"From Jo'burg to Jozi": A Study of the Writings and Images of Johannesburg from 1980-2003.

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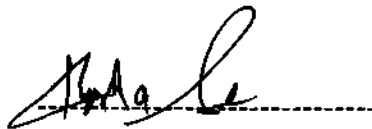
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Declaration

Unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, this thesis is entirely my own work.

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Abstract

The thesis examines some of the short and long fiction set in Johannesburg, which is published between approximately 1980 and 2003. The thesis examines how the residents viewed themselves, and evaluates the various social and political struggles and strategies that were employed in an attempt to belong, imagine the city differently and establish strategic identities that would enable them to live a better life during the focused quarter of a century of experiences in an ever-changing fictive Johannesburg.

Chapter 1 gives a review of some of the literature and theories by De Certeau (1984), Lefebvre (1991), Pike (1981), Williams (1973) and others focusing on the city that influence this thesis. It also discusses the social and historical background to the real city, and the general trend on the fictional writings on Johannesburg and the line of argument that guides this study.

Chapter 2 studies the life experiences, views and images of Johannesburg that are portrayed in the short fiction published in the journal *Staffrider* from 1978-1993. Various tropes, such as that of the racialised body as an invisible, segregated and victimised one, that are used to describe the experiences of the oppressed and segregated residents are taken into consideration. The intention has been is to evaluate the extent to which the residents' social experiences and interaction in the censored public spaces help in the formation of resilient identities, and new imaginings and images of the racially dominated and oppressed city arenas, drawing on Lefebvre's (1991) idea on spatial relations. Chapter 2 therefore explores the new possibilities that were created by the dominated and oppressed fictive residents.

Chapter 3 studies some of the fictional writings on the Johannesburg of the 1980s that were produced by some defiant white writers such as Nadine Gordimer and Stephen Gray. These white representations are evaluated to determine the liberal white perspective of the experiences the residents of the fictive city were going through and how these imaginings impact on the image of the Johannesburg of the 1980s. The main intention of this chapter, therefore, is to examine some of the means that were employed by some of the white residents of Johannesburg to subvert some of the apartheid policies in the city, and imagine and create different social and political spaces in the city centre, northern suburbs and townships as, for instance, given by both Gordimer (1984) and Stephen Gray (1988).

Chapter 4 analyses the fiction set in the early 1990s to determine the nature of the residents' reaction and consciousness in relation to the ensuing social and political

transformation. The portrayal and significance of the anxiety and fear constituted within some white residents of fictive Johannesburg during the period of transition to democracy as portrayed, for instance, in Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf* (1999) and Ivan Vladislavic's *The Restless Supermarket* (2001) is studied in this chapter. The representations of the contradictory and contesting perceptions based on the unfolding social, political and spatial changes taking place in the Johannesburg of the early 1990s are examined, drawing mainly on Williams' (1973) critical views on complexities that take place during a period of intense and rapid transformation.

Chapter 5 analyses the fictional depictions of the residents' reactions, perceptions and identity formation as they handle the challenges and trauma posed by the legacy of apartheid during the early post-apartheid period. Texts such as Jonathan Morgan's *Finding Mr Madini* (1999) and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) are examined to determine how some of the urban dwellers appropriate the new Johannesburg, remap it, associate with other residents and establish survival networks during the early post-apartheid period The chapter also analyses how some of the characters grapple with the trauma of apartheid violence, and the associated social and psychological displacement, as presented in Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* (2001) and Jo-Anne Richards' *Sad at the Edges* (2003).

Chapter 6 examines some of the current popular thoughts and images based on experiences encountered during the first few years in post-apartheid Johannesburg given in Heidi Holland and Adam Roberts' *From Jo'burg to Jozi: Stories about Africa's Infamous City* (2002). The chapter studies the new styles and discourses that are formed by the various writers as they represent the urban dwellers' life experiences, anxieties and aspirations from different angles and genres. The objective has been to study the significance of current popular writings in portraying how the urban dwellers from different locations and social classes relate to the new challenges and opportunities existing in the post-apartheid city and in that way conceptualise the multiple and unstable images of post-apartheid Johannesburg.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by considering the significance of the shifting social and historical forces in shaping the narratives considered in this study. It also briefly comments on some new texts on Johannesburg that do not fall within the studied period and discusses what I consider to be the direction which the current literary writings on Johannesburg are following.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Writing the city and Johannesburg's literary history.

1. 1 Writing the city

The city in literary and cultural studies has been a subject of in-depth and wide-ranging intellectual attention from the time of the ancient city to the current globalised one. For instance, much attention has been given to the study of the ancient Roman city, where among other focuses, the ancient monuments, maps, social, economic and political institutions are studied in order to evaluate how these areas of focus influenced the inhabitants' experiences and constitution of identities. Janet Huskinson's work (2000) is a clear example of one of the key studies focusing on the relationship between the ancient city's social, political and built spaces and life experiences during that ancient period. What is perhaps interesting is that the city's spatiality is proffered as dialectically linked to how ancient inhabitants lived their lives and perceived themselves. This linkage between the lived experiences and the existing or constituted space's ideological, social and spatial make up is what I intend to focus on in this thesis. This chapter, therefore, discusses the major ideas and theoreticians whose work forms the foundation of this thesis. Other theories specific to and relevant to the different individual chapters will be considered in the thesis when the need to expand on the general concepts influencing the particular writings in the study arises.

In *Soft City* (1974: 19), a study of the conception of and built nature of the city, based on observations of experiences in Britain and the United States of America, Jonathan Raban refers to the concept of "the nightmare city" and "the ideal city". The link between the constructed, or abstract space, and the social and economic interests of the architects and planners, is given here as integral in the shaping of the city's lived experiences. The meshing of the city's spatiality and the constituted lived experiences and identities, is also characterised by the existence of both hope and opportunities. Raban rightly considers this condition as emblematic of the city as an ambivalent space:

> The city has always been an embodiment of hope and a source of festering guilt: a dream pursued, and found vain, wanting and destructive. (1974: 17)

While this view of the city as an ambivalent space is located mostly in literary studies and social sciences, a significant consideration should be given to the relationship between the lived experiences and the created social, economic and political forces that shape city life. The first point to take into consideration, then, should be the fact that any city in the world is a constructed, named and lived space (Miles 2000: 1-2). Consequential to this status, is the linkage between its naming, construction and habitation, in relation to social, political and economic forces that have impacted on the given city throughout its history. Furthermore, various cities of the world have been subjected to critical studies that trace the dialectical linkages between socio-historical trajectories and their impact on the given urban spatiality. For example, Marshal Berman (1983) places periods of rapid transformation from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, which he calls "unfolding modernities", as central to the understanding of the changes that occur in the constructed space, as well as the ways in which the dwellers view themselves and live their lives. He asserts:

> There is a mode of vital experience – experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils – that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience "modernity". To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. (15)

I am fascinated here by Berman's conception of modernity in which the lived experiences, space and time are given as pertinent in the construction of daily lives in the world.[1] The part of the world that I am focusing on, which is the city and specifically Johannesburg, is, as I argue, influenced by socio-historical trajectories which impact on its space and thus engender paradoxical feelings and experiences given by Berman above, as ranging from "adventure to the destruction of who we are". This paradox is also described well by Miles et al. (2000) as "the spectacular characteristics of the city". These characteristics discussed by Miles and others (1-2) include: its existence as a central and densely populated socio-economic space, its sustenance of urban life "as where things happen and people act" and its invisibility, yet its encouraging social and economic exchanges such as falling in love or making

business deals. The other characteristics are its construction as a space where phenomenal historical events and important decisions, as well as great architectural and artistic productions, are made, and more importantly, it is a temporal space – "it is now, and will become". It is in this modernity, described by Berman and Miles above, where the ambivalence of the city's built, lived and imagined spaces can be best noted.

Experiences and trajectories that occur during periods of rapid social and economic development also impact significantly on the shaping and mapping of any city's experiential and abstract spatiality. Raymond Williams' (1973) study of the transformation that occurred in London, as represented in various literary texts focusing on this theme, shows that there is a close linkage between the rapid social and economic changes that occurred during the protracted period from the feudal space to the industrial city spaces, and the changes in the residents' experiences and the city's built spaces. In fact, the constitution of urban identities and life experiences in London is linked to the spatial fragmentation that occurred as London moved from an agrarian and rural-oriented space into an industrial and often exciting and hopeful, as well as alienating and confusing space (1973: 148-151). Williams goes on further to catalogue the various instances of contradictions witnessed in the long period of London's social and economic transformation. Williams draws on Adam Smith's critical observations of London's thriving commercial nodes, in which he (Smith) postulates the city as a space of freedom and order, as well as one "likely to breed a volatile and insecure people" (144). What I find interesting here, is the contradictory existence of both vibrant social experiences and economic prosperity, on one hand, and possibilities of individual and social alienation. This paradoxical urban experience resonates well with the way Berman celebrates what he calls "the vital experiences of possibility and perils" (1983: 15) in life.

Again, Raban (1974: 9-10) postulates this contradiction as contributing to the traditional conception of the city as an alienating space, but goes on further to suggest that the same city is potentially malleable to the extent that an urban dweller can formulate new and meaningful identities and experiences. This and Williams' (1973) view that new perceptions of the city and new connections with the city are created during the city's social and historical trajectories (147-148) are of great significance in outlining the framework of enquiry in this thesis. I will therefore take the above theoretical perspectives, and others that are particular to the different literary periods

and writings, to examine the extent to which fictional representations of Johannesburg in South Africa, with its specific social and historical trajectories, such as the 1980s period of high apartheid, excluded, controlled and fragmented the oppressed inhabitants of Johannesburg, and at the same time provided possibilities for transgression and the establishment of resilient identities.

From the above discussion, it can be ascertained that the city is subject to social and historical transformation and as a result there is a need to explore this subject in relation to the notion of the city as a space that is always in flux or continuous change. It is generally accepted in cultural geographic and literary studies centred on the urban spaces that the city is not static and that its experiential space is subject to social, economic and historical changes. In other words, the city's state of flux lies in the fact that it is a space impacted upon by various forces. Pike (1981: 27) succinctly discusses the shift emerging in the nineteenth century, witnessed in the European and American literary imagination of the city, where "[t]he institutions of the city, its physical monuments and social classes, were portrayed less and less as elements perceptually fixed in relation to each other and more and more as a succession of fluid and unpredictable juxtapositions". The perception of the city's fixed points, indicated in commerce, power, art, religion and other monuments generally associated with life in the city, shifted with time and began to consider the dynamic human activity obtaining in the city's built and lived space (Pike 1981: 28). Various tropes were included in the Western representation of the city in an attempt to capture the characteristic flux occurring in the cities. Pike (1981) catalogues these tropes. These include that of the street, which is used to depict the complexity of everyday life experiences and to capture the uncertainty of city experiences; the idea of the city as an "irritable nervous energy", portraying the inhabitants' exposure to an unstable outer world; the trope of alienation used to show an increased individuation and disorientation from one's community and city space (33-35). He concludes his examination of these tropes with the view that the constitution of the city in literature vividly represented experiences of discontinuity and dissociation, and not community-making (72). I intend to problematise this conception of the city's status of continuous change, as argued by Pike, in relation to the specificities of Johannesburg's flux and examine the extent to which and why the inhabitants became disoriented and vulnerable. I will also examine further, if there are any possibilities and plastic

qualities available to some of the inhabitants as they tried to live more meaningful lives during the apartheid and post-apartheid period.

A key point, also gathered from Pike's discussion above, is the twentieth century's constitution and recognition of the "new" notion that regarded the city's experiences as composed of complex links between the abstract and lived or social space. This registers the existence of a relationship between built and lived spaces, and this inter-relationship influences the city's state of flux. Henri Lefebvre (1991: 26-53) argues that space is not innocent and that the modern city's spatial representation is a signification of the relational social productions, such as relations between space and power, and space and hegemony. I consider Lefebvre's (1991) argument that the city can be understood better by taking into consideration its relationship to other realities, and the need to read the city as a space, where the existing forms of social production, such as raising families and going to work (31-36), are viewed as a point of departure in formulating a complex theoretical perspective of the characteristics and representation of the shifting nature of the city.

Lefebvre also discusses the concept of relational spatiality, where the city is given as composed of social spatial representation, spatial practice and representational space (1991: 38-42). The city's representational space, a space under focus in this thesis, is the space conceived by specialists like planners and scientists, that which is lived and associated with symbols and images. Jennifer Robinson (1999: 165-166) expands on Lefebvre's ideas and explains further that this representational space is usually associated with the contradictions that take place in the city.[2] The contradiction is noted in the facts that the city is on the one hand envisaged as a socially and politically dominated space, whose inhabitants are represented as fragmented, and on the other hand, where the dominated inhabitants will be actively trying to appropriate the city and imagine the city differently. I find the concept of the city's state of continuous flux and contradiction tantalizing, for this condition affords the dominated urban dwellers a chance to make new identities and other forms of agency thus contributing to the complex nature of urban experiences.

An evaluation of the concept of relational spatiality is significant if one is to have a better understanding of the continuous change that is always taking place in the city. That is, there is need to analyse the impact of the relationship between power and the built space, the built and the social space, and ideology and the social space in establishing a perpetual instability in the city (Lefebvre 1991; Robinson 1999). I

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argue that this will enrich our understanding of the nature of the lived experiences, the mediated identities, the constituted perceptions of city life and even the concept of the community and the nation in any city.[3] These views on the relational space will be considered in the study of the fictional representation of apartheid and post-apartheid Johannesburg in this thesis. More importantly, linkages such as that of ideology and the city's built infrastructure are significant in the study of some of the major forces that are at play in creating changes and instability in fictive Johannesburg. The task at hand, then, is to establish the extent to which forces such as power, history and ideology influence the shifting spatiality and the lived experiences as they are represented in the fiction under consideration in this thesis.

However, I am also interested in Lefebvre's (1991) concept of the link between space and other realities as well as the idea that space is not innocent. My intention here is to examine whether there is a likelihood that a dominated and impacted space can support moments of contact, which enable transgression, and new possibilities that subvert the existing social and political spatiality in, for instance, the Johannesburg of the 1980s and early 1990s, especially as represented in the short fiction published in *Staffrider* and that written by some defiant white writers in the 1980s.[4] Desmond Harding (2003) also discusses this issue that I wish to pursue, as illustrated in the comment he makes on the conceptualisation of the city in relation to modernity:

> While the city is certainly home to many forms of disintegration, we
> should consider the possibilities it also provides as a site of liberation
> from the very forces that would seem to crush the individual. (13)

The hypothetical view that I hold here, is that in the consideration of the linkages between urban spaces and other realities, as well as between space and other forces, the same impacted space is still capable and has the potential to influence the social space, the lived experience and even the way the dwellers conceive and walk in the city's abstract spaces.

Michel de Certeau's (1984) work on the ordinary residents' experiences in the city, discussed under the fitting title "Walking in the City" (91-110), is very critical in the examination of the concept of the city's flux, and the creation of new possibilities and definitions in a dominated space. De Certeau makes a voyeuristic observation of

life on the streets of New York atop the World Trade Centre, and marvels at the city's specific nature of flux and capacity to reinvent itself:

> Unlike Rome, New York has never learned the art of growing old by playing on all its past. Its present reinvents itself, from hour to hour, in the act of throwing away its previous accomplishments and challenging the future. (91)

What interests me here, is the city's transformative capacity, that is, its ability, through the activities of its inhabitants, to move from the past, and then reinvent and position itself strategically in order to meet the challenges from the future. A transformation of this nature is worth considering, especially when analysing the literary and cultural representation of Johannesburg during the period of the transition from an apartheid city to a post-apartheid one, and even its current democratised spatiality. It should be noted that, for a city like Johannesburg, it is politically problematic to view its apartheid past within the above-mentioned concept of reinvention that is future oriented and does not consider past achievements, as postulated by De Certeau, for apartheid is generally considered as a period of the South African city's "dark history" from which limited memories of accomplishments can be retrieved. Nevertheless, the post-apartheid literary discourse of nationhood is based on looking back for national reconciliation and forgiveness before the nation can move on. Be that as it may, I believe that an evaluation of the extent to which the representation of Johannesburg is or is not representative of this flux and reinvention is worth paying attention to. Thus I intend to explore the residents' "spatial enunciation" and "practices of space", which are ways used by urban dwellers to define the city by imagining and walking it differently from its official intentions and definitions (De Certeau 1984: 84), and evaluate how this can assist in the establishment of new possibilities in a city like Johannesburg, whose history is quite diverse.

The trope of walking and how it is linked to the transgression of racialised and dominated spaces and the appropriation of others will be considered in the analysis of the fictional representation of Johannesburg, especially during the 1980s and early 1990s. The possibilities signified in the walks, and indeed other forms of agency

fashioned by the invisible and dominated, which I will consider in the thesis, are articulated clearly by De Certeau:

> If it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities
> (eg, by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (eg, by a wall
> that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualises some
> of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge.
> But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing,
> drifting away, or improvisation of walking, privilege, transform or abandon
> spatial elements. Thus Charlie Chaplin multiplies the possibilities fixed by
> the constructed order (he goes only here and not there), on the other he
> increases the number of possibilities (for example, by creating shortcuts
> and detours) and prohibitions (for example, he forbids himself to take paths
> generally considered accessible or even obligatory). He thus makes a
> selection. The user of a city picks out certain fragments of the statement
> in order to actualise them in secret. (98)

It is this representation of an engagement with the existing spatial order, as argued by De Certeau, that I intend to focus on in the study of the writings and images of Johannesburg from 1980 to 2003. I will, however, take into consideration the fact that the larger part of South African urban history is dominated by state-sanctioned racial segregation. I will investigate how the characters in the texts to be studied appropriate, re-map, transgress and view the different city spaces that they lived in. I will determine the extent to which their movements resulted in the "invent[ion] *of* new spatial forms", as well as "creating short cuts" and selecting detours and "picking out certain fragments" as noted in the above reference to the analogy of how Charlie Chaplin "multiplies possibilities fixed by the constructed order", which in a way indicates a challenge to a given order. This will be noteworthy in my evaluation of the extent to which some of the apartheid fiction addresses the residents' (irrespective of race and colour) establishment of creative means and imaginings of the city as a new and different space from its original plan. This concept, which in the apartheid city emblematises the resilience of the oppressed, resonates with De Certeau's analogue of "the footsteps of the invisible walkers" which open up new meanings and "insinuate other routes into the functionalist and historical order of movement" (1984: 104-105).

It should be noted that representations of the transition and post-apartheid experiences demand a new set of walks and perceptions of fictive Johannesburg due to the ongoing democratisation of the social and political space. It might appear, therefore, as if De Certeau's critical ideas cease to be relevant in the study of the representations of Johannesburg during the transition and post-apartheid period. I contend that his postulations on "walking in the city", remapping, appropriations and the whole notion of searching for possibilities in the city are still critical in the study of the experiences taking place after 1990. New forms and perceptions of exclusion and curtailment of freedom of movement in the transforming fictive city, as well as certain types of ambivalences that come into being can still be understood through the prisms of De Certeau's work discussed above. Other critical ideas based on various appropriations and travels, and contradictory experiences taking place in Johannesburg drawn from Lindsay Bremner in *Johannesburg: One City, Colliding Worlds* (2004) and Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall's "Introduction" (2004) will complement these guiding concepts on the city given by De Certeau, Lefebvre and others in this thesis.

Nevertheless, De Certeau's discussion can also be paralleled to Robinson's (1999) discussion on the inventive potential held by urban dwellers in their everyday interaction with the city. These postulations are based on her analysis of Toloki's urban experiences in Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1996). Robinson identifies the dynamism that is evident in the transforming spaces of the South African city in the early 1990s, as shown here:

> The lines of the city are crossed, redrawn, reimagined; outside the
> conceiving spaces of planning visions. The city of everyday experience
> and imagination is already a different space; it is already a space of
> difference. (170)

It is my contention that this conceptualisation of the trope of walking and its intricate linkage with agency and the residents' ability to free up the spaces for themselves, provides an appropriate point of entrance into a conceptual and empirical study of the writing of Johannesburg, during both the apartheid and post-apartheid period as represented in the fiction under consideration.

1.2 Johannesburg: from a dominated space to a democratic urban space.

Having engaged in a conceptual discussion on a number of ideas that are pertinent to the representation of the city, which I do not claim to have exhausted, I will now briefly examine the history of Johannesburg and try to place it within the preceding discussion. The focus of the discussion is to establish the history of the construction of the city as a vibrant social, political and economic space. Furthermore, I intend to examine the historical, social and political development of Johannesburg. That is, I will focus on its physical and infrastructural growth into a city, its transformation into a segregated and dominated city, as well as its attainment of a post-apartheid status. I will link all this with the fictional representation of the dwellers' experiences during the period from 1980, shortly after the establishment of the journal *Staffrider*, up to 2003, a full decade after the first democratic elections.

The history of the city of Johannesburg is closely linked with the mid-1880s discovery of huge reef gold deposits on the Witwatersrand area. The historical linkage between the growth of the mining industry and the city of Johannesburg is clearly pointed out by Van Onselen (1982):

> For a length of some 40 miles along the line of reef, from Springs in
> the east to Krugersdorp in the west, the accommodation ridges and
> depressions of the Witwatersrand became pock-marked with all the
> signs of an industrial revolution – mining headgear, ore dumps, battery
> stamps, reduction works, slimes dams and the frayed ends of railway
> lines. Besides, and in between these starker thickets of technology,
> the same revolution also spawned a series of urban sponges – the
> mining compounds and towns – that were called upon to absorb the
> ever-increasing numbers of black and white miners who made their way
> to the new goldfields at the turn of the century. And, in the midst of all
> these developments, almost exactly half-way along the line of the reef
> outcrop, lay the social, political and economic nerve centre of the new
> order – Johannesburg. (2)

The discovery of gold went hand in hand with a huge influx of a multiracial migrant labour force whose settlements were also multiracial. Historians and social scientists

from the University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop such as Eddie Koch and Dunbar Moodie (1983) have documented the various racial groups and their experiences, which include living in overcrowded inner city slums infested with disease, prostitution and the brewing and consumption of illicit liquor in the compounds. However, during the beginning of the twentieth century, the Johannesburg city authority, under the influence of a powerful ratepayers association, which was backed by the large mining industries, began to clamour for laws and moves to exclude and restructure the city along racial lines (Parnell 2003: 615-616).

The racialised spatial definitions and urban restructuring arising out of the white ratepayers' demands are quite significant. The demands were based on what Susan Parnell describes as the demonisation of the slums categorised as 'native problem areas' even though Africans were not the majority there. She also shows how a combination of a discourse on race and sanitation, and race and crime were used to establish racial divisions in the city. As a result, the council had to promulgate new laws, such as the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 and this marked the beginning of the local government's legalised exclusion of blacks from compounds located in the city centre as well as the control of their movements in the inner city areas (2003: 630-636). I agree with social historians and cultural geographers such as Parnell (2003), Alan Mabin (1992) and Jeff McCarthy (1992) that the subsequent urban segregationist laws that were enacted during the first half of the twentieth century such as the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act and the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts, laid the foundation for the establishment of a segregated Johannesburg and other urban spaces in South Africa. McCarthy's (1992: 27) summation here is quite critical: " 'White' South Africa had effectively been defined in terms of the provisions of the 1910 Constitution, and the 1913 Land Acts... and local government by-laws had forged a high level of urban and rural segregation within 'white' South Africa." (27)

A more pronounced segregated Johannesburg came into existence after the 1948 Afrikaner Nationalist Party's (NP) election victory. The victory was followed by an introduction of apartheid laws, such the 1950 Group Areas Act "[which] required the strict segregation, within discrete areas, of four groups recognised in terms of the Population Registration Act of 1950 (White, Coloured, Asian and Black)" (McCarthy 1992: 27). Thus, the city space in South Africa became both a capitalist-dominated one and racially segmented on the social and political level. White ratepayers were included in the central administration of local and national authorities. They also had

privileges such as the reservation of the city centre and the northern suburbia as their territory while coloureds, Asians and blacks were excluded from the political space and racially segmented into group townships on the periphery of the city.

The creation of racially segregated and controlled townships had profound social and political effects on the racially excluded Johannesburgers. Townships such as Orlando in South Western Township (Soweto) for blacks, Lenasia for Indians and Newclare and Westbury for the coloureds were created under the Group Areas Act (Mabin, McCarthy & Lupton; 1992). These were created after forced removals from the city centre and all the areas that had been designated as white areas under the "Verwoerdian grand apartheid geopolitical vision" (McCarthy 1992: 27). The negative effects of the forced removals are clearly shown in the case of the destruction of Sophiatown's multiracial communities, which resulted in the social and psychological alienation of most black, coloured and Indian inhabitants. The displaced lost their properties, homes and identification with old places, and had to form new relationships and urban networks.[5]

It is important to briefly note the social and economic developments that occurred in Johannesburg under the Verwoerdian geopolitical vision. The city experienced a huge infrastructural development. The major focus was on the improvement of Johannesburg's road and communication system through the construction of world-class freeways that snaked through and linked the city's commercial, industrial and residential nodes. In addition, major improvements were made in the telecommunication sector. These included the expansion of the state-controlled South African Broadcasting Corporation and the construction of high-rise communication signals such as the Hillbrow Tower. Other gigantic and often exhibitionist developments, fuelled by the economic growth occurring in the 1950s and 1960s, include the building of the giant Johannesburg Hospital, the construction of major postmodern high-rise buildings such as the Carlton Centre, the Standard Bank Centre and the Sanlam Centre (Chipkin 1999: 251-267). These developments, which are symbolic of the grand vision of apartheid and are similar to the phenomenal infrastructural development that were also taking place in the prosperous Western economies during the 1960s and 1970s as discussed by, among others, David Harvey (1989), have a great social and political significance in the definition of Johannesburg's spatiality.

Nevertheless, the 1980s witnessed a number of popular revolts in Johannesburg and other cities, which epitomize the growing unsustainability of apartheid during this critical decade in the history of the city and South Africa as a whole. Johannesburg became a contested space on the social, economic and political level. Its commercial and industrial spaces were transformed by the workers, under their organized unions, into spaces of political consciousness and organization towards revolt against poor working conditions. Later on, the workers entered into the national political space under the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), which changed into the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) through their engagement with the politics of "the social wage" McCarthy (1992: 31). Numerous job-stay aways and demonstrations were held in demand for better working conditions and a complete overthrow of the apartheid system. The formation of United Democratic Front (UDF), which was an umbrella civic organization representing various anti-apartheid and worker's unions; an increased international community's pressure; the commencement of an economic slump in South Africa, and other factors, forced the government into negotiations (McCarthy (1992); Alan Lester et al. (2000) and Liebenberg (1993)).

I referred briefly to the history of Johannesburg in the 1980s to show how history impacted upon the socio-political space of the city and more importantly how the city became subjected to contested meanings, imaginations and new urban identities, which were perhaps never thought of by the apartheid government when it came into existence. However, it is significant to point out that transgression and the formation of social and political agency against the domineering state machinery in Johannesburg dates back to well before the intense 1980s popular resistance to apartheid. From the beginning of the twentieth century and especially during the second half of the century, Johannesburg remained an oppressive and racialised city, yet still managed to encourage different forms of agency from the oppressed. The major historical beacons of urban resistance include the 1956 anti-pass march, the 1957 Alexandra bus boycott and the 1976 Soweto uprising. These moments exemplify the possibilities and new spaces of political activity that were created by the oppressed inhabitants.

The importance of such resistance and resilience is noted in the way the oppressed appropriated the dominated and racialised city structures such as the compounds, roads and schools to use them differently. This resonates with Lefebvre's

(1991) concept of the capacity of the dominated to imagine and live in the oppressed space in a different way from the intentions of those who defined it, as discussed earlier. The Marabi culture represented in Modikwe Dikobe's text *The Marabi Dance* (1973) is a good example of how some black workers appropriated the racialised settlements and urban spaces into spaces that reflected their own social and cultural imagination, and revolted against the mining and industrial capital and the local government's definition of the early Johannesburg. Urban structures and even institutions such as roads, schools and transport systems were appropriated and transformed into spaces for creative political activism. This can be noted in the way the young black educated and journalist elites used *Drum* magazine in the 1950s to explore the urban experiences of the multiracial societies in Sophiatown, which included crime and poverty. These elites also focused on the horrifying experiences occurring in Johannesburg's townships, the city centre, hostels, prisons and other places. Other forms of resistance included the appropriation of public and state oppressive and racist machinery and transforming them into spaces of resilient and defiant performance against oppression. An example that easily comes to mind is that of the 'skelm' figure's actions on the commuter trains, the streets and other spaces of Johannesburg as reflected in some *Staffrider* stories, which will be examined in Chapter 2. It is this resilience and other factors such as the unsustainability of apartheid policies, the international community's pressure and others discussed by writers such as Liebenberg (1993) and Lester et al. (2000) that constituted the developments towards the transition from apartheid to the post-apartheid era and the democratisation of Johannesburg.

The period under the transition from apartheid to post-apartheid is marked by tough political negotiations, the revocation of apartheid laws, and the enactment of new ones and the democratization of the once segmented and racially exclusive urban spaces. The whole process of the ideological and socio-political transformation of Johannesburg was triggered by the parliamentary opening statement made by F. W. de Klerk on 2 February 1990 where he announced the unbanning of the ANC and other popular opposition organizations. He also invited them to enter into negotiations towards the framing of a national constitutional democracy. This marked the opening of a new page in the socio-political trajectories of South African cities, including Johannesburg, and the nation as a whole. The city space was democratized as demonstrated by the annulment of apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act of

1966, the Urban Controls Act of 1950, the Separate Amenities Act of 1950 (repealed in 1989), the Population Registration Act of 1950 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953 by the national transitional authority (Bonner, et al. (1993) and Lester, et al. (2000)). This enabled the city to change on the political and social level because once 'white' city spaces such the streets, restaurants, hotels, parks, schools, northern and inner city suburbs and other public spaces were opened up and officially multiracialised.

This was, however, immediately followed up by huge human movements into and out, and an intensified abandonment and decay of some parts and buildings in the city centre. The once-excluded local black, coloured and Asian communities migrated in huge numbers into inner-city residential places such as Hillbrow. This had already begun in the early 1980s and was compounded by the arrival of Africa migrants such as Nigerians, Cameroonians, Zimbabweans, Zambians and other nationalities (Morris 1999). Furthermore, Johannesburg's city centre's commercial space deteriorated due to the translocation of corporate financial, commercial and industrial capital to northern suburbs such as Sandton.[6] As a result, spatial nodes of abandonment such as empty high-rise office buildings and hotels still mark the current city centre. Nevertheless, there has been a new agency characterised by the constitution of new social, cultural and architectural spatiality as the city's authorities, civic organizations and residents respond to issues such as inner-city decay, an obsessive fear of crime, xenophobia and a preoccupation with fortifying homes and suburbs in the northern suburbs as will be discussed in Chapter 6, which focuses on short stories that represent some of the experiences characterising Johannesburg during the first decade into multi-racial democracy.

Associated with the above-mentioned restlessness and bleak urban constitution is the existence of a social and cultural space of affluence and glamour that exists in Johannesburg. This glamour and affluence is epitomized by the ownership of the latest and most expensive cars, visits to the growing number of post-modern, architecturally designed shopping malls and the establishment of ostentatious and spacious homes and cluster houses in the northern suburbs. These spaces of glamour are also distinguished by the aesthetics of fortification such as electrified fences, razor wire, high security walls, protective gateways and patrols by armed security personnel, which is synonymous with the establishment of fortified and utopian cities.[7] Therefore, Johannesburg's transition into a democratised space has resulted in

the formation of hybrid and ambivalent spaces that are marked by the existence of totally different social and economic worlds. The image of a two-cities-in-one is also witnessed in major African cities such as Nairobi in Kenya, as discussed by Roger Kurtz (1998).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the ultimate democratization of the city and the nation as a whole was achieved through the holding of the first national elections in 1994. After the elections the African National Congress (ANC) formed the new government in a new post-apartheid era. National and local government efforts were channelled towards redressing old apartheid imbalances in both the cities and the rural and homeland areas. The efforts include housing projects, health and education programmes, and the rationalisation of the fragmented metropolitan and township councils into compact city development entities.[8] These new post-apartheid policies are of great importance in the postulation of the trajectories of Johannesburg, in that not only do they signify a complete transformation of the political scape of the city, but they have a direct bearing on the shaping of the current city's experiential space and how it is conceived by literary practitioners whose works I will be studying in this thesis.

As we consider the fictional representation of the currently constituted urban identities, perceptions and imaginations, we note the significance of the intersection between this current constitution and the city's history, culture, social, political and economic development. I argue that the current Johannesburg can be viewed as a socio-political and ideological palimpsest, where the remnants of the past, the influence of present and the new, and the imagined future possibilities play a significant role in the conceptualization and representation of the current Johannesburg experience.

1. 3 Conceptualising the writing of Johannesburg from 1980 to the present.

The research will be based on a literary and cultural analysis of the short and long fiction set in Johannesburg, which is published between approximately 1980 and 2003. Firstly, there will be an analysis of the life experiences, views and images of Johannesburg as portrayed in the short fiction published in the journal *Staffrider* from 1978-1993. From the *Staffrider* fiction, I will consider the representation of the life experiences of some of the residents in the segregated, oppressive and excluding city spaces. I intend to take into consideration the heterogeneity of the represented

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inhabitants based on their different races, ethnicities, social class, places of location and ideological points of view. Various tropes will be taken into consideration and these include that of the racialised body as an invisible, segregated and victimised one, especially for the non-whites, although in some instances some whites are portrayed as victims too. The trope of the street and the public space, as among other images, a site of segregation, violence, death and even one for resistance will be considered. I intend to evaluate the extent to which the street and public spaces help in the mediation of resilient identities and the formulation of new imaginings and images of the racially dominated and oppressed city arenas. In fact the concept of the new possibilities likely to arise, even when the space is a dominated and oppressed one, will be considered. Furthermore, the significance of the ideological and spatial iconography signified by institutions and buildings such as John Vorster Square in Essop's "The Concrete Fountain" (1988), Sophiatown and Triomf in Isaacson's "Whose Triomf?" (1990) will also be analysed. This will be done in relation to Lefebvre's idea of spatial relations and how these abstract emblems of apartheid domination influence the residents' everyday experience and sense of community as well as their dreams and imagination of the past and the future. The fiction will be examined to determine the dwellers' diverse reaction in relation to the residual colonial and the then apartheid domination.

I will also study some writings on Johannesburg in the 1980s that were produced by some defiant white writers such as Nadine Gordimer. These white representations will be evaluated to determine the liberal white perspective of Johannesburg and its impact on the image of the city and the experiences that the residents of the fictive city were going through. I will examine how some white Johannesburg dwellers are depicted as either cynical or subverting apartheid policies in the city, and how some writers create complex and penetrating views of the represented city's social and political spaces in the city centre, northern suburbs and townships as, for instance, given by both Gordimer (1984) and Stephen Gray (1988). Hence, a study of the 1980s short and long fiction seeks to evaluate the multiplicity and complexity characterising the representation of the urban experiences in a severely censored fictive Johannesburg, as the residents move through the turbulent decade.

Fiction set in the early 1990s will also be analysed to determine the nature of the urbanites' reaction and consciousness in relation to the social and political

transformation that was taking place. The portrayal of the existence of anxiety and fear during the period of transition to democracy will be analysed. For instance, Marlene van Niekerk's representation of the restlessness and sense of betrayal felt by some ordinary Afrikaners and their holding of an apocalyptic vision of the post-apartheid city and nation in *Triomf* (1999) will be studied. The other trope to be considered in the representation of Johannesburg during the transition is the image of chaos and disorder. Johannesburg is represented as a dislocated social space, characterised by dilapidated infrastructure such as streets, shops and restaurants, and dysfunctional human relations. This is contrasted with the existence of a positive hope for a new prosperous and opened-up city, where new multiracial and meaningful relationships are possible. The contradictory and contesting perceptions on the future are clearly shown in Vladislavic's short stories such as "The WHITES ONLY Bench" (1996) and in the novel, *The Restless Supermarket* (2001). As a result, the significance of Raymond Williams' (1973) critical views on complexities taking place during a period of intense and rapid transformation will be considered in the study of the fictional representation of Johannesburg's transition from apartheid to the post-apartheid period.

I will also analyse recent fictional depictions of Johannesburg to determine the nature of the current imaginative reflection of life experiences in this city. The intention is to study the reaction, perceptions and identity formation of the urban residents as they handle the challenges and trauma posed by the legacy of apartheid, especially during the early post-apartheid period. Texts such as Jonathan Morgan's *Finding Mr Madini* (1999) and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hilbrow* (2001) will be considered in the examination of how the urban dwellers appropriate the new Johannesburg, remap it, associate with other residents and establish survival networks in the face of the ensuing disorder arising out of various changes occurring during the early post-apartheid period. The trope of violence and memory will also be considered in the study of Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* (2001) and Jo-Anne Richards' *Sad at the Edges* (2003) with the objective of analyzing how the characters grapple with the trauma of apartheid violence as well as the associated social and psychological displacement. I will also try to examine how the appropriations and remapping of the city, consumption habits and spatial signs are used to represent Johannesburg as a home for some residents, and how these indicate the existing linkages with the local, regional and global social, economic and political influences shaping the city. This

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should be of significance in the evaluation of the multiple images of the city arising out of the fiction, especially when considering that in the recent fiction set in Johannesburg, the use of the tropes of the migrant, memory, disease and even death are very prominent.

Finally, I will also analyse some of the current popular thoughts and images based on experiences during the first decade in post-apartheid Johannesburg given in Heidi Holland and Adam Roberts' *From Jo'burg to Jozi: Stories about Africa's Infamous City* (2002). The focus will be on studying the new styles and discourses that are being formed by the various writers as they represent the urban dweller's life experiences, anxieties and aspirations from different angles and genres. I will also examine some of the perceptions that define the contradictory image and instability of the phenomenal Johannesburg experiences since 1994. These include popular opinions on violence and crime as shown in Ruth Ansah Ayisi's "Kwame Doesn't Worry" and Holland's "Getting Even", Johannesburg's characteristic vibrancy and grime as given in Dave Chislett's "City of Restless Sleep" and Bongani Madondo's "Tatty Whore with a Heart of Gold". Furthermore, I will evaluate the significance of the trope of the glamour of Johannesburg and new class- and consumption-based social divisions in mapping the heterogeneity of Johannesburg as represented in stories such as Darrel Bristow-Bovey's "Sport and Cars" and Marlene van Niekerk's "Take the Body Where It has Never Been Before". The objective is to study the significance of current popular writings in portraying how the urban dwellers of different social classes relate to the new challenges and opportunities existing in the post-apartheid city and in that way conceptualise the multiple and unstable images of post-apartheid Johannesburg.

Therefore, the thesis will study fiction set in Johannesburg during the period witnessing the height of the contest between apartheid authorities and the anti-apartheid movement in Johannesburg up to the current post-apartheid narratives. The analysis seeks to determine the nature of the experiences of those who lived and depended on interacting with the city, how they viewed themselves, and examine the various social and political struggles and strategies they employed in an attempt to belong, imagine the city differently and establish strategic identities that would enable them to live a better life in the continuously changing fictive Johannesburg.

Endnotes

1 Tuan (1977) also discusses the significance of space, time and place in literature, and argues that the conception of time and the experience of space is related to, among other factors, the view of movement in history and around the given space.

2 Robinson (1999) also refers to Lefebvre's ideas on the relational space in her analysis of the imagination of the fictional representation of the city in Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1996). She gives an insightful discussion on the creation, and appropriation, of possibilities in the post-apartheid city by showing how the main character, Toloki, imaginatively appropriates and remaps the city from its original definition by official experts such as city planners and architects, as well as capital and past ideological definitions. Toloki redefines the city by imagining it differently and constructing his own dreams of the city's streets and buildings despite his state of dislocation. In that way, Lefebvre's concept of the relational space and how it is related in the portrayal of the continuous instability and transformation of the city as well as the constitution of new possibilities is clearly explored.

3 I have taken into consideration the views expressed by Lefebvre (1991) and Robinson (1999) in the formulation of this line of thinking. I must however acknowledge that I found Robinson's use of Lefebvre's idea of the relational space and the whole concept of the production of space in her article "(Im)mobilizing Space – Dreaming of Change", much more comprehensible.

4 I am reminded of Homi K Bhaba's ideas formulated in *The Location of Culture* (1994) of the creative agency and other possibilities that are created in this space, the third space, arising out of historical moments of contact.

5 Various studies on the social and psychological dislocation suffered by the displaced urban communities have been recorded. These include that of the displacement of blacks, Indians and coloureds from Sophiatown, Fordsburg and generally from the Metropolitan Johannesburg Region documented by scholars such as Lupton (1992), Tomlinson et al. (2003) and Lodge (1983).

6 The characteristics and nature of the transformation of the Johannesburg city centre, which has resulted in the formation of an image of decay and dereliction, as well as a discussion on the effects arising out of the flight by corporate capital into the northern suburbs such as Sandton and Sunninghill is fully discussed by Tomlinson et al.(2003).

7 I had an opportunity to observe this phenomenon of the aesthetics of glamour and fortification that is reflected in the northern suburbs during the Johannesburg Development Agency-sponsored educational tour of residential places such as Sandhurst, Rosebank and Sunninghill, and post-modern shopping malls such as Melrose Arch and Rivonia Shopping Mall, while attending a Summer School on the city held at the University of Witwatersrand from 1 to 8 February 2004.

8 These programmes, which were introduced mainly during the period 1994 to 1999, have been subjected to in-depth scholarly attention by social scientists, historians and urban studies critics such as Lester, et al. (2000).

Chapter 2: Popular imaginings and representations of Johannesburg in *Staffrider* Short Stories[1]

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines selected short stories set in Johannesburg, which were published in *Staffrider* magazine (between 1978 and 1996). The selected stories reflect the inhabitants' everyday experiences and imaginings of their social, political and economic space during this period. In this chapter, I consider the stories as a repository of the popular imagination of Johannesburg and the larger experiences of the ordinary people in Johannesburg and other cities. These imaginings are held predominantly by ordinary South African black, Asian and coloured inhabitants and writers, who were the main victims of apartheid oppression. I will focus mainly on the response that could have been experienced by the readers after reading some of the stories and imaginings of Johannesburg. Nevertheless, I am aware that works produced by progressive whites from within South Africa and the region as well were also published in the magazine, just as its readers were of different races and from different countries. I intend to examine briefly the rise of *Staffrider* into becoming "one of the most successful cultural journals ever published in South Africa", to borrow the description given by Oliphant and Vladislavic (1988: Preface). I will also analyse some stories set in Johannesburg and determine the extent to which they represent the writers' popular imagination of their experiences and whether they offered any possibilities for characters to symbolically cross over some of the city's segregated and dominated social, political and economic spaces existing in the 1980s.

The major guiding question in this chapter is: To what extent did the popular medium enable the writers to express any contradictions, moments of opposition and possibilities for the readers of the magazine to imagine and live the city differently? Other consequent questions include: What is the significance of *Staffrider* in mapping the literary history of the writing of Johannesburg? How suitable is the popular genre in capturing the setting and atmosphere that existed in the Johannesburg of 1980s? In what ways did the consumers and represented characters try to symbolically and literally cross over some of the racial and censored boundaries that defined their experiences in fictive Johannesburg? These questions will assist in me in assessing the applicability of the hypothesis guiding this chapter, which is that despite the existence of intense apartheid censorship of cultural and literary production, and oppressive

working and lived spaces in the city, a number of urban characters as well as consumers of the written stories could still find an alternative and creative space where they could metaphorically restructure and cross over some of the social and political constraints and even perceive the city in a different light to the one imposed by the state.

I will take into consideration among other critical perspectives, Raban's (1974) views on the 'soft' qualities of the city, discussed in Chapter 1, as I evaluate the popular writings. I will also take into consideration Lefebvre's (1991) views that the search for possibilities and constitution of urban identities, especially in a space that is constantly changing, can be better understood by examining the relationship between the inhabitants and their social, economic and political realities. In this case, I will be considering how the writers imagined and represented the experiences of Johannesburg's dwellers in relation to apartheid domination. I will also look at the portrayal of the urban worker and dweller, whom I consider as the ordinary inhabitants, in relation to the racial classification of the streets, social amenities as well as memory-making.

What makes the magazine and the selected stories that I will focus on significant in the area of popular arts is that they fit within the expected paradigm of a true popular arts, cultural and media production. Karin Barber (1987: 7-8) observes that scholars seem to agree that popular culture should serve the people and conscientize them in preparation for a radical engagement with their situation. John Fiske (1989a) in his discussions aimed at "understating popular culture" – drawing on the title of the chapter – gives similar views to Barber's. He notes that: "popular culture is made by subordinate peoples...is made from within and below...[and that it] is always a culture of conflict, it always involves the struggle to make social meanings that are in the interests of the subordinate and those that are not preferred by the dominant ideology" (2). It is in this capacity to make the South African oppressed and racially excluded individuals express their censored experiences and make their communities and the rest of the world aware of their situation that *Staffrider* shows its importance in mapping the popular imagination of an apartheid setting such as Johannesburg.

To this end, I will focus on stories that show how the inhabitants and the writers themselves imagined and coped with the apartheid ideological apparatus and surveillance of the city's streets,[2] educational and other socio-political structures. I will also examine stories that depict imaginings of the city's racist, oppressive and

exploitative economic and social spaces such as experiences at work places and within public spaces and facilities such as streets and train services. Finally, I will focus on stories that portray the marginalized urban dwellers' experiences in order to determine how the dwellers dealt with individual and collective memories and evaluate whether they reflect the existence or potential of any possibilities of resistance and transgression of the existing social, political and economic domination. The stories from *Staffrider* that I will examine in this chapter include: Mongane Serote's "Hot Beans" (1981), Peter Wilhelm's "Van" (1978), K. F.S Ntuli's "Magawulana" (1978), Farouk Asvat's "The Barrier" (1981), Dikobe Martins' "Jazz and Rugby, Tough Games Brother" (1979), Ahmed Essop's "Gemini"(1979), Bheki Maseko's "Mamlambo" (1982), Peter Esterhuysen's "From the Roof, the Sky" (1988) and Maureen Isaacson's "Whose Triomf?" (1990).

2.2 *Staffrider* Magazine: The historical background

2. 2.1 The objectives and focus

Ravan Press created *Staffrider* in 1978 "in an attempt to respond, as publishers, to the great surge of creativity which has been one of the more hopeful signs of recent times" (*Staffrider* Editorial 1978). The writings were gathered at the different writers' associations and cultural groups meetings spread across South Africa. They were then sent to Johannesburg for editing and publication. A survey of most of the earlier volumes' contents pages proves that a majority of the writers and associations that contributed to *Staffrider* were from the Johannesburg and Pretoria townships. While Mike Kirkwood maintains that he and other members of the editorial group at Ravan Press always tried to make the magazine accessible to Writers' Associations from places such as Durban and Cape Town, he points out that the largest "interest [in *Staffrider* was] centred on the Reef – Johannesburg and Pretoria" (1980: 26). This clearly confirms that *Staffrider* was predominantly, but not exclusively, an urban and township literary and cultural journal.

The writings focused on, among other issues, community experiences and imaginings based on the writers' and inhabitants' local conditions. These would then be sent to Ravan Press as a group or association's effort and were again published as a community contribution. Michael Vaughan notes that the image of the magazine's layout "and the organisation of material in terms of region of origin and group identity all serve to promote an image of the magazine as a collective enterprise" (1984: 200)

Various poems, interviews and short stories would be published in the magazine under titles such as Creative Youth Association Diepkloof, 'Soweto Poems' or a writer's contribution would identify the community or city from where he or she hailed. As a result, the creative writers and cultural groups, from which these writers contributed, functioned as centres of "group creativity" in that they offered a platform for holding reading and writing workshops. They were also the first stage of what Mike Kirkwood called the "editorial collective". This involved writers' groups that edited their own work by first deciding on which of their works they had to put forward for publication. The second stage involved a group of five editorial staff members at Ravan Press in Johannesburg who debated which articles were to be published in the next issue (1980: 24-25).

By 1988, the magazine had abandoned the use of banners and layouts that identified the contributors' community identity due to the breaking up of the different writers' groups (Kirkwood 1988: 4). Nonetheless, the earlier emphasis on layouts with banners and community affiliations evidently shows that the magazine's base lay in the communities of the excluded and ordinary urban people. These people were excluded by the state and ignored by the official media and literary publishers in apartheid South Africa and thus rendered ordinary in the mere sense of being invisible and insignificant people and within the idea of the ordinary that is discussed by Njabulo Ndebele (1994), which I will consider later on in the chapter. Nevertheless, the writers were able to achieve a sense of community and national belonging through their activities in the writing and reading associations. I am reminded here of Benedict Anderson's (1991: 42-49) discussion on how national identities can be formed through imagined shared assumptions and consumptions such as speaking the same language or reading the same newspaper. In this case, an imagined collective urban identity was created within the writers' associations and readership accessing the magazine through out the country.

The magazine was primarily intended to give space for the publication of the often-ignored voice and imagination of the peripheral township and rural experiences. Thus it has its antecedents in the influence of the Black Consciousness Movement, whose doctrine under the leadership of Steven Biko called for the establishment of black unity and the development of black aesthetics based on the observation and celebration of the black resilience seen in the urban and homeland townships. Vaughan (1984: 196-197) in his analysis of the contribution made by *Staffrider* in the

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development of South African literature, examines the tenets of Black Consciousness, which include: black unity against oppression, the assertion of black cultural values and militant black political aspirations, establishing relations with a wider black community and drawing on creative aesthetics that were located in the oppressive and impoverished townships and other black communities. He goes on to show that Black Consciousness had a great influence in the formation and writings that were published in the early editions of *Staffrider*. Nevertheless, the magazine had an open racial policy. Mike Kirkwood concedes that the magazine also had a huge readership among white South African students from white universities (1980: 27). In fact, the magazine shifted in its focus from being predominantly Black Consciousness-inclined in the mid 1980s, to become non-racial and began to include writings from progressive whites, the middle class and established writers later on. This was probably due to the demise of the writers' associations that had been instrumental in the early stages of the magazine's life. Other factors include the coming in of new and dynamic editors such as Andries Oliphant and Ivan Vladislavic, and the possible ripple effect of the widening of a non-racial agenda by the anti-apartheid movement under the United Democratic Front.

The magazine therefore tried hard to give a broad picture of the communities that would not have been spotlighted by the mainstream press. Various pieces were published in *Staffrider* in different genres such as letters, poems, interviews, stories, photographs and graphics. This was a radical and 'dangerous' move; for the magazine started publishing during the period when the apartheid government was strengthening its censorship of the media and education in the wake of the 1976 Soweto Uprising. Kirkwood describes the entrance of *Staffrider* in the South African literary and media scenes as marked by unpredictability due to the legacy of the 1976 student revolts and the fact that a few months before their publication eighteen organisations culturally linked with Ravan Press had been banned (1988: 3).

2.2.2 The significance of *Staffrider* in South Africa's literary history

One of the exciting characteristics of this magazine, at least in so far as the 1980s editions were concerned, is the distribution and marketing of the magazine. This was done through bookshops in the various centres around South Africa and at university bookshops and libraries. Mike Kirkwood also confirms that a number of copies were also distributed to Western countries such as England, Australia, Canada, Germany

and Holland (1980: 26). However, I find the informal distribution system that was used by Ravan Press to market *Staffrider* as fascinating and befitting of the magazine's centeredness in the ordinary man and woman who made up the bulk of the magazine's readers. Kirkwood clearly describes the nature of this informal distribution network and the rationale behind it:

> The whole black readership in this country operates largely outside the normal channels of bookshops. And, from the beginning, *Staffrider* has been trying to express the cultural force that rests outside the institutional framework. So we use non-commercial outlets, outlets that derive from the writers' groups that we publish... We tend to see a natural affinity between contributing to the magazine and distributing it. This is part of an attitude to writing. Mothobi Mutloatse says in his piece; he has to be part of getting that piece to the people and be part, even, of the people's response to the piece he's written. In other words, we see the connection between the writer and his audience not as an abstract thing, certainly not as something that operates through a mechanism as abstract as the market, but as a matter of concrete connections. (1980: 26)

The magazine's significance is thus noted in the way it developed a pragmatic culture and system of distribution that suited its intended readership's peripheral condition. It must also be commended for involving the writers and other contributors in its production and distribution activities, and more importantly for making sure that it kept the writers in contact with their community and readership.

