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CANDIDATE: GREEN, KATHLEEN EILEEN

STUDENT NUMBER: 200317156

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**A COMPARATIVE EXAMINATION OF THE NOVELS OF
FARIDA KARODIA, RAYDA JACOBS, PAMELA JOOSTE**

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR CRAIG MACKENZIE

CONTENTS

	Page No.
Acknowledgements	3
Chapter 1: Introduction	4
Chapter 2: <i>A Shattering of Silence</i> – Farida Karodia	7
Chapter 3: <i>Other Secrets</i> – Farida Karodia	20
Chapter 4: <i>The Slave Book</i> – Rayda Jacobs	34
Chapter 5: <i>Sachs Street</i> – Rayda Jacobs	49
Chapter 6: <i>Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter</i> – Pamela Jooste	66
Chapter 7: <i>Frieda and Min</i> – Pamela Jooste	87
Chapter 8: <i>Like Water in Wild Places</i> – Pamela Jooste	103
Chapter 9: <i>Conclusion</i>	118
Bibliography	

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The intention of this dissertation is to examine the writings of three South African women authors who are active in the post-apartheid era. Work by South African women writers, mainly English-speaking, has been emerging at a remarkable rate in the first 10 years of democracy. The three women authors chosen for examination here have been selected because of their different racial and social backgrounds. In different ways, they attempt to recuperate an alternative past by using a voice previously denied them through sexist and racial discrimination during apartheid South Africa.

Post-apartheid writing has not received its due attention. In the main, the treatment of the works of post-apartheid authors has been slight and superficial. Unsurprisingly, the writers whose works are examined here reveal a cultural awareness of a society previously dominated by racial discrimination. However, their creative responses to the period of transition and the new social and political realities have been diverse, and this makes for revealing and enlightening analysis, criticism and comparison.

The principal area that will be examined will be these writers' experiences of what life was like during apartheid. Moreover, areas of multiculturalism and the influences of religious beliefs will be singled out for special attention. The various aspects of legend and mythology will be shown to possess a richness and mystique both fascinating and valuable to contemporary South Africa. In general, an understanding of all of these areas will aid in reconciliation and transformation in post-apartheid South Africa.

The narrative techniques used by the authors – for example, the dominant first person protagonist/narrator technique and the secondary epistolary technique, will be examined. These narrative techniques enable the writers to achieve various objectives, like recuperating a personal history alongside a broader social history, in order to regain an identity or to rewrite a history skewed by apartheid white historiography.

This dissertation deals with selected works by Farida Karodia, Rayda Jacobs and Pamela Jooste. These three post-apartheid women writers all emerge from the apartheid era of racial and sexist discrimination. Because they belong to different racial groups, they present different perspectives on South African life during an era when racial discrimination affected all spheres of life.

Karodia and Jacobs are of mixed-race background. Karodia also has Indian ancestry, while Jacobs has Malayan slave forefathers. Jooste belongs to the 'previously advantaged' white racial group and also has Jewish ancestry. Because race and religion are part of social and cultural heritage, the Christian, Muslim and Jewish religious beliefs and practices are examined in their novels. These three female English-speaking writers have gained prominence in post-apartheid South African literature. "During apartheid Nadine Gordimer was the female literary voice. Her Manichean style of writing dictated what was good and bad", says Fred de Vries in an article for *ThisDay* (2004: np.). Since 1994 the new dispensation has freed female literary voices from the discrimination of the past and the new generation of women writers provides their predominantly female readers with popular fiction which reinterprets the past.

The novels that will be examined and compared are Farida Karodia's *A Shattering of Silence* (1993) and *Other Secrets* (2000); Rayda Jacobs's *The Slave Book* (1998) and *Sachs Street* (2001); and Pamela Jooste's *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter* (1998), *Frieda and Min* (1999) and *Like Water in Wild Places* (2000).

Farida Karodia was born in 1942 in Aliwal North. She graduated from Coronationville Teacher Training College in 1961 and taught in Johannesburg and later in Zambia. When the government in South Africa withdrew her passport in 1968, she emigrated to Canada. She taught and worked in various other jobs while studying and writing fiction and radio drama.

Her first novel, *Daughters of the Twilight* (1986), was shortlisted for the Fawcett Prize. Another novel, *A Shattering of Silence*, about the war in Mozambique, was published in 1993. She is also the author of two short story collections: *Coming Home and Other Stories* (1988) and *Against an African Sky and Other Stories* (1995). After spending 20 years in Canada she has now returned to

South Africa and resides in Johannesburg for six months of the year and in Canada for six months. Her recent work includes the novels *Other Secrets* (2000) and *Boundaries* (2003).

Rayda Jacobs was born in Cape Town. In 1968 she left for Canada. In 1995 she returned to South Africa after an absence of 27 years. She now lives in Cape Town and is a full-time writer where spending her time “writing, walking her dogs, and flying a kite” (Introductory note of *Eyes of the Sky*: 1997).

Her first book, *The Middle Children*, a collection of short stories about South Africans of mixed race, was published in Toronto in 1994. Her first novel, *Eyes of the Sky* (1996), was awarded the Herman Charles Bosman Prize for English Literature in the same year. *The Slave Book*, published in 1998, and *Sachs Street*, published in 2001, will be analysed here. Her latest books are the novel *Confessions of a Gambler* (2003), and a new collection of short stories, *Postcards from South Africa* (2004).

Pamela Jooste was born in Cape Town in 1946. She matriculated at Ellerslie High School for Girls in Cape Town in 1962 and then studied English and Modern Romance Literature in Translation through Unisa. She regularly does external examining for the UCT creative writing course. She married in 1978 and still lives in Cape Town.

Jooste’s first novel, *Dance with a Poor Man’s Daughter*, was published in 1998, and received the following awards: Commonwealth Prize “Best First Book Award” for the Africa region in 1998; the Sanlam Literary Award; and The Inaugural Book Data South African Booksellers’ Choice Award. Her second novel, *Frieda and Min*, was published in 1999. Her third novel, *Like Water in Wild Places*, was published in 2000 and has been translated into Swedish, Dutch and German. Her latest novel, *People Like Ourselves*, was published simultaneously in the United Kingdom and South Africa in 2003.

Aside from the novels she has written, Jooste has also written short stories, radio plays, serials and film scripts. *Dance with a Poor Man’s Daughter* was scripted for theatre and produced and staged by the University of Cape Town Drama Department.

CHAPTER 2

A SHATTERING OF SILENCE – FARIDA KARODIA

Karodia's novel is therapeutic; her need for purification is paramount. Through her identification with her protagonist's (Faith's) narration, she is able to deal with the trauma of her past as a woman of 'colour' in apartheid South Africa. Karodia uses first person narrative throughout the novel. Faith is initially a child narrator but soon becomes the adult narrator. This technique allows Karodia dual viewpoints in her attempt to explore the effects of the trauma of war where a child's identity and voice (literally and figuratively) are removed and regained. Karodia's need for purification is so strong that she becomes an intrusive narrator as her narrating 'I' often becomes the experiencing 'I'. As an intrusive narrator, therefore, there is an autobiographical aspect as she identifies with her protagonist/narrator's trauma and recuperation of her identity and voice.

However, in a detailed author's note, Karodia suggests that her work is merely fiction and has neither biographical nor autobiographical reference. She claims that the novel represents "children all over the world, who are brutalised by war, hunger and political corruption" (Author's note: 1993). Although the novel explores the suffering experienced by children of war, their predicament cannot be limited to the Mozambican child victims of war, but extends to children of war throughout the continent. This exploration includes the children of 'colour' in apartheid South Africa who were victims of political and consequent social abuse.

"The writing had been a form of therapy which helped immensely with the recovery of my memory" (Karodia, 1993: 1), says Faith in the Prologue. Immediately the resemblance between Faith Smith and Farida Karodia is perceptible. They both use memory and writing as therapy to 'break the silence' as victims of a society, where political upheaval and violence caused torment. From the outset it is clear that Faith, on a return flight to Mozambique after 20 years of exile, is the narrator as she relives the traumatic events of her childhood in war-ravaged Mozambique until her escape in 1972. Coincidentally, Karodia also returned to the country of her childhood, South Africa, after an

absence of 20 years. Karodia also fled a society where she was a victim. Just as Faith's notebooks allow her to come to terms with her trauma that resulted in her loss of voice, Karodia's writings allow her to come to terms with the traumatic experiences of her youth in apartheid South Africa.

As Faith lands in Mozambique she notices the ravages of years of civil war and drought. She notices the misery of the refugees – that people either live in shanties or are homeless and that there are begging children everywhere. She takes cognisance of the infrastructure which is falling apart when, on the airport road, enormous potholes need to be avoided. Local residents have heavy burglar bars to protect themselves from the violent society in which they live. Faith is starkly reminded of her childhood in Mozambique. She finds her painful memories return, as she remembers that day “which had started out so peacefully forty years ago, in a remote village in northern Mozambique, and ended in tragedy robbing me of my voice, my history, and much of my life” (1993: 7).

With these words the novel flashes back 40 years when the eight-year-old Faith begins to narrate the story of her life in war-torn Mozambique. Her tale begins when she is growing up in a small village in northern Mozambique. Her parents, Rebecca and Alex Smith, are Canadian missionaries, and while her mother runs a clinic and dispensary, and her father a school and Christian church, she enjoys the “freedom and innocence” (1993: 10) of an idyllic childhood.

Faith discovers that her parents have opposing views on the question of imposing one culture on another. Rebecca rants when she has to deal with “problems created by rituals” (1993: 11) whereas Alex believed “that indigenous people ought not to be pushed to develop too rapidly” (1993: 11). These words allow Karodia to initiate her criticism of colonialism and of the ethics and beliefs which colonialists sought to thrust upon the cultures of the locals. Faith comments: “Years later I realised how naïve we had been” (1993: 12).

The Portuguese colonial estate owners in Tete province are enormously powerful and although labour conditions are loathsome, they are opposed to change of any sort. Alex claims this attitude can “only reinforce the sense of inferiority instilled by the colonialists” (1993: 12). Consequently, Alex is seen to

sympathise with the workers and a certain Joseph Coelho, a labour organiser. Being a Protestant missionary does not further Alex's cause and having incurred the wrath of Raul Morais, the most powerful landowner of the region, the "apocalyptic events which were to follow" (1993: 12) are initiated. Horn comments:

Private armies supported by the estate-owners and tacitly approved by the colonial government destroyed entire rural communities in an attempt to quash their resistance against starvation wages. Such brutal attacks that came to be known as the Tete massacres later sparked world-wide protest. Tete is a rural province in Mozambique where these murders were particularly prevalent (1994: 5).

Faith's "carefree childhood" (1993: 10) is brought to an abrupt end with the arrival of a helicopter of paramilitary forces who massacre the entire village with ruthless cruelty that Karodia describes powerfully and vividly. Faith is hiding close by, having been tugged away by sixteen-year-old Lodiya, her nanny's daughter. Her clear view of the massacre and the resultant trauma leaves Faith with no memory, no parents, no home, no voice and "numbed, unable to cry" (1993: 21). She is taken by Lodiya to Father Fernando's Catholic mission where she is further robbed of her history when he informs the authorities that there were "no survivors" (1993: 21). Faith undergoes a huge character change and she now faces the future with a "gnawing dread and terror" (1993: 21) with no memory of her past.

Karodia's writing is rather poignant and effective at this point. The style of her writing is tight and fast-paced and holds great promise of rapid plot development. However, this does not hold and the narrative becomes somewhat plodding later.

Having initiated her criticism of colonialism, Karodia now examines the treatment of the child victims of war at the Catholic mission orphanage. She also questions the Christian perspective of rendering aid to the needy in exchange for conversion to Catholicism. Lodiya hints "at the possibility that Father Fernando and [Faith's] parents had competed for Catholic and Protestant converts" (1993: 23). Faith finds this attitude "offensive" (1993: 23).

Lodiya scorns what she believes is the subjugation of the Mozambicans to an unfamiliar religion rather than developing “the rhythm of the indigenous culture” (1993:24). It is evident at the mission school that both the spirit and traditions of the local culture are not tolerated - the children “who wore ritual amulets or charms were punished severely” (1993: 25). Only Portuguese is spoken, and all beliefs perceived to be heathen, are forsaken.

The Catholic nuns at the orphanage are the next target of Karodia’s criticism of Catholicism. She has Faith commenting that Sister Luisa’s “expression was the same as the ones carved into demon masks” (1993: 27) – an unholy visage indeed. The missionary nuns are shown to be heartless, cruel and lacking any understanding of the beliefs of the local Mozambicans. They are described as misfits in their habits which, are both cumbersome and uncomfortable – making them look like a “piece of dough” (1993: 27). The nuns are also physically abusive. Sister Luisa, claims she “is doing God’s work” (1993: 30) when she beats Faith, accusing her of laziness. Angrily Lodiya shrieks: “What God? There is no God!” (1993: 30) when it is discovered that Faith is not lazy, but has contracted malaria. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Lodiya leaves the mission. It is the last time Faith ever sees her. It is only 20 years later that she reads of her death in a Mozambican rebel prison camp, in a London newspaper.

Karodia examines the plight of children “who are brutalised by war, hunger and political corruption” in the novel (Author’s note: 1993) and her account of conditions at the orphanage is vivid and detailed. Her research in this area is thorough and admirable. She is careful not to assign culpability to any one organisation or society in an attempt to appear non-judgemental. The conditions under which the children live are atrocious, and Karodia’s description is graphic. The children are half-starved, crippled, sparsely clothed and “considered an eyesore and a nuisance by a government bent on promoting tourism” (1993: 34). The building is cold and drafty and full of vermin.

Karodia suggests a duplicity, or Pharisaism, in the intentions of the nuns in her comparison of Sister Luisa to a life-size statue of Christ. Faith says, “the image of a crippled Christ seemed quite fitting” (1993: 34) amongst the crippled children in the orphanage. Orphans of war are often not only physically crippled but also psychologically affected. Christ preached the law of ‘love your

neighbour'. Obviously, Sister Luisa, a representative of Christ's legacy, is anything but a lover of mankind and the treatment of the children, crippled by war, are the antithesis of Christ's teaching.

Amid the horrors of orphanage life Faith learns "to survive" (1993: 36) until one day Mamaria, a large, plump local Mozambican woman appears – having been sent by Lodiya to fetch her. The bureaucracy proves daunting and because Faith's history and past have been "destroyed" (1993: 33), because she is Protestant not Catholic and white not black, the Church regards itself as her guardian. A breakthrough is made when Mamaria suggests that she can pass as *mulatto* (having one white and one black parent): "Years in the sun had darkened and scarred" (1993: 40) Faith's skin. For the first time skin colour becomes an issue in Faith's life. Sadly, Faith's sojourn with Mamaria is short-lived as Mamaria collapses into a diabetic coma and dies. So, at fourteen, Faith returns to the orphanage. She has learnt that times of happiness disappear as quickly as they come and so she mistrusts people and society. This mistrust is intensified by her inability to communicate.

Because Faith is white, her stay at the orphanage is brief and she is sponsored by a wealthy Portuguese woman, Dona Maria Del Gado Cardoso, an interesting, undeveloped peripheral character. Ironically, she sends Faith to a Catholic convent, to be educated 'properly' for the first time and to learn to communicate in sign language. Karodia concedes that perhaps the missionaries made positive contributions, but her earlier overt criticism, suggests that cultural inclusion, not exclusion, may have more successful in their dealings with the locals.

Karodia uses Faith's four-year sojourn at the Convent of Santa Teresa to show the reader how Faith's character develops, to continue her criticism of colonialism and the Christian religion (especially Catholicism), to hint at the expansion of the rebel movements and to highlight again the plight of war orphans.

When she leaves the convent at eighteen, Faith takes up a position at the Clinic for the Deaf to teach sign language to the privileged children of wealthy Portuguese parents. In this way her isolation from her previous life amongst the

indigenous Mozambicans is cemented for the time being. She pays frequent visits to Dona Maria and Senhor Cardoso, the latter being very critical of the Lisbon government for the oppressive conditions in Mozambique.

The character development of Faith is almost sidelined by Rita. Rita was one of Mamaria's 'children' and she gains prominence now. Rita is Karodia's persona as she, once again, examines the effects of colonialism, Christianity and the plight of war orphans. When Rita hears that Faith will be teaching white Portuguese children sign language, she scornfully refers to their parents as oppressors whose mansions "perched like glittering jewels" (1993: 72) overlooking the Indian Ocean, which only serve to remind the locals of their "helplessness and misery" (1993: 72). Later Rita claims that she herself will have a hard time getting into nursing because she is black. Rita's allusions to the significance of skin colour make Faith very uncomfortable, for it is something that has never been an issue in her life. Karodia makes it very clear that a form of 'apartheid' also existed in Mozambique. She shows clearly that 'faceless' colonial governments bled the occupied countries dry while they ignored the rights of the locals.

In the persona of Rita, the Catholic missionaries come under attack from Karodia, this time with the Convent of Santa Teresa as the source. The buildings are elegant and the landscape is compared to an oasis – the implication being that outside the convent walls there is a 'desert'. Endorsing her earlier suggestion of missionary duplicity, Karodia intimates that convent life constitutes a hive of elitism as the nuns live in their self-sufficient, microcosmic society, cut off from the reality of the impoverished local Mozambicans on the outside. Rita makes the negative remark that it is rather "like being in a prison" (1993:59). Karodia allows Rita to be negative about anything which can be equated with colonialism and not indigenous to Mozambique, because she is part of a community that is sidelined. Ironically, though, Rita has no objection to being trained as a nurse in a white-run Portuguese hospital. Rita raises questions about a Christian God when she sees children paying the price for political corruption. The children who turn up at the hospital are malnourished and orphaned. Karodia makes a point of mentioning that these children are "confined mainly to the black ghettos" (1993: 71) while the European population remains blissfully unaware of their suffering and dispossession.

Karodia, as a victim of apartheid herself, always identifies with the victims of society. This makes her writing very partial, and it is unfortunate that she does not at times put herself into the persona of Dona Maria, for instance, to give a more balanced view of her character's experiences. This is perhaps one of the greatest weaknesses of her novel; however, it must be borne in mind that her writing is mainly cathartic, for she clearly had a great need to heal herself of her past. Nonetheless, Karodia's inability to extricate herself emotionally from the victims of society is not an excuse for this weakness in her novels and it constantly manifests itself. This tendency endangers Karodia's relationship with her reader and may lead to alienation at times.

Karodia's limited view is also located in her narrative techniques where, as pointed out earlier, she is unable to separate herself from her narrative. Her relationship with her protagonist/narrator is experiential. Her authorial intention which is to explore situations where identity is denied and voices are smothered, is hindered by her intrusive narrative and this detracts from the artistic integrity of her work. However, as a female voice in post-apartheid South Africa her novel is an admirable attempt to rewrite the history of a past which was dominated by white historiography. She achieves her goal in this sphere as she exposes the predicament of children of an unjust political society.

Sheila Roberts has the following criticism: "Although the depictions of the effects of war on populations, towns, and villages are compelling, the novel does not hold to its earlier promise. The middle sections become plodding, and the writing loses liveliness and color" (1993: 416). The action is constantly interrupted with political detail, repetitive descriptions and is even clichéd at times. It is this repetitiveness that makes the middle section so laborious. Although the narrative drags, there are, however, some positive developments.

It is at this time that Faith meets David, the English engineer who is to influence her life significantly and she feels secure in the fact that "there was now someone who cared for [her]" (1993: 74). As she matures she is able to make her own decisions, even if some regard them as somewhat contrary. When the "conventional and rigid" (1993: 75) David asks her to marry him, she suggests that they live together instead. Dona Maria and David are taken aback, but a more mature Faith feels that there "... were aspects of my life and my

personality that few understood. Much of who I was had been forged in those early years under intolerable conditions, without complaint. With no voice to cry out, there was a slow build-up of rage and resentment ..." (1993: 75) and she decides that she does not really care what people think. As Faith struggles to come to terms with a lost identity, the reader admires her courage and confidence.

Faith and David's relationship starts to suffer as a result of Faith's feelings of guilt about an empty past. He is unhappy about their "loose living arrangement" (1993: 83) and her trips to the township. In his attempt to halt this connection, he makes a statement that stays with Faith during all her years.

The people here are still too traditional – their way of life is quite incompatible with development. It'll take years for them to catch up with the developed countries ... Africa is dominated by dictatorships, all notorious for their excesses and their lack of integrity and humanity. You mark my words, one day, weakened by war, corruption and famine, we will see Africa recolonised by new masters (1993: 90-91).

These words come either from great calculated insight or they merely show a lack of confidence in the future of a very tribal and warlike Africa. This comment could, of course, be highlighting what Karodia judges to be the superior attitude of the colonists' way of thinking. Faith, Karodia's mouthpiece here, counters with the words, "... colonialism is a white man's concept. As for the white man's concept of morality and humanity, I've encountered more morality and humanity amongst blacks than I have amongst whites" (1993: 91).¹

Karodia uses Faith's work in the hospital and at the clinic to return to her favourite theme of the plight of the children of war. Rita works in the trauma unit where she is exposed to the gruesome brutality of soldiers and the effects of a war which brings limbless, gangrenous, festering and wounded children to the hospital.

The Afrikaner is equated with apartheid. Karodia's introduction of Wynand van der Berg, one of David's business associates, allows her to express her distaste for this stereotype of oppression. It is understandable that Karodia indulges in

this sort of characterisation, as she was the victim of oppression under the Afrikaner Nationalist government so she sees Afrikaners in a negative light. Van der Berg is labelled as coarse, uncouth and rude with limited vocabulary. His language is randomly interspersed with words like “fuck”, “voertsek”, “bleddy” and “bastard” and he is either sneering or snarling (1993: 94-95). In addition, he is overweight and bulging, his “soft white flesh gleaming like the underbelly of a fish” (1993: 95). While Karodia has the authorial right to depict Afrikaners in this way – they did after all cause massive suffering with their Calvinistic, self-righteousness – not *all* Afrikaans-speaking people are uncultured like Van der Berg, and this bias undermines the artistic integrity of Karodia’s novel. To have been more balanced would have enhanced the appeal of her novel: it would have signalled a more complex artistic vision.

Sheila Roberts comments that a weakness of the novel is “in the many underdeveloped characters peopling the narrative ...” (1993: 416). Karodia does not develop the characters of Dona Maria, Van der Berg, Carlos, Soza and now the old woman, Luzia, who practises traditional medicine and predicts the future. Rita, who greatly admires Luzia, introduces her to Faith. Karodia is, obviously, promoting this form of healing and has Luzia saying that her “medicine is stronger than the medicine of any doctor” (1993: 107), an indictment of the foreign missionaries and colonialist ‘do-gooders’ who arrived with their so-called sophisticated medicines. Luzia tells Faith that she will, at the end of a long journey, get back her voice. This is the last time we ever hear of Luzia even though she is capable of such a powerful prediction. Luzia’s words foreshadow the action of the next two books of the novel yet she remains underdeveloped although she is such a pivotal character. Karodia *needed* to include a character of such importance into future action to make her presence and the action more credible and less superficial.

Faith’s character gains depth with the introduction of Juan Guerra, a doctor from Portugal, working at the hospital. Initially a ‘working relationship’ develops between Faith and Juan, but he is both passionate and hard-working and so absolutely different to David that Faith is attracted to him. Another two new peripheral characters are also introduced: Helia de Souza and Rhonica. These three characters play an integral role in the rest of the novel and so, although

they do not develop, they remain with us for a considerable time. With their introduction the pace of the action also picks up, although not dramatically.

Another issue that emerges is the rumour about children disappearing or being kidnapped. This 'rumour' gains substance with the disappearance of Faith's neighbour's daughter, Sofia. There is the suspicion that the children are being shipped out of the country to be sold into slavery. Rhonica helps to solve the problem of the disappearing children. She and Faith go down to the docks and onto a ship where they discover dozens of children in the hold waiting to be transported to the Middle East where they will, it is suspected, be sold as slaves. Karodia has quite subtly informed her reader of another way in which children are victims of war. Later we learn that the boat was attacked off the coast of Tanzania and that most of the children end up in refugee camps.

The introduction of the PIDE (*Policia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado*) and Marcelo, a prominent member of the secret police, sets the scene for more fast-paced action. The reader is also informed of the assassination of Dona Maria's husband and daughter, Isabella, by means of a car bomb in Lisbon. We learn that the Cordosos support Communism, a political ideology the fascist Antonio Salazar did not tolerate. In addition, it emerges that Rita is involved in the liberation movement.

Having struggled to maintain pace through the middle section of her narrative, Karodia bombards her reader with facts and then allows the novel to slip into a light romantic style – a clichéd love story. David, presumed to be in South Africa, turns up at a ball which Faith is attending with Juan. When David sees Juan, he hastily retreats. This ending is predictable, however, if one looks at the themes portrayed: Karodia simply could not allow her heroine to have a successful relationship with a person considered to be a colonial puppet.

The action gathers momentum and the reader's attention is captured and sustained more easily. It is obvious now that the conflict between government forces and rebel factions is ongoing and fierce. Karodia has Juan commenting that, "No one cares" (1993: 160). The roads are falling into disrepair, the economy is collapsing with the currency losing value and generally decay is settling into the infrastructure of society – all common side-effects of war.

When Rita is shot both Faith and Juan become involved in the intrigue. Faith takes Rita to Dona Maria's home. It is here that the role of Carlos gains importance. He becomes the highly efficient assistant of Dona Maria as he instinctively 'knows' that Faith is in trouble with the police, disposes of the car and orchestrates Faith and Juan's escape. It is at this stage that Dona Maria informs everyone that she is working underground, fighting government forces.

Karodia's use of a first person narrative style and her sustained rapid pace engage her reader in Faith's journey to self-identity. Horn remarks that: "Faith's escape from her enemy reads like a feminist political thriller ..." (1994: 5). The final pages of the novel have what Horn refers to as a "sense of immediacy and authenticity" (1994: 5).

In an attempt to maintain her reader's approval, Karodia returns to the character of Rita, who has only been presented as a critical, rather negative character in her attitude towards religion, particularly Catholicism, and the Portuguese colonialists. While this tendency served a valuable purpose in allowing Karodia to voice her opinion, this is no longer necessary as it quite clear that Faith will escape and attempt to do something about the situation in Mozambique, especially the position of child slavery to the Arab states. This allows for a couple of ironies with regard to Rita. Firstly, the convent at Santa Teresa will hide her and aid her recuperation. The alternative is capture and death at the hands of the government forces. It will be very difficult in the future for Rita to criticize the Catholic nuns and even God. Secondly, she felt great antagonism for Dona Maria, whom she regarded as another one of Mozambique's colonial exploiters and oppressors. She now has to face up to the truth that Dona Maria and Carlos are involved in some underground network, and as they seem to arrange matters with reasonable ease, have probably been involved with escapees for some time.

Furthermore, this involvement supports the Liberation Movement. Both of these ironies must be fairly bitter pills to swallow, but perhaps it is not only Rita who has to undergo a change of heart but Karodia too. Perhaps she has realized that she too has presented the facts from such a slanted angle that, before her novel ends, she needs to make amends.

After Faith and Juan set out on their escape route to the north and out of the country, the story takes on the quality of a Hollywood movie script. It becomes clichéd and colloquial and so obviously contrived that credibility is almost entirely lost. The predictable action detracts from the story's authenticity. It is almost as if, having achieved what she set out to do – that is, to highlight the predicament of children in war-torn countries, criticise Afrikaners, colonialism and the Christian religion – she needs to finish off the novel rapidly and so she slips into cliché and unimaginative narrative.

On a positive note, the trauma of being attacked by her parents' assassin allows Faith to overcome her silence and scream "Ma – Mama!" (1993: 201). The reader has been waiting for this moment for a long time and it is with relief that it now materialises. Unfortunately, her vocal cords have atrophied and she will require intensive therapy in London.

The novel ends with Faith's memory returning rapidly and her request to address the United Nations about child slavery. The ending is something of a letdown, however. Having used an autobiographical style successfully, Karodia simply has Faith being rowed away. There should have been a postscript to fill in the 20-year gap in Faith's life between leaving Mozambique and her return, which we have in the prologue, so that there is the feeling of closure or finality. Karodia wrote the novel in the format of Books One to Five. This causes the novel to be somewhat disjointed and allows Karodia space for the unnecessarily drawn-out plot and detailed descriptions – which diminishes authorial intention and detracts from the stylistic integrity of her work.

Moreover, the middle part of the book is prosaic, and repetitive passages should have been eliminated to enhance a sense of cohesion and also allow the story to flow more smoothly. The final pages of the novel are too clichéd and often contrived and, therefore, lack authenticity. In addition, the introduction of so many 'convenient' characters who are undeveloped add to this lack of authenticity.

An oversight is that Karodia introduced PIDE into the novel but does not give the meaning of this acronym anywhere. (It took some research to find out what PIDE means: it is the less common form of PIPE – *Policia Internacional e de*

Defense do Estado. This force suppressed any protest in the colony, whether peaceful or violent.)

As *A Shattering of Silence* was written in 1993 and is set in pre-independence Mozambique there is a need to comment on its relevance to post-apartheid literature.

In the first place Karodia was a victim of the apartheid regime. This in itself is relevant and its pertinence clearly manifests in the character of Faith, who is severely traumatised. Karodia must have found conditions in South Africa insufferable as she, like Faith, left the country of her birth reluctantly. Also, it is obvious that this novel served a cathartic purpose. Writing this novel was probably as therapeutic for Karodia as it was for Faith, who was finally able to 'shatter her silence' and find a voice and identity in a society free from discrimination.

