusuf, whom her cousin Baboo asks to escort her around Johannesburg, introduces her to a group of

activists and he makes her aware of her own developing sexual awareness. Her response to Yusuf's caresses is "as natural as if [she] had done this a hundred times before" (1986: 84). Meena later decides that she is going to become involved in politics (1986: 115) and her sexual agency thus seems to find its expression in a womanist mode: through sexual agency she is able to align herself with a broader black community fighting for political freedom. This sexual freedom should also register as a flouting of the patriarchal values which seem so dear to Abdul, but this aspect of freedom is not raised in the novel, despite the opening offered by Meena's conscious desire for her father's approval. The issue of race appears in this instance to have subsumed that of patriarchy. Yasmin is in love with her riding instructor who is a young white man and with whom it appears she has had a sexual relationship (1986: 102). This relationship is ferreted out by Delia, who reminds Yasmin that it is a punishable offence (illegal under the Immorality Act of 1957) and establishes the lines of racial division: "I don't like the idea of a white man taking you for riding lessons. They have no respect for our people..." (1986: 114). Delia's racial fears are realised when Yasmin is raped by Cobus Steyn. Because it is not possible to cross the colour bar on equal terms, Yasmin can only be constructed as an object in a white world. Finally though, there is no resolution to sexual relationships – either satisfying or tragic - evident in the novel and Meena's brief relationship with Yusuf remains a "vague yearning" (1986: 85), more imagined than real. This is possibly one of the strongest signals in the novel of the isolation that Indian women experienced during the struggle years.

In *the world unseen* sexuality is the favoured weapon of resistance. As I have shown, Farah uses it in her petty way to even the score against patriarchy. More constructively, Jacob Williams and Mrs Smith, the white postmistress with whom he is friendly, are prepared to defy the Immorality Act, even if their relationship is doomed to an early end. The best example of this defiance is Amina whose lesbian identity unsettles all forms of hegemony. The most overt threat to her, Constable De Witt, is described in terms of his physical attractiveness which lends an underlying sexual menace to the instances when he invades the personal space of both Amina and Miriam. His entry into Amina's room at the restaurant is discomfiting (2001: 125), especially when he is provoked by her reminder of her sexual orientation to hit her. Yet rape in this novel is not, despite all the connotations of domination and violent assertion of manhood, something to which the obvious minions of patriarchy resort. On the

contrary, it is an unnamed African labourer, someone on the lowest rungs of the race, class and gender hierarchy who rapes his Indian employer's wife and then disappears. Unlike *Daughters of the Twilight*, Sarif refuses to simplify violence against women in any neat configurations of Baas bad/ Abject Victim good. Clearly subjugation breeds aggression and destructive behaviour, which is the weapon of the weak. It sours the souls of man and woman alike and they find their revenge in aggressive, degrading and misdirected sexual behaviour.<sup>v</sup>

## WOMEN AND WOMEN

The relationships between women are foregrounded in both novels, but in their attempts to survive the deprivations and destruction that apartheid gives rise to, the women in them form very different female communities, the natures of which determine the degree of agency each can offer women. The ideologies and related symbols, such as the strong mother, which were available to black writers in the 1980s are evident in Karodia's concept of a female community and this corresponds to those formed by "Ma-Raineys – women without men" who "demonstrate concern for the family – not for the Western nuclear family [...] but for the black extended family" (Ogunyemi, 1985: 73). The core of this community in the Mohammed family can include others who share the same conditions of oppression, in the same place and time, extending even across the fairly distinct black-white divide to include Mrs Ollie, their neighbour, who is "an Afrikaner woman with a very strong sense of justice who dovetailed right into [their] lives" (1986: 45). The focus on survival and the immediate which characterises Karodia's 'interregnum' site of enunciation is reinforced by the physicality of the links between women – there is a fixed woman's space (the kitchen) in which generations of women function together - and by the heirlooms that are handed down from a maternal forebear. *The world unseen* does not present any such cohesive community. The connections between Miriam, Amina and Rehmat avoid family ties or proximity in order to emphasise a community that is more abstract than physical. While no physical artefacts are handed down, women's stories are shared – Amina tells Begum's story (2001: 91-8) to Miriam who, in return, sends her favourite novel, *Little Women*, to Amina (2001: 155). Whereas, in *Daughters of the Twilight*, mothering is a key feature serving to hold the community together, it is a feminist sisterhood built around breaking free from all oppressive

constraints which appears more effective in *the world unseen*. The comfort offered by the womanist community remains in keeping with the 'interregnum' conditions in which Karodia writes, while Sarif's characters reflect a more global and fluid connection with country and community which is indicative of the analytical tools available to her in a 'post-anti-apartheid' site of enunciation.

