

BURIED NARRATIVES: REPRESENTATIONS OF PREGNANCY AND BURIAL
IN SOUTH AFRICAN FARM NOVELS

by

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submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

ENGLISH

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF L DE KOCK

NOVEMBER 1998

SUMMARY

This dissertation examines the way in which South African colonial texts may be read for the historical signs they inadvertently reveal. The history of land acquisition in South Africa may be read through the representation of burial and illegitimate pregnancy in South African farm novels. Both burial and illegitimate pregnancy are read as signifiers of illegitimacy in the texts, surfacing, by indirection, the question of the illegitimacy of land acquisition in South Africa. The South African farm novel offers a representational form which seeks (or fails) to mediate the question of land ownership and the relationship between *colon* and *indigene*. In the four texts under discussion, Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, Florence Ethel Mills Young's *The Bywonner*[sic], Pauline Smith's *The Beadle* and Daphne Rooke's *Mittee*, the representation of burial and illegitimate pregnancy is problematic and marked by narrative displacements and discursive breakdowns.

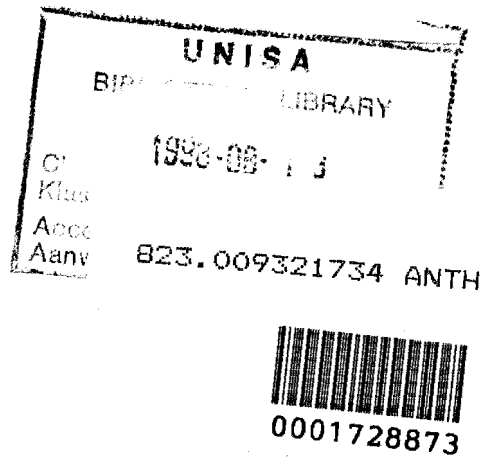
KEY TERMS burial, colonial discourse, farm novel, illegitimacy, illegitimate pregnancy, land, postcolonial theory, representation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to Professor Ian Glenn for e-mailing me the complete transcript of his interview with Daphne Rooke, to Dawie Malan for his endless patience and his faith in me, to Professor David Bunn for his generosity of spirit, to Peter Midgley for his graceful editing under pressure. To my supervisor, Professor Leon de Kock, for his gentle pressure, his inspiring dialogue and his continued affirmation. And finally, to my husband, Mark, and daughter, Dyllan, who make it all worthwhile.

ABBREVIATIONS

Daphne Rooke. <i>Mittee</i> .	<i>MT</i>
Olive Schreiner. <i>The Story of an African Farm</i> .	<i>AF</i>
Pauline Smith. <i>The Beadle</i> .	<i>TB</i>
Florence E Mills Young. <i>The Bywonner</i> [sic].	<i>BW</i>



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Commitment to Theory?¹

This study attempts to track representational breakdowns, discursive *lacunae* and structural *aporia* in the fiction of four white female colonial writers. These fictional cruces of breakdown and contradiction may be read as the surfacing of the sign of History in colonial fiction, often against the grain of [overt] authorial resistance, and are markedly evident in the genre of the farm novel or *plaasroman*, and in the representation of the foundational rituals of pregnancy and burial. The sign of History that is variously repressed, displaced or masked in the fiction is that of colonial land acquisition, with its attendant retinue of power and belonging, dispossession and alienation. In all four novels, burial is represented problematically, and pregnancy is inscribed as illegitimate, both marking tropes of illegitimacy that, I will argue, may be read off as the illegitimacy of land appropriation in colonial South Africa.

Indeed the colonial enterprise may be seen as a linear, historical narrative about land acquisition, leading from a demarcation of land into territory (British, German, French, and so on) towards its formalisation into law in, for example, the nomothetics of apartheid. The specificity of colonial and apartheid land dispensations, of course, lies in the fact that the differential along which distribution occurred was that of race. This was not, at the time, read as perverse: land acquisition may often be seen as the correlative of all history and, for my purposes, the history of Western civilisation, of which racial domination was merely a symptom (cf. Michael Vaughan 1982:126). However, on the basis of the novels considered, this study suggests that when land laws find coincidence with race laws the land itself becomes a site of difference, henceforth predisposed

towards the complication and vitiation of its more affirmative functions, such as farming, fertility and burial.

The 'sign of History' is a gnomic phrase which needs some elaboration before it can be assumed: it may be read materially, ideologically and symbolically as the colonial historical formation of South Africa, which everywhere determines the relationships and representations that are founded under that sign. It is the colonial *dispositif* or apparatus (Foucault 1981: *passim*) which regulates (and indeed creates) the conditions under which colonial subjects live their lives. Without wishing to reify the concept of history, one needs to acknowledge, nevertheless, that in the colonial situation the determinisms at work are particularly powerful, far-reaching and tendentious (cf. De Kock 1996a:12-18). History may be seen as a totalising force which penetrates all levels of discourse and all relations inscribed within these discourses. This is not to say that history is a seamless, 'coherent, monolithic process' (Comaroff 1992:183); rather it traverses the fractures and fault lines of colonial power relations and discursive practices. Hence, the constant irruption of the sign of History into the order of fiction is considered in the novels selected for this study.

This venture promises to be speculative, and intentionally so. Rather than setting out with a series of heavily deterministic tenets through which to read the fiction, each chapter is formally different from the next. I have attempted different readings in an effort to articulate different ways of reading white colonial fiction. This is not a dissertation in which assumptions operate in a strict *a priori* sense, but more a linked collection of essays and a tentative foray into the multiple readings that may be brought to any text. The calculatedly discursive nature of this dissertation in fact speaks to a larger issue that needs addressing, but which tends to be silenced in many Master's level theses. This is the issue of theory in South Africa, of formulating a theoretical lexicon through which to

articulate the localised knowledges that are housed here on South African soil. The study aims to present multiple readings, variously manipulated, through which to parse colonial texts. It is by nature speculative, and attempts to resist the seductive lure of imported theoretical praxes. It nevertheless attempts to provide what Jean-Phillipe Wade (1996:2) calls 'a vibrant theoretical experimentalism impatient with all dogmatisms'. This, however, is by and large an impossibly difficult thing to do: just as we need to deal with the crisis of our own coloniality (neo- and post), we need to unravel the connections that link us to American and European academic institutions and their varied discourses. To unravel such connections, one needs to go through them, in a discursive rite of passage that has, of course, no guaranteed outcome. When one comes to write as a Master's student, one is necessarily forced into a position of theoretical ventriloquism, in which Europe and America feature as purveyors of current reading methods, be they post-structuralist, feminist, psychoanalytical or postcolonial (and so on). There is a difficulty in resisting this textual ventriloquism, and of allowing the texts to articulate some sort of representational truth, outside (and indeed beyond) a deterministic reading of them. W.B. Yeats has said, at a punctual moment before his own death, 'Man [sic] can embody truth, but he cannot know it' (in Macliammoir and Boland 1971:122). In reading Schreiner, Mills Young, Smith and Rooke I am necessarily also articulating aspects of the truth of my own experience, which is that of a white, female, (post) colonial writer (more or less), but in so doing, I hope also to be localising or grounding these texts in their proper context, which is South African, colonial, impossibly historical, entangled in the gnarled umbilicus of disturbing power relations.

But there is another feature of theory that must necessarily be addressed. To have meaning here, in South Africa, imported theory must pass through some sort of refractive prism, because

meanings necessarily change across borders (indeed meanings themselves are always liminal), and when theory traverses a colonial and postcolonial terrain, the shift is never innocent. What needs to be introduced here is the self-reflexive nature of theory used for the purposes of this study: the ironic interface of a literal and metaphorical lexicon is worth noting. The discreet abstraction that occurs within the rhetoric of theory can be seen to obfuscate the literalness of tropes of burial and pregnancy in the South African context. To speak of a 'site' is not merely to enunciate a textual relation but is to speak of a very real place; to speak of a 'body' is not only to evince a textual boundary but rather a somatic, fleshy thing. I would argue that the easy slippage from metaphorical to literal discourse is part and parcel of South African sense-making. Indeed, it might further be argued that apartheid sought to and in part succeeded in making real its conceptual categories, in reifying and making practicable those value-ridden binarisms of master/slave, black/white and self/other, found so ably in colonial antecedents. In the case of the fiction, such binaric formations operated through literary discourse to establish and reinforce a national consciousness that in turn anticipates a 'real', distinct South African nation. Benedict Anderson (1991), Homi K Bhabha (1990), Leon de Kock (1996a), Joseph Ernest Renan (1990) and others have written at length on this subject.² That is to say, these binaric categories act as a foundational ethics, discursively inscribed, through which the nation locates itself and its Others (De Kock 1996a:12-18), through which the nation, in Bhabha's (1990) formulation, narrates itself.

In South Africa, this discursive ethics was played out in the most practical (and indeed practicable) of terms. It was heavily legislated, calcified in a strict nomothetics that thereafter affected the entire experience of ordinary, everyday life. Jean and John Comaroff (1989:267) have shown how colonisation in South Africa 'was as much an attempt to seize control of the signs and

practices of everyday life as an exercise in material coercion'. The conceptual was made concrete in the superbly disturbing twinship of law and *volk*. And we work to undo it still today (ironically invoking legislation itself, the letter of the law, in a Bill of Rights, to undo apartheid legislation). Because I write in an age of undoings, when we are not yet 'past the last post', I must (there is no choice) choose a conceptual lexicon, a theoretical discourse, that can cover the ground, and the new ground that is still being upturned.

Hence the discourse of theory must assume additional (if not new) meanings as it is used here in South Africa. To write without an awareness of this is to write naively, which, in a colonial or postcolonial context, as history has reminded us, can be dangerous. To locate the place of theory in a post-Apartheid South Africa, one needs to be wary of reproducing, in a discursive form, the hegemonies that ruled variously in the past. Trinh Minh-ha (1989:42) has warned that theory remains suspicious 'as long as it remains an occupied territory'. She goes on to add that

theory is no longer theoretical when it loses sight of its own conditional nature, takes no risk in speculation, and circulates as a form of administrative inquisition. Theory oppresses, when it wills or perpetuates existing power relations, when it presents itself as a means to exert authority - the Voice of Knowledge. (1989:42)

In South Africa, outside a limited academic circle, theory is regarded suspiciously, pitted as it is against activism, praxis, commitment. Bhabha (1994:19) urges us to undo this opposition and asks, rather belatedly one feels, 'must we always polarize in order to polemicize?' To unravel the South African historical formation one cannot help but make the territory of investigation those very polarities that Bhabha abhors; they are real here, reified into calcified forms that only time and (there again) history can dissolve. Theory, understood in a binary relation to politics, to a history of awful literalness, is unavoidable here precisely because it takes its place as the binary against which other terms (urgent terms for us) must take their life. In confronting the binaries of the past, we work to

undo the discursive fixity that plagues our present utterances. We can begin to speak now of a theory which is localised, hybridised and flexible.

A final (or perhaps preliminary) binary that needs some clarification before it may be assumed, is that of coloniser and colonised. I find these terms reductionistic, homogenising and ultimately unhelpful. A more localised terminology would have us speak of settler and *indigene*, but Van Wyk Smith (1990:9) points to a further distinction, between *colon* and settler:

The *colon* (for which there is no satisfactory English term) is the semi-permanent colonial sojourner who never gives up his [*sic*] metropolitan identity, yearnings, and pretensions; the settler, with varying degrees of success, at least attempts to negotiate a new home in what may be conceived of as either paradise or wilderness, but to which there is no real alternative.

I believe Van Wyk Smith's distinction is too exclusively delineated, denying as it does the hybridity and ambivalence that may constitute the colonial subject, who may (as in much of the work examined here) oscillate restlessly between both conceptions of a colonial self, in an attempt to stabilise a riven subjectivity everywhere under siege.

But this still leaves silent the place of the *indigene*, of the Other, who is in danger of being 'nothing in itself, but simply all that we project onto it, the repository of our desires' (Foucault in Carusi 1989:89). Carusi (1989:89) goes on to say (in her discussion on the limits of post-structuralist thought) that

The naming of the Other as Other can be seen as a thetic and logocentric gesture on the part of post-structuralism whereby otherness is foreclosed. The fact that I continue to use the term here is a result of the embedding of my discourse in that tradition, and the impossibility of finding another term which is not simply a euphemism. The implications of this are the impossibility of breaking with Western systems of thought, of doing something different, of operating a radical transformation.

Carusi does go on to attempt to resolve this dilemma by shifting to the term subject-effects, which

allows for 'the positioning of a subject as a discursive instance which is the effect of a variety of structures or discursive practices' (p.91). Here, at least, the fatal binary of Self and Other is transmuted, heterogenised, possibly even undone for good. But how does that serve my own study, which attempts to show that the rhetoric of Self/Other, Subject/Object, Coloniser/Colonised (the list is endless) was, in fact, most real, at the historical moment in which the four texts were written? That the only way (the *via media*) to understanding the structural limits of these texts is precisely through a theoretical lexicon which speaks *in the same terms*, within the same limits, as the texts themselves, embodying the very crises that the texts attempt to mask or manipulate. Hence the very irreducibility of the binaries marks a way forward to understanding the construction of these binaries across time. It will not do to privilege one term of the binary over the other, to replace 'bourgeois chronicles with subaltern accounts' (Comaroff 1992:17) or vice versa. As Bhabha (1986:164) warns us, 'the taking up of any one position, within a specific discursive form, in a particular historical juncture, is then always problematic – the site of both fixity and fantasy. It provides a colonial identity that is played out – like all fantasies of originality and origination – in the face and space of the disruption and threat from the heterogeneity of other positions.' Instead, the real analytic challenge lies in locating

the struggle among the diverse life worlds that coexist in given times and places - between the 'tendentious languages' that, for Bakhtin (1981:263; Holquist 1981:xix), play against one another and against the 'totality' (posited, realized) that gives them meaning. (Comaroff 1992:17)

The binaric logic of Self and Other (or whichever other terms one prefers to use) simply locates the perimeters of the struggle and inscribes it within a confrontational praxis. The theoretical terms mark both a limit and a ground of contest, mark an abstraction and a 'reality', a limit case and the enabling conditions. And if my hands are tied in this double bind of theory, it only means that the

tightrope walk across this colonial terrain is all the more precipitous, all the more exhilarating.

1.2 Farm Novel: Farm/Novel

For a site that surely must be located centrally in the drama of the South African historical formation, the farm and the representational form that goes with it, the farm novel or *plaasroman*, have, until recently, remained largely untheorised. Research abounds in the field of travelogues and travel writing, where descriptions of farms and farm life are quite literally inscribed in passing, yet surely it is the farm, focalised in the genre of the farm novel, that must constitute a zone of maximal contact (Pratt 1992:6-7) on the axes of the colonial history of South Africa. Yet, alarmingly, I discovered through the course of this dissertation that the field of research into the farm novel is largely bare, and indeed that the theoretical praxis is limited to generalised overviews culled from Anglo-American conceptions of the farm novel.³ This is not to discredit Anglo-American research but to signal the dearth of theory in what must surely constitute a central obsession, and a locatable site of this obsession, in South African fiction. J.M. Coetzee's chapter 'Farm Novel and *Plaasroman*' (1988) and Annalisa Oboe's chapter 'Farm/Land' (1994) are perhaps the only properly consolidated attempts to reach towards an indigenous generic form.⁴ Much work in the field reveals an inability to come to grips with the ideological structures underpinning the farm novel. Most references allude to but never conceptualise an actual genre, which everywhere reveals certain discontents and structural *lacunae*. With the land issue formally in debate since the South African Natives' Land Act of 1913, very little connection has been made between this highly charged issue and the emergence of a genre that either reinforces or denies the issues at stake. It is surprising to me that so little discussion should have emerged around the genre of farm novel, considering its

importance as a colonial and a postcolonial site. The farm itself, locus of so many collective fantasies and struggles mapped out in colonial time, remains largely unexcavated in cultural writing as an ideological site, while the theoretical bases for examining space and sites have been well traversed (one thinks most immediately of Foucault, Bachelard, Barthes and Lyotard), yet in South Africa we refuse to deal with this sort of spatialisation in anything outside the discourse of the social sciences, as statistical elements in so many dry narratives on production, agriculture and the Meat Board. Oboe (1994:139), drawing on Bhabha and A.D. Smith, makes the following formulation regarding the nexus of locale, history and nation:

When associated with the historical fate of a community, particular stretches of territory become the setting of a national past; they are turned into the distinctive terrain which roots the temporal development of a people and defines its characteristic individuality. Territory is relevant to ethnicity because of an alleged 'symbiosis' existing between a certain piece of earth and 'its' community. Identity seems to be grounded in locality, and communities are seen as inseparable from particular habitats.

When that 'habitat' happens to be the farm, represented in the farm novel, the necessity of coming to grips with the genre of the farm novel presumes far more than merely a case for generic study; it becomes rather the crucial, discursive meeting place between the Colonial Western Self and its supposed Other. This meeting place is precisely the farm novel's discursive form (and not merely, more obviously, its often formulaic content).

This is because the farm issues a unique zone of maximal contact between *colon/settler* and *indigene*. It is the 'contact zone', *non plus ultra*, 'where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination' (Pratt 1992:4). The farm novel, as literary discourse, can be seen as the representational form of those 'highly asymmetrical relations', alternately masking or repressing its historicity, effacing the Other

in an effort to gain coherence and integration. The farm novel as such enacts, in Van Wyk Smith's words (1990:3), an 'endless drama of domicile and challenge'.

Authors who have 'chosen' the genre (or are chosen by it) are implicated in the necessarily ideological structure of the farm novel. From Schreiner through Smith, Coetzee and Van Heerden, the choice (in the sense of orientation) of farm novel necessitates a profound engagement with that discursive moment that is problematic and situational. Situational insofar as the farm novel takes its shape, quite literally, from and through its historicity, from the farm site as history. The farm novel offers up a pivotal moment in colonial and neo-colonial history, a frozen zone of rigid relations between Self and Other, a space that is traversed by so many suasive hegemonic forces and modes of resistance to these forces: the *baas* and his horsewhip; his title deed and idle plough; the slave/*kaffir*/worker and his sullenness, his muscle, which turns the earth, ploughs the field and extends the *lebensraum*⁵ relationship. This 'space' occurs at many levels and needs to be understood. It is both historicised space and discursive space, the bounded mode of relation between farmer and worker implicit in the space of the farm, and the relation of the text itself to its moment in history, implicit in the genre of the farm novel. Both spaces seem to have escaped categorisation. Possible reasons for this include the obvious and unstable polemic over land tenure which is still with us today. The question 'who owns the land?' begs an analysis of the historical deep structures that have shaped but failed to stabilise this country. Another reason is that the farm novel in colonial South Africa presents an impasse. Because the authors in this study may be seen as colonial writers, the obvious representational mode that they have available to them is that of the pastoral, and the European pastoral can adequate neither the South African landscape nor the South African farm. The farm novel is premised on a real and representational site that is unstable and tenuous. It works

as a 'concrete and intensive illustration of the intimate connection between text and territory' (Faris 1990:151) or, in De Certeau's words, it shows the 'circularity between the production of the Other and the production of the text' (1986:69), and everywhere reveals its own inconsistencies. As Turner (1979:2) puts it:

Country literature [read farm novels] cannot be reduced to 'depiction' of the actual state of the countryside - that is its whole point. It works on historical reality, and produces something different. It works, moreover, in a variety of ways - insisting on the irrelevance of the world, or suppressing its painful contradictions, or interrogating, transforming or inverting it.

Once the farm is 'written up' in the farm novel, we are forced to question this representation that services an historical disquiet, a history of unease over the land and its appropriation, its encoding and mythic formulation.

The farm novel, to reiterate, more so than travelogues, personal memoirs and adventure novels, approximates far more readily the co-ordinates of land, *colon* and *indigene*. This triangular structure of colonialism or what Hulme calls the 'classic colonial triangle' (1986:159) is easily discernible in the architectural, historical and literary imprint of the farm. Yet while the farm novel is the representational form that most clearly articulates the space of Self and Other, it also contains within it an *aporia* - that is, the inability to conceive of the Other, the denial of the coevalness of the Other (Fabian 1983:37-69). This *aporia* is evident in real terms; if we look at the architectural and material structure of the farm, we may read it as concrete evidence of the settler's claim to the land. It is the totem of possession, a graphic warning to outsiders, itinerants, vagrants (so many Others), as seen from any distant koppie, of ownership; it is what Pratt (1992:64) calls 'territorial and visual forms of authority' which everywhere mark an inability to view the Other as a coterminous element in the landscape. This is a fundamental feature of the farm novel, from *The Story of an African Farm*

through to *Mittee*. This inability of the *colon* ‘to conceive of the Other in the time of [his] own thought’ (Foucault 1972:12) is central, I will argue, to the rhetorical and structural breakdowns of the farm novel or plaasroman. In this light the farm may be read as

a defensive structure that [asserts] at once its own existence and the ability of those inside the structure to defend themselves against the alien and hostile world outside.
(Akenson 1992:4)

(In this sense, incidentally, the farmhouse is the logical extension of the ox-wagon.) Why such a defensive structure is necessary once again testifies to the *aporia* at the heart of the farm novel: if the *colon* perceives himself as a legitimate claimant to the land, than against whom must he defend himself? Yet frequently in the fiction, which seeks to mediate these issues, the denial of the Other reasserts itself again and again. This denial is linked to another representational trope of the farm novel, what Coetzee (1988:9), Bunn (1993) and Oboe (1994) refer to as ‘the literature of empty landscape’, which really spells the inability to properly people the landscape. Attwell (1993:22-3), drawing on During (1985), speaks of a ‘crisis of emptiness’ that ‘remains a significant determinant of white South African writing.’ Coetzee rightly interprets this as the failure of the historical imagination, but one can readily speak of an ‘awareness of illegitimacy’ (Van Wyk Smith 1990:5) which mediated the settlers’ (and trekkers’) perception of the land and its codification into a pastoral landscape. We have to understand the settlers’ need to represent the landscape as vacant (that is, we have to ask ‘what does this need mask?’), and we need to investigate the foundational rituals used by the settlers to mediate the growing awareness of illegitimacy that accompanied their forced occupation and appropriation of the land. Gray (1979:158) speaks of a whole novelistic tradition (from Schreiner onwards) which was based on ‘the uneasy feeling of the white man’s failure to belong to the land, and his guilt at being an interloper, a colonizer.’ We may trace this in the fiction

where the pastoral mode of the farm novel becomes, in fact, anti-pastoral, as the representational structure is ruptured by signifiers of death and tropes of illegitimacy, reaching back to the issue of the land and its wrongful acquisition. This rupture must always necessarily (I do not want to say already), finally refer back to the relative absence of the Other, whose absence is the vacant space that marks the vortex of the South African pastoral, the farm novel.

It may further be argued that writers under the sign of colonialism can only produce monologic texts in which discursive possibilities are limited to predetermined origins (such as the trekboer conception of a 'chosen people') and predestined outcomes (such as the trekboer notion of 'divine election'). The potential dialogic function of colonial (and indeed neo-colonial) texts is stymied precisely by the inability to conceive of the Other as integral (if not central) to the text.

1.3 Illegitimacies: Land, Burial, Pregnancy

It would be an inappropriate exercise here to rehearse the history of land acquisition in South Africa.

The historical and historiographic record is well traversed and often imaginatively written up.⁶ However, one is inevitably drawn to what surely constitutes a central moment in South African history in terms of the motivation for land: the Great Trek. As early as the 1900s conventional historiographic attempts were made to understand the motivational forces behind this wave of migration. Agar-Hamilton (1928:8), for example, in a series of lectures delivered at the Transvaal University College in Pretoria in 1928, already dispenses with previous motivations such as the Hottentot Question, the Slave Question and the Kaffir Question, the discontent over missionary policy and alien domination, and offers instead the following precise formulation: 'The [Cape] Colony had been expanding eastward since the first grant of land in 1657 and the Great Trek itself

was only a phase in the age-long process.’ As to the real motivation, he adds ‘beyond the Orange [River] vacant land, to be had without Government fee or surveyor’s diagram, beckoned [the trekboer] on’ (p.9).

Of course, one has to interrogate this notion of ‘vacant land’. This convenient antinomy (antinomy, because in what sense can land ever be seen to be vacant, except by those who have driven others out?) has, over time, been repetitively and unimaginatively deployed in the standard discourse of history textbooks on the topic of territorial expansion and land acquisition. Frequently cited as the reason for this vacancy is the (variously spelt) Difakane, Lifaqane, or Mfecane, or, as it was interpreted by belated Western historiographers, the wars of conquest and attrition waged by the Zulu chief Shaka in the central and north-eastern parts of the country. But the older, more conventional narrative of a vacant interior waiting to be filled, when it is taken up into fiction, suggests more the stuff of Western, male-centred fantasies of possession and domination than rigorous history. And so the story of land acquisition, in the novels under discussion, takes a necessary departure here towards a darker tale, in which unfolds the desire of the white, male *colon* to fill the gaping *béance* that haunts him. But, and here is the crux, the interior is not vacant, but peopled by difference, by the unassimilable, by the Other. Here is the central pathology of this great trek and of the colonial fiction in its wake. The interior’s purported vacancy is in fact, problematically for the *colon*/frontier farmer, an always already determined region, with its own history, into which the white man steps, and against which he must assert his power and will. Yet for the frontier farmer/trekboer/coloniser to effect a lasting occupation of the land, he has to deny, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the existence of pre-existent landowners. As Gallagher (1991:26) states: ‘Despite the accumulation of archaeological, anthropological and

historical evidence to the contrary, the myth of the empty land continues to be propagated by the [Afrikaner nationalist] government and believed by Afrikaners.' Furthermore, she argues (p.26), this myth has been institutionally enshrined in Afrikaner historical narratives.