CHAPTER 3

OTHER SECRETS - FARIDA KARODIA

Other Secrets is strongly 'coloured' by Karodia's experience as a child of 'colour' during apartheid. Karodia is one of the female voices whose literature attempts to rewrite a past distorted by white historiography. The limited view, where Karodia is unable to detach herself from her narrative, which is located in *A Shattering*, resurfaces in *Other Secrets*. As she identifies with her protagonist/narrator, Meena, Karodia once again becomes an intrusive narrator as she struggles to separate the narrating 'I' from the experiencing 'I'. As a victim of apartheid, her relationship with her narrator/protagonist remains subjective as she struggles to regain identity and status. As in *A Shattering*, Karodia again uses a first person narrator, first as a child then as an adult. However, in contrast to *A Shattering*, she uses this narrative technique of child/adult to present the reader with multiple points of view of a life of an Indian/Coloured family living and suffering the many forms of discrimination under apartheid. This enhances the artistic integrity of this literary contribution to post-apartheid writing. Karodia again has a fairly strong romantic theme holding together the narrative and it is obvious that she is writing popular fiction, based on history, for an English-speaking female readership.

In order to attract a larger female readership Book One of *Other Secrets* (2000) is a reworking of Karodia's earlier novel *Daughters of the Twilight* (1986). Karodia obviously felt that she needed to add to her novel and update it to make it more relevant to a post-apartheid South African readership. Karodia, in *Other Secrets*, is a more mature writer than she was in *A Shattering of Silence*, and she has the added benefit of first-hand experience. Because she is more comfortable with her subject matter, her writing gains in authenticity as she challenges readers of popular fiction into a deeper involvement of the sufferings of people of 'colour' during apartheid.

"We lived in Soetstroom, in the Eastern Cape ... We were the only Asians ..." (2000: 3), says Meena. With these words Karodia engages her reader's attention with the establishment of setting and character. The focus of the early

pages is the Mohammed family, who reside in Soetstroom in the Eastern Cape. They are the only Asian family in the town. The family consists of Papa (Abdul), Ma (Delia), the maternal grandmother, Nana, daughters Yasmin, who is sixteen, and Meena, who is twelve. The story is narrated by Meena. She is astute and observant and is the voice of Karodia throughout. Both Karodia and Meena have in common their mixed-blood ancestry, their Muslim/Christian religious backgrounds, and both suffered from a confused identity in a racially divided South Africa. However, it is not the trials and tribulations of the Mohammed family that are discussed in the opening pages of the novel, rather it is the conspiracies and actions of the perpetrators of the apartheid laws. Meena comments that it “was relatively common in the days before mass relocation to find solitary Asian traders living and conducting business in the heart of white rural communities” (2001: 3). Abdul Mohammed owns the local General Dealer’s store which is opposite “that bastion of Afrikanerdom, the Dutch Reformed Church” (2000: 4). As in her previous novel, Karodia is highlighting the irony of a religious institution which upholds an inhuman system like apartheid.

The Group Areas Act (1950) affected, in particular, the Indian and Coloured communities who were restricted to certain trading and residential areas. The Bantu Education Bill stated that all non-whites attend specially designated non-white schools where an inferior system of education was promoted. Yasmin and Meena attend the local school for Coloureds. In addition, Karodia was very aware of the Calvinistic Afrikaner government and has Meena saying that the “store was closed on Sundays because trading on that day was prohibited by the Lord’s Day Act. We occasionally circumvented the law ...” (2000: 11). Karodia again in this novel portrays Afrikaner whites in negative terms as “vicious bullies or tyrannical snobs” (Moss 2003: 182). Cobus Steyn, the son of the local Member of Parliament, is a racist bully who enjoys harassing the Mohammed family – labelling them “coolies” and demanding that they address him as “Baas” (2000: 16).²

It is through the character of Daniel that Karodia is able to criticise Influx Control – regulations that controlled the movement of Africans out of the ‘homelands’ into ‘white’ South Africa. People from neighbouring countries suffered a similar fate. As Daniel is probably “from one of the Rhodesias because he had

mentioned the 'Smoke that Thunders'" (2000: 20), he is not allowed to reside in the location nor in the town. He lives with the Mohammed family, "assuming a crab-like existence beneath the rusted skeleton of the Hudson" (2000: 21).

The other theme that Karodia explores is the complex nature of cultural and religious traditions within one family. In addition to having to cope with the demeaning apartheid laws of segregation, there is the conflict of Christian and Muslim values and ethics and of Coloured versus Indian tradition – all in one family. Papa is a strict Muslim traditionalist, while Ma and Nana are Christian and belong "to that nebulous group generally referred to as Coloured " (2000: 24).

To complicate matters further, Papa is 30 years older than Ma and the suggestion of 'secrets' is evident in words like, "You don't want to know the truth about your daughters ..." (2000: 25) from Nana, the wise, all-knowing matriarch of the family. It is against this complex background that Karodia allows her characters to develop into individuals with "the secrets they are required to hide and the secrets they themselves hide, and their quest for space ..." (Pearson 2001: 145).

From the moment the reader is introduced to Yasmin, her desire to escape from Soetstroom is obvious. To free herself of the claustrophobic Soetstroom environment she pleads the need to attend boarding school. She is the "beauty in the family" (2000: 19) and Papa's favourite. Meena has a "plain face and unremarkable body" (2000: 19), who longs for Papa's attention and is closer to Nana than to Ma. It is when Meena attends school for the first time that Karodia is able to point out the inferior quality of non-white education: when old readers discarded by the local white primary school are handed out to the children and after reading the jingle, printed on the inside cover, "Coolie, coolie, ring the bell; coolie. Go to hell" (2000: 31-32), Meena tears out the page. She is severely chastised by Miss Durant who threatens her with "the thrashing of [her] life" (2000: 32). When Yasmin defends Meena with the words, "She's only a baby ..." (2000: 32), she herself is beaten instead.

Karodia uses various incidents to criticise apartheid policies to illustrate how humiliating and dehumanising they were. Papa and Ma's visit to Hermanus

Steyn's farm to discuss their son, Cobus Steyn's racist behaviour highlights the ludicrous Immorality Act (1950). There is a noticeable change in Steyn's arrogant attitude when he notices what an attractive woman Ma is. He tells her, "I could not rest until I saw you again" (2000: 39). Some sort of 'relationship' develops here – we are not told what it is, but it is ironic as the Immorality Act outlawed sexual relations between all whites and non-whites and Steyn is white and also a Member of Parliament. Also, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act attempted to stamp out marriages between white and black – another irony when one notes that the marriage between Papa and Ma is, in fact, a 'mixed' marriage – but this is 'acceptable' because neither party is white.

Karodia also brings to her reader's attention the preposterous Separate Amenities Act. Under this Act, all public amenities and stores were required to have "separate entrances and cubicles for African customers" (2000: 46). These amenities were "provided for all classes according to their aptitude, according to their standard of civilisation and according to their need" (Reader's Digest 1989: 377).

Karodia, like Jacobs in *Sachs Street*, does not approve of arranged marriages. When Papa, in traditional Muslim custom, starts arranging a marriage for Yasmin, Karodia allows her to convince her parents to let her attend the Elizabeth Grey Private School for Girls, at enormous financial cost to the family. This situation is preferable to an arranged, loveless marriage. Also, Yasmin's obsession with escape has an ominous ring about it. This feeling of unease is compounded by Yasmin "fluttering her eyelashes" (2000: 44) at Cobus Steyn; events which foreshadow events crucial to the plot later in the novel.

It is while Yasmin is away at boarding school that the family are the victims of the government's policy of forced removals. (Pamela Jooste concentrates on this policy in *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*.) Meena says:

The Group Areas Board was a government body that had been formed to deal with the classification of racial groups and their removal to particular areas set aside for the different groups. New townships sprouted along the outskirts of towns and cities to accommodate the dispossessed (2000: 69).

The Mohammed family are offered R1200 as compensation. They are given six months to move to McBain, a desolate place in the bush, and 28 miles from the nearest town. They do not move in the specified time and are faced with the humiliation of eviction. The policemen of the apartheid government are ruthless and heartless as they destroy the lives, dignity and possessions of the family. "Papa had his head buried in his hands in an attitude of utter despair", observes Meena (2000: 93). Conditions at McBain are unacceptably primitive. It takes the family two months to settle into the desolate McBain and it is Papa who suffers the most. He is emasculated and all dignity as a provider is removed. It is here, too, that Karodia intrudes into her narrative and one is able to feel her bitterness as she has Meena commenting:

We had become the first victims of the government's grandiose scheme to move all Indians out of small towns into one central area, a task so impossible to implement that it eventually had to be abandoned (2000: 98).

It is at this stage that the reader is brought face to face with the 1950 Population Registration Act designed to provide definitions of 'race' based on physical appearance. The carrying of identity cards stating the 'race' of a person was required. Some of the early classification procedures were crude, particularly the 'pencil in the hair' test. "If a pencil pushed in the hair stayed there, it signified kroes hair – and the classification of the subject as Coloured or African" (Reader's Digest *Illustrated History of South Africa*, 1989: 376). Ma suggests that Meena be reclassified Coloured to open up more options. In this way, Karodia reveals the inhumanity of the system, and the humiliation suffered by people of 'colour'. In Ma's words Karodia states the crux, "What you are is a South African ... We're not trying to deny your birthright. The government has already done that" (2000: 87).

Interestingly, given the alarming statistics of violence against women in South Africa, Karodia is the only one of the three women authors examined in this study who deals with the scourge of rape. After Yasmin has completed her matric she is raped one evening by Cobus Steyn, and Karodia uses this incident to highlight the predicament of a voiceless people in Nana's words: "What proof do we have now? It is only her word against his if we go to the police. You know

the law is always on their side” (2000 136). Yasmin is the victim of apartheid and rape here. Traumatized, she becomes detached from life around her and rejects Soraya when she is born. She then leaves when the baby is two months old.

Karodia uses symbolism very effectively in this first book of her novel. One of the most obvious is Meena's escape into the world of romantic novels and her tendency to identify with the heroines. Perhaps this is symbolic of the unreal or fantasy world of apartheid or perhaps it merely shows Meena's isolation from a normal society. Further symbols of escape are Yasmin's passion for horse riding and the two girls “cavorting [stark naked] while the rain pelted down” (2000: 115). The girls yearn for freedom from the restraints of an artificial society, a culture where Christian and Muslim values differ and from the isolation in which they live. The Steyns and the police are symbols of Afrikanerdom and apartheid – with their power which is based on racial discrimination and a false ideology of white superiority.

After Yasmin's exodus from Soetwater, Karodia concentrates on the character of Meena and the mothering of Soraya. Meena finds that loneliness for her is a way of life in McBain and she escapes into the roles of the heroines in the romantic novels which she reads to alleviate her solitude and to create an artificial world where she is someone important. “There were to be many times in my life when the edges of fantasy and reality became blurred” (2000: 171) admits Meena while driving an old Austin which she says “was my carriage and I was a princess” (2000: 171).

It is at the stage that Meena befriends Elsa Botha, the daughter of an Afrikaner railway worker. From the outset it is obvious that there is some ‘secret’ about the Botha family. Meena notices that “Elsa was typical of the poor-white Afrikaner communities. She had very little experience and almost no education” (2000: 164). It is Meena who teaches Elsa to read and write. Elsa's mother “remain[s] a mystery” (2000: 165) always peeping from behind either the back or front door but never leaving the house. We find out later that she is an alcoholic. In addition, Elsa's pregnancy later is possibly the result of incest. When Niels is born without hands, this suspicion seems to be confirmed. “Ma

and Nana speculated about the paternity of the child. An ugly suspicion had reared its head in both their minds” (2000: 196), says Meena.

There is a discernible edge to Karodia’s bitter portrayal of the Afrikaner poor white, and one can understand her attitude as even the most illiterate white experienced the privilege of ‘job reservation’. (Mr Botha works for the railways, a government institution which employed vast numbers of unskilled Afrikaners.) This was a policy which ensured that certain jobs were ‘reserved’ for workers of a particular race and also prevented the employment of blacks to do work ‘reserved’ for whites, thus entrenching segregation (1989: 489). However, Karodia’s prejudice is often not warranted, as not all Afrikaners are like the Bothas. To an extent she is aware of this as she “attempts to be ‘fair’ and create a decent white” (Moss 2003) in the person of Mrs Ollie who says “... we’re not all like that” (2000: 93). However, for Karodia to debase the Afrikaner so relentlessly in both novels discussed detracts from the authenticity of her novel and renders it too subjective and biased, as it detracts from the artistic integrity of her work.

The teaching profession under the Bantu Education system is highlighted when Meena leaves school with a standard eight certificate and attends Junior Teacher Training College and then teaches at the local Coloured primary school. She earns a salary which is poor but considered “adequate” (2000: 178) by the government as salaries “were scaled according to race and gender” (2000: 178). This policy affected both non-whites and whites. Whites earned more than non-whites and white males earned more than white females in the teaching profession. Meena’s paltry salary is not her only problem. New governmental bodies have been set up – Indian, Coloured and Bantu Affairs. These bodies administer education according to race. In order to keep her position in a Coloured school Meena has herself reclassified as a Coloured – something she hates. “The whole issue was steeped in irony because the Coloured population had always viewed themselves as descendants of the white settlers and as such had expected preferential treatment” (2000: 185), says Meena. Karodia is aware of Meena’s intense discomfort here as she herself experienced the effects of Coloured education having graduated as a teacher from the Coronationville Teacher Training College in 1961 (org.people/profiles). She also taught under this system in Johannesburg.

Karodia's experience is one of the strengths of her novel as it enables her to write with an unparalleled sensitivity.

The issue of 'colour' affects Meena's future as the daughter of an Indian father and a Coloured mother. This issue rears its head when Papa again decides that Meena has to be "settled" (2000: 178). This is a euphemism for an arranged marriage and Papa tries to arrange a marriage with Hamid Khan's father. Papa states quite clearly that this is his decision and has "nothing to do with the 'women'" (2000: 180). The issue of the Muslim patriarch-dominated family is called into question by Karodia. In addition, problems created by mixed marriages where culture and religion cause conflict, are also explored. Meena observes:

... the old problem of our mixed parentage would always be an obstacle. Yasmin and I were not pure Indian. We were half-breeds. We had a Coloured mother, which in the eyes of the Indian community was a defect. We were spoilt goods and thus of less value (2000: 178).

The arranged marriage with Hamid Khan is, therefore, a convenient option as he is a somewhat troublesome youth, but comes from a good family and "marriage would knock some sense into him" (2000: 181), comments Meena. Karodia has the women presenting "a united front against" (2000: 183) Papa, who once again, fails to arrange one of his daughter's marriages.

Karodia uses the issue of marriage to inform the reader of the importance of cultural tradition in the local black community. Gladys, the domestic worker, marries the local chief. She is aware that he is a polygamist as she is his fourth wife and he already has seventeen children. Her inferior position is indicated when "the first wife – the grandam – the doyenne" (2000: 186) puts in an appearance. Meena notices that:

She was a big woman and wore the traditional long skirt, a black fringed shawl wrapped around her chest. Draped over this was an elaborately decorated modesty-bib. A hand-woven choker in brightly coloured beads circled her neck. Her face was coloured with ochre

and an enormous black headscarf was wound around her head like a turban. In one hand she held her pipe, its stem at least fifteen inches long. She gestured regally at the other women (2000: 186-187).

She is obviously the most important wife, living 'regally' in the Transkei while Gladys brings up the children. Karodia, it seems, disapproves of this 'abuse'.

Muslim tradition is very much a part of Meena's life and Karodia explains in a fair amount of detail the burial procedure when Papa dies while under anaesthetic. The Islamic Society take over immediately to cleanse his body, perform 'Ghusl', keep vigil and recite the Koran. His Christian women have no say.

The relevance of the title of the novel becomes evident as the novel progresses and remains a major theme until the end of the book. At this stage we have encountered a number of the 'secrets': Papa is thirty years older than Ma; Soraya's ignorance of her parentage; Ma's episodes of driving off without telling anyone where she goes; Nana's remonstrating with her in words like "Don't forget what happened before. I warned you ..." (2000: 223); Hermanus Steyn's unexpected visits; and Elsa's disappearance when Niels is accidentally killed. Karodia solves these riddles rapidly just before the novel ends.

Karodia strongly criticises the police force of the apartheid era. They are the watchdogs of the system and carry out their 'duties' with scrupulous efficiency. "The police, like gods, had power over life and death. They could summarily dispense justice without the benefit of a court of law" (2000: 240). However, Karodia effectively manages to minimise their images of self-importance by mentioning that one wore "cheap" sunglasses while the other was so fair he was "almost albino-like" (2000: 240). Daniel is the target of their investigation and Karodia uses emotively-charged words like "confused", "frantic", "terrified" and "abandoned" (2000: 241) to create the negative effect she wants when he is interrogated in Afrikaans. He is arrested for not having a 'dompas' the required identity document all people of colour had to have carry at all times. He escapes from the prison cells and the Mohammed household is searched without a search warrant, thus demonstrating the police's lack regard for people's rights. While being hunted Daniel runs blindly into an oncoming train

and is killed. Nana had claimed earlier that “ ... he’ll be shot, and the police will claim that he was trying to escape” (2000: 244). Karodia, of course, is referring to prisoners who died in police custody during the apartheid era.

Other Secrets “has all the elements for a good movie script or ‘soapie’”, says Mathilda Smith (2000: Dispatch online). Smith is referring to Karodia’s sudden, rather dramatic speeding up of events in her novel. This change in pace is introduced by an unexpected phone call from London by Yasmin after a seven-year absence. She informs Ma that she will be returning to South Africa for a visit. This news coincides with a drought and then a violent storm. Karodia uses the symbolism of drought when Yasmin is away and a cleansing, albeit violent, storm after her phone-call. Yasmin always manages to ‘storm’ into her family’s lives and create turbulence. She does precisely this by stating that she will be taking Soraya with her to London. This decision causes heartbreak and tumult for all concerned.

It is from this point that Karodia falls into the same trap as she did in *A Shattering of Silence*. As Smith (2000) notes, having achieved what she set out to do – criticize apartheid policy and inform her readers of the suffering endured by non-whites – she ties up all her loose ends in true ‘soapie’ style with all the dramatic intrigues that go with this style of writing.

Yasmin has been successful in the seven years she has been away and now owns a “small dress-design boutique in London” (2000: 27). The reader also learns that she is involved in a relationship with her former white employer. She has managed to destroy his marriage and we see that it is not only within her family that she creates ‘storms’. Karodia also, as in *A Shattering of Silence*, indulges herself in repetition and devotes an entire chapter to her characters’ past suffering.

The focus of the narrative now shifts to Soraya. She is told that Yasmin is her mother but is not informed about her father. She is insecure and her behaviour becomes hostile and disruptive. The situation is aggravated by the accidental death of Birdie, her dog. When Soraya leaves, the family is “paralysed with grief” (2000: 291). Meena leaves South Africa, a teaching career and “a system of education that had become a burden on [her] conscience” (2000: 293) when

she joins Yasmin and Soraya. Karodia also left South Africa in 1968 and emigrated to Canada and returned in 1994. Meena will also return to South Africa years later. Karodia's identification with Meena is evident here. Karodia's intrusion is also evident when she has Meena experiencing anxiety at the airport:

Years of persecution by police and government officials had cowed non-white South Africans, creating an irrational fear of officialdom. It was a fear and an anxiety that remained with me throughout my life (2000: 299).

As in *A Shattering of Silence*, events speed up at an almost frenetic pace. Soraya, is unhappy in London even though she has no material restraints and enjoys the life of a wealthy, spoiled child. She and Yasmin remain emotional strangers and she misses home. "I want to go back to McBain! I hate this place and I hate Yasmin!" she cries in exasperation (2000: 309). Karodia intrudes here, as Meena comments, "We all have our own places. I discovered mine much later – a place which reflected the geography of my soul" (2000: 310). Karodia thus continues to identify with her characters. Soraya is sent to boarding school and, as Meena says, she will become "British" but will remain a 'brinjal', that is, a person who is "dark on the outside and white on the inside" (2000: 318). Yet Soraya matures in this English environment: she becomes "confident and independent" (2000: 340) and finally attends the Royal College of Music where she indulges "her passion for jazz" (2000: 263).

Meena finds London somewhat overwhelming: "London, with all its sophistication, left me floundering" (2000: 311). The parallel of Karodia's life with that of Meena remains obvious. Meena registers as a teacher, finds the "illiterate and uncontrollable classes of disrespectful students" (2000: 333) uninspiring and takes up a position as housekeeper at a local hospital. (Karodia too, taught briefly and then wrote fiction and radio drama in Canada after leaving South Africa.) To alleviate her frequent bouts of depression, Meena becomes involved with a group of ANC activists. She admits that "deep down, I knew that I wasn't a revolutionary". Her affiliation with this group causes an unexpected backlash when the South African Embassy revokes her passport. "I had come to London in search of freedom and now found myself trapped and

aching for McBain” (2000: 344). She also finds herself the victim of racism in London and never really fits into English social circles. (It is very probable that these are the problems and emotions which Karodia too experienced as she writes with such clarity of this aspect of isolation from one’s homeland.) “I was restless and unhappy. I felt confined. Marooned. I developed irrational phobias. I’d lost control over my life and my destiny” (2000: 346). Meena’s depression and misery is so overwhelming that she desperately longs for McBain and can only think of death. She sees a doctor who prescribes Valium, a sedative. However, her isolation in a foreign country leads to such despair that she attempts suicide. Meena admits she needs professional help and after “months of therapy” (2000: 347) she rallies. Like Karodia, Meena now starts writing novels and, like Karodia, uses her writing therapeutically.

Meena is almost 40 when she has a three-year affair with a Moroccan film maker, Sayeed Farrah, who is also a married man. The affair ends when he is killed in a car crash. This interlude with Sayeed is contrived, and it also seems as if this event has been stuck in as an afterthought, as he is introduced and killed off in seven pages and remains undeveloped. This fault of not developing her peripheral characters remains a pitfall for Karodia. Karodia made the same mistake in *A Shattering of Silence*, where she would introduce a character, neglect to develop it and write it out shortly after introduction.

Karodia needs to return her narrative to McBain largely to solve a number of ‘secrets’ and so she uses Nana’s death. It is nineteen years since Meena originally left South Africa and she now returns with Soraya for Nana’s funeral. Karodia quickly has to inform the reader that Meena’s passport has been reinstated and that she visited South Africa in 1992 and in 1994. These significant events are revealed in a single paragraph reflecting Karodia’s lack of attention to detail and organized planning. The detailed, emotive discussion about Meena’s exile and the withholding of her passport, needs to be balanced with another detailed analysis of the consequences of these events.

The ‘secrets’ are solved fairly rapidly. While she is packing up Ma’s house Meena discovers her mother’s love letters from a certain Nathaniel Basson who is Yasmin’s father. Ironically, Yasmin has a white father just like Soraya. Soraya learns who her father is when she overhears the McBain women discussing the

rape. Ma visits Sergeant Klein – a ‘secret’ Yasmin has been aware of for a long time. Elsa Botha suddenly re-appears in the cottage across the tracks. Soraya is having an affair with a married man, Douglas Pilkington. This is another irony as it is exactly what her mother did.

Yasmin’s purgation is highlighted in the final pages of the novel. Marrying Neville and settling on his country estate, while simultaneously running a successful business in London, has left her unfulfilled. Another ‘secret’ which comes to light is the fact that she had had an abortion five years earlier. She feels she needs to do “something else with [her] life” (418). This scenario sets the scene for the final pages of the novel. When Soraya is severely injured and brain-dead after an accident, she is found to be pregnant. It seems Ma and Gladys have known all along – another ‘secret’ is resolved. Yasmin and Neville find common ground and behave like “two doting parents” (2000: 455) when they claim their grand-daughter after the machines are turned off. At last Soraya and Yasmin have found peace.

Karodia’s strong relationship with Meena, her narrator/protagonist, is evident in the closing lines of the novel. Like Karodia, Meena returns to her life in a foreign country. She is still lonely and has only her writing in her adopted country:

For the first time in ages I felt terribly lonely and wanted someone in my life, someone to console and comfort me, someone to hold me and ease the pain (2000: 465).

Karodia’s novel successfully covers a period of some forty years to the post-apartheid years. The early pages of the novel speak of an authenticity gained from experience and are sensitively written. The years of isolation and exile are also convincing as here, too, the author is acquainted with exile in Canada. However, the final section of the novel is rushed and there are too many convenient occurrences: like Meena finding her mother’s love letters or Soraya overhearing the conversation of her conception. This tendency to conclude her narrative abruptly detracts from the artistic integrity of Karodia’s work. It reflects inadequate attention to detail as she chooses a clichéd alternative instead of more focused material.

Karodia's use of child/adult first person protagonist/narrators in both *A Shattering* and *Other Secrets* is a successful narrative technique. Her intimate relationship with her narrators involves the reader in her narrative, which allows the multiple viewpoints which she expounds to be explored effortlessly. In *Other Secrets* she is able to relate stories which are historically accurate through the innocent, non-judgemental eyes of a child. As Meena, her child narrator, becomes an adult the narration become more personal as Karodia identifies with her in her struggle for identity. Karodia's experience of life under apartheid is clearly reflected, through Meena's narration, as she cleanses herself of the trauma of the past.

Although Karodia's deals with historically accurate information, the novel does not belong to the genre of the historical novel, but rather forms the backbone for a work of popular fiction based on historical fact. Karodia's presentation of the various apartheid laws is accurate. She uses these facts to show their initial impact and their consequent psychological effect on the victims.

Moreover, as the novel covers so many years, it allows Karodia to focus on some of the problems of post-apartheid South Africa. She touches on the unrelenting reign of criminals in the words: "The papers are full of stories about people being robbed and murdered. We won't have a moment's peace ..." (2000: 374). Another problem she highlights is the recklessness of the often unlicensed minibus taxi drivers who drive unroadworthy vehicles. Karodia has Soraya injured in a minibus taxi accident: "A minibus taxi was overtaking a truck" (2000: 445) after seeing Yasmin and Meena off at the airport for their return flight to London.

Although Meena, like Karodia, has regained her identity, she does not return to post-apartheid South Africa permanently, for it seems that it is still not the place where she can live her life contentedly, and she returns to her life in London.

CHAPTER 4

THE SLAVE BOOK – RAYDA JACOBS

“He’s promised to give me my freedom. I’ll not go back in the slave book” (Jacobs, 1998: 92). These are the words of Noria van Malabar, a slave in Jacobs’s novel, *The Slave Book*. The slave book referred to was a documented list of slaves who resided in the Cape in the 1800s. Once a name was listed in this book, it was nearly impossible to be free, in spite of British intervention stating that slaves were to be subjected to a process of apprenticeship in order to be set free. Moreover, the “children of slaves born in captivity were registered with the Cape of Good Hope Slave Registry Office in order [for the farmer] to prove ownership” (Reader’s Digest, 1989: 48). The Reader’s Digest further informs that the most “valued of all slaves was a Cape-born child of a slave mother and white father” (1989: 50).

Jacobs has done a superb job of researching her novel and her in-depth knowledge of this era of slavery strikes one immediately as one takes note of the various sources Jacobs acknowledges at the beginning of her novel in the Acknowledgements. She says:

Real praise ... belongs to those writers who spend years researching the past and whose works we historical scavengers ruthlessly plunder for atmosphere and ideas. We cannot write these books without them ...

Some of the sources Jacobs acknowledges are *Children of Bondage, A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838*, Robert C.H. Shell, 1994; *The Early Cape Muslims: The first and oldest mosques in Cape Town*, F.R. Bradlow & Margaret Cairns, 1978; and *300 Years of Cape Wine*, C. Louis Leipoldt, 1952.

Jacobs’s thorough research is further reflected in the extracts she quotes from various authors at the beginning of each chapter. One of the extracts is taken from Anders Sparrman (1998: 61) who visited the Cape in the 1770s aboard Captain Cook’s ship *Resolution* (www.captaincooksociety.com). Sparrman “was a Swedish naturalist who visited the Cape twice in the 1770’s looking for

biological specimens. His book *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope* is recognised as the first detailed account of travel in the interior of the Dutch colony. In it he recorded a meeting with a local farmer somewhere between Paarl and Cape Town” (sundaytimes.co.za. 23 November 2003, *Lifestyle Features*).

John Philip is another interesting historian who Jacobs uses as reference for an introductory quote (1998:175). He was superintendent of the London Missionary society and an important influence drafting reports in 1835 and 1836 about incorporating indigenous peoples into British law as equal citizens. His reports focused mainly on Eastern Cape frontier policy, in particular the prevalence of violence and coercion on the Eastern Cape frontier.

It is interesting to note that Jacobs sees herself as a historical novelist as she categorises *The Slave Book* as one “of historical fiction [which] is an arrogant attempt by a writer ... to recreate and inform” (Acknowledgements: 1998). In *The Slave Book* Jacobs sets out to provide a corrective view of the history of the slaves of the early Cape. South African history, influenced by white domination, largely neglected to record and trace the origin of the slaves of the Cape, ignoring their ancestry and neglecting to acknowledge the richness of their religious and cultural heritage. Thus she is attempting to recuperate a past that has been distorted by white historiography. Jacobs also focuses on the origins of the Coloured people indigenous to the Cape. She informs her readers of their cultural heritage which is as diverse as it is rich. The slaves were brought in from Java (Batavia), Bali, Macassar, Timor, Burma, Malaya and China because the Dutch East India Company forbade Jan van Riebeeck “to enslave the indigenous people of the Cape” (Reader’s Digest: 1989: 48).

“Coming from different continents and cultures, the slaves had little in common except their bondage” (Reader’s Digest: 1989: 50). Families were broken up as a buyer was under no obligation to purchase whole families. Although slaves formed a large section of the Cape population, they were never really accepted as true members of the Cape community although they formed an integral part of it. Indeed, the slaves from Malaya were regarded as the “king of slaves [as they] learnt the skills of almost all the trades practised at the Cape” (Reader’s Digest: 1989: 50).