The community of women in *Daughters of the Twilight* forms itself around traditionally feminine roles of nurturer and care-giver. Motherhood, with its attendant emphasis on sacrifice, constitutes the pinnacle of female power, yet in keeping with her 'interregnum' position, Karodia is forced to question the efficacy of such power. Motherhood features as a strong bonding factor which extends the womanist community. Mrs Dlamini, mother of one of the girls' peers, can identify with Delia's fears for Baboo in the large city, as her son is studying there and is exposed to its evil influences. Gladys, the Mohammeds' domestic servant, proves her worth as a woman in her selfless provision for her extended step-family too. Yet, exercises of this form of female power often provide little more than consolation and a means of escaping the untenable present. The preparation of food in *Daughters of the Twilight* is also significant in drawing women into the circle:

In the kitchen Ma confirmed that Papa had gone to Molteno, and with a grimace of relief she tied an apron around about her waist. It seemed to me that she was going to cook up a storm despite the tremendous heat.

I loved these occasions. It meant that we women could congregate in the kitchen. With Papa away there was always a feeling of camaraderie amongst us. I think he sensed it, and at times he must have felt left out. But I didn't dwell too much on Papa now. I was thinking more of all the fun we were going to have. There would be lots of gossip and laughter, especially if Yasmin joined in, because she was so good at imitating people. (1986: 9)

This is a key to the power represented in the novel – this little community of women working together provides Karodia's vision of an environment without oppressive intrusions.

It seemed that the family crises had drawn us all closer, there had been some wonderful warm moments shared in the kitchen as a family. Remember this ... Remember that... Our future did not exist. All we had now was our past and we dwelt on it. (1986: 70)

However, reality intrudes and there are internal as well as external pressures which undermine this community's capacity to provide protection. It is later invaded by agents of apartheid and, while each woman has some stake in it - Mother cooks; the pots are Nana's (11); Gladys has stoked the fire; and Meena pounds the chilli (1986:10) - Yasmin is shown to have no set task and might decide not to join in. The kitchen provides comfort for the women and it becomes their castle in times of trouble. Thus, both kitchen and family offer shelter, but simultaneously double as a trap - the comfort of nostalgia disabling their future.

Karodia does not, however, present us with a perfect picture of womanist harmony. Despite the scenes of communal work, there is frequently friction between Nana and Delia as each battles for a dominant position. Karodia's portrayal of these struggles suggests an ambivalence about the efficacy of womanist ideas which is never really resolved. Generally, Nana comes out ahead; she is shown as the strength on which this community relies (1984:150). Hers is the critical eye observing the community around them and the voice commenting pithily on social injustices. She is the pragmatist who suggests the plan to enable Meena to continue her schooling by changing from one race classification to another. She too is willing to use her pension to cover the cost of Meena's board in Johannesburg, and later she also provides some of the money to make the house at McBain habitable. Yet Nana, despite her willingness to accept and adapt to changes, remains a conservative power. It is she who keeps watch over the state of the family principles, guards against consorting with the enemy, and remains the guardian of traditional female virtue. For all that Karodia portrays Nana as a pillar of strength, she is to some extent a patriarchal proxy who should pose a question about womanism's ability to effectively confront patriarchy, yet Karodia never takes this up. Additionally, Nana cannot provide an effective answer to apartheid and the family's integrity and dignity is inevitably eroded by its irresistible force. The static nature of Nana's conservation cannot defend itself against an increasingly antagonistic environment. What emerges, possibly against Karodia's initial outlook, is that womanism is not only unable to achieve a global unity of all black people, it also cannot protect the wider community from the fragmentation caused by apartheid. Finally, the disempowered are isolated when the family is compelled to move to McBain. Thereafter the focus of the narrative moves inward, concentrating on the family only.

On the other hand, Yasmin, the character who drives the plot, presents us with an identity which is in obvious conflict with the womanist community. She is more interested in her personal liberation and comes much closer to the narcissism that Ogunyemi implies is one of the central characteristics of feminism (1985: 67; 72). Miss Jones claims "the school has nurtured her like a delicate flower [and] a flower will not grow in a desert." (1986: 69); she requires a certain "milieu" and the kitchen with its attendant domesticities is not it. Yasmin has her own internal world into which she escapes from the harsher realities of small town life and isolation long before she rejects the motherhood forced upon her and runs away. This is in stark contrast to the ideal of a womanist community, but it conforms to a trend of the 1980s in which black mothers who abandoned their children were exempt from judgement as this was seen as an effect of the corrupting force of apartheid (Matlou, 1987: 74). Yasmin identifies the baby with its father – unlike the rest of her family she cannot see it as innocent (1984: 141).<sup>v</sup> When Delia is railing against Yasmin at the end it is Nana who defends Yasmin, saying "the baby will be better off with us and she knows it. I think she did this for the child's sake" (1986:150). It seems that this is not just a comment on Yasmin's perspicacity and an affirmation of the community's ability to provide for the child, but perhaps a suggestion that change in South Africa requires a shift of woman's norms.