The fact that the magazine was formed and able to survive despite the heavy censorship regime in South Africa provides another interesting point in the history of *Staffrider*. The production of writings focussing on the experiences of the ordinary and excluded urban and rural people was considered subversive and as a result, they were subjected to severe apartheid censorship laws. The objective was to express ideas and information aimed at enhancing the apartheid ideology. This was achieved by exclusively focussing on the white community and at the same time creating a media blackout on the experiences of the non-whites. Nevertheless, *Staffrider* gave the experiences of the township residents, workers and the excluded a place in the space of popular culture and information production. This does not mean that the

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magazine escaped from the jaws of state censorship, for *Staffrider*'s Volume 2 Number 1 was banned, and later on the magazine continued to exist, probably due to self-censorship under the different editors who were in charge of the magazine. Be that as it may, the magazine drew a wide readership and response from the excluded.

The general impression that one gets is that the magazine was able to capture a wide readership because of its low price. Mike Kirkwood (1980: 28) stated that the magazine would deliberately cost less in order to reach its grass-roots readership. Later on the price rose from R3, 50 in the early 1980s to R24, 90 by 1988 and, as argued by Maughan-Brown (1989: 12), the magazine by then became unaffordable to its grass-roots readership. However, the fact that the magazine focused on the non-white urban dwellers and workers' experiences, transformed it into a site for the creative and cultural struggle against the official media. Oliphant and Vladislavic clearly articulate this quality of the magazine:

> *Staffrider* was able to become an outlet for young and often inexperienced writers and to feature the community- based projects, inscribed as it was with the imperative to resist officially sanctioned culture and its concomitant aims of domination. (1988: preface)

The magazine provided a space for the production of a counter media and cultural production. This is because a substantial amount of the magazine's fiction is based on the lower-class workers' and residents' experiences, which were characterised by segregation, poverty, exploitation and other dehumanising experiences. Other tough and dehumanising experiences included: the difficulties encountered during the daily travels by train into the Johannesburg's retail, industrial and domestic employment space in the morning and the hurried movements out of the overcrowded and racially segmented city on their way back to the outlying townships such as Soweto. A number of stories based on some of these concerns will be examined in great depth in the following sections of the chapter.

Other thematic focuses include the representation of the hopelessness felt by the marginalized and unemployed black Johannesburgers. Most of these inhabitants suffered from homelessness and poverty and had to rely on wit and trickery to survive. For instance Dube in Makunga's "Go away, we're asleep" (1985) has been "kicked out of [Tandie's] White City, Jabavu shack" (3) because he is unemployed

and refuses to go and get the required employment or job-seeking pass. As a result, he visits his girl friend, Tsidi, to seek shelter in her servant's quarters in Park Town. When he arrives there, he is humiliated, for he finds his girlfriend in bed with another man. He however moves into Tsidi's room after his rival has gone out to relieve himself. He is therefore saved from spending the whole night out in the cold after outwitting his rival. The story, despite its absurd sense of humour, replicates Dube's state of emasculation due to poverty and unemployment. It also depicts the threat of homelessness that constantly worries a majority of black urban dwellers. Furthermore, it represents the popular view held in apartheid urban centres that the likes of Dube and other inhabitants of a city like Johannesburg had to acquire certain unusual and absurd qualities, such as trickery, in order to survive. This and other marginalised non-white residents' experiences, indeed provide a radical shift in South African literary history ever since the decline of *Drum* magazine.

Finally, the magazine's publications in the 1990s became erratic. The last edition was the 1996 one, dedicated to the West African and Ogoni human rights activist and writer Ken Saro Wiwa. Nevertheless, it is certainly one of the significant literary and cultural magazines ever to be produced in South Africa after the 1950s *Drum*. Perhaps one has to take into consideration the prophetic comments made by Mike Kirkwood in 1980, in order to understand why the magazine folded:

> How long can *Staffrider* continue to play this role? I certainly see the
> magazine as operating within a particular transitional culture. When
> the transition is accomplished I would think that *Staffrider*, like all
> magazines soon or later, will have to learn how to fade away as gracefully
> as possible from the scene. (1980: 31)

2.3 The popular in *Staffrider* and Johannesburg's dominated and oppressive space

My analysis of *Staffrider*, among other concerns, investigates the linkages between the magazine, popular culture and the representation of the popular imagination of Johannesburg. An appropriate point of entrance into this study is an evaluation of the magazine's qualities to determine whether they confirm or deny its categorisation as a 'popular' literary and cultural production.

The magazine can be classified, to a great extent, as falling within the realm of popular literary and cultural media. The fact that the magazine was born out of a desire to produce the experiences of the downtrodden and excluded people in the South African urban social, political and economic spaces, as already discussed, confirms its status as a popular journal. The articulation of ordinary people's experiences, whether written or oral, is considered as one of the identifiers of that which fits into popular art and culture. Karin Barber (1987) in the section subtitled 'Popular Arts and People's Experience in Africa' of the article "Popular Arts in Africa", discusses various popular art forms existing in Africa, where she goes on to acknowledge that the arts "proclaim their own importance in the lives of large numbers of African people" (1). She even shows that much of the popular arts are expressive of the ideas from "the public" and from those often rendered invisible by the minority educated and wealthy elite. These minority elite, she argues further, make up the class that usually controls the national newspapers, radio and television in Africa (2-3). Barber's discussion shows the linkage between ordinary people's imagination and art forms that express their daily experiences. More importantly, it shows how these can be classified as popular art and culture. However, the discussion is mostly aligned to popular culture experiences obtaining in the post-colonial situation in Africa. This is a situation characterised by the domination and betrayal of nationalist struggles under dictatorial leaders, most of whom would be aligned to Western powers – a scenario indicative of Fanon's views on the "Pitfalls of Nationalism" (1965: 119-163). This is to some extent different from the basis and nature of popular arts and imaginings developing in South Africa during the time when *Staffrider* was published. The 1980s' popular arts and culture in South Africa were mostly centred onspeaking out against the Afrikaner ruling elite and the accompanying apartheid social, economic and political policies governing the country. Nevertheless, popular arts and culture as seen from the generalised post-colonial African situation and South Africa's during the apartheid period, is identifiably linked with the artistic and cultural expressions emanating from those rendered invisible and ordinary.

The magazine is also recognised as a largely popular literary and cultural magazine because of its association with the racially and socio-economically lower classes of South Africa. The above discussion on the history of the magazine confirms the grounding of the magazine in the excluded urban black, coloured and Asian

inhabitants of South Africa. This establishes the journal within the realm of popular arts. Barber (1987) in her discussion of the definition and the characteristics of popular African Arts concedes that scholars generally associate popular arts with productions to or emanating from the people or from below. She argues further that the artistic and cultural productions should serve the community by making the people aware of their situation and thus prepare them for a radical engagement with their situation (7). Similar qualities are noticeable in the writings and visual productions published in *Staffrider*. These writings' major attribute, as pointed out by Oliphant and Vladislavic's comments in the preface to the 1988 edition, was to create a space for resistance to the official culture and domination, as discussed earlier. Hence, the magazine provided a medium for the popular representation of popular views, imaginings and aspirations of the oppressed urban and even rural South Africans.

For example, in "Hot Beans" (1981), an excerpt taken from the novel *To Every Birth its Blood,* Mongane Serote portrays Alexandra Township as a social space dominated by poverty and dislocated family relations. The story reveals a conflict between the older generation, as represented by the parents, and the younger generation, as represented by Tsi, the main protagonist. Each generation holds different views on how to respond to their urban condition of racial exclusion, township poverty, violence and misery. In the story the reader is made to visualise the dusty township's streets, which are mapped as spaces of violence and death. A number of dwellers are killed in the streets at night and the protagonist's parents live in constant fear that the existing violence might harm their son and daughter. Furthermore, the larger image of the city of Johannesburg reflects a space where blacks, coloureds and Asians are exposed to racial discrimination and embarrassing police searching and demands for passes.

For the younger inhabitants of Alexandra such as Tsi, there is the need to live life fully and engage with their oppressive and impoverished township condition. As a result, they walk the same "dark streets of Alexandra, where women are raped, men killed, shot, stabbed, run over by cars" (6). Their decision to walk in these dangerous streets echoes Michel de Certeau's concept of the pedestrian's speech acts, discussed in chapter 1, in which the urban walker actualises the possibilities in the given space and creates new ones where they do not exist (1984: 96-99). In this case, Tsi and other young characters can be viewed as, on one level, coming to terms with the impact of apartheid domination and oppression such as the rampant violence and humiliation.

On another level, this can be viewed as the youths' attempts at realising the existing spaces of possibilities and creating or searching for new possibilities as they walk in the streets of Alexandra, to follow on with De Certeau's argument cited above. This creation of new possibilities is evidenced by Tsi's realisation of a new consciousness after coming back home from the dangerous space out in the streets and darkness of Alexandra. As a writer, Serote critically imagines and condemns the humiliating experiences such as the demands that black passengers should occupy the back in buses and trains and the general emasculation that black men suffered at the hands of white women (6).

The story's importance is seen in its potential to conscientize both the dwellers of Alexandra, and other urban characters, about their oppressed social and political conditions. Tsi's agency implicitly calls for a new culture of writing and discourse from below against apartheid. It also informs the residents of the dangers associated with any misdirected energy. The symbols of misdirected energy in the story are seen in the references to acts of violence, street wars and family arguments, and the way some characters wallow in false consciousness. The holding of a false consciousness is ridiculed as seen in the reference to Tsi's father, who "believed that one day his heroes, his supermen [such as Kaunda, Nyerere and Nkrumah] were to fly into South Africa and seize it out of the terrible grip that now held it" (6). The crux of the story, as given by Barber (1987), lies in the fact that it encourages the formulation of a new imagination within the oppressed. Furthermore, Tsi is conscious of his conditions, to invoke Fiske's (1989a: 2) theorising regarding the imaginings that exist outside the control of hegemonic forces and the dominant ideology. This imagination has the potential to make the urban dwellers realise that they can remap their socio-political space, provided they critically analyse their situation and seek a constructive agency that would deliver them from their oppressed condition. Hence, the magazine, as exemplified by the above story, fulfilled one of the major tenets of any given people's popular culture and imagination identified by Barber as "that which truly serves the interests of the people by opening their eyes to the historical conditions of their existence" (1997: 3).[3]

The magazine's popular appeal is also noted in its characteristic subversion of apartheid objectives and control. Most of the magazine's images and much of its focus describes the daily experiences of the oppressed and excluded in a manner that conflicts with the expectations prescribed under apartheid. For instance, in "Hot

Beans", Tsi's experiences reflect the nascent anxiety existing within the dwellers of Alexandra Township in fictive Johannesburg. Theirs was an anxiety based on a search for means and ways aimed at speaking against and delivering themselves from apartheid as well as a search for meaningful lives in the city. In a discussion where he succinctly defines elements of popular cultural practices under different conditions such as political domination, Fiske (1989a) considers acts of resistance by the subordinated as they try to find meaning in their oppressive conditions, as examples of "semiotic power that is power to make meanings" (1989a: 10). He articulates the significance of this popular culture practice of resistance:

> Semiotic resistance results from the desire of the subordinate to exert control over meanings of their lives, a control that is typically denied them in their material social conditions. This, again, is politically crucial, for without some control over one's existence there can be no empowerment or self-esteem. And with no sense of empowerment or self-esteem there can be none of the confidence needed for social action, even at the micro level. (1989a: 10)

The above quotation clearly explains the popular culture activity of subverting political domination in order to create different meanings in a political space, where the oppressed is constantly suffering humiliation and other dehumanising experiences. This is represented in the way dwellers of Alexandra live in a space dominated by the occurrence of death, violence, humiliation and social dislocation. Yet, a conscientious character such as Tsi is able to understand, for instance, the reason his parents have become so withdrawn from their everyday reality and yearn for peace and quiet. Tsi is more pragmatic than his father who thinks that pan-African heroes such as Kenneth Kaunda would deliver South Africa from oppression. Therefore, the represented semiotic power, to continue with Fiske's (1989a) ideas, which is witnessed in Tsi, signals an element of subversion against apartheid's intended social and political domination.

Another interesting feature of subversion used in most of the stories in *Staffrider* is that of excess and the vulgar. Both excess and the vulgar are used to cross over the created boundaries and to ridicule existing oppressive social, political and economic conditions. Fiske (1989a: 5-7) notes the use of puns, inclusion of excess to

achieve parody, subversion or inversion and a tasteless tone, as well as the vulgar, as some of the qualities found in popular cultural activities such as writing, art, popular music and carnivals. Such qualities are evident in some of the *Staffrider* stories. For instance, the vulgar, excess and parody are used to invert power and scorn the dominant socio-political situation. Apartheid machinery police and commuter train guards and ticket inspectors are subjected to inversion of power and parody in some writings. Ndebele in his examination of the nature of South African literature describes these major targets of inversion of power as "symbols of evil" and outlines them as including sell-outs, baases, madams, policemen and township superintendents (1994a: 28). One such *Staffrider* story is Peter Wilhelm's "Van" (1978) that depicts a progressive white writer's ridicule of the white agents of apartheid control in Johannesburg's black townships. In the story a white police officer stationed at Rockville in Soweto, is shown on one level faithfully enforcing apartheid laws and standing as a figure in control, yet in his personal life, he is portrayed as a drunk and disturbed by a dysfunctional marriage.

As the story begins, Van der Merwe, whose nickname ('Van'), suggests the subordinates' use of scorn to fight back at their oppressors, justifies the killing of a twelve year old black boy claiming that he was a "fucking terrorist" (26). However, this image of a brutal and proud apartheid policeman is inverted as the story progresses. Van endures a marriage characterised by non-communication and as a result gives in to alcohol. The worst scenario, and an indicator of ridicule, is the revelation that Van's wife, who had been denying him a "screw" was acting "very lovey-dovey" that night. The ridicule lies in the ironic reference that she was acting in the same way as she had acted the night Van discovered evidence of her infidelity. (6) The writer's use of the vulgar creates a shocking tone in the story, which at the same time aids in portraying the ridicule of the police force.

The ridicule transports the reader into a space where the relationships and imaginings of power are reversed. The reader witnesses the existence of possibilities that whites in the police force and other apparatus of apartheid domination are just as human and can lose control over their social and professional lives. This can actually lead to the realisation of a new perception, where the aura of white superiority can be overturned through socio-political agency by the excluded. Van reflects the image of a powerful figure in the townships, yet in his private space his marriage is in shambles, as his wife is having an extra-marital affair. The ridicule is pronounced at

the end of the story. His "lovey-dovey" wife calls him to hurry to bed, yet he is already drunk out of frustration. He cuts a pathetic and defeated figure as shown in the concluding sentence: "Fuck it, he thought, as he went to bed. A policeman's lot was not a happy one" (27).

The reception of the story signifies a practice typical of popular culture, where the dominated ridicule the oppressor and use inversion of power as a means to indicate their aspirations for or imagining of a new social order. Such stories in *Staffrider* usually represent Afrikaner rail inspectors as objects of ridicule by black commuters moving to and from the townships. Sometimes the rail inspectors are outwitted by commuters dodging payment of fares as shown in K. F. S Ntuli's "Magawulana" (1978). These stories are therefore indicative of the magazine's popular appeal and function as a medium used by some of the excluded black, Asian and coloured inhabitants of Johannesburg to register their disapproval and even rebel against apartheid control.

However, other factors should also be taken into consideration as we contemplate why the magazine should be considered as a popular production. Firstly, the mythical aura associated with the naming of the magazine as *Staffrider* is indicative of a divergence from the official media focus and thus an entrance into the realm of popular literary and cultural production. This is evident in the 1978 editorial, which names and maps the ideological focus of the magazine:

> A staffrider is, let's face it, a skelm of sorts. Like Hermes
> or Mercury – the messenger of the gods in classical mythology – he is
> almost certainly as light-fingered as he is fleet-footed. A skilful
> entertainer, a bringer of messages, a useful person but ... slightly
> disreputable. Our censors may not like him, but they should consider
> putting up with him. A whole new literature is knocking at the door,
> and if our society is to change without falling apart it needs all the
> messages it can get – the bad as well as the good.
>
> Like him or not, he is part of the present phase of our common
> history, riding 'staff' on the fast and dangerous trains of our
> late seventies. He is part of the idiom of this time.
>
> The magazine which bears his name has been established by
> Ravan Press in an attempt to respond, as publishers, to the great surge of

creative activity which has been one of the more hopeful signs of recent time. (1978: editorial)

The naming and association of the journal with a township image of a daredevil character "who rides 'staff' on the fast, dangerous and overcrowded trains that come in from the townships to the city, hanging on to the sides of the coaches, climbing on the roof, harassing passengers" (Kirkwood 1980: 23) is ample evidence of the magazine's association with a popular Johannesburg worker and passenger cultural practice. Although the naming of the magazine seems to be tinged with an elitist aura – signified by the reference to classical figures such as Hermes – it is still located within the realm of popular culture. *Staffrider* owes its name to an association with the classical figures and of course the current popular and heroic figures living in the apartheid South African city, thus depicting one of popular culture's characteristics – that of incorporating the syncretistic and intertextual.[4]

Furthermore, the magazine's focus on "the township skelm" addresses the likelihood of state censorship. The editorial of the first edition articulates that "our censors" might not like the magazine's issues for the persona of the magazine is "slightly disreputable". As a result, the magazine is located within the ontology of the dangerous, the likeable and sometimes dislikeable, which is automatically the realm of the 'unstable' as well as the unofficial and hence popular culture. Oliphant (1991) in his examination of the role that *Staffrider* played in the growth of South African popular history concurs with the characterisation of the magazine as a medium of unofficial and popular culture:

> The connotations of illegality, defiance, and risk conveyed the aims of
> the magazine's founders and situated it outside the institutional forms
> of South African life. (1991: 353)

An examination of a story where the trope of the "skelm" figure is used certainly gives a clear picture of the magazine's popular nature. One such story is Ntuli's "Magawulana" (1978), slightly outside the demarcated scope of this thesis, but important for its introduction of this trope. In it, the main character Magawulana, a street-wise urban fellow, leads an escape out of a Johannesburg jail after deceiving a newly introduced jail warden. He and his colleagues leap into the street with a group

of armed police on their trail. He jumps onto a moving bus destined for Hillbrow and manages to evade the pursuing policemen after his bloodstained trail is incidentally washed away by the runoff from a sudden rainfall. Later on, he is secretly taken to Soweto, where a fellow township thug nurses him and again assists him in the final escape from Johannesburg. In the story, Magawulana is portrayed as a daredevil figure that not only escapes from jail, but also shrewdly evades detection by the rail company's ticket examiner, when he rides the passenger train for freedom during his final escape from Johannesburg. He is also associated with this 'tsotsi' or gangster imagery located within the *Drum* writers' fiction.[5] Magawulana's skelm character is depicted in a flashback scene showing his first meeting with a novice skelm called Liso:

> He [Magawulana] of the red, fearful, jumping eyes. The one who knew
> how to get onto trains without paying a ticket: he who could discourse
> for hours upon virtues of keeping your eyes open. The one who would
> give you the best advice on how to avoid trouble. He introduced himself
> as Magawulana... this one knew how to bruise the law and how to avoid
> its consequential retaliation. He was the maestro; Machiavelli reborn. He
> was truly master of any situation. You knew he would captain the ship;
> you knew where your place was with him. In any situation you had to
> take the back seat and he would drive, for, you see, difficult situations were
> his speciality. Only practical experience can give these qualities to any man,
> and experience was what Magawulana certainly had. As he told Liso later,
> he had escaped from a Johannesburg jail. (8)

The above description, and the story as a whole, clearly portrays the qualities of the popular skelm figure that *Staffrider* drew inspiration from. The fact that Magawulana is an experienced trickster and someone who can be helpful to novices such as Liso is an interesting and typical popular representation of some of the experiences taking place in fictive apartheid Johannesburg. Magawulana symbolises that subversive and elusive character who appeals to the popular imagination of the oppressed and discriminated non-white residents. The oppressed definitely identified with Magawulana's "bruises with law" and probably hated the constant suffering. In the same breath, they also admired the way he violated apartheid laws and control as

signified by the escape from jail. The readers' admiration can be closely related to their admiration and imaginative desire for agency against apartheid. Vaughan (1984) aptly describes this populist staffrider character as signifying the condition of the urban blacks and their popular yearning for resistance:

> It is highly significant that the imagery of the staffrider figure is drawn from an aspect of black life that is pervasive, and that is tied into the specific terms of exploitation and oppression in South Africa: the aspect of travel. Trains, for example, are not simply means of getting from one place to another. They give expression to the status of black people as foreigners in South Africa, as a migrant labour force. The staffrider encounters this endemic predicament of migrancy – a specific term of his oppression – as a victim, a victim who can – with hardihood – gain some small victories over his oppressors, and thus keep the spirit of resistance going through hard times. He emerges, in this way as a figure which has something to say to the 'community'. (198-199)

The construction and use of the staffrider character is indeed indicative of the popular nature of the magazine. The staffrider represented the aspirations and popular desire of the downtrodden to transgress the censored Johannesburg space. The police live in the popular imagination of the excluded urban dweller as agents of oppression, whose function is to stop-and-search at any moment in the city. This image is also given by Bozzoli (1999) in her observations on the use of surveillance by the powerful in an attempt to control their subordinates. She gives this observation in her study of the linkages between space and identity during the rebellions that took place in Alexandra in the 1980s. She observes that:

> ...most rulers with a disproportionate amount of power over their subjects...will use space to assist in controlling them in a highly instrumental fashion. Populations are often physically controlled, and subjected to obvious and less obvious forms of surveillance; while elites who are physically close to the subordinate are often used to provide legitimacy and assist in control". (1999: 1)

Nevertheless, the oppressed inhabitants are still able to imagine Johannesburg as a space that needs to be transformed. For example, in Dikobe Martins' "Jazz and Rugby, Tough Games Brother" (1979) the freedom fighter protagonist, Poshoka, "who [had] done no wrong", is stopped and summarily searched by an apartheid policeman to see "what ... he got in there, [and whether it was] stolen goods?" (34). This constant subjection to surveillance and body searches is typical of the controlled movements endured by the oppressed and racialised residents in the then apartheid South Africa. Later on Poshoka kills ninety-eight people at a rugby match in "Alice Park Stadium" in a bomb attack. The attack is emblematic of the popular yearning by the oppressed to dismantle and transform the apartheid-dominated social and political space. Hence, the representation of and use of the motif of the skelm figure in *Staffrider* provides a counter discourse to the official information and ideological conception of Johannesburg's and the national space as fully under control: for skelms are constantly subverting and remaking these spaces of segregation and domination.

2.4 The suitability of the popular genre in representing the experiences in a segregated Johannesburg

The above leads to this discussion on whether the popular imaginings and arts accurately represent the oppressive and exclusionary conditions that characterise the experiences taking place during the 1980s in fictive Johannesburg. A few questions that will guide this subject under focus of this chapter's section are: to what extent can popular culture, as revealed in some of *Staffrider* short stories, fully capture the conditions under apartheid domination? Is the popular genre able to offer an alternative reading of the oppressed social, political and economic conditions impacting on the everyday experiences of some of the urban dwellers in fictive Johannesburg? Are there any possibilities that are portrayed in these popular stories that will enable the inhabitants to view their experiences differently and to cross over some of the dominant socio-political boundaries that existed in the city?

An appropriate point of entry is to draw from Lefebvre's (1991) ideas and engage in a discussion of the relationship between apartheid, power and segregation, in relation to the everyday experiences of the blacks, Indians and coloureds living in and around Johannesburg. The created segregated townships and streets were defined during the early stages of apartheid as spaces of control and racial segmentation. The oppressed and excluded stayed in far-away locations under the watchful eye of a

white location superintendent and were subjected to entry and exit control into the townships and in the city centre (Bozzoli 1996). Later on the townships became dormitories of exclusion and spatial reminders of social fragmentation, especially after the forced removals due to the Group Areas Act and other apartheid laws. As a result, the social and political spatial definition of Johannesburg's townships, such as Alexandra, Lenasia and Diepkloof, during the 1980s, provided a rich ground for the growth of popular literary and political activities. The townships, as witnessed in the history of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa's cities such as Johannesburg, became major centres of popular political agency. This agency is witnessed in the urban youth's street revolts and the cordoning off of townships from local government and other apparatus of apartheid control. Other examples include the social movements' championing of the anti-rates payment campaign, worker unions' involvement in the anti-apartheid and literary movements that united and boosted the morale of workers reeling under racist economic exploitation.

These popular literary, cultural and political activities were closely linked to the developments associated with the oppositional relationship between apartheid domination, censorship and segregation, and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Bozzoli (1996) points out that blacks, coloureds and Indians would encounter real-life and symbolic reminders of their state of oppression and fragmentation in their daily lives in the townships. She outlines further that these daily encounters went a long way in encouraging some inhabitants to engage in popular protests against issues such as homelessness and the formation of resistant imaginings and memory-making. She maintains that:

> In the case of the many areas that were removed, the operation of
> memory took a different form: removals to the newly created
> townships on the peripheries of white cities entailed the removals
> of memories as well – and the new areas were imbued with ideas
> about a number of pasts. New suburbs – Diepkloof, Meadowlands –
> carried with them the bitterness of dispossession. But the censorship
> and control of ideas forced memories in all these areas into a
> forbidden and secret underworld, where again they remained until
> popular intellectuals sought to mobilise them. (1996: 19)

This clearly shows a close linkage between socio-political domination and the rise of popular thoughts and memory-making. However, it should be noted that the other strand coming out of Bozzoli's observation, that of mobilisation into popular political protests, is clearly revealed in the worker movements' political activism and the writings made by some worker poets and writers, which is an area that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Popular cultural practices, such as some of the writings in *Staffrider* and other forms including oral song and art and dance, can act as a medium to show the opposition occurring within a given oppressive socio-economic space. Michel de Certeau (1984: 12-18) explores popular cultural practices created by ordinary and oppressed people, such as playing games, diversionary practices such as engaging in other activities while at work, and the language of the peasants in Brazil that created a new discourse based on their struggles against rich landowners and the police. Of significance are his views on the Brazilian peasants' popular cultural practices that dealt with the domination by the rich and the police and how these practices subsequently led to the formation of resistant and hopeful identities. This proves that a popular practice can depict the existing power relations and the consequent oppression affecting society and at the same time proffer the possibilities of imagining the oppressive situation differently. Furthermore, it enables the victimised to invert the existing reality by constantly labelling it as unacceptable. This is evident in most of the short stories under focus, where the urban characters on the one hand, and the consumers of the fiction and the journal *Staffrider* on the other, are able to imagine their urban social and political spatiality in a way that refuses to accept an apartheid-induced misery. This therefore shows how popular culture plays a significant role in representing how people can construct new imaginings and possibilities aimed at a better life than the oppressive one they are living.

Nevertheless, popular writings have sometimes been observed as merely representing the domination existing in a given society without offering an in-depth analysis as well as possible avenues through which societies can aspire to better lives. A case in point is the criticism that is given by Njabulo Ndebele (1994) in his analysis of some of the characteristics of the post-Soweto Uprising literature from South Africa. Ndebele describes this literature, most of which came from the townships, as entrenched in the country's reality in that it portrayed the then existing oppression and the writers' 'moral opposition' to oppression. He however criticises such fiction as

imagine the city, as argued by De Certeau (1984), differently as well as to walk and live in it according to their wishes and not according to those stipulated by the social and political architects of apartheid.

Furthermore, the creation and maintenance of the common people's voice through the symbolic act of writing out of the different writers' groups in the townships, as already discussed above, resulted in the actualisation of new spaces. This was also achieved through writings that seemed to celebrate minor victories such as a gangster's escape from the jaws of apartheid control but would, in a way, be challenging the urban readers to be aware of the existing oppression. The writers wrote themselves into the national imaginary. More importantly, other stories depicted a critical complexity and actually called for the realisation of new identities and new ways to achieve better lives. They also offered complex means through which the urban condition could be perceived and imagined.

2.5 The popular imagination of the Johannesburg city space

I now discuss the significance of some of the short stories in portraying some of the popular imaginations of the Johannesburg's social and political space. My analysis is based on, among other ideas, Lefebvre's (1991), which call for the examination of the urban space from a relational point of view. That is, I will evaluate the represented urban experiences, constituted identities, imaginations and aspirations of the excluded inhabitants of Johannesburg in relation to the way in which the fictive city and township's built and lived spaces were structured under apartheid policies. The inhabitants' experiences in relation to their designation as a source of labour in the often exploitative and racist space of work will also be considered. I will also examine the link between the urban characters' practices and other social dynamics arising from their own initiatives and diversities associated with their different social, racial and ethnic groupings and differences in ideological belief. Bozzoli argues in "Introduction: Class, Community and Ideology in the Evolution of South African Society" (1987: 23-24) that a critical study of any given community's experiences within its own socio-political and economic spaces demands a complex approach. She argues further that the study must take into consideration various factors that influence the particular society's experiences, imagination of its past, present and future, as well as the way some identities are constituted. She includes factors such as race, social classes, ethnicity, language, place of origin and differences in ideological

views. The above considerations will inform my examination of the selected short stories in this part of the chapter.

A majority of the *Staffrider* short stories set in Johannesburg portray an urban condition characterised by segregation, oppression and poverty. Most of the characters that work in the city encounter racial segregation. The segregation, as portrayed in the stories, is an ideological means used by the state to control their movement and location. The lowly placed urban black character is constantly under the watchful eye of the apartheid police. Movement into and out of the city centre is inhibited by the frequent demands for "the pass" and bags are frequently searched. This is clearly seen in the story "Jazz and Rugby: Tough Games Brother" (1979) mentioned earlier on in this chapter. Evident in such stories is how subordinate and inhibited identities were created within the segregated characters resident in literary Johannesburg. These resultant identities indeed confirm Lefebvre's (1991: 140-141) perspective that any representation of space usually shows the intentions of its creators and that those who live it, what he calls the representational space, become associated with the images and symbols of its creators. Hence, the oppressed and racialised urban identities acquired by some of the depicted Johannesburg dwellers can be viewed as having been defined by the structuring of the city under the influence of apartheid policy-makers and implementers as well the city's authorities. In addition, these identities are determined by the activities of the city's apparatus of control such as the police.

One is certainly reminded here of Foucault's (1977: 195-228) discussion on the notion of surveillance in *Discipline and Punish*. He argues that the 'panopticon', which is the architecture of uninterrupted inspection and surveillance, as evidenced by the constant surveillance in the physical prison, is still noticeable in some of the current sites of disciplinary control such as schools, hospitals and barracks. He argues further that the panopticon enables the powerful to constantly remind the subordinated of their subjugation and to sustain control over them. In an apartheid South African city such as Johannesburg, the residential townships were designed in a manner reminiscent of this 'panopticism'. This is indicated through the existence of controlled entrances and exits into the townships, the existence of public lighting systems that tower over the townships and the constant presence and supervision under the eyes of a white superintendent and his subordinates.[6]

An omnipresent surveillance of the non-white residents of Johannesburg is represented in Farouk Asvat's "The Barrier" (1981). In the story, the main character Rashid, a musician and activist of Asian origin staying in Fordsburg, is seen suffering from a psychological disorder. The state security operatives in the city centre have just interrogated him. They have been watching him and want to know if he is still a member or in any way linked to the various social and political movements such as the 'BPC', 'SASO' and the 'ANC'. The brutality of apartheid surveillance is further noted in his 'banned' and oppressed identity. He is banned from getting any gainful employment by the government as well as from playing music in front of any public audiences because of his group's radical cultural values, which are entrenched in the Black Consciousness Movement. Later on, he gets into a relationship with a white girl. The relationship is characterised by an inner conflict over the political correctness of his experiences with the daughter of a liberal white academic that wanted to promote the main character's music career.

"A Pilgrimage to the Isle of Makana" (1979) by Mtutuzeli Matshoba, does not fall within the study's period but is very significant in that it clearly depicts the existing physical and symbolic signs of surveillance in both the township of Soweto and the city centre associated with apartheid. In the story, the nameless main character is on a journey to visit a friend who is in jail at the notorious Robben Island in Cape Town. Through the use of the journey motif, the narrator and main character take readers on a tour of the social and political conditions existing in the townships of Soweto and the city centre. The existing oppressive conditions are poignantly symbolised by the main character's terrible memories of the arbitrary arrests of the likes of his friend and the subsequent incarceration at Robben Island. The protagonist also alludes to this through reference to a heavy presence of police and military camps in the racially divided locations and also recounts, in a flashback style, scenes of police surveillance and interrogation over his mail correspondence with his imprisoned friend.

Later on, the main character gets into contact with the parents of one of the prisoner's parents and an association called the Dependants Conference. The association helped him to get a permit to travel and organized contacts that would take him to the island. He then goes on a train journey to Cape Town, where a vivid overview of the social and political space of Soweto and its recent history, such as the Soweto Uprising, are given as he travels down to Cape Town. During the journey, he

maps the characteristic iconography of brutal control and surveillance existing in Soweto in his conversation with a fellow passenger on the train to Cape Town. He identifies the location of his place of residence using reference points that remind the reader of the segregation existing in the township. He also maps the conditions in Soweto in relation to spaces of control and surveillance. These include the migrant labourers' hostels, the monitored schools and the imposing military posts:

"There, near that high building which is Mzimhlope station, is where I stay. This is Phomolong, beyond is Killarney. Further up is the hostel – the one that engaged in the faction of Seventy Six. The horizon is Meadowlands. The school with a green roof right of that ridge, is Orlando West High where the first bullet of Seventy Six snuffed out thirteen-year-old Hector Peterson's life."

... My friend looked attentively at the living map I pointed at, like a determined school child in a geography class. Trouble was, our class was moving and we missed some landmarks. "And that there should be Dube," he said pointing. "Ya," I agreed, stopping short of patting him on the back, "Nancefield hostel: didn't know they were still enlarging those human sites."

"And this?"

Kliptown... Lenz, for the Indians. And on this side a military Camp or base or something." (13)

The writer takes the readers on a metaphoric journey that crosses over the inscribed oppressive and segregated reality obtaining in the fictive Soweto and Johannesburg's city centre. This is achieved through the narrator's representation of a bleak picture that shows a life of containment in the hostels and separation in the racially and ethnically based sections of the township. The motif of the train journey is frequently used in the short stories and literature of black South Africans. The motif generally helps to show the migrant identities inscribed in the urban black, coloured and Asian inhabitants and the difficulties they face everyday as they travel everyday to and from the peripheral townships to the city centre and places of employment. For instance a story such as Martins' "Rugby and Jazz, Tough Games Brother" (1979)

maps the poverty and restlessness found within the urban migrant workers as they commute to their different destinations in relation to Johannesburg's city centre.

Nevertheless, the journey to Cape Town is represented in a manner that, I argue, goes beyond the characteristic of the 'spectacular' or protest literature, which is heavily criticised by Ndebele (1994b) in his analysis of South African literature. The journey hints at the existence of a possibility that the oppressed could overcome their oppression or that at least they could imaginatively cross over some of the racial and physical boundaries that had been created to contain them. Moreover, the memories of resistance to apartheid domination and brutality are covertly rekindled through references to the sites of death during the Soweto uprisings in Matshoba's story. This becomes more of a metaphoric journey into an awareness of the oppressed and excluded urban characters' reality and memory. This is an empowering act since the magazine's urban readers were likely to get inspired and reclaim their lost dignity especially from the represented past acts of courage.

The urban dwellers of Johannesburg are portrayed as vulnerable figures in some stories. This is noted in the way apartheid policemen are popularly depicted as over-enthusiastically enforcing surveillance aimed at "preventing the city from collapsing under the weight of lawlessness" to use a description used by Eugene McLaughlin and John Muncie (1999: 129). This is taken from their discussion on how the police in England in the 1880s and in New York in the 1990s asserted their power on the streets through a heavy-handed 'hounding' of streets as well as the disciplining and criminalizing of groups of people they thought were in the wrong place. The police brutality discussed by McLaughlin and Muncie, though occurring in different historical periods and political conditions to those occurring in South Africa during apartheid, can offer moments of insight and comparison in my study. In both cases the police showed themselves as the visible agents of the power relations of a state or council policy seeking to clean up the streets from those it deemed a danger to their ideals. Furthermore, such power relations are fraught with numerous cases of police brutality as shown by the Rodney riots in New York and reports of police harassment and deaths of detainees in police cells in South Africa during apartheid –a well-known case being the death of Steve Biko.

This determined and brutal surveillance is reflected in Solomon Martins' "Night Shift", where apartheid policemen on a night patrol in the streets of Johannesburg get into 'Koosburg' where they "came upon an unfamiliar car parked

oddly among the swings and jungle gyms of a children's playground" (1983: 28). The policemen, however, fail to apprehend the man and woman, naked to their waists, who were sitting inside the car. The writer notes that the police failed to apprehend the man since he did not meet the general racial criminal stereotypes. These included being a terrorist and being involved in an immoral relationship. The man found with the woman was not a coloured, the car was not stolen, and it was not a getaway car for some criminal activity in progress. However, after a while, the senior police officer orders his junior to stop the driver as soon as the man starts driving off. He is later charged for drunken driving.

The story therefore represents on the one hand the way apartheid police became identified with a 'hounding' and predatory image as they surveyed the street corners of Johannesburg and townships. On the other hand, it depicts a way in which the common urban dwellers popularly imagined the state police as always waiting threateningly for a chance to apprehend them even when they were innocent. This then shows the animosity between the oppressed and the police. It also shows how the oppressed urbanites attained vulnerable and criminalized identities in the fictive city.

2. 6 Representations of the exploitative social and economic spaces of fictive Johannesburg

The apartheid city is also represented in the *Staffrider* stories as an oppressive and exploitative social and economic space for Asians, blacks and coloureds. Most of these urban inhabitants are the excluded and as a result have to constantly move in and out of fictive central Johannesburg to their marginalized township spaces such as Soweto. This is clearly revealed in the experiences of Siva, a waiter of Asian origin who works at the Constellation Hotel in the city centre as given in Ahmed Essop's "Gemini" (1979) again, published a year before the scope of this thesis, but important for its representation of the racialised economic space. The Constellation Hotel is portrayed as a racialised space of exploitation. Siva, just like most of the Asian, black and coloured workers, is overworked as shown when he is introduced to the reader: "He felt tired after the long hours of work at the Constellation Hotel" (42).

In addition, he is defined as an invisible and racialised character. His marginality is noted in the way he is visualized as necessary for the mechanical functionality of the apartheid social and economic space: as a waiter for the privileged Johannesburg white community. Essop depicts Siva's marginality and invisibility by

focussing on the inscribed racial inferiority and the undignified work that the main character has to do. He describes a moment of personal analysis and perceptiveness, typical of the qualities of those born under the zodiac sign of Gemini, where the impact of the existing social, economic and political forces on the experiences and constituted identities are aptly laid out:

> He closed his eyes, but instead of the inertia that usually overcame him until the train reached Lenasia, his imagination crowded with the faces of people he had served – wines, dinners, delicacies – at the hotel, faces lit with gaiety, of affluent businessmen, brokers, professional men and doll-like women.

> His life was on the periphery of their lives, he reflected, a dark figure in a stereotyped outfit – maroon jacket, white shirt, black bowtie, grey trousers and black shoes – moving from table to table, booklet and pencil in hand, noting the requirements dictated by the diners' appetites. Then there was the gathering of the food-stained crockery and cutlery and the uneaten remains that always filled him with nausea. Was he born for this – to be at the beck and call of sirs and madams and to assist in satisfying their appetites? (42)

This clearly represents the racialised social and economic space and contrasting mapping in which the urban Asian, black and coloured characters inhabit. The inhabitants are figuratively and literally invisible and lose their human dignity due to the exploitation and associated dehumanisation they encounter at their spaces of work on a daily basis.

The perverse bleak life experienced by the worker is encountered further in the peripheral and segregated townships such as Lenasia. When Siva arrives at his Lenasia home, he is told that a fire had gutted his house. We also note his impoverished status as indicated by the humble property, which he owned. The property included a table, paraffin lamp, a few blankets and a chest of drawers, which in a way emblematise the poverty found among most of the urban non-white workers in Johannesburg. Such poverty is closely linked to the dwellers' sense of misery and, exclusion and to a great extent, places the ordinary inhabitants of fictive Johannesburg

into moments of anxiety. This anxiety is witnessed in Siva's thoughts during the train journey in which he reflects on his wretched identity and searches for solutions that might deliver him from his misery. I argue that Siva's search also becomes the readers' search. In as much as Siva reflects on his racialised and oppressed identity, and questions whether he should continue working under dehumanising conditions, the same searching question can also be appropriated by the segregated and exploited urban dwellers and readers of the magazine and even encourage them to seek means to transform their bleak life.

Nonetheless, there is need to look at a seemingly contradictory element arising out of the story. The story ends on a sad and what seems to be a pessimistic note: Siva's son, whom Siva had been hoping would escape from the miserable life of poverty by successfully completing his education, had just failed his exams. On one level, the poor results are linked to Siva's past educational failure. This seems to imply that if Siva had succeeded during his schooling days he might still be suffering, but on a perhaps less demeaning level than he is in. This shows that there were chances, albeit limited and heavily controlled by the apartheid state, for anyone from the oppressed dwellers of Johannesburg and indeed the whole country, to find spaces of social and economic success perhaps through educational and other successes. Bozzoli's (1996) study of the socio-economic and political trajectories of the dwellers of real Alexandra Township from the 1950s to the early 1990s certainly confirms this view. The study shows the existence of an educated, middle class and wealthy elite in the community during the 1950s and 1960s, which is indicative of the existence of limited spaces of opportunities in the apartheid city. However, Bozzoli shows how the elite's social and political status was marginalized later on as apartheid housing and local government policies were being implemented, and that this encouraged the township dwellers to unite beyond class considerations as they were by then sharing common grievances against the state.

On another level, the story "Gemini" renders an ironic and perhaps pessimistic ending that demonstrates that the cycle of social and economic oppression within the excluded urban characters would never end. One gets the impression that future urban experiences would always be bleak as signified by the failure of Siva's son. If this is the case, then the story fails to offer an alternative, but it does provide readers with a powerful image of their material conditions.

Another important strand that comes out in some of the stories depicts the urban characters' social experiences in relation to the 'unhomely', which is a condition where the home space and social relationships between urban dwellers become affected by the events occurring outside the home.[7] The fact that the non-white inhabitants of the represented Johannesburg had been identified and constructed as migrant labourers in the city, as symbolised by their journeys in and out of the city centre and its work places helps represent their vulnerability. These Johannesburg dwellers' lives are characterised by the lack of permanent social relationships and urban residence status. Most of them lead unfulfilling lives at work, and in the peripheral townships. As a result, most of the inhabitants have alienated identities symbolised by spiritual anxieties and restless searches for fulfilling and permanent relationships. Nevertheless, this anxiety and restless search for fulfilling and meaningful personal and social relationships also results in the creation of new social identities and agency. Writers such as Bheki Maseko focused on such moments and explored the resilience of the segregated dwellers as well as how they could transform their oppressive conditions.

The main character, Sophie, is depicted as a socially and spiritually dislocated migrant worker in Bheki Maseko's "Mamlambo" (1982). Her socially fragmented life as well as her urban migrant labour identity is described here:

> Sophie Zikode was a young, pretty, ebony-faced woman with a plump
> and intact moderate body. Ever since she came to stay in the Golden
> City to work as a domestic servant, she never had a steady boyfriend.
> The only man who lasted longer than any other was Elias Malinga who
> was from Ermelo. He was the first man she met when she came to
> Johannesburg and he was the only man she truly loved. (22)

Her social instability and spiritual alienation, a condition which affected the social life and psyche of most of the urban characters, is evident in this narration of Sophie's condition and decision to visit a traditional doctor:

> Ever since Elias left her she had never loved anybody else.
> All she wanted now was a husband she could be loyal to. But she just
> could not find one. Then along came Jonas, a tall well built Malawian

who was much more considerate than any of the other men.

For the first time in her young life a thought came to her mind.

She must consult a traditional doctor for help. She wanted to keep Jonas forever. She must see Baba Majola first thing in the morning. (23)

The story assumes a narrative style common with magic realism, for during the consultation she is given some traditional medicine that she had to rub all over her body and place under the pillow on her bed before her boyfriend returns home. The fortune-seeking ritual results in the invocation of the magical snake Mamlambo, "a kind of snake that brings fortune to anyone who accommodates it. One's money or livestock multiplies incredibly" (22). This signifies the extent to which the long history of urbanisation and capitalism displaced the migrant workers from social stability and inflicted a spiritual void and made them vulnerable. This sense of alienation and vulnerability intensifies during apartheid. As a result most of the residents engage in restless efforts, sometimes associated with the mythical and magical, to achieve success and better lives in the city.[8]

Both Sophie and Jonas are gripped by fear when they see the snake on their bed. As a result, they return to the traditional doctor who gives them instructions on how to get rid of the snake. This is achieved at Johannesburg's Park Station. Sophie gets rid of Mamlambo by leaving the suitcase, where she had stored the snake, in the care of the mother of her old boyfriend Elias. Later on Elias' mother takes the suitcase with the snake to Durban. The story ends with Sophie and Jonas on their flight to Malawi where both will start a new life together on Jonas' father's farm.

The story clearly shows how the characters' domestic space and social as well as personal relationships are configured by the existing urban conditions. The unstable relationships, lack of spiritual and social fulfilment and restless yearnings for fortune and success, are somehow related to the existing alienation and vulnerability that is witnessed in the represented and socio-historic trajectory of Johannesburg. Characters such as Sophie become so vulnerable and short of choices that would adequately deal with their conditions in the apartheid city. As a result, they end up searching for advice and other forms of possibilities in some of the spaces found in the fictive city, such as that of traditional medicine, where the mythical and sometimes 'shocking and troubling' solutions like the Mamlambo are given.

The same alienating and miserable city experiences, such as Sophie's constant misfortunes, can still be viewed as encouraging the inhabitants to discover other possibilities in the city. The story seems to be suggesting that despite the misery and vulnerability, certain survival skills and other practices such as traditional medicine and cultural ethos were still in existence in the city and at the disposal of most urbanites. These included seeking advice from the body of community knowledge or traditional doctors such as Baba Majola given in the story. In fact, it is evident in the social and urban history of South Africa that various urban migrant cultural practices such as *Isicathamiya* among the manufacturing and dockyard migrant workers in cities such as Durban and Pietermaritzburg, as well as Kiba women dancers in the female migrant worker hostels in Johannesburg, were created and remained outside of the circle of apartheid censorship. They even provided a space for the alienated workers to create images, through song, of their homes in the rural areas, remake themselves and celebrate new identities and organisational abilities in the city in a manner that diverged from those prescribed by apartheid.[9]

Moreover, a close examination of the urban dwellers' experiences under apartheid can also reveal that spaces of 'intersection' and 'intimacy' between people of different cultures and even different races existed. These provided "the possibility of a different cartography" (Nuttall 2004a: 742) of fictive Johannesburg to the one created by apartheid architects that never included the abstract and social sensibilities of the excluded. Nuttall (2004a) argues further, drawing on Robinson (1999), for a new way of reading the literary and cultural writings that depicts the urban experiences during the apartheid and immediate post-apartheid period in South Africa. She goes on to proffer the domestic space of interaction and the resultant personal relations, which she calls the space of intimacy, established between the urban non-white migrant communities as one such area, where a new critical reading, aimed at assessing whether some form of possibilities and transgression of apartheid and general urban alienation existed, could start from. I take into consideration the space of personal and urban migrant intimacy that was entered by Sophie, a domestic worker and other local migrant workers, as a new space that was created in an attempt to find meaning and better experiences in the segregated urban and exploited identities created under apartheid. Although Sophie's relations with other local migrant men such as Elias were characterised by betrayal and failure, at least this shows that there were new spaces, where new identities and experiences could be

achieved in the apartheid city. This space of 'intimacy' capable of creating means to view life differently and accessing new possibilities that could transgress the apartheid-created urban social margins is positively depicted in the relationship between Sophie and Jonas. Therefore, the story "Mamlambo" depicts that the city still provided other possibilities, especially in the space of intimate relations and cross cultural associations that usually evaded apartheid censorship, and could create chances for the achievement of new dreams and new cultural experiences.

2.7 Writing and imagining the home and making memory

The issue of homelessness is also significant in the popular imagination of Johannesburg as observed in some of the short stories published in *Staffrider*. A number of stories in the magazine focus on the urban dwellers' subjection to forced removals. These stories are mostly written from the victim's point of view and are thus focused on ordinary people's life experiences. A major theme in the popular imagination of the apartheid Johannesburg space is based on the perception of the city as a homeless and exclusionary space where blacks, Indians and Coloureds are not permanent dwellers. As a result the theme of forced removals occupies an important role in the popular imagination and representation of Johannesburg and indeed any apartheid city's experiences. The forced removals of the oppressed and segregated Johannesburg workers and other inhabitants from designated white areas as per the group areas and other racist urban planning laws resulted in the inhabitants' condition of vulnerability in the city. Nevertheless, it is significant to examine the representation of how some of the excluded common dwellers used their memory to perceive the fictive apartheid city differently and clearly expose their experiences under oppression.

For instance, Ahmed Essop in "Jericho Again" (1983) depicts the anxieties and sense of personal and social dislocation felt by the main characters Khalid, an old man, and Houda his wife, both of Indian origin, as well as their neighbours during the state-sanctioned eviction from Fordsburg to the designated Indian township, Lenasia. Khalid is given a final notice of eviction by the Johannesburg authorities and this adds further to the depiction of the sense of vulnerability in the story, especially when considering that both are very old characters. The story's title alludes to the biblical invasion and destruction of the city of Jericho by the Israelites. As the narrative begins, one senses a sad tone of abandonment as the setting is described and the

narrative moves backwards, to recover memories of past community experiences and reveals the characters' imagination of their future in Lenasia. Most of the characters had already left Fordsburg, some of their homes and commercial buildings had been abandoned, and the incoming white residents were destroying some. A gloomy tone associated with the loss is sensed in the story, as the inhabitants of Fordsburg leave their properties and the community space that they had shared for a long time. Khalid cuts a pathetic character while walking along the streets, and encounters an empty and deathly atmosphere, as the past, present and future are all put into perspective:

> ...he went down the stairs to the streets. Only the streetlights were
> on. Once the street had a blaze of colour, neon signs proclaiming
> names of shops... But beyond the materialistic glamour, the street had
> served as playground, agora and academy. Children had played games
> in the evening and adults had gathered in the shop-front colonnades to
> listen to merchants, politicians, pundits, students, lawyers. Medics,
> sportsmen and teachers... Now the lights were out. (8)

In this case, an image of the death of a community experience and a loss of home is invoked by the absence of people in the street and the neon lights, which "were out". It also becomes clear that the forced removals disrupted the individual psyche and social life of the victims as signified by the state of displacement Khalid finds himself in. In addition, one gets the sense of helplessness felt by the depicted urban dwellers as their homes, businesses and community are destroyed by a white community that used racist laws as a justification to displace the excluded.