These slaves from Malaya brought with them their Muslim religion. The Muslim slaves were, however, banned by the Dutch from practising their religion. "It was only during the First British Occupation in 1798 that a freed prisoner, Tuan Guru, founded the first mosque, which still stands in Cape Town's Dorp Street (Reader's Digest, 1998: 50). Since 1994 the Muslims are more free than ever to practise their religion and so this is an ideal time for a post-apartheid author like Jacobs, to enlighten her readers on the introduction of this religion into the Cape and to highlight its rich heritage. Jacobs's need to do this seems so compelling that she often indulges herself in infinitesimal detail, which, while interesting, detracts from her narrative.

It is against this background that the novel will be analysed and criticised. The main movements of the text will be outlined and then analysed thematically.

The novel starts with a short Prologue, from Sangora's (a slave from Malaya who is a devout Muslim³), point of view, which establishes setting. It is 1838 and the day of slave emancipation. We are introduced to the main characters: slaves with wonderful, unused talents and the "white man with a bigheartedness too dangerous for his own good. But let me go back ..." (1998: 11), he says.

With these words the novel then reverts to third person narrative and the day of the slave auction a number of years earlier, but the reader's sympathy with Sangora is firmly established and a great deal of the novel is seen from his point of view. Although the English had halted the slave trade in 1828 the "people still bought and sold human beings" (1998: 13), says Sangora. Andries de Villiers, a wine farmer, buys Sangora van Java, a skilled, defiant Muslim and Somiela van de Kaap, his stepdaughter, who is sixteen years old. His wife, Somiela's mother, Noria van Malabar, is sold to an Englishman. Sangora and Somiela are taken to Zoetewater, the wine farm at the foot of the Wynberg mountains. Here we are introduced to Andries's wife, Marieta, and his stepdaughter, Elspeth. It is obvious, from the start, that both Marieta and Elspeth are irritated by Somiela's beauty and her cultured appearance. Marietta instructs Rachel, the house slave, to remove the lace from Somiela's dress while Elsbeth herself cuts off Somiela's black hair when Somiela refuses to have it cut. "Elsbeth had never been openly defied by a slave" (1998: 32), Sangora, the narrator at this stage, informs the reader. Rachel sums up the

slave/master situation with the words: "You're a threat to her. You're a slave and you dare to look white, dare to have straight hair, green eyes, and then have the cheek to open your mouth. Slaves don't have opinions" (1998: 33).

The reader is also made aware that there are undercurrents of dissension amongst the other slaves when the mandoor ("a black overseer", explains the glossary at the end of the novel), Kananga, a "massive ... Mozambiquan who ... took his pleasure with the males has "beaten Siek Klaas senseless and broken his ribs for losing one of the cows"(1998: 27). Siek Klaas is one of the slaves on the farm.

Rachel van Ceylon, the aia, has a son, Arend, "fathered by a Frenchman" (1998: 23). Arend is also a Muslim convert. Another Muslim, Salie van Celebes, a slave who speaks Melayu, "was sharp-featured, with smooth brown skin, very white teeth, and a mane of black hair ... was very handsome" (1998: 37). He is obviously enamoured with Somiela.

In these early pages a number of important themes are introduced. The first one that is obvious is Jacobs's constant reference to the Muslim religion. From the beginning Sangora, also a Muslim, is portrayed as being religious ("In his head he would be saying a prayer ..." (1998: 20)) and he is regarded as a troublemaker because he "just preached his religion and converted some slaves" (1998: 26). It is apparent that the religious aspect is very important to Jacobs. Pamela Jooste comments in her interview with Universite de La Reunion (30/07/2001):

Rayda wrote a book called *The Middle Children* and that's what she is. She prefers to be called Muslim, to be referred to by her religion but she is in fact a woman of colour. She wrote *The Slave Book* and *Eyes of the Sky*, so she is sort of writing out of that community. Rayda hasn't lived in this country for a very long time. She lived in Canada and she came back after the election ... Rayda Jacobs and I were invited by PEN in Stockholm to be their guests. Four South African women writers ... the four women who went to the PEN conference together didn't get on that well ... Rayda Jacobs who hadn't lived here for such a long time referred to Sindiwe Magona as a *Bantu*, not

knowing it was politically incorrect. So Sindiwe, thereafter, kept talking about Rayda's 'coloured roots' which drove her nearly crazy (www2.univ-reunion.fr/ageof/text: 17-19).

The inhuman treatment of slaves is glaringly evident in these early pages. They are traded like cattle and family units are split, as in the case of Noria and Sangora. The latter has "irons clamped onto his legs" (1998: 35) when he threatens to go to the Protector of Slaves. Marieta refers to Somiela as a "naai-maandje", an insult par excellence. Later in the novel we see the reason for this slur. If a slave is born while the mother belongs to the farmer then the child belongs to him. Often to ensure a sufficient supply of slaves the farmers themselves fathered the babies. Andries says:

We need slaves. If there's a child, whose is it? ... It was crude, but it was one way to ensure an ongoing slave population. Van Heerden had three bastards running around on his farm. Everyone knew they were the son's (1998: 104).

Jacobs touches on the mixed origin of South Africans too. It seems that many South Africans are of mixed blood or 'half-breeds'. Rachel's son has a French father and Somiela is of mixed blood. Jacobs expands this theme as the novel unfolds. It seems that Pamela Jooste may be correct in her assumption that Jacobs's 'coloured roots' do disturb her. If one considers the implication that many 'white', especially Afrikaans, South Africans are of mixed blood then the apartheid government did not have the right to discriminate against those they regarded as inferior because of their colour.

Another observation which is linked to the above is the origin of the names of the slaves. "Most slaves carried names given by slave-dealers or their owners ... They also received classical and biblical names, such as Titus or Rachel. Others were named after the months of the year, especially April, September and October. Their 'surname' usually referred to their place of origin ... while those born at the Cape were known as 'Van de Kaap'" (Reader's Digest, 1989: 49). So in the novel one encounters names like: Salie von Celebes, Rachel von Ceylon, Somiela van de Kaap, Sangora van Java, Noria van Malabar and Maryam van Malaya. Sangora is briefly renamed February because Andries

purchased him in February (1998: 24). This legacy remains to this day and many of the Cape Coloureds still have 'months' for surnames.

Jacobs brings another legacy to her reader's notice, namely the English / Afrikaans conflict. She uses the comments of Andries to this end: "The arrival of the English had greatly upset things ... killed the Boers ... slave[s] could now marry and lodge a complaint ... wished the English had stayed in their country ...". The conflict between the English and Afrikaans continued until 1994 when a democratic government was voted in.⁴

Jacobs's fascination with the Koi-na and Sonqua ("The Koi-na and Sonqua are how the Khoi and San referred to themselves" explains Jacobs in her 'Acknowledgements', 1998) is introduced early on too. She talks about the "nomadic Koi-na who came looking for seasonal work" (1998: 22) and Geduld a "sallow-skinned Sonqua who came during the grape-picking season to Zoetewater ..." (1998: 36).

Then the reader is swept straight into the Karoo and the area of the Hantamberge, into the lives of the Sonqua and the Kloots, particularly Harman Kloot whose mother was Sonqua. Thus Jacobs firmly links this novel to her earlier *Eyes of the Sky* (1996). From this point events are often narrated from the point of Harman. In fact, Jacobs is versatile in this respect, as she is able to narrate from various points of view, namely the slave master (Andries de Villiers), the Sonqua (Harman), the slaves (Somuela, Rachel, Sangora, etc.) and the Afrikaners (the De Villierses and the Kloots). Jacobs is obviously striving to allow a grander view of her narrative to include all spheres of the early Cape society. In this way she is attempting to offer a balanced viewpoint of her characters. The result is a clear lack of bias, boosting the success of the novel as an example of historical genre. In contrast, Karodia has thus far been unable to achieve this versatility of shifting narrative point of view. She seems anchored in the autobiographical aspect of her characters where she sees herself as a victim of circumstances. It is important for writers to be able to put themselves into various personas, credibly and objectively, to remove subjectivity and to lend authenticity to the writing. This is a talent which Jacobs has expanded admirably in this novel as she slips into the 'shoes' of her different narrators and

shifts narrative amongst her various characters each speaking from his unique microcosmic communities.

In a brief flashback Jacobs fills in Harman's past and we are given the reason for his being in the Cape when his life is so much a part of his ancestral link to the Sonqua: "You are not from the same mother as your brothers and sister, Harman. Your mother is Sonqua" (1998: 44), says Roeloff Kloot, Harman's father. Jacobs then tells us that Harman killed an Afrikaner farmer and that there is a "price on his head" (1998: 42). However, she cleverly manipulates her reader, as the circumstances are described from the Sonqua's point of view and the reader is fully sympathetic of Harman and his support for the Sonqua, who are being displaced and enslaved by the local Afrikaner farmers. Jacobs is once again attempting to inform her readers of a society that has been ignored by the historians of a discriminative society. "The San hunter-gatherers of southern Africa were a Stone Age people until they came into contact with other people" (1989: 20). They mainly occupied large areas of the Kalahari although some migrated to the Cape.

Jacobs shows that, as the Afrikaner Boer moved north, he occupied land belonging to the San. The conflict is highlighted when Harman kills a boer involved in the kidnapping of three San children. Jacobs also draws the reader's attention to possible relationships which existed between some boers and the San women. Harman is a result of such a liaison and is, therefore, of mixed blood.

Having firmly secured her reader's empathy for the Sonqua and Harman, Jacobs returns the action to the Cape and wine-farming. Instantly, she once again earns our admiration for her in-depth research as she gives a detailed and informative description of the process involved in the farming, harvesting and fermentation of grapes which produce the wonderful Cape wines (1998: 50–52). Again, Jacobs's reason for this detail is clear. Without the slaves the success of wine farming in the Cape would have been non-existent. The slaves formed an integral part of the necessary labour force of the industry. Moreover, they became highly skilled. Jacobs obviously feels that the contribution of these people has never really been acknowledged, so she is attempting to provide a corrective view of history.

In order to transport her readers into the lives of the slaves, Jacobs then relates the more intimate details of their lives through Sangora's observations. Jacobs's versatility is again reflected in her ability to shift between personas and give readers insight into the various aspects of the microcosmic social groups that constitute the macrocosmic society in which they exist. By doing this, Jacobs is non-judgemental. It also makes her novel multidimensional, which, again, contrasts with Karodia's largely one-dimensional writing where the reader is constantly presented with biased judgement. This makes the discerning reader critical of this bias and consequently distances the reader from the skewed narrative because the characters emerge, almost in isolation, from a specific social group.

Jacobs uses the kitchen setting to highlight the fact that the slaves had no rights, were regarded as savages and were totally at the mercy of the farmers who owned them. It seems that conditions were worse for slaves, like Somiela, who were pretty. Her looks and her ability to cook "maleier food" enlists the wrath and, almost certainly the jealousy, of Marieta. Andries is just in time to prevent Kananga from beating her and so we understand Rachel's comment that Marieta's intention is solely "to strip the girl of her dignity" (1998: 71). It is here that Jacobs introduces Harman to the family. He is offered a job to replace Kananga, who will be disposed of as if he were merely an object, but the reader is unsympathetic towards Kananga as Jacobs has portrayed him as heartless and cruel in his dealings with his inferiors.

Harman is now introduced into the De Villiers household. He is good-looking and kind and wins over the workers with his belief that a "contented worker is one who performs well" (1998: 106). The instant attraction between Somiela and Harman also seems natural, as they are both of mixed blood. What comes as a bit of surprise is the "unexpected thrill" (1998: 75) Elspeth feels when *she* meets Harman. She is betrothed to Martinus, his brother, after all. It is at this stage that Jacobs gives us a vivid description of an early Cape farmer's kitchen:

[Harman] took the chair with the riempie seat offered ... and looked around the lofty kitchen with its beamed ceilings and highly-polished yellowwood floors ... with a coal stove agleam with brass post and pans, a koskas for the storage of food, and a stinkwood dresser

displaying rows of fancy plates with a green leaf design. The table at which he sat was an oval yellowwood gate-leg table with baluster-turned legs ... (1998: 73–74).

Jacobs's attention to detail continues in her superb description of the style of dress worn by the magistrate in the Cape in the 1800s. Martinus has a tailor who has "black trousers with a matching jacket reaching almost to his knees ..." (1998: 88) made up for him from imported fabric.

The Muslim religion is again highlighted when Sangora makes an azeemaat (the glossary informs the reader that it is a "small square of paper with Arabic inscription ... worn by Muslims to protect them" (1998: 283)) for the ill Kananga and prays over him. In fact, Jacobs makes use of a visit to Cape Town, when Harman takes Somiela to visit her mother, and is accompanied by Salie and Arend, to explain elements of the Muslim religion in detail. The reader learns about a merang, what it is to make salat and exactly who Mohamet was. Another aspect of the Muslim religion on which Jacobs comments is the fact that "a man can have more than one wife" (1998:94). Noria says, "I'll understand if he finds someone ... God allows it" (1998: 92). The Muslim religion allows a husband to take up to "four legal wives" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 11, p. 101,1970). Jacobs's near obsession with her religion gains momentum as the novel progresses. The only real relevance of Jacobs's concentration on the Muslim religion to her slave theme is the fact that many slaves, especially those from Malaya, were Muslims and that their religion is the heritage which they have passed down to many people in South Africa today. Apart from this, her constant references to religion are somewhat intrusive to her narrative.

The plight of the slaves of the Cape is well catalogued in Jacobs's description of the inhumanity of their treatment as an ongoing theme as her narrative progresses. Harman is instrumental in having Sangora's illegal chains removed (1998: 106). Kananga is summarily sold and Noria's life of abuse is documented. She has been bought, sold and renamed numerous times – from the age of ten. It appears that her present English employer is the most humane. It is obvious where Jacobs's affiliations lie: "He's cruel ... [but] a damn sight kinder than his wife" (1998: 93), she says of De Villiers shortly after informing the reader that "Andries hated the English ..." (1998: 89). It seems

evident that the shocking treatment of slaves, from Jacobs's point of view, was largely the domain of the Afrikaner in the Cape because she only deals with the Afrikaner wine farmer and describes their dealings with their slaves, most especially those of the de Villiers household. In contrast, Jacobs tells the reader that Noria works for "a doctor of women's complaints ... An Englishman" (1998: 18), Joost van Heerden tells Andries. Later Harman tells Sangora that Noria's "owners are treating her well ... She has some freedoms ... she'll be released in five years ..." (1998:98).

In addition, slaves were expected to express no individuality and to be unquestioningly submissive. "A slave with a little knowledge is a dangerous thing" (1998: 105), Marieta says to Andries. However, Harman, without inhibition, washes with the slaves and strikes up a conversation 'improperly' with Somiela and then tells her not to refer to him as Seur but Harman. Marieta says, "He likes bosjesman and hottentot" (1998: 104). Ironically, her daughter, Elspeth, is jealous of Somiela and has the strong urge "to touch [Harman]" (1998: 104) even though she is engaged to Martinus.

The character of Salie gains prominence as the novel progresses, and this is of relevance to the conclusion of the novel. He is obviously attracted to Somiela, is Muslim and says to her, "We're the same. He'll not understand you" (1998: 119).

Harman is used by Jacobs to reintroduce her characters from her earlier novel *Eyes of the Sky* (1996) and to show us Harman's heritage. In fact, 46 pages (1998: 128–174) are devoted to his family's ancestry. The reason for this is very clear. Jacobs's objective is to emphasise that the Afrikaner, who declared himself superior in every aspect with his apartheid laws, is, ironically, anything but pure-blooded and probably has an ancestry of mixed blood. When Roeloff Kloot arrives in the Cape to attend the wedding of his second son, Martinus, the ideal opportunity is created for an in-depth look at Harman's direct lineage and it can be summarised as follows: Roeloff Kloot married Neeltje Roos and they have three children: Beatrix, Martinus and Karel. However, Roeloff has two illegitimate children: Bessie (by Soela Joubert) and Harman (by Zokho, a Sonqua). Furthermore, it is at this stage that Harman declares his love for Somiela and tells Roeloff that he "will marry her" (1998: 136). This statement

plunges Roeloff into the “carelessness of his own youth” (1998: 136) and he tells Harman that “Black blood’s a funny thing. You never know when it’ll surface” (1998: 137). Later, Somiela wonders “what the De Villiers family would say if they knew their daughter had married into a family with mixed blood” (1998: 144).

Thus Jacobs has made her point quite clearly: there are few pure white Boers. Jacobs continues to examine the origin of the ‘Cape Coloureds’. She introduces Boeta Mai to her reader and she does this for two reasons: to underscore her standpoint about the South African legacy of the people of mixed blood, and to bring to her reader’s attention the inception of the Muslim religion at the Cape. Harman learns that Boeta Mai’s grandfather and his (Harman’s) great-grandfather were brothers. Boeta Mai’s grandfather, Krisjan Kloot, a white Christian, married a Muslim slave girl from Ceylon. They had three children: Stefan, Albert and Reijnhardt. The latter two children married daughters of *white* wine farmers while Stefan married Maria (a slave). Stefan and Maria had two children: Ismail and Latiefa, who “returned to [their] grandmother’s faith” (1998: 169). Ismail is married to Maryam, a Muslim from Malaya. Harman, therefore, has both slave blood and Muslims in the family. It is also clear that whenever Jacobs compares Christianity with Islam, the latter religion always emerges as the superior and that, if her characters have a choice, they will inevitably choose Islam, as do Ismail and Latiefa. This religious conflict is dealt with in greater depth in Jacobs’s novel *Sachs Street* (2001).

Jacob’s talent for detail is demonstrated in her informative description of the rituals and customs of the Muslims. There is the tariq, which is a hypnotic-like trance only the very pious can achieve; the bilal, or calling to prayer; the ratiep, a ritual involving knives and swords; and the Salat – to mention a few. Jacobs’s attention to detail indicates her pride in the Muslim’s fierce devotion to their religion. However, Jacobs needs to be aware that proselytizing should not be the primary objective of fiction.

Jacobs also shows her reader the origin of the Cape Malay cuisine and the introduction of bredies, boboties, spicy dishes, mango atjar and the use of the curry leaf, coriander, jeera, green chillies and the tasty fried fish, which most South Africans relish, is something for which we have the early peoples of the

Cape to thank. The custom of eating with the thumb and the tips of four fingers is a custom which Jacobs feels she has to explain: "The food tastes much better if you eat it this way", says Maryam (1998: 168). And again: "We eat with our hands even when there are forks. It tastes better", says Sangora (1998: 158). It is a Muslim custom and acceptable and yet the reader may feel that Jacobs's comments are somewhat propagandistic.

It is interesting to note that both Karodia and Jacobs deal with what they see as the conflict between the Muslim and Christian religions. For Jacobs this is a bigger issue than it is for Karodia but for both authors it *is an issue*. The reason for this is possibly the fact that South Africa has always been regarded as a Christian country, especially under Nationalist rule, when other religions were largely disregarded.

"When Andries' first move towards molesting Sangora's stepdaughter, Somiela, is interrupted by Andries' wife, the novel explodes" (Gottschalk, 2000: 117). This incident forms the climax of the novel and Jacobs concludes her comments on her major themes of "how the lives of slaves and masters are twisted by slavery and indentured labour"(2000: 117). The ultimate triumph of the Muslim religion over Christianity in the lives of these early inhabitants of the Cape and the long-term influence of those with mixed blood. Gottschalk feels that "Jacobs is among the very few authors who can evoke what the subtleties of class and shades of colour mean to persons of mixed race who live in a social order marked by white racialism" (2000: 117).

Thus it is that when Marieta throws boiling water over Somiela, Harman negotiates a plea-bargain that he will work for Andries for a year without pay – if Andries agrees to let him have Somiela after that period of time. The absolute impotence the slaves have over their lives is obvious. Andries's words " ... you can come here and negotiate a slave's freedom as if it were a sack of flour" (1998: 182) ring atrociously true. In addition, Sangora attacks Marieta when he is labelled a "heathen" (1998: 185). With Harman's help they fake his death and, with Martinus's help, give him a new identity – "So my name gets changed once again" (1998: 217), says Sangora helplessly.

December 1, 1834 was the day for Slave Emancipation at the Cape. Jacobs gives the reader a detailed account of the feelings of the slaveholders and of the contents of Ordinance 50 which introduced “gradualist abolition” (1998: 239). To facilitate this ‘gradual’ approach and to a large extent to appease the slaveholders, ‘freed’ slaves had to serve a four-year apprenticeship, ostensibly to give them marketable skills but, in fact, this was “a tactic on the part of owners and the authorities to perpetuate slavery beyond its final end” (1998: 239). One only has to consider the skills Sangora brought with him: woodwork, cabinet-making, carpentry and cooperage, to understand the extent of the ploy. In addition, the Boers were “bitter about the changes” (1998: 238). Andries and his neighbour, Joost van Heerden, “had been part of the protest meetings against Ordinance 50 ... and [they] wanted the assurance of adequate financial compensation” (1998: 239). The English/Afrikaans conflict is also emphasised and De Villiers refers to the English fiscal as someone who “belonged to the race he hated so much” (1998: 221).

Harman’s love for Somiela, her pregnancy and their subsequent marriage deal with the other two themes, namely, mixed-blood marriages and religious conflict. Bessie warns Harman, “... if you take her, you must know it won’t be easy. You’ll be alone ... [but] if you feel strongly about this girl, you must do it” (1998: 190). Harman adds, “She’s also Mohametan ... she will not come to my faith” (1998: 190). Later we have Somiela dreaming of Harman’s love for her and “how he would convert to her religion” (1998: 232). In contrast, Harman ponders his dilemma: “... he was still a Christian ... but he liked the Mohametan philosophies also” (1998: 257). It comes as no surprise, however, that Jacobs has Harman convert to the Muslim faith, that Boeta Mai arranges the wedding and that Imam Achmat accepts Harman into the faith and marries him and Somiela. “You accept the one God, and the last prophet?” he asks. In the final analysis, it is the Muslim religion which triumphs and, after Harman is killed, Somiela returns to the Cape to marry the long-suffering Salie and they are “bound by the same code ... With him she need never apologize for her faith” (1998: 24).

S’iam, Harman and Somiela’s red-headed daughter marries a German and Jacobs comments through Sangora, in the prologue, that “S’iam never fully belonged to her mother. In the end, her white blood claimed her ...” (1998: 281).

It is not clear what Jacobs's innuendoes are here but it is almost as if she is indicating that the paler the shade the greater is the gravitation towards the perceived superior white society, and everything that it brings with it. Alternatively, she may be criticising the action as being one of cowardice, where pride in one's origins is sadly lacking.

Jacobs's fascination with the Sonqua resurfaces when Gumtsa takes the runaway Sangora to Hangklip. The Sonqua are master hunter-trackers and so it is inevitable that he is the one Jacobs uses for this task. Jacobs also uses this opportunity to introduce us to the "drosters", who are runaway slaves who have become squatters at Drostersgat (1998: 202). Jacobs adds a touch of authenticity by tracing Gumtsa and Sangora's journey step by step from the Vishoed mountains, to Muizenberg then on to Macassar – the place where an early Muslim Sheik is buried. Jacobs briefly informs her reader of his history:

Sheikh Yusuf ... had come to the Cape at the end of the 17th century. Of noble firth, and a political exile, the Sheikh was brought from Ceylon where the Dutch had had enough of him, and thought him better out of the way at the Cape of Good Hope (1998: 199).

Having safely 'delivered' Sangora to Drostersgat, Gumtsa goes north and Jacobs has succeeded in showing us how at one with nature this 'bosjesman' is and how he is able to outwit their "captors with ... uncanny knowledge" (Goulding, 1999: 24) of the Cape that was their domain.

The novel suitably ends with an Epilogue by Sangora who fills in the details of the lives of these characters Jacobs writes about in the novel.

Jacobs's style flows naturally between formal and colloquial. When she is describing some historical fact or cultural peculiarity of the early Cape, she uses formal style, as in her description of wine farming in the 1800s in the Cape (50-51), or when she is describing the lack of rights for the slaves (238-239). However, when she deals with the day-to-day conversation of the people of the time, she uses their typical colloquial language and words like "mijnheer", "inlander", "kleinnooi", "mandoor", "landdrost", "skaapbos" and so on are encountered. Fortunately, for the reader, Jacobs has provided a detailed

glossary at the end of the novel as it aids understanding and allows the novel international acceptance.

In *The Slave Book*, Rayda Jacobs has succeeded in informing her readers of the origin of the 'Cape Coloured'. She has also given a detailed explanation of the introduction of Islam and its rituals into the Cape. These are themes which she will continue to expand in *Sachs Street*, but this time they will be examined within the context of apartheid and at the beginning of democracy.

CHAPTER 5

SACHS STREET- RAYDA JACOBS

Sachs Street is the story of Khadidja Daniels, a young Muslim girl growing up in Cape Town in the 1950s, in a female-dominated environment. The story is related by Khadidja, more than 30 years later, to her psychologist, Anna Birnbaum, in an attempt to establish an identity for herself. Khadidja, as a child of an apartheid South Africa, suffers identity confusion influenced by a history where colour segregation was paramount. She suffers further disorientation by being a child of a divorced mother at a time when society frowned upon single parent families and on women who were self-sufficient. Her confessions to her psychologist allows her, in first person narrative, to involve the reader in her past experiences as retrospectively, she attempts to recuperate a lost past and to establish an identity for herself.

Jacobs uses the young Khadidja's first person narrative, and later the mature Khadidja's third person narrative (thus using the narrative within a narrative technique) "to clarify without being didactic, certain issues – especially polygamy, and the rights of women – in the Muslim community in the Cape" (www.numbmagazine.com/identity: 1). The themes on which she concentrates are: the responsibility of the Muslim believer in a multicultural society; the role and treatment of women within Muslim society – more especially in the Cape; the effects of the apartheid system on the Cape Coloured community; and an attempt by Khadidja to establish an identity for herself within this environment. "Social identity involves cultural practices which distinguish a social group as having a common identity distinct from other social groups", says Jacobs in her article '*Identity*'. She admits that she suffered displacement and confusion as a result of her inability to establish an identity:

The confusion as a child of who I really was, has always been a dark companion. An identity further confused by being a 'child of divorce' at a time when it was unfashionable for women to be too independent. Add a white strain, being Muslim, marrying an Iranian in an immigrant

country [Canada], having Canadian children, and the scene is set for an identity crisis" (numbmagazine:1).

The novel is, therefore, largely autobiographical and Jacobs is often clearly the young and older Khadidja, as she herself attempts to recuperate a personal history alongside a broader social history.

The novel begins with the following lines: "I remember the wind on the day my great-grandmother arrived in Bo-Kaap in 1955. I was eight years old ..." (Jacobs, 2001: 7). Immediately, the attention of the reader is captured with the establishment of setting and character. For the next few pages Jacobs continues to introduce the reader to the people who will affect Khadidja's life profoundly. We are also shown the society where this young Coloured girl will grow to adulthood in her predominantly female-orientated environment. The first person narrative point of view involves and affects the reader's attitude towards the protagonist, Khadidja. The first person narrative also indicates Jacobs's authorial intention as she deals with her themes in the novel.

It is also within these early pages that the reader is made aware that 'colour' is an issue in Khadidja's life. Her great-grandmother is a "white person" (2001:8) with "flaming red hair" (2001: 8). "There's white blood in the family. You can't tell anyone" (2000: 32). She whispers this to Alison in class the day after her great-grandmother moves in. "White blood!" (2001: 32) is Alison's horrified reaction. Khadidja also has hair of which she is "horribly ashamed" (2001: 9) as it is kinky. In addition, she is the darker-skinned of the sisters – Murida, her older sister, is much fairer. We read that she has been described as the "blas enetjie met die kroes hare" (2001: 9) by acquaintances. Furthermore, Khadidja discovers that her great-great-grandmother was a slave and "Mohammedan" (2001: 54). Her great-grandmother tells her:

My grandmother's mother was a slave woman ... The man who raised my grandmother was also a slave. Not the blood father – he was an Afrikaner ... Every Mohammedan born here has a slave in his background (2001: 10).

Thus it is that Jacobs picks up on two of her favourite themes: the Malay slave ancestry and the Muslim religion of the Cape Coloured society, two themes dealt with extensively in *The Slave Book* (1998).

It seems that little granny (a name Khadidja gives her great-grandmother) no longer wants to live with her son, Solly, in Paarl because they practise Christianity and she wants to practise her Muslim religion freely, something she can do in Ateeka's (Khadidja's mother) home. Jacobs uses this opportunity to inform her reader of the Muslim washing ritual:

I knew then that wherever [little granny had] lived, they didn't wash themselves like Moslems. Moslems didn't sit in dirty water. Water had to run. Clean water had to rinse off the soap (2001: 30).

After establishing the necessary background, and using the unique narrative within a narrative flashback/forward, first person/third person narrative style of the novel, Jacobs then propels her reader more than 30 years into the future and we meet the adult Khadidja, who is the editor of a women's magazine, and an about-to-be-divorced Alison, her best 'childhood' friend. Khadidja has had an affair with a Jewish lawyer, Saville Eisenberg, and is presently married to an unfaithful Rudy. The affair with Saville was doomed because "there was apartheid, [and] their different faiths" (2001: 26). It becomes clear as the novel progresses that Saville is the man with whom Khadidja had a really close relationship, and, consequently, she finds it very difficult to experience any really fulfilling relationships again. There is a tension in the novel between Jacobs's desire to explore the nature of true love and her need to defend the Muslim faith. At this stage Jacobs allows Khadidja to sacrifice love to both colour and religion.