Yasmin is in greatest conflict with Nana, yet Delia suggests they are more alike than they acknowledge. Karodia never sets Yasmin up as the 'bad girl who gets what's coming to her' against whom Meena and Nana's more saintly values will be thrown into relief. In interview, she has referred to Yasmin as "a very gutsy woman" whom she "admire[s]" (2002: 348). Gladys, too, describes her as a "good girl" (1986:105). Yasmin has energy and glamour, around which the family can warm itself in bleak times. The absence of negative judgement on Karodia's part turns the focus back on the family to suggest that, close and comforting though the community may be, it is not enough to allow for a fulfilling life. It is Yasmin who points out to Meena that life is about "... living and hurting. Not hiding out" (1986: 145). Yasmin is the only character to escape the squalid surrounds of McBain.<sup>vii</sup>

Sarif, writing in the global village of the late 1990s when political, racial, cultural and gender boundaries were more fluid and their validity was being more consciously

interrogated, presents a more complex matrix of categories than Karodia and in questioning the legitimacy of any 'natural' order, she shatters and reconstitutes some of the symbols evident in *Daughters of the Twilight*. Matrilineal identification is broken down in *the world unseen* and mother-daughter relationships are problematic: <sup>viii</sup>

'My mother never hugged me,' she said simply, without looking up, and Amina turned around.

'No?'

'No,' said Miriam, her face reddening, 'She never gave us much affection like that. I got used to it, but I didn't want my children to feel the same.'

'My mother can be cold, too,' said Amina.

'My mother wasn't cold,' said Miriam, defensively. (2001: 86)

Amina's mother is supremely conscious of her outsider status and resents her own mother, Begum, for this, while Amina's own life-choices are similarly strongly influenced by her grandmother's life story. Miriam's mother seems content to remain within the boundaries delineated by her culture and her advice to her daughter, when her marriage is arranged, is to be happy that she has no mother-in-law to work her like a slave (2001: 16). Miriam is initially a dutiful daughter and wife by traditional standards. However, her father had insisted on her education – "[her] mother alone would not have done it" (2001: 90) – which allows her access to more liberated female models to identify with. It is perhaps the lack of identification with their conforming, maternal relatives that creates a gap which makes it possible for both Amina and Miriam to resist being interpellated into a traditional gendered identity. Instead they share a greater awareness of their potential in the South Africa in which they find themselves.

There are no sister relationships in *the world unseen*, yet this serves to highlight the bonds which can be formed among women based on love and acceptance rather than blood. Miriam and Amina form very close bonds with each other and they are both prepared to sacrifice much to save Rehmat from the police. Sarif creates a feminist sisterhood – in which difference appears to be a unifying force: Rehmat, whose marriage to a white man means rejecting all the cultural values she had grown up with; Miriam, the initially dutiful wife and mother who finds herself attracted to Amina; and Amina, whose mixed ancestry, lesbian identity and defiance of State law is in conflict with the Indian community's traditional values too. The only factors which they have in common are their interest in books and the critical stance they take towards their cultural community.

All three are in some way isolated from it. Rehmat's mother died when she was in her teens and she grew up in an entirely male family. Amina's family does not live with their cultural community when they move to South Africa and her parents are not particularly sociable: her father is not interested in disturbing his routine and her mother, as a result of her family history, is not sought out. Amina grows up without the checks that would have been exerted on her by her own community. Initially, and despite her father having broken with tradition by educating her, Miriam grows up in India as a dutiful daughter and she remains dutiful in marriage while she and Omar live in Pretoria in Sadru's house. Once they move to Delhof, she lives in increasing isolation: Omar hardly speaks to her and she has only the children and the servants as company. It is in this isolation that she develops empathy for the oppressed Africans and is encouraged, by Amina's gift of a book, to seek out the books she brought from India.

Stories are a source of strength for Amina and Miriam. Amina has Begum's story to motivate her defiance of traditions which are neither just nor sensible. While growing up, Miriam identified with Jo, the most independent of the sisters in *Little Women*. She is unable to see herself in this role when she thinks back on her childhood, yet by the end of the novel she is looking to making her own path in the world. In their reading and their lives, both Miriam and Amina have access to models of womanhood which break with the norm and which indicate gaps between what they are called to be and what they could be. The profoundly personal meaning each narrative has for Amina and Miriam allows them to give a part of themselves in the sharing of them. They are offered as gifts of love – a love which shows promise of being both empowering and fulfilling.

In *the world unseen*, cooking is equally an act of love and sharing, but is also linked to the economic independence that is necessary for survival. As in *Daughters of the Twilight*, the kitchen setting is one of those central to women's function and this iterates the point that the location of South African Indian women in the 1950s was domestic and hence any resistance they offered had to be on a personal and individual level. However, in *the world unseen* the kitchen does not remain the domain of women only. The restaurant's recipes are originally Jacob's and Robert, the young servant who helps Miriam in the house at Delhof, also cooks. Amina offers Miriam a job at the Asian Bazaar as a part-time cook and it is this opportunity to translate her domestic skills into a professional environment which finally gives her the strength to defy Omar (2001: 233).