Nevertheless, Khalid is able to show his tough qualities at the end of the story. He fights against the forced removal in a spirited manner. He challenges the Department of Replanning by refusing to relocate from Fordsburg and even asserts defiantly to the press that he "intend[ed] to stay on the pavement" (8) when his defiance gets the attention of the local press. The significance of the story in the popular imagination of Johannesburg lies in the fact that the readers are made aware of their victimhood in the segregated city. They are also given the chance to read about and experience the way in which the inhabitants of fictive Fordsburg challenged the apartheid system and to realise that their dignity and a sense of belonging could only be reclaimed through active resistance. Khalid's defiance wins him a cult status,

synonymous with the staffrider figure as he is given an enthusiastic press interview during his protest.

Closely related to the imaginings of forced removals, is the issue of the ordinary and segregated dwellers' recollection of their history and memory. The major objective of the apartheid ideology and its censorship, as has already been discussed, was to control the flow of information and educational material as well as the growth of an independent and nationalist imagination. This enabled the state to dominate the segregated urban dwellers' imagination.[10] The pre-apartheid non-racial urban interaction, which existed in multi-racial communities such as Sophiatown, the creative imagination developed during the *Drum* decade, and the 1960s and early 1970s political activism were some of the issues that were censored from the imagination of the excluded. Added to the list of censored political, cultural and creative issues was the act of memory-making.

Some of the *Staffrider* stories show creative means that were employed by the dominated and segregated inhabitants of Johannesburg to counter the state's control of their memory. The objectives of these stories included: the desire to reclaim their dignity, celebrate their collective spirit of vitality and resistance, and to expose the importance of being critically aware of the past and present. Any given society realises a sense of empowerment through memory-making. Hacking's remarks undoubtedly show this empowering effect of memory-making:

> Memory is a powerful tool in quests for an understanding, justice, and
> knowledge. It raises consciousness. It heals some wounds, restores dignity,
> and prompts uprisings. (1995: Introduction)

I will focus mainly on stories that show the attempts that were made by the ordinary and segregated inhabitants of Johannesburg to retrieve their past memories. I will analyse how the represented urban experiences are closely linked to the act of memory-making. It is within these stories, where the present was represented in relation to the past and the future, that memory-making was teased out. The writings were therefore, a way of undermining the apartheid censorship of the collective imagination and a means to recover historical memory.

Some of *Staffrider*'s short stories show the 1980s and early 1990s urban dwellers' attempts at remembering the old Sophiatown experiences and "the fabulous

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decade of the fifties" – to use a title phrase used by Nkosi in his study of *Drum* writings (1982). Most of these stories are set in the Johannesburg of the 1980s and represent the existing urban dwellers' experiences in which segregation, oppression and poverty were common. These experiences are then juxtaposed with the imagined 'fabulous' experiences of Sophiatown. These 1950s and 1960s experiences that are referred to in the stories were characterised by the life of shebeens and jazz concerts featuring renowned artists such as Miriam Makeba. Other popular events included jazz operas such as Todd Matshikiza's *King Kong* as well as the annual Township Jazz shows that were held in both black townships and white suburbs of Johannesburg (Nkosi 1983: 16-18). These stories provide a means for the present readers to have alternative imaginings. Moreover, the imagined past and the recovered memories were an empowering act, especially when considering that they represented a joyous township culture. Hence, they revived memories of a past defiance and subversion of the prescribed racial separation of urban life.

This memory recollection is observed in Peter Esterhuysen's story "From the Roof, the Sky" (1990). The story is set in Hillbrow in 1987, and portrays the experiences of a white jazz enthusiast, who resides in a haunted flat. Later on, he travels into the dreamy and past experiences centred on the life of a legendary black jazz artist called Joe Makhene. The protagonist recounts his dreams to Mary, his black domestic worker. She, in turn, recounts the story of an old Sophiatown saxophone player called Joe, whose dream was to become a world jazz star. She also reveals how the dream was shattered when the police detained Joe's financier, a young white man, for socialising with blacks. As a result, the ticket he had bought for Joe and the other plans he had made to promote Joe's international music career failed to materialise. Joe later descends into the world of drugs and insanity until his death. Nevertheless, Mary recounts Joe's legendary character to the protagonist in the following conversation:

> "Joe Makhene," Mary explained softly, "was a famous sax player who used to come round and play in this very building."
>
> I play the clarinet. "Tell me about this Joe," I said.
>
> Mary shifted her seat. "It was in those days, those days when jazz was the thing. Every weekend the big bands would play, two, three bands in one night. The whole night. I was a young girl living with my

3. 2 Writing in and about a censored city space

The major stumbling block to literary production during this period and for most of the apartheid era is that the enforced racial divisions and oppression meant that fictive writings critical of the system, and those reflecting the experiences of blacks, would always be subjected to a rigorous state Censorship Board evaluation. White writers, especially those who chose to transgress the apartheid expectations, became victims of the restrictive state censorship laws. The act of writing, therefore, meant the possibility of plunging oneself, as a writer and individual, into political and societal alienation. This is evident in the enormous time that would be lost fighting the state Censorship Board and the anxieties arising from being cut off from readers and society after a literary text had been censored and the writer declared a banned person.[1] Gordimer in "Letter from Johannesburg, 1985" (1988) writes about the social and professional alienation she was enduring. She ponders on the paradox of her societal alienation and the contradictory 'protest power' that she and other writers who defiantly focus on the ongoing evils of apartheid wielded:

> Everywhere I go I sense a relaxation of the facial muscles
> among whites who had appeared to be tasting the ashes of the
> good life when Soweto was on fire in the week before the State
> of Emergency was declared. Approval of the state's action is not
> often explicit in my company because it is known that I belong
> to the minority-within-the-white-minority that opposes the
> constitution as a new order of oppression in contempt of justice,
> and sees the state of emergency as an act of desperation; a
> demonstration of the failure of the government's atrocious 'new
> deal' only a few months after it was instituted. (252)

In addition to this alienation, writers and those involved in theatre, as well as journalists, suffered greatly from the mid 1980s and after the introduction of the state of emergency in 1985 by the government (Chapman 1988; Woeber 1993). Thus, in the 1980s, the field of literary and cultural production faced a number of impediments whose effects were worsened by the introduction of the state of emergency. As Chapman (1988) shows, these affected the social lives and raised

new challenges to the writers and other practitioners, as they had to search for new aesthetics and new ways that would enable them to creatively respond to the ongoing turbulence.

It is crucial to make a brief analysis of the social and political space of Johannesburg that acted as the muse of the texts under focus from a relational perspective. This is influenced by Lefebvre's (1991) critical insights calling for the need to analyse the relational spatialities, that is, the complex realities and possibilities existing in a constrained social space. The Johannesburg portrayed in the fiction under study is characterised by the writers' desire to capture the bleak city and experiences of the brutalised mostly non-white urban dwellers, while operating within a severe state censorship regime. At the same time, these writers lived in white-designated suburbs far removed from the impoverished and politically unstable townships. Hence, they imagined the Johannesburg life experiences from an ironically secured social position. Nevertheless, such oppositional white writers took into consideration the existing intense racial fragmentation and the civil strife that was going on in townships such as Soweto and Alexandra in their literary productions.

The position of whites has always been subject to misconceptions and suspicion from various sectors. For instance, the international community, especially those who opposed apartheid vehemently, were generally of the opinion that most, if not all South African whites supported apartheid. Even the South African Censorship Board's minor relaxation of censorship of some written literature in the 1980s, which included, among other issues, the unbanning of Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter*, were viewed by some writers, Gordimer included, and society in general, as a ploy by the government to co-opt white writers (De Lange 1993: 133-134). In addition, Gordimer in "Letter from Johannesburg, 1985" concedes that there existed, during that time, a misconception within the international community that "Afrikaners are the baddies and the English-speakers the goodies among the whites in our country" (251). It should be noted, however, that in her study of the history of censorship in South Africa from the 1950s to the 1980s, Hofmeyr (1985) commends the inception of the David Philip Africasouth Paperback series, which catered for some books that had been unbanned. She also argues further that the unbannings and the sympathetic nature of the censorship board to both black and white writers lacks depth because of the continued existence of inhibitive tough apartheid laws and conservative perceptions in South Africa. In addition, a close reading of Woeber (1993) shows that

the continued censorship of some books, township theatre and the press in 1985, is indicative of the existence of a deep culture of censorship that undermined literary, cultural and press freedom in the 1980s. Therefore, one needs to focus on how the writers under focus were able to deal with this severely divided Johannesburg and the suspicions cast on their commitment and still offer an alternative outlook as well as suggest possibilities of better life experiences – the malleable and plastic qualities referred to as existing in all cities by Raban (1974), also described by Robinson (1999: 170) as the "spaces of difference". More over, there is need to evaluate whether the Johannesburg of the 1980s portrayed in some of these texts encourages the growth of a new social consciousness in the characters or 'defiant walking' to link this chapter with De Certeau's (1984) ideas on the ordinary resident's transgressive walks in a dominant and alienating city.

More than anything, the travels or metaphoric walks in the fictive Johannesburg became more complicated and difficult to imagine for both the writers and the readers during this period. This is due to the fact that some of the city's streets and especially those in the townships became heavily censored, and militarily and politically contested spaces during the various periods of the state of emergency and increased township and worker activism. One of the major images of the Johannesburg of the 1980s shows some of the city streets as the symbolic arteries providing the lifeline for the protection of white areas from the militant anti-apartheid activists. These streets enabled the brutal police and military agents to move around and establish networks and positions to spy on any anti-apartheid activism. In Gray's *Time of Our Darkness*, Jenny Carter and Pete Walker, both white school teachers at the multiracial Saint Paul's school in Sandton, are spotted by the apartheid intelligence agents while attending a UDF anti-apartheid meeting in downtown Johannesburg. From then on, they are subjected to daunting and violent police surveillance at their homes, work places and during travels in and out of the fictive city.

The ambiguous image of the fictive street as a symbol of censorship and death, and conversely as a metaphor of possibilities to defy the same censorship in order to attain freedom, which resonates with the ambiguity of an abstract space as discussed by Lefebvre (1991: 52), is clearly shown in Gordimer's "A City of the Dead, A City of the Living." The story reveals an austere image of a nameless Johannesburg township, most probably Soweto. The township is portrayed as a fragmented space

due to the effects of apartheid. This image is immediately introduced to the reader through the use of a vivid symbolic setting that lays bare the barrenness and sense of neglect pervading the townships:

> The street delves down between two rows of houses like the
> abandoned bed of a river that has changed course. The shebeen-
> keeper who lives opposite has a car that sways and churns its way
> to her fancy wrought-iron gate. Everyone else, including shebeen
> customers, walks over the stones, sand and gullies, home from the
> bus station. It's too far to bicycle to work in town. (10)

The township casts an image of a neglected outpost on the margins of Johannesburg. As a result, most of its working-class inhabitants are reduced to a horde of miserable and vulnerable characters at the mercy of an uncaring system: they live far-away from their work places in the city and are subjected to an enforced sterile environment of "walking over the stones, sand and gullies" (10).

Gordimer further describes the dehumanising effects of apartheid based on its materiality. She makes reference to the "sub-economic township plan[ning]" (10) and the resultant social and spatial architecture of poverty and overcrowding. This is evidenced by the inadequate "two rooms and a kitchen with a little yard at the back" (10) that were without electricity and sparsely furnished. She also describes the desperate conditions found at the Moreke's matchbox house, where the plot of the story develops: "Number 1970 Block C holds – has held – eleven people; how many it could hold is a matter of who else has no where to go" (11). The inhospitable conditions existing in the rest of the township are symbolised by the lack of privacy felt by Samson and Nanike Moreke, two of the main characters in the story. Both characters are always receiving visitors. Patrons of the nearby shebeen always pass by to have a chat and so do a number of relatives, some of whom would stay for a while. Despite the overcrowding and lack of privacy, the Morekes still have a tenant who occupies the garage at the back, and she, the tenant, also receives her own crop of visitors. In addition, the street is always filled by inhabitants visiting the shebeen to buy beer, especially during the weekend, a situation reminiscent of Frantz Fanon's (1965: 31-42) idea of the restlessness and anxiety of the colonised. Hence, the bleak township is associated with the walks of misery and anxiety.

Despite this austere image of a 1980s Johannesburg township, Gordimer introduces an element of hope in the narrative by representing how the residents make connections and perceive their spaces differently from the way they were created. Robinson (1999: 170) describes this as an agency where "ordinary people are reusing and remaking urban spaces... [so that] the city of everyday experience and imagination [becomes] ... a space of difference". Gordimer's focus on the spaces of the black urban experiences of resistance is radical and puts the life of the township dwellers in the centre of literary discourses and the white imaginary. This subverts apartheid ideological expectations and notions guiding the censorship of literature and the media. She reveals the various complexities and alludes to some elements of an active search for alternatives to the existing oppressive conditions, thus implicitly revealing her creative search for "the emergence of new kinds of spatialities" (Robinson 1999: 167). The inhabitants of this township still try to make the best out of their bad conditions. This attempt at actualising new possibilities through remaking an oppressive space into a meaningful and different one from the intention of its makers echoes De Certeau's (1984) views on remapping the oppressive city and Raban's (1974) idea of the soft city (Chapters 1 and 2). This is revealed in the story, for instance, in the way an oppressive and sub-economic matchbox house is managed with ingenuity to cater for the occupants' needs. The house is small but in their interaction with their constructed living space (Jacobs 1987: 33), the Morekes use curtains to subdivide one room into two. One side is made into a reasonable "living room with just space enough to crate a plastic-covered sofa and two chairs, a coffee table with crocheted cover vase of dyed feather flowers and oil lamp, and a radio-and-cassette-player combination with home-built speakers" (10). The other side is converted into a 'reasonable' bedroom. More importantly, the inhabitants of this fictive Johannesburg township make some positive strides and social connections aimed at overcoming the overwhelming social divisions through their community-making. The shebeen is presented as a major symbol of community-making.[2] It draws together the young and the old, and men and women from the township. Most of these township dwellers converge at Moreke's backyard, drinking together, talking and laughing and sharing the host's newspapers.[3] Hence, an ambivalent image of the township "providing a detailed picture of township life with privations and its special sense of community in the midst of poverty" (Lomberg 1993: 229) is brought into view.

What interests me, however, is Gordimer's creative ability to reveal the ordinary characters' life experiences and the contradictions they face as they try to cross over the imposed social and political fragmentation, thus taking the reader into a new domain of imagination of apartheid experiences. This is clearly shown in the experiences of Samson Moreke and his wife Nanike as they interact with their guest. Themes such as commitment and political transgression are teased out in the representation of these characters' experiences. Gordimer introduces an intriguing twist in the plot of the story through the arrival of "Mthembu's friend who needed somewhere to stay" (13). This friend, an Umkhonto weSizwe member called Shisonka, has recently successfully sabotaged a local police station. However, he needs refuge for a while until he can evade police detection and ultimately escape into exile. The writer uses Shisonka's case to highlight the complex and often contradictory experiences that the black inhabitants of the fictive Johannesburg township found themselves in as they actively engaged in anti-apartheid activism. Shisonka puts the Morekes in a difficult situation: as occupants of a house that has no privacy and is open to almost every inhabitant in their street, they had to have a name with which to call him. There was also a need to craft an explanation for his visit, in case their neighbours might ask. To make matters worse, both husband and wife had their own concerns as well. They did not know how long he would stay, they were aware of the treasonous risks involved in harbouring a saboteur, and more importantly, the routine of their lives and interpersonal relationship are disrupted by Shisonka's presence. Therefore, the writer successfully takes the readers into the inner space of ordinary township protagonists as they relate to issues such as commitment to the struggle against apartheid. These issues were pertinent in the social and political discourse of the 1980s but were mostly ignored in the fiction produced by white writers.

Gordimer also shows the complex experiences that the characters go through as they grapple with the oppressive township conditions, search for a social consciousness, and engage in a political activism that would subvert the existing apartheid domination. Moreke and other township dwellers are not passive; they are involved in civic organisations that oppose the apartheid-allied township councillors and the whole ethos of enforced social division. The associated economic exploitation of the numerous township dwellers and workers is also hinted at through Moreke's complaints that "[t]he bus fares went up last week. They say rent is going up ..." (17).

Gordimer further shows the worsening bleakness of this fictive township by including some narrative pointers and symbolic references to the ongoing entrenchment of apartheid surveillance and militarisation. To this end, the writer briefly comments on the ubiquity of police details and the difficulties the township dwellers face daily as they leave their cordoned off township for work in the city centre. This also reflects the image of an oppressively disciplined city.

The writer also introduces a radical strand in the story where the oppressed, through the workings of the unconscious, are able to constitute imaginatively or dream of new spaces of possibilities (Lefebvre 1991: 207-209). The key narrative technique that is used to introduce this radical perspective in the story is the transportation of the reader into Shisonka's realm of social and political consciousness. Shisonka, in his discussion with Nanike and Samson, pre-empts the inhabitants' civic agency manifested in anti-rent campaigns and implicitly suggests the need for new and radical ways to get over the pervading hopelessness. Gordimer subtly shows this by juxtaposing Moreke's resigned, "So what's the use? What can you do?" (17), with an authorial intervention, "The man did not tell what he had done. 'The police station' was there, ready in their minds, ready to their tongues, not spoken" (17). As a result, an allusion to the possibility of attaining freedom through an active military activism is made. Thus, through Shisonka's discussion with Moreke, it becomes clear that the oppressed inhabitants need to change their strategies in the townships by acquiring a new and enhanced social consciousness based on the material conditions of gross inequality. This also portrays a new image of Johannesburg, one that expresses a divided and contested terrain on the ideological level. Moreover, this is an image of a highly oppressive city that ironically still offers moments in which the township characters could engage in conversations aimed at shaping new resistant identities and even perform covert military missions.

However, the space of opposition is fraught with contradictions and ironies. The experiences of the township dwellers become complicated as they continually engage with the realities of the huge demands of commitment to anti-apartheid agency. The major twist is revealed in the psychological drama revealing the mental progression of Nanike Moreke from being a 'beautiful' host into a restless character who ends up betraying her guest. By focusing on the psychology of the township characters who are heavily involved in the anti-apartheid resistance, Gordimer is able to vividly portray the complexities and contradictions taking place within the spaces

of anti-apartheid resistance, and in that way advance a transgressive aesthetics described by Chapman (1988: 39) as "the rhetoric and signs of solidarity". The complicated nature of commitment to the anti-apartheid cause is revealed through the use of prison imagery. While the township is first introduced to the reader with symbolic and metaphoric indicators of social and political imprisonment, the place suggests a concentration camp and the police are always present, it becomes ironic later on that the Morekes become imprisoned by Shisonka and his military mission. At first Nanike seems drawn to Shisonka as shown in her mental revelation that her baby liked him (18). Both characters engage in a number of warm conversations about the different places that Shisonka has been to. Nanike also willingly cooks for Shisonka and is prepared to mend his clothes, while he in turn assists her in washing the dishes. But as the story progresses and Sishonka stays longer, there arises a shift in Nanike's mental progression. She is startled by the gun that Shisonka brings out to clean and oil: *"He did bring something. A gun."* (19). This is complicated further by the fact that *"He never takes out the gun when Samson's here. He knows only he and I know about it"* (21). Furthermore, Shisonka becomes more intrusive with each day; he gets closer to her child as if he is the father (21). These are symbolic indicators of the dislocating effects that the characters suffer as they harbour the military activist.

The psychological and social displacement that Nanike goes through is puzzling, for most readers would assume that, since she is from the predominantly oppressed victims of apartheid, she would willingly support the ongoing political and military insurgency. Gordimer succeeds in her realistic and psychologically penetrating representation of the contradictory experiences that the resistant township dwellers faced. The Morekes are then ordered by Shisonka to stay indoors over the coming weekend and the folly of the strategy by and presence of the latter is shown through the use of prison imagery. On the eve of the weekend, both males are non-communicative and are likened to prisoners enjoying their last meal. On the following day they lock themselves inside and pretend to be away (21-25). This would deny the Morekes a chance to connect with the rest of the community through drinking beer and sharing the Sunday newspaper as they normally did (12-13). Furthermore, this worsens the sense of mental siege that Nanike has been developing all along. Shisonka has disrupted her family's experiences, and he had not been showing any signs of intending to leave soon and during that weekend he orders them to stay indoors. It does not come as surprise when Nanike breaks down due to these heavy

and imprisoning demands. In a bout of anxiety, she asks the men if she can go out and buy "milk for the baby" (25) but instead goes straight to the nearest police substation to report on Shisonka, the man with a gun in her house at number 1907 Block C (26). Perhaps the complexities of the existing apartheid oppression and the anti-apartheid activism became so intense that they ended up effecting social and psychological displacement in some of the protagonists to the extent that some, like Nanike, broke down and seemingly turned into collaborators. This resulted in the Morekes being subjected to further social and political alienation. This is shown by Nanike's admission that *"I don't know why I did it. I get ready to say that to everyone who is going to ask me"* (26), and the despising look and accompanying spit that she gets from Ma Radebe her neighbour who is unaware of the complex experiences the Moreke's have been going through. Therefore, a white writer such as Gordimer was able to defiantly portray some of the experiences that were unfolding in Johannesburg, in that way contributing towards a depiction of the turbulence and ensuing fragmentation.

I will now move on to consider the strategies that were employed by the writers under focus in order to evade state control and represent life experiences in a Johannesburg setting during the turbulent 1980s. However, before examining these different ways, it is important to briefly examine the wider impact of censorship in South Africa. The entrenchment of censorship in the country's social and political fabric is clearly articulated by Nick Visser (1992: 484):

> Censorship in South Africa ramifies through virtually every
> form of communication and cultural transmission within civil
> society – literature, art, the press, radio and television, film,
> theatre, music, and even, where banned persons are concerned,
> private communication – and it is elaborated and enforced
> through a pervasive network of legislation and bureaucratic
> apparatuses.

In addition, De Lange (1993) and Van Rooyen (1987) give in-depth studies on the evolution of censorship in South Africa, the laws and their impact on literary, cultural and media production through the times. The tough censorship laws that the White South African writers, and all writers for that matter, had to face were first introduced

in 1963 under the Publication and Entertainment Act. There were also new censorship laws that were introduced, such as the 1974 Publications Act, governing the appeals board and other administrative procedures of the censorship board as well as the subsequent amendments that were made between 1978 and 1983 (De Lange: 7-14). Nevertheless, these censorship laws' base is located in the 1963 Publication and Amendment Act which states that the government objected to the publication of material that was obscene, blasphemous, ridiculed 'inhabitants of the Republic' and damaged the security of the state as per section 26 (2) of the Act of 1962 in *Statutes of the Republic of South Africa* (cited in De Lange 1993: 8-9). The above laws made the field of literary, cultural and media production in South Africa a severely censored one. They also hint at the panoptic image (Foucault 1977: 195-228) of apartheid Johannesburg. Here, the real city, under apartheid, and the fictive one, represented in most of the literature of the period, is a censured one. The state imposed discipline through a perverse surveillance of the urbanites' social movements and locations to contain the oppressed as well as limit their intellect, especially those residents who were creative, with the objective to maintain a utopian 'orderly" city.[4]

Despite these stringent laws, some white writers were courageous enough to write literary texts that evaded the state-enforced censorship. A number of white writers both Afrikaans and English-speaking such as Andre Brink, Nadine Gordimer and Stephen Gray (Visser 1992: 486-487) had their books banned and were sometimes even proscribed as banned persons. However, the proscriptions did not affect a number of white writers because, as the decade progressed, the censors became less stringent about written literature and began focusing more on censoring township performances and the liberal print media (Chapman 1988: 32-34). More so, and pertinent to this thesis, there arose a transformation of the narrative styles and the growth of evasive strategies that enabled the writers to continue tackling the same important issues without having to suffer the severe consequences of state censorship.

3.3 The evasive literary strategies

A number of strategies were employed by some writers in order to evade censorship while at the same time still tackling crucial themes grounded in the different experiences that were unfolding during the apartheid era. The shift in strategies can be construed as a creative agency akin to those used by some of the *Staffrider* writers examined in Chapter 2, where the existing bleak township and general urban

condition is depicted in a manner that also reveals the residents' ability to transgress apartheid domination and imagine new possibilities. Some writers described the experiences in Johannesburg and focused on the misery and social fragmentation suffered by the oppressed dwellers as well as imaginings of different spaces of resistance and possibilities of a better city. The strategies included the use of fairy tales, fables[5], and allegorical and satirical representations. Sometimes they dislocated their writings from contemporary settings and yet would still focus on issues such as commitment and protest against apartheid. De Lange (1993: 62-92 & 116-172) examines a number of strategies that were used by white writers such as Andre Brink, Karel Schoeman, Louis Kruger, Nadine Gordimer, Christopher Hope and J. M Coetzee to, "narrate the story of apartheid and anti-apartheid resistance". [6] Hence, despite the enforced state restriction of the publication space, some white writers were still able to publish their dissenting views in South Africa. I will briefly examine Jac de Ridder's novella "A Daisy-Guts Cocktail" in *Sad Laughter Memories: Two Novellas of Old Sophiatown* (1983) and Ivan Vladislavic's "Journal of a Wall" in *Missing Persons* (1989) in an attempt to examine the strategies used and the extent to which they aid in the creation of an alternative image and voice in the apartheid-censored fictive Johannesburg.

De Ridder[7] in "A Daisy-Guts Cocktail" appropriately uses the strategy of dislocation to treat themes that were relevant to the Johannesburg of the 1980s and employs the notion of crossing over apartheid oppression through memories (Lefebvre 1991: 64). The novella is set mainly in "Gold Street – Sophiatown" (2), a multiracial slum in the Johannesburg of the 1950s. The narrator and protagonist Scotch McHugh, a retired gangster, moves from the 1980s present time in Johannesburg and goes back in memory to the experiences he went through in Sophiatown. He describes his experiences in a passionate and nostalgic tone. As a result, one can easily decode the narrator's pride and connection to this diverse and vibrant experience in his old suburb. McHugh vividly describes his street and reveals his connectedness to the place thus:

> A long winding affair, cluttered with shops and houses, a crazy
> mixture of business and dwellings that spilled out evenly to the very
> edges of the twisting gutters on either side.

Gold Street. The street of shebeens, brothels, dagga dens. The street of Indian shops, Chinamen shops, Jew shops. The street of criminals and of gangsters. Just a cracked strip of grey tar running drunkenly over the face of Sophiatown . Just a side alley, not really a street. Yet a side alley that was busier, livelier, noisier and crazier than anything else in Africa.

Maybe it means nothing in your life but to me it was home. A wonderful place with wonderful people. (2)

This is a moving introduction to the novella, whose direct address, first person narrative and autobiographical tone frequently incorporate (tsotsi) gangster language used throughout the story. The story revives the old memories of life in the shebeens (the title is from one of the gangster cocktails of the period's popular brandies and whiskeys), jazz, women and the fast life of the gangsters. The past experiences invoke the image of a lost golden era. The narrator even suggests, from his narrative travel into the past, that he is socially alienated. It is clear that he would rather choose the sense of community belonging and self pride that he enjoyed in the past rather than his present situation. His contempt for apartheid is clearly spelt out when he exclaims that he is a "so-called Coloured" (2). Furthermore, his sense of psychological displacement is noted in his phrase, "it (Gold Street) was home to me". Various forms of social and political alienation characterised the real Johannesburg of the 1980s and in this case they are being addressed in a literary production, whose time and place are dislocated and which appears on one level as a mere gangster story. This evasive style enabled the text to evade censorship and yet still poignantly bring to the attention of the reader an alternative and past image of a homely city – a city of difference that was probably worth yearning for.

McHugh's narrative journey into the past, where the reader is an assumed present audience, as suggested by the numerous breaks made by the narrator to address the reader, becomes a metaphor of hope. The narrator makes a significant act of memory-making that is critical of present racism, when he recounts his experiences as a notorious Sophiatown gangster, who robbed some of Johannesburg's liquor stores, retail shops and banks. He had a close connection with various Sophiatown gangsters that were made up of coloureds, Indians, Chinese, blacks and whites such as Greeks, and even rose to become the leader of the Gold Street gangs' syndicate called

Rackets Incorporated. He even recounts that the whole Gold Street community were shocked when a fellow resident and criminal shopkeeper Vicci the Greek was shot dead by a rival Alexandra-based gang led by Big Joel. As a result, McHugh reveals a key resistant strategy of using memory to disregard present racial differences since the residents of his memory lived and felt that they were one community. This is evident in his comments that the victim "was one of us. Sure, he was a Greek but he was a Gold Street Greek... on Gold Street you could be black or white, or coolie or Coloured, it made no difference. The old street moulded us all into the same pattern" (83). A lost multiracial connectedness that existed in the past but is missing in the present is teased out and this makes the readers think about the shortcomings of the present state-sanctioned social separation.

McHugh constantly repeats his lamentations at the loss of the old sense of community, and in that way implicitly creates an alternative image of Johannesburg. For instance, as he relates an incident in which his crime syndicate successfully robbed a local bank (105-120), one gets the sense that he is also encouraging his audience to oppose the present bleakness and oppression. This defiant desire for a different, lively and multiracial community is vividly captured in his description of a typical Friday afternoon:

> It was a human volcano. Nobody was going in the same direction and everybody was talking to a guy over the road.
>
> It was a jostling, dusty, heaving mass of black, Coloured, Coolie, Chinamen and whatnot spewing over the roads, the shop fronts, the pavements and into the gutters.
>
> Millions of sounds thudded on your ears and whirled in your head. This was the pulse throb of Sophiatown, the noise of its people going home for the night.
>
> God, how I miss it all now. How I miss the closeness of those folk, their jokes, their tears, their tempers, their anger – huh! – and their money. I miss it all now but in my mind I can see it all and hear it and feel it, smell it again like it was only yesterday. (112)

Furthermore, the act of remembering is closely related to the creation of an element of hope and historical optimism. Hence, it is implied to the reader that there will be a

future restoration of this lost multiracial community despite the current oppression being experienced in the fictive Johannesburg of the 1980s. Gray (1984) undoubtedly confirms the close association between resistance and hope in memory-making:

> An act of memory in a society which has lost an internal dynamic
> of renewal can be allied to an act of provocation. (*Can be.*)
> Writing of a past that was different implies a future that will be,
> also. (35-36)

Finally, as the story progresses the readers are made to enjoy a certain empowering and vicarious transportation into a world of invincibility and other resistant possibilities. The nostalgia for violence is quite ironic in that imagining or revering any violent attacks or triumphs against the state would certainly draw the attention of state censorship. The novella appears to be focussing on inter-gang warfare and thus not harmful to the state. Even McHugh and his gang failed to get the golden loot but rather helped the police to recover the stolen precious metal at the end of the story. Yet there is still a significant restoration of the dignity of the oppressed. This restoration is revealed in McHugh's evasion of police surveillance and capture while playing a leading role in the various criminal activities. These past small victories provide moments of symbolic empowerment and pride for the 'now' highly oppressed apartheid victims of the 1980s.[8] Hence, the writer probably restores hope and transports the readers into this imaginary space of possibility, where the apartheid machinery's invincibility could be dislodged through the kind of community connections and carefully organised activities such as McHugh's Rackets Incorporated.

Other white writers used allegory and satire as literary strategies to evade state censorship. While such writings would on the surface appear to be mere representations of the experiences of certain characters, an in-depth analysis shows that the narratives focus on pertinent issues such as the absurdity of apartheid in the residents' experiences. Some of Ivan Vladislavic's stories in *Missing Persons* include a combination of the above mentioned evasive styles and the use of fantasy and magic realism.[9] I will examine the story "Journal of a Wall", which shows the experiences of a deluded nameless narrator who spies on a Mr Groenwald, his neighbour, who is building a protective brick wall around their house. The writer humorously shows the

protagonist writing a journal in which he notes down all the events associated with the building of the wall. The journal begins three weeks into the construction of the wall and has its first written entry on 31 May after Mr. Groenwald "ha[d] laid the foundations" (23). This journal records how the neighbour filled the foundation and builds the wall every weekend until completion on 24 August. The narrator also makes some additional entries on 8 and 17 September, and 2 and 9 November of that year, where he shows the Groenwald's house entrance on the real estate market, and the subsequent arrival of the new owner to the house. In this way, the story resonates with Foucaultian discipline as revealed through the constant surveillance, recording of data and isolation of the observed by an outside disciplining force (Foucault 1977). This is also similar to the isolation and confinement of the Morekes and other black township dwellers by the state in "A City of the Dead, A City of the Living", thus confirming that both white and black characters were victims of apartheid oppression and surveillance.

Vladislavic portrays, as the story progresses, the ridiculousness of the spying narrator's activities and by extension that of the larger apartheid system on the fictive city. The narrator spends the weekend watching the building process while in some scenes pretending to read a Sunday newspaper or wash his car. Sometimes he would watch the events from his window overlooking the neighbour's house (exaggeration is used greatly in these descriptions), in a style typical of the detective genre, thus hinting at the larger satire of apartheid surveillance. The narrator even crosses onto the yard of the Groenwalds to have a close inspection of the wall, the bricks and the letterbox, while they are away on an excursion one weekend. The reader is provided with a detailed description of the neighbour from the narrator's close watch. The more he spies on his neighbour, the more the reader enjoys the associated humour and empathises with this ordinary character that is oblivious of the obsessive and scornful neighbour: "He never looked my way once. He worked very slowly, but steadily..." (27). The humane qualities of the neighbour and his wife, which include getting on with their daily tasks, having tea in the afternoon and going on weekend excursions, draw the reader on to their side. At the same time, while relying on and being indebted to the narrator for his vivid description, readers ironically dissociate themselves from the repulsive and too critical narrator. The narrator scornfully describes the neighbour as "simply an amateur. He didn't look as if he had built a wall before either" and a disappointment who was "simply the driver of a car or the pusher

of a lawnmower' with a "pale and flabby" (27) back. In such a paradoxical narrative development, Vladislavic's story becomes satirical in that it implicitly draws the attention of the reader to the ridiculousness of the surveillance upon which the apartheid machinery placed its faith for their survival.

Vladislavic also teases out an important theme in apartheid narratives, one in which the system is revealed as ironically victimising the same white characters it is supposed to privilege. This theme is subtly introduced in the story through the violent degeneration of the narrator after he realises that his object of merciless observation, the Groenwalds, were going on an unexpected weekend excursion. The narrator's violent disposition and fury is noted when he scorns the Groenwalds as "swines" (31), as they were driving away, and obsessively wonders, in a manner that invokes violent imagery; "what she (Mrs Groenwald) thought of me, weeping at my post, holding my pickled tongue in one cupped palm and the bloodied bayonet in another" (31-32). The violent disposition is emblematised further by his drunken rage, where he embarks on "a walk .. all over the place, staring into blank faces of walls... shouting obscenities into leafy hedges. I made dogs bark. I rattled on gates and banged doors. I put fear of the devil into the whole suburb" (31). This ridicules apartheid and its surveillance system by showing the associated absurdities and paranoia developing in the whites who acted in complicity to the system. It is quite unusual that the narrator degenerates into a pathetic and violent figure, thus reflecting the image of Johannesburg, where the existing repressive system aids in the creation of meaninglessness and aggressive dislocation within some white residents. This individual psychological and social displacement is also closely related to the larger obsessive and violent dislocation of Johannesburg, as depicted in the way Vladislavic approximates the violent mutation of the narrator with that occurring in the other parts of the city:

> I brought back a newspaper billboard that said THREE MORE
> DIE IN UNREST and it was easy to believe in unrest and death
> with the rattle of leaves in the throats of the drains, the letterboxes
> chocked with pamphlets, the bottles of milk souring on the
> doorsteps. (32)

In "When My Hands Burst into Flames" (99-103), Vladislavic also represents similar violent experiences taking place in fictive Johannesburg during the 1980s, probably

during the period of the state of emergency, in a fantastical style that is totally different to Gordimer's and Gray's style. Here, the threatening violence is revealed through the image of a fire that starts off by burning the narrator's hand and ends up engulfing a huge part of the city.

Furthermore, as the story, "Journal of a Wall", develops toward a conclusion one realises that the wall aids in the portrayal of the paradoxical image of the Johannesburg of the 1980s. It seems "It's a fine wall" (40) for those characters that were walling themselves in but at the same time the fictive city is continuously developing into an alienating space. The narrator laments in a manner that gains the reader's empathy:

> [I]t struck me then, with a sense of loss, that I couldn't see my
> house at all from this side. It had vanished completely. The sky
> above the wall was a blank, moronic space, as high as the stars.
> There was nothing in it that would provide comfort to a human
> heart, that would fill a human eye. The world beyond the wall was
> empty: there was not even a world there. (40)

It is no wonder that the final journal entries are based on the sale of the house to "new people... They are simply people carrying boxes and banging doors. Good" (44). This is double-edged in that it might be alluding to a continuation of the same old drab and fragmented experiences or might be a symbolic indicator that the future will bring in new experiences where, despite a sense of loss, life will still go on. In the final analysis, such a literary strategy, in which satire is used in the writing of white experiences during apartheid, made the reader aware of the effects of apartheid on some of the inhabitants of the city.

Some white writers such as Gordimer bravely made socially realistic representations of the lives of the blacks in the townships in an attempt to show the complexities involved in living in a poor, oppressive and violent Johannesburg township. However, to evade censorship, Gordimer published her work internationally, as indicated in the preface to the text *Something Out There* that some of her stories were first published in international magazines and newspapers before compilation in the text. To address the local readership and evade censorship, she would dislocate the settings, making them nameless but familiar and contemporary

through the inclusion of the social and spatial fragmentations typical of apartheid experiences. This is evident in the above discussion of her story "A City of the Dead, A City of the Living". In so doing Gordimer, like other writers such as Gray, used a literary strategy that would realistically and critically reveal the ongoing contradictions and paradoxes associated with the effects of apartheid on the inhabitants of Johannesburg. This leads on to the next section of the chapter, where I will analyse the multiple images of Johannesburg and the representation of some of the "crossings" (Robinson 1999: 163) over apartheid and the constitution of spaces of difference that are reflected in Gray's *Time of Our Darkness* and Gordimer's "Something Out There".

3.4 The fictive Johannesburg of the 1980s

This section examines defiant long and short fiction that focuses on the experiences unfolding in apartheid-dominated Johannesburg in the 1980s. The decade witnessed an intensification of violent anti-apartheid resistance in the townships, massive worker unionism and anti-apartheid activism, the introduction of the state of emergency and a widening of the multi-racial nature in ant-apartheid activism through the UDF. The fiction representing some of the experiences during this decade is defiant in the sense that it makes the reader aware of significant themes such as police and military violence, the evils of racism, and the complex experiences and reaction of the oppressed and other victims of apartheid as they engaged with the system. I also regard these literary representations as defiant in that they portray an alternative image of Johannesburg (alternative to the state controlled one), where the social and spatial fragmentation, and political turbulence occurring in the 1980s are mirrored through the use of different literary modes such as critical realism and socialist realism. The different images of the Johannesburg of the 1980s are also modified through the incorporation of metaphors, symbols and other figurative discourses that expose, ridicule and conscientise society on social and political transgression taking place in the city. Stefan Helgesson (2004b: 11- 13) fittingly describes these oppositional images and discourses as aesthetic and activist conceits that portrayed the contradictory life experiences under apartheid, the defiance of ideological censorship and the possibilities of a better future during the height of apartheid. Therefore, an analysis of Gordimer's "Something Out There" and Gray's *Time of*

Darkness will help unpack the alternative and 'realistic' picture of experiences in a turbulent and fragmented Johannesburg of this period.

The approach that I take in this section (as indicated in the above paragraph's concluding sentence) treads on dangerous ground: I seem to be suggesting that the literary texts under focus are a true reflection of some of the Johannesburg inhabitants' life experiences. I must clarify here that while literature might represent experiences from certain historical periods and even typify life experiences of that period, as examined succinctly by Michael Green (1997), it does not reflect reality. This point of view takes into cognisance the literary and cultural debate, which I will not explore, that was topical in the scholarly debate over the status of South African literature in the 1980s. The debate focussed on history, apartheid, protest and commitment. It involved major critics such as Michael Chapman in *Southern African Literatures* (1996), J.M. Coetzee in "The Novel Today" (1988) and Njabulo Ndebele in *Rediscovery of the Ordinary* (1994) as noted by Helgesson in his chapter "Exploring 'History' and 'Writing'" (2004b: 11-23). To strengthen further my standpoint, I affirm that most of the literature of the 1980s, especially protest literature, including that under study in this chapter, borrowed from the historical events in the 1980s, in a manner skilfully described by Coetzee as "provi[ding] the reader with vicarious first-hand experience of living in a certain historical time embodying contending forces in contending characters and filling our experience with a certain density of observation" (in Helgesson 2004b: 17). Therefore, the white literature under study is different, defied apartheid censorship of literary imagination, and offers various insightful perspectives and images of the experiences under apartheid in the Johannesburg of the 1980s.

3.5 Gordimer's "Something Out There": the paradox of divided experiences and the possibilities of political transgression

Gordimer's novella "Something Out There" primarily portrays the experiences of white residents in literary Johannesburg's northern suburbs that are being terrorised by a mysterious animal. It also focuses on the experiences of four anti-apartheid activists, Charles and Joy, a white couple, and Vusi and Eddie, two black conspirators, who are plotting to destroy a power station on the margins of the city. The plot reveals those dynamic connections that take place in defiance of the existing hegemonic status quo in that way revealing the existence of alternative spaces of

possibility as postulated by Robinson (1999: 170-171) and Lefebvre (1991: 40-53).The story begins with the sighting of the mysterious beast by Stanley Dobrow and his friends Hilton and Sharon in the northern suburbs, an incident sensationally headlined as "*Predator At Large In Plush Suburbs*" (118) in one of the local Sunday papers. Further sightings of the beast around the suburban areas include detection at a golf club by the specialist Johannesburg doctors Caro, Fraser-Smith, Methus and van Gelder (124-126), at a secluded cottage "among the deserted stables of an old riding school" (141) by a nameless upper-class white couple involved in an extra-marital affair (139-143), and at Sergeant Chapman's house by his wife Mariella (158-160). The beast is finally shot by Bokkie Scholtz after invading his yard only to escape "from tree to tree (their legs are like another pair of arms), up that steep little street that leads to the koppies of Kensington Ridge" (194) but is later found dead on one of the suburb's alleyways. These experiences surrounding the beast contribute towards the development of the main plot of the novella. The subplot of the novella focuses on the experiences of the four multi-racial saboteurs as they plan their attack of a power station that supplies electricity to Johannesburg.

The novella has been studied from different angles, the most critical and in depth being Judy Newman's (1995). Newman uses anthropological, archaeological and ethnological views proffered by thinkers such as Robert Ardrey in *African Genesis* and *The Territorial Imperative,* and the notion of mimicry as postulated by Bhabha to examine the interdiscursive qualities of this story. She also uses these views to consider themes such as racial segregation and the nature of anti-apartheid resistance during the 1980s as represented by Gordimer in "Something Out There". I concur with Newman's significant discussion of these themes; however, I intend to examine the significance of the structure of the narrative in developing the themes of transgression and the search for better possibilities in fictive Johannesburg. Most importantly, I treat the story as a typical Johannesburg story and as result will focus specifically on the image of Johannesburg that is portrayed in the novella. Both plots, the one based on the travel routes of the beast in the northern suburbs of fictive Johannesburg and the other focusing on the experiences of the four military activists, Charles, Joy, Vusi and Eddie, are juxtaposed, thus hinting at the period's deep-seated social divisions and the fragmented image of the city. For instance, from the novella's narrative structure, the reader immediately witnesses the early few sightings of the mysterious beast and the excitement that sweeps the suburbs of Johannesburg and its

media circles, before the introduction of 'Charles and Joy Rosser' at Mr and Mrs Naas Klopper's country house enquiring about renting the Kleynhans place. This may be construed as a structural indicator of the privileging of the space of white experiences during apartheid. White experiences in this sense occupy centre stage, thus suggesting the fragmented image of two cities in one, where race is predominantly the dividing element.

Even the perceived and real threats arising from the mysterious beast – perhaps a monkey, a baboon, an escaped chimpanzee from a Johannesburg zoo, or an angry and dangerous black man – are emblematic of the shifting perceptions arising out of the divided conditions in the fictive Johannesburg. Thus, the ambivalent nature of Johannesburg is intimated. This is noted in the way some white inhabitants grapple with, on the one hand, excitement with the mystery associated with the beast, and on the other, anxiety arising out of fear of being attacked (the beast is sometimes thought by some white characters as the menacing black criminal waiting to pounce on the white characters). For example, Sergeant Chapman is worried about the safety of his wife when she excitedly tells him about the beast's stealing of the venison:

> So I saw the meat must've been pinched. I ran to the street and
> then I rushed round the yard –
>
> – You shouldn't do that when I'm not there, but anyway,
> they'll knife you if you try to catch them. I've told you Mariella,
> stay in the house at night, don't open to anyone. –
>
> But she was 'so cross excited' she fetched the torch and took
> the dog by the collar looked everywhere.
>
> – Well you are just lucky he'd already gone away, I'm telling
> you, Mariella, you make me worry. There must be blacks hanging
> around the neighbourhood who know I'm often away late – (158-
> 159)

Despite his call for caution on his wife's part, which reveals an image of the siege mentality that pervades the city and the indeterminacy of white dwellers that is revealed by Newman (1995: 180-181) as manifesting in the lack of security in white built and lived spaces, Sergeant Chapman immediately goes on to inform his

workmates about the incident in an equally excited tone, thus registering the contradictoriness of the perspectives on the beast:

> He came striding back to his mates with a swagger of sensation,
> a tale to tell. —You know that escaped monkey? Came to our
> place and swiped the Blesbok leg we brought from the farm
> yesterday! True as god! I hung it in the window this morning! —
> (159)

In addition, other paradoxes and absurdities characteristic of the apartheid hegemony are revealed as the beast terrorises the white suburbs. These include the existence of an apparent lack of conscience and indifference pervading the mentality and culture of some white characters. Some of the city's upper-class residents, such as a group of highly successful doctors who encounter the beast, had dodged their work for a game of golf and another couple encounter the beast while on a secretive rendezvous to fulfil their extramarital affair. Lomberg (1993: 230) notes that such practices are subjected to social criticism by Gordimer: "For the four medical specialists, their Thursday afternoon golf game is more important than their patients". It is quite intriguing that, as the white dwellers walk in their privileged spaces, removed from the world of the oppressed, most of their travel routes run contrary to De Certeau's rebellious walks of the oppressed. Most of the white residents constitute the included, yet some are paradoxically portrayed as constantly grappling with different rhythms and certain degenerate traits, notably the selfish pursuit of personal fulfilment and pleasure. This, I assert, symbolises the period's contradictoriness and the 'unstructured' life sequences faced by some of the white dwellers. The contradictoriness and associated disjointed experiences are, to a great extent, implicit in the absurdities of apartheid, which among other issues hampered the establishment of a coherent life and image of Johannesburg.

The main plot is indeed significant in portraying the racial divisions and a typical apartheid white mentality characteristic of the period. These divisions are portrayed and criticised by the author through the allegorical nature of the story. This is achieved through some of the juxtapositions and parallels that act as metaphoric indicators of the social and political experiences occurring in the Johannesburg of this period. Gordimer's creative genius is revealed when she includes the media

conversations carried out by some characters from the white community as they focus on the adventures of the beast. The main plot ceases to be just a thread portraying the effect of a mysterious beast's terror campaign in the white suburbs. It becomes more of an allegorical representation of the prevalent racism and warped white perceptions of the unfolding experiences. The beast's terrorism is juxtaposed with the prejudiced and sometimes violent white mentality where the black man is perceived to be a threat to their civilised lives in the suburbs. As has already been pointed out, Sergeant Chapman thinks that it is a black man who robbed their game meat at his home and his superior, the Major, goes on to hint at the brutal repression of that time by suggesting that Mrs Chapman should learn to use a gun since "next time it might be more than a monkey out there in the yard" (158-159). Incidentally, before this scene, the reader witnesses Chapman at John Vorster Square musing on his work as an apartheid police interrogator, where the Major emphasises mercilessness and brutal extraction of information from the anti-apartheid activists.

Other racist prejudices are revealed in the media discussions on the beast. The intense white media response, represented in the story, reveals the divided landscape of political beliefs, where ridiculous and inward-looking interests are dominant. A left-wing writer perceives the keenness of some white inhabitants to recapture the beast and place it in a zoo as an over-blown issue that lacks social awareness considering that a huge number of black people had been displaced (154). Ironically, for some, the homelessness of the beast, whose intrusion is similar to the intrusion of white spaces by the terrorists, is evidence of a lack of civilised conduct that is creeping into society, as shown by the way some discard an animal that has outgrown its status as a pet (154). In a manner that is subject to social criticism by the author, some conservative white inhabitants register their disgust at the beast's transgression and indicate their desire for the maintenance of white superiority. This is alluded to in one writer's response to the beast's increased movements and terrorism:

> The monkey or whatever it was was in self-imposed exile. If it
> had been content to stay chained in a yard or caged in a zoo, its
> proper station in life it wouldn't have had to live the life of an
> outlaw. If one might presume to do so without making oneself
> absurd by speaking in such terms of something less than human
> -- well, serve the damn thing right. (189)

Therefore, the transgression of the beast, which is also closely interlinked to the theme of political transgression played out in the subplot, plays a significant role in leading the reader into the sharply divided racist-dominated 'mentalscape' of the white characters.

The racially based obsession with placing the blacks in 'their' inferior place under the pretext of civilisation and order is also portrayed. Mrs Dot Lamb demands that white residents must stand up to fight against the beastly outlaw in order to prevent the degeneration of their place into a sphere of danger. She challenges the residents to strive for their civilised ideals as she did when she fought against the council for trying to build amenities such as toilets, bus shelters and other facilities that would encourage blacks to loiter in the suburbs (171). As the plot develops to its climax, Gordimer creates a paradox by juxtaposing "the creature" that "never went beyond the bounds of white Johannesburg" (181) and the black workers who defy influx controls by moving into white areas in search of jobs. This juxtaposition resonates with the transgressive walks discussed by De Certeau (1984). It also reveals, on a metaphoric level, the contestation over the city between whites and blacks, and the roots of white fears as arising from the influx of blacks in the fictive city. As a result, the white residents of fictive Johannesburg are satirised for seeking that "the animal ... be confined in its appropriate place" (181), a desire, which also applies to the black residents who defied influx controls and remapped the racialised fictive city space (De Certeau 1984). Gordimer is thus able to show the absurdity of the white civic agenda and ridicule its purported civilisation ideology.

The racial divisions characterising the social mapping of the fictive Johannesburg are also met by a contradictory reaction from the victims. Some of the excluded non-whites meekly accept their placement in bleak prison-like places, as indicated by the Chinese shop owner's helplessness in the face of his police clientele from John Vorster Square, who abuse facilities, such as the shop's phone. The atmosphere in the Chinese shop is eerie and has a deathly silence that is likened to a concentration camp (157). However, some of the excluded characters, such as the domestic workers and gardeners, who are marginally confined to backyards and alleyways of the suburbs, can still afford some moments of protest against the system. This is best revealed by a certain young housemaid, who is fired for dropping her master's dinner after a shocking encounter with the beast. It is alleged by her white

employer that the intruder was her boyfriend, and not the marauding beast, as evidenced by the fact that she had not screamed (147). Nevertheless, she acts out her public transcript of resistance (Scott 1990) before she leaves:

> The girl left without notice, anyway, first blazing out at the old cook and the old gardener that if they didn't mind living 'like chicken in a *hok*', stuck away in a shit yard where anyone could come in over the wall and steal your things, murder you, while the whites had a burglar siren that went off if you breathed on their windows – if they were happy to yesbaas and yesmissus, with that horrible thing loose, baboons could bite off your whole hand – she wasn't. Couldn't they see the whites always ran away and hid and left us to be hurt? (147)

Gordimer's representation of this "resistance not recognized in orthodox revolutionary strategy" (147) carried out by the young black servants to challenge apartheid hegemony is emblematic of the role that the youth were playing in the 1980s political transgression – a space of resistance that would hopefully one day yield a better city.