The mature Khadidja has come to terms with her 'kroes' hair and says that after "years of straightening [she has had it] shaped, coloured, and turned it into a wanton burst of copper ringlets" (2001: 22). Jacobs's preoccupation with her protagonist's hair is so insistent that it suggests an uneasiness with this physical manifestation of racial mingling. The young Khadidja, on hearing that her grandfather was a black man, thinks that it must have been his "blood which accounted for [her] mother's and [her] blush complexion and curly hair" (2001:

13). She further realizes that her grandmother's white features and fine hair are the reason her sister has "silk strands" (2001: 13).

When we return to life in the Bo-Kaap with the young Khadidja narrating her story, we are shown how Ateeka manages without a husband, what life is like for a young Muslim girl from a single-parent all-female family, that she has Christian friends, her nickname is Titch and that gangsterism is rearing its head in District Six. Here a very important theme is highlighted, namely, the remarkable resilience and courage of the women in the Bo-Kaap of the 1950s. Heather Robertson comments, "Jacobs is at her best when capturing the texture, spirit, humour and the resourcefulness of women in the closely knit Cape Town community ..." (*Sunday Times*, 18 November, 2001).

The attitude towards and treatment of the women is closely linked to the Muslim belief that women are the backbone of family life and must, therefore, remain subservient. Khadidja says:

... it amazed her when she heard the things Murida did for her husband. Setting out his clothes in the mornings; picking his tie, socks, shirt; frying his eggs with a tablespoon of butter; toasting his bread a golden brown. Every morning before he left for the office, she asked him what he wanted for that night's supper (2001: 44).

In today's society the emancipated woman, who is very independent, would regard this behaviour as a modern form of slavery. Later, Khadidja notes that Murida "had adapted completely to a life of shopping, cooking, car pools, and a man who was generous and kind, but could also be bull-headed ..." (2001: 144). Sadly, all this 'skivvying' [mine] does not keep Maan, her husband, faithful. There had been "the incident with the girl at the Portuguese café" (2001: 144), Ateeka had on occasion informed Khadidja. Again there is the tension in Jacobs's intention to expound the Muslim religion on the one hand, and on the other hand, there is resistance to acknowledge the effects of the Islamic faith with diminishes the status of women.

A. Gagiano says, "Die vroue is sterk en interessant, maar het te kampe met hul mans se selfsug, onverantwoordelikheid en seksuele losheid ..." (Boekwurm,

Insig, November 2001). Jacobs's criticism of the treatment of women by Muslim men and their infidelity is unrelenting. Ateeka, Alison, Khadidja and Murida are all faced with husbands who are unfaithful. Murida is the only one whose marriage remains intact in the face of this infidelity. Ateeka is a strong woman who struggles to raise her daughters without any maintenance. She tries to set up a business selling chickens so "they won't have to take a man's nonsense" (2001: 79). On Khadidja's tenth birthday, the same day her father marries Salieyah, she tells everyone that her mother "... pays for lots of things. No one else supports us" (2001: 184). However, Alison feels that it is the fault of their mothers: "They're to blame. They train us to be these patient handmaidens We wash and fetch and overlook, and they sell us down the river ..." (2001: 49). Alison's husband, Farouk, divorces her and Khadidja divorces Rudy when he says that he wants to take a second wife.

"But Islam allows a man to take a second wife ..." (2001: 46), whines Rudy. Jacobs is extremely outspoken on this topic and covers herself by having the adult Khadidja saying, "I'm in agreement with it for those who can live with it. Not for me" (2001: 116). Jacobs's overt criticism of polygamy is contrary to the ideology of Islam which allows the men to take up to four wives (quoted from Encyclopaedia Britannica in the discussion in *The Slave Book*).

Yet Jacobs's novel continues to reflect Muslim propagandistic intent in the ongoing debate with the born-again Christian, Storm. This obvious ideological tension undermines the integrity, the 'truthfulness', of her work, as Jacobs's need to defend the Muslim faith on the one hand, and her rejection of its social practices, on the other hand, appears incongruous. However, Khadidja has written a book, *First Wife*, which "deals with divorce and polygamy" (2001: 117). It seems as if Jacobs is engaging in a kind of self-conscious examination of the writer's art here, as at heart, Khadidja, like Jacobs, is a feminist. This attitude is reflected in Khadidja's words:

Not all women have the same chances. Some have no skills, no money; they have children to support. They stay out of necessity. These are the situations that bother me, when a woman is held in place with religious strapping ... (2001: 116).

Inadvertently, by highlighting the selfishness, irresponsibility and sexual wantonness of the men (as the *Insig* article, quoted above, suggests) Jacobs is showing just how strong the women, who struggle on alone, are.

Jacobs is also somewhat critical of the garb that Muslim women have to wear. Khadidja does not wear the scarf which most Muslim wear (2001: 47) and, as a child, she regards Oemie Jaweier's black robe as "ugly" (2001: 58). As Khadidja grows older she, in fact, becomes more and more proud of her head of hair, "her hair – was her best feature now" (2001: 65).⁵

Another area of criticism that emerges is that of the Muslim custom of arranged marriages. This criticism emerges in the figure of Yusuf Arendse, a lawyer who Ateeka arranges to meet Khadidja. He is a widower with young twin daughters who is "looking for someone right now just to do some cooking and cleaning" (2001: 70). Khadidja, a successful journalist, is uninterested. She says, "... I don't want an arranged marriage, and I do want love" (2001: 71).

Education for girls also does not seem to be a priority. The Gamieldiens, the young Khadidja's next-door neighbours, have eleven children. Their father, Booia, asks the fourteen-year-old daughter, Gabieba, if she will give up school to stay at home and help their mother run the house. He bribes her with the offer a new outfit of clothing every month. Gabieba accedes. Khadidja's only comment is: "... the cleverest of the Gamieldien girls It was cruel to ask someone to give up school to do this ..." (2001: 39). And later in her diary entry: "Poor Gabieba. I'm glad I'm not her" (2001: 41).

An interesting anomaly emerges in Jacobs's attitude to the drinking of alcohol and to that of dagga-smoking. When Storm brings a bottle of sparkling wine into Khadidja's house, she tells him: "Muslims don't drink ... It'll bring bad luck into my house" (2001: 115). Yet, when it comes to smoking dagga, there is no such adamant rejection. When Alison tells Khadidja that her husband, Farouk, is suing for divorce, the reader is told that Khadidja "had one joint too many and [had] run a stop sign" (2001: 19), killing Alison's eldest daughter, Leila. Later we see that "Alison was an expert at rolling joints" (2001: 102). Khadidja and Alison then proceed to smoke dagga together. The dagga makes Alison morose while it "always made [Khadidja] relax. But two hits were enough. More made her

reckless” (2001: 104). Later when Farouk has visited Alison, after their divorce, and they sleep together again, Khadidja finds Alison “red-eyed and bleary The room reeked of stale smoke and misery. A plastic bag with dagga was next to her ...” (2001: 193). Alison then decides to give up dagga for good and we have Khadidja watching “in disbelief as the weed slid out into the rushing waters” (2001: 195) of the toilet bowl. This is all that is said about dagga – which, like alcohol, is a drug. Does the Muslim religion not condemn this, like it does alcohol, and why the tolerant attitude towards an illegal drug? Alcohol is not illegal per se. Jacobs’s reply to this question via email was: “All your other questions relating to her dagga smoking ... Khadidja is Muslim, but human like anyone else” (23/01/04). If one analyses this statement, then it seems that Jacobs is saying that if one is Muslim and one has weaknesses or sins, and that if one behaves in any way contrary to Islam, it is excusable because it is a human failing. However, the question about the Muslim attitude towards dagga, interestingly, remained unanswered. The obvious tension between Jacobs’s desire to defend Islam and her ambivalence in the acceptance of its social practices is evident here.

Religious debate is another important theme and dominates a large portion of the novel. While debate of this sort can invigorate a novel, if it becomes too dominant it can become tedious and, unfortunately, this is the case at times in the novel. Jacobs claims:

My writing has at its heart the desire to make my faith friendly and accessible to those who might have a skewered perspective of Islam, and to foster understanding of all faiths. (www.numbmagazine.com/identity: 1) [Note the misuse of the word ‘skewered’; it should read ‘skewed’.]

While Jacobs may feel that this is why she expounds Islam continuously, and, although throughout the novel she has Khadidja constantly saying things like, “Stop talking about God” (2001: 125); or “She hadn’t expected that he would launch immediately into religious debate” (2001: 106); and “If you talk about religion, I’m going” (2001: 159), the proselytizing intent remains obvious to the reader and continues to undermine the artistic integrity of her work. The religious debate between Khadidja and Storm continues until, finally, both

characters bring in authorities to the debate. The reader is then exposed to Underdeacon Bennet of the Apostolic church and Bashier Salie of Islam debating various aspects of religion (2001: 196ff). At this stage of the novel one is so wearied by the constant religious debate that one has a strong desire to skip these repetitious sections. If this dreary debate is Jacobs's attempt at encouraging tolerance of other faiths (Khadidja says to Storm, "... and that includes respecting other people's beliefs" (2001: 172)), it does not succeed because the propagandistic ideological aspect is so evident that the reader will become intolerant of Jacobs's attempt to convert not only Storm but her reader.

Jacobs's attempt "to make [her] faith friendly and acceptable" (as quoted above) is further hindered because her support of Islam is so patently biased. There is a persistent underlying criticism of the Christian religion, including Catholicism and the re-born sects. Oemie Jaweier is shocked that Ateeka allows Khadidja to have a Christian friend. "You allow the children to play with Christians? ... You want them to mix with their own kind" (2001: 57). Ateeka protests that, "They mix with their own kind, but they mix with other kinds also" (2001: 57). As Khadidja's best friend is Alison, a Christian, who later converts to Islam, Ateeka defends their stance. As Jacobs feels religious tolerance is something *Sachs Street* is promoting, then it is possible that Ateeka is speaking on her behalf.

Storm dislikes Catholicism intensely: "... the Pope wants to plant a seed in my head and change my thinking and turn me into a Catholic. That's adultery" (2001: 108). Religious tolerance, however, is not something that Jacobs succeeds in promoting in the novel, no matter what she suggests. Khadidja's mother warns her: "Just don't get yourself mixed up with Christians" (2001: 119) and again, "The Muslims turn their backs on those who turn Christian" (2001: 170). Religion is probably the main reason that her relationship with Storm crumbles. He whines: "I can't love you. I *can't* be your partner ... Find yourself a Muslim man and go on with your life" (2001: 271).

So Khadidja continues to defend Islam although, ironically, her partner, Ulf, is an atheist. However, he does say that, "if he believed in God, he would be Muslim" (2001: 299). When her friend, Alison, also converts to Islam (and thus Islam once again triumphs. Thus Jacobs's claim that she has:

... not made Islam bigger than other religions ... that if [she] wanted someone to discover [her] faith, the way to do it would not be to be arrogant, but to invite them in another way in another way – and this [she does] through fiction ... (www.numbmagazine.com/identity: 3)

is inaccurate, because Islam always tends to dominate and in *Sachs Street* more than ever. Moreover, this propagandistic nature of her writing is somewhat arrogant and undermines its artistic authenticity. There is some truth, however, in her statement that she uses fiction to 'invite' readers to discover Islam.

However, it also becomes obvious during these incessant religious debates that Jacobs herself faces a dilemma, namely the impact of Christianity in society. Khadidja informs Storm at dinner one evening, "Jesus is revered in the Qur'an" (2001: 120). Jacobs states:

My latest novel *Sachs Street* was an outright attempt to pick up the thread on Jesus when the Muslim female protagonist meets a born-again Christian and falls desperately in love. A Muslim woman who sins, but has a strong sense of identity, knows who she is, and despite moments of great weakness, resists the persistent efforts of the born-again who tries to convert her. (www.numbmagazine.com/identity: 2).

Khadidja faces Christianity head-on when she accompanies little granny to Solly's farm in Paarl. "They were Christian, maybe they ate pork. We were never ever allowed to eat in Christian people's homes" (2001: 128). She is also whisked off to church on Easter Sunday: "I'd never been in a church; I was scared ... They were all white. Mine was the only dark face ..." (2001: 139). For the young Khadidja colour and religion seem to be linked as they are for Jacobs. She says about social identity that, "We identify with the Arabs when we are in fact African and the offspring of slaves. We are not encouraged to study other cultures and beliefs for fear it might take us away from Islam ...". It is obvious that this quote refers to the 'Coloureds' who are Muslim. She had earlier asked little granny: "If you're white, Granny, is it better to be Christian or Moslem?" To which the reply is: "Christian, I think" (2001: 86). Later, when a classmate, Sybil Coetzee, drowns, Khadidja again questions little granny:

"Will Sybil go to hell because she's Christian?"

“People don’t go to hell because of their faith. Sinners go to hell, Moslems as well as anyone else.”

“Is [Jesus] a white man, Granny?”

“ ... Jesus was a Jew. I don’t know if that’s white” (2001: 153).

For Khadidja, this confrontation with Christianity is essential if she is to come to terms with her identity, which she does, by the end of the novel. As one expects, she remains Muslim although she does come to the realisation that she will never marry a Muslim man again. Ulf tells her, “You must have made the discovery by now that you will not marry a Muslim” (2001: 291). The reason for this is, of course, her rejection of the way Muslim men treat the women in their lives and her rejection of some of the social practices of Islam.

Although Khadidja comes to terms with her religion and her identity, the question of colour is something that remains evident to the end. When little granny and Khadidja are invited to Oupa Solly’s farm in Paarl for the Easter weekend, Khadidja notices that although Oupa Solly is “a tall, very fair man” (2001: 89) and although little granny says he is not “... white ... he looked it, and there were only white farmers by law” (2001: 129), and he has a farm in the Paarl valley. Also the birthday party she is to attend with Oupa Solly’s grandson, Joachim, at the neighbouring farm, is suddenly and inexplicably ‘cancelled’ and the reader realises that her colour is the problem – especially after Ateeka had commented earlier, “... Helga said that thing about colour. I mean, how will they receive her?” (2001: 127). The neighbours are white Afrikaners, the Mosterts, while it is quite obvious that Khadidja is Coloured. The hair issue rears its head again and Ateeka has what Khadidja feels are her “ugly curls chopped off ... so short that it looked straight ...” (2001: 128) so that she will not look so Coloured in Solly’s ‘white’ household.

The adult Khadidja still faces issues of colour when she walks down the street with a white man. Even though “Section 16 of the Immorality Act [which] saw late-night raids on unsuspecting couples by the police [had been abolished], . . . there was still apartheid, and heads still turned to see a white man and a coloured woman together” (2001: 112). It is ironic, however, that, other than her marriage to Rudy, Khadidja is always involved in relationships with white men: Saville, Storm and Ulf. Jacobs’s ambivalent treatment of race and religion

surfaces in this area again as she rejects the treatment of women as indicated in the Islamic faith, and forms relationships with whites who are not Muslims. Yet she allows Khadidja to accept, unconditionally, the Muslim faith in her quest for identity.

It is also interesting to note that discrimination is not a white/black phenomenon only. Alison is also a victim of discrimination by her Muslim in-laws. One aspect of this was her religion: she was required to convert to Islam. "But it was more than religion. Alison wasn't fair enough, her hair was nappy, her nose was too broad ... Farouk called her a hotnot" (2001: 20). Finally, there is Khadidja's son by Storm, Luq. He is fair with hair of "sleek copper strands" (2001: 297) – like those of Storm, who she had earlier described as, "White, young, reddish-brown tan, long hair glinting like copper" (2001: 98).

The issue of colour and identity is, by Jacobs's own admission, the major theme of *Sachs Street*. One accepts that the novel is largely autobiographical and that Khadidja is Jacobs's persona for they faced the same identity crisis which could only be resolved by recuperating a personal and social history, which included submitting to Islam. Furthermore, Jacobs says of her personal identity crisis:

... Canada had restored me – given me back my self-esteem, and made me well enough to return to my place of birth. I'd ditched the insecurity, lost the bitterness. But not without cost. The loneliness of a confused childhood. Displacement in a country filled with immigrants.

Further displacement upon my return to South Africa. An eventual recovery of identity. Culture and identity is inextricably linked with religion. You cannot look at the culture of a people without understanding its beliefs ...

A writer always brings his or her own experiences to a tale. As someone who has suffered a major identity crisis, my work will probably always reflect the pain and longing of a South African childhood and upbringing ([www.numbmagazine.com/identity 3](http://www.numbmagazine.com/identity3)).

Khadidja's parallel stories of her childhood/adulthood are an attempt, with the help of Anna Birnbaum, the psychologist, to come to terms with her past. The narrative of the young Khadidja is what a more mature Khadidja is telling Anna about her various childhood experiences, which are now vivid memories. Like Jacobs, Khadidja is insecure as a result of the same problems: a father who abandoned them, having white blood, having both Muslim and Christian religions in the family, being a victim of apartheid – all leading to the same feelings of displacement that Jacobs experienced. However, it is only towards the end of the novel that one realizes that Khadidja's almost disjointed childhood episodes are what is being related in a psychologist's room and this realisation comes as something of a surprise, for until then, the only indication has been a narrative within a narrative and the contrast between first person and third person narrative. Nowhere is there any suggestion that she is relating her story to Anna Birnbaum.

Anna tells Khadidja that she is "experiencing the same feelings now as when you were a child ... when your father's car left" (2001: 266). This after Storm has broken off their relationship. "The relationship with Storm is an attempt to correct the past ... [until now] he always comes back. There's safety in that. Unfortunately, it's all an illusion" (2001: 266), Anna Birnbaum tells Khadidja. The relationship with Storm, which is largely sexual, is an attempt "to fix the past". Also, as neither one is prepared to sacrifice his/her faith for the other, she has to put the relationship behind her so she can face the future confidently and with a clear identity. In an attempt to cleanse herself of her relationship with Storm, Khadidja picks up a stranger, a foreigner, in the marketplace and sleeps with him. Weeping later, she tells Alison: "I picked up a stranger in Greenmarket Square. He told me to come to his hotel room. I drank champagne. I let him fuck me" (2001: 275). Both alcohol and prostitution are forbidden by the Muslim religion and it is almost as if, in an attempt to throw off her previous life, Khadidja needs to commit these sins so she can learn to forgive herself and expiate her childhood guilt stemming from feelings of hate for a father, who had abandoned them when she was a child. It is only at the end when she visits her father, Hassiem, and invites him to Luq's first birthday party that this process of forgiveness is complete.

It seems that it is not only as a result of being the product of mixed blood, having different religions in the family or being a victim of apartheid that can lead to displacement. Jacobs goes to a great deal of trouble to show us this in the person of Storm. He is confused about his identity and has “no impulse control” (2001: 273) according to Anna Birnbaum. Displacement often results in alcoholism and this is exactly what it does to Storm. Stretch, a colleague of Storm’s at the fire station, who is an alcoholic, tells Khadidja, “Storm’s also an alcoholic ... He goes on a three-or-four-day binge ...” (2001: 201). Veronica (Storm’s mother) admits “... he’s got a drinking problem ... He’s a secret drinker” (2001: 229). His religion becomes so obsessive that it ruins his relationship with Khadidja, as he has an overwhelming urge to convert her to the religion that has given him an identity.

An interesting aspect of the young Khadidja’s character is her inability to deal with death. She has an inordinate fear of death, based largely on her religious dilemma. She cannot understand why a benevolent God would take nine-year-old Sybil Cloete, a child so young and innocent. In addition, she poses the question: “What if the Moslems were wrong, and there really was a Jesus waiting at the other end?” (2001: 151). This fear of death manifests itself in physical symptoms: “I was shivering, and couldn’t explain the tightness in my chest” (2001: 151) after Sybil’s death. When Sies Moena Gamielien loses a baby girl, Khadidja is so fearful of the stories “about the Angel of Death” and so “angry with God” (2001: 221) that she observes the happenings at the Gamielien’s from behind the curtain of the front window. Two months later when little granny dies, she flees to Alison’s house and refuses to leave, “It took my mind off angels and graves and rotting bodies” (2001: 225). It seems, however, that later when Khadidja has come to terms with her identity this fear has evaporated. She deals with the death of Aunty Mavis (Alison’s mother) almost dispassionately: “Aunty Mavis was brain dead ... she watched the body being wheeled down the corridor to the lift” (2001: 285).

Jacobs’s literary ability and dedication to writing manifests itself in Khadidja. From a young age Khadidja loves books and reading. When little granny asks if she likes reading, the eight-year-old Khadidja replies: “Yes, Granny. I have six books in my room” (2001: 13). When she discovers that little granny cannot read, she is more than happy to read to her and her “heart bound[s]” (2001: 16)

when little granny chooses something from Grimm's Fairy Tales, her favourite. For her tenth birthday she receives a bookcase with two books from her mother and little granny: *My Cousin Rachel*, by Daphne du Maurier, and *Emma*, by Jane Austen. She says, "I opened the first book and read ... The opening thrilled me" (2001: 179). Later, Khadidja reads to Storm from Mark Twain and her literary interest is evident again when she visits Florence and admits that the highlight of her holiday was the visit to Dostoesky's house, "a modest building with a gold letterplate" (2001: 254). She is thrilled to hear from Ulf, the Norwegian tour guide, that Dante, Machiavelli, D. H. Lawrence, Shelley and Lord Byron have also had one or other connection to Florence. It is obvious that Khadidja (like Jacobs) is very well read. Her literary interest, of course, leads to her career as editor of a women's magazine and the publishing of her book, *First Wife*. Jacobs writes:

As Muslims, we don't encourage our children in the arts. It is not considered to be real work. As a very young child, it was a loving grandfather who always bought me books for Christmas and birthdays. This grandfather let us have the experience of other people's celebrations, and at Christmas and Easter there were always presents and chocolates and bunny hunts. Perhaps I had always been destined to be a writer – I have rejection slips from age 12 to prove my love for the written word – but it was probably all those Grimm's Fairy Tales and School Friends and Girls' Crystals I received as a child that set the ball rolling. (www.numbmagazine.com/identity: 2)

Sachs Street is a real place that existed in the section of Cape Town known as Bo-Kaap in the 1950s. The novel starts in 1955, when the people of the area spoke mostly Afrikaans. It was also known as the Malay Quarter and was largely Muslim: "... Muslims have occupied the area since the slave days. People don't move out. Houses are passed down from family to family" (2001: 174). The street was "named after a Jewish man, Mr Sachs, who'd lived there long ago" (2001: 27).

The fact that Jacobs chose the street name as the title for her novel suggests that the area was once multicultural, as Sachs Street existed prior to the apartheid era. In her 'Acknowledgements' in the front of the novel, Jacobs

thanks “Fawzia Taliep, for her wonderful stories of life in Sachs Street in the 1950’s”. Also a Jewish man, Mr Sachs had a house there, and “there was this African man ...” (2001: 28), the young Khadidja informs the reader. Apart from the fact that Sachs Street provides an essential backdrop to the social life and culture of the young Khadidja, it also provides a place of safety for both the young and adult Khadidja. Her mother is always there for her when she needs support during her years of confusion. When Storm finally rejects her and she is physically ill, she feels free to ‘go home’ to her mother and Sachs Street at midnight: “The house on Sachs Street was in darkness when she arrived. After a second ring, her mother opened the door” (2001: 272).

The novel concludes on a high note with Khadidja choosing the unassuming Ulf as her partner. He is a good father to Storm’s son and supports her in her religion without imposing his opinions on her. She is not married to him and is content to be who she is now with her new-found identity. She ponders, “I stay with Ulf because he makes me laugh, and keeps me interested with his knowledge of things, his wit ...” (2001: 299).

To conclude, this is what Jacobs says of her heroine:

... Khadidja has indiscretions and sins, and tries to redeem herself. It is the struggle for redemption that’s important; that you can sin, and try to change your life. That is the point of the novel. That in the end she triumphs (email: 23/01/04 over her displacement).

She has found an identity balancing her religion, Islam, with what she perceives is independence within that restrictive environment.

The style Jacobs has used in this novel, is interesting and successful. The novel shifts easily from first person narrative, when the eight-year-old Khadidja is relating the story of her childhood, to third person narration, when the story then takes a leap of more than 30 years into the life of a successful, if confused, Khadidja, as editor of a women’s magazine. Interspersed, at the end of the young Khadidja’s story, there are some diary entries which reveal the emotions of the child’s experiences. This technique includes the reader in the narrative while reflecting the Jacobs’s attitude to her material. In this way, Jacobs is able

to explore various possibilities of her religious and social themes while conveying experiences somewhat objectively largely through her protagonist and, to a lesser degree, through the various other characters.

Jacob's use of the local dialect is accomplished and it is obvious that she is familiar with it as it flows without artificiality. The following example reveals this:

We played many games on this hill: aan-aan, kennetjie, rounders, hide 'n seek. Sometimes we took an old blanket, a bottle of water, jam sandwiches, and sat high up on the hill, searching for vrietangs in the grass, picking bessies off the trees. When the wind blew, we held on to each other. When it rained, the water rushed down the hill in torrents and turned Sachs Street into mud. When we heard the bilal at the mosques calling us to prayer, we ran like the devil to get home. Even our Christian friends would shout, 'Daar's die bilal. Hardloop!' There's the muezzin. Run! Everyone knew that Moslem children had to be off the street at sunset (2001: 28).

For those familiar with Afrikaans, the above quotation poses no problem. However, although Jacobs uses the colloquial Afrikaans easily, those who do not recognise these words will be at a loss at times. Unfortunately, there is no glossary, probably because it would have added a tinge of artificiality to the text. Nonetheless, for international readers this is, sadly, a necessity, even though it would have detracted from the ease with which these words add such colour and character to the novel. In order to accommodate non-Afrikaans-speaking readers Jacobs has felt the necessity to translate the longer sentences. As to be expected, this repetition detracts from the style and makes it clumsy. Fortunately, this is not often necessary, and is, therefore, not too distracting.

There are certain similarities between the two Jacobs novels analysed here. The greatest similarities, as mentioned at the outset of this discussion, are Jacobs's focus on the Coloured people and their mixed blood heritage. In *The Slave Book* their origins are explained, while in *Sachs Street* the characters live with their heritage on a daily basis. This is a deliberate novelistic strategy which enables Jacobs to focus on, and reconstruct the past. She then focuses on the present in order to allow her protagonist to find an identity. The Muslim religion

is dealt with in both novels but discussion peaks in *Sachs Street*. In both novels, when a character has to choose between Christianity and Islam, the latter is always the religion of choice because Jacobs has herself completely submitted to Islam.

The Coloured people of the Cape with their unique culture stimulate a desire and curiosity in people who have a “skewed perspective of Islam” (as quoted earlier). Rayda Jacobs, as a Coloured woman instinctively senses this and attempts to satisfy our curiosity with her detailed narrative.

However, it is not only Coloured authors who are introducing us to the inimitable world of the Coloured people. Pamela Jooste, a white woman, also enters into their world and does so successfully, sensitively and with humour.

CHAPTER 6

DANCE WITH A POOR MAN'S DAUGHTER – PAMELA JOOSTE

Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter has an immediate appeal; it offers a rich insight into the lives of the Coloured people of the Cape.⁶ This impression is deepened on closer analysis of the novel. Unlike Karodia and Jacobs, Jooste, successfully and unflinchingly, places herself in the shoes of a child of another culture and racial group. By comparison, Karodia and Jacobs are too personally involved in their novels. In addition, Jooste has a superb, and often subtle, sense of humour.

Jooste remains truthful to her subject matter throughout. She provides a less jaundiced, less partial view of South Africa and opens up imaginative possibilities for post-apartheid South African writers. This, in turn, may lead to more conceptual space to portray a hopeful future.

Some will argue that she does not carry any of the emotional baggage of an apartheid South Africa, that she was 'privileged'. In this chapter I will attempt to rebut these arguments because an individual's subjective position should not disqualify him or her from understanding – and imaginatively depicting – the predicaments of others. It is this innate talent to do just this that makes Jooste's novel so successful. Jooste is aware of criticism of this sort being levelled at her and defends herself in her Author's Note:

I am aware that there may be some people who feel it is the height of impertinence for a white South African to write about the suffering of so-called Coloured people: but stories come to writers in many and various ways and are no respecters of person. If a writer feels strongly enough about a subject then that writer must go ahead and say what he has to say, however criticized he may be for it. (Jooste, 1998: 9)

There are some interesting similarities in material which appear in *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*, *Sachs Street* (Jacobs) and *Other Secrets* (Karodia).

The first similarity is that the main characters in both *Sachs Street* and *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter* are young Coloured girls both with the surname 'Daniels' and both tales are narrated through their eyes. As both authors are female, it is easier to write in the personas of young girls and as both authors are dealing with the Coloured community, first person narrative through the innocent and unbiased eyes of a child within that community, is the most suitable vehicle for their observations. In this way the authors can reflect their attitude to their subject matter while influencing the reader's attitude. The name 'Daniels' seems to be one of the commonest amongst the Coloured community of the Cape and, therefore, the choice of this name is probably purely coincidental.

Thus it is that, where in *Sachs Street* Khadidja knows her father but suffers greatly because he abandoned the family, in *Dance* Lily remains unaware of who her father is – although the reader is aware that James is her father – through Jooste's subtle innuendoes. She has an excellent relationship with James, who is essentially a father figure to her. In *Other Secrets*, Soraya is also unaware of who her father is until she is in her twenties, although she too had a father figure in the person of her grandfather. However, there is no evidence that these two authors influenced each other in presenting such similar family situations. It merely seems that both authors are showing the readers what strong women there are within these families – in an era where women were not only restricted by colour discrimination, but also by a sexist society.