The kitchen remains largely a women's space, but unlike the sheltered power it confers on the community in *Daughters of the Twilight*, there is no such unambiguous sanctuary in *the world unseen*. The kitchen is not proof against invasion; for example both scenes in which readers are shown Omar's violence take place in the kitchen. The kitchen in Sadru's house is an area of exploitation: Farah not only defrauds Omar of his contributions to household expenses, but she also exploits her senior position, forcing Miriam to carry the bulk of the work. Yet the kitchen is also a space which empowers Miriam: her cooking skills could secure her independence from Omar. This shift from the private to the public kitchen allows freedom in the same way that moving to South Africa did for both women. Neither country nor kitchen need have a fixed value, rather it is an individual's vision and interpretation of those spaces that determine their meaning – for Begum and Rehmat, South Africa is a violent, oppressive place inside which they cannot exist. Amina connects South Africa with her personal freedom from conventional restraints, because she sees things differently from others (2001: 33). Miriam in particular signals how an awareness of shifts in context can create subtle discontinuities which enable change, when, upon her arrival in South Africa, she reflects on how one phase of her life ends and life begins anew:

For despite everything, she was young, and aware of the possibilities that lay before her. It was a new life in a new country – she had felt as if she had been wiped clean, that her life until now had been a specific, enclosed block and that now she could start again, a different life, in a different place. (2001: 33)

Her constant revisioning of her life is the source of her ability to overcome the obstacles which cultural customs place in her way. Recognising differences allows her to create alternatives and allows her to perform herself differently.

The relationship which develops between Amina and Miriam highlights the fluidity of individual identity. Miriam's sexual identity evolves from that of reasonably contented young matron to an ambiguous, bisexual identity by the novel's end. There is no indication that she will leave Omar, yet she is taking up Amina's offer - an opportunity affording Miriam the independence to explore all the possible selves that she can be. It is the erasure of distinct gendered and sexual boundaries that liberates Miriam from the stifling oppression and unhappiness of her marriage and grants her the means to resist Omar.

While women in both novels form affirming communities, both novels reveal the chasm which apartheid created between white and black. In neither novel are there permanent links across the broad racial black-white divide. There are only temporary connections. In *Daughters of the Twilight* poverty occasionally forces white women to patronise Mohammed's General Store, but it "caters specifically for the black trade" (1984:35). Nana resents the way in which they are exploited by these women and the familiarity with which they treat the family. The only woman not in this position is Sinnah Olivier (Mrs Ollie) who maintains her independence and who treats them as equals. It is she who remonstrates with the local policeman when the Mohammeds are forcibly removed from their property. She takes them into her house and serves them rooibos tea in her best china. Yet she is no longer there once they have moved to McBain.

In *the world unseen* the only white women with whom Miriam is acquainted are the wives of the Kaplan brothers. The Kaplans arrive at the Delhof store in their chauffeured car and the men go off to talk business leaving the women to while the time away talking about the children – the only topic they appear to have in common - but even this underscores their separation: she is aware that her children will never go to the same schools as these women's children. They represent a world of glamour that is beyond her everyday reality (2001: 30). There is no possibility of an American Dream here, because the most significant separating factor is not money and class, but race. Miriam is left wondering whether her son, Sam, has ever seen a blonde child or not.

## MIXED-RACE FIGURES

The mixed-race figures serve to highlight both the power of racialised thinking and the senselessness of any attempt to contain identity within a rigid classification system; they are the liminal figures who confound apartheid's attempts to impose discrete racial categories, and who make the exclusionary practices of apartheid appear absurd. In both *Daughters of the Twilight* and *the world unseen* they are set in complex relationships with the history and society of South Africa, reflecting the different sites of enunciation of each author. While Sarif's vision of a hybrid identity offers the possibility of empowerment and for democracy, Karodia's vision is ambivalent and her hybrid figure is mired in externally controlled circumstances. Each novelist positions her mixed-race

figures differently on the imaginary hierarchical racial scale that apartheid wished to institute. In Karodia's novel, the baby, Fatima, has a white father and a coloured mother, while in Sarif's novel, Mrs Harjan's biological father is a black man and her mother, Begum, Indian. Sarif seems to extend the boundaries of African identity while Karodia is challenging a racist regime to acknowledge the humanity common to all people. The conflict in mixed-race identity is also signalled by the violent circumstances of their conception. In *the world unseen* the child is conceived when Begum is raped by an unknown black worker and in *Daughters of the Twilight*, Fatima is conceived when Cobus Steyn rapes Yasmin. This portrayal of violence indicates the increasingly destructive behaviour of the 1950s in a society riven by prejudice and its dehumanising effect on both perpetrator and victim. Sarif's portrayal suggests a more complex and uneasy relationship between all race groups reflecting the 'post-anti-apartheid' interrogation of identities, allegiances and conflict, while Karodia reflects an increasing need of the 1980s for literature to play witness to white atrocities against all black people.

Alongside the centrality of the violence in the conception of Fatima, *Daughters of the Twilight* offers a contrasting genesis for hybridity as all the women of the Mohammed family are "coloured" (1984:11) and there is no indication that they had been conceived in violent circumstances. Violation features in the history of many of the coloured people of South Africa, yet Karodia has not chosen to imagine her family in this way. She firmly resists portraying the Mohammed women as helpless victims and it is quite clear from tracing the origins of their precious porcelain heirlooms that they are not the illegitimate products of some shady affair, or violent union.<sup>x</sup> Their attachment to their inheritance harks back to a better, more positive past. In the novel's present, however, such a union is no longer possible. While conveying the illegitimacy of apartheid, Karodia does not appear to question the prejudiced, pre-apartheid past too closely. As her characters are trapped in the inertia of nostalgia, this portrayal seems to suggest that Karodia too might be trapped, but for her it is in the immediacy of the 1980s struggle.