The author's pronounced literary defiance is revealed in her development of the theme of political transgression in the subplot of the novella. The activities of Charles, Joy, Eddie and Vusi are a significant pointer of the possibilities of political transgression (resonating with Raban's (1974) idea of the soft city) that could still be engaged in the repressive apartheid city. The 'terrorists' secretively look for a base to plot their sabotage of a power station that supplies Johannesburg with electricity. Gordimer reveals the multiracial dimension of the 1980s anti-apartheid activism, a theme also dealt with by Gray in *Time of Our Darkness*. This is indicative of those uncontrollable connections that were still possible through the residents' agency which enabled them to create "a heterogeneous space of difference and diversity" (Robinson 1991: 169). She also shows how the multiracial dimension created difficulties for the apartheid intelligence system. Charles and Joy, a white couple whose relationship has just broken down – they sleep on different beds under one roof – deceive Mr and Mrs Naas Klopper, residents at a small holding called Eiendoms Beperk on the outskirts of Johannesburg, and induce them to offer a six- months lease on the neighbouring farm house, "the Kleynhans place" (121). After successfully

signing the six-month lease, as a young married couple trying to start a new life, they receive two more fellow anti-apartheid activists, Eddie and Vusi, with whom they organise the military sabotage.

The author gives an empathetic tone to the commitment and highly organised secretive mission that is being carried out by the four saboteurs. They each had tasks ranging from repairing the garage to turn it into a storeroom, collecting military hardware from different contacts around Johannesburg, to assembling the guns and even taking turns to cook. The reader also gets a better understanding of the lives and personalities of these conspirators. For instance, one gets to know more about Vusi's childhood as a glue-sniffing boy, his perseverance as a correspondence college student trying to improve his life and finally how he turned into an anti-apartheid guerrilla who at one time never sold out on his colleagues while under state police interrogation. The writer also humanises the conspirators, a stylistic and narrative technique that contrasts and undermines the dominant white mentality, where those transgressing the apartheid order and 'civilisation' are likened to a beastly misfit that must be brutally kept in their place or killed before it turns the whole fictive city upside down. The four conspirators liked to dance, drink beer, read and discuss topical issues like any civilised people. Vusi is also artistic; he makes a saxophone from discarded beer cans. As a result, the reader is shown the other and likeable side of the rebellious characters in Johannesburg and made aware of the 'beauty' and hope out of those moments of resistance that 'were out there'.

Moreover, the narrative style also gives a realistic portrayal of the reasons behind the political transgression that was occurring during this period. Gordimer exposes, in a style that is quite factual and informative, the long history of colonial and apartheid social and economic exploitation through a description of the conspirators' political discussions. The four conspirators' social and political consciousness is hinted at through the symbolic reference to their awareness of the complex materiality of apartheid. Vusi and Charles at some time in their stay at the rented country house, take turns reading the book *Africa Undermined: A History of the Mining Companies and the Underdevelopment of Africa* (160). Implicit in such a detailed description of the discussions and consciousness of the four anti-apartheid activists is Gordimer's amelioration and justification of the increasing political transgression and military activism that is happening in this literary city. The characters' ability to live harmoniously, despite their racial differences, and unite in

their political commitment are a symbolic indicator of some of the possibilities of inter-racial community making, also described by Newman (1995: 186) as the "transformative future possibilities" that the apartheid victims and progressive white urbanites could still achieve. This resonates with Lefebvre's (1991) idea of the representational space of possibility that can be defiantly accessed by the oppressed as they search for alternative perceptions and imaginings of their dominated settings. Hence, the image of a contradictory Johannesburg is expressed in that while there existed racial divisions in the oppressive fictive city, some inhabitants were still able to search for and imagine a racially inclusive and egalitarian future city.

The four anti-apartheid activists' act of sabotage also aids in the expression of various critical and satirical images of Johannesburg. The sabotage plunges the suburbs of Johannesburg and its margins into darkness and brings the fictive city's social, health and domestic spaces to a halt before alternative sources of power are sourced (195). This is emblematic of a radical destabilisation of the traditional image of apartheid invincibility. This aura of white order and invincibility is noted in Mrs Lamb's organised effort to rid their place of the marauding beast and uncivilised blacks. It is also revealed in the Prime Minister's speech, in which his discourse on the need for reconciliation between races is still laden with threats to those who choose to continue resisting apartheid (149-150). Moreover, the apartheid censorship of news on the sabotage is subjected to further ridicule by the author. The writer verbalises the irrationality of the apartheid censorship by revealing the linkage between the media blackout and the state's intention to instil fear in the residents (indicative of the sense of siege felt by some dwellers) and the indeterminacy of the white residents (Newman 1995: 181) in fictive Johannesburg:

> If it was detrimental to State security to allow publication of any
> details about the saboteurs, it was useful to use certain details of
> the attack to impress upon the public evidence of what
> threatened them. Let State Information pick up the saboteurs'
> weapons and hold these at citizens' heads: that's the way to shut
> any big mouths asking awkward questions about why they had
> come to be threatened-everyone'd be quick enough to agree,
> then, they must give the Prime Minister, to save their skins,
> anything he demanded. (198-199)

Gordimer also criticises the ironic bias of the journalists reporting on the issue: "it was known that the actual job was done by blacks. It was the involvement of whites that was the news-worthy angle; one white revolutionary was worthy twenty blacks" (198). She goes on further to undermine the way the police handled the sabotage in a dismissive and secretive way because some of the residents were already aware of what had happened. The repressive intelligence apparatus is also lampooned in that they were taken by surprise. Even their sources of information, such as Mrs Naas Kloppers and the Indian shop owner from whose shop Vusi got some water and other supplies, were not helpful in their investigation. They could not remember the faces of the 'culprits'. Hence, the shaky ground upon which the apartheid system was then standing in the 1980s and the general image of social and political turbulence affecting Johannesburg are clearly hinted at by Gordimer in this story.

Finally, the story ends on a historically optimistic note. The guerrillas, Vusi and Eddie succeed in their attack on the power station. Despite the death of Eddie, who is shot while trying to cross into Swaziland, one hopes that the creation of a liberated city is possible. His death is not an end of the political rebellion, for Vusi, Charles and Joy survive, and are never captured by the police. Moreover, this is a struggle that is justified historically and therefore will go on until the city is democratised. This is evidenced by the authorial voice giving the historical background to the Kleyhans' Place, and the true identities and personal histories of the four saboteurs. More importantly, the authorial intervention reinserts especially the black protagonists into the fictive city's and nation's history (Newman 1995: 188) for it reveals the historical rights of the blacks to the place and the surrounding mines due to the fossil evidence of ancient black mining in the area. This is significant because as Newman (1995: 188) concludes in her article, the authorial intervention depicts the possibility enshrined in the reality that that which is 'out there' is no longer a myth or an animal but an activism by protagonists who have a historically backed commitment to create a new and different fictive Johannesburg.

What image of the Johannesburg of the 1980s is portrayed in this story? The narrative style of the novella suggests an implied writer and reader who know everything that is going on in the city. Both share the benefit of an awareness of the larger picture in which the different worlds of the fictive city are perceived as related

in various ways. The characters are socially and politically alienated from each other. White inhabitants fear the dangers that exist outside their walls 'something out there' and though the blacks are outside of the picture, they come in, as the perceived threat; the beast might be a black man. Despite these divisions, there is a way in which all residents are related as shown through the connectedness that is achieved as they talk and write about the beast. Perhaps Gordimer is saying that despite the fear held by some whites, which is real and justified, one needs to consider that the fear they project might be much lesser than the reality. It was only a marauding baboon, on the literal level, as shown at the end of the story. Hence, the realistic image of the fictive city, a perception that can also extend to the real apartheid city, is one that is beyond the one projected by a majority of white characters, for the lived city is connecting in ways that are beyond the existing separation and censorship.

3.6 The space of intimacy and the representation of other battlefronts in Gray's *Time of Our Darkness*

The novel *Time of Our Darkness* predominantly renders the relationship between a white gay teacher Pete Walker and his black student Disley Mashinini. One gets a realistic glimpse into the social and political experiences taking place in the Johannesburg of the 1980s through these characters' experiences. The novel reveals a complex gay circle, which sometimes becomes bisexual, whose sexual encounters are often graphically presented to the reader. This is an apparent challenge to apartheid censorship, for explicit descriptions of sex, nudity and the obscene were illegal. Furthermore, this widens the imagination of resistance discourse by taking the reader into the realm of other spaces of anti-apartheid struggle resonating with Chapman's (1988: 41) idea of "different liberations". Pete is involved in a dysfunctional gay relationship with his pilot partner Andre Anderson, with whom he has been living for over ten years. Disley, a black student and recipient of an American scholarship at Saint Paul's in Sandton, where Pete teaches, comes in to complicate the relationship between the above-mentioned couple. He shows up at his teacher's house during the Republic Day long weekend and lies that he had missed the only bus that would take him to his township home. After that he becomes Pete's lover thus portraying some of the defiant social relations that could still be formulated despite the existing apartheid determinisms. Other characters such as Jenny Carter, a fellow teacher at Saint Paul's, and Andre's boyfriend Prince, a poor white school dropout and Hillbrow gay

prostitute, also become involved sexually with both Pete and Andre. This complex circle of sexual relationships that is plagued by deceit and unfaithfulness also hints at some of the non-state-initiated risks in the fictive city, such as the threat of abusive sexual encounters (Pete and Prince's) and exposure to HIV and AIDS. Nevertheless, it is imperative to examine the way in which the novel subverts apartheid literary and socio-political censorship. It is also important to evaluate the image of Johannesburg in the novel as well as to ascertain how the characters manage their day-to-day lives and imagine themselves differently while facing the ideological and political constraints in their city (Robinson 1999: 163).

The major subversive nature of this novel is that it boldly focuses on homosexuality, a theme whose treatment was subject to severe censorship under apartheid. The narrator, Pete, reveals the repressive conditions they suffered; their relationship was confined to the underground to avoid apartheid censure of immoral activities:

> In the eyes of the world, insofar as the world knew about us at
> all, Andre and I formed a gay couple. We took precautions to
> hide the fact. (15)

Critics such as Shaun de Waal (1994), Michiel Heyns (1998) and Robert Gray (1999) have comprehensively analysed the novel and in the process shown their concurrence that the text's focus on homosexuality is a radical motif used to resist the stringent apartheid anti-immorality laws, police brutality and segregation. I agree with their assertions and even acknowledge that the novel significantly defies apartheid repressive morality laws through its immediate and captivating form – Stephen Gray in an interview with Ulrike Ernst (2002: 72) describes it as "an absolutely orthodox, realist, first-person novel". Thus, the novel is able to openly challenge apartheid South Africa's "prejudice and intolerance [...] and the experiences of discrimination and oppression" (Heyns 1998: 108). One also needs to point out that the graphic gay and heterosexual sex scenes in the novel, such as the encounter between Pete and Disley, Pete and Prince, and Pete and Jenny, are daring examples indicative of a literary defiance against apartheid censorship of graphic descriptions of sex. To show how the apartheid censorship machinery was obsessed with moral issues, Woeber (1993: 75) examines the May 1985 South African Parliament's discussion on the

Publications Amendment Bill "to curb the growing number of risqué magazines masquerading as 'art magazines'", which is indicative of the radical nature of Gray's novel later on in the decade. Thus, in focusing on the theme of homosexuality, Gray represents an alternative image to the traditional view that the real Johannesburg's social fragmentation was based on race. That is, apart from racially and politically based divisions, other repressive determinism such as discrimination based on sexual orientation impacted heavily on some of the city's dwellers from all races.

The novel also describes some of the events found in the complicated and thrilling space of the underground and anti-apartheid activism. The brutality and violence allied to apartheid surveillance, already discussed when examining Vladislavic's "Journal of a Wall", are also teased out. The paradoxical and secretive world of the anti-apartheid activists is revealed through a suspenseful thread in the novel associated with Jenny's connivance with Andre (a surprising character for the job since he is an Afrikaner and his mother is full of racist bigotry) to smuggle foreign funds from Europe that would be passed on to the local oppressed communities. Jenny describes the intricate smuggling scheme after being quizzed by Pete about the issue and the nature of her relationship with his gay partner:

> It's not at all what you imagine. I am not involved with him that
> way. Honestly, Pete. It's just that Andre smuggles parcels of
> money for me. [...] For the Saint Helen's Mission in Kangwane,
> at the moment. They are establishing a self-help scheme and a
> soup kitchen for the district, and a modern clinic. It is not
> officially encouraged because the staff, like me, are thought to
> be a bit red... It's just that it's not exactly legal to support
> grassroots projects beyond this state's control. (251-252)

Both characters and their friends are subjected to brutal police investigation, and Pete and Andre's house is broken into by the police as part of the investigations. Yet the fact that Jenny and Andre are able to smuggle quite a substantial amount without capture shows the existence of loopholes in the apartheid repressive machinery that could be exploited by the daring dwellers in their struggle against the existing oppression. Moreover, the author clearly reveals the transformative power that is gained when characters engage in the various organisations that participated in anti-

apartheid activism. Pete's identity and consciousness changes after he is introduced to these alternative spaces of multiracial opposition:

> For the first time I felt eased into the situation. I think we were the
> germs of the new South Africa; old South Africa was out there,
> declining. (106)

This realisation, as well as other indicators of transformation, such as the metaphoric signs at Saint Paul's, a white school in a white suburb, Sandton, that enrolled black students, create a hopeful and positive image that allude to the developments in the real city. The represented events seem to suggest that the real city is slowly progressing towards a multiracial community despite the contestations that were taking place.

Despite a huge resistance from conservative white characters and heavy police surveillance, there still exist in this fictive Johannesburg alternative spaces, where the oppressed and the progressive are able to interact and connect. Pete and Jenny witness a heavy police presence and are exposed to threats from conservative Afrikaner resistant characters at the downtown hall, where a UDF meeting is being held. This reveals a paradoxical image of a heavily disciplined and censured city in accordance with the apartheid panopticon, yet the state's desire for 'discipline' is closely associated with unruly behaviour and brutal surveillance. The paradoxical panopticism is vividly represented in the atmosphere existing outside the venue:

> There was a bursting of a glass window, some screams. Out of an
> alley came a disorderly clump in leather and jeans – about seven of
> them. They were white, pudgy, had slicked-back hair. Congratulated
> one another, hurled back insults: 'Fokken terroriste, fokken
> kommuniste!' This was the Afrikaner resistance, louts disguised as
> Hell's Angels. They had thrown a brick through the window of the
> hall. 'Fokken liberale, fokken Tutu – Tutu se moer man!' We were
> invisible to them.
>
> And they were invisible to the police, who around the corner
> patrolled the front of the building, a Ford van with its antenna, twelve

in blue uniforms, the dog handler in mufti, Alsatians strutting, a
megaphone on the pavement, not in use. (99)

Some agents are even inside, and as Pete and Disley drive back to their suburban house, they both witness a long convoy of military cars, which is in a way indicative of the period's turbulence and perhaps the state of emergency declared in the country, where the townships were on fire and many youths were captured and detained without trial. Nevertheless, the city can still afford those soft spaces of resistance against apartheid oppression. This is witnessed in the highly charged atmosphere existing in the meeting attended by Jenny and Pete in downtown Johannesburg. People from different races, classes and locations all join to demonstrate against detention without trial and offer each other legal and moral support in such meetings.

The vibrancy of these spaces of opposition and their ability to cross over some of the apartheid constraints are also registered through the constitution of alternative mediums of expression. The activists participated in various theatrical acts of resistance such as singing, dancing and sloganeering. Alternative means to beat the apartheid-media-blockade of the experiences of the oppressed and anti-apartheid activism were also available as indicated by the presence of foreign media companies such as CBS, which reminds the reader why the state was keen on censoring the press, as examined by critics such as Chapman (1988) and Woeber (1993). Despite the tense atmosphere and increased police brutality, clearly indicated by the shooting to death of Disley at the end of the novel, a sense of hope is intimated in some of these minute moments of resistance practised by some of the characters and in the dissenting imaginings on Johannesburg as clearly narrated by the narrator, Pete. However, the author underscores the paradoxes inherent in the social and political transgression occurring during this period. It appears as if the narrator and the death of Disley undermine the resistant efforts of the urban youths, especially when considering that Pete seems to think that the acquisition of education should come before the fight for democracy. These contradictions are a major indicator of the shifting images and contesting perceptions that were held by the different residents in Johannesburg. They also resonate with the literary debates and scholarly discussions on the role of literature and the arts during the anti-apartheid period and the kind of "imaginative expression" that was coming up or needed during periods such as the country's state of emergency as teased out by Chapman (1988).

3.7 Conclusion

It is evident in this chapter that some white writers were able to critically portray the experiences that were occurring in the 1980s in Johannesburg. These writers managed to subtly, and sometimes openly, ridicule and criticise the existing social and political repression, which had degenerated into enormous violent proportions during this period in the history of Johannesburg and South Africa as a whole. Such writings ran contrary to the apartheid state's objectives and system that inhibited social and political freedom, and censored any opposing imaginaries, of the various inhabitants of Johannesburg. Hence, the examined literary works truly reflect some of the defiant imaginings and representations of the fictive Johannesburg of the 1980s. Various political and social spaces, where characters actively transcended apartheid determinisms, such as racist and religious conservative morals, by engaging in homosexual and inter-racial relationships (Gray) and holding politically searching conversations (Gordimer), all contribute to the expression of the complex images of the Johannesburg of the 1980s. The represented city is indeed a divided one, a two-cities-in-one type, where fear perceptions were rampant in the white sector, and misery existed in the sector of the oppressed. Yet, the oppressed and some rebellious white characters would always try to cross over the apartheid constraints and imagine a different city to the apartheid one. The larger image of the Johannesburg of the 1980s is a contradictory one. As one reads the texts under study, one realises that the city is moving in a different direction to the one that the apartheid social and political architecture intended. This is a result of the transgressive walks of some urban characters (De Certeau 1984) and because any city, as postulated by Raban (1974), always has these "soft qualities" that enable the alienated inhabitants to transform it into social and political spaces that can meet their desires.

Furthermore, the domestic spaces, as revealed through the experiences of the Morokes in their township house and the four conspirators at Kleynhans place (Gordimer) as well as the gay relationships and its associated underground activism (Gray), suggest that the 'real' and alternative city to the apartheid sanctioned image of Johannesburg existed "somewhere out there'. The 'true' image of Johannesburg seems to exist beyond the one projected by Mrs Lamb and other fearful and prejudiced characters found in the examined texts. It is expressed in that realm, where characters are able to craft transgressive imaginings and connections that go beyond

the enforced social and political separation. This image of a Johannesburg that is connecting somehow despite the ideological and state sanctioned violent control is metaphorically revealed in the contrast between the inside and outside spaces of the represented Johannesburg. Gray and Gordimer reveal the outside spaces of Johannesburg's streets, townships and cityscape that are subjected to heavy police surveillance and aiding in the effecting of the characters' social and psychological dislocations. Yet as one moves into the represented domestic and intimate spaces, one notices the inhabitants' resistance against the existing apartheid social and political constraints through their involvement in 'immoral' sexual and social relationships, as well as radical identity making and anti-apartheid activism. This is indeed a poignant image of another Johannesburg that is connecting in its own ways and enabling the construction of oppositional social and political identities. Some white literary imaginings transcended any expectations of complicity with apartheid and, as is the case with most of the texts under study in this chapter, moved from the outside into the inside or domestic spaces. The terrain in the texts under study is revealed as a contested one. In the process, incisive and critical imaginings of the Johannesburg of the 1980s are revealed. Hence, a complex Johannesburg that is divided but connecting, apartheid-disciplined but affording moments of radical social and political transgression is revealed. The image also subtly signifies a positive progression of the real city towards a better dispensation.

Endnotes

[1] Margreet de Lange (1993) gives a detailed study of censorship in South Africa and how writers such as Gordimer and Eberson were affected after the state banned their works, which focussed on politically sensitive issues such as the 1976 Soweto uprising and the death of Steve Biko. Catherine Woeber (1993) also examines the impact of state censorship on some literary works, the press and township theatre, and discusses some of the texts that were banned and those that were unbanned in 1985.

[2] During apartheid in South Africa social divisions were based on race as well as ethnic and tribal grounds. The last two dividing factors were enforced in black and Indian townships.

[3] The township inhabitants' actions resonate with Benedict Anderson's (1991: 47-49) idea on imagined communities, for here is a community that shares similar experiences and through the newspaper become part of a larger imagined community.

[4] My ideas here are influenced by Michel Foucault's chapter "Panopticism" in *Discipline and Punish* (1977: 195-228).

[5] De Lange (1993: 51) quotes the Afrikaans poet D. J. Opperman's emphatic statement published in *Die Burger* of 30 July 1974 that writers in South Africa would create new creative means such as the use of fairy tales and fables to elude government censorship.

[6] This quotation by Lewis Nkosi is cited in the introduction to *Current Themes in Contemporary South African Literature* (1989) edited by Lehmann & Reckwitz.

[7] The writer is a criminal psychologist by profession, who acknowledges the influence of the cultural anthropologist Oscar Lewis of the University of Illinois in writing this text.

[8] Barber (1987) discusses this concept of symbolic empowerment acquired by the oppressed in her insightful study of popular culture in Africa.

[9] Felicity Wood (2002) discusses the use of magic realism, the fantastical and Vladislavic's playfulness in an interview with the author. (The use of this style and its effect in Vladislavic's work are examined at length in Chapter 4).

Chapter 4: Johannesburg during the transition

4. 1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the literary representation of some of the experiences occurring in Johannesburg during the transition from an apartheid city into a democratic and post-apartheid city. During this period, Johannesburg experienced a huge social and political transformation of its lived, built and public spaces. The texts under study reveal that the unfolding transformation was characterised by moments of tension, violence and anticipation.[1] My hypothesis in this chapter is that contradictory and complex urban perceptions and experiences are created within some of the dwellers due to the brisk and radical restructuring of the social and public spaces; the handling and remaking of monuments and symbols of apartheid domination such as whites-only cafes, parks and suburbs, and the consequent wearing away of social and cultural ambiences that privileged whites in fictive Johannesburg. These perceptions and experiences engender feelings of unease within some urban characters as they engage with their daily experiences and various processes associated with the transformation. Furthermore, some urban characters become vulnerable as they think about the post-apartheid city.

However, my contention is that the engendered anxieties, especially within some white urban characters, are both appropriate for the period and symptomatic of an implicit yearning for an urban social and political transition that would yield a secure, peaceful and rational post-apartheid Johannesburg. I will evaluate the restlessness constituted within the urban characters, which is a condition that significantly marks the writings of the transition in Johannesburg. This restlessness is considered in relation to the urban dwellers' perception of the management, preservation and restructuring of apartheid monuments and symbols, as well as that of the characters' lives as they enter into some of these public spaces. Also included in this assessment, is the narrative fate of the major reference points of apartheid political, commercial and cultural triumph that include the Hillbrow Tower, Johannesburg's Civic Theatre and Hospital, former white suburbs such as Triomf and inner-city Hillbrow, and important commercial places such as the Carlton Hotel found in the city. I will also focus on the literary representation of the apocalyptic vision of the fictive Johannesburg possessed by a number of urban white characters, as they experience the unfolding urban social and political restructuring and think about the

post-apartheid urban condition. These contentions will be considered in my examination of Ivan Vladislavic's "The WHITES ONLY Bench" (1996), Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf* (1999) and Vladislavic's *The Restless Supermarket* (2001).

4. 2 Rapid transformation and imagining an apocalyptic or miraculous future city

My analysis of the portrayal of the experiences in Johannesburg during the early 1990s' intense social and political transformation will draw mainly on the views given by Williams (1973) and Pike (1981) – whose views on the city, relevant to this thesis, have already been discussed at length in chapter 1. Their ideas are of importance in my evaluation of the tension, sense of alienation and vulnerability felt by some characters as they face the changes that are being introduced in some the city's formerly racially exclusive spaces. I will also take into consideration views given by, among other critics, Lefebvre (1991) and Annie Coombes (2003) in my analysis of the stylistic and thematic complexities portrayed in the descriptions of the transition as given in the texts under focus in this chapter.

Most pertinent to this chapter are the ideas of Williams (1973) based on his insightful study of the literary representation of the experiences in London during the period when the metropolis underwent a rapid transformation from being a feudal settlement into an industrial and modern city. Williams postulates that during a period of intense and rapid transformation, the perception of the present and the future is ambivalent. He argues further that the trajectory is thought of as a movement from a magnificent present and past into an apocalyptic phase in city life (277-278), thus revealing the pessimism, fear and fragmentation that often grips citizens as they relate to the ongoing rapid social and political transformation. Pike (1981: 26-35) also points out that the city, by its nature, is always in a state of flux and thus new perceptions and experiences that are often complex and contradictory will be experienced, a condition that noticeably becomes more pronounced as the city goes through radical changes. I intend to examine the extent to which the experiences that unfold in the suburbs of Triomf and Hillbrow, as represented in the texts under study, reveal the constitution of contradictory perceptions within some urban characters as they anxiously try to come to terms with the ensuing rapid social and spatial transformations. That is, I will examine how characters such as Aubrey Tearle the main protagonist in *The Restless Supermarket* and a middle-class white dweller of a

democratising inner-city Hillbrow, perceives the trajectory of this section of the fictive Johannesburg in terms of the past white experiences (glorious past) and the unfolding reality. The same considerations shape my study of the way the represented low-class Benades relate their family and urban Afrikaner identities in Triomf, a former white suburb, with the associated social and political changes typical of the transition, as represented in the novel *Triomf*. I will however, add another strand to this argument, which suggests that the inhabitants of the represented or literary[2] Johannesburg are able to constitute different and complex identities, life experiences and perceptions of the transforming city depending on their class, social, historical, racial and ideological positions.

One of the significant areas that I also consider in the study of the literary representation of the transition in Johannesburg is the relational linkages that were created during the city's transformation (Lefebvre 1991). Here, one takes into consideration the city and its various geographical positions such as residential suburbs and inner city commercial, service and residential complexes, in relation to their traditional and historical symbolism, as well as the new metaphors arising out of the restructuring of literary Johannesburg. For example, I will consider relational linkages between the current Hillbrow, described as reeling under a massive influx of local and regional mainly black migrants, the overcrowding and neglect of most of the hotels, residential flats, streets and other social spaces, and a bohemian Hillbrow of the apartheid era with its exclusive social spaces such as Café Europa (Vladislavic 2001). Furthermore I will analyse the impact of the social and historical changes associated with the imminent first democratic elections on the residents of the suburb of Triomf and the old social and historical symbolism of the suburb as a 'stable' white neighbourhood that is rendered by Van Nierkerk's (1999). I am reminded here of Reingard Nethersole's (1994: 126-141) incisive study of the significance of language in the literary writing of space. She argues that the study and writing of space in literature takes into consideration the representation of, among other issues, reference to geographical places or regions, spatial points and the use of spatial indicators such as locative prepositions and other linguistic techniques. Nethersole argues further that these spatial symbols and language structures strengthen any literary representation when used in reference with spatial nodes such as public places and infrastructure, and the lived spaces of a given setting as it goes through a social and historical trajectory. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how Johannesburg's built and lived

spaces relate to the dying era, the existing reminders of apartheid and to the imagined impact of the incoming non-racial democracy.

In consideration of Nethersole's (1994) critical views in a literary analysis that takes into cognisance language, geography and spatial indicators, I will examine the metaphoric significance of the commercial and everyday language in use in the transforming city's commercial space, places such as Café Europa located in Hillbrow and the fantastical world of the mural city of Alibia (Vladislavic 2001). I will also evaluate the significance of history, the Benades' cynicism and carnivalesque-tinged criticism of their displacement from their orderly suburb of Triomf – "built on the ruins of the demolished Sophiatown" (De Waal 1999: 22), and the imagined fears that the impending first democratic elections may spell an end to white privileges and stability (Van Niekerk 1999). In this case, the depiction of the contradictions taking place during Johannesburg's transition is closely associated with a description of the city's specific built and lived spaces such as Café Europa and Hillbrow's streets and commercial sector (Vladislavic 2001) and the suburb of Triomf (Van Niekerk 1999). Hence, social and cultural stereotypes drawn from the city's history, urban myths and the fantastical, and new perceptions that are being created as the city transforms, are also significant in the analysis of the writing of the urban characters' experiences during this period.

One also needs to take into consideration the importance of the relational linkages between public places, buildings and monuments with Johannesburg's history and the ongoing social transformation. In this case it is critical that one examines the depiction of the experiences associated with the preservation of symbolic buildings, monuments, symbols, visual materials and historical narratives significant to the city's social and spatial restructuring. Vladislavic's short story "The WHITES ONLY Bench" (1996), which describes the experiences of a multiracial group of curators who are in the process of renovating a Johannesburg museum and are introducing new display material and memorabilia from the apartheid and anti-apartheid period, is one such important story. I will examine the portrayal of Johannesburg's social and spatial restructuring in relation to the traditionally restrictive and racialised public spaces and monuments.

The 'whites only bench' and public monuments such as the Voortrekker Monument and the museum are part of the iconography of segregation and apartheid-sanctioned inhibition of blacks, coloureds and Indians' access to museums, parks and

street benches in the cities[3]. The story "The WHITES ONLY Bench" gives a satirical representation of how the curators grapple with deadlines and a new administration while they work on a new section to the museum. In a manner reminiscent of Annie Coombes' (2003) apt description of the importance of handling well the monuments and material culture during South Africa's transformation, the story begins with a reflection on the implications of Mrs Coretta King's official opening of the museum and the media's sensational photographic coverage of her sitting on a replica of a 'whites only bench'. The narrative style then shifts into the immediate past experiences of the curators as they work on the material exhibitions and memorabilia to be preserved in the new post-apartheid museum. Other events from the further past, such as the 1976 Soweto Uprising, which occurred during the social and political trajectory of the city, are also referred to in the story.

The ensuing contestations and contradictions impacting on the professional lives of the characters as they restructure the described city's public institution during the transformation are revealed. Here, the past and the present and symbolic considerations associated with historical events, visuals and monuments are used by the author to reveal the anxieties and contradictions experienced during the transformation of the fictive Johannesburg museum. Christopher Graham Warnes (1999) in his MA thesis gives a perceptive examination of the role and interpretation of history in post-apartheid fiction as represented in this story and in others from Vladislavic's *Propaganda By Monuments and Other Stories* (1996) and Elaine Young (2001) also gives a study that is similar to Warnes, where she discusses Vladislavic's "fictional and metafictional interrogation of the politics of representation by focussing on one particular suggestive story, 'The WHITES ONLY Bench'."(39). Of significance in this part of the chapter is an analysis of some of the contradictions and tensions felt by the characters as they work towards the transformation of some of the city's once racially exclusive public institutions and monuments.

A major scene pertinent to this focus is the narrator's analysis of the newspaper photograph of Mrs King sitting on a replica of an apartheid 'whites only bench' – a monument that symbolises the racialised constraints that non-whites had to face in the city's public spaces. Not only is this bench that has been placed in the museum's courtyard fake, for it is a replica made by one of the curators at the museum called Charmaine; it also holds a further and revolting contradiction in that,

as argued by Warnes (1999: 76), it still invokes the history of discrimination associated with such benches. Ironically though, as conceded by Warnes, such past discrimination is being challenged by the presence of Mrs King –a character associated with the fight against racial discrimination.

The narrator says of the ambiguity arising out of Mrs King's photo:

> Mrs King has her left thigh crossed over her right, her left foot
> crooked around her right angle, her left arm coiled to clutch one of
> our glossy brochures to her breast. ... There's an odd ambiguity
> in her body, and it's reflected in her face too, in an expression
> which superimposes the past upon the present: she looks both
> timorous and audacious. The WHITES ONLY sign under her
> dangling thumb in the middle of the picture might be taken up the
> wrong way as an irreverent reference to her eyes, which she opens
> wide in expression of mock alarm- or is it outrage?   (52)

From the beginning of the story, the narrator reveals that the shocking presence of the past in the present and the associated tension between victimhood and triumph as reflected by Mrs King (Young 2001: 39) will always plague the psyche of the urban characters as they enter the city's 'new' public spaces and interpret the meanings of some its monuments. That is, the urban characters will always experience and will have to deal with this double perception of the residual racism and the emerging signs of freedom and pride as they relate to the transformed public and social institutions in their post-apartheid city. This constitution of ambiguous perceptions of the city is in one of the major sources of tension and contradictions found in fictive Johannesburg as its public institutions and different characters grapple with the transition. This is indeed evident, later on in the story, in a scene where the narrator aptly reveals the contradictory reception of the public to Charmaine's bench. Here, a white male character, "history teacher say" (65), is observed by the narrator sitting on the bench cutting a contented and perhaps nostalgic picture: "he pulls up his long socks, crosses one pink leg over the other, laces his fingers behind his head and closes his eyes" (66). In addition, and ironical too, "a black woman shuffling resolutely past, cast[s] a resentful eye on the bench and mutter[s] a protest under her breath..." (66). As a result, one is inclined to assume that the new urban experiences, interpretation of the

old monuments and reception of restructured social and public spaces will always be ambiguous and contradictory.

The story also goes a long way in showing the tensions and conflicts that are experienced as the public servants work towards the institutional and physical changes to the described public spaces and institutions. The conflict between Charmaine and Strickland, the new Director of the museum, is a huge indicator of these tensions. The narrator respectfully reveals the efforts of other curators in transforming the museum, and retrieving the literary city's historical memory, cultural material and monuments, in a manner viewed by Coombes (2003: 1) as providing sites from which new definitions of community and national identities were created as people tried to handle social conflicts and manage the process of renewal. The curators are eagerly making and collecting new items such the narrator's "rostra for the Congress of the People" (53), Charmaine's 'whites only bench' and Reddy's newspaper cuttings, photographs, and election and campaign posters from the past, to put up in "Room 27: Petty Apartheid" (53). These efforts certainly appear appropriate for the intended reorganization of this fictive Johannesburg museum that will transform it into a racially and historically inclusive institution. However, there are some tense moments, for Strickland's detestable character runs contrary to these seemingly valuable contributions from the curators. The narrator ridicules the way she (Strickland) handles business meetings and makes the final decisions. A tour of the museum's workshop is described as an unguided one on tiptoe, taken with her right hand clasped behind her back while "scanning the photographs and diagrams pinned to clipboard display stands" (53-54). The narrator cynically comments that she does not touch anything and that "there was something grossly intrusive about the inspection" (54). He ends up with a humorous but scornful description of her physical appearance, which is perhaps indicative of the existing tensions between the curators and their director as they restructure this public institution in fictive Johannesburg:

> Strickland wears large, rimless spectacles, double glazed and
> tinted pink, and they sometimes make her look like a pair of
> television monitors. (54)

As a result, one notes the narrator's disapproval of the new director's awkward and dictatorial administrative style. At the same time the museum becomes a site where

personality clashes and professional conflicts are unpacked and interrogated in relation to the unfolding democratisation of the city's public spaces and the constitution of new urban and national identities as reflected in the Johannesburg described in this story.

Tensions and contradictions are also encountered as the curators try to recover and restore historical memory. A noticeable focus is given in the story on how the curators in this fictive museum engage in professional and ethical contestations over how to recover and preserve an inclusive history of their Johannesburg. The greatest intrigue in the story is depicted in the way Reddy, one of the curators, provides an interesting reaction to the project of preserving the city's historical materiality. He tries to undermine Strickland's suggestion as per "item 4: bench" (58) at the meeting focusing on whether historical items and monuments should be authentic or not; Strickland prefers authentic materials. Reddy firstly declares his loathing of the commercialisation of the collection of material for the museum and then embarks on his own representation of the events that took place during the day of the uprising in 1976. The representation is structured in a style similar to the paradoxical interpretations of Mrs King's photo that is given in the earlier part of the story. Hence, as Reddy takes his colleagues and the reader on a detailed historical journey of the fateful day of the uprising and analyses the pictures and testimonies from the incident, an element of irony is revealed. The reader finds that just as Mrs King's photograph is subject to ambiguous interpretations, fraught with uncertainties and possible omissions of detail, people often ignore the time, weather conditions and names of some of the figures involved in a historical event as asserted by Reddy. If this is the case, then further problematic readings and uncertainties will be encountered in the search for and analysis of historical details being recovered for the transforming city. Warnes (1999) clearly analyses this theme of uncertainties and ambiguities that arise in the interpretation of history and monuments and concludes that Reddy's accumulation of bullets in a lunch box while in search of the truth about who killed Hector Petersen means that "the attempt to eradicate uncertainty resulted in a plethora of possible truths" (94).

A similar open-endedness and uncertainty are also revealed in the handling and reading of some of the once exclusive 'whites only' public spaces and monuments in public memory. The conflicts between Strickland and her subordinates, and the contradictory reception to Charmaine's bench given by the history teacher-visitor and

the African woman, already discussed above, are important indicators of these open-ended interpretations of the city. Yet despite this, there is a way in which a majority of the urban characters, irrespective of race, colour, class or historical position, in a manner hinting at the miraculous (Williams 1973), reveal an eagerness to contribute meaningfully to the transformation process. The city's Municipal Bus Drivers' Association donates what they believe is an authentic 'whites only bench', after receiving some publicity from the act and a reasonable financial compensation. In addition, the former town clerk of Bethlehem writes to Pincus, one of the curators at the museum, offering to hand in copies of every election poster that has been displayed in his town since the city was founded. This confirms that some urban characters engaged positively with the restructuring of the fictive Johannesburg's public spaces, institutions and in the handling of some of its cultural material and monuments in a way that worked towards the creation of a truly democratic post-apartheid city and new urban identities.

4. 3 Experiencing the transition in a former 'whites only' suburb – Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf*

Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf* (1999) gives a realistic and sometimes manic fantastical portrayal of the Benades' life experiences during the transition in Johannesburg. The Benades, a poor white Afrikaner family, made up of Pop, Mol, Treppie and Lambert; live in Triomf, which means Triumph in English, a former lower-class white suburb located in Western Johannesburg. McCarthy (1991: 260-265) in his analysis of apartheid urban planning patterns and their effect on urban social relationships rightly notes that the former multiracial Sophiatown stood as a huge threat to white authority in the 1950s. The suburb provided homes that were conveniently close to workplaces for non-white workers and acted as a hot spot for the spread of radical workers' and ANC activism. As a result, the destruction of Sophiatown under the Group Areas and Population Registration Acts to give way for a white working class suburb, Triomf, heralded a symbolic victory for apartheid and that of the process of urban transformation and planning based on race. Hence, the significance of studying a novel set in this suburb that was created after the destruction of the old Sophiatown, an important social and historical signpost in the trajectory of the literary and literal Johannesburg, cannot be overemphasised. The novel's main plot describes the characters' specific life experiences as they relate to

the political and social restructuring processes aimed at reversing the long history of racial divisions within this former 'whites only' residential suburb and other parts of the fictive Johannesburg on the eve of the 1994 democratic elections. In addition, events in the sub-plot portray the family's preparations towards Lambert's fortieth birthday. It is through these experiences that some of the fears, tensions and contradictions occurring, especially within a disadvantaged white and Afrikaner family, are portrayed in the novel.

The imaginary life experiences of the Benades are dominated by poverty, violence, alcoholism and fear, as they talk about their past, present and future during the fading apartheid era. The family's poverty is emblematised in the novel by their daily survival on a diet of white bread, polony and soft drink Coke. This depicts the family's disadvantaged and perhaps 'unusual' position at a time when the country is transforming into an epoch where white privileges would be discarded in the interest of the national project of non-racial democracy. In addition, one also notes that the family fails to meet the traditional white image of a stable and self-sufficient white family as expected in apartheid South Africa. De Waal (1999) asserts that: "Afrikaner mythology has a special place for *vleis* – the meal of the hunter, the farmer, a strong dish that gives strength to those unafraid to kill..." (22). The Benades' daily survival on white bread, polony and Coke is thus indicative of a state of gross impoverishment in Afrikaner cultural circles. Their use of bricks and container boxes of Coca Cola bottles as seats also indicates the perverse poverty affecting this family. In addition, one is always reminded, throughout the novel, of the family's lack of decent clothing. Mol's scant dressing signals to the reader the family's poverty: she is always putting on a dustcoat and walks around without any underwear because the family cannot afford to buy her new and decent clothes. In this case, poverty is depicted as one of the major sources of contradictions and indicators of the state of vulnerability of some of the poor white working-class dwellers in literary Johannesburg during the transition.

The novel shows that the Benades' state of poverty is closely linked with different forms of anxieties felt by some members of the family. For instance, Lambert is depicted, in a mad but humorous scene, spying on their neighbours from 'Fort Knox' while they are having a braai (barbecue). Later in the text, he falls from the security wall and hurts himself, much to the scorn of the neighbours he had been spying on. Such behaviour by Lambert depicts the discordant relations existing

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between the Benades and their neighbours, a theme treated with great humour in the text. On a more significant level, one is made aware of the different forms of restlessness affecting Lambert as he engages in complex negotiations in his search for an elusive happiness in the face of poverty, a haunting family violence and a radically changing political atmosphere.

Later on in the novel, in another scene that confirms the family's precarious position during this described tumultuous period, Treppie complains to his sister, Mol, about her alleged failure to make a decent meal for the family. Treppie moans bitterly that Lambert is suffering heavily due to Mol's failure to meet the expected "one tablet three times a day. With meals" (246) as prescribed by the doctor for Lambert's epilepsy. He protests further that Lambert needs "meals, like food you cook in the house. Fit for a king, isn't it? Bacon and eggs for breakfast. Pill. Rice, meat and potatoes for lunch. Pill. Wors and baked beans for supper. Pill" (246). Here, poverty is clearly represented as dehumanising and posing serious health threats to the poor white characters such as Lambert. Its social threats are portrayed in the ever-present tensions and disagreements between the Benades as they argue over the shortage of food and through Lambert's anxious spying on their well-to-do neighbours. This is also indicative of a larger sense of fear and social distress specifically existing within some sectors of the fictive Johannesburg's Afrikaner community as they experience the social and political changes affecting their historical dominance in the city and exclusivity in suburbs such as Triomf.

One is left wondering whether such a specific Afrikaner family, described as at risk socially and economically, would be able to survive in a future post-apartheid and racially inclusive Johannesburg.[4] It is ironic that Van Niekerk chooses to write such a graphic and grotesque portrayal of the poverty experienced by the Benades during the dying years of apartheid. Their experiences move into the larger realm of the symbolic vulnerability and fragmentation that the urban Afrikaner faces as the fictive Johannesburg and whole country experiences massive social and political changes. These changes are reminiscent of the rapid changes taken into consideration by Williams in his literary studies of the writing of London (1973), and are, as envisaged by the Benades, going to impact heavily on the social and spatial nature of their suburb Triomf and the rest of the Johannesburg in which the novel is set. This gives an apocalyptic aura to the anticipated future of some of this once-privileged Afrikaner community.

The novel further depicts the tense political atmosphere that envelops the suburb as its characters witness the political transformation and impending first democratic elections. The Benades spend most of their time discussing and furthering their hysterical perspectives on the changing social and political conditions affecting their city and nation as a whole. They are also subjected to door- to- door visits and exposed to public campaigns from various political parties and religious organisations such as the NP and the Jehovah's Witnesses. The NP and the church, especially the Dutch Reformed Church, have played an important role in shaping the Afrikaner ideology and national identity, and are now eager to canvass the Benades' support during this turbulent period. The Benades are nevertheless filled with fear and uncertainty. As a result, they resort to racially prejudiced or defensive remarks during the countless discussions and arguments over the political developments occurring during this period. They imagine that the political transformation means an end to their livelihood and that the first democratic elections will usher in a period of social and political chaos in Johannesburg and the country as a whole. Their responses are to a great extent representative of a caricature of the general white unease existing in this fictive city. This is symbolised by Lambert's digging of a hole in their yard at 27 Martha Street, to store fuel and the way he hatches "the Great North Plan" (59) which the family would put to use when they embark on the trek "[t]o Zimbabwe or Kenya. Where you can still live like a white man!" (59) in the event of an outbreak of post-election chaos. Van Niekerk engages with history in the narrative as shown by her description of Lambert's plan that draws on the historical memories and mythical symbolism of the Cape Boers' Great Trek. This time, the myths and historical memories are, however, invoked by Lambert to show the present uncertainties plaguing urban Afrikaners and other white characters that nervously imagine that a democratised city will undermine their privileges.

The imagined disorder and chaos in the post-apartheid Johannesburg clearly shows a politically-induced restlessness that is apparent, specifically within the Benades and probably within other vulnerable residents of the fictive Triomf on the eve of the 1994 democratisation of the country. The fear stems from the Benades' realisation that the old days of an assured political superiority and paternalist Afrikaner political hegemony that excluded blacks, coloureds and Asians from the urban and national political landscape is coming to an end. Van Niekerk draws on the historical narrative of the Afrikaners' active ways aimed at surviving against English

colonialism in an attempt to show the bleak position in which the formerly privileged characters, such as the residents of Triomf, occupy during the transition. She draws further on the history of white political will and action, which sought to ensure the survival of whites in South African cities and the country as a whole, in an attempt to show the grave effects of the current threat to the survival of Afrikaners. For instance, through the use of flashbacks, the background to the Benades' poverty is traced back to the dislocating effects of the economic depression and droughts that ravaged South Africa in the 1930s. The old Benades lost their farm during the depression and yet were provided with free rail transport and accommodation during their relocation to Johannesburg. Other protective policies included the government's deliberate reservation of jobs for whites only in the railway company and other public service institutions such as post offices, the police and local government offices.[5] As a result, Old Pop and other characters get employed easily in the railway company after relocating to Johannesburg, thus showing the past white government's political will aimed at ensuring the survival of whites throughout history.

As history shows, the later establishment of separate white residential areas under the 1950 Group Areas Act and the violent forced removals of blacks and other targeted groups from areas that had been reserved for whites, becomes a significant ideological symbol of the apartheid political project, which privileged whites in the cities and the rest of the country. Blacks, coloureds and Asians were also not allowed to participate in elections and any national politics outside the homelands, although later on in the 1980s, they were given a limited political involvement in local government and through the ineffective tricameral parliament system. This layer of history surfaces in the novel, when Van Niekerk makes reference to the National Party (NP) government's deliberate and violent establishment of Triomf after the removal of the inhabitants of Sophiatown. This is alluded to in the novel through the presence of stray and crying dogs. Lambert says that blacks left the dogs as they hastily evacuated Sophiatown. Other indicators of the disruptive nature of the forced removal include the old rubble from the belongings of the former settlers of Triomf, which Lambert excavates while digging a hole to store fuel and other supplies for future use when Johannesburg and South Africa degenerate into chaos after the first non-racial elections.

The political changes that are in operation during the transition and the supposed sense of fear and anxiety induced within the Benades are revealed through

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references to the larger political sphere. Treppie makes hysterical remarks about the political events that are happening in the city and the country as a whole. He reads out aloud from newspapers and makes crazy comments during the campaign visits made by certain political groupings, especially the NP. The sense of fear and vulnerability within the Benades, as they think about the forthcoming black majority rule, are confirmed by Treppie's disparaging description of Nelson Mandela's campaign in Triomf. As a result, one notices the siege mentality and imagined sense of uncertainty affecting Afrikaner urban dwellers such as Treppie as they come face to face with the various changes happening during the democratisation of this urban space.

Van Niekerk employs the metaphor of the crying dogs, albeit in a carnivalesque way, to depict the unease these particular urban characters feel as they contemplate their future in a post-apartheid Triomf. She again draws from historical events, this time those associated with the destruction of Triomf, to create the metaphor of the wailing of dogs. This depicts a likely repeat of the old sense of desperation and fragmentation felt by the inhabitants of Sophiatown, but this time coming from the formerly privileged characters such as the Benades who imagine an impending 'destruction' of their suburb. The ensuing bleakness and despair, as the fictive city undergoes a rapid transformation, is represented in a maniacally humorous way in which Treppie mimics the way the suburb's dogs cry. This mad scene symbolises the despair that the present restructuring of the fictive Johannesburg's residential places like Triomf is likely to evoke from poor and once-protected white dwellers. There seems to be a way in which the sense of desperation and uncertainty that is felt by the likes of the Benades in the face of the impending democratisation of Triomf is comparable to the characteristic bleakness and dislocation of the old multiracial community of Sophiatown. Ironically this time, the urban white characters will be the victims.

One can also interpret Treppie's and Lambert's hysterical miming of "Martha Street dogs and other streets' dogs… all the way to Ontdekkers and beyond" (17) as representative of some of the disturbances and nuisances that are also occurring within the city as the characters relate to the rapid social and political changes sweeping through the city.[6] That is, because of the fictive city's uncertain socio-economic future, certain places are likely to be exposed to unsettling experiences. For instance Triomf in one scene finds itself assailed by heavy helicopter noise, Mol's irritating mowing of the yard at midnight under the abusive instructions made by

Treppie, Lambert's disturbing loud cries after being stung by bees and the thick smoke that affects the whole of the suburb after Lambert accidentally starts a fire. On another level, the miming of the dogs creates a temporary family unity, especially between Lambert and Treppie who are always arguing in the novel. This union seems to bizarrely suggest that the dying apartheid order is a 'crazy' move in the minds of the Lamberts and Treppies of Triomf and is likely to lead to the creation of despairing and unstable Afrikaner identities. More so, the manic humour invoked in the scene where Treppie mimics the dogs, his casual use of the vulgar and curses in his complaints against political betrayal by the NP, echoes the dissident voice, critical of the transformation, which pervades the narrative. Furthermore, one can also view the curses, arguments and breaking down and repairing of the family's old cars and refrigerators, ever present at 27 Martha Street, as a parody of the disjointed and meaningless lives which the Benades are moving into; the rapidly changing experiences are thus subjecting them to an even greater social instability and more nervous moments.[7]

One of the novel's intriguing elements is shown in Van Niekerk's focus on the individual experiences of each of the Benades. This enables the reader to gain an insight into the experiences of the given individual characters as they live through a transforming suburb and city. Collectively and individually, Mol, Pop, Lambert and Treppie help to portray the apocalyptic vision as they think about their future urban condition. Generally, Van Niekerk succeeds in showing the apocalyptic vision by grotesquely satirising Afrikaner perceptions, where Treppie and Lambert still think of themselves as superior, yet ironically both are just low-class unemployed and abusive characters loathed by their neighbours. Moreover, Lambert in particular and to some extent the whole family, are 'trash' as confirmed by the scene in which Lambert meets with a vagrant at a rubbish dump on the outskirts of Triomf. In this symbolic scene, both Treppie and the vagrant are revealed as having the same disadvantaged and vagrant identity. Such is the displaced identity and apocalyptic vision that is constituted within some white dwellers as they lose their privileges during the narrated unfolding transition.

Treppie indeed shows typical anxieties felt by some subversive urban white characters that feel that they will be disadvantaged by the transition. He ridicules the old NP leadership from Magnus Malan to F. W. De Klerk in a manner that is representative of carnivalesque humour, and social and political criticism. He

ridicules the two NP student campaigners from the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) and gets into huge arguments with them as he tries to further his view that the NP has betrayed the likes of him. In one incident Treppie reads out loudly to his family and offers a different interpretation to the story published in the *Beeld* and the *Star* newspapers, which recount how a swarm of bees had wreaked havoc at Pretoria's Union Buildings.[8] He then madly deduces that the NP leaders were rendered brain dead due to the stings. This bizarre revisionist historical narrative is an indicator of how an ordinary Afrikaner like Treppie is trying to make sense out of this otherwise maddening transformation and criticising the old apartheid leadership for not considering their interests during the political negotiations leading to this unfolding transformation.