The notion of an empty landscape presupposes two different yet related functions: the one is what one may call teleological and the other ideological. The first is teleological in the programmatic sense that empty land may yet be filled, and who better to fill it than the white coloniser/frontiersman. The second is ideological in the sense that the land, being empty, cannot be dispossessed of any one - in other words, the ideological function serves a justificatory end in legitimising land acquisition. That there was an awareness of the illegitimacy of land acquisition cannot be disputed. André du Toit (1983:937) informs us that

in the 1830s, Chief Justice Truter and Advocate J. de Wet found it necessary to produce rather contrived and quite elaborate theories in support of the contention that the colonists had at no time illegally dispossessed the original inhabitants of the land.⁷

So masks and ruses are already drawn to negotiate the untenable history of land acquisition in colonial South Africa. This stratagem was not exclusive to Afrikaner narratives of land ownership but form part of British colonial administrative and missionising discourses. Schreiner, Mills Young, Smith and Rooke, all English by descent, all write under the sign of erasure, marking in their inscriptions both a denial of, and implicitly a response to, the issue of illegitimate land acquisition, most specifically in the rhetoric of belonging and (for want of a better term) *un*belonging. And always this inscription prowls restlessly around the place of the Other.

Which leads us to another inscription on the landscape, that of burial and the gravesite.

David Bunn (1996:x) discusses the significance of the grave in South Africa:

A grave is both a site and a sign. It is the smallest unit of owned space, assuring rest for the mortal remains of a family member, and as such it is a small microcosm of

the profound conflict in this country around land ownership and separate space.⁸

While the gravesite is totemic of a profound conflict which refuses, even today, to be stabilised, the ritual of burial rehearses its own approximates of land, belonging and self-inscription. The ritual of burial is precisely the bridging term, the ideological sleight of hand that the coloniser uses to legitimate his ownership. It is the one ritual which apparently allows him a visceral and intimate knowledge of the land; perhaps, after all, it is his only real contact with it. Bunn (1997:3) has shown how the establishing of gravesites on the landscape was as much 'an act of insemination as much as of memorial'. This is not so much for the deceased person who takes his final rest in the earth, but more importantly for the survivors, sons and inheritors of the farm, who use the ritual to reconstitute the social and cultural fabric,⁹ and to reassert their right to the land. Burial is an investment of meaning in the land, it is the cementation of the coloniser's claim to it. This is an ultimate codifying gesture in terms of land acquisition, the positivistic moment in which the son/inheritor claims the land on the basis that his parent/ancestor is buried there. The literature, of course, tells another story. Not 'the whole story', but a story fragmented and disjunctured by the representation of the very ritual which is meant to smooth out (to bury) discontinuities, to bring to rest the restless contradiction of colonial land acquisition. For what lies at the heart of this story is the fact that the grave site also marks an attempt 'to erase, either wholly or in part, the signs of other lives that had unfolded in that particular space' (Boehmer 1995:13). The literature cannot succeed. At best it can capture that moment of rupture or *aporia* in the form of the burial scene/site. In the farm novel, burial is always problematic, not always in the sense that rituals themselves may be imperfectly consecrated (this is particularly prominent in the short stories of Scully, Bosman and Blignaut and in the four texts under discussion), but more discreetly at a rhetorical level, at the level

of discourse, in terms of the act of representation itself. There is a failure or inability to (coherently) represent the signifying act of burial, which, we recognise, is not so much an act of restoration and redemption, but rather an act of concealment and, precisely because of this, a revealing instance of the failure of novelistic form to match an untenable, unmanageable content. The failure, in the last instance, of fictional narrative discourse to repress the sign of History. The failure, of course, of fiction to unravel itself of ideology.

Another inscription on the land is the symbolic investment of the land as female. More specifically, the correlation of the land and the female body marks a common obsession in colonial writing (both fiction and non-fiction), and has been extensively theorised.¹⁰ Loomba (1998:152) states that ‘from the beginning of the colonial period till its end (and beyond), female bodies symbolise the conquered land. This metaphoric use of the female body varies in accordance with the exigencies and histories of particular colonial situations.’ The focus in this study is more specific, dealing with the pregnant female body, where that pregnancy is illegitimate. Conventionally the pregnant female body, sanctioned by marriage, provides an obvious symbolisation of the fertility and productivity of the land. Indeed, in conventional colonial farm narratives, nuptial/conjugal (and hence legitimate) pregnancy often exactly mirrors the seasonal flux of the farm, inhering in cycles of reaping and sowing, naturalising the farmer’s investment in the farm. Indeed, such narratives invoke ‘an enduring love bond which establishes the earth as wife to the husband-man’ (Oboe 1994:148). Oboe (p.148) neatly shows how this metaphor works to collapse the woman’s cycle and the cycle of the land:

The values of the woman-farm-land are the traditional fertility, fruitfulness and warmth of the maternal womb. Out of man’s sowing of his seeds onto the mother-land, life multiplies and wealth increases.

Of course, this happy scenario masks the actual realities of failed farms, low productivity, capricious climate and (often rebelliously) sexual women. The issues are further complicated when that female body (correlated mercilessly with the land) is racialised, located specifically, as a white female body (perhaps even more specifically as a white Afrikaans or white English female body!). In being racialised, specialised as a particular race, the female body is thus effectively historicised. As Laura Doyle (1994:4) puts it:

[On] the one hand, the racialised mother figure harbors a knowledge and a history rooted in the senses of a racially and sexually specific body. On the other, this figure carries out the dominant culture's subordination and use of that knowledge and history. In other words, the race or group mother is the point of access to a group history and bodily grounded identity, but she is also the cultural vehicle for fixing, ranking, and subduing groups and bodies.

Oboe (1994:156) has also shown how the racialised body, sanctioned through marriage, can be harnessed to legitimate the nation, 'to found the white nation of South Africa through marriage and to consolidate it by producing future citizens.' When the nation and the racialised married mother are invoked, procreation takes on a special, determining function: 'a national struggle honored - or burdened - the procreative woman of the "higher races" with a special responsibility: reproduction for the race and, in turn, for the nation' (Doyle 1994:11). A patriarchal function is clearly at work here for 'in Western society the patronym embodies the forces of tradition and authority, it enables the dominant ideology and culture' (Maclean 1994:2). The female body, set against this, is 'fundamentally a problematic and unruly body; whose sexual and reproductive capacities need constant surveillance and regulation because of the threat [it] would otherwise pose to the moral and social order' (Smart 1992:8).¹¹ The female body can thus be controlled through marriage, but illegitimate pregnancy signals a *lack* of control, a breakdown of the patronymic order (the Law of the Father) and the influence it exerts. There is a further corollary, of course, that needs to be

articulated here: if we take up the equation of the female body and the land - and we need to acknowledge the representation of the mother as a foundational landscape - then the illegitimised female body must be seen as the illegitimacy of the possession of the land, invoking a troubling disturbance of the various claims that are made in the possession of the land. In Schreiner and Mills Young, the illegitimate pregnancies of Lyndall and Adela mirror periods of hostility and drought in the land. In *The Beadle*, Andrina has to move her pregnant body off the Van der Merwe land as quickly as possible, and in Selina's case, her pregnancy must stand for the illegitimacy that marks the order of Paul du Plessis.

But the equation of woman and land is further complicated by a displacement which surfaces readily in the fiction in this study: the displacement of the body of the female settler/*colon* for that of the female *indigene*. Illegitimate pregnancy is figured as a 'kaffir's' experience, starkly throwing up the issues of exclusion and unbelonging that link the two racialised female bodies, but such a link is generally disavowed by the authors under discussion and surfaces by indirection.

To sum up: burial and pregnancy are linked to the land in specific ways in the farm novel, but because the land is a problematic, historicised and contested site, these foundational rituals themselves are problematised and historicised. In the fiction, narrative ruptures occur when an attempt is made to represent the foundational rituals of burial and/or pregnancy, where pregnancy is read as illegitimate and burial is seen as an attempt to lay claim to the land.

NOTES

1. Taken from the title of Bhabha's (1994:19-39) important chapter, 'The Commitment to Theory', the interrogative is intentional in order to reactivate the urgency of theory in post-apartheid South Africa. Bhabha (1994:20) asks, 'is the language of theory merely another power ploy of the culturally privileged Western elite to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power-knowledge equation?' Questions like these need to be confronted

- in the determining of our postcoloniality. A debate in this area has been opened up amongst, *inter alia*, De Kock (1993), Van Wyk Smith (1991), Parry(1987), Vaughan (1994), Carusi (1991) and Sole (1997).
2. The issue of 'real' and 'imagined' communities warrants a discussion in its own right, for which there is no space here.
 3. Annette Kolodny (1975), Leo Marx (1964), Lawrence Buell (1989) and others have opened up a thorough analysis of the American pastoral.
 4. David Bunn (1993) is doing excellent work to address the theoretical deficit, notably in his distinction between the previously held cognates of land and landscape. See also Carli Coetzee's (1993) unpublished PhD dissertation (University of Cape Town), *Writing the South African Landscape*. Land and landscape are seen as discursively inscribed entities, formulated in the colonial imagination. See also Marquard (1979) for an analysis of the concept of the farm in South African women's fiction.
 5. J.M. Coetzee (1988:76) uses this term in his analysis of the farm novels of Van den Heever to evoke a sense of blood link to the soil.
 6. See T.R.H. Davenport and K.S. Hunt (eds) (1974); A.J. Christopher (1971); Crais (1992). For a more extensive bibliography see Michael de Klerk (ed.) (1991). For an exhilarating and creative account of the first contact between the Dutch and the Khoisan, see Carmel Schrire (1995).
 7. Du Toit does show, however, that 'the older generation of the colonists readily admitted to the historical realities of conquest and dispossession' (p.936) but by the 1830s 'the whole climate of colonial thinking had been profoundly changed' and the colonists felt the need to deny the violence and exploitative nature of their land acquisition (p.937).
 8. Interestingly, Bunn goes on to write that the gravesite was later used in precisely the opposite way, by the oppressed, in land reclamation debates.
 9. See Alan W. Friedman's (1982) interesting article on the significance of the burial act for the survivors. He says, 'The focus has shifted from the drama's central actor to the regrouping techniques of the survivors, from the immediate to the mediate, from the literal to the metaphoric and vicarious' (p.72).
 10. See Kolodny (1984), Bunn (1988), Smart (1992), Schaffer (1988), McClintock (1992), Hyam (1991) for interesting readings.
 11. This representation of the female body as 'unruly' is particularly pronounced in frontier narratives where the colonial, patriarchal order is constantly under (often imaginary) threat from the heathen, the Other, the wilderness, the darkness, etc. Woodward (1995:20) notes that 'the difficulties of settlement on the borders of the Cape Colony exacerbated such anxieties about women's bodies, which appeared to be both nature and culture. White feminine corporeality may have been part of civilisation, but only marginally.'

2. AT THE FOOT OF THE GIANT'S GRAVE: THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN FARM

2.1 *The Return of the Repressed: the Giant as Totem and Taboo*

In the opening lines of *The Story of an African Farm* only one thing breaks the flat, colourless monotony of the Karoo landscape: a 'small, solitary "kopje"'. Schreiner describes the koppie as a heap of stones 'piled one upon another, as over some giant's grave' (AF:29). That the landscape should be figured as a repository for the dead, and that the dead should be ascribed mythic proportions, is no accident. It speaks to several sense-making mechanisms that operate in colonial South African fiction and that cannot be discounted as mere similes. The 'giant' is a totem of several myths that have operated since the imperial enterprise first took to the antipodean corners of the earth. Like the purported inhabitants of Patagonia, the New World was thought to be peopled by fantastic creatures and giants, and this teratology is well-documented, if unsubstantiated.¹ The giant stood as a graphic symbol of Otherness, bigger than and perhaps beyond assimilation into the Western unconscious, capable of asserting itself as a residual trace in the drama of imperialism. Of course, the myth of the giant was serviced only as long as there was no actual contact between coloniser and colonised. But even after the first contact (and contracts) were made, the giant came to stand henceforth as the emblematic shadow of the colonised. A convenient shadow for the coloniser, a justification for his violent and oppressive order, insofar as it suggested the ever present threat of the 'native', the slumbering giant who might yet awaken, the 'sullen' slave or 'kaffir' who might still turn the ox-whip on his master. Coetzee (1988:9) figures this 'slumbering might' at the level of representation, as 'the failure of the listening imagination to intuit the true language of Africa' which masks another failure: 'a failure to imagine a peopled landscape, an inability to conceive a society in South Africa in which there is a place for the self.' Coetzee terms this sort of

white writing the 'literature of the empty landscape' which signals primarily the 'failure of the historical imagination' (p.9). For when the landscape does 'speak' to the writer, it does so 'in the form of some giant or monster from the past, breathing vengeance' (Coetzee 1988:10), suggesting what Roy Campbell named in *Zulu Girl* 'the curbed ferocity of beaten tribes' (in Coetzee 1988:10). Schreiner's giant is clearly dead but, considering that the first person we encounter on the farm has recently dreamed of ghosts, it is not unlikely that this giant may still haunt the earthly inhabitants at the foot of the koppie. More importantly, at a representational level, the giant may just come to represent the order of the repressed, the repression of the sign of History.

The giant is no accidental trope: while Luis de Camoëns was rounding the shores of southern Africa in the 1560s, the predominant myth used to mediate this treacherous enterprise - in Canto V of his epic poem *Os Lusíads* about Vasco da Gama's rounding of the Cape - was the myth of Adamastor. Adamastor, culled from Greek and Roman classics, 'grows to symbolize all the horrors and tribulations of Portuguese maritime history compressed into one' (Gray 1979:24). It stands for the unassailable and unassimilable otherness of the new continent. Not only in its rocky, seemingly harbourless coastline, but equally, and much later inland in its people, its landscape. Gray (1979:24) cites the following from the *Quintanilha* :

I had hardly spoken when a muscular and powerful figure materialized in the cloud itself. It was gigantic in stature, disfigured, with a huge, sunken face and a squalid beard and sunken eyes. His expression was evil and menacing ... His hair was matted with mud. His black mouth was filled with yellow teeth ... In a deep and horrifying voice, he spoke as if from the depths of the underwater.

At a basic level, the physical inaccessibility of the Cape of Storms is 'anthropomorphized into a giant' (Gray 1979:25). But it is more than this, for the giant Adamastor represents both a mythological figure and an attempt to signify a foreign, resistant 'reality'. 'It exemplifies for us how

a poet facing a strange Africa went about inventing the appropriate literary symbolism, where before there had been none' (Gray 1979:24). As Gray puts it elsewhere: 'Its essence is that of confrontation across a wide distance, its motivation a desire to codify and explain, if not to engage' (p.15). But Adamastor is an empowered force of nature beyond Western civilisation and, therefore, beyond the ostensibly civilising ethic of imperialism and colonialism. The Adamastor myth must also be understood as an imaginative failure, as a totem of the European's inability to represent the unfamiliar landscape (and, by extension, cultures) which threatens to subvert or disrupt his signifying system altogether. 'The figure of Adamastor is at the root of all the subsequent white semiology invented to cope with the African experience: he is menacing and inimical, and seen across a barrier ... His state is ineluctably fallen ... yet he is likely to foment rebellion once more against those who keep cheating him of his birthright' (Gray 1979:27). Both Coetzee and Gray, therefore, see the figure of the giant as the return of the repressed history of the South African landscape and of the Western imagination's attempt to lay claim to it, both at a symbolic and physical level.

Thus it is not unexpected that in Schreiner's farm novel, following on that 'white semiology' of which Gray speaks, the centripetal site of the farm, the koppie, is a giant's grave. The emblem is what Coetzee would call dystopic (1988:4) insofar as Schreiner sees the farm, and indeed the entire Cape colony, as an anti-garden; not a garden but a grave. As a corollary to this, one might speak of Schreiner's farm novel as 'anti-pastoral' (Coetzee 1988:4). Schreiner's farm novel cannot meet the obligations of the pastoral mode, that is, it cannot represent, in a 'backward glance' (Marinelli 1971:9), the patterned innocence of the rural idyll, with its benign feudal relations, its gentle toil, its Arcadian loveliness. It cannot represent, even nostalgically, 'the time of the

forefathers as an exemplary age when the garden of myth became actualized in history' (Coetzee 1988:4). For, as Coetzee has it, Schreiner's African farm 'seems to lie outside history' (p.4). And yet history, in the figure of the giant, is ever ready to reassert itself, to present itself as the return of the repressed, to lay claim to its proper birthright. Schreiner, as both coloniser and novelist, is understandably stymied by a contradictory impulse at the moment of writing: on the one hand the structural exigencies of the pastoral mode demand a nostalgic idealisation of the farm; on the other hand the farm she encounters in the Cape Colony bears no resemblance to the idyll. Instead, the farm 'mimics the idleness, ignorance, and greed of colonial society' (Coetzee 1988:4). The pastoral mode demands an idealisation of the landscape (or as Turner (1979:xii) puts it, 'the mystification of the ideal landscape') but, in the same breath 'that idealization involves spiriting away the labourer' (Turner 1979:xii); in Schreiner's case a black, dispossessed labourer. Schreiner must represent the historical reality of the farm, but that history cannot be written except at the expense of the pastoral mode. This is the representational dilemma with which Schreiner must deal. In her first novel, bound as she is to the conventions of the pastoral and limited by the discourses available to her, she must represent a past that cannot be, that never was except in the poetic imagination, as a service to a present that bears no resemblance to that past. Moreover, that past cannot be idealised - but needs to be - because history will have its way; it will resurface. In order to write with some sense of discursive control at all, Schreiner needs to forget the idyll as she needs to forget the historical reality that confronts her in the moment of writing. She needs, finally, to transcend both the idealised past and the imperfect present. This need stems from her attempt to stabilise her colonial identity, a riven identity, based on English parentage in a colonial backwater. Marquard (1979:297) suggests that Schreiner was 'the first of the South African novelists to see self-definition

as intimately connected with environment.’ One may argue that Schreiner’s identity hinged on her ability (or inability) to come to terms with the colonial past which she inherited, to abbreviate the connection between herself and the land which she occupied, and to do this she needed to transcend the ugly historical fact of colonial land acquisition. Dan Jacobson (in Clingman 1990:41) has remarked that a colonial culture ‘is one which has no memory’. Clingman (p.41) goes on to agree with him, in the sense ‘that a colonial culture must needs repress the real history of violent aggrandizement that underlies its claim to the colonized land as a natural right.’ This repressed history, I will argue, is figured in the giant’s grave, the koppie. Indeed, it is a key focalisation of Schreiner’s farm novel. This will prove to be the *mise en abyme* of the novel, not least in the fact that it houses the historical and cultural signs of the first inhabitant of the land, the bushman, now absented but, by dint of the legacy of his drawings, ever-present.

2.2 On Power and Property

At the foot of this ‘giant’s grave’ lies the farm:

First, the stone-walled ‘sheep-kraals’ and Kaffir huts; beyond them the dwelling house - a square red-brick building with thatched roof. (AF:29)

The architectonics of the farm are telling; nestled at the foot of the koppie, the homestead is dwarfed by it. The layout of the farm presupposes the social and hierarchical relation of livestock, ‘kaffir’ and landowner. The ‘sheep-kraals’ and ‘kaffir huts’ are both syntactically and materially linked together, in the conjunctive ‘and’, and in the fact that they are both ‘stone-walled’. In contrast, the ‘dwelling house’ is made of red brick, suggesting a different order of civilisation and status. The crude stone walls, which may be seen as a form of containment, cannot compete with manufactured red brick. But it is interesting to note that the bounded living space of sheep and ‘kaffirs’ is forged

of the same material as the koppie (with its 'heap of stones'), suggesting a far more integral link with it than with the dwelling house.

And it is in the 'dwelling house' that the first human character is encountered: Tant Sannie, the Boer woman, slumbering restlessly in her bed, dreaming not of her first and second husbands, one of whose graves marks the farm, but of the sheep's trotters that she consumed for dinner. Again, the functional and relational nature of the farm constituents is laid bare: this is a sheep farm; the sheep are husbanded by 'kaffirs' and, later we learn, a German herd-boy, but are consumed by the Boer woman. This rather garish image of consumption suggests a far less benign relationship with the farm. Though the farm may be seen as a pre-capitalist model of feudal relations, this act of consumption, which later finds its apotheosis in Bonaparte Blenkins, suggests the advent of a far more sophisticated and imperial mode of relationship, firmly imbricated on a capitalist model of a highly individuated will to power.

But the overriding fact is that the farm, in Schreiner's dystopic novel, is offered to us as a static model of feudal relations only partially, but not significantly, penetrated by a newer order of things. To some extent it may be said that this is the partial displacement of a pastoral mode of life by what may be called, for want of a better term, a modernising, capitalist one, much in the same way that Bonaparte Blenkins usurps and destroys Otto, atavist of the Arcadian good shepherd. But just as Bonaparte is figured as a transient and temporary influence, and just as Waldo steps in to replace Otto, so what inures is not a sense of change but of the inflexibility and stasis of the pastoral model which destroys its participants as it seeks to reproduce them. Gray (1979:139) sees the farm as 'immemorial, resistant to change, isolated and a complete world unto itself.' Those who survive it (Em, Tant Sannie, Gregory Rose) are profoundly lacking in historical insight and are unable to

enact any sort of self-reflexivity (though Gregory Rose does achieve this in the end by an inversion of gender, and Em through a kind of robust simplicity). Those who are destroyed or subsumed by it (Waldo, and especially Lyndall) are so on account of their awareness of themselves as historical beings. For as Coetzee (1988:11) rightly puts it,

The literature of white pastoral marks off for itself, and defends, a territory 'outside' history, where the disturbing realities of land and labour can be bracketed off, and questions of justice and power translated into questions of legal succession and personal relationships between masters and servants.

Except that those who are afflicted with the 'ache' of history cannot fully accept this cordoned off zone of rigid intentionalities. For Schreiner, however, writing in 1883, what is immediately at issue is not the illegitimacy and coercive nature of land ownership nor the issue of black labour, but rather, in a displaced form, and out of her own limited experience, the oppression of the female and the oppression of the spirit. However, I shall argue that these two things cannot neatly be separated from the others. And this is where the discontinuities in the novel show their face. For Lyndall's state of disempowerment comes not so much as a result of being female, but rather as a result of being *landless*. As Lyndall painfully blurts out to Em,

'When you are seventeen this Boerwoman will go; you will have this farm and everything that is upon it for your own; but I ... will have nothing.' (AF:39)

And her kinship with Waldo is not only based on the fact that they share a commonness of spirit, that 'under the skin [they are both] sentient being[s] writhing in anguish' (AF:139), but more tangibly in the fact that they are 'both poor, both young, both friendless' (AF:177). Of course, Schreiner uses their common status to launch an invective against patriarchal privilege which, in spite of Lyndall and Waldo's shared poverty, will favour Waldo over her. But the basis of her argument, the torque of Lyndall's predicament, is that she is dispossessed, that she is not a landowner and is therefore

disempowered. Had she been a rich woman, and had she owned a farm of her own, *African Farm* would probably never have been written.

Waldo and Lyndall's shared *anomie* is rooted in the fact that they know too keenly 'the little cankered kingdom of the tangible' (*AF*:271), that they have too keen a sense of their own materiality - Waldo in constant spiritual resistance to it; Lyndall learning to manipulate it. Yet both are inescapably a part of it. Both Lyndall and Waldo venture away from the farm towards the 'material paradise' of the city, only to discover that it is not so different from life on the farm, that it reproduces rather than repudiates the relationships of power that exist on the farm. Waldo's experience of the transport rider's brutal beating of the 'black ox' (*AF*:240) is not so different from his own beating at the hands of Bonaparte Blenkins (*AF*:115). That Schreiner fails to use the black ox as a metaphor for black labour speaks of the limit of her own historical imagination. Her horizon of limit precludes any investigation into the real injustices of the system that went beyond the female and the individual spirit. This is not to degrade the advances that Schreiner did make. As Isobel Hofmeyr (1983:154) reminds us, 'Schreiner was a nineteenth century middle class colonial woman, whose views were neither isolated nor aberrational.' Yet out of her own historical fixedness, speaking from an historically determined position, she managed to reinvent not only the conventions of rural colonial life (she was an autodidact who tried to rise above the conventions imposed on her) but also (perhaps more importantly) the conventions of novel writing.² That this challenge should tally with European thought of the day, and that it should largely take the form of a nascent feminism, is no reason to decry the fact that she was unable to take her critique further onto the level of race and dispossession. (Gordimer (1983:97), however, reads Schreiner's interest in feminist ideas as 'bizarre' and as a failure to confront the 'actual problem' at the time, which was one of race.