In *the world unseen* Amina and her mother also represent two different possibilities of constructing mixed race identities. They are both the descendants of the most powerless figures in a racist and patriarchal South African society - a black labourer and a young Indian wife - yet each re-presents the opposite poles of personal

power and agency. Their physical hybridity does not automatically confer special powers of resistance or strength, for this lies in a more spiritual sense of self. Amina's mother is deeply angry at the fate that she perceives her mixed blood to have allotted her, feeling very clearly her pariah status: "She ruined *my* life by what she did,' she continued. 'I grew up as an outcast that nobody wanted...'" (2001: 46). Mrs Harjan attributes Amina's father's wanting to marry her to luck and in accepting the ascribed racial prejudices, she defines her own sense of self and self worth:

'And now she is ruining you, even from the grave, and she is ruining me all over again. How can I look those people in the face? Her talk of bravery and being smart and looking after yourself. She has made you into what you are, and you are...'

'I like what I am,' said Amina.

The sentence was spoken with such conviction that Mrs Harjan was silenced.

(2001: 47)

While Mrs Harjan assimilates the conventional view of herself and acts out a form of crippling self-hatred, bowing to her mother-in-law's dominance, Amina never accepts the constraints which are placed around her: 'That's the problem in my life, I think. I keep looking at the accepted conventions from the wrong angle – and once you've done that, you can't ever go back to seeing things the old way' (2001: 170). Her perception of conventions unhinges the fixity of 'right' and allows her see and act outside them. In this she proves Judith Butler's point that:

The reconceptualisation of identity as an *effect*, that is as *produced* or *generated*, opens up possibilities of 'agency' that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed. For an identity to be an effect means that it is neither fatally determined nor fully artificial and arbitrary.

(Butler, 1990: 147)

Amina has, unlike her mother, no desire to conform to a limited cultural identity, but identifies more strongly with a broader South African identity which stretches across racial boundaries. Her business partner, Jacob Williams, is a coloured man and it is clear from her knowledge of the assistance that Miriam gave to the African man run over by a white farmer that she has a close link with the black community. Her boundary-crossing identity is not limited to a politics and race, but is equally expressed in her androgynous appearance and sexual identity. In Amina, Sarif politicises sexual identity too. In the Indian community Amina is considered to be transgressing cultural custom,

while for Constable De Witt it is not just that Amina is wearing trousers, but that she is “an Indian girl in trousers” (2001: 2). It is in contrasting Amina with her mother that Sarif reveals how custom and laws based on ‘natural’ differences are constructed in order to maintain a status quo and to cripple individuals.

In *Bodies that Matter* Butler argues that there is a “domain of bodies” which is “unthinkable and unliveable”, “excluded” and “illegible”. Additionally this domain “haunts the necessary domain of bodies as the spectre of its own impossibility”, it is the “constitutive outside” of the “necessary domain of bodies” (1993: xi). Amina represents this body that “does not matter” for the Indian community. While Butler’s argument refers to a sexual identity, her notion can equally be applied to the way in which Sarif presents the mixed race figure.<sup>x</sup> It is also clear that Amina functions for the rest of the community as a figure to define themselves against, so that her differences – her curly hair and darker skin - reaffirm their collective coherence as a group (2001: 69) and therefore their sense of being in the ‘right’. Butler also describes this excluded body as “the abject” and it is quite clear that Amina’s mother sees herself in this light. It is through Amina’s embracing the “abject”, by liking what she is, that she is able to like who she is and to be empowered by difference.

Similarly, the hybrid identity of the women in *Daughters of the Twilight* affords them greater strength by contrast with the men. Abdul clings to his cultural identity as an Indian and Muslim man, maintaining the customs of that identity. Yet when he attempts to exert the decision-making parental power that this identity should confer upon him, he is thwarted in choices about education and marriage. When the family receive notice from the Group Areas board that they will have to move, Abdul vows to fight the decision, but his course is passive – a denial rather than a confrontation. Finally, it is the women who have to deal directly with the agents of removal; when the police come to forcibly remove the family and attach the house and shop, he is away in East London and his subsequent heart attack provides him with a protective distance from the harshest moments of change.<sup>xi</sup>

The group classified as ‘coloured’ is described by Karodia as “nebulous” (1986: 11) and it is this indeterminate hybrid identity which allows Nana and Delia to slip the boundaries that the law seeks to create – allowing Meena to be reclassified from

'Indian' to 'coloured', so that she can attend the school of their choice. This possibility of slipping through loopholes highlights the arbitrariness of apartheid law. Delia acknowledges that her husband is Indian, but claims that they are separated and that all the people Meena associates with now are coloured; finally, it is Meena's flawless Afrikaans which convinces the classification officer that she is 'coloured' (1986: 77). Race, like gender, is seemingly incontrovertibly prescribed by a body – fleshly substance that cannot be changed or chosen - yet apartheid's attempt to impose race in discrete categories succeeded only in spotlighting the inconsistencies. It does seem, however, that while the Mohammed women can manoeuvre in the cracks, this refuge cannot offer a full escape from a disabled South African identity.