More so, as far as Treppie is concerned, the betrayal is indicative of an imminent end of a white community's world in South Africa, to make use of Viljoen's ideas (1996: 71-72). Treppie sullenly gives his imagined view of the impending destruction of the future Johannesburg by drawing on apocalyptic religious imagery associated with the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who frequently visit their house. Therefore, in order to maniacally register the enormity of his anger and rebellious voice towards Afrikanerdom, he blends religion, an institution that has been very important in providing ideological insight and stability in their nation, with a popular joke on Marike De Klerk's permanent frown, perhaps a symbol of the Afrikaner leadership's loss of insight, which is seemingly delivering them into destruction:

> The Jehovas say it too. They say the end is near and we should
> approach with the name of God sealed in our foreheads. Then
> there is no space left for a frown. (133)

Lambert's uneasiness is portrayed in the novel through the various tasks he sets himself to. He shows an edgy character as he tries to repair the family's old cars and refrigerators, and makes a list of items, such as fuel, food, and guns that are needed for the final escape when chaos engulfs Johannesburg after the elections. His activities are symptomatic of a character that envisions a bleak city in the future and feels alienated from the ongoing project of urban social and political restructuring. Lambert also shows his suspicion of and disconcertion at the already introduced racial

opening of Triomf. As if in confirmation of his suspicions that the standards were deteriorating much to the threat of old apartheid stability and security, Lambert meets a black vagrant at a dumpsite on the outskirts of Triomf who sells him a gun cheaply. Lambert's experiences show his obsession with the fear that the democratisation of the portrayed Triomf and Johannesburg would result in the lowering of standards or a racial and other social levelling, a fear incisively discussed by Giliomee as the fear of *gelykstelling* by Afrikaners (2003: 888-129). It does not come as a surprise to the reader when Lambert dedicates himself to be the protector of the suburb. He even thinks that "if it wasn't for his regular patrols in the streets at night, which he does of his own free will, without expecting anything in return, then Triomf would be the same as all the other suburbs. Full of murder and robbery and killing. As things stand, Triomf is one of the safest areas in the whole of Jo'burg" (272). Lambert also shows his dislike of their neighbours whom he suspects to be communist because they treat their black male gardener with respect by, for example, having knife-and-fork meals with him in the garden. Furthermore, he objects to their lesbian sexual orientation as described in a hilarious way in the section titled "Fruit Salad". This shows the fear of the widening of social, legal and human freedoms, especially those that would revolt against discriminatory and conservative religious and cultural beliefs, as another source of the described white residents' anxiety.

As the narrative unfolds, one also realises that the Benades' restlessness as well as their sense of displacement, whether imagined or real, is intricately linked to alcoholism, violence and the weight of past secrets that haunt the family. The trauma and family secrets are significant indicators of the complexities associated with the theme of betrayal in the novel. It is clear that it is not only the political leaders who betrayed the people, for some Afrikaners betrayed each other at the family level. The family's obsessive indulgence in Klipdrift and Coke is associated with their consequent degeneration into a life characterised by physical and psychological violence. A number of violent scenes, in the form of verbal abuses in which the common victim is Mol, who is also a victim of the three male characters' sexual and incestuous abuse, are closely linked to the misuse of alcohol in the family. Treppie, the chief perpetrator of abuse in the family, is always under the influence of alcohol and he constantly curses and shouts orders at Mol to the extent that she is always confused. He also bullies the epileptic Lambert most nights, after his return from 'the Chinese', where he does odd jobs.[9] During the large part of the novel, Treppie, often

under the influence of alcohol, refuses to teach and pass on to Lambert "the family bible" (329), which offers mechanical hints on how to repair refrigerators. Hence, some of the social dislocation and vulnerabilities experienced by Lambert, Mol and Treppie during this period can be attributed to the effects of alcohol abuse and other personal experiences.

The most intriguing part of the Benades' miserable experiences is linked to the effects of a traumatic past, a present abusive atmosphere and the existence of 'dirty' family secrets. Van Niekerk radically opens up the family's history of dirty secrets in order to reveal the effect of the transition on such an Afrikaner family. That is, with the ongoing social and political transition, the specific but closely held family secrets and other traditionally unquestioned Afrikaner ideals, as the dissident voice of Treppie has been showing, would become subject to discussion and scrutiny at both domestic and national level. Treppie has a violent disposition that is linked to the traumatic physical abuse that he suffers as a boy at the hands of Old Pop. The scene on the Brixton Kopje makes the reader aware of the severe beatings that were inflicted on Treppie by Old Pop as punishment after the discovery of the incestuous relationship between Treppie and Mol. Ironically, Treppie had been coerced into the incestuous relationship by Pop and, as such, is also a victim. As a result, he suffers from a multiple trauma from his father's beatings and coercion to become party to the crime, as well as from the betrayal by Mol and Pop, who did not support him during the beating. Treppie's bitterness with both Mol and Pop and the dislocating effects on the Benades is shown here:

> Treppie must have seen on her face she couldn't believe what
> she was seeing. So he said she mustn't come and act holier-than-thou
> all of a sudden. Didn't she remember what he looked like that night
> when they dragged him out of the train? 'Marked for life!' he said,
> prodding his finger into the scars on his skin.
> What could she say? So she lit up a cigarette – lighter was
> burning away – and said: 'Shame.'
> That was not the right thing to say.
> To hell with shame, Treppie said. That's all that she and her
> mother could ever say, shame this, shame that, and shame
> everything else. But they never stood up for him, not once when

> Old Pop screamed at him so terribly and hit him for no reason at all.
> Not once did they take his side. (382)

Such a traumatic past and feelings of betrayal suffered by Treppie emblematise the multiple betrayals haunting this family at this brink of a new social and political order. Certainly, at the domestic level, the whole family has been subjected to or has perpetuated sexual and physical abuse. Worse still, because of their poverty and subsequent diminishing sense of security due to the ongoing multiracial democratisation, the Benades become embroiled in a journey of self- and historical evaluation. This journey is indicative of their perceived state of helplessness and fervent desire to come to terms with the unfolding events. To show the depth of this perceived betrayal and subsequently perceived helplessness, Pop in one scene under the title "Overload" comments that "the people in Triomf are the state's own people" (259).[10] Furthermore, by making the Benade family talk about their painful and shameful past, Van Niekerk introduces another layer to the implications of the transition, specifically affecting the Benades and by extension the larger Afrikaner community. There is a sense in which the writer appears to be furthering the view that there is no way the post-apartheid urban experiences are going to be meaningful to a number of Afrikaner families if they do not come to terms with their own painful and sometimes shameful past. The past is, as she has represented through the Benades, beleaguered by a history of abuse, secrets and untruths, issues indicative of the faultiness of old certainties, now being revealed at this moment of opening up and re-evaluation necessitated by the transition.

The destructive impact of the transition in the fictive Johannesburg cannot be over emphasised. The tension and social chaos that erupts later on in the novel, after the secrets about Lambert's parentage come out, invoke an apocalyptic image in as far as the represented white community's social identities during the transition are concerned. Lambert's parentage is a tightly held secret due to the history of incest, which involves Pop, Mol and Treppie. The incestuous relationship shows the sexual abuse that is suffered by a helpless Mol, a reminder of the reversal of the role of the Afrikaner woman from being a strong figure during the Great Trek into a heavily domesticated and oppressed figure later on (Giliomee 2003: 375-376). Incest is portrayed as significantly underscoring the disadvantaged and shameful backgrounds

of some whites, which is an ironic disjuncture between a heroic Afrikanerdom and the reality as signified by the ordinariness and shame of the Benades.

Viljoen (1996) outlines the consequent social and political risks that are symbolised by the role of incest within some urban characters: "On a political level the incestuous and inbred Benade family becomes symbolic of the extremes to which the apartheid philosophy of racial exclusivity led" (71). The apartheid ideology of exclusivity and the white community's gamble in political and racial superiority, as well as the development of a culture and identity that was inward looking, position some characters, such as Pop, Mol, Lambert and Treppie, on a wrong footing at a time when the city and the nation's social and political landscape are radically changing. One notices the subsequent sense of displacement and degeneration into hypocrisy, as the likes of Pop, Mol and Treppie create false narratives in order to hide away the truth of Lambert's parentage. The family takes great pains to stick to the false story of the wedding between Mol and Pop, 'a distant cousin from the Cape' until Lambert himself discovers the family journal that gives away the truth about his parentage. Hence, the frantic efforts made by Treppie, Pop and Mol to hide the truth and maintain silence over the family's dark secrets on incest, the physical abuse of Treppie, and Lambert's parentage, reveal "the family's ability to expose indirectly the hypocrisy underlying the society in which they have been condemned into powerlessness and silence" (Grabe 1995: 34).

One will not be doing justice to the representation of the experiences of the Benades, if there is no focus on their attempts at imagining a stable and better future for Triomf and Johannesburg. Despite all the violence, self-deceit and fears of a chaotic future in the post-apartheid city, the Benades still make an attempt at finding ways to understand themselves and their city. The narratives created by the elder Benades about Lambert's parentage can be viewed as an attempt at finding the rationale behind their activities and experiences. In addition, these can be considered as a genuine wish to protect Lambert's self-esteem, in much the same way as they were planning to give him a birthday present of a woman so that he could have sex with a character other than his mother. Ironically, the birthday present, a coloured prostitute, becomes abusive and at the same time shocks Lambert horribly when he realises her race. The scene aptly sub-titled "LAMBERTUS AND CLEOPATRA" (392-413) is punctuated by a hysterical but humorous exchange of expletives and racial slurs. There is also a weird conflict of intentions, where Mary, as a prostitute,

wants to quickly get 'the deal' over and done with while Lambert, like a charming host, plays music and tries by all means to be romantic to a prostitute. The final moments of this comical scene show Mary radically inverting the Afrikaner obsession with racial superiority in her mocking of Lambert. The mockery also reveals the precariousness of Afrikaner identities in a new South Africa, where whiteness is no longer the basis of superiority since new forms of identity formation are being created, as the Triomf and Johannesburg experienced by the Benades transforms. Mary hysterically mocks Lambert thus:

"You bastard! Look at you! Look at this place! Who the hell do you think you are, hey? You're not even white, man, you're a fucken backward piece of low-class shit, that's what you are. Useless fucken white trash!" (405)

Nonetheless, one sees that the redeeming factors, to borrow Ina Grabe's fitting description of the positives associated with the Benade family (1995: 34), include Lambert's active and creative attempts at conceptualising his family's, and the Afrikaner's social, historical and political position in relation to their reality. He creates some wall paintings in which he places Jan Van Riebeeck, Triomf, his family, the route of the planned great trek up north, his work on the refrigerators and a list of some of the supplies that they would need as they migrate to Zimbabwe or Kenya. This shows an implicit search for an understanding of his identity, meaning and a possible position of the Afrikaner nation within the transforming city's social and political condition. Van Niekerk herself, who is cited by De Waal (1999), confirms:

If people read carefully, they will see that all four characters are artists. They all have ways of interpreting or trying to make sense of their lives. Lambert has an obsession with order- he wants things to work. Treppie has a huge problem with nominalism and realism- "What's in a name? ... Its all in the mind". Pop and Mol, one could say, are the chocolate-box story fabricators who want to pad their own existences sufficiently for them to survive the cruelties of life. I think we all do that. I do. You negotiate a certain narrative that helps solve the problems you experience now. (23)

Furthermore, the ending of the novel represents an entrance into a new and stable literary Johannesburg and nation as a whole. A new and meaningful order is ironically achieved after the elimination of some of the characters' bad qualities. This is noted in the death of Pop and the disabling of Lambert after the accidental fire, which results in everything being "much calmer" (470). Treppie now only takes one Klipdrift a month and there are now a few blacks in Triomf: the latter being viewed by the Benades as "an excellent development" (472). The remaining Benades are also described in a scene in which they look at the stars in Orion in a way that invokes an astrological and mythological imagery indicative of the arrival of a new and better dispensation in the fictive post-apartheid Johannesburg. This is further confirmed by Treppie's statement to the rest of the family that:

> The most important thing was that they should never again say the
> word 'kaffir'. Not in their own house and also not outside. What
> was past was past, he said, and it applied to them too. (471-472)

In addition, the arrival of a new dawn in Johannesburg and South Africa is depicted positively, in that for the Benades it means: "North no more" (474). That is, because no chaos occurs in the literary Johannesburg after the elections, then there is no need for the exodus into exile as had been planned by Lambert. Therefore, one realises that in the novel *Triomf*, a sort of magnificent new order, a phrase influenced by Williams (1973) that is associated with an aura of the miraculous,[11] is after all realised, as the process of the movement into a new dispensation draws to a close. This is of course, despite the existence of various contradictions and anxieties that characterise the trajectory into a new and democratised fictive Johannesburg.

4. 4 Changes in the inner city social and built spaces as portrayed in Vladislavic's *The Restless Supermarket*

The novel, *The Restless Supermarket* (2001), described by Tim Couzens (2005: 10) as portraying "a dying past", is also set in Johannesburg and similarly depicts experiences transpiring during the height of South Africa's transition from apartheid to a democratic and post-apartheid period in the early 1990s. This section of the chapter analyses the reaction, perceptions and thoughts of the middle-class former

proof reader, Aubrey Tearle, and his circle of friends, during this period of intense social spatial and political transformation of the literary Hillbrow and Johannesburg. The contention guiding this section is the same as in earlier sections of this chapter: that as the fictive city transforms, its various dwellers depending on class, race and ideological viewpoints, are unsettled, subjected to anxious moments and build contradictory perceptions and identities as they try to come to terms with the occurring rapid social, spatial and political transformation.

The novel portrays the life experiences of a retired resident of Hillbrow, Tearle, whose experiences are centred on his movements from his flat in Hillbrow to his favourite former 'whites only' restaurant called Café Europa. The setting of the novel in inner-city Hillbrow is very significant, for this part of Johannesburg stands out as a metaphor of triumph in the history of the city's rapid architectural expansion and modernisation during the 1960s and 1970s and especially in the mapping of the city as bastion of white urban culture and order (Morris 1991; Chipkin 1999). Hence, the description of the democratisation of some of Hillbrow's social spaces and the ensuing sense of displacement and anxiety felt by some of its dwellers, such as Tearle, provides an intriguing and equally significant insight into some of the processes and impact of the transition on some of the places and infrastructure in the literary Johannesburg. Mike Marais (2003: 284) rightly terms Tearle's commentary on the transition, a form of social proofreading. Tearle also conflates this social reading with an obsessive linguistic proofreading of the language used in the city's public and commercial media, as well as that spoken by the characters he interacts with everyday. For instance, he ridicules Moces/ Moses, the Mozambiquean migrant working in the café over his poor command of English (9).[12]

Other social and political experiences unfolding in Johannesburg during this time are introduced in the narrative through various intertextual strategies. For instance, the unbanning of African nationalist and anti-apartheid movements, the release of Nelson Mandela from jail and the opening up of the national all-party constitutional negotiations through CODESA, which were aimed at paving the way for the creation of a new city and democratic South Africa, are all incorporated into the narrative through references to newspaper and television reports. Stefan Helgesson (2004a) gives a succinct analysis of the way Vladislavic refers to various media technologies such as the print and television media in the novel to vividly portray the visual spatial deterioration and the intense social and political

transformation unfolding in Café Europa and in the fictive Johannesburg during the transition. However, the most prominent narrative technique that is used by Ivan Vladislavic in this novel is the trope of proofreading, where, as Marais puts it: "Throughout the novel, Vladislavic collapses the distinction between his protagonist's *linguistic* proofreading and *social* proofreading, that is, the obsessive manner in which Tearle detects "errors" in the world around him as he goes about his daily business" (2003: 283).

Tearle gives most of the commentary concerning the rapid social and political, and the negative linguistic changes being experienced in the illustrated city, in sarcastic and racist-laden allusions. A number of non-white characters, and to some extent white immigrants from Eastern Europe such as Boguslavic, who have recently migrated into the represented Hillbrow, are subjected to Tearle's racial slur and ridicule as he narrates the story. Marais (2003: 284) clearly analyses a passage from the novel, which shows Aubrey's reading of the new black and coloured clientele, such as Nomsa, that now patronise Café Europa. He shows that Tearle's observation of Nomsa's skin, with its purple sheen, larger mouth and the way she is described using animal imagery, reveals the protagonist's deep sense of racial superiority and his failure to accept otherness in a transforming literary Johannesburg. The same racial bigotry is noted in Tearle's reading of Nelson Mandela's release from jail, an act that is considered as very important in the country's historical trajectory towards democracy. Tearle laments the way "standards plumbed new depths (long since superseded) on the day Nelson 'The Madiba' Mandela was released from prison. You couldn't get a pot of tea for love or money, because the waiters would not be dragged away from the screen. ... You could have waited till doomsday without attracting a waiter's attention" (166-167).

Furthermore, the larger space of political negotiations for the creation of a new and democratic constitution for the new South Africa is subjected to some of Aubrey's cynical analysis of errors in syntax and 'confusing' acronyms that he observes in his Hillbrow:

> Wessels called Moces to turn up the volume on the television set. News from the Convention for a Democratic South Africa. For some time now, Wessels had been making a show of interest in national affairs. Oddly enough, I had a feeling he was trying to impress the

waiters. CODESA this and CODESA that. The country was disappearing behind a cloud of acronyms. As for the décor at the 'The World Trade Centre' – how could one expect proper political decisions to be made in those dreadful surroundings? The place looked like a brothel. (12)

Therefore, the social and political transformation occurring in the literary Johannesburg reveals a significant and paradoxical condition where certain middle-class white characters, such as Tearle, are discomforted by the ensuing structural and spatial changes, yet these changes are generally viewed by the larger society as pertinent for the survival of the city and the nation as a whole. It is also evident that such white characters end up envisioning Johannesburg as a once magnificent city that is declining into a post-apartheid apocalypse.[13]

Tearle is indeed not at all amused by the rapid opening up of the social spaces and streetscapes of Hillbrow. He observes that:

> The public spaces in my neighbourhood were uninviting. The parks provided no seating arrangements. Where once there had been benches for whites only, now there were no benches at all to discourage loitering. The loiterers were quite happy to lie on the grass, but, needless to say, I was not. The park in Beatrice Street had a bench; but then it also had a reniform paddling pool that attracted the wrong sort of toddler. The public library was a morgue for dead romances. A series of children's drawings, hideous without exception, had been stuck on the wall in a misguided attempt to brighten the place up. There were no pavement cafés a la Française. (15-16)

As a result, he feels that the city's public spaces and the lives of the once-protected whites are under threat. Vladislavic employs the trope of chaos and death to succinctly describe Tearle's reading of the city's built and social spaces' deterioration during the transition. As evidenced in the above quotation, the inner city's public spaces, such as the once well-maintained and orderly streets, parks and libraries, are now disordered and abandoned. Furthermore, the library's state of neglect is likened to "a morgue" and is described as full of irrelevant reading material.

Marais (2002; 106-107) aptly analyses Vladislavic's use of the trope of death in the novel. The use of the trope is evident through the death of characters such as Merle, Tearle's colleague. Moreover, as one pays attention to Tearle's obsessive linguistic proofreading throughout the novel, one senses his lamentation at the deterioration of the usage of English language in Johannesburg. This is a very interesting thematic and stylist focus, which as I have already pointed out, is treated well by Helgesson (2004a). That is, however, not the main focus of this chapter. The lamentations given by Tearle show the link between the perception of the deterioration of English usage standards and that of the death of the language, and other deaths assailing the city, such as the impending death of the Café and the disorder that befalls the Restless Supermarket in "The Proofreader's Derby". In fact, Tearle, through his linguistic analysis of the perceived errors, "corrigenda – pleonasms, omissions, mispronunciations, misspellings- that he encounters in his day-to-day existence as a reader and a patron of … Café Europa" (Helgesson 2004a: 777), confirms the dominant conservative view in which the transition is considered as indicating that "an era was ending" (127). Therefore, conservative urban white characters, as symbolised by Tearle, fearfully view the transition into a post-apartheid Johannesburg as resonating with a rapid plunge into disorder and death of an old era of order and civilisation enshrined in the English language and culture.

Nonetheless, Tearle and some urban characters are subjected to life-threatening risks as they move around Hillbrow. These hazards symbolise the larger social and political risks found in Tearle's Johannesburg during the transition. The author describes the streets of Hillbrow as dangerously overcrowded. Tearle is nearly knocked down by a baker's delivery van, which ironically had a sign reading 'How am I driving,' thus revealing a characteristic feature of the humour that is frequently used in the novel to show some of the ridiculous Johannesburg experiences. This playfulness mostly found in Vladislavic's writings and evident in the use of irony, puns and playing games with his characters and readers, is fully discussed by Felicity Wood (2001a) in her study of the writer's "hilarious, fanciful or downright crazy inventions" (21) found in some of his stories. However, after Tearle escapes the accident with minor injuries, he immediately jumps into another danger, which is one of being robbed by the bystanders who had come to his assistance: "… I fended them off with elbows and epithets, equally sharp. They try to pick your pockets under cover of kindness" (24).

Later on in the novel, Tearle echoes the same sense of paranoia by imagining the unfolding democratisation of his suburb and city as the degeneration of the once glorious city into crime and grime. He assumes that the new black female clients patronising Café Europa are "ladies of the night" (131). Furthermore, his fellow socialite from the glorious days of the café, Wessels, holds a similar opinion as noted in his view that the young black men who have recently started to patronise the café are a group of loiterers and low-class clientele. Wessels describes the new youthful black clientele thus:

> They don't spend their bucks here. They shoot pool, they sit outside in the sun, they have a couple of pots. Half the time they don't even pay for those – it's cheaper to bring your own. I see them topping up their glasses with nips from the girls' bags. (8)

In both cases, Vladislavic ridicules this typical middle-class white anxiety and the resulting paranoia constituted as the characters try to come to terms with the transition.

Nevertheless, one should not discount the potential risks arising out of the rapid transition. The city's streets and public amenities that had been earmarked for minority white urban dwellers were most likely to be overburdened after the city and its social spaces are desegregated. Moreover, the rapid opening up of the city's once exclusive social spaces is likely to result in an increase of crime and other risks in the fictional city. The violence that ensues at the closing-down party at the café, where Tearle sustains a knife attack and Floyd, Shirlaine's boyfriend, is severely injured, serves to confirm the validity of some of the fears held by the likes of Tearle. Hence, one is likely to empathise with Tearle, although some of his ideas on the social threats that might affect them during and after the city's transition are repulsive.

Images of plunder and chaos are also used in the novel to show the imagined view that the city is degenerating into an apocalypse; the same perception figures in *Triomf.* The narrator describes the ensuing plunder and chaos as "the sacking of Johannesburg" (121). A number of the inhabitants of literary Hillbrow plunder and destroy the city's places of cultural and political significance such as the Carlton Hotel, Botanical Gardens, Zoo Lake and the Supreme Court. Other items and former apartheid monuments that are plundered in the city for souvenirs include manholes,

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street signs, 'whites only benches' and the Hillbrow Tower. Tearle shows his disgust at the degeneration that is developing within some of Hillbrow's dwellers. For instance, he scorns some of the patrons at the café who were celebrating after a successful pillaging of the Hillbrow Tower:

> Titters and jeers. Let them, I thought, as Errol butted the air with
> the broken tower. "You have no sense of responsibility. In fact, you
> have an overdeveloped sense of irresponsibility. There's a destructive
> streak in you. Vandals, that's what you are, it's the sack of Rome
> all over again." (118)

Tearle's exaggerated comparison of the plunder of Hillbrow with that of Rome, gives the fictive Johannesburg experience a cosmopolitan historical perspective. That is, one is reminded that during moments of social and political transition that have been witnessed in most parts of the world, cities have often been subjected to plunder and chaos. This certainly depicts the possibilities of Hillbrow tottering into apocalypse as Johannesburg goes through a similar transition and as such any critical reader will certainly empathise with Tearle as he imagines a ruined future.

As Tearle thinks deeply about the plunder of the city, he goes on to do an etymological search of the meaning of the word 'sack' that had been used by Errol, one of the revellers, during their celebration of the pillaging of the Hillbrow Tower. As a result, Tearle ridicules the destructive tendencies that have cropped up in his city. At the same time Vladislavic injects humour into the narrative through Tearle's comic tendency to quickly consult his pocket dictionary for the history and meaning of any word that he would have heard, and playfulness as he considers the various dictionary meanings of the word to find a suitable contextual meaning:

> I opened ... my dictionary... Perhaps in this heightened atmosphere
> my fingers had been guided by some extrasensory urgency as my
> eyes now were, to **sack**[2]. (Of victorious army or its commander)
> plunder, give over to plunder (a captured town etc.). (Of burglar etc.)
> carry off valuable contents of. From the French in the phrase *mettre a*
> *sac*, put to sack. From the Italian *sacco* sack. (119)

The French plunder of ancient cities in Egypt and the Italians' of Addis Ababa is alluded to in the above comic scene and thus mark the transition of Johannesburg during this volatile period as likely to be characterised by the same kind of plunder and destruction. Later on in the novel, Boguslavic, a fellow patron of Café Europa and immigrant from Bulgaria, collects rubble and other apartheid relics as items for sale to tourists, an experience similar to what happened in Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Hence, white urban characters such as Tearle allude to the perception that the democratisation of their suburbs and Johannesburg will result in the plunder of their city's proud history, culture and order.

Closely related to the imagined plunder of the city is Vladislavic's portrayal of Tearle's deep dislike of the city's spatial degeneration during the transition. Tearle observes the commercialisation of Hillbrow as profound and chaotic, as indicated in his hatred of the ubiquitous chicken outlets in the city. He draws on his linguistic expertise to show his aversion of the chicken outlets:

> "So long as it's not another chicken outlet," I said. "We've got enough
> of those. Though why they should be chicken outlets, I don't know.
> It sounds like the orifice through which a fowl passes an egg." (11)

Ironically, at the end of the novel, a chicken outlet becomes useful for Tearle and Shirlaine. Both characters buy some take-aways, at dawn, on their way back to Hillbrow from Johannesburg Hospital. Nevertheless, Tearle's social and linguistic reading of the portrayed city's commercial shops and telephone directory is of significance in the depiction of the pronounced collapse and heavy commercialisation that is engulfing literary Hillbrow and Johannesburg. Tearle's reading of Johannesburg's telephone directory enables him to see these terrible developments characterising the falling apart of Hillbrow and the city centre:

> I began to notice not just the patterns within directories, but the
> changes from one directory to the next, the slight shifts in emphasis
> and secret movements that only a comparison over time would
> uncover. I could tell that business was booming in Cleveland and

dying out in Jeppestown, thanks to the new motorway. Without ever setting foot in Jules Street, I saw that it was becoming the used-car centre of the city. I saw that the head offices of the big businesses – the manufacturers, the insurance houses, the retailers, and their touts in the advertising agencies – were moving from the city centre to Rosebank and Sandton. I saw new suburbs rise from the veld – Lonehill, Mondeor, Amoroso – and old ones fall into decay – Doornfontein, Bertrams, Vrededorp – and then rise again, occasionally, in a flurry of restaurants and antique shops. (128)

He also engages in a word game with his friend Spilkin in which both spell out a number of ridiculous city shop and garage names, thereby revealing the general disintegration unfolding in their city. High comedy is evoked as Helgesson (2004a: 784) rightly points out, when names including Mr X-haust, Mr Bathroom, Mr Cupboard, Mr Juice, Mr Propshaft, Mr Ladder, Mr Plastic, Mr Sweets, The Restless Supermarket and Mr Crusty (91-92) feature in the game. Later on in the novel Tearle, who has been collecting a number of linguistic errors that he came across in his work as a proofreader of telephone directories, creates a Proofreader's Derby, where some characters and socialites from the café will compete in at the closing party of Café Europa. Therefore, it appears that middle-class and conservative white urban characters, such as Tearle and Spilkin, perceive the transformation of Johannesburg as a development towards a chaotic over-commercialisation of its public and commercial spaces.

The most prominent indicator of the view that the transition marks the end of an era is represented in the experiences and perceptions arising out of the impending closing down of Café Europa in Hillbrow. The closure is associated with an apocalyptic image: Tearle says that over the years the café's "standards [have] slipped in the direction of the shebeen" (8) and his friend Wessels claims that the closure means, "Our days are numbered" (9). Once more, the fear of losing white privileges and a secure way of life are presented as some of the major factors contributing towards the creation of anxieties within some white characters. Therefore, fear plays a great role in shaping the apocalyptic perceptions of some of the urban white characters as they deal with the unfolding changes and edgily imagine their livelihoods in a fictional post-apartheid Johannesburg.

Another interesting strand that is depicted in the novel pertains to the constitution of a deep sense of personal alienation and obsessive imaginings within some characters as they think about the impending end of apartheid. Vladislavic's narrative employs surreal and non-realistic elements of the fantastic to describe Tearle's decline into societal alienation. This alienation from the world around him is represented through his obsessive entrance into the imaginary mural city of Alibia[14] (reminiscent of the ancient name of England, Albion). Tearle fearfully imagines that the closing down of Café Europa is a threat to his way of life and the city's too. Thus, he draws complex interconnections between the café's imminent closure, his social and linguistic reading of Johannesburg's degeneration into chaos and death, and perceived threats to the imaginary city of Alibia. As Tearle describes his experiences at the dying café, he also travels into the fantastical city of Alibia that he frequently escapes to. More so, his perceptions of their Johannesburg's degeneration and desire to save the same city are paralleled with that of Fluxman the proofreader and chief protagonist in "The Proofreader's Derby" who works hard to save Alibia from falling apart. Tearle strongly imagines that his city can be saved from collapse through the pursuit of linguistic rationality and therefore, makes a plan to save the city, just like Lambert who engages in night patrols to save Triomf from decline into crime (Van Niekerk 1999; 271-272). This is evidenced by Tearle's description of the experiences unfolding in "The Proofreader's Derby", where a proofreader's power of deletion helps to rid the imagined city of errors and thus prevent its demise.

The reader is vicariously transported into the fantastical world of Alibia, portrayed in the section of the novel titled "The Proofreader's Derby". The ensuing structural and social chaos that is anxiously imagined as likely to transpire in Johannesburg is described thus:

> One morning, Alibians awoke to find that St Cloud's Square had come
> adrift and rotated to the opposite quarter of the compass; ...
> On the outskirts of Alibia, among the sporting-goods factories
> and balsa-wood mills, in the peri-urban badlands, in the housing estates
> and low-cost townships, where the building regulations had never been
> applied with rigour and foundations were shallow, the disorder was
> precipitate. Whole streets suddenly banged together, like two halves of
> a book slammed shut by a reader, smashing everything in between,

animate and inanimate, to pulp and tinder. Blocks of flats turned topsy-
turvy, raining down the occupants and their possessions, and re-
established themselves with their roots of cables and pipes twisted in
the air, like so many baobab trees. People found themselves living on
top of one another, cheek by jowl with exactly the types they wanted
nothing to do with. (209)

However, Fluxman uses his blue pen to delete errors and all signs of structural and
infrastructure deterioration that were threatening the imaginary city of Alibia. He
redraws the maps, crumbling buildings, roads and other elements of the city's
architecture that he finds dilapidated. Fluxman also leads a proofreaders' union that
works hard in order to save Alibia from errors and destruction. As a result of the
proofreaders' urgency, "[t]he city pulled itself together. Slowly, the recognizable
outlines of Alibia reappeared, as street after street and block after block was knocked
back into its familiar, ordinary shape" (226).

The events described in "The Proofreader's Derby" indeed draw the reader
into the intricate details of Tearle's fearful imaginings of the fate of the imaginary
Hillbrow in the future. The description serves to illustrate his imagined sense of
power. Tearle, just like Fluxman, imagines that he will lead the crusade to save the
city from destruction through an active social and linguistic proofreading. This kind
of an imagined proofreaders' agency as represented by Fluxman's activities is double-
edged. It represents the delusion and conservatism held by some white characters,
who think that transformation equals deterioration and thus has to be managed to stop
the destruction of Johannesburg. In addition, one also notes that implicit in the
imagined proofreaders' agency is Tearle's obsession with the search for a solution to
prevent his Johannesburg from collapsing into social and political chaos after the
transition into a multiracial democracy.

Tearle's obsession with Alibia and linguistic perfection also reveals the paradox
of his sense of displacement. That is, despite the fact that the anxieties he and other
characters such as Spilkin feel are justified in such a period of rapid change, Tearle
fails to realise that the transition is creating a number of possibilities for those who act
in accordance with the unfolding changes. One notes that much as the fantastical
world of Alibia is full of possibilities for Fluxman and his union of proofreaders to
save their city from falling apart, so is the literary Johannesburg of Tearle and his

friends. However, this can only be achieved if the characters change their attitude towards the transition. One certainly needs a pragmatic insight in order for them to come to terms with the transition. It is unfortunate that Tearle becomes a marginalised character among some of the middle-class white characters in a literary city and nation where the dying apartheid hegemony also offers new possibilities for some characters.

Tearle is depicted in the novel as a lonely character and in a way that cuts an image of the modern day flaneur (Benjamin 1979). He never speaks of his family, never marries nor does he have a permanent set of friends. He is portrayed as a lonely figure whose sense of loyalty is only seen in his commitment to the café. Furthermore, the larger sense of social alienation, located in deep racist perceptions, is depicted in the cynical comments that he makes as he proofreads the phone book of Johannesburg. He realises "some intriguing trends ... signs of momentous changes that lay in store for the city and the country... 'M' was the fastest-growing section, thanks to the burgeoning numbers of African subscribers ... in Hillbrow" (128-129). Thus, while Tearle's social proofreading and other imaginings offer what he thinks is an appropriate social and linguistic discourse that enables him to understand further the impact of the transition, Vladislavic compels readers to actively question Tearle's imaginings and their own responses towards these urban changes. This is clearly argued by Marais (2003):

> ... Vladislavic's use of irony [which helps] in establishing a
> disjunction between Tearle's views and those of both author and the
> implied reader, apparently enables the postapartheid reader
> complacently to distance himself or herself from Tearle and deride
> his apartheid-era aberrations. (284-285)

I argue therefore that the indicators of a perhaps 'magnificent' transition into a better Johannesburg are revealed through Vladislavic's undermining of Tearle's racist-laden cynicism and apocalyptic imaginings of the post-apartheid city.

Vladislavic does indeed describe a number of positive social and political developments occurring in the portrayed city during the same transition that Tearle perceives with great suspicion. The café's new management has grown to accept

black women whom Tearle calls "ladies of the night" (130) and male patrons from all races as part of its new clientele. For Tearle, the new patrons disturb what he calls an admirable European ambience. He even asserts that he prefers the idea of the reservation of rights of admission to the newly introduced open-door policy. Nevertheless, a new and rational dispensation that he is blind to is constituted here; the coming in of new patrons signifies the period's successful removal of past racial divisions. This depicts the credible democratisation of the literary city's social and political spatiality, especially from the perspective of the formerly excluded, and some progressive characters from the white community. Vladislavic considers the idea that change is inevitable and has to be appropriated positively by the residents of this city. This is revealed by Mrs Mavrokordatos, the new owner of Café Europa, in her dismissal of Tearle's displeasure at the blacks who were now patronising the café:

> Don't pull such big eyes, Mr Tearle. I need the business. You have
> to change with the times or you get left behind. (131)

Vladislavic also reveals the possibilities of a positive transformation in literary Hillbrow and Johannesburg as a whole. The author reveals that it is possible for the urban characters to realise new and meaningful experiences in post-apartheid Johannesburg. As a case in point, life after the riotous party and 'death of the café' is described as a miraculously new experience. Shirlaine, a coloured woman and fellow party reveller, does not betray Floyd, her boyfriend, who has been attacked during the party. She accompanies him to Johannesburg Hospital together with the injured Tearle, who is also whisked off in the same ambulance to the hospital so that he could receive some medical attention. The possibility of new relationships is shown in Shirlaine's frankness as she talks to Tearle during and after their visit to the hospital. The same friendly tone continues as both characters visit some of the described public places, such as the Civic Theatre, which Tearle thought were falling apart. Shirlaine's openness and playfulness, noted in the carefree attitude she shows, as both walk from Johannesburg General Hospital into Hillbrow, proves to be an eye-opener for the sceptical Tearle:

While we were chatting, we had passed the College of
Education and turned into Queens Street, and now our path sank
down towards Empire Road. I was gearing myself for the uphill
slog into Hillbrow when she proposed making a detour past the
playground in Peter Roos Park. She wanted to play on the swings.
The park was a mass of leafy shadow behind a corral fence of
creosoted rails. Who could tell what desperadoes, dosing in the
shrubbery, might be roused by a careless footstep, but an
exhilarating recklessness had possessed me, and in any case, I
needed to take the weight off my feet. We crossed the street,
slipped between the trees on the traffic island, raising their jagged
palms to menace us, and found our way through the undergrowth.
(291)

From now on, Tearle acquires a positive identity: he realises that new and exhilarating experiences, as well as meaningful relationships across race, are possible in the new literary Johannesburg.

Later on, when both Shirlaine and Tearle get to the café, "Café Europa had been trashed" (299) and Tearle's copies of 'The Proofreader's Derby', which had been hidden in the gentlemen's room, have been stolen. Despite this gloomy incident, which seems to confirm Tearle's views that their city is deteriorating into eternal chaos, Shirlaine gives a sobering and reassuring thought. She points out that: "I can't believe you're so upset this joint is closing down. It's not the end of civilisation, you know" (300). In addition, her most pronounced portrayal of the existence of the possibilities of the dawn of a new era in the new literary Johannesburg is shown in the little book that she gives to Tearle as a gift. The third page in the book has the legend: "Be a brick. Help me to build a wall of friendship." (301).

The reader also witnesses a much more likeable Tearle, despite his obnoxious character, by the end of the novel. Tearle acknowledges that beside the ubiquitous social and linguistic errors in the city, the inhabitants of the fictive Johannesburg are communicating and understanding each other, and that life is going on smoothly and meaningfully:

> What was it Merle advised me to do? To look on the bright side
> ... The lights of motor town lay before me, the highways coiled
> like cables on the matt black of the mining wasteland, and beyond
> them the southern suburbs, the buffer zones, filling up with
> informal settlements, and the townships. Movements were afoot in
> those dark spaces that would never be reflected in the telephone
> directories. Languages were spoken there that I would never put to
> the proof. As if they were aware of it themselves, the lights were
> not twinkling, as lights are supposed to do, they were squirming
> and wriggling and writhing, like maggots battening on the foul
> proof world. (304)

Hence, Tearle realises that, as the city transforms, "the bright side" is perhaps what the dwellers of his Johannesburg should be thinking about. Moreover, it is certainly important for the urban characters to note that, despite the existence of certain errors and indicators of degeneration, they should keep pursuing ways that bring satisfaction and meaning to their lives.

4. 5 Conclusion

The social experiences that were occurring during the transition in the Johannesburg given in the texts under study represent the period's social and historical developments. Nevertheless, both Van Niekerk and Vladislavic describe these experiences differently. Van Niekerk, in *Triomf,* on one hand, gives a vivid representation, sometimes grotesque and exaggerated, that specifically focuses on the experiences of a poor Afrikaner family residing in Triomf that is filled with social and historical realism. Vladislavic, on the other hand, gives an equally interesting description of the transformation that is occurring in Hillbrow through the experiences of Aubrey Tearle, the main character in *The Restless Supermarket*, using a narrative style that conflates both social and historical realism and the fantastical. In "The WHITES ONLY Bench", Vladislavic also employs a realistic but rather satirical representation of the events and experiences faced by some of the inhabitants of Johannesburg as they restructure some of the fictive city's public institutions and monuments so that they could comply with the unfolding democratisation of the city

and country as a whole. Nevertheless, all texts depict the tension, fears and contradictions that are experienced and constituted in the various urban characters as they negotiate with the rapid social, political and historic restructuring of the city's lived, built and public spaces.

This chapter, thus, has tried to analyse the fear and apocalyptic perceptions held by some urban characters as they experience the transition. A number of the urban characters become restless and alienated as they perceive the restructuring of city's suburbs such as Triomf and inner-city residences, social and public spaces and institutions. For the main characters, especially in *Triomf* and *The Restless Supermarket*, urban public, commercial and built spaces are deteriorating. At worst, the future Johannesburg will be characterised by death and destruction as evidenced by the different characters' pessimistic views and apocalyptic visions of the fictive city. Intriguing though, in the analysis of such urban anxieties and apocalyptic visions, is the disjuncture between such perceptions and imaginings and the described unfolding events and identities coming out in the fiction under study. That is, both authors are able to reveal the various contradictions and gaps between the observations and imaginings of the Tearles, Treppies and Lamberts, and the events unfolding in the fictional Johannesburg.

Hence, one is inclined to assert that the fictive unfolding transformation is tense and unsettling for some white urban characters, for the existing urban social and public spaces are likely to be overcrowded or oversubscribed and standards may deteriorate. However, new perceptions of the city and new possibilities are also being created as realised by Tearle in his interaction with Shirlaine and his gaze at the awakening Johannesburg at the end of the novel *The Restless Supermarket*. Furthermore, the advent of a democratic fictive Johannesburg is after all, not marked by an intense chaos, social and political disintegration as depicted in the conclusions of both *Triomf* and *The Restless Supermarket*. Even if the restructuring of the city's institutions and monuments will be characterised by organisational and cultural tensions, haunted by reminders of past racial prejudices and other uncertainties, this overwhelmingly reveals an attempt at creating an all-inclusive image of Johannesburg's triumphant transition into a multiracial urban space.

Endnotes

[1] A number of historical and sociological studies have analysed the events, forces at play, perspectives and the nature of the social, political and constitutional changes that were established during the difficult and volatile period of the transition. Allister Sparks' *Tomorrow is Another Country: The Inside Story of South Africa's Negotiated Revolution* (1994), John D. Brewer's edited text, *Restructuring South Africa* (1994), Richard Spitz and Mathew Chaskalson's *The Politics of Transition: A Hidden History of South Africa's Negotiated Settlement* (2000) and Neville Alexander's *An Ordinary Country: Issues in the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa* (2002) are some of the texts that provide illuminating studies on South Africa's transition from an apartheid to a post-apartheid era.

[2] In a forthcoming chapter that analyses the fictional representation of contemporary Johannesburg, Nuttall titles the chapter "Literary City". I will use literary city or literary Johannesburg in an attempt to show that I am analysing the Johannesburg that is given in literary texts.

[3] This line of thought is influenced by Coombes' (2003: 19-53) discussion on the theme of 'translating the past', where she among other issues analyses the symbolic meanings of some of the monuments and iconography in relation to the history of apartheid.

[4] The issue of survival plays an important role in the social and historical trajectories of the Afrikaners. Giliomee (2003) outlines the Great Trek , the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), the formation and strengthening of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party and its rise to power in 1948, the subsequent introduction of apartheid laws that solidified racial, social and economic privileges principally among the Afrikaners, the fight against African nationalist and anti-apartheid movements, and arguably the negotiations for a peaceful transition into a non-racial democracy from 1990, as evidence to support his argument that the quest for survival, in its varied forms has been at the heart of the Afrikaners' agenda for the past few centuries.

[5] Giliomee (2003: 312-350) outlines a comprehensive historical analysis of the political developments and programmes that were introduced to help the poor whites who were moving into the major cities in the 1930s.

[6] Michael Titlestad's (2003) stimulating discussion on the social and political trajectories of Johannesburg based on the analysis of the city's soundscapes influences my views here.

[7] The whole process of the transition was not smooth, as history records incidences of political violence and other disturbances that punctuated the period. Examples of violent activities that threatened the success of South Africa's social and political transition are discussed by such scholars as Neville Alexander (2002), Allister Sparks (1994) and Richard Spitz and Matthew Chaskalson (2000).

[8] The use of different interpretations or shifting narratives from the past, national history and even newspaper stories is prevalent in the novel. Van Niekerk used this as a suitable technique to depict the diverse views and contradictoriness that characterises some of the characters' views of the transition (Viljoen 1996: 229-230).

[9] Unemployment among the semi-skilled and unskilled whites is here hinted as one of the issues that are affecting white communities during the transition and the problem will definitely be worse in the post-apartheid city considering that the new dispensation will do away with job reservations that were favourable for whites.

[10] In chapters 16 and 17 of his comprehensive historical text based on the social and historical trajectories of Afrikaners, titled "Surrender Without Defeat" and "A New South Africa" respectively, Giliomee (2003) discusses among other issues, the feelings of betrayal held by some Afrikaners and other whites in South Africa. He shows that some whites ended up joining other ultraconservative parties and engaging in white extremist activism during the transition and the period after because they felt that they were being exposed to huge risks of crime, unemployment and possible poverty due to the failure of the NP to negotiate a better deal for them.

[11] Commentators generally label South Africa's successful transition from an apartheid state into a democratic post-apartheid state as a 'miracle'. However, some critics such as Alexander (2002), Spitz and Chaskalson (2000) and Giliomee (2003) argue that the transition was inevitable and so had to succeed because of various factors. These factors include the impact of the late 1980s fall of Communist Russia and the end of the Cold War, effects of the international economic sanctions against apartheid and the growing desire for a negotiated settlement within moderate and pragmatic leaders from both the Afrikaner Nationalist government and the African National Congress.

[12] Stefan Helgesson (2004a) offers an in-depth study of the significance of Tearle's revulsion at the high levels of the city dwellers' oral and written errors in relation to the larger image and use of the English language in South Africa.

[13] This is reminiscent of Raymond Williams' (1973) idea of the apocalyptic and the magnificent conception of the city or any setting during moments of rapid social and political changes.

[14] Wood (2001b: 56-59) interviews Vladislavic on the use of non-realistic and fantastical features in his writing. It is clear from the interview that the author is fascinated with the fantastical and that its use enables him to provide a complex and open-ended representation of the social and political challenges that affect the urban settings that he normally focuses on in his writings.

Chapter 5: Post-apartheid Johannesburg: spatial democratisation, memory, trauma and moving on

5: 1 Introduction

The 1994 multiracial elections in South Africa and the accompanying opening up of Johannesburg led to the creation of new social and political urban experiences in the real city.[1] The opening up of business, lived and abstract spaces, due to the removal of apartheid barriers, shapes how "one sees the city as its social fabric diversifies and becomes complex", as fittingly observed by Mpe (2003: 183) in his discussion on the spatial changes occurring in real Johannesburg in the 1990s. Major preoccupations of most residents after 1994, especially the formerly excluded, focused on dealing with the legacy of apartheid's psychological and social displacement, memories of past traumas, as well as finding ways to traverse, come to terms with, and constitute appropriate identities for the 'new' Johannesburg. These concerns and issues are reflected in the post-apartheid narratives on Johannesburg under examination in this chapter.

I intend to evaluate the urban dwellers' experiences and the image of post-apartheid Johannesburg that are projected in the selected texts mentioned below. This study is based on the assertion that after the transition from apartheid to the post-apartheid dispensation, literary Johannesburg witnesses new and complex social and spatial changes. These changes were characterised by various movements into and around and appropriations of the democratised city's built and social spaces, some of which are chaotic. Others aimed at remapping and reordering urban spaces and experiences. These social and spatial changes proffer what Nuttall (2004a: 740) considers "a fruitful site for understanding city-culture in a more extended idiom", an idiom which in the texts under study is characterised by "new fusions" (Boehmer and Gaitskell 2004: 727) where the residents appropriate and transform the existing lived and built places, create new social connections and ways to understand 'the new' in post-apartheid Johannesburg, and attempt to deal with past traumas and other haunting histories. I contend that the Johannesburg represented in these texts is complex and ambivalent. Gunner (2003) fittingly describes the fictive Johannesburg as a space characterised by fears and possibilities, thus revealing some of the ambivalent qualities of this city.

I will examine how the residents of this post-apartheid Johannesburg are able to perceive the new experiences associated with the opening up of the city to local and foreign migrants. Other questions underpinning my study include: How are the urban dwellers able to relate to the desegregated lived and built spaces? What survival techniques and social connections do they create? What perceptions of their city, other dwellers, the past and the future are held by some of these residents? How do the characters' responses to the painful memories of past apartheid injustices and abuses impact on their life experiences and identities in Johannesburg?

The above hypothesis and questions will guide my study of Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001), Jonathan Morgan's *Finding Mr Madini* (1999), Jo-Anne Richards' *Sad at the Edges* (2003) and Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* (2001). These texts critically represent the different experiences taking place in some of the fictive post-apartheid Johannesburg spaces. The experiences include the urban dwellers' appropriations and attempts at redefining and re-ordering[2] their lives in Johannesburg. Robinson (1999: 163) perceives this tone and remaking pervading the early post-apartheid Johannesburg years as characterised by "experiences of mobility, interaction and the dynamism of space". This mobility, social interaction and spatial dynamism (as noted by Robinson (1999) above) defining the nature of this period's urban flux, is to a large extent characterised by new class-based and 'citizen'-based perceptions of the city and the self in relation to other citizens and the city itself. The newly created perceptions determine whether one belongs or does not belong in the new fictive city, as will be discussed with particular reference to *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and *Finding Mr Madini*. In addition, some of the characters' experiences, as reflected in *Sad at the Edges* and *Bitter Fruit*, are heavily complicated by the combination between memories of physical and sexual abuse, present psychological and social displacement, and the need to create new and 'appropriate' identities aimed at adapting to the demands and conditions of post-apartheid Johannesburg.

A brief examination of the theoretical views that inform the above-mentioned hypothesis, upon which this chapter is based, is important. As discussed in the previous chapter, and basing my argument mainly on Williams' (1973) study on the literary representations of London's transformation from a feudal settlement into a modern city, any process of transformation is laden with paradoxes including the fear of losing an old order and anxious expectations of a better future city. The characters in the transforming London under examination "experienced a new kind of

alienation" (Williams 1973: 150) at some stages in the process, which is characterised by the residents' loss of a pastoral order that they had been used to in the country, exploitation in London's industries and exposure to austere living standards. Williams aptly describes this chaotic life experienced by a number of urban dwellers thus:

> Blake saw a common condition of 'weakness and woe'. Wordsworth
> saw strangeness, a loss of connection, not at first in social but in
> perceptual ways: a failure of identity in the crowd of others which
> worked back to a loss of society itself... (1973: 150)

Nevertheless, Williams goes on to show that despite this image of a chaotic life experience, the same writers also reflect positive images of urban experiences, thus showing a simultaneous creation of a new order in London. Williams analyses Wordsworth's 1850 version of "Residence in London" in *The Prelude*, where the poet perceives experiences in London from a different angle that registers "new kinds of possible order, new kinds of human unity, in the transforming experience of the city... in the same shock of recognition" (1973: 151). I am interested in this paradox in my study of post-apartheid narratives on Johannesburg, even though the idea, as postulated by Williams, is based on the experiences that took place in a Western city, London, going through changes based on different social and economic factors from those that dwellers in Johannesburg experienced during its transformation from apartheid to a multiracial era. It is significant to note how, for instance, the inhabitants' different appropriations, perceptions and movements in post-apartheid Johannesburg, are representative of the chaotic life experiences in the city. The likes of Refentse, Tshepo and Lerato, and various new African migrants, who move into Hillbrow, now opened-up from a past racially-based order in Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, will be examined later in the chapter using the above ideas.