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Lewis (1996b:28) develops this argument in another direction.) However, I intend to argue that the issues of race and dispossession do surface in the novel through indirection, and that they surface precisely at those moments when Schreiner's representational control breaks down.

For Schreiner, Lyndall's predicament centres on the issue of power or, more pointedly, the lack thereof. Lyndall's obsessive thinking around the subject - her intense admiration for Napoleon, sheer will to power, for one - mirrors her creator's. As Cherry Wilhelm (1981:2) says:

Schreiner understood and admired power because her circumstances excluded her from it. Her experience was of subservience, deprivation, powerlessness, humiliation and dependence. This was true of her situation as child versus parent, as governess versus employer, as colonial versus European, as Englishwoman versus Boer landowner, as woman versus man ... Her life was a story of trying to negotiate on grossly unequal terms. As a child she had no power to prevent her mother's beatings; ... as a governess she was forced to accept poor wages, petty tyranny and hard labour; as a poor Englishwoman she had no rights over the land.

Lyndall learns all too quickly that if power is not only linked to maleness but, for want of a better word, landedness³ (Waldo is male but landless and therefore powerless), then she is doubly excluded from the systems of power and she must be content, like so many other women in history, 'who, having power, but being denied the right to exercise it openly, rule in the dark, covertly, and by stealth, through the men whose passions they feed on, and by whom they climb' (*AF*:179). Schreiner's formulation here is curious: the parenthetical 'having power' is quickly subverted by the terms 'denied', 'covertly' and 'stealth'. The kind of power women must cull from their experience as women is no power at all; it is sickly, spurious and parasitic. It is no wonder that Lyndall is unable and unwilling to effect a relationship with a man, sanctioned by law (marriage), that will afford her her 'climb'. Conventionally, unpropertied young women used their sexuality to make upwardly mobile marriages. More often than not (and this is symptomatic of much of the literature of the period and of a later tradition) they failed to achieve legal unions and resorted to abortion

and/or illegitimate births.⁴ This is indeed the route that Lyndall follows (there is no other) but even when she is offered the legal sanction of marriage, she refuses. Lyndall refuses precisely because she recognises the auxiliary, diluted and vicarious nature of the power she is offered. As Schreiner understood all too well, such power is no power at all. Instead Lyndall travels with her lover but denies him the right to remain with her while she carries the infant full term. The infant - inevitably - dies and Lyndall, debilitated by a difficult birth, locates herself in the region of the gravesite. This is neither accidental nor merely melodramatic. The buried child (like the giant's grave) signifies an order of repression. Not only the repression of female sexuality or fertility but, by extension, the repression of all systems of otherness that are excluded by the dominant, landed male power relation. In the particular eschatology associated with illegitimate births, the child cannot survive. If it did, it would survive as a totem of exclusion and denial, a graphic marker of otherness. Like the Hagar motif that Gregory Rose evokes, the birth of the illegitimate child implies banishment, exclusion and marginalisation. This must be hidden or erased by the dominant power precisely so that its own legitimacy is neither questioned nor challenged. (I shall be taking up this issue in chapter three). Lyndall understands this battle between the weak and the strong; early in the novel, as a young girl, she remarks:

‘When that day comes, and I am strong, I will hate everything that has power, and help everything that is weak.’ (AF:85)

Throughout the novel, Lyndall correctly intuits the importance of power but deconstructs her own power by always measuring it against the established power system of maleness and property. The quoted sentence offers a microscopic example of this deconstructive tendency. Lyndall vows that when she is strong, that is, when she has power, she will ‘hate everything that has power’. She bears the seeds of ruin in herself, as it were. For finally what she must militate against is not the limits of

being female (which is the route that Schreiner chooses) but really the limits of being unpropertied.

She chooses her battle at an essentialist level when she may more profitably expend her energies in challenging something far more materially and historically contingent, the land and its codification into property. Schreiner reaches an horizon of limit at an essentialist, feminist level, and fails to tackle the material realities of land, property and dispossession. One may argue that this failure is a result of her inability to extend these terms to compass dispossessed black labourers whose situation, after all, tallies (too closely for Schreiner's comfort) with Lyndall's. If Schreiner had fully engaged with the issues of land and power, she would have had to draw into her schema those who are utterly dispossessed, the bushman, the 'kaffirs' and the 'maids'. Finally, Lyndall does not grow up to defend the weak (who may well be read as the dispossessed blacks) but is a victim of the very power that she seeks for herself. Like the Chinese woman's foot that is made to fit her shoe, Lyndall finally fits the sphere of an unpropertied woman in a colonial backwater (*AF*:177).⁵

In a telling scene on the koppie where she exercises her power over the pathetic Gregory Rose, we have the only real confrontation with 'a Kaffir' (*AF*:213) who, for the first time, is brought under Lyndall's (and perhaps we must necessarily say Schreiner's) focalising gaze. Lyndall parodies the 'Kaffir's' power but she is just as easily parodying her own power as she sits idly toying with and tormenting the hapless Gregory Rose, who is no match for her only because he is no match for any one at all. Lyndall's alliance with the 'Kaffir' must remain unspoken and uninterrogated. It is interesting to note that Schreiner mentions the presence of 'kaffirs' seventy-two times in the novel.

Itala Vivan (1991:96) goes on to analyse these:

In six cases out of these, this presence creates a narrative event within the story; in all the other cases, Africans play mere walk-on parts, and are details in the physical background of the novel. In no instance, however, do they achieve the level of characters, not even of minor relevance; and they never exert any influence on the course of events - that is to say, they never enter the action. They are always

confined to the role of objects observed and commented upon, only occasionally helping the characters as passive executors of the characters' wills and orders. A typical result - or, rather, symptom - of this strictly defined role is that they are deprived of language. One never hears them speak intelligible words of their own; the only time they articulate words is either to translate the whites' speech (never quoted, however, but only hinted at), or to mutter incomprehensible (and savage) sounds, or to laugh. Most of the time, however, they are silent: mute shadows belonging to the inner and outer landscape of the novel, i.e., inside or outside the farm.

Vivan's comment confirms Schreiner's seemingly absolute inability to represent the Other, or to interrogate the connection (in terms of powerlessness) between the landless whites on the farm and the dispossessed 'kaffirs'.

2.3 On Death and Transcendence

In the same breath that Lyndall alludes to the restrictive limits of her position as a woman, she says:

'We will be equals again when they tie up our jaws for the last sleep.' (AF:177)

Parity cannot be effected in this life; the historical reality of Victorian colonial power relations precludes it. As Otto puts it, only hours before his own death, '[t]here is a land where all things are made right, but that land is not here' (AF:85). It seems that only death offers the possibility of transcendence, of an escape from the merciless dictates of the colonial power nexus. And death must be seen as a compensatory gesture in the face of a profound awareness of loss and lack. If Waldo, Lyndall and Otto can be seen as 'alienated particles moving around the social stability of Boer upsitting and Boer wedding' (Wilhelm 1981:4), then death, in Schreiner's fictional schema, is the only thing that can bring their restless, shifting *anomie* to stasis. What Schreiner must deal with is the need to represent a world which is 'accessible only in the privative way of understanding' (De Man 1984: 81), through her recognition of a sense of loss and *anomie* (loss for a non-existent

idealised past and *anomie* for an unaccommodating present). But death offers Schreiner a representational loophole, a way out of the contradiction she encounters at her moment of writing.

Death offers, at a representational level, a unique moment in which the ideal (the pastoral emblems of the past) and the real (the rigid, exclusive power relations of the farm) are finally brought together.

Death, in fictional terms, is both a real and an ideal resolution to untenable issues in the novel. In practical terms, it offers a world beyond this one (the kind of world which can easily replace the pastoral ideal) and, at the same time, it offers a potentially integrative moment in this world, through the ritual of burial, through a return to nature, acceptance into the soil. Jane Wilkinson (1992:35)

puts it in other terms:

The unification of the real and the ideal is an arduous task, bringing ambiguous results. Access to the unknown (the pursuit and grasping of the ideal) and the interpenetration with the world of nature (the greatest possible adherence to the real) come only with death.

Wilkinson goes on to argue that, at a representational level, the 'grey pigment' with which the pseudonymous Ralph Iron prided himself as an index of truthful representation is in fact 'the colour of death' (p.9).

Too 'realistic' to be able to provide a happy ending that would permit her characters fulfilment in life, too 'idealistic' to content herself with transcribing the dystopic situation she saw about her, Schreiner sought some form of solution through her transformation of utopia - the 'better place' that is 'nowhere' to be found - into 'euchronia' - the better time that must, however gradually and slowly, be constructed, and through her adaptation of the evangelical vision of death as a source of life. (p.35-36)

Death is a way out for Schreiner at a thematic and representational level. The 'euchronia' of which Wilkinson speaks ties in nicely with Coetzee's notion that the farm is outside history. In order to escape the constraints of the novelistic discourses available to her, which a realistic representation would necessarily entail, Schreiner takes refuge in the figuring moment of death. Death is the end

of time. Death is outside of time.

In death time becomes space or space-time. Space is the now without the repetition of resurrection: an infinitely extended now, without recollection or hope, a realm of mere happening, of endless oblivion. (Metzger 1955:7)

Because Schreiner cannot find an historical resolution to the 'adverse material conditions of life' (AF:10), she must find an ahistorical one and death, in Schreiner's schemata, is profoundly ahistorical.

By examining the structured death scenes of Otto, Lyndall and Waldo, I will show how their state of dispossession and ambivalence towards the farm paradoxically allow for at least a partial sense of integration, but at an *ahistorical, transcendental* level, with the land that is not theirs. The transience of their tenure, or lack altogether thereof, allows them at least a partial recovery of quietude at death not afforded them in life. The 'final quietus' succeeds here precisely because they are all three (Otto, Waldo and Lyndall) landless and poor. Schreiner, however, cannot make the necessary corollary that the blacks too are dispossessed. For the landed whites and dispossessed blacks have their place in the immobile tableau of the pastoral. Homi K. Bhabha (1994:66) has said that 'an important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of "fixity" in the ideological construction of otherness' and indeed in the construction of all power relations. (This sort of fixity prevails in monologic writing where characters and their relationships are overdetermined by a mastering authorial consciousness and Schreiner, I would argue, falls into this representational trap). But a problematic arises with Otto, Lyndall and Waldo because they stand for an anomaly - that of 'poor whites'. The anomaly of landless whites interrupts the text as it occupies a position of profound *aporia*. How can Schreiner represent a social relation for which there is no vocabulary of representation? At the time of writing, the 'poor white' was an

uninterrogated entity, for which no representational term was available. Schreiner resolves this by reverting to a transcendentalist discourse which simultaneously masks and displaces onto another level the issues at stake; the characters of Waldo, Lyndall and Otto can only finally be recuperated if they are dealt with ahistorically, as individuated souls in anguish, set well apart from their social status (or lack thereof). That is, the whole drama is resolved symbolically or allegorically precisely because it cannot be resolved historically. Otto's death scene is structured as a recovery of innocence, a return to a childlike idyll longed for throughout the novel, because Schreiner cannot deal with the historical reality of 'Old Otto, who goes out to seek his fortune' (AF:86) in the anti-garden of the colony. Once again, Schreiner locates her protagonist, at the last, outside of time. When Otto is found the next morning, he has 'grown so young in this one night' (AF:88); to such as Otto 'time brings no age' (p.88). Schreiner, in the face of historical exigencies, defers to a transcendentalist, ahistorical discourse.⁶ Likewise, Lyndall's final wish is to be taken to 'that blue mountain' (AF:263), where hitherto she had fled the farm for, in Coetzee's words, 'to accept the farm as home is to accept a living death' (1988:66). (Real death is preferable to a living death.) The blue mountain refers to the allegorical narrative at the heart of the novel in Waldo's Stranger and eidetically links Lyndall's quest to a metaphysical rather than political one. Instead of dealing with real historical issues, Schreiner bows out to an essentialist discourse which, like some crude *deus ex machina*, forces resolution and closure. Note also Waldo's curious integrative moment of death, where he quietly 'ceases to be'. When Waldo is faced with the fact that he has 'no prospect in the future than that of making endless tables and stone walls' (AF:279), that is, that he cannot escape his historical destiny as an indentured labourer, Schreiner neatly offers him a way out that once more balks at representing more adequately the historical, political reality of the farm. Indeed, Schreiner

ends the novel on a doggedly pastoral note: Em with the tea towel and cup of milk, the chickens pecking in the dust, Waldo (the good shepherd, the prodigal son of the farm) in quiet repose against the wall. Endings like these should make us naturally sceptical. As Lyndall says elsewhere:

‘I have noticed ... that it is only the made up stories that end nicely; the true ones all end [terribly]’ (*AF*:41).

Waldo is dead, we know, but the farm is intact. Schreiner’s masking transcendentalist programme is laid painfully bare in her own words:

An evil world, a deceitful, treacherous, mirage-like world, it might be; but a lovely world for all that, and to sit there gloating in the sunlight was perfect. (*AF*:278)

Schreiner here strains to mask the evil, treacherous world with the lovely one, to efface the former.

To pull, with a mirage-like gesture, the wool over the reader’s eyes. But the semi-colon implicates the one with the other, so that Schreiner’s apparent sleight of hand ultimately fails. We are not left ‘gloating in the sunlight’, satisfied with the consolation prize of the ‘lovely world for all that’. We are left feeling strangely unsatisfied. What Schreiner wants to offer us is a richly paradoxical moment, but I believe she fails to achieve this. When everything else has failed, Schreiner can only offer up the reified figure of Nature, overworked and conventionalised by an age-long pastoral tradition, now harnessed in a desperate bid to bring final resolution to the novel. It fails miserably in much the same way that the pastoral mode of representation failed Schreiner (or she failed it); it fails to faithfully do what it promised: in Ralph Iron’s words, to ‘paint what lies before [it]’ (*AF*:24), to truthfully represent the ‘adverse material conditions of life’ (*AF*:10). Of course, this transcendentalist discourse must finally be seen as a compensatory gesture that makes good of a lack locatable elsewhere (cf. Easthope 1993:19-21), in which case, while this discourse attempts to mask the lack, it ends in revealing it.

2.4 Digging Down to What Lies Buried, Or Half-buried, Beneath

The startling feature of all three death scenes is, firstly, the 'mirage-like' discourse that Schreiner deploys to effect resolution. All three death scenes exhibit linguistic features or representational flaws. But secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the failure to effect a meaningful burial ritual is conspicuous. The promise held out by burial is only partially realised in some and not at all in others. Otto is indeed buried but what is striking is Schreiner's representation of this burial:

'Good morning, my dear boy. Where are you running to so fast with your rosy cheeks?'

The boy looked up at him, glad even to see Bonaparte.

'I'm going to the cabin,' he said, out of breath.

'You won't find them in just now - not your good old father,' said Bonaparte.

'Where is he?' asked the lad.

'There beyond the camps,' said Bonaparte, waving his hand oratorically towards the stone-walled ostrich camps.

'What is he doing there?' asked the boy.

Bonaparte patted him on the cheek kindly.

'We could not keep him any more, it was too hot. We've buried him, my boy,' said Bonaparte, touching with his finger the boy's cheek. 'We couldn't keep him any more. He, he, he!' laughed Bonaparte, as the boy fled away along the low stone wall, almost furtively, as one in fear. (AF:90)

The usual mediating function of burial is lost (and indeed the act itself is not represented at all). The final redemptive ritual is effaced and in its stead is a stark performative 'We've buried him'. Waldo cannot participate in the event nor can he participate in the equally redemptive ritual of mourning. Instead, the predominant feeling is one, not of sorrow, more chillingly, of fear. The entire representation is privative, marking lack and absence, and Bonaparte's calculated ambiguity speaks to both the decay of language and ritual in the rural colonial setting. The failure to represent a meaningful burial for the old man, following on the redemptive depiction of his death, unmasks once again the *lacunae* at the heart of Schreiner's novel: that none of the protagonists can achieve a

meaningful relationship with the land, with Africa. This is highlighted by the fact that all three protagonists (Otto, Waldo and Lyndall) are themselves in a position of profound ambivalence. As landless whites they mark a point of *aporia* between the fixed relations of landed whites and dispossessed blacks which Schreiner cannot question. Occupying the middle ground they discover that, in Waldo's words, there is 'no ground anywhere' (AF:270).

Similarly there is no ground anywhere for Lyndall. She is forced into a restless, nomadic existence which ends only with her death. Her death is also represented through indirection, through the eyewitness reportage of Gregory Rose. Like Hagar (AF:263) she is banished, exiled, dispossessed. The idealised 'blue mountain, far away' (AF:263) changes with proximity and becomes 'not blue now, but low and brown' (AF:264), a defeat of expectations, it would seem. On this final journey Lyndall recognises her predicament; a mist rolls away and she realises the defeat of her fantasies: '[T]here was no future now. The old strong soul gathered itself together for the last time; it knew where it stood' (AF:264). She fits her sphere perfectly. The mist rolls away to reveal the divided self of Lyndall even as she accepts her lot. As she lies looking at her *doppelgänger* in the mirror, which represents the 'alienated, *doppelgänger* reality' she lived (Coetzee 1982: 20), she dies. This final specular image is revealing in other ways; Jean and John Comaroff (1988:23) (citing Mumford) show that

The self in the mirror ... was the self *in abstracto*, only part of the real self, the part that can divorce from the background of nature and the influential presence of men.

The mist rolls back again (like Moses' Red Sea), another mirage-like strategy on Schreiner's part, and Lyndall is enshrouded in mystery at the last. The divided self is never interrogated, only asked. She is never buried. She evaporates, as it were, in a mist. The partial redemption she achieves at death, if only because the anguish of life is finally over, an anguish, moreover, directly a result of

her social status, evaporates as there is no proper effectual ritual burial to go with it.

Waldo too is not afforded a burial. His death scene suggests nothing less benign than an afternoon nap. Again, this scene is profoundly deceptive. Em is easily fooled. Schreiner, liberated by the knowledge that Waldo must and will die, can now play openly with the pastoral mode that so failed her previously. It is a cruel gesture, and the impish note that 'the chickens were wiser' suggests a final attempt on Schreiner's part to recover some sort of stable, unified coherence for her novel. She does this in the face of the fact that his dying is not realistically probable, that the death scene here is so obviously contrived⁷, as she is unable to interrogate the real terms of Waldo's existence; we see through this contrived representation to the defeat of the young man whose real future would be one of toil and labour (a striving and a striving, and an ending in nothing). For Waldo cannot, as Schreiner would have it, 'sit on one side, taking no part in the world's life' (*AF*:280), outside the ache of history. To be outside of history he must die. The integration that Schreiner offers Waldo at the end of the novel is shallow, as shallow as the pastoral conventions which she falls back upon. The reality is this: Waldo is a white labourer, life is 'nasty, brutish and short' and that 'lovely world' of which Schreiner speaks can never be his, just as a final integration with the land, this soil, the colony, cannot be his.

The logical extension of this, of course, is that if Otto, Lyndall and Waldo as white colonisers but as landless colonisers fail to achieve 'equality' in life, as historical subjects, achieve it only in death, what chance do those others have, the voiceless, landless black natives? But Schreiner cannot speak this. Instead, we have the giant's grave, irrupting the flat landscape, rupturing the clean, smooth surface of the text, a tale of things to come. But Schreiner's giant is still safely buried and the white landowners live on, unchallenged, reproducing themselves (as in *Tant*

Sannie), staking their claims (as in Bonaparte Blenkins and his wealthy widow) and fulfilling their destinies (as in Em's attachment to the farm).

2.5 *The Giant's Grave Again*

As I have argued, Schreiner's metaphysical, transcendentalist discourse is in fact a masking technique, in the face of the overwhelming intransigence of the land issue, which forces a sacralised, pseudo-mystical response to untenable issues in the novel. As such, Schreiner's own caveat that 'one judged what might be truth only by what was left out, and the reality by what was denied' (1923: 147-8) is in fact a working methodology which might be focused on her own *African Farm*.

It is those who are absented who require our attention, in the figure of the bushman, and those who are rhetorically dismissed and marginalised, in the figure of the 'ill-looking kaffir' (*AF*:35); in other words, the dispossessed. And it is precisely the koppie, the 'giant's grave', which forms a central, almost obsessive site of anxiety, the *mise en abyme* of the novel as a whole. In a telling scene which takes place on the koppie as the children ponder the existence and absence of the Bushmen, the issues I have discussed coalesce:

The children had turned around and looked at the [Bushman] pictures.

'He used to kneel here naked, painting, painting, painting; and he wondered at the things he made himself,' said the boy, rising and moving his hand in deep excitement. 'Now the Boers have shot them all, so that we never see a yellow face peering out amongst the stones.' He paused, a dreamy look coming over his face. 'And the wild bucks have gone, and those days, and we are here. But we will be gone soon, and only the stones will lie on here, looking at everything, like they look now. I know it is I who am thinking,' the fellow added slowly, 'but it seems as though it were they who were talking.' (*AF*:42-43)

This is a startling passage in that it reveals so transparently so many of the issues discussed. What should be the recounting of a political and historical moment (the displacement of the Bushmen by

the Dutch) is transmuted dreamily into a naturalised image of nature as process, timeless and ageless (the wild bucks 'have gone' and the children will soon be gone too). What was a discrete historical act of force and domination is seen here as merely a process in the great transcendental sweep of time. That the telling should occur on the koppie, that the yellow face of the bushman was once (it is implied) seen 'among the stones', that it appears to the boy as if it is the stones themselves who are speaking, suggests that the sign of history cannot be fully erased or transmuted. That, as Coetzee says, when the stones do speak it is only to revisit on us the order of the repressed.

NOTES

1. Cf. the journal of Antonio Pigafetta (1519-22) (Chatwin and Theroux 1985:30-32), kept during the three years when he sailed with Magellan on the first voyage around the world. Round San Julian in 1521 he wrote:

... One day, without expecting it, we saw a giant, who was on the shore of the sea, quite naked, and was dancing and leaping, and singing, and whilst singing he put the sand and dust on his head ... He was so tall that the tallest of us only came up to his waist.

Other early explorers such as de Weert, Spelbergen and Shelvocke also describe encounters with giants. For an interesting, anecdotal account of this see Chatwin and Theroux (1985:30-32).
2. Much has been said of the lack of 'artistic unity' in Schreiner's work. Her disregard for artistic control and coherence may speak to an attempt to faithfully render the South African reality she confronted. Or it may just as well be inadvertent. See Jean Marquard's (1983) attack on critics who read Schreiner for its lack of 'artistic unity', oblivious to the representational exigencies that confronted her. See also Gray (1979).
3. Bonaparte Blenkins, another landless male, understands this all too clearly, and rigorously goes about securing tenure for himself through marriage to a wealthy landed woman. He too triumphs, we learn, at the end of the novel (p.276).
4. Helen Bradford (1991, 1995) has shown how a misprision of Victorian code language has lead to the failure to read Schreiner as suffering from the guilt of an adolescent abortion.
5. Schreiner pre-empts de Beauvoir's *La Longue Marche* (1957) and Kristeva's article 'About Chinese Women' in Moi, T (ed.) *The Kristeva Reader* (1986:138-159) but is once more limited by her own historical centredness.
6. Gray (1979:149) sees a central theme of the novel as 'the failure of man to achieve transcendence, although the work itself, we must assert, is a demonstration of transcendence

(over the mean, over the elemental, over the unimaginative) at work.’ Attwell (1993:104-5), citing Gray (1979:150-54), speaks of the ‘intransigence of the interior landscape, the stultifying effects of colonial culture, and the futility of attempts to live meaningfully in South Africa. Transcendence of these conditions is impossible,’ Attwell says, ‘and death comes as a final defeat.’ In my own reading, the discourse of transcendence operates in the novel to ward off an engagement with historical issues – it is not offered as a solution to the intransigence of historical realities, nor, at a thematic level, as a moral or spiritual solution to the dilemmas of colonial life. Instead, it operates at the level of discourse itself, as a representational response to the problems of writing that Schreiner inevitably encountered.

7. Attwell (1993:104-5) speaks of Waldo’s death as ‘a rare moment of lyrical absorption into Nature’, suggesting that, in the last instance, Schreiner falls back on a pastoral mode of representation.