Despite women's ability to turn some of the instruments of apartheid against it, they have no real way of defeating the system and it is the raping of Yasmin that highlights their vulnerability in an unjust world. The fastness of the family cannot save her and nor can it achieve what she wants: an abortion. For her the only way she can become the person she wishes to be is to escape the sterile, degenerating confines of Sterkstrom.<sup>xii</sup> The fragility of the porcelain heirlooms, which are smashed by the police during the family's removal, underscores the women's vulnerability. Karodia's 'interregnum' lens can only reveal the Mohammeds' present as an isolated period: cut off from their past, they face an unimaginable future, seeing only guns and dogs.

In neither novel is racial or cultural hybridity a sufficient form of resistance. In an hierarchical society, the greatest possible threat that mixed race poses for the oppressor, is the mirroring of sameness and difference which undermines any attempt to stabilise racial categories. Yet each novelist appears to see the shifts in identity which are integral to a hybrid identity as central to survival within a South Africa of the 1950s. Sarif from her 'post-anti-apartheid' site of enunciation sees beyond survival and looks towards a truer democracy in which the self-actualisation of each individual is possible, irrespective of any difference.

## CONCLUSION

In a postcolonial world which is still attempting to deal with past injustices and the uneven, unequal developments which resulted from colonisation, while simultaneously defending itself against the economic and cultural neo-imperialism of multinationals and globalisation, issues of representation are of primary importance. In South Africa 'representation' and 'identity' form crucial current debates and, as I have shown, are being taken up by one of the most subjugated of groups, Indian women. And recent writing shows that they continue to find it necessary to challenge the stereotypes of racism and patriarchy, as well as considering the previously occluded differences, within the apartheid category of 'Asiatic', between languages, religions, cultural practices, class, and economic status. Since 1994, when the 'Rainbow nation' was called into being, requiring the mobilisation of identities based on cultural/ethnic rather than racial distinctions, the situation has not improved significantly. As Desai points out, it has led to a homogenised cultural representation which creates a situation favouring those who are in power and further marginalising those without:

A particularly relevant spin-off of the transitional discourse of Rainbowism is the rewarding of those who are more inward-looking, traditional and exclusive as long as what they get up to is abstracted from class politics. It matters not how repressive that identity might be to its own subalterns (eg. to its women, gays and poor).  
(1996: 119)

He also points out that there are reactions against the authoritarianism and conservatism of Indianness, which is a "disguise for ethnic chauvinism" (Desai, 1996: 122), but that "rebellions are individual and because they are so often conducted by groupings that are financially dependent they are hardly ever sustained" (Desai, 1996: 122). Furthermore, these rebellions are often tragic, taking violent forms such as family murders, suicide pacts, parental abuse and children assaulting parents. Local 'post-anti-apartheid' writing which I surveyed seems to support Desai's view: two plays, *Women in Brown* (Krijay Govender, 1997) and *Nadia* (Nadine Naidoo, 1997), and the novel, *Sounds of Shadows* (Fayiza Dawood Khan, 1995) depict women committing suicide and a mother abusing a child. It is clear that a shift in political representation is necessary and Desai claims that

“the spark for a new orientation must lie with the Indian disadvantaged” (1996:122). Historically, democratising a society and forcing the elite to share power, requires mass action. Given that participation in mass action has been uncharacteristic of South African Indian women, *who* represents them and *how* they are represented is crucial. Literature depicting the lives of South African women opens up a public space for women who have traditionally been confined to a domestic and private space. Pratibha Parmar, a diasporic Indian woman writing in England, states:

For me as a Black woman it is vital that our histories and our struggles are documented. It is vital, too, that we become visible in ways we can control. Writing is one way of doing this, where we can create images of ourselves through our visions and imaginations, as well as challenge existing stereotypes. We must speak through whatever means are available to us, or we will be condemned to silence, misrepresentation and invisibility (1987: 153).

Literary representation, therefore, becomes a valuable instrument in re-presenting these women. Both Sarif and Karodia have been published internationally and to great critical acclaim, opening up a significant public space. It is in comparing both Karodia’s and Sarif’s work with local writers that their relevance here is made clear.

Even though they are not set in the 1950s, recent plays, short stories and novel written by South African women focus on issues similar to those taken up by Karodia and Sarif, suggesting that the lives of South African Indian women have not undergone revolutionary change since the 1950s, despite the changes which have swept through political and social arenas. It also indicates that one needs to look beyond state politics to identify shaping forces, which may be why most of these works place women firmly in a domestic environment and their roles are usually family-oriented. It also seems significant that the relationships which are most problematic or are focussed on most strongly are those between women, especially mother and daughter. Unlike Karodia, and more vigorously than Sarif, many of the contemporary writers focus on domestic abuse. They interrogate female complicity in the patriarchal discourse, indicating, like Sarif, that women police the observance of traditional practices so as to keep patriarchal structures in place and draw their effective power from their sanction.