The impact of the historical eradication of the apartheid order is of great significance in the establishment of the different life experiences, which were both orderly and chaotic in literary post-apartheid Johannesburg. I consider the old apartheid racialised censorship and ordering of every aspect of life in the city, and the subsequent marginalisation of the non-white dwellers, as resembling Foucault's concept of the panopticon (1977). Hence, I hypothesize that the dismantling of the apartheid panopticon during the period of the transition, as discussed in the previous

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chapter, resulted in huge social and political changes that saw a mass exodus, by the previously excluded, from the townships and the rural areas into the city. Once in the city the new migrants and urban dwellers made new appropriations and remapped the different city spaces in ways they thought suitable, most of which redrew urban spatial borders, social relations and perspectives of the self and that of the city. I contend that this massive movement into urban spaces such as Hillbrow, as will be discussed when examining the huge migrant community and their different perceptions and experiences reflected in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, contributes, to a great extent, towards the establishment of complex urban use patterns and practices, such as walking in the city and placing oneself in an alienating city, as perceived by De Certeau in the illuminating *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). Such 'new' urban experiences create new social and spatial use patterns, which Nuttall (forthcoming 2007) terms multidirectional movements and new rhythms of urban life. Furthermore, the experiences of the characters such as Refentse, Lerato and Refilwe in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and that of the homeless characters in *Finding Mr Madini*, are indicative of their multiple appropriations of the city spaces and the generally confusing strategies they adopt. This creates an image of a Johannesburg that is trying to reconstitute itself from an old apartheid character, no longer relevant to the new democratic project, yet it is an apartheid order that enshrined certain ideals such as controlled spatial densities and a striving for proper use of certain streets, and lived and commercial spaces, which might still be relevant in the contemporary new order. This old Johannesburg has to accommodate old dwellers and significantly new ones, mostly from the so-called non-whites and foreign African migrants, who hold different perspectives and aspirations and face different personal challenges that will certainly impact on the post- apartheid experiences in complex and often contradictory ways. Such an image is aptly described by Bremner (2004) in the title of her seminal book on post-apartheid Johannesburg spatial use and architectural patterns as 'Johannesburg: one city [with] colliding worlds'.

Most immediate to this chapter, and advancing my hypothesis regarding the complexity of life experiences in which the fictive dwellers of Johannesburg have to grapple with order and disorder, are the cultural and geographic interpretations on order and disorder given by Gerry Mooney (1999). Mooney describes some of the features of urban disorder as heterogeneity and an intensified social difference, the existence of shantytowns, derelict housing schemes and buildings, and riotous

behaviour. Other emblems of such a disorder are the dawn of new forms of urban exclusion, and unequal social, economic and political relations. I will consider these and the different appropriations and remapping of the post-apartheid city in my study of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and *Finding Mr Madini*. However, congruent to this paradox are attempts by some characters to find meaning in the complex and confusing life experiences. I will examine how some characters, such as Refentse in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, and the homeless writers, represented in *Finding Mr Madini*, attempt to belong and create new relationships in and new perceptions of the post-apartheid Johannesburg. These attempts, which I consider as some form of the social and creative reordering of both the characters' lives and Johannesburg, are indicative of the complexity unfolding during the immediate post-apartheid period.

There certainly are different forces at play in the chaos established and the subsequent attempts at reordering the lives and perceptions of the different characters as reflected in the different texts under examination in this chapter. Past events and their trauma return to haunt and disrupt the lives of characters such as Francesca in *Sad at the Edges* and the Alis in *Bitter Fruit*. These characters undergo difficult experiences as they 'negotiate with their pasts' (to borrow a phrase from Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee's title of their insightful book *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (1998)) and suffer saddening fallouts in their relationships, as especially witnessed in Silas and Mikey Alis' destructive responses portrayed in *Bitter Fruit*. Theoretical considerations discussed by critics such as Andre Brink (1998) and Anthony Holiday (1998) on memory-making, and the contestation between public and private confession in relation to personal healing and forgiveness, will be considered in the examination of how some characters grapple with traumatic memories and try to create new identities and move on with their lives as described in *Sad at the Edges* and *Bitter Fruit*. In both novels, domestic and inner chaos, and a post-modern indeterminacy are central to this order and disorder that is experienced by some of the dwellers during the early post-apartheid period. David Byrne (1997: 50-56) in his discussion of the post-industrial Western city explores the idea of urban chaos and disorder within the post-modern perspective of indeterminacy, fragmentation and other aspects. He goes on to look at the simultaneous existence of order and disorder in any urban setting undergoing transformation or as it experiences its continuum, and reveals how this simultaneity adds to the complex quality of city life. I am interested in his idea of the simultaneous existence of order and disorder and

how this contributes towards the establishment of complex subject formations and agencies as the characters try to come to terms with their complex lives. Here, memories of the past are not necessarily 'charming and nostalgic', as aptly noted by Elizabeth Wilson (1997: 133) on nostalgia and the city, but come to destabilise the characters' social lives and psyche, as witnessed in the experiences of Francesca in *Sad at the Edges* and the Alis in *Bitter Fruit*.

5.2 Spatial dynamism, life experiences and the character of post-apartheid Johannesburg

Granted that the end of apartheid and the subsequent dawn of multiracial democracy led to the opening up of South African cities such as Johannesburg, it becomes worthwhile to critically examine the effect of social and political changes on the patterns of urban spatial use and the residents' perspectives of themselves and their city. There is a need to examine "the world of always- moving spaces" and "the dynamism of space" (Robinson 1999: 163), as well as the life experiences that are taking place in Johannesburg as reflected in the texts under study. In this regard, critical attention must be focussed on how the represented urbanites are able to relate to both the desegregated lived and built spaces, and to other characters that have just arrived or were already resident in Johannesburg.

Literary Johannesburg witnesses a new and intense use, by its inhabitants, of some of the city's space. A new pattern of pedestrian use and other forms of travel in the city's built and lived spaces are undertaken, especially by the previously excluded. These practices, where pedestrians and citizens in general use their space in various ways thereby expressing their freedom, perceptions of and ways in which they relate with their city, in this case post-apartheid Johannesburg, are succinctly discussed by De Certeau (1984: 91-110) as pedestrian speech acts. These are travels and urban use patterns that metaphorically reflect their views on and relationships with their city. The urban dwellers therefore use and appropriate the city with great energy and sometimes in confusing ways. Such urban mappings and appropriations are described by Bremner (2004) as social and spatial uses, and experiential patterns moving in various directions that cross over the old physical boundaries of Johannesburg. The spatial uses and experiential patterns have also resulted in new and numerous appropriations of some of post-apartheid Johannesburg's spaces. This is aptly revealed later in the huge invasion of inner-city Hillbrow by African local

and foreign migrants, the subsequent overcrowding of the streets, and the abandoning and turning of some buildings such as respectable shops and hotels into dens of the homeless and noisy night-clubs, as described in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and *Finding Mr Madini*. These urban experiences occurring in the post-apartheid city are noted by Nuttall (2004a: 742)[3] as fitting within the new thinking on "the city as a place of manifold rhythms, forged through daily encounters and multiple experiences of time and place". The multiple uses are indeed reflected in the literary and cultural representations of Johannesburg, the main focus of this thesis, and in various sociological, architectural and historical studies on the same city. Before examining the fictive portrayal of these dynamic urban uses and multiple experiences, it is important to note that significant scholarly works that examine the various experiences of the urban dwellers, business trends and the architectural developments occurring in the different spaces of the real post-apartheid Johannesburg have been produced by scholars like Alan Morris, *Bleakness and Light: Inner – City Transition in Hillbrow. Johannesburg* (1999), Lindsay Bremner, *Johannesburg: One City, Colliding Worlds* (2004) and Richard Tomlinson et al., *Emerging Johannesburg: Perspectives on the Postapartheid City* (2003). However, this thesis focuses mainly on the literary representation of the different urban dwellers' experiences during the early post-apartheid period (all the texts under discussion are set between 1996 and 1999), and I thus begin with an analysis of how mainly African migrants and other dwellers react to and experience the opening up of the once segregated Johannesburg, as discussed in Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*.

5.2.1 Migrant appropriations, new perceptions of and remapping Hillbrow in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

Mpe's novel, written in an experimental style that incorporates the use of the autobiographical, vivid documentation, and reference to architecture and oral folk tale narrative styles, reveals the characters' appropriations, remapping, the constitution of new perceptions of the self in relation to Johannesburg and that of the self in relation to other residents. *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* provides a picturesque representation of the architecture, infrastructure and life experiences taking place in the immediate post-apartheid Hillbrow inner-city space of Johannesburg. This vivid description of the city's built and lived area is, to a great extent, a factual documentation of the inner

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city's architecture. Mpe (2003) reflects with intense enthusiasm and a critical focus on the changes that occurred in real Hillbrow during the early 1990s, and one is not surprised at the incorporation of a vivid documentation style, drawing on such reflections, in the description of the experiences of the recently-arrived African migrant dwellers in his novel. The first chapter of the novel is actually called "Hillbrow: The Map"; a metaphor reminiscent of De Certeau's (1984) concept of mapping the city through the experiences of an ordinary citizen's pedestrian travels and perceptions. The inner city's built spaces and the associated life experiences are vividly portrayed in the novel. We get a glimpse of the character of the residential flats in Hillbrow, especially Vickers Place in Caroline Street (7) where Refentse, a Tiragalonga-born mobile Hillbrowan studying at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) lives with his policeman cousin. He later falls in love with a fellow student from Alexandra Township, Lerato, establishes himself in Hillbrow, while teaching at Wits, and later commits suicide after discovering his girlfriend in bed with his best friend Sammy. All these experiences are portrayed in the first person narrative which is dominant in the text. Also described are the office complexes, churches such as "Christ Church, the Bible Centred Church of Christ" (6), banks, such as ABSA and First National Bank, supermarkets and shops including Checkers, Spar, Clicks and CNA, as well as night clubs and pubs, carrying symbolic names including The Base (alluding to an important place where one has to be in order to be trendy) and Jabula Ebusuku (a place for joyous night entertainment) (7-8), thus vividly documenting a true- to-life picture of the intense remapping and appropriations of Hillbrow's social and built spaces.

The mapping quickly introduces the reader to the existing multiple spatial uses and perceptions of this opened-up space, described by Mpe, in an interview with Lizzy Attree (2005: 138), as "a portrait of Hillbrow ... in a very geographic sense". Hillbrow is represented as a limited locale, as in real life, yet it is a built and lived space that exudes a different perceived and experienced temporality as confirmed by Tshepo (the narrator): "Hillbrow – that locality of just over one square kilometre, according to official records; and according to its inhabitants, at least twice as big and teeming with countless people" (1). The image invoked here is that of a now opened-up city peopled by various newly-arrived migrants who possess different perspectives and engage in different movements and patterns of spatial use. The streets are characterised by freedom of movement, crime and moral degeneration. The trope of

the migrant, also present in *Finding Mr Madini*, discussed later, is used to modify this social mapping of the described Hillbrow. This is noted through the different recently-arrived African inhabitants' various street movements and uses, overcrowding and the ubiquity of prostitutes, drug users and dealers. Even the rhythm of the new Hillbrow, by this time greying due to the flight of businesses from the CBD resulting in abandonment of office complexes, hotels, restaurants and hotels, as noted in the critical studies by Morris (1999) and Tomlinson et al (2003), is unstable, raw and uncaring. This multiplicity and contradictoriness is best shown in an oral narrative style, hinted at through the informality of the story-teller authorial voice and repetition of certain ideas and phrases such as, "you will recall" and "you will remember" in the following quotation. The citation depicts the euphoric street celebrations taking place after the South African national football team, Bafana Bafana's win of the Africa Cup of Nations in 1995 that are tainted with violence:

> You would remember the last occasion in 1995, when Bafana Bafana
> won against Ivory Coast and, in their jubilation, people in Hillbrow
> hurled bottles of all sorts from their flat balconies. A few bold souls,
> boasting a range of driving skills, swung and spun their cars in the
> streets, making U–turns and circles all over the road. You will recall
> the child, possibly seven years old or so, who got hit by a car. Her
> mid-air screams still ring in your memory. When she hit the concrete
> pavements of Hillbrow, her screams died with her. A young man just
> behind you shouted:
>> Kill the bastard!
>> But the driver was gone. (1-2)

Life here is revealed as characterised by this unimaginable freedom where anything can happen in Hillbrow: euphoric celebrations and death; freedom of movement; and the *corrupt walks of the drug dealer and prostitute, as well as other odd juxtapositions,* which are to some extent, a metanarrative of the larger Johannesburg. These all reflect the contradictions and instability evident in the newly forming post-apartheid Johannesburg.

The different streets walked by Refentse and other characters and their movements across Hillbrow (Nuttall 2004a: 743) also vividly capture the multiple

rhythms, experiences in and perceptions of Hillbrow. Various studies on this novel (Nuttall 2004a; Gunner 2003; Manase 2003) have critically examined the associated symbolic remapping, where the characters define and perceive the spaces differently from their intended social and economic purposes, as postulated by De Certeau (1984), and depicted in the way Refentse, in particular, as well as the African migrants and other ordinary dwellers cross over some of Hillbrow's streets, pass spatial nodes, such as the police stations, and perceive banks and supermarkets dotted around the inner city in their day-to-day lives. We notice, from the characters' travels around Hillbrow, that most African urban dwellers and migrants now have access into the inner city's various spaces. Refentse, for one, has just arrived in Johannesburg from rural Tirigalonga and is finding his way in Hillbrow on his mission to study at Witwatersrand University, when we first meet him. Other migrants, both local and foreign, are also revealed establishing themselves and experiencing Hillbrow from different angles. The city also affords the inhabitants the chance to write their own travel routes as indicated by Refentse's travels in and around Hillbrow and to and from Wits.

Furthermore, the likes of Refentse achieve the freedom to perceive some of these spaces differently or to ignore others for that matter, thus depicting an urban practice aptly described by Nuttall (2004a: 743) as "a revised inventory of the city, comprising a path along its streets, both tracking and breaching historical constructions of the city". The narrator, for instance, maps Hillbrow Police station as a place "in which you (Refentse) take minimal interest" (11), since such a space has been historically a site of state-sanctioned oppression and the exclusion of Africans, Coloureds and Indians from the apartheid city. Later on we note that Refentse categorises the same police station as one of the places denoting the continuity of the past in the present. He considers this in relation to numerous cases of harassment and the brutalisation of illegal immigrants and prostitutes in Hillbrow by some police officers whose intention is mostly to solicit bribes. Of great significance here, is the point that post-apartheid Hillbrow and indeed Johannesburg is portrayed as a space where the inhabitants are able to walk freely, without encountering any racialised boundaries or any rigid controls over how one perceives or relates to the city. Literary Johannesburg has thus moved on, despite certain contradictions such as Refentse's cousin's solicitation of bribes from illegal foreign migrants and prostitutes. More so, the inhabitants now have to look for new ways, thus create a new order, which will

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enable them to relate to and formulate new connections with their city and other urban dwellers.

The novel clearly shows that the post-apartheid dispensation has encouraged the redefinition of some of the city's spaces, as well as the formulation of new connections with and new temporalities in the city. Tshepo, the narrator, voices the different experiences of the important characters Refentse, Lerato, Refilwe, Bohlale and Sammy, as they journey from their once excluded spaces into and out of Johannesburg, find a place in the same city, as well as relate to the inner-city Hillbrow's streets, social and work spaces. The fictive Hillbrow also possesses a different temporality and experiential space for most of these local migrants, the Tirigalongas and others. The migrant characters bring in their experiences and perceptions acquired from their original homes and these later on influence their views and life in Hillbrow and Johannesburg, thus introducing a new dynamic and social memory to the Johannesburg experiences.[4] The trope of the migrant is used to show the rise of sentiments rooted in an African imaginary based on what the city and Johannesburg in particular is or should be. The trope further reveals some of the new forms of urban conflicts and discriminations, which are not necessarily based on race, now forming part of the post-apartheid city's social mapping. This is highlighted in the way foreign migrants from the region further north of the Limpopo are collectively scorned by the locals as *Makwerekwere* and stigmatised by the local "[m]igrants who deduced from such media reports (the grapevine) that AIDS's travel route into Johannesburg was through *Makwerekwere*" (4). Nevertheless, both the local and foreign African migrants, as is also reflected in *Finding Mr Madini*, have embraced the inner city and it has in turn embraced them – "Welcome to our Hillbrow" (5), which in a way confirms that intriguing simultaneous existence of order and disorder (Byrne 1997) discussed in the introduction.

Various tropes are used in the novel to portray the 'dark side' of and perhaps mark the notion of the two-cities-in-one that is in existence in Johannesburg. These tropes include the prominence of seedy pubs and nightclubs such as Sweet Caroline, The Fans, The Base and Jabula Ebusuku (7-8) that are patronised by local and foreign prostitutes and drug dealers. There is also the trope of overcrowded streets, where one is never safe as signified by the mugging of the drug-addicted Sammy while he is coming from The Chelsea Hotel (50-51). It is also shown in the way Bohlale "was knocked over by a speeding car [...] driven by hijackers fleeing a pursuing convoy of

Johannesburg Murder and Robbery Squad cars" (53) while on her way to visit Sammy who was in hospital.

I am interested in how this bleak image, which gives a picture of urban experiences in this post-apartheid period, is to a great extent characterised by different forms of social disorder and spatial neglect, which are however not as grotesque and apocalyptic as the chaos imagined by the likes of the Benades and Tearles of fictive Johannesburg discussed in Chapter 4. This disorder resonates with the interpretation of disorder discussed, from a cultural geographic point of view, by Mooney in the chapter "Urban 'disorders'" (1999), already discussed in the introduction of this chapter. I find the post-apartheid city disorderly, in the sense that the pedestrian enunciations of some urban characters, such as local and foreign migrants, drug dealers, prostitutes, beggars and the ubiquitous street vendors, typify a movement marked by negative appropriations and uses of the city. These movements aptly captured in Tshepo's exclamation: "welcome to our Hillbrow of milk and honey and bile, all brewing in the depths of our collective consciousness" (41), reflect a rudimentary image of strange interlinks and urban chaos. If we agree that there are ways in which this post-apartheid city's experiences are punctuated by some imagined, perceived and lived disorder, new forms of exclusion, instances of spatial dereliction and general overcrowding, a need arises for an examination of how the re/ordering of the fictive post-apartheid Hillbrow is portrayed.

Mpe traces the life experiences of the main characters in a style that is sometimes autobiographical, and through them portrays an opened-up and energetic city, where various dwellers live close together, yet have different aspirations and social positions in Hillbrow. It is clear to the reader that Refentse and his friends enter the city with certain naiveties that probably account for their social and psychological displacement. Refentse is just a rural boy when he enters into Johannesburg for the first time and has to be given directions and a map of Hillbrow. He has to craft careful walks on the streets, for he, just like most characters, is threatened by certain risks ranging through crime, police brutality and being taken advantage of by strangers (his cousin tells him not to greet "every fool in Hillbrow" (12)). Moreover, the likes of Refentse and Refilwe, and other Tirigalongas, succumb to parochial and rural prejudices, such as views based on oral migrant narratives and the old apartheid Radio Lebowa[5] that all migrants in Johannesburg are under threat from diseased foreign men and women, and that "all Hillbrow women were prostitutes, who spent their

nights leaning against the walls of the giant buildings in which they conducted their trade of under-waist bliss" (39). It is no wonder that these migrants bring their social memories, which are to a great extent different from those that had been in existence before the post-apartheid era. This then introduces a new idea of what the city is in the post-apartheid era, where the polarity between the European and apartheid sensibility, on the one hand, and the rural and African one, on the other, is broken due to an establishment of the oral and the folk in the city.[6] However, these experiences and perceptions are juxtaposed with some characters' attempts at adapting to and finding meaning in the city. For instance, Tshepo offers rational and different views on issues such as HIV/AIDS, an indicator of the trope of disease also used in the novel to reveal the new challenges that define the post-apartheid experiences in Johannesburg. He does not blame its spread on foreigners and he is very critical of prejudice against foreigners as noted in his sentiments that: "Many of the *Makwerekwere* you accuse of this and that are no different to us – sojourners, here in search of green pastures" (18). There are also a number of opportunities in the same city that point to some form of upward mobility and re/ordering, as observed in Refentse's rise to be a lecturer at Wits before he commits suicide, a point that I will examine in great detail later on in this section. This reveals the ongoing characters' urban experiences, where life moves in different directions and reflects a conflict between order and disorderly transition in the fictive Hillbrow.

It is clear that the fictive and even real post-apartheid Hillbrow space has transformed into a democratic and cosmopolitan space. The inner city has been democratised socially and politically to the extent that it has become multi-ethnic as evidenced by the arrival of various local migrants and those from other African countries. The influence of the African element and social memory is symbolised by the colloquial narrative style, aptly described by Ato Quayson (2000: 84) as the oral trope, which permeates the novel. At the same time, there are indicators of the links between Johannesburg and the Euro-American city as demonstrated by the presence of companies and representatives of foreign capital such as Coca Cola and a number of banks, as revealed by Tshepo in his description of the map of Hillbrow in the first chapter of the novel. Johannesburg is growing bigger than it was during apartheid, and is being influenced by the local, regional and global (ideas that I will be looking at in the next chapter), which are indicators of the complexities typical of the flux taking place in most major world cities.

Conceivably, the inner city is portrayed as a bleak place due to the fact that most of the characters, especially the migrants from Tirigalonga, fail to position themselves strategically in relation to the various complexities that are forming. Xenophobia (espoused by Refentse's cousin), distrust of urban women (held by migrants from Tirigalonga), dishonesty (exhibited by Refilwe's spread of false information over the suicidal death of Refentse) and other prejudices are indicative of the rise of new forms of social exclusions and a lack of social cohesion in Johannesburg. Some of these issues are discussed by Mooney (1999) as indicators of urban disorder. Nevertheless, the novel reveals a number of attempts aimed at re/ordering and establishing an imaginative control over some Johannesburg experiences. The most central indicator of re/ordering is Tshepo's re-storying of his friends' experiences in Hillbrow. He returns from the dead in a folktale-like style, where time and space are collapsed, to narrate the experiences of his friends and transports them into the 'heavenly realm', as portrayed in the chapter "Notes from Heaven", where they reunite and reconcile:

> Together, the two of you (Refentse and Lerato) had gone to meet your mother in the courtyard of heaven. You introduced her to this former Johannesburger. Your mother had examined her looks carefully, the way old people in Tirigalonga are wont to do. [...]
>
> Then, your mother took you and Lerato to the House of Heaven, where you met Tshepo and his father, Piet, who was Lerato's father too, but whom she had never known since he was killed before she was born. There too, was Tshepo's mother, who had died of grief when Tshepo was struck by lightning. She and Tshepo's father were finally reunited, although she did not yet know that her husband's heart was only partly here in Heaven, and partly in our Johannesburg, where Lerato's mother still was. [...]
>
> So you went with Lerato to watch the TV in the Heaven lounge, while your mother continued her chat with fellow villagers or as it now was, fellow Heaveners. After which Lerato suggested that you watch a movie together. You were not keen on movies. When you were still living in our Parktown Village and Hillbrow, Lerato used to go to the cinema with

Sammy while you did your academic work. But since she had just arrived in our Heaven, you decided that you would indulge her wish. (69-71)

This oral narrative style is also evident in the merging of the documentary, autobiographical, the creative and performative style used in *Finding Mr Madini* that will be discussed next and in writings to be considered in Chapter 6, which demonstrate new and experimental ways to imagine and shape life experiences. This condition is now feasible in the post-apartheid city because past censorships of the imaginary that writers used to face, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, are no longer in existence.[7]

More importantly, any failure and death by some of the main characters, notably Refentse's and Lerato's suicide, as well as Sammy's degeneration into dementia after Bohlale's death, are all revealed as emanating from the characters' unfortunate personal choices and rash decisions. Tshepo, in his re-storying, emphasises repeatedly that if Refentse had not given in to "the seduction of suicide" (67) he would have understood why Lerato had ended up in bed with Sammy, thus proving that the deaths and other failures plaguing the main characters in the novel are to some extent due to the characters' decisions. In addition, these characters' miserable fate can be viewed as hinting at the social and psychological pressures, as well as the general irrationality making up this city, probably typical of any city for that matter. Nevertheless, the tone is optimistic, for despite the deaths, the heavenly union by some characters, the return of Refentse from the dead and Refilwe's decision to fight in the battle against her HIV condition and not commit suicide, after her return from England, reflect "a positive vision" (Attree 2005: 142) as noted by the author himself. Consequently, the city's duality as a bleak space tottering towards chaos but at the same time enabling attempts at an orderly and meaningful experience is revealed. This duality is also portrayed in *Finding Mr Madini*.

5.2.2 Finding *Mr Madini*: social and spatial freedom, chaos and the quest for survival

The novel *Finding Mr Madini* reflects thematic and spatial representations of Johannesburg, similar to those depicted in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. Both texts use the trope of the migrant to portray pertinent issues such as the arrival of local and foreign African migrants and their multiple appropriations and uses of the inner city,

the CBD and other suburbs, and the ongoing social exclusion of some characters in the post-apartheid dispensation. The migrants and other characters' multiple uses and movements in the city are, to a great extent, linked to the inner turmoil affecting some characters in Johannesburg. They thus metaphorically spell out the disorder dominating the city. Certain disorders, similar to those portrayed in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, such as the immediate post-apartheid migrant influx that results in high levels of overcrowding in some parts of the city, hostile competition for space and the neglect of some of the city's spaces, are revealed in the novel. Just as in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, the novel links the trope of the migrant, with the urban experiences of the rural and sometimes foreign narrators to portray a complex sense of the new post-apartheid social mapping now existing in Johannesburg.

The reader is made aware of a mixture of local and foreign migrants who inhabit the Johannesburg portrayed in *Finding Mr Madini*, as Jonathan Morgan, the director of the text, assembles the different autobiographical narratives given by some Johannesburg homeless and other down-and-out characters. These characters, comprising a mixture of local and foreign migrants, hold a regular writers' workshop for the newspaper *Homeless Talk*. Some of the homeless writers include Steve, the former gold miner and failed boxer from Transkei, and Virginia, a struggling actor in one of the city's theatre companies who comes from Venda in the northern Limpopo province and lives at "Cornelius House, a derelict warehouse in Albert Street... [where] [r]ent range[s] from R60 per month to R180 [and] communal cooking facilities and ablutions ... are always locked" (50-51). Other members are: Sipho Madini, originally from Kimberley, a talented homeless writer to whom the title of the novel is dedicated; Gert a poor Afrikaner with an Argentinean ancestry who grew up with his grandparents near Westdene Dam in Johannesburg; Robbie from Ghana who "owns a pavement barber shop" (77); Valentine, the Cameroonian native and a son to an irresponsible criminal father called Lord Albert, who used to deal in drugs while in Canada; Fresew, a refugee from Ethiopia; Patrick an art graduate from one of Johannesburg's technical colleges; and Jonathan, a Jewish psychologist and director of the text's production. These characters are of different ethnicities and races, and from various places of origin. As a result, this Johannesburg is characterised by a presence of the rural, as indicated by reference to experiences in Venda and Transkei; cities other than Johannesburg, such as Kimberley; and experiences from other countries such a Cameroon, Ethiopia and Canada. This is depicted through the

different characters' memories and attachment to places of origin or those they have once lived in. This shows the city as a repository of many memories and social maps. Furthermore, the centrality of the image of post-apartheid Johannesburg as a cosmopolitan city going through wide-ranging re-appropriations, intrusions and new associations as it opens up, also reflected in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and to some extent in *Sad at the Edges* (as we will notice), is again confirmed in this novel.

In addition, the homeless characters' vivid and factual description of their colleagues' 'homes' (each is tasked with visiting a member's 'home' so that she/he will describe it as a way of introducing a colleague's readings) offers us a picture of the disorder, as discussed by Mooney (1999). The disorder is reflected in the human congestion, poverty and dereliction existing in some of the city's spaces. As has already been pointed out, Virginia lives in a converted warehouse, whose imprisoning and claustrophobic effect is noted in Pinky's statement that:

I feel bad. Maybe she (Virginia) thinks I do not understand how it feels. You feel trapped and angry. You want to get out and find a place you can raise your child. A window for a view of life. A window is all you want to give you hope. To make you smile. That is all. (52)

Sipho's home is an underground drain somewhere in Braamfontein and Steven is a "Jo'burg hobo" (215), who at one stage in the past led an invasion of the abandoned South African Defence Force's building the Drill Hall, before being expelled from the building due to alcoholism. Patrick, an art graduate, completed his studies at a certain Johannesburg technical college, while sharing a small roof-top room in a middle-class Rosebank Flat complex with his domestic-worker relative. This city is, therefore, portrayed as an alienating and uncaring one, especially to the poor and vulnerable who find themselves excluded in an ironically newly democratised space. For such characters, the exclusion makes for meaningless life experiences, unstable lives and thus a chaotic urban condition, especially when considering that the attainment of multiracial democracy is generally perceived as symbolising an opening up of opportunities as displayed in the hope that Sipho has when he leaves Kimberley for Johannesburg.

The different homeless characters' experiences also aid in the reflection of the city's heterogeneity. The trope of the characters' production of windows into their

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past provides factual narrations of past personal experiences, outside and inside Johannesburg, and their thoughts on the present and future city. The stories reveal Johannesburg's heterogeneity in terms of the variety of past experiences and social memories, thus contributing to the existing body of chaotic life experiences. That is, even though most characters are, at this point in the development of Johannesburg, coming to terms with their past and traumatic memories, their different stories confirm that the traumas suffered during apartheid are varied. We note, for instance, Virginia's sickly early life in Venda and her subsequent experiences under the care of her domestic-worker grandmother, who worked for a benevolent white suburban boss in apartheid Johannesburg. We are also made aware of Steven and other miners' exposure to humiliating recruitment and dangerous work conditions at Randfontein Mine, as well as his brief success as a professional boxer in the 1980s until he degenerated into a homeless character. Furthermore, the recollections are also revealed as complex since they are not all owing to the effects of apartheid. There are also foreign migrant members of the writers' workshop who have to contend with various disasters, but these are entirely from a different history and experiences. Valentine Cascarino's experiences are a good example to support this other source of pain and other pasts haunting some of the foreign migrants. Although he is from Cameroon and he has been to Canada, he has a history of drug abuse and dealing. He is also grappling with the burden of his father's criminal activities. Valentine's father was a notorious and wealthy mastermind of major cash-in-transit heists and other criminal activities in Johannesburg before his ultimate downfall. What I consider to be important here, is the fact that the different pasts of these homeless Johannesburg characters either contribute to their exclusion in the present, or haunt them and thus destabilise their positioning and identity as they participate in the developing post-apartheid urban experiences.

In addition, the windows onto the various characters' past lives, to a great extent contribute towards the creation of an image that reflects the existence of this other disorganized city of unfulfilled dreams, homelessness, poverty, pain and other predicaments. Steven is a homeless man and a failure because he left his job at the mine to pursue a career as a boxer in another city, but he failed to realise his dream after losing his bus fare during a brief drinking session. Later on, alcoholism becomes the source of his undoing and entrance into a perpetual life of homelessness. Sipho is homeless because he lacks skills that would enable him to find a job and also because

he failed to find his uncle after his first arrival in Soweto from Kimberley. Virginia is homeless and struggling to find a stable career because she is a life-long victim of coincidental violence. Her first taxi boss boyfriend was killed in taxi warfare and later on her house in the township was destroyed during the mini civil war that devastated the townships during the transition from the apartheid to the post-apartheid era. These windows into the homeless writers' experiences also become the windows into the history of the city, an idea aptly observed by Gunner (2003) as autobiographical narratives that imprint on the autobiography of the city of Johannesburg. The same narratives rendering fictive Johannesburg's state of flux also reveal a combination of different movements and encounters that are metaphorically chaotic. Johannesburg's journey into 'newness' becomes problematic in that the city is largely uncaring, lacks opportunities for the average dweller and migrant and to a large extent life, for some, lacks direction, and hence, is disorderly.

Nevertheless, the city does offer possibilities enabling its dwellers to harness some of its pliable qualities that would transform it into a welcoming city as noted by Raban (1984). I consider any attempts at placing themselves strategically and visibly in the austere and uncaring Johannesburg, as indicative of attempts aimed at re/ordering the city. These attempts, if any, are also similar to Robinson's ideas on the ability of the dominated or excluded urban dwellers to cross over the boundaries of exclusion and thus imagine and live the city differently (1999: 165-166). In the novel, then, the writers' workshops, where each member describes his or her experiences, perceptions and aspirations in the city, are to a great extent suggestive of attempts at coming to terms with their past and present and in the process creating new identities and ordering their lives and city. The act of writing and narrating past and present experiences to the other members, and the after-reading discussions held to evaluate each member's narrative, are representative of the establishment of some order, verbal and creative, in the writers' various experiences in Johannesburg. The naming of their act of writing as the Great African Spider Writers (title page) confirms the associated creative ordering of lives that is facilitated by the narratives. Jonathan's reply to Valentine, in an interview given in the epilogue, succinctly reveals this:

> ...the more I write and live part of my life as a writer, the more I see
> how powerfully we shape our worlds through the language and

stories we choose for ourselves. I'm also aware that privilege brings with it more power and choice when it comes to re-storying. (277)

There is also a connectedness that is created between the members of the writers' workshop as they meet every time, visit one another's 'home', and talk about each other. As the novel develops we find that Jonathan is always looking forward to the workshops and encouraging the others to bring their writings. Characters such as Pinky, who did not attend the workshop regularly because she "was busy writing UNISA exams" (70), end up attending regularly and producing their own stories. The initial anxiety and scepticism at the project and the gradual change is best pointed out by Patrick to Valentine when he concedes that "on the very first day I came, I really didn't know that me and other people there would be one of the great writers" (264). Virginia also admits to Steven: "Every window brought back memories and made me happy to be with everybody there" (260). Such empowerment evident in community-making provides a sense of inclusion and humanises the homeless urbanites.

The project enables the writers to go some way towards overcoming new urban and post-apartheid social divisions based on wealth.[8] Most of the homeless writers do not have strategic skills. Neither do they have proper jobs nor decent places to stay. As a result, they are excluded from the larger Johannesburg community. Nevertheless, the writers' workshops have given them a space to interact and make friends. The stories make them visible; Patrick takes Valentine to his roof-top 'maid's room' home because he wants the world to know how he lives (265). More importantly, their stories will be heard and in that way they can reclaim their human dignity. Virginia is touched by Gert's story "Pote" (248-251), which describes the trauma associated with his father's death and Gert's entrance into the world of unemployment. As a result, she hopes that the book will make society empathise with and embrace them:

> I relate well to this story. I am praying to God for people to read this book we are writing. I would like people to understand how we got homeless and jobless. It is not always laziness or inability. You experience things that overwhelm you. You stop functioning. It is undescribable. (251)

Finally, the African Spider Writer's workshops and subsequent production of the book, *Finding Mr Madini*, are a symbolic source of hope. If the narratives are the autobiography of the city as argued by Gunner (2003), then the re-storying of Johannesburg's post-apartheid experiences shows that the city can be ordered and thus create conditions where some urbanites might transform their identities, and attain a better and hopeful future. As the text's production approaches the epilogue, Jonathan goes in search of Sipho who disappears before the text is completed. Sipho is thought to be in prison for breaking into a car somewhere in Johannesburg. He is also thought to have returned to Kimberley or moved on into the invisible world of the homeless, which can be viewed as the underground city of Johannesburg. Sipho's disappearance is a stark emblem of the new vulnerable and unstable urban experiences that now exist in Johannesburg. Nevertheless, such bleakness is juxtaposed with the hope that also exists in the same fictive Johannesburg. The writers manage to get some funding for the book from the corporate world (MTN mobile phone company) and each has to decide what he or she will use the money for. The epilogue portrays this future city of hope as most of the homeless characters choose to use the money to either acquire new skills or advance their skills in search of other opportunities. Steven points out to Virginia that his "future seems brighter since we have been awarded some money to do some courses. [...] I will learn computer skills, motivation, administration and English" (256). Patrick wants to attend a driving license course to complement his "three year diploma in graphics and communication and computers, this may be the ticket to a job" (266). David will use the money to start his own advertising company (262) and both Valentine and Robbie want to be successful journalists. As a result, we clearly see the literary post-apartheid city's duality and contradictoriness, where the bleak and the positive live side by side, and different forms of social and historical based divisions and alienation are juxtaposed with new social connections and active ways such as writing and improving one's skills. Nevertheless, the image of post-apartheid Johannesburg is largely optimistic, for some ordering of and inclusion into the city is possible with the right skills and determination as evident in the various homeless characters' positions in the epilogue.

5.3 Middle class experiences and memory-making in post-apartheid Johannesburg

The thematic and symbolic significance of movement into and out of Johannesburg's different spaces such as the inner city, northern and southern suburbs, and the notion of handling the past, are also dealt with in some representations of the post-apartheid city. The past is often associated with traumatic memories of physical and psychological abuses suffered during apartheid. The experiences of the various dwellers, to a large extent, suggest that the post-apartheid experiences involve having to face a number of discomforts and traumas from both the past and the present. It is still 'sad at the edges', as implied by Richards in her novel *Sad at the Edges* and the reality is a 'bitter fruit to swallow', as implied by the title of Dangor's novel *Bitter Fruit*. Both texts are closely linked in that they focus on the experiences of middle-class residents and use the tropes of memory-making and rape. The trope of memory-making plays a significant role in the establishment of, on the one hand, some of the major characters' domestic and inner turmoil, and, on the other, attempts at new subject formations aimed at reordering and moving on with their lives.

5.3.1 The free and vibrant Johannesburg and memory-making in *Sad at the Edges*

Sad at the Edges, which, just as *Bitter Fruit*, is written as a realist novel, revolves around the life experiences of Francesca, a former anti-apartheid activist and worker at "the most obscure of non-governmental organisations" (21) in Johannesburg, as she relates to her husband Paul, their son Daniel who suffers from cerebral palsy, and her cousin Megan who has just arrived in South Africa from England. Francesca's experiences are also centred on her interaction with a group of friends, multiracial in character, which is indicative of the multicultural and 'rainbow' city culture forming in the immediate post-apartheid Johannesburg. The friends include Nombulelo, otherwise affectionately known as Buli within her circle of friends, who "had returned from exile to take up an executive position in one of the big corporations" (14), the ever present Penny and Tebogo, "[a]n Umkhonto we Sizwe soldier. Training in Moscow" (22), and the new director of the non-governmental organisation, where Francesca works, and lastly, Nicholas the trade unionist. The author herself reveals, in an interview with Exclusive Books held on the launch of her book, that the novel is set in 1996, "this prolonged period of absolute euphoria ... (and) [n]ot knowing

whether to prolong that euphoria a little more or give into the anxieties and fears" (Anon: 2). Thus, the novel reflects the experiences occurring within Francesca's life as she deals with her family, friends and past demons in the immediate post-apartheid Johannesburg.

Francesca has to deal with the new Johannesburg experiences which are marked by, on the one hand, free and enthusiastic travelling (echoing the metaphor of travel in the city as postulated by De Certeau) from her suburban home to enter the culturally vibrant social spaces, such as restaurants in Melville and to other places to attend parties including "this new South African Thanksgiving party... at some place where everyone dances on the table" (23). On the other hand, she has to deal with residual racism and reminders of past brutalities. Thus, both order and disorder live side by side. Her association with the likes of Buli and Nicholas is indeed celebrated as indicative of the 'new South Africa' urban community-making, but we notice that it is sometimes tinged with anxieties and fears based on past racial prejudices and uncertainties over the future. This is shown in the description of the socialisation between Francesca and her friends at a restaurant in Melville:

> While the dark guy conducted his sheepish conversation, every table
> joined in the gust of laughter. Weighed down by all the hopes that
> hung about her neck, Megan thrilled to a moment when the intensity of
> their togetherness seemed to transcend their fears and resentments. A
> Jo'burg moment, she thought, when intimacies formed over foibles
> and shared restaurant laughter seemed suddenly proof of anything.
> (15)

Hence, to continue with thematic focuses such as urban anxiety as the city transformed into a post-apartheid democracy reflected in *Triomf* and *The Restless Supermarket* discussed in chapter 4, the tone of post-apartheid Johannesburg experiences is again revealed as complex and ambivalent through the existence of hope and fear. This contradictory nature also emblematises a post-apartheid urban condition consisting of an embodiment of the influence of the past in the present. It is also burdened by memory-making. This condition is aptly described by Thomas Jeffery as "the interaction of past and present, and the effects of South Africa's apartheid past on some of the people in the New South Africa" (2004: 7).

Nevertheless, the image of urban experiences in this post-apartheid literary and to some extent real Johannesburg also incorporates the residents' mental travels. The walks in the city are not just physical walks or a vehicular drive through the streets as one enters and exits the opened-up spaces; there are also mental travels from the present to the past. Francesca's travels into her past student activism and her rape by "The Man", construct another city that exists in this post-apartheid Johannesburg: that of memory (Nuttall 2007 forthcoming).[9]

It is in the personal and domestic space that the dramas centred on the interface between post-apartheid Johannesburg and memory, and memory retrieval, subject formation and reconciliation, are played out. The rape of Francesca and that of Lydia by Du Boise in *Bitter Fruit*, as will be discussed later, are at the heart of these dramas. Francesca's experiences as an individual, a wife and a mother in the northern suburbs portray the private and domestic turmoil permeating the lives of some characters during the early post-apartheid period. Issues from the larger public space, in this case historical events, and the unfolding of energetic democratic processes, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings and the associated painful memories, are rekindled. The TRC is a significant event of this period in the history of Johannesburg and South Africa and though it does not form part of my focus in this thesis, it is notable that it links both *Sad at the Edges* and *Bitter Fruit*. More so, the TRC impacts heavily on the psyche and social lives of some of these characters and in that way ultimately shapes the events of the represented and real new Johannesburg. The hearings and the rekindled memories eventually invade the domestic and personal realm in a manner akin to Homi K Bhabha's idea of the unhomely (1994), that is, when events from the public space invade and influence those in the private and domestic space. This drama and presence of the TRC in the thoughts and discourse of some characters is introduced immediately to the reader in the early stages of the plot. "The Man", an apartheid-government security agent who had brutally interrogated anti-apartheid activists, including Francesca, is introduced in the opening pages of the novel as a character beleaguered by the implications of the TRC:

It was this TRC thing about to start. That's what it was. Truth
and reconciliation. God! Who were they kidding? And whose truth

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> would they be trotting out for all the foreign voyeurs with an itch
>
> for human drama? The whole process was going to irritate him. (4)

Megan is anxious to know more about the contribution of Francesca, Tebogo and Nicholas during the anti-apartheid era. She is also enthusiastic about the TRC as evident in her thoughts during her first encounter with some of Francesca's friends. Even Francesca, the "Ms Hotshot Documentary Maker" (15), is looking forward to "[h]er next project, the one that really excited her... the Truth and Reconciliation hearings" (16). However, the TRC and its implications, the need to deal with both the victim's and perpetrator's public testimonies over past atrocities for reconciliation and forgiveness, are portrayed as leading to domestic alienation and personal anxiety in both the victim and the perpetrator.

The act of remembering some of the past apartheid brutalities unsettles both Francesca's and "The Man" socially and psychologically. Francesca lives an exciting and admired professional life as a producer of documentaries in fictive Johannesburg, but despite that, the trauma of a painful torture by "The Man", now living in Port Elizabeth, haunts her and subsequently affects her marriage. Stylistically, the overbearing presence of the torture and other painful memories are revealed through the juxtaposition of the experiences of both Francesca and "The Man". This consistent use of such juxtapositions, also evident in the structure of the plot and chapter headings of "The Man" and "Francesca" in the novel, is a metaphoric reminder of the linkages between some characters, order and disorder, the past and the present, painful memories and their present personal dislocation. In addition, Francesca's domestic scene is tense and marked by non-communication between husband and wife. Both are always under stress arising out of taking care of their child whose cerebral palsy condition constantly makes him irritable. In one incident, early in the morning after a sleepless night, Daniel irritably asserts that he does not want to go to school and this leads to some tension between both parents. In the process Paul explodes, "Oh for fuck sake ... I can't stand this...[d]eal with it, Francesca" (76) while a raging Francesca wishes her husband dead because she wanted to know, "What pain or turmoil had caused his life-force to turn inward, against Daniel and her?" (77). It is no wonder that Francesca feels hollow inside. Furthermore, she enters into an affair with Anthony, an old acquaintance who is married, to fill the inner and painful void caused by a dislocated husband-wife relationship and due to an intrusive

anxiety and desire to erase her sense of vulnerability resulting from her past sexual manipulation by "The Man". Her personal, social and psychological displacement shows the past demons that haunt some of the urban characters in post-apartheid Johannesburg and thus reflect an image of a city suffering from a psychic and inner turmoil.

The handicapped Daniel and his contribution towards the family's alienation is a significant symbol of not only the brutal past's dislocating effect on the present but also of a past that needs to be faced in order for some residents to create new identities or 'to get on with the business of life' (77). The role of the past in the family's dislocation and the need for healing are modified through the narrative thread associated with the presence of "The Man" in Francesca's past and present, and the ongoing TRC hearings as the backdrop to the characters' experiences. Here, the text marries the realm of the public and the domestic with the documentary style by incorporating snippets of the hearings broadcast on the radio, which are juxtaposed to personal and mental reactions of "The Man" and his family. Hence, as the TRC hearings progress, "The Man" is forced to recollect and narrate his activities as a brutal and manipulative interrogator. This is due to his family's enormous curiosity about his past; at one time his son asks him about his past role in the apartheid police. Furthermore, we note that the media and the general public are also paying great attention to the TRC proceedings. We also note, through flashbacks, that he pretended to be a 'good cop' in order to gain the confidence of the detainees and then extract intelligence information from them. He deceived the detained Francesca, then a student activist at the University of Port Elizabeth, into believing that if she gave him some information about their student organisation's activities, he would protect her. Instead, he capitalised on her vulnerability to have sex with her and she became pregnant. Later on, Francesca aborts the heavily advanced pregnancy and this affects her psyche, as well as her reproductive health. Daniel's minor cerebral palsy seems to have arisen from that abortion. She thus suffers a daily torture in the present Johannesburg as she struggles to take care of a slowly developing Daniel. Daniel also needs constant attention, special education and parental love, which his father, Paul, hardly offers. The reader is forced to go through the violent and manipulative power relationship exercised by the apartheid system over its opposition. However, after noting the gruelling events that led to Francesca's past and present inner disintegration, worsened by her attempts to love "this broken child" (203), Daniel,

who painfully reminds her of the loss of the perfect baby from her interrogator whom she had aborted, one witnesses a positive development towards new subjectivity, evident in her leaving Johannesburg for Port Elizabeth to confront her torturer.

It appears that some of the inhabitants of this Johannesburg have to deal, at some stage, if not in this early post-apartheid period (1996), with various predicaments so that they can position themselves strategically in the process of the city's redefinition. The predicaments punctuating the experiences in Johannesburg are heterogeneous and this depicts the multiplicity and complexity omnipresent in the city as it opens up and responds to its painful past and present. As already pointed out, Francesca is a victim of a past brutal interrogation and rape, and yet she has to be part of this transforming Johannesburg as a mother, a wife and a working woman. In another case, Buli appears, in the eyes of her friends, to be a successful returnee and consultant in Johannesburg's corporate world, yet her personal life is disintegrating. She breaks down at a party and reveals the difficulties and prejudices that she is facing at work, where she cannot fit in due to the remnants of racism. Furthermore, her once progressive husband is reverting to being a domineering patriarch and thus oppressing her terribly at home. During the revelation, she declares to her friends that "It's... it's just that I don't know how I can fit in. I've never fitted anywhere ... since I left here" (35). She also explains that she attained an important position in America only because she was "their tame South African exile... their emblem of social responsibility" (35) and in the present situation she has been employed because she was in exile and a black person.

Nevertheless, the city is transforming positively in a manner akin to Raban's idea of the "soft city" (1984). Interracial social and sexual relations are now normal; Megan engages in interracial sexual relationships with Nicholas and Tebogo. The experiences are not without their risks as both men fight each other over her and later in the novel she goes for an abortion. New socio-economic struggles also come up in the city. The inhabitants are busy entering into new social and economic terrains as evidenced by Nicholas the unionist's transformation into an investment manager of workers' funds. He, however, is struggling to come to terms with the new dispensation in that he feels as if he is betraying the workers' struggle by buying into the same corporate companies that they have always considered as their capitalist enemies (30-31). Significantly, Johannesburg is free; characters are busy experiencing the city in ways they want, and some, as indicated in the relationship between Megan

and Nicholas, exhibit qualities such as deceit and betrayal, which is normal in all world cities. Even if some relationships are dislocated or breaking down as in all cities, significant is the fact that in this post-apartheid city, personal experiences and the individual are now more important. The post-apartheid drama, as represented in *Sad at the Edges*, is now taking place in the interior space of personal pain, unlike in previous cases, where battles were fought on the streets in search of various freedoms such as the right to move freely and multiracial inclusion in the city as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Hence, the post-apartheid narratives under focus in this chapter show the existence of various linkages between past, present and future, the individual and historical memory, and that of the contemporary city and the traumatised interior. The residents form new identities and take part in the represented Johannesburg's reinvention in accordance with the new social and political dispensation. Such issues are indeed pertinent in *Finding Mr Madini*, discussed above, and *Bitter Fruit*, in the next section of this chapter.

5.3.2 Family dislocation, handling memories of abuse and creating new identities in *Bitter Fruit*

Achmat Dangor's 2004 Man Booker Prize short-listed novel, *Bitter Fruit* (2001), gives a realist portrayal of the life experiences of the dislocated, coloured, middle class Ali family who reside in Berea, Johannesburg. The family is made up of Silas and Lydia, husband and wife, and their son Mikey. They have just moved from the coloured section in Soweto Township, which is an indication of some of the upward mobility and the enjoyment of other freedoms taking place within the formerly excluded middle-class dwellers. Silas Ali, a coloured former Umkhonto we Sizwe operative, lawyer and spokesman in the Ministry of Justice is heavily involved in handling "[t]his public argument between the party (ANC) and the TRC (that) was growing" (99). His wife Lydia, a nurse at a Johannesburg hospital, is introduced to us as a withdrawn woman who hardly talks to her husband. Later on, we realise that she suffers from an inner turmoil and psychological displacement, just like Francesca's in *Sad at the Edges*, emanating from a past violent rape that she suffered somewhere in Soweto at the hands of an apartheid security agent called Francois du Boise. Their son, Mikey, a promising student at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), is portrayed as a teenager passing through terrible motions of transition into adulthood and the trauma of realising the truth about his parentage.

The central drama in this novel, the plot, which is cyclical and complex[10], is mostly centred on the Alis' past and present experiences and insights into their future in Johannesburg. Furthermore, the narrative style used in this novel portrays Silas as the main character in the drama centred on the intrusion of the memories of the past rape of Lydia and in that way marginalises the voice of the female victim in the process of memory making and the quest for healing and formulation of new identities. The novel characteristically captures the energetic but nerve-wracking experiences of the Alis as they confront their common and different pasts (the rape of Lydia and different ways of coping with the haunting memories), deal with their relatives, especially the Oliphants who are Silas' in-laws and the extended Ali family, and mingle with a network of work colleagues and former anti-apartheid struggle comrades that include Kate and Julian. Added to this circle are other characters from Mikey's life experiences. The Ali family's experiences reflected in the novel, which are comparable with that of Francesca, Paul and Daniel in *Sad at the Edges*, transport us into the realm of this complex drama of memory retrieval and the pursuit of healing and reconciliation that is unfolding in Johannesburg. The experiences are, however, much more complex in *Bitter Fruit* than in any of the other texts examined in this chapter. This is because the effects of the psychic disruption arising from the past rape in *Bitter Fruit* are reflected as complexly linked to anti-apartheid, apartheid, individual and family histories. Each member of the Ali family also deals with the memory of Lydia's rape differently and, as a result, we witness a more diverse response to the rape than in *Sad at the Edges*, where the drama is only centred on Francesca. Furthermore, the issue of new subject formation, where Lydia and Mikey intentionally search for new possibilities and new lives in the face of the psychic and social disruption, are more nuanced in Dangor's than in Richards' novel.