3. THE BYWONNER[SIC]: ILLEGITIMATE PREGNANCY AND THE QUESTION OF THE ILLEGITIMACY OF THE LAND

3.1 'A nation and a woman are not forgiven the unguarded hour in which the first adventurer that came along could violate them' (Marx cit Berlant 1989:14)

Florence Ethel Mills Young, in the limited literature available about her, has been described as a novelist lacking in insight:

Mrs Mills Young was not a profound novelist. Her plots are meagre, and her characters are rarely allowed to develop. You feel that she used characters and narrative as a means for depicting events which were in the public eye at the time. By thus forcing her people to fit into any event, she did not allow them to become personalities; at the same time she did not have a profound insight into the events or places about which she wrote. (Snyman 1965:1)

Snyman goes on to add that 'her books provide an interesting study for the reader who wishes to compare different authors' approach to particular events in our history' (1965:1). In this monologic novel, with its forceful narrative closure, its all too unambiguous *telos*, we have indeed the irruption of the historical into the heart of the text. In the midst of the master narrative of seduction/love/desire and fated death we have the revelation of an unassimilable historical content. The issue of land and dispossession is retold as a tale of sex and deflowering. The crude equation of land and woman, rape/seduction and (dis)possession, or as David Bunn puts it, 'the obsessively metonymic association of woman's body and the African landscape' (1988:1), speaks to unavoidable correlatives in the drama of imperialism. The willing victim in the drama, the female subject, must surely take her place as the correlative of the land inviting, in the adventurer's or settler's imagination, conquest, submission and, finally, abuse. Of course, what cannot be admitted in this tale, but which is everywhere present, is that other historical moment which centres on the issue of race, not gender - the manichean drama between *colon* and *indigene*. Mills Young, like Schreiner

before her, cannot say this, cannot give utterance to what is essentially a *non-dit* which saturates the text even as Young would wish it otherwise.

Marx's promising line from *The Eighteenth Brumaire* may be seen as an attempt to re-formulate 'the riddled relations between political forms and the subjective conditions of historical experience' (Berlant 1989:15), to establish, perhaps, an authentic symbolisation for the female subject (in this case) within the representational economy of colonialism. But it surely also necessitates a discussion on the concept of desire, where the national fantasy may in some way recapitulate the private or individual fantasy.¹ Implicit in the concept of desire is the notion of transgression. Jameson (1981:68) formulates this rather succinctly: 'desire must always be transgressive, must always have a repressive norm or law through which to burst and against which to define itself.' But Jameson also warns us that desire, in the very act of transgression, simply ends up in reconfirming the law against which it pits itself, whether it be the law of the Father or the legitimising codes a nation creates for itself in its moment of ascendance. This eviscerated concept of desire (which Jameson (1981:68) tells us is 'outside of time, outside of narrative') can be recuperated only if the 'particular historical and repressive apparatus' against which it pits itself is specified. And, inadvertently, Mills Young does just that. The tremendous irony of this unremarkable work is that Young, in her conventional treatment of the desiring female subject, Adela, ends in precisely specifying the Law against which she immolates herself, the law of the land. Adela, as the daughter of a bywoner in turn-of-the-century colonial South Africa, is excluded from the land. This exclusion, at some fundamental level, prohibits her in turn from participating in what Berlant calls the 'National Symbolic' (1989:15), in which 'national consciousness' is transcoded 'through the construction of narrative linkages between landscape, historical time and sexuality'

(1989:29). Berlant (1989:15) defines the National Symbolic as ‘the order of discursive practices whose reign within a national space performs, and also refers to, the “law” in which the accident of birth within a geographical/political boundary transforms individuals into subjects of a collectively held history’ and elsewhere (1989:28) she writes that the National Symbolic ‘sutures the body and subjectivity to the public sphere of discourse, time, and space that constitutes the “objective” and political reality of the nation.’ For the colonial female subject, in terms of both body and subjectivity, the link to the ‘National Symbolic’ is problematic insofar as it can be seen as ‘women’s inescapable immurement within the categories of a phallogentric economy possessing absolute hegemony over the representation of gender’ (Silverstein 1993/4:20). Within the Colonial Symbolic (to originate a term), women cannot find authentic symbolisation as ‘landscape, historical time and sexuality’ (Berlant 1989: 15) are problematised. (Of course, the possibility of establishing a ‘female imaginary’ has been extensively theorised (Irigary 1985), and De Kock (1996b:12) and During (1990:143) speak of a ‘civil imaginary’, but this does not present itself as a possibility for the desiring female subject within colonial discourse.)

But if landscape and sexuality are problematised for the desiring female subject and are seen as modes of subjection, what remains is an annihilating destiny. She stands without access to the Symbolic, with ‘drives without any possible representatives or representations’ (Whitford 1991:79). In Irigary’s lexicon, Adela is forced into a state of dereliction, a state of abandonment, where she cannot find a ‘home’ for herself. (In Young’s text the state of abandonment, at both a psychoanalytic and literal level, is ascribed to Adela, a white bywoner’s daughter. The state of ‘the Kaffir’ is never interrogated.) Women in this state find themselves ‘abandoned outside the symbolic order; they lack mediation in the symbolic for the operations of sublimation’ (Irigary 1984:122-3). Phillip Stephens,

Adela's seducer, ascribes to Adela the essentialist female role of pure nature, thereby depriving her of a female-directed symbolisation in which she can house herself. He says:

'I wanted to meet you as I saw you first, among the mielie stalks. I could not picture you in a room. You are a part of nature, and nature has no life between four walls.'
(*BW*:80)²

Following Irigary, we might want to ask the question on Adela's behalf, 'where and how to dwell?'

Or, as Whitford (1991:157) puts it, 'how are women to live (in both senses - to dwell and to remain alive) in the edifices built by the male imaginary?' for, as Adela sees it, 'we cannot do without the walls' (*BW*:80).

The 'edifice' which most concerns me, of course, is the farm or farmhouse. For Coetzee (1988:9), women only inhabit the farmhouse in the sense that they are 'imprisoned in the farmhouse, confined to the breast-function of giving food to men, cut off from the outdoors.' Adela is simultaneously deprived of one dwelling (the 'four walls' referred to by her seducer) and thrust reluctantly into another (the farmhouse where she is indentured as domestic labour). Compounding her sense of a lack of 'home' in the world is the knowledge that her father and hence she herself, by implication and by inheritance, are landless. When Zirk Conradie, on whose father's farm the bywoner labours, declares his love for Adela and offers her the chance to be mistress of the farm, Vooruitzicht, Adela replies:

'One day - one day soon, I shall leave this farm, and never return to it ... Here my life has been crushed out of me, - my soul has been crushed ... I have had to serve others and eat the bread of charity. You cannot know how bitter that is or you would not imagine that one day I could be satisfied - even if it were possible, which it is not - to stay on here as mistress where as child and woman I have suffered so much. You are a fool, Zirk, if you think that possible. They wouldn't let you marry me, if I were willing; and I would sooner drown myself in the river yonder than live all my life at Vooruitzicht.' (*BW*: 64)

This passage marks a moment of both insight and prolepsis: insight in that Adela accurately intuitis

the female roles open to her (child, woman, mistress); and proleptic in that Adela, finally and tragically, does indeed drown herself (and her *in utero* child) in the river. Adela finds herself trapped in a network of impossibilities predicated on the double bind that she is a woman and that she is a bywoner's daughter: she cannot escape the farm, but she cannot live her life there. Elsewhere (*BW:73*) she says:

'There is nothing beyond this for me ... because I am a woman. If I were a man I should shake off my responsibilities, as Tom [her brother] has done, and shape my own life.'

and,

'I am handicapped by my sex. ... If I went out into the world, what could I do?'

The bywoner, to whom she addresses this question, answers simply, 'you will marry' (*BW:73*). Something curious occurs here, in Young's articulation of the problem: Young ascribes Adela's impasse to her being a woman, yet this confessional dialogue is situated in the 'poor home' (p.72) of the bywoner, and Young explicitly states that the moment of intimacy that father and daughter share is based on the fact that they were

two lonely human beings, experiencing in different degrees the same hopelessness in respect of the future and the unfulfilled promises of life. (p.72)

If the bywoner shares the same hopelessness of his daughter, then surely her predicament must centre on far more than her being a woman; it is the issue of landlessness that locks father and daughter together. This disempowered position is the soil from which the melodrama of *The Bywoner*[sic] springs, and in which it is played out. Wanting to escape her status as disadvantaged, unpropertied white female, and to escape from the farm which is a site of oppression for her, Adela inadvertently bequeaths herself to the arch-seducer, Phillip Stephens. In other words, Adela is forced to use her

body to secure her escape; it is the only sphere of action open to her. Adela, under Stephens's expert tuition, acquires knowledge of her own body, of her sexuality. At first, we are led to believe that in the transition from girl-virgin to woman, escape is indeed possible for Adela. She says,

'I used to think in the old times that there was nothing beyond this,' she threw out a hand to indicate the surrounding scene; 'that my life was bounded by the near line of the horizon as by an impassable wall. I saw nothing beyond. It did not occur to me that there was no line there ... It is like that when one is a child. Now [after her newly acquired sexuality] I go to the top of the hill and gaze away into the distance and say to myself, 'One day you shall pass beyond that boundary; you shall cross the mountains, and come out on the other side of the world'... No one need remain in a cage; it is always easy to undo the door when one learns how.' (*BW*:122)

But Young quickly subverts the possibility of Adela crossing the threshold, passing beyond to her own Symbolic (Bowie 1991:92-3). Adela ends her hopeful speech with 'I am tired of all this ... tired ... so tired.' At the very moment of crossing to the 'other side' Adela is enervated. The importance of Young's subversion should not remain unexamined; as Whitford (1991:161) tells us, 'to symbolize the threshold, then, is an essential move to open up the container, to allow passage in and out, both to contest male ownership of the container, and also to give woman her space, where she can move freely.' But Young cannot allow this; she explicitly authorises Stephens's 'complacent air of ownership' (*BW*:163). The 'male ownership' of Adela is doubly compounded by the fact that, tragically, the man to whom Adela offers herself has to some extent prostituted himself elsewhere: Phillip Stephens, though in Young's social schema of good stock, is poor. He can only empower himself through ownership of land, and this through marriage to the wealthy May Richardson. But, being male and white, and hence finding symbolisation in the Name or Law of the Father, he is able to secure his position, his dwelling, far more successfully than Adela.³ For, in the social hierarchy, Stephens stands above Adela. Young is not shy to remind us of this:

A bywoner's daughter! ... And beautiful as a dream! Why, in the name of mystery, should a bywoner's daughter be as fair as Aphrodite, and the daughter of

a rich landowner be only passable of feature? Then he bethought him of a verse in the Scriptures which read: 'The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair.' And he found in his heart excuse for the sons of God. (p.78)

'The sons of God' might well be paraphrased as the Law of the Father. Stephens, in his seduction of Adela, has full discursive power at his disposal; his being male and white guarantee for him a subject-position from which to speak and, indeed, from which to woo. Stephens's seduction of Adela begins verbally (where word play, it may be argued, is foreplay). But Adela is alert to Stephens's seductive tongue and rightfully recognises the discursive disparity that exists between them:

'You are a stranger to me,' she said with simple dignity, 'as I am to you; yet you would appear intimate. If I were not merely the Bywoner's daughter you would not be so bold.' (p.81)

But, within the discursive practices that exist for Adela and Stephens, the 'sons of God' may indeed have their way with the daughters of bywoners.⁴

But there is something which remains unthought and unsaid in Young's text: the daughters of bywoners mask the daughters of 'kaffirs'. But, as I have argued in the previous chapter on Schreiner, we arrive at the 'kaffir' by indirection. Throughout the novel the bywoner is metonymically associated with the 'kaffirs' (p.9, 13, 26, 149); the bywoner's children 'shared with the Kaffirs and the pigs the milk from the separator' (p.45); Tom, the bywoner's son, borrows the black man's language, 'amanxanxa', or poor-white, to represent himself, and Adela, in providing surrogate love for Johanna's (Zirk's sister's) baby, 'carried the child, in the hollow of her arm, or slung, native fashion, upon her back' (p.155). More importantly, when Adela is thrown into the realisation of the possible illegitimacy of her child, she cries out, 'I can't bear a child, as the Kaffir women do, and give it a heritage of shame' (p.185).

3.2 Pregnancy and the Body of the Mother

Adela, in her pregnancy, in her knowledge of the mother, 'had become curiously detached and self-centred' (*BW*:162). But the possibility of a centred subjectivity for Adela, detached from the male boundaries of ownership, is quickly forestalled by Steven's rejection of the pregnancy. This is significant in both symbolic and social terms. For Woodward (1995:19), citing Kristeva,

pregnancy signifies 'the dividing line between nature and culture' so that the mother's body is undefinable, '[i]ncommensurable, unlocalizable'. Although Kristeva is celebrating the unclassifiability of the maternal body, hegemonic western culture, particularly in the early nineteenth century, constellated it rather as polymorphous perversity, and systematised and classified the maternal body epistemologically and ontologically. On a metaphoric level women's bodies threaten order and control.

Stephens rejects Adela's pregnant body, not so much because it is no longer a sexualised object, but because it presents a threat to the male order of ownership of the land. Adela is a bywoner's daughter before she is the mother of his child; her pregnant body prevents him from having access to the land, and he realises that

he must go elsewhere and find some more accessible quarry. But women of independent means were not plentiful, and they were not always prepossessing. But the latter point was not of paramount importance, since a man when he was once married could amuse himself elsewhere. (*BW*:278)

This is a telling admission. Stephens, in rejecting the pregnant body, the mother, ends in revealing the narcissistic impulse that drives him, and he regresses to an infantile mirror stage. This is significant: as Whitford (1991:157) puts it, 'in immobilizing, or attempting to immobilize, the mother, to keep her under his control, prevent her from being a woman and having a (sexual) life of her own, he has blocked not only women's fertility but his own.' At a more literal level, when May Richardson sees the narcissistic quality of Stephens's purported love for her (she says to him,

‘Always it seems to me you consider yourself first’ (p.281)), she rejects him. Stephens leaves the Richardson farm in search of new quarry. In a last conversation with May’s father, the source of Stephens’s infantile narcissism is laid bare: ‘I hate the land,’ he tells Richardson (*BW*: 392), for it eludes him yet he depends on it for his survival. Hatred of the land here may be read as hatred of woman, of the mother; the male imaginary needs to phantasise the maternal body (or perhaps the yielding earth) as his property (Whitford 1991:159) but when the land/woman resists ownership, his very subjectivity, the space-time of the male subject (Whitford 1991:160), is threatened.

3.3 ‘Oh these illegitimate babies! Oh, girls, girls, silly little valuable things, you should have said, No, I am valuable.’ (Smith cit Greer 1984:80)

At a social level, one must assert that had Adela been a propertied woman, her child would have been legitimate. We must also remind ourselves at this juncture that

the social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of the body, always modified through the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society. There is a continual exchange of meanings between the two kinds of experience so that each reinforces the categories of the other. (Douglas 1978:93)

The illegitimate pregnancy, the illegitimate ‘polymorphous perversity’ (Woodward 1995:29), must then stand for a corresponding illegitimacy that interrupts the national phantasy, interrupts the National Symbolic. This becomes especially apparent in the case of a dominant, outsider nation that occupies another, as is the case under colonisation and settler cultures. The colonising power, for the necessary assertion of the legitimacy of its occupation, must adopt ‘a stern sexual morality, vigilant control of bodily boundaries, and a corresponding religious cult’ (Douglas 1978:113).⁵ These form an essential part of its political struggle. Hence the illegitimate pregnant body marks a violation of the nation’s code at several levels. But perhaps most importantly, and indeed central

to my argument here, the illegitimate pregnant body comes to stand for and in the place of the 'Kaffir's' body which, in symbolic terms, has been violated by the occupying nation. Of course, Mills Young cannot state this outright but in Adela's formulation the equation is unavoidable: 'I can't bear a child, as the Kaffir women do, and give it a heritage of shame.' (*BW*:185). Adela's illegitimate, pregnant body becomes the body of the *indigene*, and the term illegitimacy takes on a new valency here as, with almost mathematical simplicity, we take up that other equation: the equation of woman and land. The illegitimate pregnant body signals both an invasion of the female (both *colon* and *indigene*) and the land. Hence, the illegitimacy of the pregnant body stands metonymically for the illegitimacy of the possession of the land by the invading nation.

Stevie Smith's words cannot be left unaddressed. Adela effects a sexual union with Stephens precisely because she feels valueless. Indeed, her social status as bywoner's daughter, and her servitude at the Conradie farm conspire to keep her feeling valueless:

They [Adela and Tom] wore the other children's cast-off clothes, given to them in charity by the practical, capable, good-hearted mistress of the farm, who, while keeping their bodies decently clothed, failed to see how the inborn pride of the children suffered the indignity of having to appear in the garments so long worn by their more fortunate companions. She did her best for them: ... what right had they to be sensitive, these children of a paid labourer who worked on the land. (*BW*:11)

The issue of bodies and the land surface again here, not in equation but in opposition. The 'practical, capable, good-hearted' Mrs Conradie obeys the dictates of the dominant nation in its desire to cover up bodies (this may also be seen as part of the supposedly civilising ethic of colonialism) but is incapable of showing any sympathy at all for their subjecthood; she cannot sympathise with them because they belong to a labouring class who are simply too close for comfort to that other labourer, the black labourer. (Coetzee (1988:5-7,71-72) has written at length of the colonial farm novel's inability to represent the black labourer.) But, more importantly, she shows no sympathy for them

because they do not own the land. There are others for whom Mrs Conradie cannot evince sympathy; they too do not own the land, but they once did. Value, to get back to Smith's words, is dependent on land. Those who are landless are also valueless (Coetzee's *Dusklands* makes a novella of this). That is why, in Young's novel, there is virtually no representation at all of the *indigene*, save in the form of mendicant children begging for 'lachergoed' (sic) (*BW*:47). But Adela and Tom can be seen as stand-ins for this inutterable content of the colonial reality. They 'shared with the Kaffirs and the pigs the milk from the separator' (p.45) and their narrative (dis)placement is perilously close to the unsayable lurking in the colonial unconscious.

Adela's feeling of unworth leads directly, it may be argued, to her illegitimate pregnancy, a fate preinscribed by her disempowered (and increasingly disempowered) state as bywoner's daughter. Stephens's rejection of the pregnancy forces Adela back into the unprivileged position of disempowered, unpropertied white female. The sense of stain or taint that she felt as bywoner's daughter is compounded now by her fall, where previously her feelings of unworth derived solely from her landless status. This fatal compounding of issues speaks once more to the fact that the basis of power is land, in this case the farm, and that the farm presents for the bywoner's daughter a site of profound ambivalence. On the one hand it is a constant and grim reminder of her own landlessness; on the other it holds out the possibility of power for her in the role of a farmer's wife on some farm other than Vooruitzicht, of course. (One might think of the empowered position of May Richardson who is able to choose her own destiny.) But underlining this ambivalence is the realisation that this role, however speciously enticing, is in fact an oppressive one. Adela finds herself in a position of profound contradiction which is resolved, both structurally and thematically by the author, through the death of Adela. Adela's death is absolutely essential for narrative closure.

I have argued that the illegitimacy of Adela's pregnancy stands as a marker, a totem and taboo, for the illegitimacy of land issues, surfaced in the representation of the female, but masking the real land question - between *indigene* and coloniser, possessor and dispossessed. The thesis of burial falls in nicely here, in the ways in which Adela fails to find integration with the farm, even in death. When Adela dies, her body is never recovered. It is not known whether

she lay buried in the mud at the bottom of the river, or had been borne out to the distant sea, which seemed a more fitting destiny for the storm-tossed, restless soul. (BW:254)

Adela's final failure to find a 'home' (a resting place, in the lexicon of burial, and a farmhouse of her own when she was alive) must surely be seen in part as a result of her complicated status as both white settler (part of the dominant group) and as member of the poor-white caste, hence equivalent to the 'Kaffir'. Indeed, Johanna quite explicitly likens Adela's lack of proper burial to that of the *indigene*:

'It's like a Kaffir,' she said ... 'It's so unsatisfying.' (BW:261)

3.4 'All life is a Graveyard'(BW:91)

Adela displays an essentially dystopic vision of the farm (p.91). This, as I have said, stems in part from her status as a poor white, for as Young crudely puts it 'to be a poor-white in South Africa is to lose the prestige accorded the superior race' (BW:9). But the vision also stems from the realisation that the farm is a failed paradise, a fallen world. Early on in the novel as the bywoner tills the 'rich brown earth' (p.7) the 'loep-boy' warns him of the presence of a snake:

'Pas op, baas; daar's 'n slang,' shouted the piccanin.
And the Bywoner sprang aside in haste to avoid a large puff adder which the plough had cut out of the ground where it had sought its winter quarters. (BW:8)

Several thematics surface here (much like the venomous snake). First, we have the heavily ambivalent status of the bywoner - he is a bywoner, a tenant labourer/farmer, but he is also a 'baas' (master). He is placed, because of his poor - white status, in an untenable position between landless adjunct and powerless master. His status is confirmed and re-enacted in other ways in this scene. The scene begins with the intense physical labour of the bywoner concentrated on the fertile soil (p.7). Any relationship that may be seen to exist between the bywoner and the land is immediately irrupted by the presence of the snake, which refers, in a curious reversal, to the Edenic myth of Fall and expulsion (which recur endlessly in the novel, visited on the next generation of bywoners). The labour comes first and then the snake (not, as in the biblical myth, the snake followed with a punishment of labour), and this is telling. For the poor white settler the paradise was not there to begin with, not lost and surely, because of the fixed relations of frontier life, not to be found. Adela and her brother are born into this moment, where nothing is given and nothing promised. Young explicitly tells us that the bywoner's 'philosophy was a philosophy of discontent - the desire of the unattainable - the curse of Eden which relentlessly pursues the children of men' (*BW*: 75).⁶ Like her father, Adela's role is going to be one of labour - domestic labour in the farmhouse, but also that other labour of birth, which she ultimately refuses.

Young, with characteristic myopia, displaces the 'failed paradise' onto the bywoner himself, for he is

a poor man, one of the type fortunately not very common in South Africa, the type which stands for failure in every sense of the word. A bywoner [sic] is a labourer, a hired man who works for another. The bywoner [sic] clears the land for the farmer; he oversees the natives ... The black man looks down on the white man thus reduced almost to a level with himself. He speaks of him behind his back with contempt as 'amanxanxa', 'poor-white.' (*BW*:8-9)

Young effects a curious displacing technique (much, I suppose, like Schreiner's masking technique),

speaking always at a remove from the issues at stake; finally refusing to examine the issues which she unearths. Her active denial of the (by now) recognised 'poor white problem' is a transparent warding off gesture in the face of an inability (or perhaps refusal) to interrogate both class and race relations in South Africa. Moreover, in her very assertion of the aberrational character of the 'poor-white', the untenable admission he represents, she harnesses, through a false act of inclusion, the specious interpellation of the 'black man'. The black man, himself a victim in the racial scheme, is called upon to validate Young's claims regarding poor whites. This kind of narrative ventriloquism of the worst order spells the limits of an author who not only seeks to speak for others, but does so through a monologic author function which precludes any kind of polyphony.

Young's displacing technique is usually in the form of a denial by assertion. She states that 'Ransom [the bywoner] was not a Colonial' (p.10) yet goes on to speak of his having invested 'a certain amount of capital' in the land. She is consistently unable to interrogate her own assertions. And therefore, to get back to the failed paradise of the farm, she is unable to question either the roots of Ransom's poor white status or the set relations of the farm itself nor, for my purposes, the issue of the possession of the land.

Hence it should come as no surprise that the possibility of ritual burial, a final integration with the earth that they could labour upon but never possess, can never be represented. Burial, which is a sure and highly symbolic claim to the land, is impossible for Adela because, as we have seen, she may be seen as a stand-in for the *indigene*. If Young were to represent the burial of Adela, the implication would be that she finally finds a home, returning to the earth that was never hers. Such an admission would necessarily imply that a similar reunion is possible for the *indigene*, which Young would not want. The *indigene* must be seen to have no claim to the land at all.

The significance of burial ground is given some prominence in *The Bywonner*[sic]. Prior to the sexual consummation of their relationship, Adela and Stephens end up amongst the tombstones and cabbages of the Conradie burial ground (p.90). Stephens is bemused by the concept of the family burial patch:

‘It’s an odd life these Boer people lead, living beside their dead, and knowing that one day they will lie near them.’ (p.91)

Young must show here the possibility (if not guarantee) of integrated burial for the Conradies; she must insist on their claim to the land, a claim predicated on a system of patriarchal inheritance from one generation to the next. The bones of the patriarchs, the ancestors, are part of the legacy for the next generation, legitimating (if not in some cases legalising) their claim to the land. It is somewhat ironic that Young uses Adela to defend and endorse the Conradie’s claim on the land:

‘[Living beside their dead is] the most beautiful side of their lives, I think,’ Adela answered. ‘They keep those they loved about them. See here,’ she pointed to a grave that looked more recent than the others by reason of its cleaner headstone. ‘Surely old Mrs Conradie must be gratified that her son grows his cabbages upon her breast?’ She laughed softly. ‘It is such a poetical idea – isn’t it? – for a man to utilise his burial patch for a cabbage garden. I never eat a cabbage but I wonder which Conradie contributed to its growth.’ (p.91)

The claim to the farm is reinforced by the conflation of the burial ground and a cabbage patch. The burial ground is at once the location of the ancestors and an agricultural site, the signifier of farm productivity and nurture, hence a further claim to the land. The rather macabre image of consuming cabbages fertilised by human remains is naturalised by Adela; it is poetic. It would be rather clumsy to discuss the sexual or Oedipal images that abound here (‘her son grows his cabbages upon her breast’) but these would seem simply to reinforce the patriarchal claim to the land.