Writing in the 1970s and at the same time as Karodia, Jayapraga Reddy’s short stories in *On The Fringe Of Dreamtime* do not fully interrogate gendered roles, for she

represents motherhood as the pinnacle of woman's fulfilment in at least three of the tales, but she does come close to Sarif's complex portrayal of relationships between races by re-presenting class differences. She is very critical of the wealthier class in "Friends", depicting the protagonist, Sadhana, as a slothful, neglectful mother addicted to Indian films. Sadhana's treatment of the African housekeeper, Bessie, is no less demeaning than the two white Rhodesian women's treatment of an elderly Indian man dispossessed of the property one of them now owns in the title story, "On the Fringe of Dreamtime". Unlike Sarif and Karodia, Reddy's view of the decline of 'Indian' traditional practices is tinged with nostalgia, perhaps indicating that a seemingly stable, conservative cultural identity could be a source of comfort in its familiarity, providing at least moral value whereas the pursuit of material success often serves the oppressor. Women are represented as having agency within traditional practices that feminists would regard with horror. So it is that the reluctant (although this reluctance has the petulance of a spoilt child about it at times) bride in an arranged marriage, Zainab, ("A Time To Yield") can be persuaded by her grandmother that "the future was hers to mould" (Reddy, 1987: 103). Overall, while writing in the 'interregnum' with Karodia, Reddy concentrates on social relationships within South Africa offering little political critique.

The plays and novel written in a 'post-anti-apartheid' South Africa are set entirely within an Indian cultural community. The plays respond to the need to challenge the culturally and politically constructed identity of South African Indian women. In her study of these plays, Krijay Govender indicates that only after 1994, particularly once South African political and legislative structures had been overhauled, did the South African Indian woman begin to articulate her own *identity* and concentrate on gendered roles (1999: 56). Two plays, *Nadia* and *Women in Brown*, which she examines, focus on abusive relationships between men and women, while *Acts of God* reviews the lives and relationships of three women in the same family. All three plays indicate that cultural practices and culturally constructed identities empower men and protect their interests. The representations of South African Indian communities in these plays, particularly *Acts of God*, convey the same criticism of a blind acceptance of tradition that Sarif makes in *the world unseen*. *Nadia* and *Women in Brown* depict suicide and a rejection of a cultural identity as means of overcoming the abuse and pain which seem to accompany South African Indian women's identity. *Nadia* commits suicide and the guru tells her

grandmother that her next life will be in “a world where she is treated as a person, where there is no discrimination, where there is love and sharing and respect between man and woman” (Naidoo, 2002: 313). Nadia is then reborn as Nomsa (Naidoo, 2002:314). One of the characters, Kami, in *Women in Brown*, commits suicide by hanging herself with her sari when her parents insist on an arranged marriage, while another character, Mona, rips her sari symbolising her rejection of the cultural community. Only Pritha, the beaten housewife, retains her sari, but she folds it away rather than putting it on (Govender, 2002: 302).

The novel *Sounds of Shadows* tallies the horrific abuses heaped on Sham by her mother, Naju, and the community in which she exists. Naju’s cruelty appears to have as its source the sad circumstances of her own life: an impoverished childhood, rejection by Sham’s father and her present straitened circumstances. It is the conditions that the working class live under which are most evident in this novel, yet it zooms in on the extreme marginalization of women in this environment of poverty intersecting with a patriarchal society and highlights their complete lack of resources and redress. Naju survives by living off men. Sham is raped by a fellow employee (Khan, 1995: 108) and is fired by the owners of the shop where she works, who will not even hear her version of events (Khan, 1995:123/4). She is also turned out of school when her teacher realises that she is pregnant (Khan, 1995: 131). Sham finally finds a home with her aunt, Mariamoo, and is offered a chance to be educated by a woman teacher who does not have to work and who “teaches the poor children in the neighbourhood” (Khan, 1995:171). Even this opportunity is denied her though, when they are forced to move. The novel ends with a now homeless Mariamoo, her seven boys and Sham, walking down the road into the night. While their stoic acceptance of this fate is depicted as poignantly beautiful, it is at odds with the steadily declining fortunes which the novel seems to envisage for their future. Similarly to Sarif, Khan depicts a patriarchal community which constructs its own sense of identity to preserve the status quo. It claims to protect its weaker members, while in reality it only protects the economic interests of the dominant group.

Both Karodia’s and Sarif’s representations of South African Indian women’s identities offer a challenge to the hegemonic structures within which women were and are located. Karodia envisions a liminal identity which can be mobilised while Sarif

presents complete reconstructions of identities. Each moves away from a culturally interpellated identity focussing on a 'South Africanness' rather than an 'Indianness'. For Karodia this 'South Africanness' is not colour/race conscious. Although she usually opts for black unity there are definite moments when that view is complicated by reality. Her 'interregnum' site of enunciation does not allow her to envisage a defined democracy. Instead, her vision of democracy will admit "happiness" which has

nothing to do with money or power. It's a good feeling that comes from knowing that you've done the best you can with your life, and that along the way you've reached out and helped, rather than trampled over, some poor straggler. Destroyed in the end by greed and selfishness.