In *Dance* and *Sachs Street*, both Lily and Khadidja grow up in all-women families and the women in both families are portrayed as strong in the face of hardship. Their influence on the girls is powerful, not in an authoritarian manner, but through admirable example, devotion and love. Jooste says:

As this is a book mainly about women I ask no pardon for recording here my high regard for the endurance of the so-called Coloured women of the Cape. Many of them suffered the displacement chronicled in this story and strove to keep their families together in the face of almost impossible odds. Some succeeded and some did not but all showed the most remarkable fortitude and courage. (1998: 11)

The young child abandoned by a mother is evident in the characters of Lily and Soraya. Their mothers, who are both headstrong women fleeing lives which restrict them, leave behind young daughters in the care of their grandmothers who become their surrogate mothers. Both grandmothers are strong, loving women. However, in both cases when their mothers return to 'take up where they left off', they find that their relationships with their daughters are gone forever. The girls do not accept their mothers as mother figures and in both cases this rift is *never* healed. It can be assumed, firstly, that the girls' subconscious knowledge of having been abandoned is too deep, and secondly, that both mothers, having been displaced in an untenable apartheid society, never develop maternal feelings for their daughters. Again, both authors are deliberately pointing out, to their readers, that female displacement within a discriminatory society, had far-reaching effects which stretched beyond the immediate negative effects of racial and sexual discrimination.

The greatest similarity occurs in *Other Secrets* and *Dance*, where the main thrust of the story lines deals with The Group Areas Act "which designated certain areas for exclusive use by nominated racial ... most hated ... most cruel" (Jooste, 1998: 10). This Act led to the displacement of people and loss of their identity. It destroyed lives and heritage relentlessly. Karodia and Jooste, in their novels, do not withhold the sadness that accompanies this 'cruel' action by the Nationalist government. Jooste, in particular, shows the heartbreak this could, and did, precipitate, in the desolate figure of Lily on the boat – a small figure alone on the deck of a huge ship, a metaphor for the challenge that will lie ahead for the child.

Both the Daniels girls enjoy writing, Khadidja to a greater degree than Lily. The young Khadidja writes 'stories' from a very young age while Lily writes letters to her pen-pal Carole-Amelia. While Khadidja grows up to be an editor of a women's magazine, we learn that letters remain the only link Lily has with her former life in the Cape when she is in exile in England. So 'writing' becomes an intrinsic part of both characters' lives.

Eleven-year-old Lily Daniels starts her narrative with a reference to her correspondence with her white pen pal Carole-Amelia. She confides to Carole-Amelia that no whites live in the Valley, that she lives in an all-women

household, that the “men in our family are not worth much” (1998: 16) and that her dead Uncle Maxie was a gangster. Jooste’s epistolary dimension with regard to her protagonist being a diarist, is the same as that of Jacobs. Both authors signal authorial intention when dealing with their subject matter which influences their reader’s attitude and which also reflects their own attitudes.

In these opening lines Jooste presents her reader with some of the important themes in her novel, namely: that the Valley consists of a Coloured community, the all-women household, the problematic men in their lives and gangsterism.

We are introduced to some of the characters in these early pages of the novel. There is Lily’s uncle, Gus-seep, who drinks too much, gambles, is an inveterate liar but tries to make a living by selling vegetables from a cart which his horse, Flora Dora, pulls. Her aunt, Stella, has a son, Royston, who has become a gangster. Another uncle, Errol, lives in England after having ‘jumped ship’ when it docked in England. Then there is Lily’s mother, Gloria, who “upped and offed” (1998: 24) to Johannesburg when Lily was two years old.

The issue of colour rears its head here and Jooste has Lily mentioning that the people in Johannesburg are “colour-blind” (1998: 26); so many Coloureds “leave their families ... to try and pass for white” (1998: 26). It seems that if one is light-skinned enough, then rich Johannesburg men marry these women and they can “walk from one world straight into another” (1998: 26). However, Gloria does not ‘try for white’ but is involved with rich gangsters, “the ones who run the show up there” (1998: 27), is making plenty of money and sends a postal order to the family monthly.

James Scheepers, it seems, has a huge influence on Lily’s life and she often sits on his lap when he brings her sweets. It is early in the novel that we see that James’s interest in Lily is more than merely that of a family friend. The identity of Lily’s father is kept from her to the end, but the reader knows, through allusion, that it is James.

In spite of James being “the most respectable person [Lily] knows” (1998: 44), the Coloured men in *Dance* are not portrayed in a favourable light. They are prone to alcoholism, gangsterism and violence. This is not a racial slur on

Jooste's part but rather an accurate social portrait of a society not given recognition, during apartheid South Africa, which resulted in loss of identity and societal displacement.

Early on we are told that Gus-Seep is sometimes "drunk asleep on the floor" (1998: 17). Philander runs a place called 'The Buildings' where there is music, dancing, drinking and prostitution. However, Lily tells the reader, "I don't care what people say about the Coons, saying it's just a lot of drunk Coloureds looking for an excuse for a good time, just like they always do" (1998: 196). It is clear by now that Jooste allows Lily to present authorial viewpoint and, moreover, because Lily is so unbiased, the reader has learnt to trust her perceptions implicitly. Because Jooste is so close to her protagonist, she is able to defend, through the eyes of Lily, what she feels are perhaps jaundiced and judgmental views of people (here the Coloureds) or situations.

Through Lily's first person narrative, Jooste continues to defend the Coons and especially the Coon Carnival at New Year which is an intrinsic part of the Coloured community's tradition. Lily says, "No-one is too grand to enjoy the Coons" (1998: 193). The people love the new uniforms, the saxophones, the banjos and the Carmen Mirandas (the gay Queens). Lily says that they go to the "... same spot every year. The people who stand with us ... expect to see us there, same as usual ..." (1998: 192). She mourns the fact that when the Coloured Community is moved to the Flats, this familiarity will be gone and there will be no march down Roeland Street.⁷

Displacement occurred as a result of discrimination, forced removals, having families broken up, lack of heritage and consequently of identity. This led to the abovementioned alcoholism and gangsterism. In an attempt to obtain an identity and a sense of belonging, especially after the forced removals to the Cape Flats, gangs mushroomed. Jooste uses Royston to enlighten her readers about gangsterism amongst the Cape Coloureds. Sadly, he is following in the footsteps of his father, who "was stabbed to death in Salt River" (1998: 66). Royston runs away from home to join a gang, where he obtains a new identity and a new name – Domingo. He shows off his "gang mark ... a blue dagger with a red snake around it on the side of his hand" (1998: 67) to Lily. Another sign of identity with the gang is the replacing of teeth with gold teeth: "All his gang do,

so you know who they are ...” (1998: 70). Unfortunately, the gangs live a life of crime and are in constant danger of being killed by rival gangs. This is precisely what happens to Royston on the day of the ‘Coon Carnival’, when he is “stabbed to death in his Coon clothes” (1998: 209).

Poverty is also a reason why some feel security in belonging to gangs. Jooste presents us with the only female gang leader in the novel, Portia Elias. This status allows her to feel a righteous sense of hate for those who she feels look down on the people of the poverty-ridden Kitchener Terrace. Lily informs the reader that her family is “... not as poor as some of the people in the valley ... Poor people like Mrs Elias live in a row of houses called Kitchener Terrace ...” (1998: 73). When she nearly drowns Lily in a trough of water, she informs her: “I’m going to teach you a lesson for always holding yourself so high and mighty” (1998: 76). Portia also changes her name and becomes Jack Hoxie. Here Jooste is drawing on history to a degree, for she says: “There was indeed a girl gangster called Jack Hoxie [who took her name from] a film star of the silent era ...” (email: 20/01/04). Portia, alias Jack Hoxie, leads a gang known as The American Mongrels of Lavender Hill. The gang also has an identifying sign – a spider tattoo. “When you become a gangster you are a new person and you can be anyone you like ...” (1998: 226). It is interesting to see that Jooste allows Portia to redeem herself at the end of the novel. In a letter Lily receives from James when she is in England, he tells her that “... God got hold of her and changed her ... Portia works in Athlone at a centre for saving gangster girls ...” (1998: 345). Jooste says that she allows Portia, who suffers humiliation and inadequacy because of her poverty, to redeem herself largely because:

... she is definitely a Rebel with a Very Good Cause. But may she not be allowed to outgrow it and move toward some peace for herself? Perhaps life on the flats brought someone into her life who might have helped her redeem herself ... I have known alcoholics AA members who when they find sobriety choose to work with alcoholics because they understand ... it would be nice to think it was that way with Portia. The alternative would have been bleak ... note, she’s a bully, she’s angry and very aggressive but there is not hint of any system abuse or weapons being used ... I think it is innately a rebellion and a ‘phase’. Perhaps the solidarity of the march might even have helped her

realise that she was part of a community who cared and that she could use her energies and powers in a more positive way. (email: 22/05/04)

The male gangsters are not allowed to redeem themselves at all and this allows Jooste to continue her criticism of them mercilessly. One of the main areas of criticism is their abuse of women. Early on Royston makes it clear that, “while there’s a woman around he won’t do anything for himself ...” (1998: 68). Philander, who is nothing more than a ‘decent’ pimp actually imports his nieces from the Uppington area to work at The Buildings. However, if they do not obey him, he is quite capable of shouting and hitting them or even pushing them out into the street (1998: 180). Jooste gives us a perspicuous example in her description of the beating Philander gives Matilda, because he does not approve of her giving food to the poor. The reader is told by Lily that “poor Matilda is black and blue” (1998:181) and again that “poor Matilda is crouching on the floor with her hands over her head ... [Philander is] standing over her with ... a broken bottle in his hand and he’s screaming that he’s going to carve Matilda up ...” (1998: 188). To make matters worse, this kind of behaviour seems to be accepted amongst the men. Gus-Seep says, “... she brought it on herself because women are like children ... and now Matilda has had to learn the hard way who’s boss ...” (1998: 181). Women are regarded as inferior, not equals, something of which Jooste obviously disapproves.

Jooste does not limit her abuse of women to the Coloured or gangster community. There is the incident where Issy, a white, is demonstrating with the Black Sash women. Her husband does not approve of his wife protesting “... in a black sash saying she wants kaffirs for neighbours ...” (1998: 280). We see him, in Lily’s words, “screaming and shouting ... and kicking her just wherever he could ...” (1998: 279) egged on by “his friends shouting that it was his job as a husband to put his mad bitch of a wife in her place” (1998: 281). The outcome of this episode is that Issy’s husband takes her away and makes her pregnant to keep her “in her place” (1998: 303). Jooste voices her disapproval of this behaviour through Lily. Lily tells the reader that Gloria says that if the educated, high-society whites can “attack a woman the way Issy’s husband did with all those other men looking on an half of them police in uniform who supposed to

keep the peace and no-one doing anything" (1998: 281), they have no right to be judgmental of the people of the Valley.

It is interesting that Jooste, in an attempt to remain non-judgemental, portrays the 'Muslim husbands' as always kind and ready to help but also controlling. The "Muslim women send their children to tell us my mother's standing on the steps of Roeland Street ..." (1998: 171) and later the Muslim husbands will "be happy to take [Lily's grandmother]" (1998: 172) to Roeland Street. When Mrs Elias is moved from the Valley to the Flats, Gloria organises a 'walk' where all of Mrs Elias's smaller possessions will be taken on foot by the Valley people to her new home on the Flats, as a form of protest against forced removals. Before the walk for Mrs Elias, we see that "the Muslim husband won't let their wives walk ... their children come with messages to say their mummies are with us in spirit ..." (1998: 245). From the above, it is clear that the wives are subservient to their husbands and that they do not readily associate with the Coloureds but instead use their children as go-betweens.

Various areas of discrimination are highlighted in the novel. Naturally, they are largely linked to the apartheid system.

One victim of discrimination is Mr Asher, a Jewish man who owns the local bakery. He has suffered at the hands of Hitler's regime, and now he is again a victim of discrimination under the apartheid system. If all the Valley residents are moved to the Flats, he will have no customers, so he decides to sell up and move to a flat in Sea Point. He tells Lily, "... as far as Jews are concerned this is not a new kind of story. I've seen it before in my life and when I see it happening again it breaks my heart" (1998: 83). By focusing on the story of Mr Asher, Jooste is attempting to demonstrate how wide the range of social forces opposing apartheid was and how this system affected all groups within its society. Lily also knows that their mutual love for opera could make them good friends but realizes that there are "things which prevent us being friends" (1998: 61). It is clear that people of different races were not free to mingle in the restrictive apartheid society.

Division into racial groups focuses attention on colour, and the first victim of racial abuse is old Andries, the black man who cares for the local cemetery.

Portia says, “Kaffirs are filthy rubbish ...” (1998: 78) and talks to Lily about her “kaffir friend” (1998: 79). Apartheid is also evident on the buses and Lily comments “even though it’s mixed and not the ‘Whites Only’ bus, we can’t pick and choose where we sit any more. We have to sit in the back with the native girls because that’s the law now ...” (1998: 81). One of the most sadistic elements of apartheid was the law which stated that one had to go to hospitals designated specially for particular racial groups. When Gloria is beaten up she is refused admission to a ‘White’ hospital – “... we can’t treat this person here ...”, a nurse tells Katy van Breda of the Black Sash when she is attempting to have Gloria treated urgently (1998: 285).

The propaganda machine during the apartheid era was particularly powerful and if one protested one’s rights one could be labelled ‘communist’ and then be detained. Thus James is called a “known communist” (1998: 155) by the police and unlawfully detained. Lily muses, “... nowadays it makes no difference who you are, anyone can get arrested. Sometimes you don’t know what for and they don’t have to tell you” (1998: 165).

Shebeens also have their origins in the apartheid era. Lily informs the reader, “We all know about shebeens. Natives are not allowed to drink so that is where they have to go when they want to have a few” (1998: 246). This is the ‘business’ Gloria was a part of when she lived in Johannesburg. They were illegal or, as Lily’s grandmother says, “outside the law” (1998: 246) but, nonetheless, a ‘business’ where shebeen queens made a great deal of money. The reader learns that Gloria has probably made her money by running a shebeen in Johannesburg. Early on Lily is aware that people refer to her mother as a ‘shebeen mama’ (1998: 49) and later Lily is present when Philander tells Gloria that, “He knows she and her friends sell under-the-counter liquor to the Natives and she’s the one with the brains and the golden touch who looks after all the money” (1998: 190).

Lily, too, is an inadvertent victim of the apartheid system. If one was labelled a ‘troublemaker’ (someone who showed resistance to the unfair apartheid laws, then one could not obtain a passport. Family members were also affected. Lily has to leave South Africa on an ‘exit permit’, meaning she can never return. Gloria tells Lily, “It’s one of the ways they have of punishing people for being

what they call troublemakers” (1998: 317). James adds, “We’re not free to come and go as we please” (1998: 317).

The effects of the Group Areas Act of 1950 had far-reaching effects on the lives of the peoples of South Africa, more especially those of colour. Jooste, like Karodia, deals with the impact of this very harsh Act on the lives of her characters. The reader is told early on that James has “had enough of keeping quiet about what’s happening to us and our Valley” (1998: 45). He feels he has to do something if the Government “is going to push us out onto the streets ...” (1998: 45). Old Andries who looks after the graveyard is dead” (1998: 99), reports Lily. Old Andries is the first victim of the forced removals. He has a shack in the graveyard and has tended it for many years; it is his home, he has no other. When two policemen come to escort him “back to the native location where he belongs” (1998: 102), says one of the policeman, Old Andries opts for suicide and throws himself in front of a train.

Mrs Elias’s house is one of the first to be bulldozed. The bulldozers wait in readiness for the command to demolish homes. Lily observes that the “Government mean business. We expect the bulldozers any day now and there’s nothing we can do about it” (1998: 223). Jack Hoxie attempts to protect her mother – to no avail. As Lily says, “the inspectors are “do[ing] their job” (1998: 228) and now that the Valley has been “declared a black spot” (1998: 229) all the residents will be given accommodation on the Flats. The women stand by her, however, and led by Gloria embark on a ‘walk’ from the Valley to the Flats. Jooste allows Lily to describe the Flats for the reader – using mostly bleak and sombre words which create depressing images of a drab countryside:

Here there is sand everywhere and there are no trees. There are no proper houses either, just blocks of flats, three and four floors high with washing hanging out of the windows and children and chickens together in dust gardens behind broken fences. There are plastic packets blowing in the wind ... and they stick to the fences and the dust is everywhere. But I close my eyes and the wind blows me the voices of the Valley and they are the voices I know ... (1998: 256)

Gus-Seep is the greatest victim of displacement and consequent loss of identity. The Daniels's house remained standing and now belongs to a white family who constantly complain about an "an undesirable hanging around their neighbourhood" (1998: 347). He has become a vagrant and the police "dump him miles away in the middle of the bush out in the *bundu* far beyond the Flats..." (1998: 348), James says in his letter to Lily in London. Lily also learns from James that he always finds his way back to the Valley and that the house in the Valley was 'home' where his mother was but now, "He ha[s] lost his way in life" (1998: 349), James adds in his letter. James's correspondence with Lily is a further form of epistolary writing. Jooste uses it here to inform Lily, and her reader, of life in the Cape and to provide a conclusion to her narrative.

According to Jooste (email: 21/01/04), "There was a Gus-Seep, Guiseppe. He was my nanny's son. He had a horse and cart ... She doted on him and his name, as stated, was a mis-pronunciation. He was always in trouble." Jooste is using her own childhood experiences of life in the docklands and of the people she knew in a direct way as part of her narrative. This makes her narrative more authentic as it reflects her authorial connection as she draws on childhood experiences for her novel.

Lily's mother, Gloria, re-enters the Daniels's lives a third of the way into the novel. There have been many references to her, but nothing prepares the reader for the real person. Gloria comes home to fight the forced removals. She is frustrated because she feels nobody in the family is doing anything to stop them. "I'm not going to stand by and see your house taken away from you"(1998: 121), she tells her mother. Jooste says the ideal word to describe Gloria probably is "reactionary" in the sense that she is fighting the "Powerlessness of being a woman in a man's world; Powerlessness of being other-than-white in a white dominated society; Powerless in the face of her family's passivity" (email: 16/01/04). These sentiments clearly reflect the reason for Gloria's passion in fighting a discriminatory society, although, sadly, her passionate nature denies her her maternal instincts and she and Lily never become close.

From the beginning Lily resents her. "She's never done anything for me" (1998: 113), Lily says to her grandmother. Later, she again tells her grandmother, "...

my mother looks at me the way a person who doesn't know someone looks at them ... I don't want her ...” (1998: 115). Lily notices that her mother is a “woman in a hurry” (198: 125) and she finds her an imposition on the quiet, simplicity of the life she knows. Gloria is always “made up to the nines” (1998:126) with her coiffure immaculate, according to Lily “not like a proper person ... you'd think she was the Queen of England ...” (1998: 126). Although Granny attempts to instil into Lily the idea that her “mother didn't abandon” (1998: 35) her, Lily knows that her mother “left all her belongings, including me, neat and tidy behind her” (1998: 25) and for the rest of their time together, she has real trouble looking her mother in the face. Even on the boat at the end Lily says:

I don't even look at her” (1998: 328). She feels that if her mother loves her “she will stop and look back ... My grandmother never left me anywhere without looking back at least twenty million times But my mother is not my grandmother. She doesn't stop. She doesn't hesitate ... She doesn't turn her head (1998: 331).

Thus the breach between mother and daughter is never healed. Earlier Lily comments that Gloria “doesn't know how to act like a mother at all” (1998: 139) and wonders “how big a sin it is to love [her] grandmother so much more that [she] loves[s her] mother ...” (1998: 140).

For Gloria, being a mother is not a priority in her life. She has other issues with which she has to contend and because she is fighting for her rights and is ‘different’ to her family, Lily sees her mother as ‘mad’. “Having a mad woman for a mother is not the easiest thing in the world” (1998: 249), she says when she is a part of the walk from the Valley to the Flats which Gloria organizes. Thus Gloria's maternal instincts are inhibited as they have never been developed. Jooste comments:

Perhaps the ‘freedoms’ Gloria was fighting for were on one hand far broader than just the political freedom – she wanted exactly what she gave James – the freedom simply to ‘be’, to have been able to reach her full potential and walk through the world with no labels at all. Maybe she thought ‘it's all too big’ and when she came back, she was

older and had realised 'If not me, then who?' Maybe that was her rite of passage ... maybe I should have written the book about her ... in fact, I almost did. Sometimes she was so strong she nearly pushed Lily off the page. (email: 15/01/04)

One would certainly agree with Jooste, and her comment came in reply to an observation that Gloria's coldness detracts from her admirable character. Jooste feels that Gloria is more 'passionate' than cold. She feels that Gloria is "in many ways a woman born at the wrong time ... a life unfulfilled ... because she had a sense of this, felt, in a part of herself, cheated and was driven by anger at the unfairness of it ..." (email: 16/01/04). Gloria is indeed passionate and – Jooste's word – a 'reactionary' because of her intelligence and denied opportunities, is an accurate description.⁸ However, love for, or the ability to love, her child is missing. She certainly loves James, but in a different way. She finds him a soulmate, someone she can encourage in her 'passion' for opportunity in a discriminatory society. Yet that maternal love, which makes mothers gentler as they grow older, is missing in Gloria. It is perhaps for this reason that Lily cannot look her mother in the face, even it is a subconscious action. Gloria is aware of this and says to Lily, "You can do something for me in future ... I want you to look at me and not keep turning your face away" (1998: 295).

Jooste's reaction to this observation about Gloria's lack of maternal gentleness:

Yes, I'm sure you're right. I like picking up the bit about Lily not being able to look her mother in the face. It's a good point and 'gentler'. Yes, that's a good word. Gloria is many things ... gentle is certainly not one of them. Had she grown older she would not have been at all like her mother or like Stella and again, yes, I am sure you're right. It is more than likely their having been loving parents that gave that other, another side of their personality full reign and in that way Gloria was stunted. That side of herself was never nurtured – by her own hand and will of course. (email: 16/01/04)

However, Jooste suggests that it is on Gloria's "fearlessness and her sense of fairness" that one must concentrate. This is, of course, where Gloria's strength of character lies and why the overall impression with which one is left is of

someone who will fight, while she is able, what she judges to be unfair in her society. This is the reason Gloria returns to the Valley – she feels her family needs her and she needs to defend their ‘rights’ in the face of forced removals as a result of the Group Areas Act. She senses that they will quietly accept the inevitable and the consequent heartbreak, and that she is the only one in the family who has what it takes to fight.

So it is that at their first meal together that Gloria states adamantly, “The Government means business with you people. Don’t you understand that? Don’t you know what Group Areas is all about? It’s about giving you tuppence ha’penny for this house and pushing you out onto the Cape Flats” (1998: 120). Lily feels that she treats them like “the biggest fools” (1998: 127) and this only adds to her resentment of her mother. From the time Gloria enters the novel she dominates a great deal of the ‘action’ even though the story is still told from Lily’s point of view.

Gloria’s sense of fairness is shown quite clearly in her defence of Lily when her letters to Carole-Amelia are read by the latter’s mother, Mrs Lombard, and then Mr Christie, the headmaster. She claims, rightly, that no one has the right to read Lily’s letters and that even a child should be treated with respect. “They’re your private property” (1998: 138). In addition, her fearlessness is reflected in her dealings with Philander when he is beating Matilda. He is a big man and a violent one, but this does not bother Gloria, who challenges Philander: “... I won’t stand for a man who raises his hands to a woman” (1998: 189). The outcome is that Philander puts down the bottle in shock. Lily is surprised to see her mother weeping bitterly at home later. She says to Granny, “Why do men have to treat women this way? They have no right, no right at all” (1998: 191). Is the implication here that she has been abused herself? One is never sure about this, but the tears in someone so outwardly ‘tough’ suggests some past hurt.

Gloria greatly admires Katy van Breda, a fellow member of the Black Sash, a society which Gloria joins in her attempt to have a voice against the unfairness of the apartheid laws. Ironically, she says “... there’s nothing in this world that Katy van Breda is afraid of” (1998: 267). Her fearlessness is once more demonstrated when Issy’s husband is kicking her. Lily says: “It was too much for my mother. She threw herself across Issy ...” (1998: 282). The result is that a

policeman hits Gloria, with a truncheon in her face, injuring her badly. This is, in effect, the end of Gloria's active participation in fighting the system. When Katy suggests that she sue the perpetrators she "shakes her head that she won't do it" (1998: 221). Sadly, this is also the end of her friendship (if one can call it 'friendship') with Katy.

Gloria is the one who organizes the walk from the Valley to the Flats when Mrs Elias is forcibly moved. She is also the one who demonstrates on the steps of Roeland Street when James is arrested. Lily once more decides that her mother "must have gone mad" (1998: 173) and what she sees seems to confirm her suspicions: "My mother is standing on the steps of the Roeland Street jail, right in the middle at the top, in her black coat with her handbag over her arm and a piece of board on a stick in her hand, 'Charge Or Release James Scheepers'" (1998: 173). Gloria is very determined and stands there until James is released.

Gloria's relationship with James is enigmatic. Lily informs the reader, "Gus-Seep says the thing between Gloria and James was funny" (1998: 159). Earlier Gus-Seep commented that Gloria was involved in "cradle-snatching" (1998: 55), so the reader assumes that James is younger than Gloria. From the moment he asks her to be his partner at the Methodist Mission Dance Gloria "own[s] him body and soul" (1998: 158). She organizes a loan for his studies, persuades Philander to give him a part-time job for pocket and book money. She then encourages him to go to London to study telling him, "When you finish university, it's over between us. You go your way and I go mine" (1998: 164). He protests but she is adamant. Later actions make the reader suspect that she is pregnant with Lily. Jooste says:

If you read the book carefully you will see that James is Lily's father. He and Gloria begin their romance just before he is due to go overseas to study. She doesn't tell him about the baby because his character would certainly have done the self-sacrificing thing and wanted to stay behind to be a support. Again, I don't think she wants to burden him in any way. She makes great sacrifices for him. (email: 16/01/04)

When Gloria returns it is not long before the relationship with James is rekindled, only this time James is married to a neurotic Evie, who refuses to associate with the Daniels family – the reader suspects the reason for this but Lily is kept innocent of the fact. In addition to Gloria and James's 'friendship', they support each other in their fight against the injustices of the apartheid system. It is Gloria who demonstrates outside of the Roeland Street prison (not Evie) and it is James who supports Gloria throughout her recuperation after the 'truncheon' episode. Lily notices "there are tears in his eyes ... his heart aches because mine does too ..." (1998: 288). Together James and Gloria make the decision to send Lily to England. They know that "It's going to take more than one person to put things right" (1998: 309) and James tells Lily that she is "the most precious thing in all the world ..." (1998: 309), so she is to be sent "to live with [her] uncle, Errol, in Southampton" (1998: 309).

Ironically, when Gloria returns to the Valley, *she* is the one to beg him to leave the Valley and go with her. He is the one to say:

Being together is dreams ... It's not real life. Real life isn't about running away. It's about staying put and making do and getting on with things. It's about learning to live with big compromises and small victories. (1998: 277)

For once, Gloria accepts that she has to 'dance' to James's tune. From the beginning of their relationship James has always 'danced' to Gloria's tune. This observation necessitates a discussion of the relevance of the title of the novel – *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*.

The 'poor man's daughter' is Gloria, and Jooste dedicates a chapter to this aspect. When Gloria joins the Black Sash, Granny tells her, "... the Sash isn't for a woman like you ... [it is] for high-society white women ... You're a coloured woman and a poor man's daughter ... you've got your place the same as everyone else ..." (1998: 261). Thus, symbolically, the implication is that being Coloured, and financially incapacitated, renders one voiceless in a white-dominated society. Gloria would have realized this and would have been, justifiably, frustrated at her helplessness in the face of this inequality. Sadly, Lily's grandmother and Stella stoically accept the situation as inevitable or

perhaps they are wise in the face of the unavoidable. It appears that Jooste feels that it will be easier for the older generation to accept the inevitable and to leave the protesting to the younger generation like Gloria and James.

From the moment James asks Gloria to the Methodist Mission dance Gloria takes over his life. Gloria is an excellent dancer but James can scarcely move on the dance-floor, so Gloria teaches him “giving instructions like a sergeant major and not standing for any mistakes ...” (1998: 54). Later, when she takes it upon herself to guide him in his studies, “he let Gloria crack the whip” (1998: 159). Early on Lily tells the reader “... we’re a dancing family” (1998: 31). At the Mission dance “no-one can hold a candle to James and Gloria” (1998: 203), and Lily notes, when she sees James and Gloria dance on New Year, “I’ve never seen two people dance like that before” (1998: 205).

There is the literal interpretation of the word ‘dance’, but the metaphorical meaning is probably more powerful. Gloria feels a huge burden to help her family in the face of forced removals, so she expects everyone around her to ‘dance to her tune’, meaning to do as she says. Lily tells us, “She’s taken it on herself to march back into our lives and never asked us if we mind. She thinks she can takes us over ...” (1998: 125). Also, in sacrificing herself for the sake of James’s education, Gloria is fulfilling her dreams and when she breaks off the relationship so he can study in England, he is ‘dancing to her tune’. However, it is eventually Gloria who ‘dances’ to James’s ‘tune’ when he decides to stay with Evie.

The final victim of Gloria’s ‘tune’, is, of course, Lily – who is sent to England. The word ‘dance’ appears often on the last pages of the novel. Lily notes that everyone on board the ship is “so excited you would think we were going to a dance” (1998: 326). When Gloria and Lily are alone on the ship, Lily notices that the “seagulls [were] dancing in the air above her” (1998: 330) and the realization that their relationship will never be a really close one is somehow easier to accept. Later, as Lily looks at her mother for the last time, she says, “You can see she’s a dancer ...” (1998: 331). Finally when Errol welcomes Lily, he “pretend[s] to dance” (1998: 337) and they both recall the Carnival when she gives him the picture of himself as Carmen Miranda.