But the issue of sexuality and fertility does need to be taken up here at another level. Female sexuality in *The Bywonner*[sic] finds a literal correlative in the seasonal and climatic flux of farm

life. Female fertility is mirrored in the landscape by periods of plenty or drought, depending on whether that fertility is sanctioned by marriage or not. Adela's illegitimate fertility mirrors a period of intense drought on the farm that lasts (pregnantly!) nine months. In fact, Adela's death (and the death of the illegitimate foetus) is literally coterminous with the end of the drought. The flood of water that fills the dried-up riverbed from rain in the mountains sweeps Adela away to a watery death. Her body is never found. The point is that female fertility and the fertility of the land are linked in such a way that both must be dominated by the male order of things and indeed, both must be seen to be dominated. Adela's illegitimate, unsanctioned pregnancy can be represented only in a period of drought. It is not without irony that the drought brings hardship and crisis to the white landowners:

'I wonder why the Lord sends the drought?' Johanna mused. 'He must be angry with us. ... The Malherbes have been obliged to raise another mortgage on the farm, and Jan [her husband] is so worried it isn't safe to cross him. Some of the farmers in the district are ruined already.' (p.195)

It must be argued that if the drought is linked to Adela's illegitimate pregnancy, it too must surface the issue of illegitimacy. With the flood of water, of course, both totems of illegitimacy are safely annihilated.

The bywoner is distraught after Adela's death. Three days later, upon seeing a vision of his dead wife and daughter, he is led to the river and throws himself in. Unlike the pregnant body of his daughter, his body is recovered:

They laid the Bywoner [sic] to rest within sight of the little home that had been his for so many years, within sight of the river that had taken his daughter from him, and led him to her again. They dug a grave on the veld, and lowered the coffin into it, and filled it in again level with the rest. (*BW*:273)

The mechanics of burial are effected here, yes, but once again this is quickly subverted by the fact

that

there was no headstone to mark [the bywoner's grave], nothing to distinguish it from the surrounding veld ... when the grass grew again the stock trod upon the Bywoner's [sic] resting place, and nibbled at the tender green. (p.273)

But we should not be too quickly duped into believing that the organicism of Mills Young's imagery spells a claim to the land. Indeed, a few lines later, she is quick to tell us that 'the interment was not allowed in the family burial ground.' (p.273). As I have argued above, Mills Young legitimates the family burial ground as an effective claim to the land.

In ending this chapter I want to briefly return to the equation of the woman and the land, sexuality and fertility. Underwriting this is the fact that the earth, conventionally figured as female, is seen in *The Bywoner*[sic] as punitive and whimsical. Indeed, with the increasing harshness and unpredictability of farming in the interior comes a greater control over female fertility so that a lapsed or fallen woman, a woman who cannot control her sexual appetites and 'fornicates out of wedlock', is figured not as a lushness or abundance sorely wanted on the farm but, on the contrary, and forging a moment of *aporia*, is associated with periods of harshness and lack of yield, and is seen against nature. The fact that the woman in question is landless, is a metonymic displacement for the *indigene*, confounds the issue. This confusion stems, in fact, from the untenability of the farmer's tenure, and the failure of the nurturing ethic (for black labourers nurse the soil not he) which is signalled and painfully parodied by a female fertility and by a pregnancy which is illegitimate just as the colonial farmer's nurturing of the land (his female role) is illegitimate.

NOTES

1. A full discussion on the concept of desire is not possible here, but the terrain has been well traversed by Bataille, Deleuze, Baudrillard, Lacan and Foucault. For my purposes the concept of desire is only useful insofar as it is set against a repressive field through which

it must come to emergence.

2. There is a profoundly contradictory impulse here if we follow Irigary's notion that 'the dwelling of man is not built without hatred of nature' where man's relation to nature is 'a project of appropriation rather than [...] the desire for life or survival.' I am indebted to Whitford (1991:156-158) for this choice selection of quotes.
3. Ironically enough, Stephens is jilted by May and is forced to move on to richer pickings. Like Bonaparte Blenkins, there is no doubt that he will secure for himself a similarly advantageous position. Even if this is not guaranteed in the novel, his mobility is.
4. Is it not an accident that the name Leda is contained within 'Adela'; Leda, the ultimate symbol of violability, marked by the conjunction of divine birds (sky-gods) and human women.
5. The notion of a religious cult may be especially true of Afrikaner Calvinism, but is equally true of the neurotic missionising instincts of English, Scottish and other settlers.
6. Young seems to endorse what Grove (1989) calls 'an environmental moral economy' which, in De Kock's (1994:67) words 'envisioned a Christian Eden opposed to the sinfully despoiled and consequently drought-ridden African land.' What is behind that 'sin', of course, begs analysis.

4. *THE BLACK SHAWL: A SEMIOTIC READING OF THE BEADLE*

4.1 *On Reading Signs*

Conventional readings of *The Beadle* regularly bring to the surface the colonial subtext of the novel:¹ such readings refer commonly to Smith's determinedly pastoral vision and to her idealisation of rural Afrikaners. Her pointed reference to the poverty of this group due to their dispossession at the hands of the English suggests a developed awareness of the politics of the time.² Henry Nind's seduction of Andrina, which goes hand in hand with his English lessons, is a telling statement about the British Anglicisation policy in South Africa, with its final aim the imposition of British culture, and thus hegemony, on South African soil. Smith refuses this ending, and indeed the novel ends on a conciliatory affirmation of the pastoral simplicity of the rural Afrikaner, and his/her ability to survive cultural assimilation. Such readings do nothing to unravel the textual mechanisms whereby Smith implants (forgive the pun) her vision nor to lay bare the 'immense discontinuous network' (Spivak 1987:204) that informs such encodings. To my knowledge, J. M. Coetzee (1988), Michael Cosser (1993), Myrtle Hooper (1991) and Sheila Roberts (1989) are some of the few critics to read Smith at a textual or linguistic level. Yet *The Beadle* openly invites such a reading; close textual analysis reveals, on the one hand, a finely iterative textual structure, and, on the other hand, a system of object reification that invites a *semanalyse*.³ In the former, the iterative content features the terms 'the lands' (or 'his lands', a variant of this), and 'Klaartjie's Andrina' (or 'Klaartjie's child', a variant of this). Associated with the latter, the reification of the mirror, the Sacrament dress and the black shawl, speak to a semiotic shorthand which needs analysis. I intend to read these two elements of the novel as encodings, which enable Smith to develop her vision and give it firm textual support. While such encodings may be deliberate, I wish to trace the inadvertent encodings that emerge from

the novel. Why such encodings were necessary to Smith's vision, why the structure of *The Beadle* reveals an obsessive iterative quality, can perhaps best be ascribed to Smith's transitional or ambivalent status within the colonial paradigm. On the one hand she internalises, from an early age, the rhythms and lifestyle of the Little Karoo; on the other hand, she spends most of her life (from the age of twelve onwards) in England, and most of her literary career under the pressurised tutelage of Arnold Bennett. The obsessive iterative tropes, I intend to argue, stem from a discordant sense of self, founded on the divided subjectivity of the coloniser who refuses, but cannot forget. In a letter to Frank Swinnerton, written in June 1947 (Driver 1983:129), Smith writes:

I had an unexpected message through S. African friends the other day from [Francis] Brett Young - that I ought to come back to S. Africa which is the place for me -- 'Where I belong' says Sarah Millin, who wrote recently urging my return too - But I see no possible chance of this, & one half of me 'belongs' to England & to my English friends - I find it sometimes hard to belong to 2 countries, each so dear to me!

Smith's identity is hedged by two worlds that are sharply set apart, each firmly predicated on a colonial paradigm of land acquisition and cultural ascendance. Smith finds it almost impossible to be partisan. She is unable to choose between these two worlds, just as she is unable to unearth the ugly history of dispossession that subtends both the Afrikaner and British presence on African soil. This inability, I intend to argue, is linked to Smith's dependence on South Africa for the 'raw material' of her fiction, and England for the formal influence of Bennett. Both serve an anchoring role for Smith who, at a formative, pubescent age is deprived of two vital constituents of her identity formation: first, she is transplanted from the safe, semi-rural, consolidated world of the Little Karoo, and then she loses her father, who is intimately connected to that world.

Smith's writings return obsessively to this lost site⁴ (indeed, a *béance*, or lack), and to this lost father, this lost patronym - the Name of the Father. Smith elsewhere has stated quite

emphatically, 'all my happiest memories and my most formative impressions were those of my South African childhood and my father's companionship' (Smith 1933:13). For this reason, in her fiction, Smith indelibly fixes the world of the Little Karoo in a timeless, enclosed vacuum, cut off from momentum and contradiction. And she recovers the presence of the Father through the figure of Arnold Bennett, who is linked to the fictional world that Smith represents and who conditions Smith's representation of that world just as Smith's father inhabited, and in part determined Smith's perception of, that other world, the Little Karoo. In another letter penned to Frank Swinnerton in 1936 (Driver 1983:125) these complex dependencies surface again. Smith is in Long Kloof, in the Little Karoo, collecting notes for her next novel:

I realized in reading the letters [of Arnold Bennett] how idle I have been out here! Writing very little, but collecting much that I may never have a chance to collect again - & yet may never use - The narrowness of some of the lives lived in this valley is what Arnold would have called 'fantastic' - yesterday we went far up into the mountains to a most beautiful little farm where they seemed never to have heard of any war since the Boer war, and where no papers from the outside world ever reach them - It was as if for those few hours we were living in a little self-contained world safe within a ring of mountains over which no news of disaster could ever travel! And on Sunday the Dutch predikant ... preached a sermon that should have been preached not less than 500 years ago! I was appalled! - Yet these are the people I understand best - so there must be something of them in myself.

Arnold Bennett's presence invades the letter just as it articulates Smith's perception of the 'lives lived in this valley'. While she is 'appalled' by what she sees as the insular, anachronistic nature of the life lived there (and it is Smith as a liberal British citizen who is appalled here), nevertheless this life offers two essentially redemptive possibilities to the shy, neuralgic, impossibly torn Smith. It offers safety and freedom from disaster, from the exigencies of history (which is Europe between two wars and the beleaguered state of the Empire); and more importantly, as she acknowledges through the telling contrastive transition 'yet', it is fundamental to her own identity. Smith is

properly divided between her own European sensibility and, conflictingly, her South African self; a South African self, moreover, that is specifically, locatably, rural and Afrikaans. This conflict finds fictional resolution in *The Beadle* where, as Voss has argued (in Cosser 1993:64), 'the novel, like Andrina's child, was the issue of an encounter between the rural Afrikaner community and the intrusive, speculative English individual.' The optimistic closure of the novel shows a recovered father (in the figure of Aalst Vlokman, who is now endowed with the status of grandfather as well), and the promise of a future return to Harmonie which, for Andrina and Aalst Vlokman alike (and indeed for Smith) is the dearest place on earth.

Smith's very ability to write is profoundly complicated by the several dependencies that she encounters at the moment of writing. In a letter written in Cape Town in 1927 to Sarah Gertrude Millin the complicated yearnings that affect Smith's vision are laid bare. It is worth quoting at length:

What you wrote of Olive Schreiner interested me very much - & was a little comforting to a timid person like myself whose first book was written, as it seemed to me at the time, on the verge of old age & the grave! - Like you I like to think of what I want to write - but what I do write falls so far short of what I want to write that the whole thing is a sort of misery to me - & after every short story ever I have thought 'I can't go through this again - This is the end' - But for Arnold Bennett's insistence there would have been no 'Pain' and no *Beadle*. I haven't managed to work at all out here, & have been troubled about it - I can never, as you can, say that I'll finish something by a certain date - They tell me if I could, or would, do so I could command higher prices than I do - But it is beyond me - I'm hoping to be able to work more regularly now that I'm so marvellously well - But I'm going home to a houseful of difficulties & sometimes feel that I'll do no more work until I've gained courage to run away to something as near to Tristan d' Achuna (Good heavens, how do you spell it?) as I can get in England! Mr Bennett tells me I have every reason to be satisfied with the sales of *The Beadle* - but those sales do not bring an independence of the family purse! (Driver 1983:119)

We would be forgiven for believing that these are the agonies of a young, inexperienced writer, but Smith is a forty-five year old woman when she writes this, and the sense of dependency in her letter

is revealing. Her dependency may be read at several levels: the first is the paralysis that afflicts Smith at the moment of writing and her creative dependence on Bennett to undo this paralysis; the second is her intense desire to escape both South Africa and England (literally to flee to a deserted island) but for her dependence on these for her sense of literary place and literary purpose; and finally the issue of financial dependence which, perhaps, subtends the lot. Such dependencies, I will argue, find expression in a desperate grappling for literary form. The form is two-fold: in structure it is iterative, linked to several dominant tropes, and in style it is epic and sacralising or, as is always said of her work, biblical. Both these formal features are a result of an arrested wish-fulfilment in Smith; her position as a displaced *colon* creates a duality within her that is unresolved, except in the fiction. Her adoption of a pro-Afrikaner, pastoral vision is an attempt to deal with the issue of her own dividedness. She identifies with and finds a home in the idealised world of the rural Afrikaner; but she also needs to represent the intrusion of the British into that home. The only way to allow such an intrusion (in the case of *The Beadle*, at an historical, linguistic and sexual level) is to naturalise it, to sanctify it, and finally to transcend it. In *The Beadle*, Andrina embodies this intrusion at all levels: she is the illegitimate niece of bywoners who were dispossessed of their land; she is taught English and is a willing pupil of Henry Nind; and she allows the latter to seduce her and leave her pregnant. But the ending of the novel suggests transcendence and redemption. Smith finds novelistic resolution as a way out of her own beleaguered predicament of being an English, female *colon*, of being a transient coloniser who cannot wholly identify with her own kind, the English, but cannot quite find a place elsewhere. The obsessive iterative structures suggest a returning to a common point or theme, a stable point of reference, and the biblical *topos* suggests a mythical, transcendental vision which overrides the exigencies of historical time. The stylistics

of Smith's writing bears a striking resemblance to the 'radical realism' that Said (1978:72) coined to designate philosophically the texts of Orientalism. The orientalist writer:

will designate, name, point to, fix, what he is talking or thinking about with a word or phrase, which then is considered either to have acquired or more simply to be, reality ... The tense they employ is the timeless eternal: they convey an impression of repetition and strength.

In attempting to 'preserve the boundaries of sense for itself', the orientalist writer creates 'a static system of "synchronic essentialism", a knowledge of "signifiers of stability"' (Bhabha 1994:71).

I do not want to stretch the link here, but it seems to me that Smith, in an attempt to mend her own split identity, which is 'continually under threat from diachronic forms of history and narrative, signs of instability' (Bhabha 1994:71), precisely deploys the fixing, iterative and synchronic forms of representation that mark Orientalist (we may wish to read colonial) texts.

These forms of representation restore Smith to a sense of place and time, outside the dislocations of her own space-time as an Englishwoman living first in the Klein Karoo and then in England. The end of Smith's novel brings to rest the restless oscillations of her conflict-riven identity. If, as Reckwitz (1993:7) suggests, we assume 'that the end of any narrative text is the culminating point of its conflictual semantic deep structure', then Smith, quite impossibly, has indeed forced a resolution of the conflictual meanings that constitute the text. Her ending, against all odds, is happy, confirming what may be regarded as her writerly desire.

At a linguistic level we may read Smith's encodings as an attempt to use language to 'signify *something quite other* than what it says' (Lacan 1977:155), to operate within the dual planes of language which 'enables instincts to challenge authority without producing anarchy' (Roudiez in Kristeva 1987:4). Smith's encodings challenge British authority without destabilising its presence in South Africa - the novel has an anti-colonial impulse in its plot but nevertheless confirms the

colonial presence on South African soil. As I shall demonstrate later in this chapter, Smith's muted challenge to British authority and the dispossession of the Afrikaner in fact stands in for a challenge that she cannot make, the challenge to Afrikaner authority and the dispossession of the indigenous peoples, whom she can barely represent in the novel. For if Smith were to wholly interrogate Afrikaner authority, she would surely destabilise the founding moment of her own identity, and strip herself of the ideational content of her writing. Smith cannot make this challenge because it would reveal all too clearly the profound ambivalences of her position as a divided speaking subject: on the one hand, she spends her formative years in the Klein Karoo where her father instills in her a respect and love for the rural Afrikaners; here a discursive field is laid of which she can never divest herself; on the other hand she spends her adult life in England, becoming a 'speaking subject' within another discursive field which is discontinuous with the first. The way out of her predicament is precisely to authorise the English presence in South Africa, mocking yet allowing it, and to show the resilience of the Afrikaner at the end of it. The central contradiction of the novel, and of her other writings, can only be resolved thematically through a sacralising, redemptive vision, and textually through an iterative structure and through iconic, emblematic representations.

4.2 Church lands, his lands, the lands: which lands?

The issues of property and proprietorship are very closely linked to issue of propriety in the novel. The Van der Merwe farmstead, Harmonie, seems to mark the harmonious fusing of these three terms. Their ownership of the farm is never interrogated but is indeed sanctioned by their innate moral rectitude, as if the one implies the other. Mevrouw van der Merwe, in Andrina's moral schema, is God (*TB*:193), and the feudal relationships of the farm are sanctioned by the Bible:

When the last of the dishes was cleared away, the great Bible was placed before

Mijnheer. From the kitchen quarters came the native servants, crowding in the doorway without entering the room and squatting down there upon the floor. The chapter was read. The psalm was sung. Jantjie, slipping from his chair, walked up to his grandfather's knee and repeated his evening prayer. From the doorway came the indentured children and they too, at their master's knee, repeated a prayer. 'Make me to be obedient to my mistress, oh Lord,' prayed Spaasie in her rough, hoarse voice. 'Make me to run quickly when my master calls,' prayed Klaas. (TB:137)

There is no indication of authorial irony in Smith's rendition of this scene; indeed, borrowing from Coetzee (1988:67), we could argue that such a scene merely supports the view that Harmonie is 'the achievement of an ideal equilibrium or stasis or finality in social relations such as could survive forever.' And indeed, in spite of a legacy of scandal (Klaartjie Steenkamp's illegitimate child) and the intrusion of the seducer, Henry Nind, into the Harmonie household, nothing is able to disrupt the ordered relations that thrive there. Indeed, Nind's presence at Harmonie merely reinforces Andrina's sense of service and duty, for she too is part of the firmly fixed relations of the homestead: 'At Harmonie her love for the Englishman had made her not less considerate of others but more so' (TB:175-6). This is the model upon which Smith must insist, even nostalgically, for upon it depends her own sense of self, her own past, from which she cannot escape. If she were to escape, she would deprive herself of the material content of her novels. To preserve that memory means to preserve a stable, unchanging world on which she can readily draw, and which can never be displaced. The displacement of this world, a world which was wholly formative to her, would arguably result in the fragmentation of her identity, an identity already rendered ambivalent by her dual citizenship.

Smith is all too aware of the importance of the land. The terms 'the lands' and 'his lands' (referring variously to Aalst Vlokman and Stephan van der Merwe), 'church lands' and 'our lands' occur 31 times in the novel (which is 193 pages in length). The iteration is an attempt (or perhaps even a need) to cement the notion of land ownership in the novel. That 'his lands' refers both to

Mijnheer Van der Merwe (the feudal overlord of the farmstead) and to Aalst Vlokman (a bywoner on Van der Merwe's farm) suggests that for Smith the issue of land ownership is undisputed and unchallengable. Here, unlike the case in *The Bywoner*[sic], both *seignor* and tenant labourer have equal access and equal right to the land, reinforcing the white Afrikaner claim to land in the colony. This sense of ownership is further reinforced by the use of the 'church lands'; the church is built on Harmonie land, is indeed contained by it, suggesting again Smith's sacralisation of the existent power relations. The church-bell, we learn from the brief interpellation of Jafta, the old Hottentot post-cart driver, 'had once been a slave-bell' (TB:18). This recasting of an object (the bell) in a new signifying system, this easy substitution of an object of redemption for an object of oppression, is very much part of Smith's sacralising discourse; Christianity is seen as an advance against slavery, but this sleight of hand (re-placing the signification of the bell, appropriating for it another, more benign meaning) surely masks the actual current power relations which Smith refuses or is unable to question. Indeed, in Smith's schema, the church becomes an egalitarian site where all difference is levelled: 'In the gathering round the church rich and poor mingled together without distinction of class. Here, in the sight of God, all were equal' (TB:55).

Smith's 'all', which appears as a signal of inclusiveness, is questionable; it excludes more than it includes as it does not harness the full relationships that constitute the Aangenaam valley. This, I believe, is not intentional in Smith's writing but is unavoidable. When Smith does tackle notions of power and powerlessness, it is always at a remove from the real colonial issues. If a people are dispossessed of their land, it is the Dutch who are the victims at the hands of the English (TB:107); if the relations between Nind and Andrina are unequal, it is precisely a result of their cultural and gender difference (TB:128,131). The issue of race, and the earlier dispossession that

allowed for subsequent dispossessions between colonial rivals cannot be addressed by Smith. Her vision is a redemptive, pacific one; it cannot allow for the irruption of the historical, what Bhabha terms a 'signifier of instability' (1994:71), into the text. Smith's fiction is an effort to stabilise the contestatory forces that constitute her own identity formation. Her insistence on the lands, the church lands, his lands, is a semiotic brace for Afrikaner hegemony in the region, a hegemony that is naturalised, sanctified and, quite obviously, pacified in Smith's soothing cadences, the rippling rhythms of her 'pastoral' prose. Stephan Cornelius Van der Merwe's entitlement to the lands, the homestead and all about it is ultimately, in Smith's scheme, sanctioned by God:

In his lands, in the veld, and on the mountain side; in the cool, lofty rooms of the old gabled house where his wife, Alida de Villiers, still smiled upon his love: in the square white church where men and women gathered together for the Sacrament, he was conscious always of the presence of his God. (*TB*:27)

God's net is cast wide over all Stephan van der Merwe's possessions: land, homestead, wife and church. His proprietorship is made holy by the fact that he is a benevolent patriarch, a munificent overlord. Of course, Smith does qualify just who Van der Merwe's God is; it is not the Christ-God who later proves redeeming for Andrina, but the God of the Old Testament, wrathful and vengeant, providing religious grounds for the Afrikaner's self-fulfilling destiny, 'the God who, showing mercy unto thousands of them that keep His commandments, would, in His own time, bring His chosen people into their full inheritance' (*TB*:27-8). It is important at this point to understand that Smith's tone is neither critical nor ironic; that while she finally prefers the Christ figure of the New Testament, she understands the levity of, and indeed necessity, for a patriarchal God. Smith is unable to discredit the archaic, Bible-based faith of the Afrikaner.⁵ While her own English liberal individualism begs for an individuated Godhead, a more personally accented figure of redemption, she understands the great myth that underlines Afrikaner faith, the myth of a chosen people, chosen

by a wrathful, utterly patriarchal God. The Old Testament mythos authorises, both for Smith and for the Afrikaner, their presence on African soil.⁶

4.3 'Klaartjie's Andrina', 'Klaartjie's Child': Substitution and Restitution

The phrase 'Klaartjie's Andrina', and its variant 'Klaartjie's child', occurs 35 times in the novel.

It takes on an incantatory status as Andrina comes to both rehearse and redeem the fallen status of her mother. It is Smith's authorial gift that she is able to effect the two contradictory motions. On the one hand, Andrina, like her mother, falls pregnant out of wedlock (it is appropriate, in the moral schema of the Aangenaam valley, to use this quaint term), but unlike her mother, who is described as uncontrollable and wayward, Andrina is a model of servitude. 'No one would ever rule Klaartjie', Johanna recognises, 'Not even ... God himself' (TB:77), but Andrina, throughout the novel, is associated with service and duty (on no less than 17 occasions) (see pp.11, 12, 14, 28, 42, 68-69, 73, 75, 103, 108, 118, 121, 125, 139, 146, 171) and this ethic of servitude takes on an ordained status. Service becomes the only and true way to justify Andrina's lack of a saving sense of sin in other respects. Andrina's 'sin' is precisely redeemed by the 'nature' that innocently accommodates this sin: a nature based on service, on humility and self-sacrifice.⁷ Andrina's mother, Klaartjie, had neither the saving sense of sin nor a desire to serve; but she is recovered morally in the figure of the daughter, a dutiful daughter in the extreme sense of the phrase, a daughter who, although illegitimate, can claim a measure of legitimacy for herself in recovering the name of the Father (Aalst Vlokman). The daughter can be seen as re-occupying the place of the wayward mother. While the mother is all impulse and insubordination, the daughter reveals a profound desire to be of service to others; indeed it is this sense of servitude and humility that both condemns and redeems

Andrina. Her acquiescence to the seductions of Nind is tied up with her desire to be of service, and her desire to be of service to others is tied up with her own piety. There is a contradiction here that Smith never quite resolves - this intense desire to serve, coupled with humility, makes for both piety and sexual acquiescence. (This contradictory trope finds semiotic encoding in the Sacrament dress, object of both sanctity and desire.) Such a double play on the exact nature of Andrina's piety and servitude is precisely the sort that was figured in the changing signification of the church-bell/slave-bell. For Andrina's piety and sense of service is both redeeming and damning, both innocent and knowing, both legitimate and illegitimate. However, it is the former that Smith is at pains to emphasise (just as it is the redeeming significance of the bell that Smith would have us hear).