(1986:115)

Sarif's 'South Africanness' is linked to a democracy which shatters any singular identity. It moves beyond the binary simplifications of anti-apartheid positions - such as black/white, oppressor/oppressed, men/women - which ignore the complex interplay of interests within and between race, gender and class and which tend to ignore the plight of the subaltern. In Amina and Miriam she has mapped a route for South African (Indian) women to construct their own individual sense of self. They are able to transcend the limitations of an identity determined by gendered, racial, cultural imperatives by moving outwards and embracing difference and change.

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## NOTES

- <sup>i</sup> This 'Africanist' element probably drew inspiration from Negritude and was a forerunner of Black Consciousness, which was "an ideology stressing black self-reliance in the fight against apartheid in South Africa" (Tuttle, 1999: 250) and which was propagated by the South African Student Organisation [SASO], led initially by Steve Biko from 1968-1970. By the 1970s, the relationships between black groupings had shifted and the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa included coloureds and Indians, besides black Africans as 'black' (Tuttle, 1999: 250).
- <sup>ii</sup> *Other Secrets*, published sixteen years after *Daughters of the Twilight*, which Karodia revisits and considerably revises in "Part One: Daughters", allows for useful comparative references, as Karodia seems to have reconsidered issues such as racial politics and patriarchy from a 'post-anti-apartheid' site of enunciation. Owing to space constraints, I am keeping these points to brief references in endnotes. In *Other Secrets* Karodia attempts to give Abdul a more politically correct role, associating him with Gandhi's passive resistance campaign (2000: 5) thereby giving him activist credentials. She also writes him as present when the police and government agent arrive to forcibly remove them from their home (2000: 90).
- <sup>iii</sup> In *Other Secrets* Karodia reassigns much of this aspect of Nana's role to Abdul
- <sup>iv</sup> She is also an awkward character who indicates an area that womanism fails to consider: there must be some common ground between feminism and womanism. In her article "To Hear the Variety of Discourses", Zoe Wicomb points out that 'The search for literary/cultural theory to suit the South African situation must surely take as a point of departure a conflictual model of society where a variety of discourses will always render problematic the demands of one in relation to others and where discursive formations admit of cracks and fissures that will not permit monolithic ideological constructs. Womanism, then, presents only one side of the story and it does so precisely because "in the context of white patriarchal culture" it is not legitimate to speak of "contradictions" '(1996: 45). Karodia seems to not to have fully developed the significance of Nana's role in her novel, but it clearly bothered her, because in *Other Secrets* much of Nana's role is reassigned to Abdul.
- <sup>v</sup> Father-daughter relationships are indicated quite differently in each novel, but space does not permit a full discussion of them. In *the world unseen* it is Miriam's father who insists on her education and Amina's father who finally supports her alternative way of life. In *Daughters of the Twilight*, Abdul cannot be viewed in the same light, for he is alarmed at the freedom to which a wider education might expose his daughters - a freedom totally unsuitable for Muslim girls in his eyes. Despite recognising that Yasmin is difficult, he tries to organise a match between Yasmin and Farouk, son of his close friend (1986:112) but, his plans give the impression of being little more than lip service to tradition, allowing Yasmin to declare in the face of his anger: "I want you to know, Papa, that I am not marrying Farouk." (1986: 112). It is possibly in these father-daughter relationships that the potential for change is most clearly registered. Abdul

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his daughter "a determination and strength that he did not recognise in himself" but can admire "anyway" (2001:226). His strength lies in accepting difference.

- <sup>vi</sup> *Other Secrets* offers little evidence of redemptive love – the relationship between Fatima/Soraya and Yasmin remains problematic and Yasmin can only express her love for Soraya once she is comatose.
- <sup>vii</sup> Meena's stated desire to enter politics is never acted out: in *Other Secrets* she returns to Sterkfontein/Soetfontein as a teacher and supports the family. Finally she too moves to England, eventually becoming a romantic novelist. Nana and Delia remain at McBain, teaching, until they die.
- <sup>viii</sup> See endnote v.
- <sup>ix</sup> In *Other Secrets* we learn that these heirlooms are brought to South Africa by a maternal great-grandmother from Ireland (2000: 43).
- <sup>x</sup> In her discussion Butler does warn against a easy parallels between race and gender issues, but it seems to me that Sarif is to some extent paralleling the two in the process of individuation which she suggests.
- <sup>xi</sup> This has been changed in *Other Secrets* and he is present when the agents arrive. It seems that with hindsight Karodia felt the need to represent him with greater degree of agency, despite her view that apartheid emasculated black men. She also invents a more politically correct past by associating him with Gandhi's passive resistance campaign.
- <sup>xii</sup> As we see in *Other Secrets*, to achieve this she has had to leave the country, as does Meena finally too.

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