As the narrator of the story, Lily has allowed her readers to enter into the lives of her family and society. She has done this without malice or bias. She merely tells the story as only a child in a happy family can, honestly and with humour. None of the sadness or cruelty of the Group Areas Act is lost, however. Her comment at the end when Gus-Seep's horse dies reflects the heartlessness of a regime which is capable of destroying lives, "The police haven't got much time for people with broken hearts ..." (1998: 314). However, Lily matures as the novel progresses until she is able to tell Errol it is silly to hold her hand. On afternoon, on their way home from the docks, Lily tells him:

There's no need for that type of thing now. I'm too old to have my hand held. I won't get lost. I'm old enough to walk alone and he gives me a funny look but I think he understands. (1998: 338)

One cannot complete an analysis of this novel without some comment on Lily's grandmother and Stella.

Lily's grandmother (we never hear about her grandfather) is a wise, sensible and loving lady who is the one with the strongest influence on Lily. She is also religious and her faith makes her calm and optimistic in the face of harsh reality. When Royston is stabbed and Lily asks why God did not look after him because he changed his name to Domingo, her grandmother asks the question: "Don't you know that God knows exactly who every single one of his children is? It makes no difference what they decide to call themselves ..." (1998: 221).

Lily's grandmother watches her when she goes to the shop to buy bread. She always puts a label into the pocket of her coat in case she is lost. Lily knows her grandmother will always be there for her. When she feels the label in her coat pocket, she knows her grandmother "has not forgotten" (1998: 251) her. Again, when Lily is alone on the ship she feels the label in her coat pocket and says:

I undo the pin and pull the paper out and it is my old label with my name on it and my address at my grandmother's house and I know my grandmother must have come into my room when I was sleeping and put it there just like she always does and I know something else too.

Although it is true that the world is a big place I know where I belong in it and so do the people who love me (1998: 334).

The theme of identity is one of importance which Jooste, like Jacobs, feels is essential to victims of the apartheid era. Lily will suffer displacement in a foreign country and will long for a sense of identity all the time she is away from the Cape where she 'belongs'. It may even be that the label in her pocket is an attempt by her granny to give her an identity to which she can cling while she is away.

Lily never sees her grandmother again after she leaves for England. Her grandmother and Stella move to Salt River, where the granny dies two years later, we are meant to infer, of a broken heart. Lily's exit permit does not allow her to return to South Africa and she is, therefore, unable to return for her grandmother's funeral.

Stella, in her quiet way, is an admirable character. Crippled by polio as a child, she supports her mother emotionally and, together, they bring up Lily after Gloria leaves. One never reads that she complains about the life of adversity that has been thrust upon her. She accepts her fate without bitterness and it is only after her mother dies that she marries Frank Adams.

The novel ends on a poignant note with Lily and Errol sitting at the docks watching the ships "come and go" (1998: 338) to see if they will, someday, recognize someone from Cape Town.

Jooste's style in the novel is greatly enhanced by her charming use of dialect. Jooste is able to use the dialect with such ease that it is difficult to believe that she is not herself a Coloured. In addition, she uses an eleven-year-old child to narrate and the combination of a child's simple vocabulary and the use of the Cape Coloured dialect is rich and evocative.

Jooste's ability as a white person to write in the persona of someone of a different hue and culture is impressive. She is more than qualified to write about the Coloured community: she grew up in the dockland area of Cape Town and

was constantly exposed to their accent, so she is able to use their expressions, colloquialisms and slang effortlessly. Jooste writes in her Author's Note:

I did not grow up in 'Whites Only' suburbia. I grew up in the docklands where my parents managed a small hotel. This is where we lived and this is where I learned some things about street life an dock life and bars and gangsters and Union Castle liners that come and go ..."
(1998: 11).

Some interesting examples are: "kissing his picture flat" (1998: 30); "seen him dead in the process" (1998: 160); "laugh your hearts out" (1998: 233). Some of the examples are extremely 'colourful': Lily talks of Evie's "green-eye problem" and says she will have "a pink fit" (1998: 91).

Another aspect which delights, is the humour. Jooste has the ability to break the sadness of the moment with some really funny incidents enhanced by this 'colourful' language. One example of this is when Lily fetches water for Dudda: "... I'm at the sink splashing water all over the place trying to get it in a glass and my eyes are out of the back window looking for the police ..." (1998: 153).

Another example occurs when Gloria is confronting Philander with the threat of death and Lily is clearly terrified: "... I'm hanging onto Gus-Seep's coat for dear life and when I hear her say this I get such a fright I nearly sit down flat on the ground out of nerves, as if my legs won't hold me up any more ..." (1998: 189).

Moreover, the whole incident of the ID photos is very funny and culminates in the family collapsing with laughter when Granny says about Gus-Seep, "If you ask me he's been hanging around with Philander for too long. He's starting to look like a proper crook" (1998: 234), which the family agrees is a very accurate observation!

A final example of Jooste's humorous style is when Gloria has managed to track down Errol's address in Southampton and sent a letter asking if Lily can live with him. Lily observes:

He must have thought someone had died or we'd won the sweepstake and were coming to visit him. My mother is lucky he didn't keel over dead from a heart attack with her letter in his hand because then she would have had a death on her conscience (1998: 311).

Lily's story is narrated in the first person. In this way the reader is always a part of the action. First person narrative allows Jooste to embrace more possibilities in her attempt to present an omniscient point of view of her narrative. This style immediately adds to the artistic integrity of the novel thereby influencing the reader's attitude to the artwork. This style also adds to the authenticity to the events as they unfold – making them more poignant. Lily is Jooste's voice throughout so her relationship with the narrative is extremely close. Jooste says of this 'relationship':

I have been asked many times if I would do a sequel for Lily but the answer is 'no'. Lily told me as much as she wanted and that was it ... But her 'voice' did stay with me ... it took months and months to make her stop chipping in my head and I don't invoke her now because it's still such a strong voice. (email: 21/01/04)

The novel is refreshingly devoid of the 'victim' aspect, notably because Jooste was not a 'victim' of apartheid.

Jooste provides a compelling model for post-apartheid South African authors and how to create a South African identity which envisions inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness. This aspect of the creation of a true South African identity, not based on race or colour, is probably the most important message Jooste has to offer her readers.

In her unique way, Jooste has successfully explored some of the issues of the apartheid regime and she will continue to do this in the next novel which will be analysed, *Frieda and Min*, although she will concentrate on different issues.

CHAPTER 7

FRIEDA AND MIN: PAMELA JOOSTE

In *Frieda and Min* Jooste once again chooses to use child narrators to engage with her readers and to influence the interpretation of the subject matter in the novel. However, Jooste takes her successful narrative technique a step further than that of *Dance*. In this novel the reader is presented with two narrators, Frieda and Min. In the early pages of the novel, these narrators are fourteen year old girls. Initially, therefore, Jooste's attitude to her subject matter is tinged with the childlike naivety and non-judgemental attitude typical of children. Jooste's artistic integrity is enhanced as she extends her narrative technique to adult narration when her child narrators mature and become adults. Jooste's attitude to her subject matter changes as her narrative becomes that of the adult point of view which is no longer naïve. She uses the narrators to examine issues of importance and although she remains non-judgemental, her relationship with her narrators allows her to embrace more possibilities when dealing with her subject matter.

The novel opens in 1998 with Frieda reminiscing about the day she met Min. The first thing she noticed were Min's delicate white feet in African sandals which "only chars and garden boys wore" (Jooste, 1999: 11). With characteristic ease, Jooste tells the story, alternating the first person narratives of Frieda and Min. Just as characteristically, she is, very convincingly, able to slip smoothly into the personas of both Frieda and Min. Jen Crocker of the *Cape Times* writes that "... walking in the shoes of other people ... this is one of her particular gifts as a novelist ... she creates characters that are so well-rooted" (1999: p.14).

Set in South Africa during the *apartheid regime*, it is an exploration of the extraordinary friendship between two girls from totally different backgrounds. Frieda is Jewish and conventional, Min is "... exactly like her father ... a kaffir-lover ..." (1999: 176), according to her mother, a white who relates more closely to black South Africans than she does to those of her own colour.

Min's ambition in life is to follow in the footsteps of her bush doctor father, providing medical care for South Africa's African population. Frieda's main

concern in life, on the other hand, is “to find a wealthy husband and stay out of trouble” (Weaver, 1999: *The Cork Examiner*: np.).

This is the superficial summary of the novel, for it deals with many more issues than this. It deals with apartheid at its cruellest, the ‘normality’ of the ‘monsters’ who perpetrated the inhuman acts accompanying their ideology, anti-Semitic prejudice, materialism, family relationships and the growth to adulthood of two unlikely friends, over a period of 23 years, from 1964 to 1987.

Jooste’s sensitivity is both superb and subtle as it surfaces through the simplicity of her characters and their observations of the events that surround them. She allows the reader to penetrate the skin of her characters with her and this adds credibility to the world in which they live.

The characters of Frieda and Min will be analysed separately. Discussion will centre on the issues which Jooste emphasizes through them for she uses their characters and their friendship as a springboard for different viewpoints and issues which she wishes to examine.

As in *Dance*, Jooste once again explores the mother-daughter relationship. In *Frieda and Min*, it is the relationship of Min and her superficial mother, whose only ambition is to scale the social ladder and put her origins in Coronation Street, Germiston, firmly behind her. Jooste distinguishes herself in this area as she allows the reader to feel Min’s feelings of abandonment by a flighty, selfish mother. Not at any time does the reader feel anything but disgust for Julia Delaney who sees fit to dump her daughter onto the Woolfs so she can go on holiday with her new husband.

After the death of her brother, Justin, Min retreats into a world of silence, as did Faith in Karodia’s *A Shattering of Silence*, to help her deal with her sorrow. Julia feels she is “doing it on purpose” (1999: 88). She does not understand Min’s affinity with the Zulu bush as taught her by Mr Morefe, her first teacher. He has taught her African legends and so, as a child, she believes that Justin’s soul is in a buffalo thorn branch. Julia calls her a “white kaffir girl” (1999: 109) talking scathingly about Min’s early education “in some half-baked kaffir school with a coon for a teacher” (1999: 126). Min is fully aware that her mother hates her and

that, as far as her mother is concerned, she is a “wicked, vengeful girl” (1999: 128).

Jooste is showing her reader quite clearly that Zulu culture has a place in our society and that there is a great deal to admire and respect in this culture, a richness ignored as inferior by ‘superior’ European culture. Julia epitomizes the white colonial who rejected everything local as despicable, to be cast aside and deplored. Min is highly intelligent and Mr Morefe’s stories “of a life’s journey” (1999: 99) have greater substance than her mother’s materialistic designs. Mr Morefe’s magical stories of the bush, told under the night skies, have an everlasting effect on Min’s understanding of life and death. It is Julia’s fake, ‘educated’ colonial society which Jooste satirizes when she comments on the servants’ uniforms with their ‘broderie anglaise’ (1999: 127), starched caps, white longs and red sashes (1999: 127-128).

Later, when George Morefe dies in police custody, Min says, “Goodbye, kind master, old friend, giver of the gift of learning. Go well on your great journey” (1999: 245). Because Min has refused to sign Morefe’s death certificate, she is arrested by Evert Brink. She is jailed, in solitary confinement, for various crimes against the apartheid regime like taking part in banned organizations, treating people without passbooks, not reporting gunshot wounds and burying dead activists without signing death certificates.

While she is in jail she hears (the reader is not told from whom) that her “mother goes around telling people as far as she’s concerned [she is] dead ... ” (1999: 294). Julia never influences Min again. Jooste is showing clearly which ‘education’ has more purchase when an intelligent and perceptive mind like Min’s is faced with life’s complexities.

Min identifies completely with her selfless father, whose only ambition is to use his medical skills to serve the poor in Zululand. It is her father who understands her fixation with the buffalo thorn branch, who speaks Zulu, who inspires her to return to the village as a doctor to serve the Zulu community during the era of apartheid atrocities. Jooste shows us which “Things are important” (1999: 99) in life through Min’s father’s quiet dedication to the poor; he is a doctor who admits “that white doctors don’t know everything” (1999: 77). With these words Jooste

dismisses the pompous colonial concept that whites are the only 'educated' people in the country.

The year is 1962 and Jooste makes her first allusion to the rumblings of dissatisfaction under the apartheid regime and the bigoted attitude of the police. The first allusion to trouble/protests against the apartheid regime is introduced with the words, "There's been a protest march in the township" (1999: 132). A boy of fourteen has been taken away by the police for questioning, and has not been seen for three months. Min's father takes part in the protest and for this receives a police visit. One of the policemen warns him that it is unnecessary for "white men [to stir] up blacks ... there's no need for that when a quiet word between educated people will do ..." (1999: 137). The irony employed here is clear. Jooste does not feel that to take a fourteen-year-old boy into custody and to keep him there for three months is 'educated' behaviour, especially when nobody has been informed of his whereabouts.

Twelve years later Min is at Medical School joining banned organizations, participating in student protests and being arrested. The students object to "detention without trial" (1999: 175); they want open universities, the abolition of job reservation and academic freedom. Jooste uses the character of Min to show the impact of apartheid on all sections of society and to open the eyes of her reader to the injustices perpetrated by the regime. This informative aspect is necessary. Jooste is targeting the reader of 'popular/escapist fiction' as she attempts to initiate a new (and perhaps unwilling) audience into an awareness of the horrors of apartheid. However, she is never judgemental as she allows her characters to relate events as they see them, although she makes it quite clear where the prejudice lies. Min's mother says she is "... exactly like her father. He was a kaffir-lover too" (1999: 176), an observation Min would, indeed, regard as a compliment. Needless to say, Min's relationship with her mother remains forever distant. In *Dance*, the mother-daughter relationship also remains unhealed, an interesting phenomenon which occurs in both of Jooste's novels. Jooste says:

I don't really know why the breakdown in mother daughter relationships interests me so ... I think my relationship with my mother – ups and downs – was one of the strongest in my own life and

because of that I explore it over and over again. The prickliness between mothers and daughters interests me. (email: 09/02/04)

As unrest spreads, Beauty, the Woolfs' domestic worker and a lady with whom Min has a special relationship, is caught up in the bus boycott and pass demonstration. Min is able to *click-clack*, Frieda tells the reader, (1999: 83) in Zulu. She bails out Beauty as the police "won't listen to anyone who isn't white" (1999: 186). Once again, Jooste directs attention to the whites, who are the only ones who are supposedly 'educated'.

Frieda says: "There's fighting everywhere in the townships and all the injured get taken to Bara" (1999: 192) where Min is an intern. She knows about the Casspirs and the missing people and is arrested for offering to give information to the families of those missing – something forbidden by the police during the apartheid era. She is bailed out by Frieda, who sells her engagement ring for R20 000.

In 1976 Min returns to her father's clinic, a place she knows with her "eyes" and "heart" (1999: 216) but by 1980 she is under house arrest, which the *South African Oxford Dictionary* defines as "the state of being kept as a prisoner in one's own house" (2002: 560), for treating people without passbooks, not asking questions and not reporting all deaths. Min is still allowed to practise her profession because there is a shortage of doctors, but she is not allowed to leave the magisterial district and her letters are scrutinized. Jooste uses Min to inform the reader of the conditions of house arrest. Min tells the reader: "You cannot take part in any gathering or public meeting. When not at work you may only have one person other than yourself in your house and that includes servants" (1999: 229). Min continues to tell the reader the predicament the police face: "Whether or not to allow a restricted person to go to church is a big problem. One [the police] haven't managed to resolve yet ... Churches are important now. In some places where the minister is fiery it's difficult to tell the difference between a church service and a public protest" (1999: 229).

Amidst the turmoil, Min has an affair with Bill Gordon, a married man and an army captain who intensely dislikes what he does. He tells Min. "It's the look on their faces ... The boot on the door. Shouting out questions, demanding

information" (1999: 230). He fathers her son before he is sent away. Yet it is with Evert Brink that Min forms an unexpected relationship. George Morefe has died in police custody and when Min finds evidence of physical abuse, she refuses to sign a death certificate. Evert admits to using a 'beesprodder' (1999: 254) at times – to aid interrogation. Although Jooste would have been aware that many South Africans knew of apartheid atrocities and do not need this enlightenment, as a 'popular' writer, she is challenging readers of this category of fiction more than they are accustomed to being challenged, and perhaps breaking new ground by doing this.

The helicopter raid on the village, where Min's clinic is, is reminiscent of Karodia's similar description of a raid on a village, in Mozambique, in *A Shattering of Silence*. It may be that this similarity is not mere chance and that both authors were influenced by Nadine Gordimer's novel, *July's People*. In Gordimer's novel a helicopter arrives in a rural village where a white family is sheltering during a revolution by Blacks in South Africa. Although the reader never knows the reason for the arrival of this helicopter in *July's People*, the helicopters in *Frieda and Min* and *A Shattering of Silence* are politically motivated raids and both result in fear and chaos within the villages. Jooste's novelistic capacity for description is highlighted in her narration, through Min, of the terror of the mothers, babies, old people and farmyard animals as they flee in all directions from the helicopters and the police.

After her confinement, Min is transferred to Pretoria Central until 1987. There is no charge against her: Frieda reports, "She is in prison for an indeterminate time at the State President's pleasure" (1999: 290). When she is released the apartheid regime is still in power so she is still largely restricted but she can now take care of her son, David. Jooste has achieved her aim – to show the lengths to which the apartheid regime went to protect an inhuman ideology.

However, Jooste is still not finished with her examination of those involved in apartheid and she uses Evert Brink for her purpose. Shirley Kossick says in her review for the *Mail and Guardian*:

The whole last quarter of the book is deeply moving, not least Min's strange, complex and ambivalent relationship with her Afrikaner

captor, Evert Brink. What this particular strand of the narrative illuminates is the ordinariness of the people who perform such evil acts in the name of an ideology. (Kossick: March, 1999)

Min says of Evert, "It is the ordinariness of his past that unnerves me ... What I am prepared for are monsters. Nothing has prepared me for this unnerving assault of ordinariness" (1999: 295). Jooste has been influenced by Hannah Arendt's famous description of Adolf Eichmann – the 'banality of evil'. Jooste says: "Hannah Arendt and the famous phrase helped to *focus* me. The reason it's famous, I think, is because it does precisely that but there is more to Evert than that" (email: 28/05/04).

Jooste feels that Evert's position of power unleashes "a sadistic strain in him but it is subtle kind of sadism" (email: 28/05/04). Various aspects of Evert's past have moulded him: his Calvinistic background, his hardworking, God-fearing parents with high expectations, particularly of their sons. Jooste says:

... the appeal of the National Party and also the problem when the oppressed becomes the oppressor – the most dangerous situation of all. The Afrikaners after the Boer war and the Depression ... all these things shaped Evert. He was born and raised for that particular system. (email: 28/05/04)

Jooste does not excuse Evert's attempts to uphold the system into which he was born. However, she does say:

... situations of conflict and upheaval that place ordinary people in situations out of the every day, bring out potential in them that are also out of the every day and that potential realised is not always all that pleasant. So, you have the background/formative influences – distortion because of political conflict plus propaganda about a just cause plus approval within one's own community rising up through the system which is of their creation. (email: 28/05/04)

In her presentation of Evert as a product of his era, Jooste shows clearly that apartheid could unleash the dark side of a person's character, that the political

climate during this time was like a “cancer at the heart of South [which] prevented anyone from having a normal life” (Weaver, 1999). Jooste is interested in the dark side which everyone has within them. The question Jooste wants her readers to ask themselves is whether the forces which surround us could unleash this potential for darkness. There is, however, a potential for good too. “Then come the huge forces and one goes one way and one another. On a larger scale one must grant Evert this and also accept that given enough force Min might also go out of control”, says Jooste. (email: 28/05/04)

His relationship with Min is one which interests Jooste, one which she explores in detail. He “embeds himself in Min’s consciousness” (email: 28/05/04) Jooste says of the relationship. She draws the parallel between the relationship of Ruth Slovo and her affair with one of her gaolers:

That relationship interests me. Also, I am obviously interested in people as regards people in uniform, one wonders what they wear when they aren’t in uniform, what their private life is like and so on. Clearly uniforms by their nature obliterate lots of the clues that would lead one to the actual personality. (email: 28/05/04)

In her attempt to understand “The voice of the Beloved” (1999: 339), Min wishes that

... they were monsters. Monsters are things we all understand ... They look neat and tidy ... These people may be monsters but the worst part is you can’t tell by looking. Which makes them, I suppose, monsters in their hearts and that’s the worst kind ... they’re ordinary people and in another way they are monsters ... (1999: 310).

Jooste’s recognition that we are all culpable of inhumanities at times distances her from Karodia and Jacobs. Her recognition that we are all capable of becoming ‘evil’ given the wrong circumstances distances her from both Jacobs and Karodia. This strength must be acknowledged especially when one takes into account that Karodia and Jacobs are more concerned with apportioning

blame and striking self-righteous poses through their protagonists, something which Jooste does not do.

Laurice Taitz, in a review for the *Sunday Times*, comments that “Min becomes obsessed with her interrogator, her hatred of him border on love (1999: 22). Min may be ‘obsessed’ but she does grow to love the ordinary person behind the monster mask he wears. As Frieda observed when Min first arrived, “... I know eyes like hers [they] see more than they should” (1999: 30). Thus Jooste again reveals her capacity to see the apartheid era in all of its dimensions: She resists stereotyping her characters as either victims or villains and remains non-judgemental. Indeed, she shows an inordinate degree of understanding for both the victims and the villains.

So it is obvious that Jooste has used Min to achieve her purpose of exposing apartheid between 1964 and 1987, years when apartheid reached its peak and demise. Min is shown to extend “concern to all, particularly the underdog. She is at all times beyond reproach”, as Jocelyn Hellig says in her review for *The Sunday Independent* (1999: 19).

The first impression one has of Frieda is that she is funny. Jooste uses her to provide comic relief in the darkest moments of the novel. No situation is allowed to become too morbid or too melancholy when Frieda is narrating. This is typical of Jooste's style, as we have seen in *Dance*. This stylistic feature makes Jooste's novel easy to read. However, Frieda's character is, like Min, an important instrument in the hands of the author.

Frieda is Jewish and her family is familiar with persecution and discrimination. Yet, as Hellig says, “Frieda and her family, though decent, loving people, remain out of touch with the black reality” (1999: 19). In fact, Frieda remains “subtly racist” (1999:19) throughout the novel, but this is Jooste's intention. Frieda represents the majority of white people during the apartheid era. In addition, Frieda's Jewish character allows Jooste to use her gift to satirize – which she does through one of satire's most powerful instruments: humour. Largely, therefore, Frieda may be regarded as a representative character. Yet Jooste, ingeniously, allows Frieda to mature despite her outmoded Yiddish perspective – a perspective belonging more to her parents' generation than her own.

When Jooste introduces Frieda to the reader in 1964, one becomes aware of a number of things: Frieda's family is poor and are still living in Coronation Avenue, Germiston, an area where most people do not "stay very long" (1999: 18); Sadie, Frieda's aunt, is desperately looking for a wealthy husband so she *can* move out; the family is somewhat traditional in their formal celebration of *shabbas*, and the family is kind, decent and a typical example of many white families of the 60's who remained subtly racist. Jooste has 'set the scene' for the character of Frieda in her first few pages and, most importantly, she is introduced as Jooste's primary narrator – funny, astutely observant and down to earth.

Frieda's family is a close-knit one dedicated to looking after the sickly Davey, her brother who suffers from an endocrinal disorder which keeps him in bed. They are not affluent, rather the opposite, and make the best of what they have – although their 'poor' status irks at times. They cannot afford a telephone, they cannot have their kosher meat delivered because it is too expensive but they *can* celebrate *shabbas* with a "silver goblet" (1999: 22). This situation is perfect for Jooste's satire. Jooste's satire covers almost every aspect of this decent family's existence. She does it inoffensively and humorously.

There is the female obsession with finding husbands, not just any husband, a husband with wealth and status. At fourteen Frieda's only worry is that no one will marry her and when she has a date, she 'religiously' thanks God. Miriam (Frieda's mother) urges her sister, Sadie, to go out and look for a husband because "Good men don't grow on trees" (1999: 39), and so Sadie visits the Brixton cemetery every Saturday afternoon where she meets Reuben Lazar, a widower. Reuben Lazar also just happens to be "one of the richest men in Johannesburg" (1999: 92). When Sadie invites him to *shabbas* he is entertained in style because such a successful marriage stands to benefit the whole family financially. When Reuben asks Sadie to marry him, Miriam "puts her hand palm-flat over her heart as if it will jump right out of her chest with happiness" (1999: 139). Frieda comments that Min thinks they have all gone mad but all Frieda says, ironically, is that "she doesn't really know anything that counts" (1999: 139) when she hears that Sadie has "an emerald the size of Zoo Lake for an engagement ring and a pair of earrings to match ..." (1999: 139). Jooste

satirizes the materialism of these Jewish women who also piously spend a great deal of time at *shul*.

Jooste refers to these women as the “*shul* women” (1999: 82) who know all about anti-Semitic discrimination and yet practise apartheid self-righteously. “Everything is always separate. It’s a little bit like keeping *kosher* but different” (1999: 82). Jooste is obviously enjoying herself when she allows Frieda to say:

The *shul* women have terrible stories they say they saw in the newspaper. Stories about maids who use the toilet and the bath when the madam’s not there and dress up in the madam’s clothes and entertain their boyfriends on the madam’s best china. (1999: 82)

Of course, Jooste is not only satirizing Jewish ‘kugels’ here, but also all whites of the 60s who had similar perceptions.

Jooste’s criticism of Jewish marriage and materialism peaks when Frieda marries Lenny Lazar in ‘The Fanciest-Schmantziest Wedding’ of 1976 – only to find him unfaithful on their wedding day. His womanizing culminates in divorce, but Frieda has matured and both she and Miriam realize money is not everything. Miriam, in 1981, is able to say that Frieda is “better off without him” (1999: 272). The interesting thing is that Jooste allows Frieda to evolve into what in the 1990’s became known as a ‘Sandton kugel’, that is, a stereotype of a wealthy Jewish woman with a fake nasal, or ‘kugel’ accent and living in Sandton, the affluent northern Johannesburg suburbs. Naturally, Jooste once again uses humorous satire to make her point and one can ‘hear’ the Jewish accent in her writing. This is how Min sees her when she is in prison and Frieda visits her:

She looks good. She looks lovely. She has on gold earrings and a necklace and the famous engagement ring and a cashmere coat with a fox collar. She’s beautifully made-up. Her fingernails are painted and she’s wearing a great many gold bangles. They go so high above her wrist they disappear into the sleeve of her coat, so I suppose that must be the fashion now. (1999: 299)

Jooste takes a great deal of trouble to describe the Friday *shabbas* in detail and her use of italicized Jewish words attempts to enhance the 'Jewishness' of Frieda's character. However, she has come under some criticism for this. Taitz talks about "Yiddish words which she never explains and which make for jarring reading" (1999: 22). Jocelyn Hellig, Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Wits, questions the accuracy of Jooste's description of the Friday *shabbas* ritual, the use of the Waverley synagogue, when there is one in Germiston, and the conflict that Aaron "must have suffered in having to work on the Sabbath" (1999: 19).

The following can be advanced in defence of Jooste: the use of random Yiddish words creates atmosphere, because often Jewish people do speak this way. However, perhaps a glossary would have been an aid, but not essential. This problem also emerged in Rayda Jacobs's novel *Sachs Street*, and in her case, a glossary was essential because very few people worldwide are familiar with Afrikaans, while the same cannot be said for some Yiddish words. Secondly, the use of the more upper-class Waverley synagogue is merely a desire to distance the family from the poor, somewhat claustrophobic environment of Coronation Avenue, and if one can only play one's saxophone on a Saturday night in order to earn a living then prioritizing is important. Thus these criticisms border on the overcritical and irrelevant, when more important issues like apartheid and inhumanity are paramount.

Jooste also uses Frieda to show her readers the largely indifferent attitude that most of the white population had towards the predicament of black people during the apartheid era. Frieda tells us that it is not only whites who are out and about on a Saturday morning: "The natives go out too, men and women in their raggedy clothes with their barefoot children running behind them ..." (1999: 50). Her tone is quite matter-of-fact, as if poverty is something acceptable. Intolerance is expressed in words like "Stupid kaffir!" (1999: 50) by motorists when the blacks walk in the street instead of on the pavements. We are told that the Indians run "kaffir shops" where goods are cheaper. Frieda feels offended and "left out" (1999:84) when Min talks Zulu to Beauty. Min tells her that if she could communicate in Zulu "black people who live here would like you far better ..." (1999: 84). The houses of the township close to Coronation Avenue consist of "location shanties" (1999: 142) and the people who live there "look like stick

figures ... hard to believe they're real people at all" (1999: 142), Frieda observes as she watches the black people walking home from work. The indifferent acceptance by Frieda of the status quo is indeed an indictment of the attitudes of many whites of the time.

Just as Evert Brink is used to show the 'ordinariness' of the apartheid oppressors, so the Woolf family is used to show the 'ordinariness' of white families during the apartheid era. The Woolf family is close-knit, warm, caring and provide a secure environment for Frieda. It is a family which is prepared to celebrate a *kosher* Christmas for Min who is staying with them. This warm and caring attitude extends to Min's son, David, who spends his early years nurtured by a loving, caring Frieda and her mother.

Jooste also deals with the mother-daughter relationship between Frieda and Miriam. It is with relief that the reader sees this relationship expanding not like Min and Julia's or Lily and Gloria's in *Dance*. Frieda says, "I look at my mother with new eyes these days" (1999: 317). With maturity, Frieda realizes that her "mother will never change and I'm glad she won't because I will always love her and I love her just the way she is" (1999: 320).