The disruptive possibilities of Andrina's humility and natural sense of service are masked to make way for Smith's redemptive vision. This act of recuperation or restitution is a necessary bid on Smith's part to preserve the continuity of the rural Afrikaans community, to show quite unequivocally that this community is capable, finally, of absorbing the various disruptions and intrusions that periodically mar it. While Andrina, like her mother, is forced into exile and, like Hagar (another common topos), gives birth in the wilderness as it were, the possibility of a future return to Harmonie is clearly inscribed in the ending.

This double play which surfaces in Smith's writing achieves far more than it risks; Smith is careful to present Andrina as a perfectly sympathetic figure. It is essential that Smith's reader sympathise strongly with Andrina throughout, that her fall from grace be seen as a redemptive fall, that through the fall she recovers the presence of the Father. It would not be far-fetched at this point to suggest that Smith's own redemption occurs at the moment of Andrina's; that Smith, like Andrina,

had in some way betrayed her own kind in her association with things English (in Andrina's case, her beloved 'Arry; with Smith, her choice of England as a more or less permanent base to live), and that the redemption, the happy ending, may be seen as a way out for Smith, as a writing of her own ending.

Smith's need to write the happy ending must also be seen as an attempt to recover what was lost to her, to fill the gaping lack that was signalled by exile from the Little Karoo and the death of her father. In Smith's scheme, Andrina is Klaartjie, but is a recovered or recuperated Klaartjie. The iterative 'Klaartjie's Andrina' or 'Klaartjie's child' is really an attempt to redeem the abandoned Klaartjie through a recuperated Andrina. Their fate is the same, one of loss (just as Smith's own dividedness centres on loss), but Andrina is redeemed precisely because she recovers the lost patronym, the name of the Father. Until Andrina can name her own father, she cannot name the father of her own child. In a telling scene, Antoinette van der Merwe demands that Andrina name the father of her child:

'Where shall I go?'

'No,' answered Mevrouw, speaking as virtue triumphant, 'that is for you to say - or the father of your child. Ask him, Andrina. Has he not shared your sin?'

'I cannot ask him, Mevrouw.'

'You cannot? You cannot? Who is he then, that you cannot ask him?'

'I cannot name him, Mevrouw.'

'And again you cannot? Is your child the son of God that his father cannot be named?' (*TB*:178)

This reference to an immaculate conception is revealing: without access to the patronym, Andrina's pregnancy cannot be signified in properly human terms yet, in a contradictory act of supreme deferral, the ultimate patronym is evoked (God the Father) to fill the lack that stands as the unnameable. The unnamed Father structures the novel as a whole, the unsaid (or unrevealed in this case) drives the novel to its determined conclusion. Indeed, one could further argue that the theme

driving the novel is the loss of the Father.⁸ The scandalous, illegitimate pregnancies and births are nothing less than a pretext for a recovery of the Father. At the end of the novel, this question of the name of the Father, the naming of the Father, is a momentary source of anxiety for Aalst Vlokman:

By what name would she [Andrina] call him now? By what name would her child learn to greet him? (*TB*:192)

Smith provides a doubly redemptive name: 'Ou-pa' (*TB*:193). Two generations are recuperated in the naming of the Grandfather. Klaartjie is recovered by the naming of Andrina's real father, and Andrina's child is recovered through the surrogate figure of the Grandfather. This moment, it might be argued, is also Smith's moment of recovery. Andrina has survived the linguistic and sexual invasion of the Englishman, and finally recovers her Father. Smith too needs to aver that she can survive the dividedness that marks her English and South African heritage, and that the Father can be recovered, albeit in a displaced form (in her case, in the surrogate figure of Arnold Bennett).

4.4 'The Abandonment of a Gentle Savage': Andrina as Other

The image of a 'gentle savage' (*TB*:103) is used by Nind to describe Andrina's acquiescence to his sexual pressure and ministrations. Elsewhere he likens her to a child: 'Her acquiescence, so gentle and yet so absolute, was like a child's' (*TB*:96). Elsewhere, he is at pains to distinguish for the reader the difference between Andrina's abandonment to him and that of the prostitute's:

Her gentle abandonment had not been the 'easy come, easy go' of the prostitute. It had come from some depths which he had never fathomed. But just because he had never fathomed those depths he felt himself morally free to ignore them. (*TB*:132)

This is an interesting formulation on Smith's part, as it almost exactly articulates notions of power, knowledge and desire central to colonial modes of representation of otherness. More specifically, Nind's representation of Andrina here almost exactly reproduces the ambivalences of the fetishised

and stereotyped discourses of colonial fiction. On the one hand, he claims to 'know' Andrina sufficiently well to adjudge her abandonment; he claims to know her moral nature and is able to adjudge it according to what it is not (she is no prostitute).⁹ On the other hand, he dare not fathom out her proper nature (what she is) lest it destabilise his own morality, lest it inhibit his own field of action. Nind can justify his own behaviour (his abandonment of Andrina) only by ignoring her 'essence'. Only by repressing any knowledge of her 'true nature', can he give vent to his own natural impulses. But, understandably, this knowledge of Andrina is fraught with ambivalence, with compassion and contempt, with concern and boredom, with desire and resentment:

The sense of a need for urgency - that false craving for speed which so often and dangerously afflicts the idle - began to grow upon him. He encouraged it. It dulled his thoughts of Andrina, which wavered curiously between a tender regret for the child whom he must hurt and something which came perilously near to the resentment felt by the oppressor towards the oppressed. And it sharpened his desire to get from Lettice something more than an admission in a note of two sentences of his power over her. (*TB*:133)

It is almost too obvious to address the issues here but, for my purposes, necessary precisely because the issue of the oppressor and the oppressed is never fully addressed in Smith's fiction. Again, as in the work of Mills Young, it surfaces by indirection. Just like Adela, Andrina is metonymically associated with a 'savage', albeit a gentle one; just like *The Bywonner*[sic], *The Beadle* can only articulate levels of inequality, dispossession and oppression at the level of personal relationships within the all-white community. But unlike Mills Young, Smith is always quick to sanction and redeem the invidious actions of her characters. We can never wholly dislike Nind or Aalst Vlokman who both, we must remind ourselves, take advantage of the innocence and ignorance of the country girls. Nind is depicted as weak and whimsical, but never malevolent or reprobate; Aalst Vlokman, though unappealing in the main, can be seen as a tragic more than a vicious figure. Again, this is

Smith's gift (for want of a better term) that she is able to present unacceptable practices in a redeemed and sanctioned light. Smith dare not open up the real issues of oppression that lie buried close to the surface, even as she is surely aware of such oppression. To do so would be to disrupt the founding orders of her identity - both the South African (read rural, Afrikaans) and the English. Fiction, we must remember, is a means of mediating historical consciousness and of resolving historical contradiction. If, as Stierle (in Reckwitz 1993:3) suggests, 'narrative figuration is historical experience made concrete' then Smith's omissions beg investigation. The utterly marginal representation of black and coloured people in the fiction, their functionary status and fixity of position marks a proper *non-dit* in the text. But again, Smith's commentary on this is through displacement and metonymy.

Andrina, it can be seen, is nothing more than a servant in the Van der Merwe household, and indeed later in Antoinette van der Merwe's household. When Andrina is banished from Antoinette's home, the latter is more concerned about finding as good a domestic as Andrina, than at Andrina's impending fate:

God forgive Andrina, but where would she, Antoinette, again find some one who could bake such good bread? (*TB*:178)

Similarly, when Tan' Linda discusses the possibility of marriage (yet another form of servitude) for Andrina, Mervrouw van der Merwe is quick to assert her authority over Andrina: 'To no one yet can I spare my little Andrintjie' (*TB*:69). Andrina's whiteness is really all that rescues her from the degrading fixity of the master/servant colonial paradigm, yet her relationship with Nind in many ways exactly mirrors the conventional colonial relationship of *colon* and *indigene*: the terms of the relationship are vastly unequal, and it can be argued that Andrina, possessing nothing (p.173), can only offer her body, herself to Nind. Smith articulates this relationship within the circle of white

relations, where difference is signified only through the limited Afrikaner/English differential, but is unable to trace the wider network of colonial relations proper. She is, as it were, staking out her own internal conflict, to find resolution here, but not elsewhere, in the field of *colon/indigene* subjectivities. One reason for this, as I have argued, is that Smith needs to preserve that rural, Afrikaner community as a substantive creative and ideational preserve. Another reason is that, for a white female writer caught between two firmly patriarchal (colonial) worlds, such issues were genuinely unsayable, for they would surely reveal all too clearly the contradictory imperatives that governed white women's status within the patriarchal, colonial paradigm, that is, their social positioning 'as both colonized patriarchal objects and colonizing race-privileged subjects' (Donaldson 1993:6). As Driver (1988: 13) puts it, 'women's sympathy for the oppressed and their simultaneous entrapment within the oppressive group on whose behalf they may desire to mediate complicates their narrative stance.' The ability to write is stymied by these contradictory impulses, and as such necessitates narrative indirection in the form of metonymic displacement and allusion.

4.5 The Sacrament Dress: Sanctifying Desire

The second part of the subtitle above is deliberately gnomic, for the use of the gerund allows for a reading of desire in *The Beadle* as both sanctified and sanctifying. Andrina's very real physical desire for Nind is sanctified (sanctioned) by her naturally pious and innocent nature; her desire to serve is only a step away from sexual desire. The Sacrament dress is a perfect totem of this: the dress is a symbol of service to the Lord, but it also signifies Andrina's budding womanhood and nascent sexuality. It is at once a sign of faith and desire, and this equation is not forced; Smith deliberately creates these contradictory meanings in order to service the former: faith, piety and

servitude sanction desire and make it a desirable quality.¹⁰ For Smith, innocence is always already on the other side of desire: in her sexual awakening Andrina's 'soul sang its innocent magnificent of humility and desire' (*TB*:118).

As an example of desire as a sanctifying force, we may read Aalst Vlokman's reunion with Andrina. Here fatherly desire up-ends loverly desire. Again, it is the Sacrament dress that leads Aalst Vlokman to Andrina. The dress is re-signified in a new faith and a new desire: the new Christ-based faith that finds a referent in Hans Rademeyer, and the new, quite legitimate desire of father for daughter. Smith's descriptions of the dress here are invested once again with a sanctifying, spiritual (if not Biblical) imagery:

In front of him, like a sign from the Lord, hung Andrina's Sacrament dress. (*TB*:190)

and,

The Sacrament dress, the cause of so much bitterness in days that were past, was to him but the last of many small forgotten miracles giving him direction. (*TB*:192)

The latter quote shows an active moment of recuperation: the object that Aalst Vlokman once despised - he once accused the Steenkamp sisters of dressing Andrina like a doll for the Englishman (*TB*:90) - becomes, on the threshold, miraculous, actively guiding him towards reunion with the lost daughter.

It would be interesting here to raise the more obvious issue that the Sacrament dress attracts Aalst Vlokman just as it attracts Henry Nind. A psychoanalytic reading of the text would reveal a transmuted oedipal drama centred on an incest taboo. Such a reading, I believe, would be unacceptably crude and deterministic. Driver (1996:205), in her persuasive reading of father-daughter desire in *The Beadle*, offers a more subtle equation:

Aalst Vlokman is to Klaartjie what Henry Nind is to Andrina, so that the figures of the father and the lover are fused and the two sexual dramas enacted in the text read

as displacements of another, more secret drama [the rape of Klaartjie].

Driver reads the sanctification of the 'fatherly transgression' of rape as the 'incomplete textual repression of the father-daughter desire that forms a point of departure for Smith's writing' (p.205).

Driver (1996:189) shows how female writers are 'ambivalently poised between being women (dutiful daughters) and writers (disobedient daughters), as they yearn for femininity on the one hand and authority on the other, in a radical and debilitating split'. Driver (1996:190) goes on to argue that Smith's loss of her father is taken up in her writing as an enabling condition:

Smith deploys father-daughter desire in such a way that it becomes hospitable to herself as a woman writer. She turns it to her advantage (finding within it a subject for her writing, in both meanings of the phrase) by cultivating its emotional and psychological charge.

As such, Driver argues, Smith's writing 'thrives in a condition of carefully nurtured crisis' (p.190).

While I am not altogether convinced that the crisis is 'carefully nurtured', Driver's argument does reinforce the point made here about Smith's sense of dividedness, and the sanctifying discourse that is used to repair it.

4.6 The Black Shawl: Levelling Difference

Smith's sacralising vision, and the fractured subjectivity that necessitates such a vision, is also deployed in her representation of burial. In a diary entry of 25 April 1914 (Driver 1983:113), Smith reports the following incident, told to her by Thys Taute:

"We were driving along across the veldt to a little encampment and walking towards us came a man I knew. He was carrying a spade in one hand, and over his shoulder a funny sort of paper parcel. I don't know why but I couldn't keep my eyes off the parcel and the spade. It seemed to me so queer. A man walking alone in the veldt with a parcel and a spade. So I turned to the friend who was riding transport with me and asked him, 'What's Grove doing out here with that spade in his hand, and that parcel on his shoulder?' ... 'Well', the man said, 'his dead baby's in that parcel, and he's off with his spade to bury it.'"

What follows in Smith's diary entry is an argument between the Predikant and Smith/Thys about the morality of such a burial. The predikant, as Smith puts it, 'was horrified' and insisted that 'people must carry their civilization with them'. Smith's response is revealing:

'Of course we must carry our civilization with us,' I said, 'but are coffins civilization! Why should they be? Our bodies have to return to the earth whether they are buried in paper or boxes - Why should we think one more civilized than the other? Personally I'd rather be buried in neither, but just put into the ground to return to earth as quickly as possible.'

While Smith does not disclaim the fact that civilisation is a necessary thing, she does however level the field by insisting that any form of burial (whether of the poor or not) is an acceptable practice and consecration of the rite. For herself, here as elsewhere,¹¹ Smith prefers a simple, unassuming, natural burial, thereby identifying in part with the burials practised in rural areas (and indeed on frontier treks).

The incident also reveals the social and cultural implications of burial. Variations in burial ceremony and accoutrements index social and economic standing: a wealthy landowner might afford a teak coffin as his final resting place, while a common bywoner would make do with pine or a simple burial shroud. For both, however, and certainly in the case of the rural Afrikaners and in Smith's representation of them, burial can equally be a way in which to inscribe oneself into the land. Certainly, Mevrouw van der Merwe's black shawl performs just such a function:

Because burial in the valley must follow so hard upon the heels of death, she [every housewife] had in readiness also both her shroud and her coffin and the shroud and the coffin of her 'man'. The poor could make no such preparation and here and there among them the older custom still lingered, and in petticoats or shirts, bound about with linen, their bodies went down into the earth into caves cut deep in their graves and boarded up with planks. For rich and poor alike the only bier was a ladder, and round about the farm of Harmonie, and for many miles beyond it, the dead were carried to their graves under the folds of a black cashmere shawl, heavily fringed, belonging to Mevrouw van der Merwe. Every farmhouse had its own group of plain white-washed tombs, every poorer dwelling its humbler mounds of earth. (*TB*:111-

12)

The shawl, though made of cashmere and 'heavily fringed' and hence an index of material wealth, is used as a levelling device, annihilating difference within the white community. But the shawl does not extend its signifying practice beyond the white community. Instead, it serves to sanction and naturalise (if not contain) the differences within that community, and to exclude or deny difference in the eyes of the people outside the community. Much in the same way that Smith's iterative 'the lands' serves equally for both Stephan van der Merwe and Aalst Vlokman, both the *seignor* and the tenant labourer, as a reinforcement of their equally valid claim to the land, so the extensive use of the black shawl sanctions burial for both rich and poor alike within the white community, and it sanctions the ritual in such a way as to confirm the entitlement on either side to a resting place, a plot of land. It also reinforces the munificence and benevolence of the Van der Merwes, confirming their position of patronage and their feudal duties.

What Smith neglects to address is the coercive power that is implicit in the shawl, the hegemonic claim that it appropriates for itself: the Van der Merwes control the activities of the valley in life just as they do so in death; their power is further extended and sanctioned. Yet the extensive power of the shawl ('about the farm of Harmonie, and for many miles beyond it'(p.112)) paradoxically reaches its own limit: it cannot compass the 'natives', whose burial rituals, whose claim to the land, cannot properly be sanctioned in the text, just as they can never be represented.

The shawl, of course, also carries Jacoba Steenkamp to her grave:

Jacoba was carried to her grave under the black cashmere shawl and buried close to the narrow mounds of earth under which lay old Piet Steenkamp and his wife.
(*TB*:163)

Jacoba's death simultaneously releases Andrina's secret pregnancy so that all in the valley, including

Johanna Steenkamp, are made aware of the 'sin'. Jacoba's death becomes an act of disclosure, but it also prompts another disclosure, for Jacoba's death releases Aalst Vlokman from his own dark secret. Jacoba is in essence the sacrificial lamb, embodying the secrets of both Andrina and Aalst Vlokman, and purging both on the altar of her death. The beadle is particularly affected by the finality of Jacoba's death, the irreparable sentence it issues on his own behaviour. Aalst Vlokman haunts Jacoba's grave site:

It was not Andrina, so far beyond his reach in the Caroline district, who now held his thoughts. It was Jacoba, farther still beyond his reach, lying quiet in her grave. (TB:165)

and,

He wasted [his time] by creeping up from his lands to gaze like a man in a trance at the dry brown earth which hid Jacoba from his sight. (TB:166)

The correlation of Andrina and Jacoba here (and no longer Klaartjie) is important because it offers a redemptive possibility for the beadle; he can claim forgiveness from Andrina where he could not (or would not) claim it from Jacoba. Although the beadle feels responsible for Jacoba's death (p.166), he is afforded the opportunity to reclaim responsibility of another, more redeeming sort, the responsibility of father for daughter.

Just as Jacoba's burial is contained by the black shawl, absorbing her fully into the Aangenaam valley community, so is the burial ceremony itself a form of containment, as it reconstitutes the social fabric of the community.

A final addendum needs to be written here of another totemic garment: the animal skin upon which Andrina gives birth. It is significant that an old coloured woman, known only as Ophelia, plays midwife to Andrina. But what is more important is that the kaross, like the black shawl, is harnessed as a unifying totem, reconstituting the fabric of Afrikaner rural culture:

Late that night, kneeling on the skin on the floor as many women of her race had knelt on the ground behind their wagons, Andrina bore her son. (*TB*:190)

What is significant here is the glaring omission of another race, who also knelt on animal skins to give birth. The association is not made here; instead Smith uses the opportunity to ascribe an epic status to the Afrikaners and to their antecedents, the Trekboers. Yet the omission itself may be reconstituted as an unavoidable correlative, an act of association that cannot be elided, and that in fact testifies to the mutually implicated status of settler and indigenous women, which is forever excised in the fiction. As Wendy Woodward (1995:26) points out in a study on midwifery in the Eastern Cape in the 1800s:

A seamless female community was not feasible, given the discourses of power inherent in class and 'race' differences, but the necessity for women to be attended in birth undermined the discursive construction of indigenous woman as other. The latter often functioned as midwives to settler women.

Using Pratt's (1992) notion of transculturation, where indigenous women often shared their esoteric knowledges with settler and trekboer women, she goes on to add that

the identity formation of settler women was a relational one, as their interaction with indigenous women contributed to the constitution of their ... identities. (p.27)

So behind Klaartjie and Andrina, bywoner women who are excluded from the land, from their place in the Aangenaam Valley, stands Ophelia, and many like her, who remain unrepresented and unrecuperated in the text.

NOTES

1. Sheila Roberts (1989), P.A. Gibbon (1982), and A. E. Voss (1977) have all located the novel against the backdrop of British and Afrikaner rivalry.
2. In her journal entries of 20-22 October 1913 (Driver 1983:108-10) she says: 'How has the wealth of the Transvaal benefited the Buckinghamshire roadman? What has empire done for him?' and she suggests that the British stop 'thinking imperially and think humanely instead' (p.109). She also notes that 'greatness for some of us meant not possessions, colonies, etc.,

- but the happiness and welfare of the majority, i.e. the people' (p.110). Of course, for Smith, 'the people' here refers to the Afrikaner.
3. Kristeva (1969:19) introduced the term to mean 'a critique of meaning, of its elements and its laws.' While my reading does not promise to provide a critique of the meaning produced in Smith's text, it does, however, draw on the conceptual terminology of Kristeva's work, drawn from Lacan, such as the split subject and the dual planes of language.
 4. Smith expressly calls it a 'loss': 'In my own case, & my sister's, we lost far more than we gained by being sent to 'boarding school in England' 6000 miles away from our parents - & the loss was our parents' too - I look back upon that break in our happy childhood as a tragedy for us all.' (Letter to Frank Swinnerton, 15 January 1947 in Driver 1983:4).
 5. Smith acknowledges her faith in the Old Testament in a letter written to Sarah Millin in June 1939: 'I turn much more frequently to the Old Testament than to the New.' (Driver 1983:127).
 6. A whole debate has opened up around the actual motivating force of the myth of the Chosen People in Afrikaner historical consciousness. See André du Toit (1983), Stanley Ridge (1987) and Carli Coetzee (1995a).
 7. Christina Landman (1994), drawing on journals and diaries, traces the construction of Afrikaans settler women as pious, subservient and long-suffering heroines, based on a biblical discourse. See also Scherzinger (1991) for the concept of the 'pure woman' in the South African pastoral and Cloete (1994), who traces the construction of the Volksmoeder.
 8. Dorothy Driver (1989, 1996) gives a powerful reading of father/daughter desire and the enabling conditions for writing as a daughter.
 9. It should not go unnoticed here that Nind's definition almost implicitly rests on the stereotypical binary of whore/virgin. Another important feature of Nind's definition by negation is that it closely resembles what structuralists term contradiction which 'defines the others by way of a summary negation whose meaning remains unspecific because it is lexematically reflexive. The other side gets semantically impoverished, as it were, though not existing in its own right' (Reckwitz 1993:2).
 10. It should be noted that the word 'contradictory' is used here only insofar as faith and desire, at the time of Smith's writing and in the fictional time of the novel, were seen as contradictory. A thesis could be written on the overlap of faith (a sublimated form of desire) and physical desire proper.
 11. In a diary entry dated 9 April 1914 (Driver 1983:112) Smith says, 'I hoped when I died they'd dig me in a field and say no prayers over, and have no funeral in the ordinary sense of the word at all.' There is a contradictory impulse here. On the one hand Smith identifies with the rustic simplicity of rural burials, but on the other, her refusal of a ceremonial or ritualised burial is almost an attempt to efface the place/site of burial, that is, to claim no land as her own, no final resting place as her proper abode.

5. *SPEAKING SELINA/READING MITTEE: COMMENSURABILITY IN MITTEE*

5.1 *Selina/Mittee: Dividedness and Belonging*

The issue of dividedness permeates Daphne Rooke's novel, *Mittee*; the eponymous title immediately peels away to reveal the dissonant narrating voice of Selina, a coloured serving woman of the 1890s.

At what point, one must ask, is this actually the story of Mittee, a privileged white, Afrikaans, land-owning 'belle' of the Transvaal, and when is it in fact the story of Selina, her general factotum? The text pivots on this question, for the issue of a divided self marks a site of obsession for Rooke, whose dual parentage, at a time when 'mixed marriage' between Afrikaner and English was a taboo, presents itself in a deeply riven identity. In an interview with Ian Glenn (1989:38), Rooke speaks of her mother's marriage to her English father:

She married him secretly because my grandmother had by then turned against the English and she didn't want her to marry an Englishman. See how quickly it changed ... My mother told me that before the second Boer War nobody really cared whether you were Dutch or English. It was only after the second Boer War that the hatred sprung up - she said it was a completely different world.

All Rooke's major novels focus on this world - the Anglo-Boer war and the competition for land and power concentrated there. In the case of *Mittee*, the competition and animosity between Boer and British is fairly obvious, but Rooke insists on a forced 'happy' ending where Boer (Mittee) and British (Basil Castledene) elope into the sunset. If this may be read as the overriding concern of the novel, then Rooke goes to great lengths to conceal it, and what dominates instead in the novel is another colonial relationship, that between Selina and Paul du Plessis, Mittee's husband. This shift of narrative focus, this displacement from one relationship to another, it may be argued, can be seen as Rooke's attempt to deal with the issue of her own dividedness. Ian Glenn (1987:3) writes in his introduction to the novel:

Mittee, dedicated to Rooke's mother, may be read, insofar as it is the story of Mittee,

as Rooke's coming to terms with what was represented by her mother's defection from Afrikaner nationalism in marrying an Englishman. The racial problem and the problem of 'mixed marriages' was for a long time in South Africa held to refer to relations between English and Afrikaans-speaking whites.