Significantly, events from the larger public and political space of fictive post-apartheid Johannesburg are central to the portrayal of the city's life experiences. The ensuing energetic movements marking the literary and even real post-apartheid Johannesburg's remaking and quest for reconciliation are influenced by a complex fusion of the history of apartheid and anti-apartheid activism. In addition, personal histories, current historical and social events, personal decisions and even coincidence also shape the rhythm and nature of the city's always changing experiences. The novel shows vividly, just as in *Sad at the Edges*, the effect, on the domestic space, of intricate linkages between events taking place in the public and political spaces, those

from the past and the present and those associated with memory-making. For instance, we get a glimpse of the euphoric aura of this period as Kate, Silas and Julian engage in various nation-building organs such as the TRC and in advising the President on the national HIV/AIDS policy. However, we also note that Silas and his public service colleagues are extremely anxious, for they are constantly thinking about their vulnerabilities arising out of the impending end of the Nelson Mandela era. This means, as pointed out by Julian to his friends that "we are all about to be booted out... [o]ur Prez is preparing the way for the new Prez... [r]eview of all the jobs and the people... [t]he criteria we received are quite clear... [h]is people..." (213). It is no wonder that Silas is alienated from his family, as evident in his realisation that "he and Lydia spoke very little these days" (10) and Lydia's motherly concern that he should "take an active interest in his son [and] hadn't he noticed how Mikey had changed, how he was no longer the easy going kid he once knew?" (10).

Nevertheless, the post-apartheid Johannesburg of this period is portrayed as undergoing various forms of social and political redefinition. There is evidence of some multiracial cohesion, just as in *Sad at the Edges*, emblematised by the friendship between Silas, who is coloured, Kate and Julian both white, as well as the different multiracial socialisations, such as Silas's birthday party held at Julian's home in the gated once whites-only suburb of Johannesburg. This, however, does not discount the existence of some contradictions, racial segregation and social exclusions. Silas, for example, is constantly questioning whether there is a positive future for coloureds in the post-apartheid social and political space. The author also teases out the contradictory place of homosexuals and lesbians, where they can live as they please but still have to face certain tensions and anxieties. This is shown in the way Julian, who has been hiding his gay identity to his family, has to struggle with the adverse effects of coming out in the open about his homosexuality. Furthermore, the volatility of the political and social remaking aimed at reconciliation through the TRC is revealed in the novel. This underscores the image of an energetic and uncertain post-apartheid Johannesburg, just as in any South African city or community, which is retrieving its violent and painful past, and trying to adapt to the new order and position itself strategically for a better future.

The diverse rhythms witnessed in Johannesburg's social and political flux, and their effects on the personal lives of the characters deserve more attention. Silas' experiences with the TRC offer a big challenge to his family's cohesion and future.

Du Boise, the perpetrator of a past sexual violation on Lydia, has applied for an amnesty hearing with the TRC and Silas thinks that Lydia should attend the hearings, which meets with huge resistance from Lydia. The whole project of public confession for reconciliation and forgiveness is revealed as very difficult to embrace and opening up potential personal and family dislocations. Furthermore, the novel's revelation of Lydia's reluctance to go to the TRC hearings, while Silas and Du Boise easily register their support for the hearings, shows the difficulties faced by women who were victimised and brutalised by the system in such a national and public project of memory-making and confession that lacks certain sensitivities to the female victims. It becomes imperative to examine how the different characters try to come to terms with and adjust to the retrieved memories or recently discovered archives of their 'shameful' and traumatic pasts. These issues guide my analysis of the experiences of the Alis as they deal with memories of a traumatic past.

Memories of past apartheid atrocities play a significant role in creating the social and psychological dislocation affecting Lydia and Silas' marriage. Dangor establishes, early in the novel, that the Alis have been reeling under untold pressure from repressed traumatic memories. Nonetheless, Dangor places Silas at the centre of the drama associated with the memory of the rape and the resultant fallout within the Alis. One would have thought that Lydia should have been the central figure here, because it is her trauma and more importantly, without discounting the fact that both her husband and son are affected as well, she is the one who seeks more healing and a new identity so that she can move on, as she rightly does at the end of the novel. The likelihood of an unsettling intrusion from the past into the lives of both Lydia and Silas, especially Silas, has always been present:

> It was inevitable. One day Silas would run into someone from the past, someone who had been in a position of power and had abused it. Someone who had affected his life, not in the vague, rather grand way in which everybody had been affected, as people said, because power corrupts even the best of men, but directly and brutally. (7)

This character from the past is retired Lieutenant Francois du Boise, who just like "The Man" in *Sad at the Edges*, is a former apartheid intelligence officer who brutally raped Lydia nineteen years before. The coincidental meeting between Silas and Du

Boise, at a Johannesburg mall, triggers in the former, painful recollections of the past horrible rape. Silas forgets about the groceries he had meant to buy (13) and goes to one of the public parks in Berea to drown his painful memories in alcohol (10-11). This clearly establishes the dislocating effect of his wife's rape. It should be made clear though, that he was already alienated from his wife due to the past nineteen years' effect of the rape and pressure from work. The author reveals that Silas has had very little to talk about with Lydia and knew very little about his son Mikey (10) (as pointed out earlier on) thus indicating the existing dislocation pervading some characters' lives at this period as Johannesburg remakes itself. Nonetheless, Lydia is also disturbed by the sudden return of the reminder of past abuses into her life. After being informed about Silas' encounter with her tormentor, she withdraws further into her untouchable inner self, a strategy that removes her from her victimised self, a movement aptly described in her diary as "cross[ing] into a zone of silence" (117). After hearing the shocking news, she goes to work quietly and informs Silas: "I'm going to be late" (13). It should be pointed out, though, that this strategy had been appropriate in the past in that it enabled her to keep the family together and was not hugely disruptive to the family's cohesion. Nevertheless, the past comes to haunt the already strained marriage. It worsens the distance between the two as each withdraws into his or her own world, with Lydia entering into that of anguish and invisibility, and Silas into that of silence and alcoholism. Hence, the act of memory-making is revealed, just as in *Sad at the Edges*, as brutally dislocating the victim's psyche and social life.

As if reflecting the predominantly bleak and unsettling tone permeating the experiences of some inhabitants in fictive Johannesburg, the retrieval of traumatic memories triggers multiple effects, which deliver some characters into a state of unpredictability. Both Lydia and Silas are unsettled because the past evasive mechanisms they had used to forget the incident are undermined by the current sudden intrusion of the reminder to the rape. Both had survived the trauma of the past incident by engaging in what Brink (1998: 36) describes as a "constant editing and reinventing of memory". Silas, who does not possess the strategies Lydia does (questionable as they are at this stage), had consciously adopted amnesia and selective remembrance over the years, which is a denial type of strategy that prevents him from functioning:

What Du Boise had done, he had done a long time ago. Nineteen years.
And Silas had learned to live with what Du Boise had done, had
absorbed that moment's horror into the flow of his life, a faded moon of
a memory that only occasionally intruded into his everyday
consciousness. (8)

However, this is shattered by the coincidental encounter with Du Boise at the mall.
Silas' present life and his usual 'stoic character', as observed by his son Mikey (30),
turns into a disjointed life journey punctuated by anxiety, personal and psychological
withdrawal into silence and an interior world of self blame and alcoholism. His
reaction, where he enters into a pathetic stasis dominated by alcoholism, unlike that of
Mikey, who chooses the route of revenge, reveals his failure to develop a strategic and
appropriate identity that would enable him to deal with his reality and even reclaim
Lydia's admiration.

Lydia's past and present reaction to her rape is both evasive and strategic. In
the past she had to find ways to deal with the issue and at the same time keep the
family together, while in the present she has to own the trauma as hers alone and go
through various reactions until she reconciles with her past and moves on as a new
subject. The fact that she diarised her thoughts and feelings about the rape reveals that
she silently reflected upon it and actively sought means that would enable her to deal
with her sexual brutalisation. Thus, before Du Boise intrudes into their life, she had
"detached [herself] from her surroundings [and] burrow[ed] into her pain for comfort"
(29) as a means of repressing memories of the rape.[11] She understandably falls into
traumatic disorientation after Silas "chose to remember [and] chose to come home and
tell [her]" (16) about Du Boise. The return of Du Boise disturbs her and leaves her
unpredictable and vulnerable. More so, it offers the opportunity to either deal with the
disruption and find possibilities enabling her to formulate a new identity or choose to
slip into further fragmentation. The nervous breakdown and suicidal mood that she
experiences after the return of Du Boise seems to confirm her resolve to follow the
destructive path like Silas, but as will be revealed in the following paragraph, this was
part of her restless search for healing, which culminates in the subsequent new subject
formation revealed at the end of the novel. Silas' account of the meeting with Du
Boise, indeed, leads to a further widening of the distance between him and Lydia as
they battle over how to handle the intrusion of the past into their life. Silas believes

that the rape is "not something you can easily forget, or ever forget" (16) and that both were affected, but Lydia, rightly so, wants to own the painful memories alone and exclude her husband from dominating this process of memory retrieval. Lydia, in a traumatised frenzy, tells Silas that "[h]e raped me, not you" (16) thus marking the beginning of the breakdown of their marriage, and asserting her anxious intention to own the memories of her rape and find possibilities of healing and reconciliation with her past trauma. Thus, after her nervous breakdown, an issue that I will be discussing shortly, both husband and wife momentarily drift into the illusory world of "peace through amnesia" (138), which is one of the issues associated with memory-making in post-apartheid South Africa, as discussed by Nuttall and Coetzee (1998). They began to "retreat into their divided intimacies (it was clear that Silas would sleep upstairs in their bedroom, while Lydia would be alone in his study)" (138). Nevertheless, Lydia goes through various responses to the memories of the rape until she develops a new identity that is indicated in her decision to leave Silas for a new life in Cape Town at the end of the novel.

Furthermore, the physical and mental health of both Lydia and Silas degenerate due to the repressive memory syndrome that is destabilising both characters. Lydia, at first, falls into the isolated and hallucinatory world of denial as she tries to privatise the memory and pain, and protect Mikey, her child, from the rape. This is brave of any mother or parent, but the risks involved in this true-to-life approach are evident in the frequent intrusion of the painful remembrances. Lydia recalls in a hallucinatory fashion the humiliating and emasculating effects of the rape on her husband; she perceives Silas as "no longer a real man, if he was he should have killed him [Du Boise]' (18-19). She also painfully recalls that "He [Du Boise] called me a nice wild half-kaffir cunt" (18). This is immediately followed by her nervous breakdown and entrance into a suicidal temporal space of "weeping silently, ignoring his [Silas'] plea to stop dancing, she was cutting herself up badly, she would bleed to death" (19-20). In these instances, vividly described in the realist narrative style, Lydia reclaims her central role and voice in the ensuing drama. Not only is she showing that she is the rape victim, but she also calls on her husband to adopt something like revenge and establish a new agency that will re-establish her respect for him and in the process cleanse her wounded spirit. Silas is also affected heavily by the strain of the rape and Lydia's "freak accident" (25) to the extent that he suffers a minor seizure. This can be viewed as a metaphor of the fallout, where he

inappropriately chooses self-destruction as a response to the memories and shame of the rape, instead of formulating a new identity aimed at healing and moving on with the new post-apartheid experiences. Both the nervous breakdown and the seizure symbolise the ongoing violent social and psychological destabilisations and subsequent risks that have to be encountered by some residents of fictive Johannesburg as they try to come to terms with their pasts and adapt to post-apartheid experiences.[12] Hence, the immediate post-apartheid Johannesburg that is pictured here is a turbulent and risky space going through reinvention and memory-making aimed at creating a new social/spatial order based on forgiveness and reconciliation.

There is also an intriguing aspect to the retrieval of personal and historical memory that is shown through Mikey's reaction. He is alienated further from his parents as they react differently, and fragments in the face of the return of Du Boise. While both parents drift away from each other, Mikey becomes more and more anxious until he discovers his mother's diary, which catalogues her rape and reveals that he is a child of rape. The discovery highlights the close relation between memory-making and the violent disturbances to perceptions of the self and identity formation that occur as the dwellers of Johannesburg adapt to the unfolding events in this post-apartheid city. That is, as some of the inhabitants confront their painful past, their personalities and histories are opened up and some of the hidden shame and prejudices (as also reflected in *Triomf* discussed in Chapter 4) are retrieved. Such characters (the Mikeys of this Johannesburg) become indeterminate and unpredictable as they deal with the past, the past in the present, and an equally uncertain future. This is best revealed in Mikey's disconcerted feelings after going over the diary's vivid descriptions of his mother's rape and subsequent discovery that he is a child of rape:

> He rises abruptly. He is determined not to sink into the melancholy
> that comes with reliving the past. He knows that it will not be possible to
> apply his golden rule – to look to the future, always – with the same
> single-mindedness as before. He can no longer think of the future
> without confronting his past. (119)

In addition, Mikey's identity, as a product of a violent rape perpetrated by a white apartheid security agent, complicates the issues relating to the discrimination of coloureds in the larger multiracial democracy. This is something that Silas also

reflects on in the novel. Mikey's experiences reveal that being coloured and a product of rape creates a huge dilemma on the personal, social and political level. Thoughts on belonging, race and complicity are brought to the fore:

> But so different from Lydia, and from himself, for that matter. I am the child of some murderous white man, Mikey thinks, a boer, someone who worked for the old system, *was* the old system, in fact. For the first time, the alien nature of this thought strikes him. Why think of the man as white, as a boer, there were many black men who worked for the system, and they too raped women, sowed their venomous seed in the wombs of their enemies? Being fathered by a traitorous black man, that would have been different, poetic almost, some sort of salvation in ambiguity.
>
> But were they all traitors, the many black people who collaborated with the old regime? The subject for an enquiry, a job for some learned academic. Decipher those unspoken, ambivalent shadows of our past.
> (118)

Therefore, the trauma of the rape triggers different responses that call for new subject formations and intentionalities appropriate for the new order, otherwise one would continue to wallow in distress and fragmentation.

Mikey undergoes a journey, where he searches for the right response to the discovery of the narrative of his mother's rape and the fact that he is a child of rape. He becomes an unpredictable and self-destructive character due to the psychological burden associated with the discovery. His promising university studies deteriorate. He engages in risky multiple sexual relationships with his lecturer Shirley Graham and with Kate, one of his father's best friends. He also degenerates into a thief, for he steals Professor Graham's "rare... first edition of Albert Camus's *The Outsider*, signed by the author" (219) and he steals a gun, as well as other books from different Johannesburg libraries. Hence, the memory retrieval is traumatic and disrupts the lives of individuals who are closely connected to this brutal past.

In addition, Mikey is further alienated from his family. He walks the city in circles and formulates new routes, which is indicative of his anxiety and nervousness. These restless and multiple walks and their alienating effect are described thus:

Mike walks, endlessly, strides away, long, loping steps that take him down Munro Drive to *Orange Grove*, to *the Radium Beer-hall*, to the Health and Racquet Club, where he works out, mixes with friends. Suddenly, he seeks out the company of young people, who welcome him, absorb him into their circle, fiercely, the way compassionate people take in a refugee. Mikey also – Lydia discovers – catches Kombi-taxis to Newclare, where his father grew up. He returns from these trips drained of energy, and is often distracted and listless, without appetite. Both Silas and Lydia worry that their son is taking drugs, but say nothing. Lydia's guilt is particularly acute. (147)

Pertinent in his walks, which echo De Certeau's (1984) notions on walking in the city, is a search for a different history to the one associated with Du Boise, a desire to re-establish connections with cousins from his father's half-brother (an extended family that has long been out of his family's life) and an attempt to reconstitute a new identity. This is the second strand of Mikey's response and it involves his search for a new identity, and a new history and social references other than those related to apartheid and its brutalities. Accordingly, the city is depicted as burdened by a daunting past, where some characters end up reacting in confusing and restless ways. This also shows a chaotic post-apartheid urban rhythm, where personal experiences are dominated by nervous conditions, transgression and contradictory movements in the pursuit of personal healing and reconciliation.

The complex personal search for a new understanding, new identity and liberation from one's haunting painful situation is also portrayed in the attempts made by Mikey as he tries to come to terms with his shocking discovery that he is a child of a past rape. He changes into a new and assertive character that extols a new consciousness:

Michael, as he now defined himself, lives in the future, in the world of young people and young pursuits. He has no use for the older generation, his mother and father, Kate, his grandparents, God, whom he thinks of as an old man too. (151)

It is quite interesting to note that painful and terrible events from history deliver Mikey, unlike his father, Silas, into some form of maturity and assertiveness. We note from the complex plot that before he discovers the diary and the revelation of the rape, he has been battling with an embarrassing childhood memory and alienation from a close cousin, Mireille. Both had a close relationship in which they practiced a platonic but incestuous-like relationship, which is condemned by the family after a chance discovery, and as punishment, Mireille is sent to stay with one of Lydia's sisters in Canada. Mikey is traumatised and transported into the world of silence due to the exiling and the family's perception of the relationship as 'incestuous'. The larger historical memory associated with the violent sexual abuse of his mother during apartheid, consequently worsens his social and psychological displacement. An overwhelmed and traumatised Mikey, therefore, seems to desire some form of liberation from his memories (Brink 1998: 37)[13] of a misunderstood childhood and the discovery of a shocking parentage.

This desire to liberate himself from the burdensome and dislocating memory, regrettably, but in a manner true to life, changes Mikey into an angry young man. He ceases to ooze the angelic aura of a sweet child that is projected by his mother by deciding that his parents and even Kate should start calling him Michael. He also becomes the impenetrable and obsessive "Michael the avenger" (215). Dangor reveals the delicate experiences that some of the characters in Johannesburg, and indeed in most parts of South Africa, have to undergo, where anger and vengeance, and the quest for healing and reconciliation are juxtaposed, thus reflecting the early post-apartheid city's volatile status. In addition, Mikey's edgy search for information that might prove the existence of some connection or similarity between him and his uncles and cousins has a double significance. On the one hand, it is an indicator of other histories and memories also lurking in the subconscious and hidden lives of the urbanites during this period. On the other hand, his search reveals that the pursuit of liberation from painful memories can lead to further complications. One cannot help but feel that Mikey is taking a mysterious and rebellious turn by getting involved with Uncle Amin, Silas' half-brother, and through the way he is introduced to the sinister "elite group" (173), a Sufi organisation under the leadership of Imam Ismail based at the Griffith Street Mosque. In addition, Uncle Amin teaches Mikey other histories especially that of his grandfather Ali Ali, which have anti-imperialist consciousness and revenge as major themes. Ali Ali fought against and killed a British imperial

soldier who had impregnated his sister and then denied responsibility. He then escaped capture by following various routes on the Asian and Middle Eastern subcontinent until he found his way into South Africa, where he settled as an imam. Exposure to these new people, other histories, doctrines and experiences, to a large extent, transforms Mikey into an obsessive young man bent on militancy and revenge.

The author seems to show this transformation as reasonable, considering the anger and extreme anxiety to which Mikey is exposed, but also undermines some of the decisions taken by the protagonist as he follows this new course of life. As Mikey formulates a militant identity where, "[t]here are certain things people do not forget or forgive...rape is one of them" (182), we are meant to question, although one's admiration is also likely to be elicited, such a radical philosophy considering that the doctrine runs contrary to the ethos of reconciliation and forgiveness influencing the flux of the Johannesburg of this period. Other criticisms are implied in the description of Mikey's entrance into the murky world of crime and senseless revenge. He exchanges the gun stolen from Professor Graham's cabinet for one from somewhere else, to avoid easy police detection, and then uses the 'unknown gun' to shoot Johan Viljoen, an anti-apartheid hero and a returnee from exile in the Netherlands. Johan had had an incestuous relationship with his daughter Vinu, Mikey's friend. This incident is related to the trope of sex and incest that dominates the novel and is used to show some of the complexities and disgraces within the anti-apartheid struggles that some of these Johannesburg dwellers had to deal with.[14] Mikey also shoots Du Boise dead at point blank range at a Johannesburg shopping mall and then enters into the world of a fugitive. This act is described by the author as a metaphoric death and an indicator of Mikey's subsequent metamorphosis: "He, too, is going to a death of sorts... Michael is to die, Noor will be incarnated in his place" (247). Finally, this fugitive identity shows the proximity of memory, forgiveness and revenge that characterise the instability of life experiences in the literary Johannesburg. The image is indeed pessimistic, bearing in mind that some characters may fail to reconcile with their past historical abuses and turn into vengeful fanatics.[15]

It should, however, be noted that other characters handle and reconcile with their memories and fates in different ways. A number of characters are able to adjust to their past and present to the extent that by the end of the novel, they are at peace with themselves or in the process of positively coming to terms with their situations. Kate is finally out of the bisexual triangle, for by the end of the novel she is left with

only one partner and therefore likely to devote all her time to that partner and her daughter. Julian openly admits that he is gay, divorces his wife and then finds a new partner at a certain Johannesburg restaurant while socialising with Kate and Silas. More importantly, Lydia is able to move on, although the process takes place at the expense of her marriage. Her first move at liberating herself from the inner turmoil and domestic dislocation is achieved through her decision to quit nursing and join a new organisation that focuses on HIV and AIDS. This new job gives her a new purpose and desire to rejuvenate her and live life fully. She buys a new car and finds a new circle of friends at the new organisation, thus breaking away from the miserable life at home. Later on, she has a passionate sexual encounter with Joao, the son of a Mozambican diplomat at Julian's house during Silas' fiftieth birthday party. The incident, one of the many sexual encounters described in the novel, though shocking and leading to the final break up of her family (both Silas and Mikey witness the incident), spurs Lydia's liberation. Lydia ironically reclaims her sexuality and inner strength from the incident and she decides to move on, as evidenced by her withdrawal of all the family savings, and drive off to Cape Town never to return. Her journey of response to the past trauma finally leads her into a new subjectivity. As for Silas, the painful realisation of Lydia's entrance into another world without him, as confirmed by the sexual encounter with Joao, and the fact that Alec, his brother-in-law, was also there when Lydia was raped by Du Boise, seem to be the sad platform from which he has to start his life anew and move on, that is, if he will be able to move on. What is clear therefore is that humanity often seems to find the capacity to move on; even if the movement, as the one represented in the Johannesburg under focus, might be turbulent and contradictorily positive and destructive.

5.4 Conclusion

The fiction under study in this chapter ably reveals that the immediate post- apartheid Johannesburg experiences are characterised by a mixture of remapping and appropriations of the opened-up urban spaces. The characters' experiences are varied due to the inhabitants' different social classes and the nature of their experiences. There are those from the upper and middle class, as shown in *Sad at the Edges* and *Bitter Fruit*. In addition, the working classes, up-and-coming young African urban dwellers, as well as the homeless, and other marginalised city dwellers are portrayed in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and *Finding Mr Madini*. We thus witness different forms

of appropriations, remapping and perceptions of the self, the city and other residents as a result of these characters' experiences. The characters also have to face their different pasts, based on the traumatic human rights abuses and exclusions suffered during apartheid, and other events, in order for them to forgive and attain social reconciliation. Hence, the inhabitants engage in different experiences ranging from pedestrian travels, entrance into and interaction in the opened-up social spaces, urban survival techniques and memory-making. Aptly portrayed in these urban characters' social and spatial enunciation and memory-making, however, are the sometimes chaotic and hugely contradictory life experiences in this fictive immediate post-apartheid Johannesburg. The city is accessible and opened up for the upper- and middle-class characters such as Silas, Kate, Lydia and Julian in *Bitter Fruit* and Francesca and Buli in *Sad at the Edges*. However, other issues such as an intrusion of violent past traumas, in this case rape, as represented in both novels, can disturb the characters' lives and thus elicit different responses as they address the inner turmoil and strive towards personal and social reconciliation. Fictive Johannesburg might also be democratised and waiting to be embraced by the new migrants into the city, both local and foreign, yet it is mostly excluding, overcrowded and crime-ridden as shown in both *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and *Finding Mr Madini*. Homelessness, disease, social alienation and other risks are revealed as some of the bleak experiences that have to be faced by the marginalised and lower-class citizens as they traverse the literary Johannesburg of the late 1990's. It is clear from the represented experiences that the Johannesburg of this period is a turbulent one. Therefore, Johannesburg is represented as a city where dwellers undergo mixed experiences and uncertainties due to the ongoing spatial democratisation. They deal with haunting past memories and struggle to formulate new and strategic identities that will enable them to find meaning and personal and social healing, so that they can be able to relate to the city in the best way possible.

Endnotes

[1] The opening up of all cities and the country's social and political spaces had been going on from about 1989, as explored in the previous chapter.

[2] This point is influenced by the idea of the paradox of social, political, economic and spatial order and disorder that exists in most world cities as discussed by Steve Pile et al. (eds) (1999), which in my opinion is revealed in the fiction on Johannesburg as already discussed in Vladislavic's *Restless Supermarket* (2001) in Chapter 4 and also in different forms in texts such as *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* and *Finding Mr Madini* analysed in this chapter.

[3] Nuttall points out that her thoughts on the city, here, are influenced by Amin Ash and Nigel Thrift's *Cities – Reimagining the Urban* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002).

[4] The idea is influenced by Mpe's analysis on the intersection between oral literature and modern research, writing and modernity in general, and the need for a sensitive awareness of the close relationship between these forms in South African literary and cultural studies.

[5] Mpe (2003) discusses the significance of oral narratives and the power of the apartheid radio, namely Radio Lebowa, in influencing the mind of the Africans in his old Bantustan homeland, an issue which he certainly incorporates in his fiction here.

[6] This echoes Mpe's (1999) theoretical views on the need for scholars to take note of how orality, the written and modernity are connected.

[7] On a similar note, the re-ordering of the real Johannesburg has been going on for some time in the form of the Johannesburg Development Agency's urban renewal of some of the derelict parts of Hillbrow and New Town, and the transformation of Hillbrow's Fort Hill Prison into Constitutional Hill.

[8] This point is discussed further in the next chapter, where I focus on the writing of some the present perceptions of Johannesburg.

[9] Nuttall and Coetzee (1998) have examined in detail the different perspectives and forms of memory-making in post-apartheid South Africa that are represented in the country's literary and cultural representations.

[10] In an article where he comments on his novel's Booker Prize listing in the *Sunday Times* (10 September 2004), Dangor concedes that readers and publishers in South Africa have generally categorised his novel as too complicated.

[11] Suppression is a typical tenet of memory-making as noted by Brink (1998: 36).

[12] Also teased out here, are notions of public confession versus privacy, personal healing and forgiveness. These are also related to the social and literary critique of the suitability of the TRC in the reconciliation of post-apartheid South Africa. This problematic is precisely articulated by Anthony Holiday (1998: 44) in his assertion that "It follows, moreover, that forgiveness, by reason of its conceptual dependence on remorse, must be an intensely personal, even private matter".

[13] Brink bases his assertions on observations of a certain Kamil from a transforming Eastern Europe who, when given a chance to talk about his memories of the past abuses suffered during the Communist reign, chooses to talk about his relationships with various women. This concentration on his amorous encounters, as argued by Brink, reveals Kamil's dislike of memory-making and instead a desire for redemption from memory.

[14] The other truths that need to be faced include issues related to violence and abuses perpetrated by people other than apartheid operatives and sometimes close relatives like Alec's complicity in the rape of his sister-in-law, Lydia, as Silas discovers later in the novel.

[15] This again hints at a thematic focus that reveals the weakness of the TRC's emphasis on public testimonies for healing and reconciliation without taking into consideration the private aspect of reconciliation and the healing process, as noted by Holiday (1998: 37).

Chapter 6: Writing the 'new' and contemporary post-apartheid Johannesburg experiences: *From Jo'burg to Jozi: Stories about Africa's Infamous City*

6.1 Introduction

Contemporary Johannesburg provides an intriguing image in scholarship[1] and literary representation as a major African metropolitan centre that is well known for its northern suburban upper-and middle-class enclaves characterised by heavily secured plush residences and post-modern shopping malls and casinos. These contrast heavily with an overcrowded and generally deteriorating inner city, city centre and equally populous former apartheid townships, which are burdened by, among other issues, high unemployment levels, crime and poverty. Lindsay Bremner (2004) in her seminal documentation of the city's spatial and architectural transformation that has occurred since the advent of democracy in South Africa aptly describes these social spatial and economic differences as representative of the "colliding worlds" that currently exist in Johannesburg. The contrasts also significantly inform the generally held perceptions labelling Johannesburg as an infamous city, as given in the subtitle of the text under study, and at the same time hints at the city's multiplicity, where one notices the post-modern, post-colonial, cosmopolitan and African urban condition, as well as the existence of social and spatial instability in the same city.

This chapter examines selected literary representations of perceptions and experiences, mostly written in the autobiographical mode, using the journalistic and documentary styles, which dominate the collection of short stories in the text *From Jo'burg to Jozi: Stories about Africa's Infamous City* (2002) edited by Heidi Holland and Adam Roberts. I argue that the existing spatial contradictions along with different social and spatial developments, and the inhabitants' life experiences as the city reinvented itself resulted in the creation of shifting thoughts and images of contemporary Johannesburg. Bremner describes this condition as "a wild, dynamic, unsettled moment, when the city was moving in many directions all at once" (2004: 20). I contend that these views and images reveal the present bleakness, the ambiguities associated with the incessant widening of the social and spatial interactions, fears and anxieties, and the constitution of new possibilities enabling the characters, among other concerns, to embrace the city and invent new literary,

architectural and spatial forms. I will examine the extent to which the literary representation of contemporary Johannesburg contributes to the creation of different urban perceptions and experiences. That is, I will focus primarily on how the writing of Johannesburg, in relation to its present and past, the spaces of the city centre, the inner-city, the northern suburbs, townships and informal settlements, leads to the formation, or not, of a new urban imaginary and social interactions, and that of the paradoxical perceptions of fear and crime. I will also analyse a number of stories from the collection, in relation to the new creative impulses that are being formulated by the urban characters and writers to determine their significance in establishing means to locate and understand the fictive Johannesburg's complex and constantly changing nature.

The text suggests a sense of completion in terms of the evolution of the city from a colonial and apartheid one to a vibrant post-apartheid one. This is hinted at in the title, where Johannesburg, synonymous with colonial and mining industrial capitalism and apartheid-based social and political urban constructions, changes to Jozi, a name hinting at the popular literary and cultural imaginings of the city.[2] As I have been examining the literary and cultural representations of Johannesburg during the last twenty-five years, where different themes, forms and images are employed to portray the city's experiences at different periods during its social and historical trajectories, a final chapter examining the writings of the contemporary experiences is of paramount significance. However, I emphasise the point that this does not in any way disregard the fact that the city is continually remaking itself, which results in the creation of new imaginings and experiences, as indicated briefly in the last part of the next and concluding chapter, where I examine the latest trends in the fictional representation of Johannesburg.

Nevertheless, an important question in this chapter is: To what extent can this text be considered as a medium of popular culture? In this text the popular gesturing is evident in a multiplicity of popular myths and perceptions of Johannesburg held by some of its inhabitants who traverse the city's different spaces as inhabitants, squatters, visitors, writers and the youth.[3] There is also a strand of spatial contradiction, which is revealed in some stories, where the affluent Johannesburg suburbs and other commercial enclaves are represented as separate from and at loggerheads with the world of the marginalised youth, the poor and 'unofficial' residents of the fictive city. Representative stories such as Marlene van Niekerk's

"Take the Body Where It Has Never Been Before", Heidi Holland's "Getting Even", Darrel Bristow-Bovey's "Sport and Cars" and Alex Duval Smith's "Signs of Life" show that indeed the marginalized characters are in conflict with those affluent inhabitants. This is evidenced by the upper-class inhabitants' constant fortification of their spaces of residence and limited social interaction to protect themselves from the threatening urban 'other' (Bristow-Bovey and Van Niekerk).

The text's inclination towards popular cultural production is further confirmed by its positioning towards a mass audience. The editors of the book aimed at producing short stories and "set a tight deadline in order to have the book on sale in time for the influx of conference delegates" (Preface xi).[4] This alludes to the notion of production for a mass audience, a cultural practice identified by Pierre Bourdieu (1993: 45-62) as indicative of some of the characteristics of popular culture. Despite this resonance with popular culture, serious themes, such as the city and crime, the city and memory, and the formation of new identities and perceptions, are treated in this text. The various literary and social concerns, genres and styles found in this text can be viewed as a metaphor of the text's hybridity and emblematic of Johannesburg's complexity as a built and lived city, and as a fictive or literary city – as Nuttall (2007 forthcoming) puts it in her chapter titled "Johannesburg: the literary city".

It is also important to show the intertextual resonances in the text and discuss their stylistic and narrative significance in the depiction of contemporary Johannesburg's spatial and social remaking, which is the main focus of this chapter. Holland and Roberts' call for short story contributions from their journalist colleagues carries a stylistic and narrative significance. The stylistic significance is noted in some stories, where experimental styles are used in an attempt to capture the diverse and contradictory life experiences and images of the present Johannesburg. The text compiles stories about contemporary Johannesburg that are written in styles that comprise journalese reportage, factual documentation and the autobiographical. Also included in the representation of contemporary Johannesburg life experiences, are intertextual references to different media forms and technologies, architectural designs and visual cultural signs as evident in stories such as Adam Roberts' " From Jo'burg to Jozi", Bremner's "A Quick Tour around Contemporary Johannesburg" and Alex Duval Smith's "Signs of Life". Most of these stories incorporate signs and references from newspapers, television and radio, cellphone technology, automobile-

driving culture, which aid in foregrounding the transient qualities of contemporary Johannesburg. They also refer to the multiple architectural forms existing in the described places such as suburban Sandton, inner-city Hillbrow, townships like Soweto, and informal settlements such as Orange Farm. Questions seeking to examine the importance of these narrative styles to the writing of contemporary Johannesburg, such as the following, become pertinent: What is the role of these references to the print media, public and commercial signs in revealing the nature of the fictive city's contemporary urban life, anxieties and memory-making? How do they inform the relation between post-apartheid urban appropriations and the remaking of the city's once racialised spaces? These and the associated themes are some of the issues that I will be examining in this chapter.

6. 2 The journalistic report and factual documentation in capturing the contemporary urban experiences

The journalistic report is a key feature that is employed by a number of writers in describing their personal experiences and thoughts on the post-apartheid Johannesburg condition. This style is used frequently in this collection because, as has already been pointed out, the editors Holland and Roberts requested stories concerning Johannesburg from fellow local and international journalists and as such, their journalistic profession influences the writers' style. This phenomenon of journalists-turned-literary writers is a common development in world literary circles, and something not new in the writing of Johannesburg. Paul Gready (1990) has explored the conditions existing in Johannesburg's slum of Sophiatown, which were vividly described in both fictive and factual narratives produced by journalists such as Don Mattera, Lewis Nkosi, Bloke Modisane and Ezekiel Mphahlele and published in *Drum* magazine in the 1950s. Most of these writers started as journalists and went on to become renowned black South African literary writers, as discussed by Gready (1990: 139). Furthermore, American writers such as Walt Whitman, Mark Twain and Ernest Hemingway, started off as career journalists and became renowned literary writers (Fisher Fishkin: 1985). In fact, Fisher Fishkin (1985: Introduction) focusing on the above-mentioned American writers, argues that they became accomplished fiction writers due to their earlier journalistic exposure to various experiences, the need for precise observations and by paying particular attention to detail. Gready (1990: 162) gives a similar observation that "[m]ost of the writers were first and

foremost journalists ...and their skills lay in the description and documentation of events, personal experience, and Sophiatown's complex chemistry".

What then is the significance of this style in the writing of present Johannesburg? The journalistic report's focus on precise observations and attention to detail, evident in a number of the narratives, assists in the portrayal of vivid images and the associated commonly held thoughts focussing on the different types of spaces found in contemporary Johannesburg. Stories such as Bongani Madondo's "Tatty Whore with a Heart of Gold" and Alan Lipman's "Beyond Our Urban Mishaps" give critical observations and vivid images in describing some of contemporary Johannesburg's places. As a result, the inner-city Hillbrow's state of dereliction and decay, and the building, planning and living styles found in some of the different informal settlements spread around Johannesburg are clearly portrayed.

For instance, Madondo begins his story from one of the streets, where he casts an eye on the diverse peopling of Hillbrow. He then goes on to show that momentary sights of beauty, and past popular memorable images of the Sophiatown Johannesburg – alluded to through reference to the early 1960s jazz music of the likes of Miriam Makeba – are quickly dashed by the daunting present reality of the city's "rot and dirt, the spilling sewage, drug- infested needles, piles of vegetables and composting on street corners" (142). Johannesburg's deterioration is personified and likened to the deterioration of an old and once-seductive prostitute, 'a tatty whore'. The story develops through the motif of the post-apartheid destructive remaking of Johannesburg's places, succinctly described by Bremner (2004: 21) as "post-democracy practices...claiming spaces in messy and overlapping ways" and goes on to describe the dereliction and grime existing in contemporary Hillbrow. Madondo gives a detailed catalogue of the existing dirt and chaos:

Look around the Jozi landscape, if your eyes can sieve
through the Himalayas of dirt and grime permanently layered on
the streets, balconies and just anywhere. Go atop Ponte City or up
Hillbrow tower. Stretch your neck giraffe-like towards northern
suburbia. What do you see? Spanking-clean suburbs. Protected
and cleaned. Fresh air might even caress your nostrils there in the
suburbia.[...] A visitor touring Johannesburg and the adjoining
suburban troika of hell, Judith's Paarl, Yeovil and Hillbrow-Berea,

will think we are living in different cities to those far northern or eastern suburbs. A new health hazard warning: beware dirt, general chaos, deteriorating buildings, paint peeling from the walls and dysfunctional drains. You'd swear it has been shelled by inner-city guerrilla warlords, like Maputo or Luanda. [...] A kaleidoscope of plastic and rubbish papers lies strewn across streets. The bones of Chicken Licken are already on the streets.

At the intersection of Twist and Plein, a passenger leans out the window of a taxi and – boom! – throws out a can of Coke. In the back alleys your nostrils are attacked by an overdose of flu from the yellowish, sepia-toned wall heavy with the aroma of informally brewed whiskey: takunyisa- soaked urine. (143-144)

The description, which reveals a cinematic eye for detail, reveals contrasting perceptions and makes a grotesque picture of contemporary post-apartheid Hillbrow, especially when the described inner city is compared with its opposite, the currently sanitized northern suburbs of Johannesburg. In addition, parallels made between Hillbrow and other chaotic and dilapidated African cities such Luanda and Maputo then still recovering from protracted civil wars, contribute towards the creation of an apocalyptic image of the contemporary Johannesburg condition.

The difference between Hillbrow and the northern suburbs also registers to the reader an astonishing and sometimes rude awakening as one notices the existing disorder versus order, dirt versus cleanliness and other spatial indicators, which mark the difference between the two literary Johannesburg city nodes. Such differences are described by Mbembe (2004: 402-404) as the hallucinatory effects on the psyche of the Johannesburg subjects as they meet with stark and unsettling contrasts characterising the spatiality of contemporary Johannesburg. As a result, one cannot help but agree with Madondo's pronounced criticism of the African residents' lack of social responsibility and their contribution towards the city's deterioration within a period of less than ten years after the advent of the non-racial democratisation of Johannesburg and the whole country. The criticism is graphically symbolised in the incident where a drunk urinates publicly in one of Hillbrow's streets. The scatological imagery creates a dramatic picture of Johannesburg's social and spatial degeneration in a way reminiscent of Ayi Kwei Armah's description of the corruption and urban

neglect found in post-independent and post-colonial Accra in the novel *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1969). The same urban spatial and social degeneration is also described in novels such as Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road* (1976) and *The Cockroach Dance* (1979) set in postcolonial Nairobi, during the early years after Kenya's independence from Britain (Kurtz 1998: 111-132). Madondo ends his narrative by rhetorically challenging black Johannesburg characters to transform themselves into socially responsible characters that will strive towards reclaiming the city's beauty and stability. He comments thus:

> Why is it that we contribute to this dirty image, playing
> right into to the destructive images that are being heaped on us?
> Besides sex workers, I can count only five white people here. The
> only faces I see, some gleaming with pride, others masking
> suffering, are black people's. Can't we wake up and smell the coffee?
> Our daily surroundings are so dirty we don't even see them any more.
> This must come to a screeching stop. (145)

Lipman, a middle-class architect and writer, in his story gives a vivid description of a shack settlement on the outskirts of the city. He also maps the expanding boundaries of contemporary Johannesburg, which now include the various spaces of the informal settlements dotted around. The different social and spatial directions existing in literary Johannesburg are also revealed to the reader. The writer begins the story with a statement confirming the difficulties involved as one tries to appreciate Johannesburg and establish new ways of reading the city, which will bring new insights of the Southern African metropolis:[5]

> If it's authentic architecture you're after, you won't find it in the
> middle -class suburbs of Johannesburg. They are awash with
> impoverished mishaps, with crass imitations of the elsewhere-
> anywhere but here. Travel instead to the immediate surroundings
> of our misshapen urban areas. (133)

Thus, the author reveals his travels from the middle-class suburb to the informal settlements, generally held in prejudice as 'formless' and 'chaotic squatter camps'

(133), and then goes on to undermine such views, in that way establishing new perspectives on the city. The disjuncture between the prejudiced perceptions and the intriguing reality of the informal settlement is shown through the positive description of the architectural designs of the "the corrugated or iron sheet, plywood boarding and plastic sheeting" (135) 'houses'.

The writer even praises the informal settlement's spatial planning, which he reveals as marked by the existence of a "space around ... for neighbourhood activities like trading with hawkers, watching casually over children at play, maintaining informal surveillance of the area..." (134). Such a social spatial planning reveals some of the remaking and embracing of the city initiated by the unrecognised and unofficial inhabitants of the fictive Johannesburg. Hence, the popular perception of the various informal settlements as disorganised and a social risk are in the first place shown in the text and through the searching style and use of juxtapositions, typical of journalese reportage, also undermined. The significance of the journalistic style is indicated when the author follows up the popular and stereotypical perception of the informal settlements with a distinct description of the spatial images depicting well-planned built and lived spaces of the informal settlement. The author reverently notes that the settlement has some form of civic organisation as indicated when he "realised [that] there was a shared understanding of how life on the settlement could be conducted in an orderly, mutual satisfactory manner ... [and that] key aspects of public life ... are appropriately, if not conventionally, civic" (134-135). This informal settlement also facilitates the crafting of new aesthetics, and home building and management designs, however rudimentary they might be. The narrator shows how the informal settlement inhabitants use quilt-art curtains for privacy, containers for storing clothes and utensils, "[a]nd ingenious methods of space management of household activities" (136). This confirms the existence and power of some of the literary informal Johannesburg settlements to nurture new forms of creativity.

The revelation of the complicated and different Johannesburg spaces, where some of the fictive inhabitants can defy the contemporary urban condition of being inside and outside, and belonging and not belonging in the city, is significant in both texts. This is revealed through some urban characters' active engagement in the extension of the fictive city's boundaries and formation of some forms of social responsibility, organisational and creative capability as noted in the building of well-organised informal settlements such as Orange Farm (Lipman). Paradoxically, the

recognised
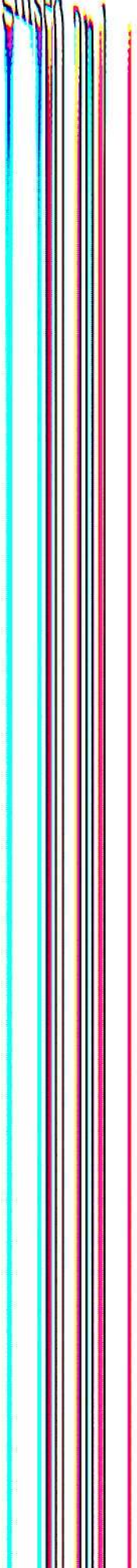
recognised and planned places, such as the inner-city, turn out to be deplorably bleak and repulsive to concerned citizens and observers, thus indicating the ongoing fragmentation of the fictive city, as revealed in Madondo's piece discussed earlier.

Form plays a great significance in capturing clearly the 'presentness' of literary Johannesburg in the current post-apartheid period. The narrative form employed in most of the stories, where the journalistic report often mixes observations, a vivid documentation of real life experiences and the dissemination of an opinion based on the available facts, assists in the portrayal of some of the characters' life experiences as they relate to the city's exposure to crime and other threats as well as regional and global social and economic forces. The use of factual documentation and a journalistic style has long been associated with literary productions based on real life experiences as evident in Barbara Foley's (1986) discussion of various literary writings that were influenced by major world events such as American slavery and the First and Second World Wars. Similarly, South African writers from the Sophiatown era, such as Bloke Modisane and Lewis Nkosi, went on to write more literary works after the demise of *Drum* based on real life and personal experiences such as apartheid police brutality, displaced psyches due to racial discrimination and relocations, and exile (Gready: 1990).

Both the journalistic report and documentary styles are important and appropriate when describing contemporary experiences, especially conditions that are still in the process of defining themselves and the general transient nature of urban settings. This, in essence, is the process that contemporary Johannesburg has been going through in the past few years. As a result, such an unstable and contradictory setting poses complex creative challenges, for writers might take long to craft literary styles that fully capture such convoluted experiences. Nevertheless, Ivan Vladislavic is one South African author who has made some inroads in developing writings of the present Johannesburg while using an innovative form that brings in the playful, irony, different media and technologies. Through these he links the different places of the city. These include the suburban enclaves, the inner city, former apartheid townships, informal settlements, the space of the road, especially freeways and roads to the different parts of Johannesburg, and hotels. I will refer to *The Exploded View* (2004) to develop this observation.

I argue that various stories in this collection navigate through the journalistic report, factual documentation, fictive writing and sometimes the autobiographical in

their description of current life experiences and the conditions existing in Johannesburg. Arthur Maimane, for example, collapses time and space, and juxtaposes the city of his memory, the vibrant and mythical Sophiatown (Kofifi), with the contemporary post- apartheid one. As a result, he manages to reveal the contradictory situation of belonging and not belonging and finding one's present self, especially for exiles like himself, torn between a present and past Johannesburg. The writer describes Johannesburg, in a style that mixes personal experiences, facts, opinion and the fictive as depicted here:

> My knowledge of the city as a wake-up majita of the Kofifi era was really only a blinkered view of one part of society... We didn't know 'the real Jo'burg' of verdant valleys above the gold reefs that bulged into ridges, hills and rock koppies...What we knew as officially mere 'temporary sojourners' were flat, treeless dustbowls once called 'locations' before their upliftment to 'townships' by apartheid spindoctors...But now I'm a moegoe who gets lost in those exclusive enclaves and the city centre amazed this returnee... All my remembered landmarks have disappeared as completely as the Sophiatown we called Kofifi with rundown shops and slum housing. The new danger is not being arrested or mugged but driving against several lines of fast-moving traffic along streets with familiar names that are now one-way thoroughfares. (149-150)

The story hints at the city's association with the myth of gold and plenty as shown by the reference to the city as Egoli (148) a popular name that associates Johannesburg with gold and the promise of a successful urban life. Thus, the narrative form blends popular and historical images from the Sophiatown and apartheid era with the present perceptions and imaginings. This enables the reader to take note of various points of view and images that all contribute towards the portrayal of the present literary Johannesburg's experiences. In addition, stories such as Alex Duval Smith's "Signs of Life", to be discussed fully later in the chapter, make reference to public commercial, political and informative signs in an attempt to fully capture the image of

the instability and multiple perceptions of contemporary and post-apartheid Johannesburg.

Furthermore, in the text under study, the narrative styles, themes and images of a city becoming, on one side, glamorous and cosmopolitan, and on another, contradictorily greying, and plagued by new forms of social divisions and fears, are also invoked in the description of contemporary Johannesburg. Nuttall (forthcoming 2007) presents this idea well, arguing that the contemporary city of Johannesburg is being imagined within a temporal realm, where the past, the present and the future intersect and aid in shaping the writers' perceptions of their 'presentness'. In such a situation, some narrative styles and perceptions of the city become cyclic and existentialist. For instance, in "Fringe Country", Mark Gevisser describes how he stumbles on an amazing archive of photographs from the *Drum* era, while researching the writing of the biography of President Thabo Mbeki. The journey from the city to Bailey's African Photographic Archives, on the outskirts of Johannesburg, becomes a symbolic journey into both the past and a realisation of what the narrator calls "what might have been" (93).[6] The narrator drives away from the city and present chaos marked by "the boomed suburbs and cluster-home developments, and neo-classical office parks" (90), and reminders of apartheid, hinted at by the drive through roads named after past colonial and apartheid leader, and the current casinos and obsessive spending and forgetting (Bremner 2004). This becomes an empowering and eye-opening pilgrimage which is a journey into an awareness of the significance of memory and history in the city.[7] This pilgrimage leads the writer to an encounter with the city of memory[8] as represented in the archive of old *Drum* magazine photographs that he discovers:

> One of the photographs accompanying the text was that of a white woman and black man horsing around in a swimming pool, above the caption, 'Where is this? Surely not South Africa, with white and black in the same swimming pool? If that's what you thought, you are wrong, this picture was taken in one of [the] smartest suburbs of white Johannesburg.' (91-92)

The writer's journey enables him to retrieve a Johannesburg of the past and memory where, despite the state ideology of racial segregation, some characters were still able

to subvert and cross over the then existing racial boundaries. Gevisser depicts to us the intricate linkage between present life experiences, the past and historical memory.

It is indeed ironic that the contemporary city is rendered as characteristically fragmented, as denoted by the boomed suburbs and office parks, the gigantic casinos punctuating the city's different prime spaces and the squatter camps cropping up on the various margins as well (all this encountered by the writer as he drives to his destination in an act analogous to De Certeau's 'walking' the city). Yet the writer shows that the city of the past also had some moments of interracial community-making that could easily be viewed as subversive in apartheid ideology. This seeming veneration of the city of memory is enhanced through the sense of loss and nostalgia that is constituted within the narrator:

> I am a child of the suburban Johannesburg. Looking at this photo I
> felt unutterable loss; a hunger that rippled down the sides of my tongue
> and gathered in my throat... I was born three years after these
> photographs were taken, just as the Rivonia trialists were beginning their
> life sentences on Robben Island: there were no such poolside gatherings
> any more. I look, now, at these photographs and see my childhood,
> blanched, with the focal point – that black man advancing through the
> water – removed. I see what might have been. (92-93)

Hence, the 'presentness' of the city, its chaos, fragmentation, memories, what it has lost and the associated possibilities, are teased out and revealed vividly to the reader through the journalistic, factual documentation and autobiographical styles, which are used in most of the stories. Furthermore, plot and form work hand in hand to skilfully foreground the complexities associated with the represented residents' embracing of the contemporary city and finding a home, journeying into and out of Johannesburg, and city life in relation to crime, which are significant themes in the text.

6.3 Possibilities of finding a home and the paradox of social-spatial fragmentation

Contemporary Johannesburg is represented and perceived as a city that has been expanding in the physical and social sense, opening up its spaces to both local and foreign inhabitants, yet its life experiences are characterised by the paradox of belonging and not belonging. I now focus on how certain urban characters have

managed to embrace and to establish a home and close connections with the city (belonging). At the same time I will focus on how the city is ironically developing into another world plagued by fear, stereotypes and self-alienation, especially for the suburban middle- and upper- class urbanites (unbelonging).