The unlikely friendship of Frieda and Min provides the framework for a tightly woven novel and allows Jooste to explore the lifetime influences of inherited codes of behaviour. Their friendship, says Mary Jordan in her review in *The Business Day*, is not accidental. It is, rather,

necessary and functional. Frieda is to sentimentalize childhood, yet that freshness will give her grown-up courage that is little short of heroic. Min's defeat is not destruction, because her resignation has its own lyricism. (1999: np.)

The young Frieda stands frozen – "I couldn't bend down or pick up a plum" (1999: 155) – in the face of blatant racist discrimination when some "ordinary boys" (1999: 153) belittle and insult Davey. "Fat pig ... Filthy Jewish pig" (1999: 153), they shout and hurl hard "kaffir-plums" (1999: 154) at him. Six years later, the more mature Frieda does not hesitate to sell her engagement ring to bail Min out of John Vorster Square because "a ring is only a ring but Min is a

person and a person is far more important” (1999: 203). It is the courageous Frieda who is able to say to Lorraine Katzeff that she can have the unfaithful Lenny: “... and *mazel tov*. I hope you have each other for a very long time. Enjoy him with my compliments and in good health” (1999: 251). It is the heroic Frieda who supports Min when she is in jail in Zululand and Pretoria Central. It is the caring, loving and loyal Frieda who looks after David as if he were her own but is generous enough to know when her “... time is up. I have had David long enough, held him long enough, loved him long enough. Now it’s her turn ...” (1999: 344). Jooste points out that apparently ‘conservative’ or ‘indifferent’ people are capable of acts of generosity and courage . . . the kind of obverse of the Evert character.

Min’s defeat and resignation also signify a maturity. The feisty, young, idealistic Min cannot fight an evil system alone. She has done what she can and now she has to retreat and wait for time to do the rest. By 1987 it is quite obvious that the demise of apartheid is no longer a distant dream, it is imminent. Also, she has discovered love in the form of Evert Brink, one of the ‘monsters’ of apartheid. She finds that her feelings for him are “deeper and for more disturbing than fear...” (1999: 340), and when he speaks “it is the voice of the beloved” (1999: 341) she hears. Contrary to being a ‘monster’, he is “gentle and tender” (1999: 342). Min also has a son now and when she is released from prison and she gazes on her son, for whom she has nearly waited seven years to claim as her own, Frieda says Min is watching him and waiting. She’s standing quite still and giving him all the time he needs, all the time in the world, all the time it takes him at his own pace in his own way to reach her” (1999: 347).

Jen Crocker, after having interviewed Pamela Jooste, says:

This is part of the joy of Jooste’s writing: that she writes sentences that flow from one to another. As a reader one is pulled through her books and it places them in the realm of written oral tradition – a contradiction in terms, but the only way that I can come close to adequately describing her style ... a musical style ... (*Cape Times*, 1999: np.)

Most of the novel is narrated by Frieda, and, as in *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*, it is colloquial using everyday words and expressions which appeal to a readership of 'popular' fiction. It is convincingly observant and contains "some unequivocally funny passages" (Kossick, 1999). Indeed, when events threaten to be depressing and gloomy, Frieda makes the reader laugh. What could be more gloomy than visiting someone in jail? Yet Frieda, affronted, tells the policewoman, who constantly interrupts their conversation with, "Not allowed", that she is "... a grown-up woman. I make up my own mind what I want to say and what I don't want to say. I don't need someone chipping in all the time to help me" (1999: 301). Min admits "... although it's all so terrible just for a moment it's also very funny and there's no one in this world who could make it so except Frieda" (1999: 301).

One of the funniest passages occurs when Min is having David and Min tells Frieda she's the doctor. "She may be the doctor but it's hard to run the show when you're flat on your back with your legs in the air and a baby half-way out" (1999: 313), Frieda observes. Frieda's narrative appeals directly to the reader's sense of humour and thus influences the reader directly. In this way Jooste's first person narrative strategy allows her reader constantly to share her narrator's thoughts and observations.

Jooste is also able to use this ability to be humorous for her satire, as explained earlier, of materialism, the fake Colonial attitude of the Jewish women, the Jewish obsession with marriage and the *shul* women are some of the areas which come under scrutiny.

There are some engaging examples of the Jewish 'accent' (which is often nasal and artificial): "At *shul* people always say to watch out for the *shvartzers*: 'Be careful Miriam. That's all we're saying'" (1999: 81). When Sadie tells her mother to be practical, Miriam retorts, "All my life I've been in trouble for not being practical enough to suit you. You want I should start now, in my old age?" (1999: 223).

Jooste also gives some excellent descriptions in this novel and there are some which are particularly outstanding. One is when Sadie and Frieda are in the kitchen preparing the tea and a cold buffet for Davey's *bar mitzvah* (1999: 157-

159). Another is the spectacular description of the area around the village in Zululand (1999: 268). The description of *shabbas* when Frieda is alone in Min's house in Zululand is particularly evocative (1999: 323-325) although Laurice Taitz says:

Jooste's attempt at a moving description of Frieda's welcoming in of the Sabbath on a Friday night becomes comical. 'I stand at the head of my table with a Gucci scarf over my head ... out of the very bottom of the Thrupp's basket is a special bottle of *kosher wine*' (1999: 22).

In *Frieda and Min* Jooste has successfully explored the many evils of apartheid in a uniquely non-judgemental style while exposing the evils of that period. In addition, she has been able to show how 'ordinary' the perpetrators were. She has also used her blend of satirical humour and her compelling first person narrative technique to draw in the reader, which, moreover, affects the reader's attitude to her subject matter. "In marvellously fluid and graceful prose, [Jooste] has presented a compassionate, caring and unexpectedly funny story of our times" (1999: np.), says Jordan.

However, in her next novel, *Like Water in Wild Places*, Jooste changes her style and the novel is written in a more formal style to suit her exploration of the darker, covert side of apartheid. She also ventures into inclusive rather than exclusive territory as she explores the rich mystical qualities of the Bushman people.

CHAPTER 8

LIKE WATER IN WILD PLACES: PAMELA JOOSTE

Nadine Gordimer once observed in an interview that apartheid penetrated every facet of South African life, turning even the most personal experiences into political acts ... Pamela Jooste seeks to take us to those places with her latest offering, *Like Water in Wild Places*. (Dlamini, *Sunday Times*, 2000: 18)

The novel tells the story of the Hartmanns, a prominent Cape family. The Hartmanns appear to be an ordinary family. It is the story of Jack Hartmann, of his wife, Sylvia and their children, Conrad and Beeky. As Jooste strips away the layers she exposes the abnormalities present in the family. Jack Hartmann hates his wife and daughter. This contrasts strongly with his passionate love for his son and the expectations he has of Conrad. More particularly, therefore, it is the touching story of Conrad Hartmann, Senator Jack Hartmann's son, brought up within the strict confines of Afrikanerdom in the final years of apartheid South Africa. Yet it is more than just a story: it is also "a lyrical journey into the mind and heart of the Bushmen" (de Groot, 2000: np.), for it is Bastiaan, a San hunter and visionary, whose teachings help Conrad to embrace what Dlamini says is "his humanity" (2000: 18), as he moves into adulthood.

The novel is more hard-edged than Jooste's previous two novels. It once again, as in *Frieda and Min*, explores the darker side of the apartheid perpetrators and the 'secrets' of the regime, many of which were revealed at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Also, there is a male narrator in the form of Conrad – first as a child, then as an adult. Jooste's style is different from that of *Dance* and *Frieda and Min*. Her relationship with Conrad is much closer than that of her relationship with her earlier narrators. Because Conrad's story is based on that of a real person, in essence, Jooste is able to engage her reader more fully in her protagonist's emotions and experiences. Conrad emerges from the same background, with the same ancestral expectations, as is the case with Evert in *Frieda and Min*. As Jooste attempts to reconstruct a social past by relating her protagonist's story, the reader is absorbed into the experience through the narration.

This experiential narration is constantly interspersed with the legends/myths of the San people where Jooste thinks they are relevant to her story. Although Jooste's inclusion of these myths reflects her intrigue with them, and although she feels, " ... they did get a bit in the way of the story" (email: 09/02/04), intrinsically they form an integral part of her narration within narration. Bastiaan's 'stories' and ancestral understanding of nature and the way this influences his perception of life allows for a somewhat more transcendental approach which allows Conrad to move away from his father's influence to rid himself of his past, to face the life choices he has to make and to rebuild his shattered life.

A further example of narration within narration is the introduction of the voice of the ghost of Old Madam. Old Madam constantly informs the reader of the historical background within which the narration occurs and provides the framework within which the protagonist is moving. Jooste says, "I had to write her in at the request of my publisher who wanted some historical context" (email: 10/02/04). Moreover, Old Madam is an astute observer and becomes a real 'character' within the context of the action. In particular, she holds the reader in suspense as regards her next dark 'prediction' about the Hartmanns.

Jooste has chosen to deal with the dark side of the oppressors and the atrocities of apartheid in this novel. Her exposé is both realistic and, consequently, terrifying when one realizes that the character of Conrad is based on genuine accounts from a close acquaintance. It is evident now that Conrad's account of his experiences are 'fictionalised history' based on a close personal history. In other words, Jooste is continuing the trend already noticed in *Frieda and Min*, examined earlier – that post-apartheid fiction is largely about reinterpreting the past. Jooste says of the Evert character in *Frieda and Min*, "I think he led me into *Like Water*. I really wanted to walk on the dark side ... I am very drawn to people like Brink as characters ... the awfulness of having to live with themselves" (email: 09/02/04). In further correspondence, Jooste expands this comment and says: "I wanted with Brink [as with Conrad in '*Like Water in Wild Places*'] to show that not all Afrikaners were mindless thugs" (email: 28/05/04).

“Die sleutel tot die roman word gevind in die stories van die Khoisan, wat die mistieke atmosfeer aksentueer, terwyl die magiese magte van hierdie oervolk ingespan word om die verhaal verder to verhelder,” says Jo Nel in a review for *Media Info* (2000: np.). Jooste has chosen to interweave the real with the mystical from the first pages when she describes the creation of man and earth and how the one inevitably affects the other. Conrad tells the reader:

Bushmen are not like other men. They have powers other men don't have and they use these powers to travel to worlds more marvellous than this one and have seen things more wonderful than we can ever see. (2000: 12)

Throughout the novel the San legends and myths are related by Bastiaan to Conrad. The San myths form the spiritual background for many beliefs and actions of the San people. These beliefs are reflected in those chosen for retelling by Jooste. It is from Bastiaan that Conrad learns how to respect and be at one with nature; it is Bastiaan who has the most powerful influence on Conrad's life; and it is Bastiaan who helps him to realize the importance of the truth. This he does through his almost magical affinity with nature. Conrad says: “When I was twelve years old, my father sent for an old Bushman tracker and gave him a job which was to be my ‘boy’ and teach me the ways of the Bush” (2000: 11). Conrad adds to this later:

Bushmen ... have powers other men don't have and they use these powers to travel to worlds more marvellous than this one ... and it came to me that perhaps, among his many powers, Bastiaan might have the ability to read the future. (2000: 12)

Because Conrad is based on a real character, the reader is able to trust his narration implicitly. Jooste says of Conrad's voice:

It's a bit like 'channelling' I suppose but you aren't really aware that you're doing it and it's one thing with a fictional character, you don't have all that much control there either ... but it's different when it is another real person's voice coming out from inside you. (email: 05/06/04)

In the same correspondence Jooste explained that for her it was a “transferral” of information from her real character to her which she then ‘fictionalised’ as Conrad’s first and sometimes third person narration.

James Mitchell in his review for *The Star* says Hartmann senior “had the imagination to place the 12-year-old Conrad in the hands of Bastiaan, an old Bushman who not only teaches the boy about the flora and fauna, about tracking and life in the open, but also a philosophy of life which will sustain him for the future” (2000: 10).

Asked about her fascination with the Bushman myths, Jooste says she found the myths in an art gallery in Kimberley:

... quite by chance lying on a side table a ring-binder with collected Bushman myths ... no one seemed quite to know who had collected so faithfully. From magazines, doctoral theses, all kinds of sources ... So this was my source and I researched from there ... But that’s how I got onto the myths and they intrigued me ... (Jooste: 09/02/04).

The myths and legends have been meticulously and accurately researched and it is precisely this mythological aspect that is intriguing. It is an area that has been largely disregarded by white South Africans who, like Oom Faan, Jack Hartmann’s older, more flexible brother with whom Conrad has a close relationship, tend to dismiss them with words like, “You mustn’t believe everything these people tell you” (2000: 22). Conrad does believe and this belief largely fashions his character.

It is the San’s deep understanding of nature that influences Conrad’s morality as he matures in a traditional patriarchal household. Jack Hartmann is the epitome of the lonely patriarchal figure, isolating himself, playing the role of protector and attempting to live up to all his important ancestors reflected in portraits on the wall. He may have “no flaws, no frailty, emotion suppressed emotion. Impossible, of course”, says Jooste (email: 09/02/04). She does, add, however, “let it be said that ... there is a sympathy for the Afrikaner men and the society which shaped them” (e-mail: 09/02/04).

Although he must be understood against the backdrop of a demanding Calvinistic heritage, where what the Afrikaner possesses has been won with a great deal of endurance and suffering – the humiliation at the hands of the English in the Boer War is an example Jooste mentions – Jack Hartmann is a brutal and inflexible man. He does not win the reader's sympathy even if we understand why he is the way he is. His verbal and physical abuse of his wife, Sylvia, reflects Jooste's capacity to depict her characters so richly and compellingly that the reader makes a value judgement without any coercion from the author. Jack Hartmann hits her, calls her trash and a trollop, a bitch and a whore and then kicks her. Sadly, Sylvia protects him, "Not my face" (2000: 33) she says. To the outside world everything must appear normal. When Sylvia gasses herself, his response sums up his heartlessness: "What we have to do is to wipe up the bloody mess" (2000: 82). What makes Jack's brutality even more repulsive is the fact that Sylvia is a small person. It is the smallness of her coffin that Conrad finds puzzling and, throughout the funeral service, he is almost startled by this smallness:

His mother goes to her grave in a small box ...

It's the box he minds and its smallness ...

It's too small to contain so many things ... (2000: 89-91)

In his treatment of his children Jack is demanding and unemotional. Beeky he hates from the time she is born till the time of her death. Conrad he expects to grow up like a true Hartmann, a successful hunter and someone who will uphold the family name and make him proud. Love never enters into his relationship with either of the children; a show of emotion is not acceptable. "I want to see what you're made of. I'm giving you a chance to make me proud of you" (2000: 40), he tells Conrad when he takes him hunting. When the twelve-year-old Conrad sobs when they are caught in a storm in the open veld, his father hits him and makes him sit through the storm up a tree. Conrad never forgets his father's words afterwards, "I sent a baboon up a tree ... but I got back a man" (2000: 64).

After the war when the Truth Commission is instituted, Jack is disgusted: "What it is we're supposed to be sorry for I really don't know" (2000: 252). Conrad has to accept, "My father is my father. He won't change" (2000: 252). What has to be understood is that he *cannot* change. This is his heritage and he has to live up to it. The Boer War and then the Depression and their hard-won control of the country shaped the Afrikaner nation. Jooste says:

Depression affected families and the Depression had a long term knock on effect into even this generation, in my opinion. They are always very clean and neat and look after their things. Everything was hard won for people like that. Perhaps Jack is almost stereotypical ...
(email: 10/02/04)

When Conrad decides to go to the Truth Commission his father "is beside himself with anger" (2000: 262). Conrad realizes that, for his father, "Nothing has changed ... slightly readjusted by his new wife but unchanging all the same" (2000: 263). The last image Conrad has of his father is that he is "livid, disbelieving and uncomprehending ..." (2000: 264). John Mitchell, in a review for *The Star* (2000: np.), says of Jack Hartmann:

So even as the reader can cringe at the thought of Jack Hartmann's brutality ... there is also an understanding of the devils that pursue this cramped, confined man, this epitome of Afrikaner Nationalism, Senator Hartmann. (2000: 10)

Jooste shows her sympathy for the Afrikaner men and the society that shaped them, for she allows Oom Faan to redeem the Afrikaner men's negative image when on numerous occasions he is seen to be understanding, kind and even gentle. Oom Faan "is older and has more time for [Conrad]" (2000:46) and it is Oom Faan who teaches Conrad to read the stars, who reminds Jack that Conrad, at twelve, is "only a boy" (2000: 63), and not yet a man. Finally, it is Oom Faan who offers to accompany Conrad to the Truth Commission. "Let this old man do the right thing for once" (2000: 265), he says as he clasps Conrad's shoulder.

Conrad too, is redeemed, and, as Jooste says, “Conrad I hope comes out of it a bit better ...” (email: 10/02/04). There is a sensitivity and a tenderness in his feelings for Beeky, even prenatally, and, as Jooste juxtaposes Jack’s dislike of her with Conrad’s understanding love, one warms towards him and the conviction that he will not be another ‘Jack’ is firmly lodged in the reader’s mind.

Conrad eagerly awaits the birth of his “new sister, who wants so badly to come into the world and be with him” (2000: 25). Even as Sylvia exacts a promise from Conrad to “watch out for Beeky always” (2000: 32), Jack attempts to break the bond. When the two children are bathing together, he viciously hits Sylvia and tells her to “keep your bastard from my son” (2000: 36). Yet it is precisely Jack’s abusive treatment of their mother that drives the children into an ever-closer relationship. Conrad tells the reader: “He and Beeky are not allowed ever to be in the same bed ... not to read books together ... not to hear stories ... or play board games or cards ...” (2000: 47) but when Jack beats Sylvia, they huddle in Conrad’s bed and Beeky “is safe with him ... warm and safe together in the Christmas boat bed” (2000: 48). It does not come as a surprise, then, that Beeky grows up to hate Jack and, after her mother’s suicide, Beeky seems to understand: “She isn’t going to forget us” (2000: 92).

Beeky is a non-conformist – an ideal tool in Jooste’s hands later on – and, therefore, Jack’s antithesis. When she fashions flowers out of soft-drink cans and puts them on her mother’s grave, he says she is “crazy” (2000: 122), while Conrad regards them as “magic and beautiful” (2000: 122). Jack’s final attempt to make her conform emerges when he sends her away to a Ladies’ College. Jack, however, does not succeed in driving a wedge between the siblings. This failure is reflected in Conrad’s parting gifts to Beeky: Bushman ostrich – shell earrings “and a packet of yellow-green sasa powder which is the bush gift of parting” (2000:123). Moreover, Jack will also fail in his efforts to turn Beeky into a conformist, firstly because she is strong-willed and, secondly, because she hates everything for which he stands: a conservative, cruel, inflexible Afrikaner Nationalist.

Because Beeky is a non-conformist, Jooste is able to use her to examine the covert side of apartheid. To this end she introduces into her novel the inherently evil Jerome, who has no conscience yet is supported by a rather unintelligent

mother. Jooste says, “Jerome is frighteningly awful ... Inherent wickedness exacerbated by ignorance and of course the ghastly mother and the counterpoint of her best friend, the ‘aunty’ who sees right through him” (email: 11/02/04). Doris is the ‘aunt’ and Jooste’s attempt to communicate directly with the reader. Jerome first ‘meets’ Beeky when he is on a school visit to the Hartmann’s home. He sees her watch and steals it. She confronts him and is so disgusted that she tells him he can have it. Jooste says she realized later that by Jerome taking Beeky’s watch “her allotment of time does literally pass into his hands” (email: 04/06/04).

Jerome is the product of his class and his environment. When Jerome is given a job with the security forces, the Spin Street ‘boys’, doing electrical circuitry “making different kinds of triggering devices” (2000: 135) and also car, letter, parcel and magazine bombs, he is in it for himself. Jooste says:

Jerome being ‘good with his hands’ is his ticket into a place where he gets peer acknowledgement and I think he lives for the moment. He’s good at his job. He takes satisfaction out of ‘doing it right’. He has neither the capacity nor the inclination to consider what the end result might be. (email: 04/06/04)

It is Jerome’s success in the face of past failure which makes him accessible to a form of exploitation by apartheid oppressors in the government. Thus he must be divorced from the intentions of the oppressors. He is one of the ‘boys’ simply because it pays him to be one of them and perhaps, as Jooste says, “he gets a kick out of a kind of dumb insolence bucking the system ... I don’t think the apartheid government created Jerome but I think it gave him a very good climate in which to operate” (email: 04/06/04).

Beeky is an activist: Conrad reports that, “she’s most against men like her father who look on and do nothing while people make laws that say human beings are somehow less than human” (2000: 140), and so she attends rallies and risks arrest. Traditionalist to the core, Jack is horrified when she has her birthmark made into a tattoo: “Like a bloody savage” (2000: 176), he says scathingly – unaware of the irony of his expletive.

It is, however, the End Conscription campaign which gains most of her attention and it also an area which, her boyfriend, Tom Webber, supports. Jack calls her a “bloody Communist ... another piece of student shit ...” (2000: 178). Webber is warned by Berry, a Spin Street (Secret Service) agent not to look “for trouble” (2000: 199). Jooste, as she did with Evert in *Frieda and Min*, shows us that these apartheid perpetrators are often ordinary people. She tells her reader that Berry used “an ordinary car ... [and was] an ordinary-looking man” (2000: 198) He was polite, spoke quietly, was friendly and “[that] they have a job to do just like everyone else” (2000: 199). Once again, Jooste intimates that, like Evert, in *Frieda and Min*, it is the ‘uniform’ which obliterates the actual personality and, given situations of conflict, bring out potentially unpleasant qualities in people. However, when Webber attends Beeky’s candlelight rally, he is the victim of a Spin Street hit and run incident. This incident prompts one to recall the assassination of David Webster (the similarity in names is striking), an apartheid activist, by the Civil Co-operation Bureau, a covert apartheid police unit.

When Jerome is approached to make a letter bomb for Beeky, he feels no regrets, only a sense of power: “It’s his day today even though she doesn’t know it. He’s the one dishing out surprises. He’s the one who’ll decide who lives and who dies ...” (2000: 225). Just as Gloria, in *Dance*, and Min, in *Frieda and Min*, were victims of a system too powerful for a lone female activist to fight, so too Beeky becomes a victim of the apartheid-era hit unit when she is blown up by a letter bomb – a letter she thought was from Conrad fighting on the Border.

It is this Border war that Jooste tackles next, and she does this forthrightly and unflinchingly. Her account of skirmishes on the border are harrowing and realistic. Her descriptions are all the more haunting because she bases her character, Conrad, on a real model who related his experiences to her and who “vetted the book for accuracy in those parts based on his information” (email: 11/02/04). Jooste, is again attempting to record a ‘contemporary history’ of SA thinly veiled as fiction. Because the character of Conrad is based on the personal history and conflict experience of a real person, it is inevitable that fiction and history are inextricably connected even if Jooste recorded contemporary history unintentionally. It is obvious that Jooste’s interest is people, that she has used vignettes from the lives of these people, especially of Conrad, in her novels. Jooste says of her meeting with the real ‘Conrad’:

We had a strange connection. I could feel myself, if you can understand this, going into his head and I couldn't stop myself and I could feel him coming into me and I didn't like it but I couldn't stop that either ... In a sense we each held a part of the other. (email: 04/06/04)

'Conrad' related a small piece of his history to Jooste and this had a profound effect on Jooste's interpretation of her protagonist. Jooste is just one of the post-apartheid women who is attempting to reconstruct history in a literary arena formerly dominated by white, male establishment figures. Jooste regards the idea of "women writing men' [as] a hazardous exercise ... it changes you", she says (email: 04/06/04). Moreover, as Jann Turner, in an article written by Fred de Vries for *ThisDay*, adds: "It's hard to know how much change you do to yourself. Since there's a need to develop empathy and trust, one eventually starts to worry about one's own contamination" (2004: np.). De Vries comments that the female writers, like Jooste and Jacobs, "... write because they say the unsayable. Because there is a need to purification. Because apartheid and the struggle were the most important parameters, smothering everything else" (2004: np.). The post-apartheid era, therefore, allows these women to reconstruct a past in an environment when their voices are no longer hidden and marginalized.

Because Conrad is the product of a traditional, staunch Afrikaner Nationalist family, he initially attempts to fulfil his father's expectations of him, and above all, yearns to make his father proud of him. Yet after his humiliation at the hands of Jack, during the lightening season in the veld, when Conrad "was sent up a tree a baboon and came down as man something changed ..." (2000: 208), he avoids his father and the other men of the hunting party. Instead he takes to walking in the veld with Bastiaan who never humiliates him. Bastiaan recognizes his innate ability to change, and when they come upon a veld fire, he tells Conrad: "A new fire for a Bushman signifies a new start" (2000: 210), and together with the sounds of the bush, Conrad finds peace, a peace he will long for while fighting in the war and which will ultimately renew him.

The young Conrad, however, is still desirous of making his father proud of him. Later, when he shoots his first eland, Jack is able to put his arm around Conrad's shoulder: "Well done ... nice shooting" (2000: 115), he says.

Moreover, when his conscription papers arrive, “His father is proud of him because he didn’t ask for the Navy” (2000: 129). Conrad longs to go into the bush, so he requests admission to ‘Special Services’. Jooste informs her reader at this point, through Conrad: “If you’re called up and refuse to go and have no good reason it’s an offence against the state and you can be imprisoned ...” (2000: 129).

From the time Conrad reports for duty, the novel rapidly exposes the ‘dark side’, which always fascinates Jooste, of the apartheid war on the Border. The forces are exposed to anything from mild propaganda to heartless killing. The war is seen as a ‘holy’ war and the chaplain prays that the enemy will be delivered into their hands. Members of the Defence Force also receive “Special issue” (2000: 146) bibles. The young, brain-washed soldiers fail to see the irony of this as they are constantly told to eradicate the “Bloody barbarians” (2000: 151) and the “vermin” (2000: 151), who are often only old women and children. Conrad tells us that, “They’re doing what their instructors told them to do” (2000: 152), killing the enemy, and during an ambush, he prays, “oh God! anybody out there, anyone who can help us now please get you out of this mess” (2000: 153). It is at this point that Conrad realizes he is “... no longer as he was. Something in him has changed ... he has been misled” (2000: 153).

While he is on the Border, there are regular letters from his father “unopened and uncensored” (2000: 157). He hears what a good job they’re doing. How they’re keeping the country free from Communists and safe for God-fearing people to live decent Christian lives in” (2000: 157). Conrad realizes that killing people, as they do Blink, is anything but Christian. After capture, because he will not submit to interrogation, the Permanent Force officers take up the eighteen-year-old Blink in a chopper and “flare him out” (2000: 167) – that is, throw him out at 100 metres. After he has seen a soldier with the bottom half of his body blown away, and another killed, and when two girl children are shot, one of them “screaming, dehumanised, crazed, screaming like a wild creature”, the music of his life on the border, the “chop of helicopters and the dull thud of mortars. The popping rounds of rifle shots ...” (2000: 206), Conrad changes forever.

He longs for a different kind of quiet. A quiet he knew when he was different. A quiet which curled and wrapped itself around the delicate notes of the five-string //gwashi or the tender flute call of a simple mouthbow or the silvery tinkle of a duet of thumb pianos with the wonderful sound that falls *like water in wild places*. (2000: 206)

Jooste's literary technique of interspersing Conrad's life-changing experiences on the Border with Beeky's constant fight to halt conscription is extremely powerful. It makes a compelling case for the justice of the anti-apartheid cause, and, in the process, the reader is left in no doubt as to Jooste's sympathies. Beeky pays the ultimate price for her stance and Conrad is forever 'damaged' – but the fundamental transformation he undergoes is ultimately beneficial to him. He realizes that the war is futile and that he can no longer live up to his father's Afrikaner Nationalist heritage. After 'klaaring out', going home after his two years of compulsory service, Conrad gazes at the portrait of Steynberg, a Hartmann ancestor and a loyal boer, and knows that he "... should always remain true to [his] blood. Be unquestioning. Fight the good fight ..." (2000: 235). He cannot, however, because he admits that his life as he knew it "has left me or been taken from me and my skin is all that remains and I drape it over myself to hide my emptiness" (2000: 212). The novel is an exploration of identity-formation – of how Conrad adopts a certain contested identity, and is then forced to change under pressure of profound social change, to reassess his humanity and morality. Conrad has killed men, watched them die and now has to rid himself of the demons in order to undergo a personality change and take on a new identity.

Conrad returns to his father's farm in the bush after the Border war as a liaison officer. He has to assist in the relocation of the San people. There is a new government and it has no use for them and, sadly, another form of discrimination is instituted. This time it is the San people who face prejudice. Jooste shows us quite clearly that it is the beginning of the demise of a rich cultural heritage that contributed to the rebirth of Conrad. It is fitting, therefore, that Conrad is a part of this change too and that the young Bushman, Tsoe, is there with Conrad on the farm when Conrad writes his story in 'A Book of Days', the present from Beeky.

This technique of writing, either in a diary or in the form of letters, is something to which the readers of Jooste's and Jacobs's novels have now become accustomed. These women use this feature to inform the reader of peripheral events or merely to reflect authorial comment/intervention. Jooste has Lily corresponding with a white penpal, Conrad cleansing his past through his diary entries, while Jacobs uses the diary form to narrate a past through the eyes of an innocent, observant Khadidja. This technique further allows the authors to expand their narrative voices and make the text more omniscient and less biased.

It is also fitting that Tsoe is there when the rains come after the long drought when "the land is renewing itself" (2000: 267). It is fitting too that, while Conrad and Tsoe watch this rebirth, a spotted eagle appears and "fixes [them] with its strange yellow gaze" (2000: 268) and that they are aware that this is the last time that 'Beeky', for they are sure she is the spotted eagle, will ever visit Conrad.