We can see that it is no accident that Rooke represents one relationship (between Mittee and Basil Castledene) in terms of another (between Selina and Paul du Plessis); both represent 'mixed' liaisons, transgressing the governing racial and cultural codes of the day. But Glenn's words, while they assert a fairly obvious position, present a problem which in turn becomes the founding moment for my own argument: *insofar as it is the story of Mittee*. One is forced to ask again, is it the story of Mittee? And if so, why is it that Mittee does not speak, why is it that Selina is chosen to speak, moreover to narrate and to finally bring closure to the novel? The obvious answer is that Selina must speak because Mittee cannot. Indeed, Selina must speak for Mittee's illicit, extramarital liaison with Basil Castledene, justified by Selina's own illicit liaison with Paul du Plessis. Selina must articulate what lies buried close to the surface precisely because Mittee, given her social constraints, her carefully guarded sexuality and, indeed, *discursivity*, as an Afrikaner woman of the 1890s, cannot give utterance. Christina Landman (1994) has written comprehensively on the constructed piety of Afrikaner Settler women and the boundaries of the permissible and impermissible inscribed for them. Mittee is constrained firmly within this group and thus she *cannot* speak. It is also a common structural feature of Rooke's work that she chooses 'a narrator who will speak what is customarily left unspoken' (Lenta 1996:101).

More importantly, Selina enables Rooke to articulate, at a remove, her own dividedness. Selina/Mittee comes to represent that nexus of dividedness, the liminal site of a split identity. This split is further complicated by Rooke's choice of a *coloured* female narrator, who herself embodies a liminal point, and who transgresses the colour line itself which 'persists as the organizing principle

of racial space', an 'exclusionary line demarcating and bounding whiteness' and articulating 'the social boundaries of legitimate belonging' (Kawash 1997:7,12). The issue of dividedness and belonging, of a coherent self and a community of one's own, seem central to the text, yet are markedly absent, except in the form of two artificial utopias which Rooke constructs, first for Mittee and the Englishman Casteldene; they ride off into the sunset, a model of absolute heterogeneity; and then for Selina and Fanie, in enforced exclusion in a mountain top retreat. Rooke, 'by plunging into the zone of the boundary' (Kawash 1997:22), the line between black and white, which at a remove may be read as the line between English and Afrikaner, attempts to grapple with her own hybridity and 'to imagine the possibilities of an elsewhere' (Kawash 1997:22) where dividedness is recuperated in a sense of belonging.

The world which Rooke attempts to recuperate is a world of violence and privation, of loss and longing, played out on the farms and in the seasonal migrations of the families of Paul du Plessis and Mittee, and set against the backdrop of the Anglo-Boer War. This world is borne directly out of Rooke's own childhood experience and the related experiences of her mother:

My whole childhood had this terrible miasma of violence and horror. I felt it terribly. (Glenn 1989:45)

I've always had this sense of violence. You know I don't think the world is a safe place - I never feel safe - and you know I'm quite right too. It is getting worse, more and more violent, but it has always been a violent and terrible world and I think that being introduced to it so early you accepted it. (Glenn 1989:47)

It was really a frightful childhood because it had this horror of violence and loss and as I got older I realised that it was all so unnecessary. (Glenn 1989:45)

Rooke ascribes this 'violence', 'loss' and 'horror' to the fact that they were always 'a soldiering family' (Glenn 1989:28), but behind this stands the issue of cultural identity and belonging: her father died young defending a patch of England, while her mother became 'a complete Anglophile'.

This English/British identity emerged against a backdrop of Anglo-Boer tensions and lingering resentments which Rooke was to feel keenly as a child. She grew up with a gnawing sense of dividedness, and with a sense of a riven identity:

I think I haven't lived the sort of life I should have lived. I lived a dual life. I hadn't got complete access to myself if you know what I mean. (Glenn 1989:23)

And later she says,

I was semi-autistic. I didn't want to be in the world I saw around me. I wanted to be in that inner world with those characters. (Glenn 1989:34)

Writing thus becomes for Rooke a protection against the complicated dividedness and violence of her external world. Her writing, it may be argued, becomes a refuge, but also a place of resolution, or at least a place where an attempt is made to grapple with the issues of cultural identity and belonging. It is perhaps fitting then, and interesting, that she chooses as her narrator a figure who embodies the very notion of dividedness and unbelonging, Selina. Michael Green (1997:147) has spoken of Rooke's varied choice of narrators throughout her novels:

In a series of novels she almost programmatically explores South African history from a variety of different subjective viewpoints, fracturing it into disparate perspectives. From the mad white male narrator of *A Grove of Fever Trees* to the coloured Afrikaans female narrator of *Mittee* ... Rooke has splintered her vision of South African history into numerous facets.

He goes on to speak of 'the sense of dislocation inherent in such an enterprise' (1997:147) and of the threat this presented 'to her own subjectivity' (p.147). But it might equally be argued that the act of writing, and the discursive possibilities available to her at the time, were as much an attempt to *stabilise* her identity as to reveal its fractures.

5.2 Can the Subaltern Narrate?

The narrative voice in *Mittee* bears further investigation. Gayatri Spivak (1988) has posed the question whether the subaltern can speak, yet in Daphne Rooke's *Mittee* we find a coloured, female narrator who apparently not only speaks, but also narrates.¹ Assuming for argument's sake that Spivak is right about subalternity and a speaking position, one is pressed to question the choice of Rooke's narrator, especially since the novel was written in the chilly dawn of apartheid, with legislation like the Immorality Act already in the air. Rooke's narrative voice also in part explains the critical silence that followed on the novel which, though loudly acclaimed abroad, was largely ignored in South Africa (Glenn 1987:1). Only recently has *Mittee* been recovered as an important colonial text, which openly offers itself up to feminist readings and colonial discourse analysis (cf. Green 1994; Lenta 1996; Wicomb 1989; Barsby 1989; Hooper 1996). However, it is not my intention here to repeat such readings. As in previous chapters, I am interested in the way the fiction masks or displaces untenable historical signs, in the form of representational breakdowns, structural anomalies and narrative strategies.

What first begs investigation is Rooke's position as a colonial writer. Writing in 1951, she cannot so neatly fall into the overtly British colonial period to which the other writers in this study belong, yet details in the biographical and fictional writings of Rooke suggest a profound and enduring interest in coloniality, and in the differences and distances attendant on this condition. In a bibliographic *précis* (Commire 1977:179-80), Rooke is quoted as saying:

My stories deal with the differences in people ... I have singled out people who are in some sense handicapped, by race or other circumstances ... I think I write to establish contact with people. Although I write fiction my search has always been for the truth. Each story has something of my own experience in it.

Rooke's awareness of difference - predicated on race - and her desire for 'contact' suggest an awareness at least of what it means to be colonial. Her 'own experience' corroborates this: born of

Anglo-Afrikaner decent, her ancestors were prominent in the early colonial settling of South Africa. Her grandfather was Dietloff Mare, Landdrost of Pietersburg, who took part in the Great Trek when he was twelve (Niekerk-Corder 1963:103). Her brother, Leon Mare, made a name for himself in Afrikaans literature. The colonial connection does not end there. In 1937 she married another colonial, an Australian, Irvin Rooke, and later emigrated to Australia. Here she took up writing children's books of the colonial adventure variety, with such titles as *The South African Twins*, *The Australian Twins* and *New Zealand Twins*. Her awareness of coloniality extends to her publishing practices. She is keenly aware of the importance of the metropole, the colonial centre, as a publishing site (Glenn 1994:79). What interests me most, however, is the centrality of issues of coloniality in her adult fiction.

Rooke can enter into these issues only by seeming to make Selina a full narrative subject, one with full discursive powers. While underlying social and economic differences patently exist between Selina and Mittee, Selina must be seen to be fully equivalent with Mittee. Indeed, Rooke is at great pains to disavow the conventional maid/madam or slave/mistress relationship between the two women. Mittee is shown, through the constraints of her gender, to be as equally entrapped as Selina, while Selina is often shown to be far more empowered than Mittee. This labile shift between Self and Other, between maid and madam, between Selina and Mittee, saturates the text. This (what I shall call) commensurate structure of the text is neatly played out in the areas under discussion in this dissertation: pregnancy and burial. In brief, both Selina's unborn child and Mittee's deformed child are destroyed by male violence (it is also no accident that they share the same paternity, in the figure of Paul du Plessis); and similarly, the lack of Christian burial for Paul du Plessis (and indeed the erroneous burial of another corpse in his stead) simultaneously implies freedom for both Selina

and Mittee.

However, the commensurability of Selina and Mittee can only really be achieved if Selina is given the speaking voice. She is given the power to narrate in order to compensate for her lack of power elsewhere and also to serve a mediating function in the text. Selina mediates Mittee's story and serves as a mechanism of displacement in the text. The narrating Selina is a spurious creation of the author, but an important one: by giving Selina the power (at least superficially) to tell her story, Rooke accommodates this story. By accommodating Selina's story, Rooke necessarily accommodates Selina's taboo (of miscegenation), and in doing so accommodates her own taboo (her own miscegenation, her Anglo-Afrikaner origins), the taboo of her own mother, and of the fictional Mittee. It is just as important, at the end of the novel, that Selina returns firmly to her own kind (in an isolated mountain paradise where they 'call no man baas' (*MT:7*), and that Mittee reproduces the Anglo-Afrikaner mix that is linked to Rooke's own origins.

5.3 Nation and Narration

Much more needs to be said on the racial classification of the narrator in Mittee. Selina's coloured status is no accident. Not completely Other, she is a more accessible narrator for Rooke, but she also raises the fundamental issue of hybridity, central to the text in both Selina and Mittee's liaisons, with its co-ordinates of sex, culture and power. The notion of hybridity is a further instance of commensurability between Selina and Mittee, because both mark for Rooke an attempt to deal with her own mixed origins and with what must surely be seen, by the author, as the taboo of these origins. It is no accident, incidentally, that another illicit, taboo relationship is addressed in the novel, between Andrina and Leon, based on incest, which also necessarily has as its focus the

question of origins and the question of identity. Robert Young (1995:4) articulates the link between hybridity and identity quite clearly:

In the nineteenth century, the very notion of a fixed English identity was doubtless a product of, and reaction to, the rapid change and transformation of both metropolitan and colonial societies which meant that, as with nationalism, such identities needed to be constructed to counter schisms, friction and dissent ... Fixity of identity is only sought in situations of instability and disruption, of conflict and change.

Young (1995:4) goes on to say:

The need for organic metaphors of identity or society implies a counter-sense of fragmentation and dispersion. There is a story behind the way in which the organic paradigm so beloved of the nineteenth century quickly developed alongside one of hybridity, grafting, of forcing incompatible entities to grow together (or not): to that extent, we still operate within its legacy of violence and corruption.

Rooke, with her fascination for difference and her need for contact (Commire 1977:179), plus her desire to deal with the 'truth' of her 'own experience', surely places herself within the operations of this legacy. Her enduring obsession with coloniality surely articulates her own discord, her desire to stabilise her dual origins. She achieves this project in *Mittee* through the commensurate structure of the text, through the parallelism of Selina and Mittee, but also through the choice of Selina as narrator. As a coloured herself, a hybrid as it were, as the very embodiment of the crisis of identity that Rooke seeks to articulate, Selina comes to stand for what is inarticulable for Mittee, and by extension for Rooke. If, as Bhabha and Said have claimed, nations are narrations, and nations are inscribed discursively, then Selina as narrator must surely embody a 'national' consciousness based on mixing, the mixing of races and the mixing of cultures, a consciousness which haunts Rooke but under whose sign she is compelled to write. Through this false act of narration, through the calculatedly unashamed, unselfconscious manner in which Selina is enabled (however spuriously) to speak herself, Rooke is also able, indirectly and by substitution, to give utterance to her own

dissonance. But Selina can only say what she does in *lieu* of Mittee, who is the more obvious articulation of Rooke's dividedness (it is Mittee, remember, who springs right out of Rooke's own origins). Selina can narrate because of her position of marginality, because she is outside both the cultures that make up Rooke's problematic identity, English and Afrikaner.² Selina's marginality not only provides her with the ideal narrative position from which to tell the story of Mittee, but also a position from which to articulate her own hybridity. There is a contradiction here that cannot be undone and which is fundamental to the foundational fiction Rooke creates to articulate her own dividedness, to stabilise her divided nationality. Selina can utter the inutterable only because she is not accountable - as servant, as coloured, and as female. She is firmly marginal to the culture within which Mittee (and indeed Rooke) defines herself, but, as a coloured, she nevertheless embodies the foundational problematic which Rooke seeks to stabilise. Both marginal to and the very embodiment, at a remove, of Rooke's own crisis, Selina plays out a contradiction in terms which can only be resolved through her commensurability with Mittee. Selina must be shown to be commensurate with Mittee, for it is Mittee's crisis, after all, that she must articulate, a crisis which Mittee cannot articulate. By a curious narrative displacement, what is backgrounded is foregrounded, in a continual shift between what is the Self and what is the Other, between Selina and Mittee, between the story of the one and the story of the other. I want to argue that this is the strategic gesture necessary to Rooke's articulation of her own mixed origins; that the question of hybridity is always linked to the question of identity, and that it saturates the text at a thematic, structural and linguistic level.

At a linguistic level, the narrative voice in Mittee is compelling. Wicomb (1989:16) has argued that in the novel 'the very mode of narration constitutes a struggle' and finds the novel to be

an uncomfortable reading experience 'in trying to locate the different voices in the text' (p.16). It may be argued that this is an inevitable if not deliberate outcome of Rooke's own struggle to deal with her hybridity - the voices merge and part in the text in a specular sequence that embodies the shifting voices, the shifting languages, that constitute Rooke's own origins. Young (1995:20) discusses linguistic hybridity in an interesting reading of Bhaktin: 'For Bhaktin, hybridity delineates the way in which language, even within a single sentence, can be double-voiced.' Young (1995:20) goes on to quote Bhaktin:

What is hybridization? It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor.

'Hybridity', Young says, 'describes the condition of language's fundamental ability to be simultaneously the same but different' (p.20), to be, in my own choice of terminology, commensurate. This seems naturally inbuilt in Selina's voice – Selina's language - which is in fact Mittee's. Rooke makes no effort authentically to reproduce the language or discursive nuances of a coloured, serving class woman in the Transvaal Republic of the 1890s, in the way Smith or Bosman, for instance, have reproduced Afrikaans speakers in their work in an attempt to breach the cultural gulf.³ Instead, the narrating voice in the text remains unaccented, for it must serve both Selina and Mittee. The narrative voice is an aural palimpsest which contains both Selina and Mittee and, behind the two of them, Rooke. The text is saturated with instances of this conflation of voices; they are too numerous to quote, but an early example, in a scene where Mittee quite unreasonably attacks one of her pupils, demonstrates the shifting narrative perspective:

'What was Kosie doing?' [Mrs Coester] asked in anguish at seeing her youngest and best-loved attacked.

Mittee could not explain. You cannot say to a loving mother that a fat boy in trousers too long for him is a sight to make you lose control of yourself; that he

was innocently reciting 'Sheep, my little sheep' when you fell upon him. Instead she burst into tears of temper and shut up the school. Sitting in her room, she was bored and I did not dare say boo or baa for fear she would take it out on me. (MT:9)

The moments of projection and transference are marked here, and the shift between pronouns equally revealing. It is hard to separate out Selina from Mittee. It is indeed essential that the voice of Selina encompass the voice of Mittee, that the single utterance contain the double voices of the women.

With Bakhtin, linguistic hybridisation has an ironising function; in Young's words (1995:20), 'he uses hybridization to describe the ability of one voice to ironize and unmask the other within the same utterance.' Rooke uses hybridisation for another purpose: she grafts the one voice onto the other in order to ensure that a link, at a thematic and symbolic level, is unavoidable between the two.

Such a link is necessary for Rooke to articulate her own crisis of identity at a remove.

5.4 Triangular Desire and Substitutability

It would be easy to dismiss Rooke's ventriloquising of Selina as simply an instance of substitutability found so readily in colonial fiction, more especially in colonial romance; to locate Selina's spurious speech as part of the fatally symbiotic and essentially mendacious dance between Self and Other - that Manichean drama - that constitutes colonial texts (cf. JanMohamed 1985). But the commensurate relationship of Selina and Mittee is built into the very structure of the text, and is asserted repeatedly through structural and narrative features that suggest a definite strategy on Rooke's part. This structure is most visibly played out in the triangular relationship of Selina, Paul du Plessis and Mittee.⁴ At a most obvious level, Paul and Selina's sexual liaison is necessary, both to displace and undermine the relationship between Mittee and Paul. This liaison is thematically necessary, the pretext by which Mittee can safely and conscionably transfer her affections to Basil

Castledene. The relationship between Paul and Selina must be seen as a purgation of sorts - a representation of all that is morally sick in Afrikanerdom - so that Mittee's relationship with Basil will seem morally justified. It is essential that the Afrikaans beauty (Mittee) end up with the just and gentlemanly Englishman (Castledene), essential for Rooke, whose struggle in the fiction is to stabilise her own origins. But Rooke has to go through a long mediatory route to achieve the necessary logic of Mittee and Basil's final union. Selina is the *via media*, as it were, of this route. Not only is she the Other Woman (rather than simply the Other), but she also establishes the link between Basil and Mittee. It is no accident that this connection is made on the day that Selina has fled her mistress, fearing discovery, having destroyed Mittee's wedding dress in a futile effort to prevent or defer the marriage between Mittee and Paul. Basil finds a remorseful Selina weeping in the sun. Rooke is at great pains first to insist on the double-edged closeness of Mittee and Selina, and then on the similarity between Mittee and Basil:

I began to cry again. 'Oh, you don't understand. She bought me blue silk to wear on her wedding day. And beads and sweets. She took me to see the lantern slides and lent me her clothes. Sometimes she forgets I am a coloured girl and calls me Sister. I love her and I hate her, you could never understand.' (MT:65-6)

But clearly Basil, the good missionary doctor, does understand, and only a little while later Selina repeatedly asserts that he and Mittee are alike: 'You are like Mittee, your blood is like vinegar' and 'You're like her, I tell you, you're like Mittee' (p.66). Basil plays out a redemptive role in the text. He is proleptically set up by Rooke to redeem the callow vanities of Mittee, but he also serves to redeem Selina and encourages her to return and 'confess to Mittee'. He even offers to provide her with sanctuary should Mittee force her to leave. As it turns out, the drama of discovery of the destroyed dress plays itself out in the characteristic terms of Selina and Mittee's relationship - through ambivalence, through love and hatred, malice and remorse, and through the specular

intensity of their coloniality. On her return from 'Besil' Selina, though contrite, still feels resentful of Mittee:

Their voices flicked at me until I quivered with hatred. I thought, If I ever get the chance, I'll poison Mittee and gloat over her as she dies. (MT:67)

Only a short while later, Mittee brutally beats Selina for her destruction of the dress, but later returns to comfort her:

Late that night, Mittee came to the little room where I slept. I knew she was there by the smell of camphor but I thought I must be dreaming until she spoke.

'Selina, I've brought ointment for your face. Oh, to think I hit you like that, all for a piece of silk. I'll light the candle so I can rub the stuff on your face.' With hands as delicate as fluttering moths, she smoothed the ointment into my cheeks. (MT:68)

While Selina accepts Mittee's tender gesture, it is pity for Paul, rather than for Mittee, that prevents her from revealing the truth of her relationship with Paul to her.

She could not understand. Almost I cried out, I love Paul. I have lain with him. It was pity for him rather than for her that kept me silent. (p.68)

All the same, Selina later recounts to Basil her mistress's gesture of reconciliation:

I think he fell in love with Mittee, though he had never seen her, when I described her remorse and tenderness. (p.68)

Basil, not surprisingly, and unbeknownst to Mittee, supplies the silk for Mittee's wedding dress, forging yet another link between them.

Selina is thus used time and again to establish the link between Basil and Mittee, and to articulate (if not embody) the impossibility of Paul and Mittee's relationship. Selina plays a structural function in the text, driving it towards its necessary conclusion. It is necessary for Rooke to stabilise her identity, to legitimate and indeed authenticate her own dual origins; she does this through the rejection of an homogeneous cultural identity, which is presented in the Afrikaner nation

against which she must define herself. Paul du Plessis stands as the representative of that homogeneous Afrikaner identity and hence Mittee's (and indeed finally Selina's) rejection of him can be seen as Rooke's rejection of such an identity.

Selina and Mittee are bonded to Paul through other means in the text. Both conceive a child through Paul, both lose their child - Selina, *in utero* - both directly and indirectly through him, and both are released finally only through his death. In both cases, Selina again provides the mediating third term, who intervenes, for reasons both selfish and selfless, between Paul and Mittee. When Mittee rejects Paul's advances under the moonlight for fear that 'a Kaffir should see' (MT:91), Selina is there to offer herself in Mittee's stead. When Paul is about to rape Mittee as a punishment for practising contraception, Selina intervenes and offers herself instead:

He smashed the door in with the butt of his rifle. I was afraid when he began to drink the brandy for his face became brutally seamed. It was for my little nonnie's sake that I took off my clothes and danced before him. (MT:180)

When Mittee is finally able to escape Paul, it is Selina who comes up with the idea to kill Paul in order to ensure that escape.

On other occasions in the novel, the link between Selina and Mittee is shown more directly: both women disclaim their given identities, disavowing the race to which they belong. Early in the novel, Selina experiences a sense of alienation from her own people:

I hesitated, thinking I might join in the fun, but a feeling of not belonging to my own race was strong upon me. (MT:38)

Later in the novel, Andrina and Mittee contrive to dress Selina up as a white girl, in order that she may see the lantern slides.

'How pretty you would have been if you were white.' She sprinkled bath powder over my face, smoothing it into my cheeks ... 'Put on your bonnet. Now you wouldn't know you were a coloured.' (MT:49)

Later, Selina and Polly, the Van Brandenburg maid, take to dressing up in their mistresses' clothes in their absence: 'We would dress up in our nonnies' clothes and pretend we were white girls' (p.52).

It is on one such occasion that Selina encounters Paul du Plessis, who rejects her simulated whiteness:

He put out his hand to me but I stayed in the doorway. 'In these clothes I look like a white girl, don't I?'

His hand dropped and bitter pride twisted his mouth. 'No. You could never look like a white girl.'

It is difficult to read these kind of scenes without distaste for the overt racism inscribed in them, but Selina's desire to be white can also be seen as her desire to be Mittee, something that Rooke needs to assert quite regularly in order to service the articulation of her own hybridity; it is, after all, a *white* colonial identity, albeit of mixed origins, that Rooke asserts for herself:

I dreamed also that a man came to me with a parcel of silk for my wedding dress. I was a white girl and my name was Mittee. (MT:86)

We are reminded of Fanon's (1967:41-2) ghostly words at this point:

We have seen that the native never ceases to dream of putting himself [sic] in the place of the settler - not of becoming the settler but of substituting himself for the settler.

At the same time, and indeed linked to this, Mittee wishes not to be Mittee, defers her marriage to Paul du Plessis for as long as possible, and regularly refers to her fear of marriage to Paul:

She sat down on the grass and spread her skirt round her carefully. 'Sometimes I wish that I was not Mittee.'

'Would you rather be Selina, who has no home and no people?' I asked bitterly.

'Paul is like Grandma. You are never free from him. I have to do only what he tells me, I'm like a monkey on a chain.' (p.107)

Mittee understands the repressive order of which she is to be a part. Marriage is her entry into that order, and marriage, as Annalisa Oboe (1994:155-6) puts it in her reading of historical romances,

'legitimizes the nation-family' and 'part of the "conjugal" romance's project is to found the white nation of South Africa through marriage, and to consolidate it by producing future citizens.' Selina dreams of marriage to Paul du Plessis and Mittee fears marriage to Paul du Plessis; this paralleled inversion, it may be argued, serves Rooke's need to articulate and justify the final relationship of Mittee and Basil, a relationship that can be seen as a disruption of the founding moment of the Afrikaner nation. As Oboe (1994:160) puts it: 'if you undermine marriage, you undermine its macroscopic extension, i.e. the nation', in this case, an homogenised, purist Afrikaner nation. Rooke has to disavow the marriage of Mittee and Paul in order to justify her own origins.