The paradox of the possibilities offered by the 'new' Johannesburg as a place where one can belong and not belong, typical of the city's ambivalence noted by Raban (1974) and the subsequent social fragmentation, are treated from different angles in this collection of stories. A story such as "From Jo'burg to Jozi" by Adam Roberts incorporates the autobiographical style to describe Johannesburg as a dangerous city for outsiders and foreigners that include the writer himself. The autobiographical mode acts appropriately as a means to give a voice to the city's experiences and represent the relationship between the self, especially the racialised and foreign other, in relation to a formerly apartheid city, if one considers Lefebvre's (1991) ideas of relational linkages. The autobiographical also helps in describing the city as home and to reveal the possibilities of the city influencing the characters' life experiences.[9]

Roberts recounts his arrival into the city, during the period of the immediate post -1994 democratisation of Johannesburg, in search of a home. He uses vivid imagery to depict the different stereotypical perceptions and myths that describe Johannesburg negatively. Through flashbacks, he is able to recount his friends' comments and make references to travel books and newspaper opinions that portrayed Johannesburg as swamped by car jacking, armed robbery, burglary and possible exposure to dangers due to an anticipated breakdown in services and delivery at some point in the trajectory of the post-apartheid city. For instance, some of the stereotypes he had to deal with during those past moments include a travel writer who uses what the narrator calls a "post-apocalyptic air" (3) to describe Johannesburg as a "city [that] has been abandoned and the streets crawl with 'gangsters and *tsotsis*'. 'Everyone had personal knowledge of someone who had died violently'" (3). Another writer referred to in the story, describes "Jo'burg as a volatile, comical and bizarre mix of the rich world and the poor one, a city of casinos, shopping malls and swimming pools put cheek to cheek with a poor, undeveloped, resentful mass" (3).

All these perceptions, some exaggerated and apocalyptic, which the narrator had to deal with, clearly depict contemporary Johannesburg as a city of contradictions. Social inequalities and different forms of spatial deterioration indeed

exist as already described in stories such as Madondo's, examined earlier. Furthermore, the writer's first drive into the city from the international airport is nerve wracking: "When I drove for the first time... I wondered why on earth I was moving to a world hotspot of murders and violence" (5). He even gets lost, but finally arrives at his destination, having realised well that "[t]errible expectations, the reputation, of the city had helped to create my fear" (6). This reveals the possibilities that one can still realise in the same city. I argue that such a cultural and literary representation of contemporary Johannesburg shows that this city is unstable, difficult to define and open to various interpretations. More so, it is able to imprint itself on its characters in ways that they (the characters) might not have thought about. This is evident in the way the writer finds a home in the same Johannesburg that is stereotyped and post-apocalyptically imagined, as revealed in the perceptions of the writers the narrator reads before moving into Johannesburg. He therefore gives a moving description of how he settled in Johannesburg and has been enjoying the city's diversity and vibrancy where both the African and Euro-American are found.

Even the former racially excluded urban characters can now walk and enter freely into some of the written city's social and other built spaces:

> Where many people were once humiliated and barred from living,
> eating or entering certain areas, the city is now a free, lively, multicultural
> and relatively mixed hub. (8)

These formerly excluded urban characters have acquired a sense of community and are proud to be part of this multicultural urban condition. This theme of finding a home and the associated proud ties with contemporary Johannesburg is therefore an indicator of the newness and possibilities that have been established in the fictive post-apartheid city as it continues with its journey of reinvention and democratisation.

Other possibilities existing in Johannesburg, despite "terrible divisions [that] remain and new problems [that] have come out, [b]ut these are more normal, the sort suffered in other parts of the world" (8), are revealed in the perceptions and images of the city located in the writer's memory [again echoing the idea of the city of memory discussed by Nuttall (forthcoming 2007)]. The narrator reveals his fascination with the "rich networks of people ...attractive architecture, a lively economic pulse [and the fact that] [i]t is an edgy, energetic city, which draws new arrivals from across the

continent" (1). He also describes how Johannesburg is likely to be enriched through linkages with other cities of the world such as London, New York, Lagos and Mumbai, and through its attraction of foreign African and world professional migrants. He is, however, quick to point out that the possibilities can be realised only if this Johannesburg establishes pragmatic relations with the rest of the continent and the world. He sees hope in the process of urban renewal then taking place in Newtown, where the city's cultural and artistic values were being regenerated through the reinvention of the place and refurbishment of the Market Theatre, which he documents. Therefore, the theme of finding a home, despite the popular stereotypical images of horrendous crime and violence, and the existence of social and spatial divisions in the fictive Johannesburg reveals the soft qualities (Raban 1974) of the city on the level of possibilities of establishing new connections to the city.

Another level of possibilities that can be realised in Johannesburg is noted in the moments when the literary city's different worlds and experiences intersect. In some of the writings, there is evidence to suggest that there are still some positive possibilities of community-making even in the existing social and spatial fragmentation. Generally, characters from the suburbs and townships can now meet freely, irrespective of race and class. Other social and cultural interactions between characters from Johannesburg and those from other South African cities, and with those from other world cities are also possible. As a result, the conditions in contemporary Johannesburg become reflective of this confluence of different and sometimes ambiguous experiences. In "Sport and Cars" by Darrel Bristow-Bovey, possibilities for the constitution of new urban identities are evident when the worlds of the northern suburbs and that of the inner city and other southern parts of Johannesburg overlap. This is portrayed through the journey motif, which resonates with the idea of 'walking in the city' (De Certeau 1984) shown in the drive taken by the narrator, who stays in Sandton, with his friend Chunko, visiting from Cape Town. Both acquire new identities and perceptions when they enter into the space where the multiple residential worlds of the written Johannesburg and other parts of South Africa and the world interconnect.

Both characters go to the FNB stadium to watch an international soccer friendly match between South Africa and France, via the dangerous inner-city Hillbrow. The fears of getting lost in down-town Johannesburg, the risk of losing their car and exposure to other life-threatening experiences, popularly associated with such

down-town life experiences, are revealed through the use of fearsome images as shown here:

> I had never been to FNB stadium at night. I had seldom been
> downtown at all. Frightening stories get told in Johannesburg about
> what goes on downtown. Apparently monsters live there. There are
> dragons and tar pits and, I don't know, giant clams that close around
> your ankles. As we drove south along the M1, singing insulting football
> songs, Chunko began to cast shifty glances at the darkening city. 'So
> you know the way, and everything, right?' he said. (58)

As a result, the intersection between the world of the northern suburb and that lived and frequented by the lower-class inhabitants in residential spaces such as Hillbrow and social places including soccer arenas, is described as characterised by fear, tensions and anxieties.

Nonetheless, a new connectedness and sense of being at home in the fictive Johannesburg are revealed as possible. For both characters' fear that although they had arrived at the stadium safely their car might still be stolen while watching the game, is inverted as the plot unfolds. In this in-between space, the narrator describes that even though they were the only white people, they enjoyed the international soccer friendly and acquired a new and existential connectedness with the other spectators:

> So we went to the game, and it was wonderful. The night was warm
> and blue with the smoke of grilled chicken and chops. All around us
> people sang – each person a different song- and we blew those horns
> that make a sound like a tugboat falling off the edge of the world. We
> swayed and we bopped and we took deep sips from whatever was inside
> the Liquifruit carton that the man in the yellow miner's helmet kept
> passing down the row. (59)

More importantly, the story ends on an ironic note, where the narrator and his friend Chunko, much to their delight, find their car, still intact despite their original fears that it would be stolen. The account thus reveals the fictive Johannesburg as

unpredictable and possessive of other surprising and new possibilities for rounded urban identity formation, especially when one enters into some of its spaces of intersection.

Some stories also describe the existence of spaces, not necessarily of intersection, but those of glamour and illusion that reveal the complexity of Johannesburg's mapping as a space of possibility and at the same time social fragmentation. Stories such as Dave Chislett's "City of Restless Sleep" and Marlene van Niekerk's "Take the Body Where It Has Never Been Before" portray the linkage between some city spaces and the consequential contradictory urban life experiences. These contradictory life experiences are characterised by the pursuit of urban pleasure and self-fulfilment, and the constitution of disjointed social experiences by the elite and leisured classes of the city. In such stories, a number of characters participate in cultural practices such as all-night revelling and excessive consumption of alcohol in nightclubs. They also contentedly alienate themselves from the other urban characters through means such as walling off their residential places, the use of over-protected cars and frequenting exclusive gyms.[10]

Chislett's story, written in the first person, describes the personal displacement suffered by a typical leisured class. It also represents the resultant temporal and social divisions that exist in the Johannesburg under focus. The narrator has just come out of a downtown nightclub at dawn, and walks into one of his favourite twenty-four-hour restaurants for his usual "Nachos and mozzarella fingers with beer at 4 am. Or full breakfasts and then some" (66). While he drinks his Carling Black Label, waiting for his breakfast order from the waiter at "this place [that] never shuts" (65) he offers his rather indifferent and alcohol-tinged impressions of the city.

The narrator intensely describes Johannesburg's life experiences in the temporal space of the night, thus signifying another element of the fragmentation that is found in the city. Night in the fictive Johannesburg[11] is lived by characters of the neon-lighted world of leisure and entertainment such as "[l]eather-clad Goths from the big Goth Industrial party at the Warehouse, ravers complete with backpacks and water pistols [and] well-dreaded Rastas" (66) who loathe the city of the day. The narrator also reveals the zombie-like and hallucinatory nature of the city to the reader, for the city of the night is peopled by "some alcoholic men of indeterminate age, race or creed" (66) and unofficial urban characters such as the illegal immigrant who guards the narrator's car. The same illegal immigrant and car park attendant confirms

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this hallucinatory quality of Johannesburg, which is indicative of the instability and the spectacular elements ensuing from the various social and spatial divisions found in contemporary Johannesburg (Mbembe 2004: 402-403) in his statement that: " Ey Golly. Golly golly golly. What a place, hey? Egoli'" (67).

The most pronounced sense of the fictive city's spatial and temporal disjointedness is implied in the metaphor of the 'zombification' of Johannesburg's life experiences. The existence of a range of anxieties and gloominess in contemporary Johannesburg is subtly revealed through the narrator's early-morning and drunken view of the city. The title of the story, "City of Restless Sleep" echoes this unsettling urban condition that is generally held in relation to this Johannesburg lived by Chislett's narrator. Furthermore, the narrator makes a "drink-riven, sleep-deprived" (67) (zombie) gaze of Johannesburg from the kopje. Here, he reveals his marvel at the beauty of the city's northern suburbs, hotels and shopping malls, and also the sterile "heartlessness and thanklessness" (67) of Hillbrow and the city centre, thus confirming the distinct social and spatial divisions existing in this city. He ends with a revelation of his trepidation at facing the city of the day because he loathes its hectic work and life demands. In this trepidation lies the social and temporal disjointed city that is at worst in conflict with some of its inhabitants and is generally alienating. The narrator reveals that those dwellers exhibiting alcohol- and drug-related displaced identities live unfulfilling lives during the day. He also compares them to vampires who suffer from beer blues and a fatigue arising from a reckless pursuit of Johannesburg pleasure. More importantly, his sense of 'unbelonging' is revealed when he points out that "I'd rather be in Cape Town" (66), thus showing how staying in the fictive Johannesburg is always associated with restlessness and a social and psychological displacement within some of the described urban dwellers.

In Van Niekerk's story, the reader witnesses the incoherence of present-day literary Johannesburg as a place and a home. This is revealed through the life experiences of some urban characters, especially that of the leisured class, which is characterised by anxiety and an obsession with security and health. Van Niekerk cynically describes how the middle- and upper-class characters' obsession with safety subsequently entrenches some form of class-based segmentation and urban fragmentation:

Along the bleak, billboard-encrusted thoroughfares of this city

we take them [their bodies] to safe places, walled or otherwise
enclosed, exclusive, places which provide the flattering illusion of
meaningful being and dwelling. We travel in our burglar-proof cars
from our walled and wired houses to the well- patrolled labyrinths of
Westgate, Eastgate, Northgate, all those lookalike bunker-faced shopping
malls. Or, if we consider ourselves too cool for trolleys, we take our bods
out to some leafy suburb, to a carefully preserved villagey street, where
we cling to our tables in cutesy coffee bars or linger in second-hand
bookshops before they disappear, like countless others before them, into
even safer neighbourhoods. (242-243)

The writer's narrative style, where she, like most of the writers in this
collection of short stories under study, maps the city's real-life landscape and refers to
crucial geographic locations in the city, points to the alienation that is felt by some of
the urban characters residing in such utopian suburban places. Van Niekerk aptly
describes this world occupied by some of the upper-class contemporary Johannesburg
characters as a dystopia, where people are always on the move "to that where" (243).
More so, the space of the health club is used as a chief emblem to show the existence
of indefinable livelihoods and to highlight the problematic social fragmentation
plaguing contemporary Johannesburg.

Van Niekerk asserts that: "The health club privatises social spacing and
upholds its own forms of exclusion and subtle oppression" (244) – a statement that
again echoes Mbembe's (2004: 393- 404) discussion on the new forms of segregation
in contemporary Johannesburg that are symbolised by exclusive and high-class
suburban enclaves of post-modern shopping malls and residential projects only
accessible to the affluent residents. The description reveals further the exclusivity of
the space of the health club, for it "retreats into a generalised conformity and a shared
resentment of strangers and oddballs" (244). It also shields the upper-class club
members from a Johannesburg described in the story as peopled by the street urchin,
informal settler, southern residential dwellers and ironically the security guard who
works at the club but is always an outsider. Hence, one of this Johannesburg's
paradoxes is revealed in the way some characters solidify their hold and fortify their
homes in the northern suburbs. Yet by so doing, the fictive urban dwellers would be

entrenching class-based fragmentations and an entrance into secluded and fortified worlds plagued by fear and anxiety as rightly revealed in the story.

However, the same dystopic and fragmented contemporary Johannesburg described by Van Niekerk can paradoxically enable the creation of new experiences and new personal connections in the city. The story ends with the depiction of a new relationship developing between the narrator and a new member to the health club. The narrator picks up a conversation with "a strange visitor, a redundant body, left over from an era when weight lifting had nothing to do with fitness" (244) and gets to know more about the male character's past life as a horse-lifter with a now defunct circus company. The "stranger" likes to work on weights as a way of transporting himself from the present into the space of a glorious past, where he was a contented employee with a circus company that used to operate on the same space where the health club is currently standing on. Hence, this gym is, despite its overwhelming alienating effects, also shown as a place that is likely to facilitate an entrance into this world, where space and time are collapsed for some of the participants as they work out, and also provide a chance for the participants to create new urban and national and cosmopolitan identities. This is clearly revealed in this statement:

> Perhaps the gym here keeps open a protean space, a distorted and painfully aberrant offspring of the parks in European metropolises, of the traditional marketplaces in African towns, where more or less the same people regularly converge for semi-public, semi- intimate togetherness. Here is a seminal form of the multicultural bonhomie prematurely dubbed, by politicians and pop stars alike, 'the rainbow nation'. (244)

6.4 Crime in the literary Johannesburg

Closely associated with the urban anxieties and a sense of not belonging in Johannesburg is the incessant obsessive fear of crime that is felt by most characters. In the above section, stories such as Roberts' "From Jo'burg to Jozi" and Bristow-Bovey's "Sport and Cars" have already established this popular contemporary and bleak image of Johannesburg as a city characterised by ongoing vibrant life experiences that are often juxtaposed with a recurrent exposure to different forms of crime and other social and health hazards. As a result, a number of issues are brought

to the fore. These include the need to examine how the treatment of the theme of crime and the city is intricately linked to other issues such as the characters' eventual challenge of the urban risks and formation of an urban identity. An evaluation of the extent to which the documentation of various disparities between popular perceptions on the fictive Johannesburg and experiences on the ground lead to the formation of new ways of perceiving and writing the contemporary city spaces, is also pertinent. Finally, there is the need to delineate the patterns of thought on the present city and its past, and acts of memory-making and the city that are teased out as the theme of the city and crime is developed in some of the stories. At most, the city's multiplicity and incoherence, which still fits within Bremner's (2004) idea of Johannesburg's movement in different directions, is revealed. Thus, I contend in this section that, in some of the stories, the representation of the city and crime leads to the formation of multiple images and perceptions of current urban life patterns. It should be noted, however, that if one takes into consideration the main theoretical underpinning of this study, then the multiple and shifting images of the imagined city arise from the intricate relational linkage, as noted by Lefebvre (1991), between the city and history, memory, the present democracy and its spatial reconfigurations.

Ruth Ansah Ayisi's "Kwame Doesn't Worry", still tapping into a mixture of the autobiographical and the journalistic report, describes Johannesburg as a lovely and impressive city that can, however, be dangerous to some of its characters, especially foreigners, as revealed by Roberts in his story discussed above. The story documents the ambiguity and social contradictions associated with the popular imagination of the new Johannesburg. It also reveals the resultant multiple identities, where a character can be vulnerable and still overcome the vulnerability to become a new and empowered subject. Ayisi shows this in her narration of the visit to Johannesburg from Mozambique made by the protagonist and her son Kwame. During the visit Kwame is enchanted by the glamour of the fictive Johannesburg's spectacular built, lived and commercial spaces, for he

> loved it. He loves the restaurants, especially MacDonald's. He loves
> the variety of shows and kids' movies… He is also deeply impressed
> by my friend's large houses with spacious well-kept gardens, with their
> pet dogs and their blue swimming pools. (30)

This upbeat and child-innocent view of Johannesburg is, however, juxtaposed with stubborn reminders of the residual racial obsessions. Kwame is denied permission to swim in the pool at the complex where they are staying and the narrator bases this denial on residual racism (30-31). This revels some of the intricacies and contradictions existing in the current fictive Johannesburg. In addition, the fortification of the residential places in response to the ever-present fear of crime is signalled in the description of how an innocent Kwame presses the buttons on the electric garage gates and triggers some of the suburban houses' alarms, and how this is immediately followed by a swift military-style security company response. Such humorously described experiences, where the unpredictability of suburban experiences is revealed through a clash between the innocent perception of a child and the harsh security of the sometimes racially obsessed adult Johannesburg world, are given as a precursor to a pronounced example that reveals the proximity of the criminal threat in the lives of those living in this Johannesburg visited by Kwame and his mother.

In the first place, the narrator and her son's shopping around the city, in particular at Eastgate, is linked to the focus on the presence of crime in literary Johannesburg. As both characters travel around the city, the enchanting post-modern spaces of consumption such as "the mock-Italian Montecasino, glitzy Sandton, or the people's mall, Eastgate" (31) are well documented, just as Bremner does in "A Quick Tour around Contemporary Johannesburg" (53-56). However, these are ironically revealed as potentially criminalized. The narrative reveals that there is a difference between shopping malls where "Kwame's eyes were everywhere" (31) and a criminally threatened Eastgate, thus depicting how 'normal' urban life experiences in the fictive Johannesburg can be suddenly ruptured by crime. Both characters are served by a criminal salesman who tries to swindle Kwame by lying to the female shop owner that "the action figure on horseback" (32) toy they had, had not been paid for. The incident reveals one of the popularly held perceptions of Johannesburg as a city that is characteristically associated with crime and other hazards. This perception contributes towards the creation of a largely bleak image, where the documented Johannesburg is an overwhelmingly contradictory space in which the characters are constantly dogged by criminal threats and other fear perceptions that end up inhibiting their freedom and ability to enjoy their lives in the city.

Nonetheless, through Kwame and his mother's travels around the city, it is evident to the reader that the 'journeying' goes beyond the remapping of the city given by De Certeau in "Walking in the City" (1984). This is because their ability to enter into different spaces uninhibitedly is emblematic of the successful transformation that the city has undergone. This is one of the most significant features of the Johannesburg described in this collection of short stories. I contend that it is intriguing to realise that despite the existing criminal and other hazards, already pre-empted by Roberts as typical of any major world city (8), the trauma of frequent racially curtailed movements and strict apartheid police surveillance (revealed in the study of the representation of the limited movements in the city and the possibilities of transgression in some of the *Staffrider* stories in Chapter 2) is non-existent in the present Johannesburg. Furthermore, different cultural meanings are now associated with the trope of journeying or being on the road. These different meanings are discussed well by Justin Fox (2000: 443-459) who reveals that during apartheid roads were a means of controlling the movement of the oppressed through constant road blocks and demarcating white power through the signs that would indicate where restricted white areas existed, yet in the present the roads are now a symbol of freedom of movement. I am interested in the way Ayisi incorporates the trope of journeying in a manner that resonates with Fox's (2000) ideas discussed above. Here, Kwame and his mother are shown travelling freely in the literary city and it becomes clear to the reader that the paradigms of power in the present Johannesburg have now shifted. Moreover, their journey becomes a metaphor of the now achieved metamorphosis of the city and the formation of a culture of urban freedoms now synonymous with the post-apartheid city.

The theme of crime and the city, here, is also linked to other issues in Ayisi's story. These include the potentially empowering and 'real life' encounters that one just has to face if one wants to be part of the 'new' Johannesburg experience. The author undermines the Eastgate incident by revealing how it empowers Kwame in a manner that is true to the title of the story – "Kwame Doesn't Worry". Kwame challenges the criminal salesman by insisting to the female shop owner that they have paid for the toy until the dishonest salesman character concedes this and gets fired. In addition, the story ends on a note where, despite the mother's paranoia resulting from the incident, a crucial moment of insight and character transformation is realised by both the narrator and Kwame respectively:

The experience was a dampener on the day. I found myself transformed into a paranoid person in Johannesburg, thinking every young man hanging around was going to rob us. I also kept my eyes out for the thief because I thought he might follow us and 'fix' Kwame.

You can't escape the insecurity, the racial divide, the poverty, I was thinking.

But Kwame had already learned to cope. "That man is stupid. He tried to rob us," he declared, looking around for more shopping. (32-33)

Therefore, while the current Johannesburg might be depicted as plagued by crime, it is ironic that some of the inhabitants may actualise new urban identities in moments where crime and living the city intersect, just as happened in Bristow-Bovey's representation of the impact of the intersection between the suburban world and the southern suburbs' world discussed above. New identities are, however, realised as the likes of Kwame stand up to the criminal threats and 'live the city'.

Nevertheless, crime is a major concern in the contemporary literary Johannesburg and its impact in the city and literary treatment in the text are varied. Some stories go beyond the tone set in the above narratives, where the narrators and other urban characters, through encountering and becoming aware of the existence of crime, craft means of selective walking in the city as suggested by Kwame and his mothers' decision to visit Eastgate rather than visiting places in downtown Johannesburg, inner-city Hillbrow and the former segregated black and coloured townships that are generally viewed as risky places. In some stories, the theme of crime is inverted from the popularly held view that its perpetrators are mostly the unemployed from the former apartheid townships, and informal settlements in Johannesburg. Len Ashton's "Watch My Lips" undermines the popular view on crime and the city by showing how Bennie Snyman, an up-and-coming young white lawyer, willingly joins a notorious neighbourhood gang of thieves called the Bothas. Ashton humorously captures the ridiculousness of Bennie's decision to risk his professional success by assuming a criminal identity thus:

Bennie fell in love. Not with some nice, clean girl who could type. No, not Bennie. He fell for a gang. A whole gang of brawling ruffians who came to him for advice when they were questioned by the constabulary in the matter of a missing Toyota. (27)

To make matters worse, and in a way that reveals an inversion of the current popular view that crime emanates from the low class suburbs, Bennie begins to offer the Bothas legal advice and ends up as an accomplice to the gang's criminal activities. He among other things provides storage space for stolen goods, having been flattered by the way the gang held him in high esteem. Also, on some night, he joins the notorious gang's "triumphant" and "flamboyant" (28) drive around the neighbourhood in which "[e]verybody saw him being welcomed and admitted to the uproarious camaraderie" (29). The drive, which "brought the neighbours out in susurration of admiration" (28) gave him in to the police, who the following day visited him, searched his house and found the stolen goods leading to his arrest and subsequent imprisonment. Again the crime story is inverted here, in that to some extent Bennie is still a victim. That is, despite the fact that he is an accomplice, there is a sense in which Bennie is a victim of the Bothas' manipulation. This implies that in some cases some of the current criminals and perpetrators of crime in this city are themselves 'helpless' victims of larger and complex criminal networks.

A new angle to the urban imaginary of crime in Johannesburg city is introduced in the story. Crime in the fictive Johannesburg is shown as arising out of other factors such as some residents' complex personalities. This even goes beyond race, place of origin and social class, thus undermining the usual sociology and popular myths of the city and crime such as the ones referred to in the newspaper reports used by Roberts in his story "From Jo'burg to Jozi" discussed above. Specifically in this story, Bennie becomes involved in the murky world of crime, in the Johannesburg that he lives in, because he found the acknowledgement by the Bothas fascinating. He assumes an existential character transformation through his association with the thugs. That is, his tough childhood upbringing, where he was never recognised by the boys of his neighbourhood, overrides the fact that he is on the road to professional success. The resultant self-actualisation and recognition by his community, and chance to enter into another realm of the city's life, that of criminal

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town. New Nugget Hotel. *It was a drinking joint for* Rand Daily
Mail *journalists.* Rand Reality: To Let-suites from 150 sq m to 1,500
sq m, already 70% let. *Cobbled street here.* Hair studio. *This feels like
one of those surveillance camera areas....* Make Friends In High
Places. Old Mutual Properties. Gandhi Square. *Is that a new name?
Cool !...*Crockett & Jones: Chubb Armed Response, trespassers will be
prosecuted, we are open, pull. (87)

One certainly gets the sense that a discourse that is likely to empower and richly
inform the urban perceptions of those living in the fictive contemporary Johannesburg
is one that incorporates all the different movements and changes taking place in the
city. Futhermore, the mapping of contemporary Johannesburg, as noted in the
cognitive response to signage and commentary on spaces given by the car occupants
in the above quotation, encompasses multiple voices, and absurd juxtapositions of
signs and built spaces. The present literary Johannesburg is thus described as one that
has to be constantly interrogated, so as to find directions and meaning, viewed in
relation to the past and some of its absurdities such as the ubiquity of security
companies and codes of restrictions in which "trespassers will be prosecuted", if one
has to 'live' the city or be part of the city, as both characters finally arrive in Melville
at the end of the narrative (88-89). Therefore, an experimental and new way of
reading the city such as Duval Smith's and Hope's, will assist in the establishment of
a perspective that captures the fictive Johannesburg's fluidity and carries the potential
to influence the characters' lives in the written setting to come to terms with its
instability and constant social and spatial changes.

6.5 Conclusion

While the imaginings of the current Johannesburg depict bleakness, where most inner-
city and township spaces are portrayed as derelict, overcrowded, crime-ridden and
fragmented from the affluent and fortified suburban settings, there are certainly
multiple perceptions that are sometimes contradictory, which are teased out in this
collection of stories. Some stories such as Ayisi's "Kwame Doesn't Worry" and
Roberts' "From Jo'burg to Jozi" reveal that there are possibilities of connecting and
embracing the current democratised Johannesburg. Others such as Hope's "Jo'burg
Blues" and Duval Smith's "Signs of Life" show that it is possible to formulate

complex discursive styles that portray the multiplicities of the city. The stories focussed on in this chapter, such as the already mentioned "From Jo'burg to Jozi", Van Niekerk's "Take the Body Where It Has Never Been Before" and Bristow-Bovey's "Sports and Cars" also show the complexity of writing and perceiving Johannesburg as a city where the African and Euro-American influences can be experienced and add to the hybridity and vibrancy of the setting. Even at a local level, stories such as Bhengu's "Romance" and Lipman's "Beyond Our Urban Mishaps" reflect the internal dynamics of this fictive Johannesburg, revealing a city that is constantly in flux, changing its spatial and social boundaries, encouraging shifting perspectives, where the past and the present are always coming into contact and are re-evaluated, as dwellers try to understand the different experiences that they encounter in their described spaces. It is this complex and constantly shifting image and positioning of this lived and changing Johannesburg that also encourages the writers to describe the city from different angles, where the literary city ends up incorporating a mixture of the popular and serious perspectives and images, as Duval Smith and Hope ably show in their stories. In addition, the setting is written from different styles such as journalese, factual documentation, the fictive and the autobiographical, as the writers of and the characters in these stories try to capture what Hope calls the "very Johannesburg" experience in his story discussed above.

ence, the fictive Johannesburg, analysed in this chapter, is an intriguing and shifting , where the present and the past, and the cosmopolitan and the local, are all twined, thus enabling the creation of this overall image of a contradictorily t and indeed notorious city, as hinted at by the title of this collection under s

Endnotes

[1] Various sociological, geographical, historical, literary and architectural studies that analyse some of the social and economic changes that have occurred in the city's Central Business District (CBD) and the inner city have been made. Issues such as the influx of local blacks, Asians and coloureds as well as African migrants from countries north of the Limpopo, and the movement of financial and industrial business offices into the northern suburbs such as Sandton have been tackled in some of the studies. Other areas of focus include the massive development of high-class shopping malls and residential projects in the northern suburbs, changes in residential and social patterns in the formerly segregated townships and the growth of a vibrant creative culture within the youth as especially represented by the growth of Kwaito music and Loxion Culca brand. The texts include: Judin and Vladislavic's *Blank: Architecture, Apartheid and After* (2000); Morris' *Bleakness and Light: Inner-City Transition in Hillbrow, Johannesburg* (1999); Nuttall and Michael, *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies* (2000) and Tomlinson et al., *Emerging Johannesburg: Perspectives on the Postapartheid City* (2003).

[2] The literary and cultural significance of the name Jozi is discussed well by Sarah Nuttall (2004b) when she examines the youth's significance in 'stylising' the post-apartheid city and in the formation of a new vibrant and hybrid identities within the context of popular culture as indicated in practices associated with Y culture. The name Jozi, however, augments a list of popular names that have been given to Johannesburg throughout the metropolis' history.

[3] Barber (1987; 1997) notes the conflict between the common people and the elite as a major tenet of popular culture. She also discusses the link between this conflict and the ordinary people's aspirations for a better life.

[4] One of the contributors to the text, Kobus Moolman, revealed in personal communication with me (11/05/05) that the deadline was meant to coincide with the period of the holding of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg between 26 August and September 2002.

[5] This offers some insight into the experimental style that is used by some of the writers in this section such as Christopher Hope and Alex Duval Smith as discussed later in the chapter.

6 The metaphor of journeying and travel is widely used in the text and is indicative of the general sense of trajectory and subsequent transformation that has been going on in the fictive city of Johannesburg as hinted by the title *From Jo'burg to Jozi*.

7 Nuttall (forthcoming 2007) uses this metaphor of a pilgrimage, which I find interesting in the study of the literary representation of Johannesburg life experiences.

8 Nutall (forthcoming 2007) writes very well on this idea of how contemporary Johannesburg is among other themes and forms perceived as a city of memory.

9 Nuttall and Michael's (2000: 298-317) ideas on the significance of autobiographical acts in portraying the writer's conception of his or her relation with the city, country or any setting, discussed in the chapter "Autobiographical Acts" in *Senses of Culture*, influence my drift here.

10 In the story "In Celebration of Walls" (129-132) in this collection, Frank Lewinberg describes the shifting social, political and aesthetic significance of protective walls in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg.

11 This is taken from Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe's comments made during a colloquium on *Public Culture* 16. 3, which focuses on Johannesburg, held at the Centre for African Literary Studies Pietermaritzburg, on 6 May 2005.

[...]d Achille Mbembe (2004: 373-405) discusses the growing phenomenon of upmarket [...]d spectacular suburban experiences and spatial designs found in places such as [...]lrose Arch, Rosebank and other parts of northern Johannesburg, which he puts [...]ard as one of the superfluous qualities of the same city. He also asserts that [...]social spatial signs depict a contradictory image that reveals the glamour and [...]emanating from the democratisation of the city, and what seems to be new [...]class-based and non-racial divisions that are coming in to replace the old [...]ised divisions in the city.

[...]emann's "Watching Soap Opera" (2000: 141-154) offeres a succinct [...]sis of this strand in her chapter.

[...]ctorial representation and accompanying description of how [...]have been appropriating and remaking spaces such as Faraday [...]ohannesburg is given by Lizeka Maas in Judin and Vladislavic, [...]i-201).

[...]notif found in most of the stories in the text.

16 This signals the instability of the mapping of any city as subjects define and change mental maps of any given setting.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The experiences, aspirations and imaginings of some of the residents and the nature of the lived and built spaces of fictive Johannesburg represented in the texts analysed in this thesis are, to a great extent, influenced by the developments emanating from colonialism, capitalism and apartheid. These three forces intersect in many ways to render their influence on the life experiences and the general social and political map of Johannesburg through out the city's history. For example, the early history of mining and the growth of a capitalist modernity had a great influence on the ideology behind early urban planning, where residential areas were designed according to the needs of the mine owners and middle-class white residents. Consequently, as profits and the standard of living of the mostly white middle-class residents of real Johannesburg improved, so did their desire, from the 1920s onwards, to establish racially based urban designs that placed black, coloured and Indian working-class residents on the fringes of the city. The introduction of apartheid after the NP's ascendance to power in 1948, as discussed earlier, strengthens further a social-engineering and racially based urban planning style already in existence. These racially based spatial and social controls, therefore, continue to dominate life experiences in both real and fictive Johannesburg.

Nevertheless, while the different urban experiences represented in the texts under study in this thesis are still located within the historicity of Johannesburg, the texts also demonstrate various literary trends, themes, images and imaginary constructions specific to each particular period under focus in this thesis. These include representations of contestations between a dominant and racist state, on the one hand, and the excluded, on the other, where the latter engaged in intense creative and symbolic resistance against apartheid. There are also instances where both the oppressed and some progressive white residents and activists subvert some of the apartheid controls. Also represented are the anxieties felt during the transition from apartheid to the post-apartheid era, the intense remapping of the city spaces, strategic identity transformation and contradictory experiences occurring during the early post-apartheid period. Even new ways of relating to and perceiving post-apartheid Johannesburg in complex ways, discussed in the later part of the thesis, still continue to respond to the residual effects of apartheid. Various characters are shown trying to remember, coming to terms with past brutalities or constituting new perceptions that

correspond with their post-apartheid conditions despite the haunting past histories of colonialism, apartheid and capitalism.

The representations of Johannesburg at each stage in history and during the time-frame covered in this thesis show the residents' experiences as they relate to their city under apartheid (or its demise) and the advent of a multi-racial Johannesburg later on. The writings of the 1980s reveal the larger realm of experiences in racially based social and political oppression and how the excluded constantly challenge the existing oppression. Most of the short fiction published in *Staffrider*, as noticed in Chapter 2, depicts the existing bleak urban and widespread poverty, constant police presence in the townships and curtailed movement in the exclusively white Johannesburg spaces, as portrayed, for instance, in Serote's "Hot Beans" (1981) and Asvat's "The Barrier" (1981). Nevertheless, the short stories go on further than just describing the 1980s oppression and how docile residents met it; for some of the stories illustrate a complex response to and other forms of symbolic and active resistance against apartheid.

Most of the *Staffrider* stories examined here fall within the genre of popular culture, where the oppressed go beyond the generally assumed docility and misery in the face of high apartheid in the Johannesburg of the 1980s. The establishment of *Staffrider* magazine itself, as a literary journal focusing on the creative imaginary coming from the excluded black, coloured and Indian writers, and its popular appeal noted in its association with the 'skelm' figure that engages in risky acts of resistance, is indicative of a literary and cultural imaginary aimed at challenging and providing alternative images to those provided by the state-controlled literary and media production sectors. More so, a new discourse that ridicules and undermines symbols and the apparatus of apartheid authority (Wilhelm 1978), and acknowledges the existence of a rich but suppressed social memory of past multiracial community-making in Johannesburg, especially during the Sophiatown era (Esterhuysen 1990) is apparent. These stories show the existence of a subversive discourse and imaginary, as well as minor acts of resistance by the excluded residents aimed at destabilising apartheid in fictive Johannesburg. The examined *Staffrider* fiction notably shows that alternative and transgressive travels in Johannesburg were still possible and that, during the process, a number of defiant characters managed to redraw the city's spaces according to their intentions. Certainly, some characters created careful but tenacious travel routes as they evaded police surveillance in the city. For example, a

heavily contested fictive Johannesburg is represented in Magawulana's escape from jail and evasion of the apartheid police manhunt (Ntuli 1978) and the main character's elusion of surveillance in the city centre until he bombs the Alice Stadium (Martins 1979). Nevertheless, it is clear that the form of resistance, symbolic or radical, shown in such stories goes hand in hand with the historical and social conditions that existed then. Forms of resistance actually changed from the symbolic, in the early 1980s, to a more open and active resistance in the late 1980s.

The fiction of the 1980s also shows the inner space of the townships and how the period's fierce anti-apartheid activism intrudes into the white imaginary and their exclusive living spaces. Apart from a number of stories written by progressive white writers published in *Staffrider*, other noteworthy defiant white writers produced fiction that represented the experiences of multiracial Johannesburg dwellers subverting some of the apartheid social and political constraints as discussed in Chapter 3. This fiction is indicative of the existence of radical and anti-establishment imaginaries within the white community and thus undermines the general stereotype that all whites acted in complicity to apartheid. In addition, the fiction describes the internal dynamics of the intense activism and community making taking place in the townships and other parts of Johannesburg from about 1985 onwards. Writers such as De Ridder (1983) complement the resistant aspirations reflected in much of the analysed *Staffrider* fiction by portraying how some Johannesburg residents defy the existing apartheid social and historical dislocation and censure of their freedoms through memory-making. The narrator in the novella remembers past moments of multiracial community life, popular criminal victories against apartheid police and their past subversion of some of the ideological controls. It should be pointed out that the earlier white writings were not as radical as those produced from the mid-1980s onwards, for the level of anti-apartheid resistance only intensifies as the decade progressed. De Ridder's (1983) writing therefore, draws on a vivid and anthropological style that also has nuances of popular resistance against apartheid legal and social controls from the Sophiatown era, thus showing the existence of defiant perceptions and hopeful imaginaries among the oppressed despite the early 1980s adversities.

However, both Gordimer's "A City of the Dead, A City of the Living" and "Something Out There" (1984) and Gray's *Time of Our Darkness* (1988) draw heavily on the multiracial residents' experiences, their responses and relations, which

either take the reader into fictive Johannesburg's physical and mental spaces of resistance to apartheid, or reveal the riotous resistance characterising the fictive city's trajectory. As a result, the fiction crossed over the established exclusionary ideologies and the associated literary and cultural boundaries in a more radical and intriguing way. Both writers' fiction destabilises the perceptual and social gulf between African and township life, and that of the whites and their exclusive suburbs, by showing moments in which the two worlds intersect despite the existing divisions. This is also achieved by focusing on the domestic and internal lives of the excluded. The writers themselves risked proscription under apartheid censorship laws, thus showing the radical nature of their literary activities and how their moves went hand in hand with the historical developments taking place in the real Johannesburg and the country as a whole (the rise of multiracial, worker and township anti-apartheid resistance that takes place from the mid-1980s onwards). Even the absurdities engrained in apartheid are ridiculed as represented in Vladislavic's "Journal of a Wall" and "When My Hands Burst into Flames" (1989), where stereotypical perceptions that blacks were the only victims of apartheid are undermined through a vivid and playful description of white anxieties and victimisation from a system that is paradoxically supposed to protect them. Hence, this cluster of defiant white fiction gives a complex picture of the resilience and transgression stemming from some of the residents and the contradictory experiences they had to face during this period of high apartheid.

The fiction representing the experiences during the transition from apartheid to the post-apartheid dispensation, examined in Chapter 4, describes issues that are related to the characters' responses as they participate in the process of transforming their city. The turbulence and uncertainties noted during this period, as is normally the case in any city or setting going through rapid transformation, are aptly portrayed. This period, however, specifically focuses on anxieties and uncertainties affecting some of Johannesburg's white residents as their exclusive suburbs, Triomf and Hillbrow, and social spaces, such as hotels, restaurants, and public ones such as streets, libraries and museums, are opened up for all races. For instance, in *The Restless Supermarket* (2001), Aubrey Tearle perceives the restructuring of the inner city suburb with trepidation. For him, the opening up of once white-only spaces, especially his favourite Café Europa, denotes the fictive city's apocalypse. In addition, in *Triomf* (1999), the Benades have to face the challenges of grim poverty, family abuse and uncertainties about their status and survival as white residents in a

new dispensation, where poor whites like them feel abandoned by the old apartheid patriarchy and thus vulnerable. One can understand these characters' sense of loss, for the removal of old apartheid controls and white privileges impact heavily on the social and psychological well-being of some of the white residents of fictive Johannesburg.

The inner spaces of the family depicted in *Triomf*, and the interior space of the mind as noted in *The Restless Supermarket*, give the reader an incisive insight into the complexities associated with the transformation and how it affected some white residents. Both texts are rich in style and discourse that draws on the spatial settings and occurrences chronicling the paradoxical perception of the end of an era versus the birth of a new harmonious one. Both Vladislavic and Van Niekerk extensively, and rightly so, describe the transition as a tense process characterised by heterogeneous responses that ultimately compel the characters to evaluate themselves in relation to family relations, friends, the city and country's history, in order for them to come to terms with or position themselves strategically in the forming new dispensation. But, as the contestations over organisational changes and interpretation of history goes on, as represented in "The WHITES - ONLY Bench" (1996), it becomes clear that the dislocating effects of the past, discomfort between different races and different interpretations will always plague fictive Johannesburg's trajectory into and during the post-apartheid order.

The post-apartheid narratives examined in this thesis and chosen to represent the literary production of the first decade since the 1994 democratic elections, are divided into those focusing on immediate post-apartheid conditions and those giving an overall picture of the phenomenal experiences and perceptions of life in Johannesburg during the ten years of multiracial democracy. The immediate post-apartheid narratives, examined in Chapter 5, represent both a state of unease and the residents' contradictory experiences as they remap and appropriate some of Johannesburg's spaces. The novel *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) is a classic of the post-apartheid period that depicts the confusing life experiences encountered by the Africans who appropriate the inner city's residential, social and public spaces. The typical paradox of order and disorder that occurs during the transformation, as succinctly discussed by Williams (1973) and Mooney (1999) is portrayed in the early post-apartheid residents' experiences as described in Mpe's novel. Of significance however, are the simultaneous experiences encountered by most characters during this

period. For instance, while Tshepo, Refentse, Refilwe and Lerato are busy establishing a home and a new life, and strive towards upward social mobility through education and other opportunities offered in the new Johannesburg, they still encounter the daily hassles of crime, grime, prejudices against local and foreign migrants, and personal conflicts that challenge their aspirations, social lives and perceptions of the city, thus reflecting the unfolding order and disorder.

The same phenomenon of contradictory life experiences in the early post-apartheid Johannesburg is portrayed in the new forms of exclusion based on social class and citizenship, as given in *Finding Mr Madini* (1999). Here, the lower class and marginalised residents of fictive Johannesburg, such as the unemployed, the poor, the homeless and the foreign migrant, are relegated to the underground and invisible city of backyard shacks, water drains and discarded buildings. Nonetheless, as in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, and much of the post-apartheid narratives examined in this thesis, an element of reordering of lives through various strategies aimed at surviving in this bleak and alienating city, are shown in *Finding Mr Madini*. Here, the 'soft' (Raban 1974) qualities of fictive Johannesburg and the residents' resilience are revealed through the homeless characters' writing workshops and the possibilities of social and economic amelioration from the proceeds of the sale of their stories in a book.

Moreover, pertinent issues from the same period such as the creation of new identities and coming to terms with memories of past brutalities are portrayed significantly in Richards' *Sad at the Edges* (2003) and Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* (2001). The trope of past rape and memory retrieval is central in both novels. Both Francesca in *Sad at the Edges* and Lydia in *Bitter Fruit* recover their memories of a past rape and this leads to family dislocation, the formation of different survival strategies and new identities aimed at overcoming the ensuing psychological and social displacement. These narratives on the immediate post-apartheid period significantly indicate the social and spatial developments that were taking place in the city as a result of the historical challenges brought about by the new multi-racial dispensation. Moreover, they affirm the complex nature of fictive Johannesburg as a city shaped by heterogeneous experiences and characters, and regional, African and Euro-American influences.

Finally, Chapter 6 examines the various perceptions and representations of Johannesburg's multiple experiences, new urban identities and new ways to relate to imagine the fictive city. The selected short stories found in *From Jo'burg to Jozi: about Africa's Infamous City* (2002), analysed in this chapter, incorporate

different worlds, as described in Bristow-Bovey's "Sport and Cars"; new ways to perceive life experiences in the post-apartheid Johannesburg, as indicated in the experimental style used by Duval Smith in "Signs of Life", and even the retrieval of memories, where nostalgia for the old Johannesburg seems to be creeping in, as noted in Bhengu's "Romance". As a result, the collection of short stories is rich in different styles and in highlighting the often-contradictory life experiences, and new urban dislocations taking place in the Johannesburg. These, as noted in the study, are shown through a composite description of the architectural and commercial signs, cinematic styles, autobiography, personal memoirs, reference to the print, radio and television media, in an attempt to fully capture the new experiences and complexities noted in post-apartheid Johannesburg.

As a way of conclusion, I intend to briefly examine the latest trend and direction in the writing of the ever-shifting experiences in post-apartheid Johannesburg, as the city enters its second decade of freedom and democracy. Vladislavic's *The Exploded View* (2004) characteristically reveals the new literary direction in as far as the fictive writing of contemporary Johannesburg is concerned. The text is made up of four narratives titled "Villa Toscana", "Afritude Sauce", "Curiouser" and "Crocodile Lodge", different fictional entities that are, however, interlinked thematically and stylistically. They deal with ordinary characters' lives in a post-apartheid Johannesburg that is plagued by multiple experiences described by Beverly Roos Muller (2004) as "the challenges and complexes of the urban, post-apartheid city, where nothing is quite what it seems". Consequently the contemporary restlessness and anxieties felt by some residents is evident in Budlender, a civil servant with the Home Affairs Department, who braves the frequent dangers on the city's roads, and in a manner that draws out both the empathy and antipathy of the reader, tries to penetrate into and make sense out of the secluded world and experiences in the utopian Italian-theme styled Johannesburg suburb Villa Toscana, as represented in "Villa Toscana". The fragmented and perhaps dystopian nature of such contemporary Johannesburg spaces is aptly described in the story as "a dreamlike blend of familiarity and displacement" (6).

In addition, Budlender yearns for some connection and a break from a monotonous life that is dominated by loneliness, inactivity and television. His desire for some community-making in this typically fragmented and walled contemporary Johannesburg is revealed on one of his visits to the complex of a female character

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resident at Villa Toscana with whom he pre-tests a censorship questionnaire. This is shown in a comical and obsessive way symbolised by his schoolboy-like examination of the female character's clothing and toiletries while in her toilet. Hence, the detailed and comical observation of the secluded lives of some characters in their artificial and secured worlds of enclosed 'foreign architecture'-designed suburbs enables one to realise the continuing formation, and absurdity of the new social and wealth-based divisions that are growing in fictive Johannesburg. Furthermore, it is clear that new writings of contemporary Johannesburg are taking into consideration the characteristic foreign architectural and suburban development models that place the city within global trends. At the same time, the writings include dangerous road travels, obsessive consumerist media and methods of consumption that define the restlessness and complexity of the current experiences in the city.

Johannesburg's experiential continuum is also represented in *The Exploded View*. The text focuses on how some residents, other than those residing in the utopian Villa Toscanas, grapple with the various transformation projects taking place in the city. As hinted at in Lipman's story "Beyond Urban Mishaps" examined in Chapter 6, the city's physical and social boundaries are continuously expanding and do recognise the centrality of ordinary peoples' lives in the city. This is evident in "Afritude Source", where Egan, a white civil engineer, visits the newly developed low-cost Hani View housing scheme to inspect the recently laid out sanitary system. However, Vladislavic delves into the finer details of the urban spatial signs, architectural designs, urban ratepayer association politics and markers of these new spaces. This enables him to depict some of the absurdities taking place in fictive Johannesburg. Egan's inspection visit turns out to be a dramatic journey into the chaos found in some of the transformation projects where "everything is wrong... everything" (61), as pointed out by Mrs Ntlaka, one of the owners of the newly built houses. Vladislavic's attention to detail and frequent use of the comic reveals the disarray underlying some of the transformation projects. For instance, Mrs Ntlaka complains about the incredibly narrow doorways and roofs that do not have ceilings. Such scenes also portray the inner world of inadequacies, unfulfilled expectations and the anger felt by some residents, thus indicative of the "fucked" nature of their lives, as is frequently pointed out by Mrs Ntlaka in her expletive-filled complaints.

Without in any way claiming to have exhausted the thematic and stylistic patterns that seem to map the direction with which the writing and images of

Johannesburg are taking, I will end with a summation of some of the critical characteristics shown in *The Exploded View*. Central in the text, and perhaps indicative of the complex focus on experiences in fictive Johannesburg, is, as succinctly outlined by Jane Rosenthal (2005), the concentration on the tropes of building, where the writer focuses on the construction of certain spaces and housing schemes as in the two narratives cited above. Also central, in my view, are new styles, innovative media and themes drawing on local and international experiences such as the genocide in Rwanda as revealed in "Curiouser". This is also shown in "Crocodile Lodge", where the main character, in the spirit of metaphoric and physical construction, builds billboards around Johannesburg. In addition, there are detailed and multiple descriptions of current urban spaces in Johannesburg that show the anxieties felt while driving on roads liable to cause accidents and encounters with comic but real drama from street vendors and beggars on intersections and along the roads. Attention is given to urban media and commercial signs that aid in the portrayal of the city's complexities and also to new styles and discourses characterising experiences in the fictive city. The inner social and personal space of some of the characters resident in Johannesburg continues to be evident in representations of the experiences of characters from different races, social classes and residential locations in the four stories. Hence, the direction of the writing on Johannesburg seems to include a mixture of commercial signs, the media, architectural designs and detailed observation of the challenges, aspirations and life experiences of the various residents of this ever-changing and expanding city.

To conclude, using a text just published, the ever-changing experiences unfolding in Johannesburg tend to be represented in Vladislavic's *Portrait with Keys: Joburg & What-What* (2006) through a blending of architectural and commercial signs, autobiography, and detailed observations of the contradictions characterising the post-apartheid urban condition. The text, which as the title implies, reflects life in Johannesburg from different stylistic angles and perceptions. The autobiographical underpins this novel, as reflected in the way Vladislavic narrates his experiences in Johannesburg from his youth, through the various decades up to the current post-apartheid period. The narrator gives a series of disjointed descriptions of experiences such as growing up with his brother Branko; his personal attachment to the nearby Marymount Nursing Home, which ends up being converted into an old people's home; social interactions with his brother and friends at the Carlton Centre and at

different places in the city's northern suburbs; losing a car to thieves in the streets of Johannesburg; observations of the streets and buildings during his research in a Hillbrow that is rapidly changing as he writes his novel *The Restless Supermarket*, and other different but significant experiences in his life as a resident of Johannesburg. This is perhaps indicative of the fragmented nature of moments, experiences and perceptions of Johannesburg as the city changes throughout history.

As in Vladislavic's *The Exploded View* and in some of the stories in *From Jo'burg to Jozi: Stories about Africa's Infamous City*, detailed observations and descriptions of Johannesburg's atmosphere, architectural designs, the media and technology, and the sense of history influencing particular moments in the city's trajectory are given prominence. *Portrait with Keys: Joburg & What-What* articulates themes pertinent to this period, as gathered from the analysis of post-apartheid narratives in Chapters 5 and 6 such as: memory-making, as noted in the narrator's childhood reflections; the impact of crime on the residents, as noted in the reference to the various anti-car theft devices (55-56) and home security technologies that are humorously portrayed as monotonous and imprisoning (11) and the contradictory appropriations of the city, where inner-city houses such as 17 Blenheim Street fall under new tenants who turn it into a brothel as the city transforms in the post-apartheid period. One also observes how the current narratives on Johannesburg integrate the role of history and the impact of unrelated but significant lived experiences as they represent the different experiential spaces of this fictive city. These lived experiences are influenced by the ever-shifting nature of the social, political and commercial spaces of Johannesburg, thus indicating that the writing of this city will always be fluid and complex.

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