Like Water marks a departure in style for Pamela Jooste, but the subject matter dictates her style. Although apartheid as a whole was very damaging to the country, Jooste deals with a particularly frightening aspect of apartheid era ideology – the attempt to maintain control and supremacy at any cost. The experiences of the armed forces on the Border was nothing short of a nightmare for the young soldiers and their families. In *Dance* and *Frieda and Min* the style is dominated by first person narrative, a narrative often interspersed with humour. In *Like Water*, however, a more serious form of narrative, which switches seemingly randomly between first and third person narrative is evident. Of this inconsistency, Jooste cites the following example:

On page 152 in a skirmish the combatants are referred to as 'they' ... Suddenly there is a switch to the first person. 'I stood ...' ... it isn't a deliberate switch ... that is 'Conrad' coming out. It's his voice you hear, not the narrator's and not mine and I never did it deliberately. At that point his voice came out through me. (email: 05/06/04)

It is evident that the 'contamination' which Turner mentions in De Vries's article (2004: np.), can penetrate the subconscious realms of the author's mind and

reflect in the narrative technique. It becomes a form of channelling the real character's voice into that of the fictional character. Jooste's narrative evolves further with the inclusion of various San myths related in third person by Bastiaan to the young Conrad. Jooste's style has evolved from the first person narrative with which she was so comfortable in the first two novels to a complicated mix of first, third, narrative within narrative technique in *Like Water*. Although Jooste says that she finds "third person, omniscient very hard" (email: 05/06/04) she has managed to embrace the technique successfully and convincingly.

Jooste says of *Like Water*:

Like Water in Wild Places was the least popular with my readers. I think it has quite a few flaws ... but people who liked it liked it big time. It appealed to a different readership. (email: 09/02/04)

The reasons many readers do not like *Like Water* as much as *Dance* and *Frieda and Min* is because the "different readership" to which Jooste refers are those who respond to the challenge which Jooste, as a 'popular' writer poses. She deals with the uncomfortable, dark side of the effect which apartheid has on the lives of the people within the system. She deals with ancestral influences, distortion, conflict, propaganda, approval within one's community, the psychological impact on 'ordinary' people. She also attempts to show that not all Afrikaners are mindless thugs and that is why Conrad is allowed to purify himself. Although most of Jooste's readers will identify with the characters and the story line, the readers who see Conrad as their alter ego will feel discomfit and will prefer Jooste's earlier novels where Conrad's story is not so forceful.

The novel achieves what it set out to do, and that is to expose the atrocities and behind-the-scene machinations of the apartheid era and its effects on the lives of those involved, consciously or unconsciously. It is, therefore, a highly successful novel because as James Mitchell says: "many of the characters are closely based on real individuals, but equally because of a brilliant, non-judgemental empathy" (2000: 10). Jooste's more detached, less judgemental, less proselytizing, in contrast to both Karodia's and Jacobs's, approach is more appropriate to a post-apartheid context in which reconstructions of a very

fragmented and contested social and historical space are being attempted. It is for this reason that Jooste's novels, most especially, *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*, are very popular and appeal to a very large readership.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

In his article “Singular white females” which appeared in *ThisDay*, 20 May 2004, Fred de Vries writes: “... if there’s one thing post-apartheid South Africa doesn’t lack, it’s new female voices” (2004: np.).

Rayda Jacobs’s *Confessions of a Gambler* (2003) has won the coveted *Sunday Times* Fiction Award (27 June 2004) while Pamela Jooste’s *People like Ourselves* (2003) was a finalist for the same award.

Fred de Vries further comments: “After the monochrome male literary cry against apartheid, it’s now time for the voices of suburbia, of broken relationships, of deception, of idyllic youth and the loss of innocence, of traumas, of sexuality to be heard” (2004: np.). The post-apartheid women authors are writing popular fiction that engages with all of the nuances and complexities of life after the heavy flatness of the apartheid era. However, they do not ignore the apartheid past of disillusionment and oppression. Indeed, there is a need for a cleansing and a need for dealing with personal trauma. “It is impossible to escape the past” says de Vries (2004: np.).⁹

The female writers deal with ‘the past’ in different ways. Jooste introduces female activists who are torn between good and bad (Gloria), who form relationships with white male interrogators (Min and Evert) or who are destroyed by the apartheid system (Becky). Karodia deals with the vicious apartheid laws of separation and discrimination while Jacobs attempts to reconstruct a misrepresented or neglected past in *The Slave Book*. Both Karodia and Jacobs also attempt to re-establish their identities against the background of a discriminatory past within the fictional complexities of the post-apartheid space where their voices are no longer smothered.

The female authors are writing for a mainly female readership, according to De Vries: “... there is certainly an English-language trend to publish books for what is called the women’s market. That is where the majority of book sales are” (2004: np.). The post-apartheid English-speaking women writers are “...

eloquent, attractive, charming and know how to deal with the media. They often write with a foreign publisher or film script in mind”, says de Vries (2004: np.). Both Jooste and Karodia have their novels published in the United Kingdom. Jooste’s novels are published by Transworld while Karodia uses Penguin. Jacobs, however, has her novels published locally by Kwela. (As an Aside, Michelle Magwood comments of Jacobs’s novel *Confessions of a Gambler*, “*Confessions*’ would make an excellent film, and Jacobs told me ... that she has indeed had several offers which she’s considering” (*Sunday Times*, 2004: 12 of *Lifestyle*)).

Because Karodia, Jacobs and Jooste are post-apartheid English-speaking women writers, certain inevitable *similarities* emerge in their novels. Moreover, each author emerges from a *different racial heritage* which reflect different *cultural and religious perspectives*. These women all experienced life under the apartheid regime and, consequently, this aspect influences their writings. It is inevitable, therefore, that their protagonists, reflect their experiences within the confines of apartheid. Areas such as interracial relations, African legend and mythology, the covert operations of apartheid perpetrators and the conservative thinking of the Afrikaner are some areas which are explored in their writings. In this way the authors attempt to present a fresh view of a past distorted by apartheid. In *The Slave Book*, Jacobs attempts to provide the reader with a corrective view of the history of slavery in the Cape. In the novel Jacobs is rewriting a past distorted by white historiography as she concentrates on the origins of the Cape Coloured people indigenous to the Cape. Jacobs focuses on their rich cultural heritage, their contribution to the wine industry, their numerous skills which they brought with them from Malaya, and the introduction of Islam to the Cape.

In *The Slave Book* and *Sachs Street* Jacobs’s protagonist and her peripheral characters reflect their dedication to Islam. Jacobs’s proselytizing/propagandistic intent, unfortunately, undermines the artistic integrity of her work. Moreover, there is a distinct tension between Jacobs’s desire to defend Islam and her criticism of its social practices like the wearing of the headscarf, polygamy and the restrictions which Islam places on the women. Furthermore, the continued religious debate between Christianity and Islam, which could invigorate a novel, dominates and is discomfiting.¹⁰

In contrast, Karodia who also debates the Islam practice of polygamy and focuses on arranged marriages, does not proselytize, nor is her defence of Islam propagandistic. Yet Karodia, like Jacobs, clearly disapproves of these social practices.

Karodia does, however, extend her criticism beyond the social practices of Islam. In *A Shattering of Silence*, she attacks the Catholic religion and questions their intentions in colonialist Mozambique and whether their attempt to convert the locals to Catholicism is at the cost of the indigenous culture. In *Other Secrets* she presents her readers with the complex nature of cultural and religious traditions within one family. Abdul is Indian and a Muslim while Delia is Coloured and Christian. Unlike Jacobs, Karodia does not allow any one religion to dominate and triumph, but her characters reflect understanding for the different religious beliefs and are, therefore, less in the service of an author's tendentious ideology.

Jooste does not concentrate on any religion per se, but mentions both the Muslim and Christian religions of the Cape Coloured community of the Valley in *Dance*. She is only interested in religious beliefs insofar as they are a part of the Cape Coloured culture. However, in *Frieda and Min*, Jooste satirizes the Jewish Kugel women who 'religiously' practise apartheid while constantly attending shul. In addition, she hints at their previous victimization before coming to South Africa and the fact that it somehow does not affect their apartheid practices. In *Like Water*, Jooste merely alludes to the hypocrisy of church-going Afrikaner Nationalists; she does not single out any particular religion.

Although all three authors deal with religion and religion beliefs, it is Jacobs's novels that emerge as having 'religion' as a major theme, whereas the other two authors merely point out their place within the context of the action in their novels. In post-apartheid literature a more detached, less judgemental, less proselytizing approach is more appropriate, and reconstructs of a very fragmented religious and social historical space are being attempted by these women authors. Jooste seems to be able to achieve this ideal approach with more expertise than either Karodia or Jacobs.

Jooste expands her discussion of spirituality to the inclusion of San mythology into her literature. Like Jacobs, Jooste is attempting to recuperate and reinterpret a past that has been distorted by white historiography. While Jacobs examines slavery in the Cape, the inclusion of San legend by Jooste reflects the tendency of post-apartheid fiction to concentrate on a previously neglected aspect of our history.

Jooste's concentration on San legend in *Like Water* is both informative and entertaining. The style used is that of oral tradition so that the legends lose none of their lyricism. However, it is the spiritual and insightful depth that enhances the literary art of the writing.

This recognition of the richness and value of the San mythology and culture is also reflected in Jacobs's novel, *The Slave Book*. Harman, a 'boer' of mixed blood, has the same respect for, and affinity with, the San, that Conrad has in *Like Water*. Jacobs shows her reader how the early San were exploited by the white 'boer', but her flirtation with the San also allows her to show, like Jooste, that theirs is a rich cultural heritage which post-apartheid South Africa should nurture.

Because apartheid was "the system of segregation or discrimination on grounds of race in force in South Africa 1949-91" (*South African Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 2002: 48), race and colour were huge issues during those years. Women's, both of white and those of 'colour', voices during apartheid were smothered by the system. However, since the end of apartheid, according to de Vries's article for *ThisDay*, "... There has been an increase of women writers – ... mainly white and English speaking." He adds that this is especially noticeable "... after the monochrome (male) literary cry against apartheid ..." (2004: np.).

However, there has not only been an increase in white female writers, but women of 'colour' are also writing successfully. Both Karodia and Jacobs would previously have had their voices smothered by the 'monochrome' society of apartheid. They experienced discrimination according to 'colour', and their novels deal with these issues in detail.

Jacobs traces the origin of the Cape Coloureds by providing a corrective history of slavery in the Cape while Karodia concentrates on the exclusion of people of 'colour' within apartheid society. Both women attempt to recuperate a past in their need to regain their identities in a society where to be Coloured meant denial of identity. Their characters reflect rejection in this colour-dominated society and the trauma experienced. The emergence of women authors of 'colour' cannot, therefore, be ignored for they too now have voices in post-apartheid literature.

Jooste, a "Singular white female" (2004: np.) also deals with the lives of the Cape Coloured community of the Cape in her novel, *Dance*. Unlike Jacobs's and Karodia's novels, which tend to reflect propagandistic intent, Jooste remains detached adding to the artistic integrity of her work. However, in fairness, it must be observed that Jooste does not need to regain a lost identity.

Jacobs's attempt to regain an identity had led her to focus on her religion, Islam. "She prefers to be called Muslim, to be referred by her religion but she is in fact a woman of colour", says Jooste in an interview with Mike Nicol (31/07/2001). Jacobs reinforces this view with her comment in her article "Identity" (19/10/03). She says, "Further displacement upon my return to South Africa. An eventual recovery of identity. Culture and identity is inextricably linked with religion."

These women, whose voices were smothered during apartheid, now write in an attempt to gain an identity and a dignity denied them.

In their attempt to regain an identity Karodia and Jacobs's novels explore the culture and religion of 'people of colour' within the apartheid society. Moreover, these women, consciously or subconsciously, identify with their protagonists and the communities within which they find themselves. Moreover, Karodia's writing is largely therapeutic. As she identifies with her protagonists, she undergoes a cleansing process and establishes an identity for herself no longer tainted by insecurity and bitterness. In *A Shattering of Silence*, Faith regains her voice which was lost as a result of trauma. Karodia, a post-apartheid female writer, has a voice denied her earlier. Meena, in *Other Secrets*, purifies herself in London in an attempt to regain her identity.

In *Sachs Street*, Rayda Jacobs also identifies with Khadidja, her protagonist/narrator. Jacobs denies that she is Khadidja in *Sachs Street*. She says:

Khadidja as a character, is not autobiographical at all. I had no issues with my hair, or a white grandmother, or anything of the sort. Neither did I grow up in the BoKaap. I did know a fireman, however, and he is exactly portrayed in the novel. I am not Khadidja in the novel, although there are some similarities.

Ulf is a real person, and atheist, and a very dear friend. We have never had a romantic relationship, and have no plans in that direction. He is like a mentor to me. I don't think Khadidja had a dilemma, but her white granny taking her to church, and the stories of Jesus in school had a great impact on her, resulting in her confusion later in life. (email: 23/01/04)

The abovementioned statements need analysis. A great deal of *Sachs Street* focuses on Khadidja's relationship with the fireman, Storm. The admission that Ulf is real, supports the suspicion of 'autobiographical' sections in the novel.¹¹ In addition, the very fact that *Sachs Street*, and *The Slave Book* to a lesser degree, has an ongoing debate between Islam and Christianity shows quite clearly that Khadidja did face a religious dilemma – which Jacobs admits in the words 'her confusion in later life' – rendering her statement denying Khadidja's dilemma, antithetical.¹²

Indeed, in identifying with their protagonist/narrators, Jacobs and Karodia now have an opportunity to gain an identity through purification and dealing with past trauma. They now have a voice to "say the unsayable" (2004: np.) as de Vries expresses this freedom to deal with the isolation these women's experienced during apartheid. In identifying with their protagonists both Karodia and Jacobs make an attempt to recuperate a personal history within the parameters of narrative or historic genre. Despite the fact that both Karodia's and Jacobs's novels expose the ignoble side of apartheid, there is space for the development of an identity previously denied. Moreover, the approach to their stories reflect

romantic love stories, which makes their novels less hard-edged and more accessible to the readers of popular fiction.

In contrast to both Karodia and Jacobs's novels, Jooste's novels are not autobiographical, but in some instances can be regarded as biographical. In *Frieda and Min* her understanding of Jewish practices emanates from the fact that she has Jewish ancestry. She says:

I went to school in Sea Point which is a predominantly Jewish area and am a quarter or so Jewish myself. I had Jewish grandparents – they migrated to Oudtshoorn in ostrich feather boom time from Lithuania. So like 'Dance...' growing up in the hotel among Coloured people, I am an outsider but kind of nudging in, if you know what I mean. I have Jewish cousins for example, so all these things are not all that foreign to me. (email: 09/02/04)

Jooste grew up in Dock Road, Cape Town, where her parents had an hotel and predominantly Coloured area where "gangsterism was alive and well" (email: 20/01/04).

In identifying with their protagonists, the post-apartheid women writers are deconstructing a past so that they can reconstruct an identity within the present in order to deal with the future and the complexities of a post-apartheid society. The authorial intention of the post-apartheid women authors will inevitably reflect their trauma and experience of life during apartheid. They explore the flaws of the apartheid regime for it is "impossible to escape the past" (2004: np.). Each of the women deals with apartheid and its restrictions experientially.

Farida Karodia's novel, *Other Secrets*, details the apartheid laws meticulously. Her characters are subjected to the Group Areas Act, the Bantu Education Bill, Influx Control, the Immorality Act, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, the Separate Amenities Act, the Population Registration Act and Job reservation. Her attention to detail reflects the degree of her trauma and her need to write for therapeutic cleansing.

Sachs Street allows Jacobs to show the effects of apartheid on the Coloured community before and after 1994. Her protagonist/narrator, Khadidja, both as a child and an adult, allows Jacobs to embrace the possibility of exploring life during apartheid in the Cape Coloured community of the Cape, and later the complexities of post-apartheid life. She mentions that after 1994 people still turn their heads when they see couples of different races together although the Immorality Act is no longer in existence. *Sachs Street's* Khadidja is a rebellious character as she defies the restrictive Immorality Act of apartheid. She blatantly rejects this law as she has one affair after another with white men. She also rejects the social requirements of Islam (as discussed earlier). This rebellion is once again Jacobs's attempt to gain a personal identity alongside a broader social history.

Jooste's novels provide a less jaundiced, less partial view of South Africa under apartheid because she does not need to regain an identity nor is there a need for purification. Her novels are, therefore, not as self-indulgent or cathartic as are those of Jacobs and Karodia. Although Jooste's novels deal with numerous aspects of apartheid she is able to distance herself from her narrative. Indeed Jooste provides a compelling model for post-apartheid women writers who attempt to regain an identity and recuperate lost voices through inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness.

Jooste chooses to deal with particular aspects in separate novels. *Dance* deals almost exclusively with the effects of the Group Areas Act and the forced removals from District Six (the Valley) to the Cape Flats. *Frieda and Min* and *Like Water* explores the "dark side" (email: 28/05/04) of apartheid and her apartheid oppressors, which Jooste says, "always interests" (email: 28/05/04). her.

Like Jacobs and Karodia, Jooste recognises that it is impossible to ignore the past and the need to deal with trauma. In order to explore the imperfections of the past she introduces young activists into her novels. These activists, Gloria in *Dance*, Min in *Frieda and Min* and Beeky in *Like Water*, are fearless and provide voices for women who were voiceless during apartheid. Being voiceless made women powerless in a man's world in a white-dominated apartheid society. The introduction of women activists provides Jooste with the ability to express their

silenced voices. De Vries says, "... a young activist in an isolation cell craves the human touch, resulting in a sexual relationship with one of her interrogators (2004: np.). He is referring to Jo-Anne Richards's activist in *Sad at the Edges*, but this observation can be applied to Jooste's activist, Min. Min's relationship with Evert allows Jooste to "... give the bad guy space to show his motivations", according to Richards (2004: np.).

In *Like Water*, Jooste continues the trend noticed in *Frieda and Min* where she writes apartheid fiction which reinterprets the past. This fictionalised history is the story of a real person called Conrad. Jooste says: "His personal history and conflict experience are inextricably wound up in the bigger picture. They have to be. So I can't say in all honesty you can discount the possibility of there being some kind of recording made here ..." (email: 04/06/04). Conrad is involved in the atrocities and the killing of people to uphold a system put in place by his ancestors. Like Karodia and Jacobs's protagonists, Conrad must undergo a purification in order to regain an identity, in his case, untainted by ancestral influence. Although his story is, as Jooste asserts, "a tiny little social history" (email: 04/06/04), it is also Jooste's attempt to re-examine a history skewed by white historiography which tended to portray Afrikaner men as unerring, trustworthy, religious authority figures.

Post-apartheid female authors examine the Afrikaner male who "was born and raised for that [apartheid] system" says Jooste (email: 28/05/04). These authors lift the protective veil from these white males and reveal their imperfections without reserve. "The South African man is portrayed unflatteringly. He's macho, adulterous, materialistic and emotionally immature", says de Vries (2004: np.). The Afrikaner Nationalist male is severely criticised by all three women authors. In addition to de Vries's description, they also describe these men as uncouth, pompous, heartless, abusive, hypocritical, and staunchly conservative.

Karodia describes Van der Berg, in *A Shattering of Silence*, as crude, overweight and self-righteous. In *Other Secrets*, she portrays the Botha family as a poor white Afrikaner family, members of whom are either illiterate or alcoholic or incestuous while Hermanus Steyn is pompous and arrogant and his son is a rapist. The Afrikaner apartheid police are shown to be ruthless and heartless. These males are the products of a background distorted "because of

political conflict and propaganda about a 'just' cause and approval within one's own community rising up through a system which is of their creation", says Jooste (email: 28/05/04).

In *The Slave Book* Jacobs shows that, although the Afrikaner wine farmer is knowledgeable and successful, he is quite comfortable with the slave trade, is annoyed by the English abolition of slavery, consciously fathers slave children by the female slaves to uphold the tradition of slavery on his farms, and is more likely than not to have mixed blood in his ancestry.

Yet Jacobs and Jooste do not portray all Afrikaner men as "mindless thugs" (email: 28/05/04). Jacobs allows the Kloots, in *The Slave Book*, for example, to recognise the dignity of the San and admire their affinity with nature. In *Like Water*, Jooste allows Conrad to acquire an appreciation of the San culture through the person of Bastiaan, a San tracker.

It is the Afrikaner oppressor who Jooste presents as the flawed character. Jooste says that "when the oppressed becomes the oppressor [the situation is] the most dangerous of all" (email: 28/05/04). Her Afrikaner men are influenced by their position of power as white oppressors upholding the apartheid system. They are ruthless when carrying out their apartheid duties like evictions, when they move in with their bulldozers and simply flatten peoples' homes, as they do in *Dance*.

Jooste also shows that male Afrikaners can be physically abusive. In *Dance*, the police smash Gloria's face with a truncheon while Issy is viciously beaten up by her husband for protesting. In *Frieda and Min*, Evert admits to using a 'beesprodde' when the police interrogate suspected troublemakers. In *Like Water* Jack is physically brutal and verbally abusive of his wife. Moreover, as the faultless, unemotional father, he terrifies his son, Conrad, and hates his daughter, Beeky. He remains unapologetic of apartheid to the end.

Jooste sees the Afrikaner men as "ordinary people in situations out of the every day [which] bring out potential in them that are also outside the every day and that potential realised is not always all that pleasant" (email: 28/05/04). Jooste warns about the "potential for darkness in all of us" in the same

correspondence. She feels that external forces trigger either the potential for good or evil. "The 'what/trigger/'how much' is important. It's a question we all need to ask ourselves" (email: 28/05/04). Jooste's ability to understand the background influences which mould her characters make her work less jaundiced than those of Karodia and Jacobs. Thus, her novels are more accessible to new dispensation South African readers.

The accessibility of the novels of these female post-apartheid writers is also affected by narrative technique. The narrative technique used by writers either enhances or detracts from the artistic integrity of their work. All of the women writers discussed use their protagonists to relate their stories using the first person narrative technique. Jooste says:

I think the first person is good for 'bildungsroman' because you really are transporting back to the child and that is a nice place to be. Even if the story is cruel or sad, you write out of innocence and it's a nice clean space to work. Also, it should engage the reader more (email: 05/06/04).

Moreover, the writers choose, almost exclusively, to use female child/adult narrators. The only exceptions are Conrad, in *Like Water*, who is a male child/adult narrator and the narrators of *The Slave Book* who are adult males.

The reason the female writers use female narrators is because the writers use the narrative to rewrite a history skewed by white historiography. They are able to do this because they themselves are women who grew up during apartheid so their writing is rooted in experience. In post-apartheid literature these women writers have a voice denied them previously.

The writers also use their protagonists as their narrators. Moreover, these protagonist/narrators are initially children who mature to adulthood during the course of the narrative. This shifting technique of the child to adult narrator allows the writers to express multiple viewpoints. These viewpoints reflect the writer's attitude to the narrative which, in turn, influences the reader's attitude. So, for example, Jacobs is able to use her narrative in *Sachs Street* for proselytizing/propagandistic intent in her attempt to promote Islam.

Jooste uses her child female child narrators to aid her in her bid to remain non-judgemental and to provide the reader with a less jaundiced view of apartheid. Lily, in *Dance*, allows the reader to “catch glimpses of the elusive white world that controls her own”, says Shepherd Smith in an article for *The Times* (1999: np.). This technique includes the reader in the narrative rather than excluding them which is the effect when writers use their work to promote their own agendas. Jooste admits that although she knows the limitations of first person narrative, she is:

content as a writer to sift the world around [her]characters through the consciousness of the characters and the main protagonist in particular. I don't want a larger landscape and indeed do not think I would be able to grapple with one. (email: 05/06/04)

In contrast to Jooste's non-judgemental, less partial view of apartheid South Africa, Karodia's writing reflects an inability to separate herself from her protagonist/narrator's narration and her personal experience. The result limits her imaginative possibilities as her relationship with her narrative strongly reflects personal attitudes as she strives in turn to influence the reader's attitude. Both Karodia's and Jacobs's personal agendas intrude into their narratives and detract from the artistic integrity of their work.

The writers all make use of an epistolary dimension in their narratives so that there often appears to be a narrative within a narrative. This technique once again allows the writers to express multiple points of view – a further attempt to include their readers in their narratives. In *Sachs Street* Jacobs's protagonist, Khadidja, is a narrator/writer/diarist. This successful technique allows Jacobs's protagonist to tell a story, to express her emotions and to show her readers what it is like to be a successful writer in post-apartheid South Africa. Jooste uses letter writing to provide alternative viewpoints. She has Lily writing to a white girl in *Dance* and finally Lily's uncle keeps her up to date with events in South Africa while she is living in London. Karodia's protagonists both write their stories for cathartic purposes in her novels, while Jacobs uses Sangora, a Muslim slave, to write the prologue, epilogue and to narrate parts of the story in *The Slave Book*.

Jooste does not use a child narrator in *The Slave Book* because this novel is her attempt to write a corrective view of the history of slavery in the Cape. She strives to provide the reader with information of their origins and their cultural heritage and so she remains largely separate from the narrative. However, her proselytizing about Islam reflects a personal agenda. The use of a child/adult male narrator in *Like Water* is because this work is the story of a real person. Jooste regards his story as a “transferral” (email: 05/06/04) of information. She says:

It's a bit like 'channelling' I suppose but you aren't really aware that you're doing it and it's one thing with a fictional character, you don't have all that much control there either ... but it's different when it is another real person's voice coming out from inside you. That's the only way I can explain it. (email: 05/06/04)

The use of the first person protagonist/narrator technique is highly successful and one which aims to include the reader in the narrative. The women writers discussed have generally used it very successfully. The novels are accessible to the female readers of post-apartheid literature or as De Vries calls it the “women's market ... where the majority of book sales are” (2004: np.)

The new English-speaking women writers who dominate post-apartheid literature are intelligent and articulate. Their popular fiction reinterprets and explores the flaws of the past in a highly effective way, and will continue to gain a readership in a society free of discrimination.

NOTES

1 Sadly, if one looks at Africa today, much of what David predicted is true. Africa is plagued by HIV/Aids, malaria, malnutrition and poverty. Many will place culpability, correctly or incorrectly, on colonialism. War is still a reality as the various tribes and factions fight for superiority. Dictatorship is evident and exploitation by those in power has taken the place of colonial exploitation. Thabo Mbeki is promoting NEPAD and there are those who will feel that this is a new form of colonialism as financial aid from the United States and Europe will, no doubt, come at a price for they are sure to demand obedience to the rule of law and, most importantly, democracy. The latter is not easy in an Africa of great diversity where many struggle for a truly African identity.

2 All historical information has been obtained from Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa – The Real Story, edited by Dougie Oaks, 1989.

3 Jacobs makes use of the term 'Mohametan' to describe a slave who practises the Muslim religion. However, I will be using the more neutral term 'Muslim' throughout my analysis.

4 The British occupied the Cape Colony from 7 August 1795. Gradually the Colony expanded its power to include the Eastern Cape and Natal. "Imported British justice threatened the independent lifestyle of the Boers" (1989: 110) and The Great Trek, which started in the Eastern Cape, was initiated in 1836. The Trekkers moved north in search of a "promised land where they would be 'free and independent people' in a 'free and independent state'" (1989: 114). However, the British continued to spread its control and after the South African War (1899-1902) Britain annexed the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. In 1910 the Union of South Africa came into being. The British were in control of the whole of South Africa but it was a fragile peace as the Afrikaner was again the unwilling subject of the British. This dissatisfaction led to the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism which resulted in the formation of the Nationalist Party in 1914. It came into power in 1948. It was "a political party that stood for Afrikaner domination and total racial segregation" (1989: 370). People of 'colour' were not the only victims of segregation, however, there was also "Political segregation from their English fellow citizens ..." (1989: 374). The Nationalist Government voted for independence from Britain in 1961. Afrikaner Nationalism and discrimination remained in place until 1994 when the new ANC democratic government was voted into power.

5 The Muslim religion promotes the wearing of the headscarf amongst women in an attempt to hide their beautiful hair from all except their husbands "... the introduction of the veil or purdah, a sense of modesty ... women 'should not make an exhibition of their beauty'" (1970: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 12, p. 670.).

6 The Cape Coloured people are "an official racial sub-group for people of mixed ethnic descent living in the former Cape province, who were Afrikaans or English first-language speakers and usually Christian" (South African Concise Oxford Dictionary, 2002: 168).

7 Jooste, in response to the question, 'Is there anything other than a somewhat tongue-in-cheek comment on society when Lily finally finds a new life with Errol and his partner who are obviously gay?' says, "The truth is that people in District Six for example and in the Coloured community generally were very tolerant to gays and enjoyed their exuberance. Hence the 'Carmen Miranda's of the 'Coon' Carnival'" (email 01/16/04). There is also controversy over the word 'Coon' and the tendency now is to use the more politically correct term: Cape Minstrels.

8 The word 'reactionary' is more commonly used to describe a politically conservative person. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as "tending to oppose (esp. political) change and advocate return to a former system" (1993: 1272).

9 Although de Vries includes Jacobs in his article 'Singular white females', Jacobs is, in fact, a Coloured woman.

10 Although not discussed within this dissertation, Jacobs's latest novel, 'Confessions of a Gambler', once again reflects the tension between Islam and its social practices, as it deals with the double life of a Muslim woman who is a compulsive gambler.

11 Ulf does, in fact, live in Stockholm and did buy Jacobs a house in the Cape. He was an exchange lecturer at UCT when he met Jacobs.

12 Jacobs does, however, concede that in her latest novel, *Confessions of a Gambler*, "... you will meet Abeeda, who is surely the cheekiest and strongest of all my characters. And she is squarely based on my own character" (email: 23/01/04).