Needless to say, it is not without irony that Mittee never wishes to be Selina. The exchange of identities can really only slide in one direction, for it is Selina who is there to serve Mittee's crisis, and not the other way round. Mittee must find accommodation in the landscape of identities that features in the conflict between Anglo and Boer, for Rooke must stabilise the contestatory identities that make up her own identity. Mittee cannot be, like Selina, without 'a home' and 'a people'. Selina is, at a remove, the articulation of Rooke's own sense of homelessness and unbelonging, of alienation from both the groups that constitute her origins, but in Mittee, for whom the crisis of identity is the same, Rooke must find an alternative destiny, a happy ending. Mittee will find a home, and she will find a people, somewhere beyond the mountains, within a moral order that stands above Mittee's inherited order where 'fat land' could 'be taken from the Kaffirs for a few shillings a morgen' (*MT*:134). In his union with Mittee, Basil Castledene presents not only a new hybrid identity, but a redeemed colonial identity, one founded not on conquest and acquisition, but on evangelism and redemption.⁵

5.5 *The Skull beneath the Skin*

Ian Glenn (1987:3) writes that the 'the motif of the skull in the hole, which in turn becomes the skeleton of what has been killed and repressed, seems to work quite as logically and thoroughly as the corpse in Gordimer's *The Conservationist*', suggesting the violent and repressive order of the South African historical formation. But the skull represents something different for Selina and Mittee:

This skull had haunted us since childhood ... and it was ... frightful in its changelessness. (MT:32)

The skull somehow represents a force of fatal continuity in the lives of Selina and Mittee, locking them into a spectral world of stasis and immutability. (One is reminded of the immobile tableau that constitutes the farming communities of rural, colonial South Africa - indeed, the fixity of all colonial historical formations.) The skull later is transposed into the full skeleton of Herry, who was murdered by Paul du Plessis after he witnessed Paul and Selina *in flagrante delicto*. But the unburied skulls and skeletons that litter the landscape (including, later, the body of Paul du Plessis) come to suggest a profound *anomie*, a sense of unbelonging, that the inhabitants of this world are unable to achieve rest or integration with the land they formally occupied; that, in Gray's words (1979:154), they can only die on the land in order to prove that they have lived above it. This anxiety over belonging and integration with the land, not unexpectedly, is articulated in the metaphysical and religious terms of proper Christian burial by the minister:

He said that you could not bury a skull or even a whole skeleton unless you knew whom it was part of, for how were you to know whether the bones belonged to a murderer or a suicide or perhaps even to an ape? (MT:32)

However, the unburied skeleton of Herry evokes in Selina a different response. She flees the farm to her Auntie Lena, fearing that Paul might kill her too:

‘All the world, Selina, what are you doing here carrying your bundle?’
‘I’ve finished with them, Auntie. I didn’t even wait for the money she owes me.’
‘Almighty, surely that couldn’t happen. Why, you were born on the farm.’
(*MT*:109)

What is at issue here is a sense of belonging, of having a birthplace, and perhaps even a birthright. The tenuousness of life revealed to Selina through Herry’s murder and his lack of proper burial suggests the tenuousness of her own existence, the instability that necessarily marks her position as coloured ‘serving girl’. The fact that Herry was assumed to be her father (p.30, 110) also evokes a sense of homelessness and dispossession. This is further augmented when Paul confronts Selina at Auntie Lena:

He was speaking eagerly, like a man who speaks of love, with gusts of breath that shook the words from him.

I held the sleeping child against my body like a shield. ‘They say that Herry was my father . While we both live, there will always be this thing between us and one day you will kill me.’

‘Never. Little heart, have you forgotten? I avenged our child. If it had lived, I would not have seen it in want. If the world were different, I would have loved you.’

I shook my head at his lies. (*MT*:110-111)

The ‘thing between’ Selina and Paul is not so much the murder of Herry as the fixity of the relations between them, the fact that Paul is from an esteemed Afrikaans family, and Selina is the offspring of a liaison between an Englishman and a Shangaan woman. It is her origins, coupled with the threat that Herry posed to Paul’s order, that lie between them. Selina recognises this. Paul’s words, ‘if the world were different’, merely further testify to the difference between them and reinforce Selina’s position of powerlessness. As with the previous texts, the issue of dispossession and unbelonging surfaces by displacement. It is no accident that Selina, in order to divert Auntie Lena’s attention away from Paul, tells her that the skeleton is ‘[p]erhaps some Kaffir who was drowned and washed

in there by the river' (p.111). It is the 'Kaffir' ultimately who has suffered the worst dispossession.

But there is a whole topography of belonging and unbelonging in the South African historical formation. Never does Selina feel her sense of unbelonging more keenly than at the loss of her father, the only sense of origin and belonging that she had:

I turned my face to the bright mountains, wistfully, like the Coesters' chained monkey did when he stared towards the krantzies where his tribe lived his thrilling life. (*MT*:112)

While Selina feels only a sense of alienation, Mittee, on the surface at least, fits perfectly in with the co-ordinates of her class and tribe. Interestingly, Mittee and Paul, being Afrikaans and of a landed class, have more in common than Mittee would admit. In the beginning of the novel we learn that

Mittee

was growing rich with the ivory and skins the farmers paid her for teaching their children. (p.7)

and that

Mittee's grandfather had left her a farm outside Plessisburg and the land was worked by Gouws and his sons, bywoners and distant relatives of Grandpa Van Brandenburg. ... Mittee drew an income from the farm as well as from her teaching. (p.8)

Paul du Plessis is similarly part of the possessing class:

Paul trekked north. He took with him his bywoners and other poor families, to be spread over the fertile valleys of the Wolkbergen. (p.117)

and

'They say he is after gold, he has struck a reef ... The only answer for Plessis is to trek on ... game by the million and fertile, he wants everything ...' (p.117)

Gold, ivory, game and skins; Mittee and Paul represent an acquisitive, rapacious colonial and settler culture. But Rooke is at pains to work against these similarities. When Mittee does choose love at the end (and what is *Mittee* if not a love story, after all?), it is with the humble missionary,

Castledene, who seemingly stands outside this order of dispossessors. This is the chosen ending because it not only stabilises Rooke's own divided origins, but also presents a far more benign face of colonialism (in the figure of Basil Castledene and his redemption of the vain, insensitive Mittee), one with which Rooke, with her fascination for difference and for those handicapped by race, can comfortably live.

The issue of burial, or the failure to achieve consecrated, ritualised burial, comes to the fore in the end with the death of Paul du Plessis. Paul, the arch aggressor, the arch coloniser, is murdered by Selina and Fanie in a rocky gorge, and his body is never recovered. An unknown corpse - one of the many that littered the land during the Anglo-Boer war - is buried in his stead. This fact is significant. The anxiety over burial reveals a deeper anxiety, the anxiety over land, for a hegemonic claim to South Africa, which surfaced most overtly in the out-and-out conflict of the Anglo-Boer war, a war over land between two occupying powers. Paul, 'the mad Boer general' (p.207), is murdered to ensure the freedom and relationship of Mittee and Basil, of an Afrikaans woman and an Englishman. The corpse is never buried, but a 'tall monument' (p.207) is erected over the mistaken body that is buried in his stead. The monument serves as a marker, a signifier of ownership, an encoding of the land, yet it is ironically subverted by the erroneous burial (in much the same way that Bosman (1981) subverts the notion of consecrated burial in *Funeral Earth*). Paul's marker is mirrored by Mittee's fake 'weathered cross' that 'stands stark against the sky, as a warning to travellers through the mountains' (p.207). But the link ends there. The reader can easily read beyond the ending to the shared future of Basil and Mittee, mirrored of course, by Fanie and Selina's mountaintop paradise. But the commensurate structure of the novel breaks apart the very moment a happy ending has been achieved for Basil Castledene and Mittee. Selina is left

contemplating the night sky alone, in a world 'grown dimmer', not yet riven from Mittee. It is a stark and melancholy ending, a final reminder that Selina still cannot disengage herself from Mittee, with whom she has been shackled throughout this text, as stand-in, servant, and *doppelgänger*. One is left with a feeling of loss and lack, a privative sense of the irrecoverability of Selina, who has now served her narrative function and must return to her own kind. But perhaps what signals a more important break from Mittee centres on the issue of pregnancy and progeny. Mittee lives beyond the ending; while she secretly practised contraception with Paul, she can now (one assumes) freely reproduce a new line - indeed, a new nation - with Basil. But Selina's line ends with her. Selina is effectively contained within this text; there is no reading beyond the ending, there is only retrospection and regret:

The moist, birth-giving season filled me with sorrow as I sat beneath the tree, remembering, for the ghost of my baby lay on the hazy air, far from my hungry arms. This was the month that it should have been born. (p.99)

5.6 *The Moist, Birth-giving Season*

Just as the landscape of Mittee is scattered with skeletons, skulls and improperly buried corpses, so is there a similar profusion of aborted babies, illegitimate pregnancies and deformed births. The issues of pregnancy and birth are linked to those of identity and nation, to origins and belonging. In an early scene, Eberhardt, intended and legitimised suitor of Andrina, recounts his apocryphal discovery of a baby in the veld:

'There, lying abandoned on the veld, is a little Kaffir baby. I bend over it to pick it up for even if it is black it is, after all, human ...'

'A kind heart,' said Mrs Van Brandenburg for Andrina's benefit.

'But as I bent over the thing,' Eberhardt's voice was like a flute now, 'it turns into a little monster. My God, it is Tigoloshi [sic] whom the Zulus dread.' (p.105)

It is not the Zulus' 'dread' that begs questioning here, but the dread of the Afrikaner, for whom the

'Tigoloshi' [sic], much like the figure of Adamastor, represents a threat to his established order, to his claim to a birthplace and a birthright. It is not without irony that the terrified Eberhardt uses his Bible to ward off the 'unholy thing' (p.106). But Paul du Plessis is quick to point out that a rifle is far more useful when riding alone on the veld, revealing, of course, the true nature of the colonial presence there (p.106).

Legitimate procreation within the marriage bed is linked to a nation's reproduction of itself. When Mittee is condemned for practising contraception and abortifacient techniques (p.167), it is not so much for the moral implications of the act, but for the disruption it presents to the national order. Moreover, the practice of contraception links her to the 'Kaffir' maid, Anna, who was raped by 'the swaggering Kaffirs' (p.164) who had grown 'insolent' (p.162) in the absence of the Du Plessis men from the farm:

'So you'll leave me while you nurse the Kaffir girl,' said Letty sourly.
'Leave me almost dead with my sick child and put the Kaffir first.'

'Ag, hold your mouth,' snapped Mittee, 'I've got to go and do something for her in any case. There might be a baby and the hardest heart wouldn't expect her to have to go through that.'

'So old Auntie Gouws has taught you her tricks,' said Letty with such spite that Mittee looked back at her almost in fear. (*MT*:167)

It is not without irony that Rooke was compelled to rewrite the rape scene; originally it was Letty, Frikkie du Plessis's wife, who was raped. But this was deemed unacceptable for Rooke's audience of the day (Glenn 1994:80); however, the subtle link between Mittee and the maid suggests once more an act of displacement, in which Mittee is ultimately protected, while others - or the Others - like Anna and Selina are the ultimate victims.

When Mittee does give birth, her child, Siegfried, is born deformed, and Paul later admits to having suffocated the child (*MT*:178). This is structurally necessary to the plot, as it once more

justifies Mittee's escape with Basil. Marriage to Paul du Plessis, to her own kind, must be seen to be against nature, an abomination of sorts, in order to legitimise her final 'elopement' with Basil.

It is no accident that Basil Castledene is there to tend to the sickly infant Siegfried, and it is there that Mittee falls in love with him. This once again highlights not only the contrast between Du Plessis and Castledene as different types of settlers, but also provides the necessary justification for Mittee's escape from Paul.

Selina is not so lucky in her own procreative fate. Having conceived Paul's child (mirroring Mittee), it is destroyed *in utero* by a jealous and vengeful Fanie, who has discovered the secret of Selina and Paul's illicit liaison. This provides Paul with the necessary excuse to murder Fanie, just as he murdered Herry, to protect his secret. The purpose of these tragic (if not melodramatic) events is twofold. Once more, it presents an unsympathetic and savage picture of Paul du Plessis, eliciting readerly censure and justifying Mittee's leave-taking of her marriage. But it also displaces the burden of suffering onto Selina, ever Mittee's stand-in, and once more protects Mittee from the horrors that constitute Selina's world. Moreover, it leaves Selina unable to conceive in future. This is important. Selina will not live beyond the ending; her line ends in the mountaintop 'paradise', for she has served her function as stand-in for Mittee. Her story is insignificant beyond the fact that it contains Mittee's story, a story which lives on beyond her own. And if we see that Selina's story contains Mittee's, we also understand that Selina is herself contained, in this very act of displacement, by Rooke, the colonial author. Selina, lest one forget, is the Other in the textual structure of Mittee and, as Bhabha (1994:31) reminds us, in this case, 'the Other loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse.' Selina, benevolently given the speaking voice, is in fact speechless, voiceless.

And just as Selina's speaking voice can be seen to be a spurious creation on Rooke's part, so too does the apparent commensurate structure finally lose its credence. Ultimately, Selina and Mittee cannot be together, sharing the same fate. The ending of the novel suggests 'separate development as a necessary escape from the psychic battering of the colonial "family"' (Glenn 1987:5), or what Attwell (1993:62) calls the 'pathological *underside* of the colonial family', but, more importantly, the happy ending inscribed for Mittee, stabilising through the fiction Rooke's own dividedness, masks an underlying exclusion. Annalisa Oboe (1994:67) has noted that 'most of the novels [which] contain an English-Boer love story [emphasise] the inclination towards fusion and the overcoming of contrasts which, even historically, are realized through intermarriage.' But she adds that 'the mythical fusion of the two white *ethnie* which occurs in the novels in English appears, given the South African history, particularly suspect, and should perhaps be dealt with as a myth of exclusion of black people' (p.67), an exclusion which is marked in a novel which deals so obsessively with race and origins. Finally, Selina cannot share her mistress's fate; she and Fanie end up cut off from all ties, all notions of race or tribe, or even belonging, cauterised by the multiple amputations of colonial destiny.

In short, the violence done to Selina on all levels - social, emotional, physical, historical - is the obverse of Mittee's 'happiness', and perhaps it is this which haunts Rooke about her own origins, and her escape from Boer ideology: that her release comes at such a high cost. This, finally, is why Selina is given the speaking voice (although this must rank as the novel's greatest difficulty: a displacement that is never naturalised or rendered natural). I have argued that the struggle to 'speak for' Selina, and Selina's struggle to 'speak for' Mittee, are evidence of the schisms inherent in Rooke's own coloniality and that this is why she makes these impossible narrative displacements.

These narrative *aporias* speak to the novel's failure finally to reconcile what it seeks to reconcile - the dilemma of a 'mixed' South African identity. The novel's forced equation must suppress the coloured character, and the autonomy of her own voice, in a sentimental elision in order for its logic to work. It is no wonder that so many coloured characters are murdered in the book - Selina's 'murder', however, is on the hands of the author. It is the cost of Mittee's freedom. This, finally, is the haunting knowledge that generates the novel's multiple displacements.⁶

NOTES

1. The fact that Selina is also the narrator of the novel suggests perhaps a decisive authorial intention on Rooke's part (though to speak at this late point of the author's intention seems fairly antiquated). However, assuming that Selina is used as a defensive, displacing strategy/defence on Rooke's part, the question of intentionality (especially in a colonial text) becomes both problematic and interesting.
2. It is, however, intimated in the text that Selina is the offspring of a Shangaan beauty and Herry, an English smouse and lapsed minister (*MT:30*). While Englishness figures in her origins, it is eliminated by the death of Herry, at the hands of Paul du Plessis, following Herry's discovery of Paul and Selina 'fornicating' (as he called it) (*MT:40*).
3. The names Herry and Besil are really the only instances in the novel where an accented voice is heard. Both are English names that would be unfamiliar to the Afrikaans speaker.
4. René Girard (1976) provides an illuminating discussion on triangular desire and substitutability. In Lacan's (1966:38-72) important essay on 'The Purloined Letter', the triangularity of desire is positioned within the realms of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real.
5. It would be pointless here to engage in an argument that the missionary presence in Africa contributed as much to its conquest by European powers as did active military force and established legislation - that the Bible was an equally effective instrument of pacification as the sword. De Kock (1996a) and the Comaroffs (1991) make this point quite explicitly.
6. I am indebted to Leon de Kock for helping to clarify the issues laid out in this final paragraph.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 *Of Beginnings and Endings*

The conclusion, like Hegel's preface to *Phenomenology of the Mind*, 'harbors a lie' (Spivak in Derrida 1976:x). It would appear to speak of endings, of closure and perhaps a sense of finality, but, on the contrary, this conclusion speaks of beginnings (not of origins; there is a distinction). When this study first took shape, the intention was to trace the genealogy of the ritual of burial in white South African fiction, landmarking it in the intervention of an historical act, the South African Natives' Land Act of 1913. The idea was to track the representation of burial in the fiction as it passed over the threshold of that Act. However, my contact with research material steered the study in a new direction. That Act, ignominious and definitive as it was, was merely a more graphic instance of a larger process, a starker history: the history of colonial land acquisition, which may be read as a documentary story of legislation, dispossession and separation, of the movement of people and bodies across borders and boundary lines, and of course, a story of *resistance* to this. Here the story of land acquisition may be seen as History and determinant, as *telos*, in the historical formation of South Africa.¹ Burial, a ritual which was meant to serve the white *colon* as a form of inscription on the land² (indeed, as a way of claiming a continuous history for the subject (Foucault 1972:12)), became a place of disturbance and a problem for representation. Moreover, the fiction in the study began to determine itself, as it were, and I found that the focus shifted to the South African farm novel, which (unlike the *plaasroman*) had remained, until recently, relatively untheorised but which seemed to offer an emblematic representation of the land and its ownership³, and of the place of Self and Other, *colon* and *indigene*. (Ampie Coetzee (1996:129) speaks of the farm novel as 'one consistent statement within the always differing, always changing ratio between power and land.')

A further development unfolded as the study proceeded: in the fiction, illegitimate pregnancy also presented problems of representation, and the idea took shape that perhaps burial and illegitimate pregnancy were, in effect, *signifiers of illegitimacy*, the illegitimacy of land acquisition in South Africa. The route to these ideas was circuitous and at times convoluted, but an overall project emerged: the reading of South African fiction for the historical signs (the signifiers of illegitimacy in this case) it inadvertently surfaces. The sign of History⁴, which may be read as the South African colonial *dispositif*, interrupts these texts in the form of discursive breakdowns and representational flaws. These usually occur at the very moment in which the writers under this sign attempt to mask, deny or disavow the issues at stake. We may read the four farm novels in this study, and their representation of burial and illegitimate pregnancy, as a displacement of the issues of land ownership, dispossession and belonging. Attendant on this is the place of the Other who, indeed, is barely represented, if at all.

Reading the representation of burial and pregnancy offers a way of understanding the symbolic construction of the colonial 'nation' and its cultural identity. Both burial and legitimate pregnancy may be seen as conditions that reconstitute the social fabric and affirm the national identity; but when that pregnancy is illegitimate it is seen as a threat to the founding colonial order, and when burial takes place in what might be called contested earth, it too surfaces issues of illegitimacy. When these rituals are grounded on the farm, in the representational form of the farm novel, the issues become particularly pronounced. The land stakes out a site of contest and the place of the Other is problematised.

For colonial writers, discursive possibilities are circumscribed by historical experience. Schreiner, Mills Young, Smith and Rooke, as white female colonial writers, write within the brace

of colonial power relations and power dispensations. The novels under discussion do not manage to transcend their historical circumstances, but unwittingly reveal the issues that they seek to deny or fail to represent.

In the four novels, the writers attempt to grapple with their own divided colonial identities: Schreiner, Mills Young, Smith and Rooke are all female colonial writers of British origin. The writing examined here may be seen as an attempt to formulate their identities as colonial women without sundering themselves completely from their metropolitan origins. In Rooke's case, this attempt is further complicated by her 'mixed' heritage, as the product of an Afrikaner and English marriage. Their writing may be seen as a bridging mechanism, binding the separate identities together to ensure a new colonial identity. Of course, the texts everywhere evince the failure of such an enterprise. That colonial identity cannot be achieved because of the silences it fails to give voice to: the silence of the Other, the silence about the land and its illegitimate acquisition. For Schreiner, Mills Young, Smith and Rooke, as white women writers, a colonial identity is always already problematic. Dainotto (1996:491), drawing on Bhabha (1994:3), shows that 'identities, in fact, "are often constructed – Black/White, Self/Other" – as dialectical pairs and historical productions. An authentic identity, as a first nature, is a place to which we cannot return.' If the place of the black *indigene* can never be interrogated and if a proper abode of one's own cannot legitimately be claimed, what we have instead is a riven subjectivity rendered transparently obvious in the fiction, especially in the representation of the foundational rituals of burial and pregnancy (at a remove, of birth and death, and the social implications of these).

With each act of burial and its representation in the fiction there is an attendant act of omission: the questions begged are 'who owns the land?' and, perhaps more suggestively, 'who

belongs on the land?’ In the four texts in this study, the writers are unable truthfully to address these questions, even though the question of the land, its ownership and a sense of belonging *to* it, are necessary to their sense of self. Instead, we witness a failure to achieve burial in the fiction, especially in the case of landless, ‘poor’ whites who, it may be argued, stand, through an act of indirection, for the other landless, the *indigenes*. Burial cannot be represented effectively in the texts under discussion because the land is a contested site, a site of profound conflict and instability. As such, this throws into disarray the writers’ conception of their own sense of belonging, as white colonial women in South Africa.

The issue of illegitimate pregnancy offers a similar passage of indirection and illegitimacy. If, in the farm novel, ‘there is no position for women other than as birthgivers to the next generation of sons, who carry the name of the father’ (Coetzee 1997:118) and if their central role is that of ‘carriers of the values and “blood” of the nation’ (Coetzee 1997:120), then the illegitimate female body stands as a threat to the male order of law, land and national identity. It is correlated in the fiction with the body of the female *indigene*, who is rarely represented, but who stands behind as the totem of dispossession. The further correlation of the female body and the land throws us back to the question of the illegitimacy of land ownership in colonial South Africa.

Hence the representation of pregnancy and burial (from birth to death, as it were) offers, in its scope, an interrogation of colonial land acquisition and the history of belonging attendant on this. The four writers in this study inadvertently deploy different narrative practices in their failure to deal with these issues: Schreiner falls back on a transcendentalist, essentialising discourse which never reaches beyond an adolescent feminism, although this is not true of her later, mature work, and she fails as such to question the place of the Other; Mills Young uses the figure of the bywoner and

his daughter to displace the real issue of dispossession, but this surfaces indirectly; Smith deploys a semiotic repetition of key phrases and a sacralising discourse to mask the real question of dispossession; and Rooke creates a spurious narrative voice, in the figure of a coloured serving girl of the 1890s, to affirm the creation of a new colonial identity at the expense of the *indigene*.

What this study finally offers (and in this sense we may speak of a conclusion) is the possibility of reading colonial texts for the historical signs they indirectly surface. Even a writer like Mills Young, who writes naively and with a profound lack of historical insight, manages to reproduce in her fiction the very issues she would seek to deny. This makes for a rich reading of colonial texts and welds together the notion of history and discourse. Colonial writers write within narrowly circumscribed discursive possibilities, yet within these they manage to reflect the historical contiguities they might wish to deny. Attwell (1993:105) speaks of the 'structural limitations that white writers have had to deal with from Schreiner on'. What is evidenced in the fiction (and this is where the reading is truly exciting) is a variety of narrative techniques such as displacement and indirection, which are used by the writers to mediate the issues under discussion.

These issues, land and legitimacy, belonging and identity, refuse, to this day, to be stabilised. They are taken up in postcolonial narratives and form part of the post-apartheid historical formation. Hence, it might be said, we are locked into our fictions and continually reinscribe them. History revisits us anew and transcribes what we are capable of saying about the present. As Dainotto (1996:493) says, 'the past becomes a place – a region about which we can make studies and write novels and that we can bring back, ideally, in our undesirable present as a moral prescription.' In this sense, history becomes a 'doctrine of remedies' (Nietzsche in Dainotto 1996:495) with which we may heal ourselves.

NOTES

1. I am not reading history here as a seamless, continuous master or meta-narrative (what Jameson (1981:20) calls an 'uninterrupted narrative'), for this would imply that history is 'a means of controlling and domesticating the past in the form of knowing it' (Poster 1984:70). The History of which I speak is a fractured, discontinuous history which encompasses modes of resistance and counter-narratives, but which nevertheless everywhere determines the relations of power and the discursive possibilities under its sway.
2. Simon Lewis (1996b:viii) has shown, through an analysis of white women writers on farms, that Europeans have 'attempted to write themselves into the African landscape through their graves and memorials'. He focuses on the life and works of Schreiner, Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley, Doris Lessing and Nadine Gordimer.
3. Coetzee (1988), in his chapter on the novels of C. M. van den Heever, argues that the chief ideological goal of the *plaasroman* was to naturalise white ownership of the land. (In Van den Heever's case this is achieved through the representation of the forefathers.)
4. One cannot proceed here without acknowledging a debt to Michael Green's (1997) *Novel Histories: Past, Present and Future in South African Fiction*. In his Introduction, Green brilliantly discusses what he parenthetically calls 'uses of history in fiction' (1997:1) and acknowledges that history 'has occurred as an "irruption" as much as a theme in this book' (p.1). I am indebted to him for his reading of history which confirmed many of my own thoughts when this study first took shape.

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