The Profits of the Past: Nostalgic White Writing of Post-Apartheid South Africa

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Abstract

Drawing on relevant theory from memory studies, literary criticism, sociology, reception studies and book history, this thesis examines the prevalence of nostalgia in white South African writing of the post-apartheid period. It identifies the numerous and remarkably conventional texts by white authors that proliferated in this time which might be described as nostalgic, arguing that these constitute a key genre of post-apartheid South African literature. In offering an explanation for the emergence of this genre, this study takes into consideration the full "communications circuit" of a book i.e. its life-cycle from production to consumption. Consequently, it employs an interdisciplinary framework to examine nostalgic literature from the perspectives of both the producers and consumers of texts. It is argued, ultimately, that post-apartheid nostalgic writing was particularly involved in the protection of certain formulations and structures of whiteness at individual, collective and institutional levels in the first fifteen years after the end of apartheid.

The argument unfolds in three phases, each of which explores the value of nostalgia and nostalgic white writing in a different but related sphere: namely, literature, memory, and the market. The first phase of the argument provides a literary critical reading of the conventions of the genre, considering a range of representative novels, including works by Mark Behr, André Brink, Justin Cartwright, J. M. Coetzee, Lisa Fugard, Christopher Hope, Jo-Anne Richards, and Rachel Zadok. The second examines the allure of nostalgia and nostalgic books for the writers and readers of this literature, drawing on sociological research on post-apartheid white South African identity and reader-response studies to analyse a selection of online and print reviews by readers. In the third phase, the thesis utilises a book historical approach to investigate the influence of various literary markets and the publishing industry, both local and global, in shaping the nostalgia trend.

Introduction

The Profits of the Past: Nostalgia, Literature and Post-Apartheid South Africa

It is always yesterday in South Africa.

Christopher Hope, *White Boy Running*

1. Introduction

In the 1990s, around the time of the transition, writers and critics speculated about how South African literature might develop without the dominant presence of apartheid constraining its imaginative possibilities. Their projections anticipated a new era in which this writing's creative horizons would be greatly expanded and take on utopian dimensions. In 1998, André Brink predicted that South African literature would "activate the imagination in its exploration of those silences previously inaccessible; . . . play with the future on that needlepoint where it meets past and present; and . . . be willing to risk everything in the leaping flame of the word as it turns into world" ("Interrogating" 27). In contrast, much of the literature actually published and circulated in the first two decades of democracy demonstrates what Susan VanZanten Gallagher describes as a "backward glance" ("Backward Glance" 384). In particular, the writing of white authors in this period returned insistently to the past, and, turning inward rather than outward, was characterised by nostalgia and repetition rather than utopianism or experimentation. This was, perhaps above all, a literature preoccupied with memory and the past.

In this thesis, I consider this post-apartheid "literature of nostalgia," as David Medalie has described it ("Uses of Nostalgia" 36), taking as my focus the plethora of texts written by white writers in English, especially novels and memoirs, which engage with the continued salience of the apartheid past in the post-apartheid present through a

predominantly nostalgic mode. What is most remarkable about this writing, and especially the novels that were published in the first decade and a half following the end of apartheid, is its striking conventionality. Contrary to Brink's enthusiastic predictions, this significant part of the post-apartheid literary landscape was characterised not so much by innovation and risk as *sameness*. As Chapter 1 will explore in detail, in the first fifteen post-apartheid years in particular, certain themes, motifs, and narrative forms became ubiquitous, surfacing repeatedly across a large number of works. Over and over again, writers in this period used similar narrative structures and very specific nostalgic tropes (the white-owned farm in decline, white childhood under apartheid, or an expatriate's homecoming) to portray and reflect on white South Africans' anxious projects of identification and coming to terms with the past in the post-apartheid present. These formal and thematic conventions are so common, I argue, that it makes sense to consider this writing as a distinct – and key – genre of post-apartheid South African literature, though one that, twenty years after the end of apartheid, may be drawing to a close.

I characterise this writing as nostalgic with some qualification, for what I intend the term to convey goes beyond its common-sense definition as mere sentimental fondness for the past – the preserve of kitsch – although that too is an occasional element of the phenomenon. As I will clarify later in this chapter, through its etymological ties to homesickness, nostalgia combines ideas of memory and the past with those of home and belonging and is, accordingly, a concept and a set of activities deeply concerned with identity in transition, and the relationship between personal and national narratives. For this reason, I suggest that nostalgic literature provides an especially fruitful way into examining the literary consequences of the South African transition.

While memory studies proliferated in South Africa during the transition, nostalgia and this nostalgic writing have been overlooked in many critical narratives about post-

apartheid writing, perhaps because it is precisely the trauma in South Africa's history that makes nostalgia such an anxiety-laden topic. With pens "attuned to the groove of crisis" (Boehmer, "Permanent Risk" 34), critics have often paid the most attention to the ways in which the trauma of South Africa's past has manifested and been dealt with in post-apartheid literature and culture, or else to the exigencies of the present moment.[1] In fact, Lewis Nkosi declared in 2002 that "South African literature shows a certain incapacity for generating nostalgia for the past, a *pastness* which can be recreated regrettably[2] as the moment of loss or state of vanished happiness" ("Republic" 249). Rita Barnard notes that, instead of longing for a golden age, most South African writing represents "the past . . . as troubled and painful – often so painful that testimony and recollection seem rife with betrayal" ("Rewriting" 660). As Jennifer Delisle observes, "there has been little room in this analysis for positive memories, for memories that fall outside the official narrative of collective suffering" (389). In this sense, negotiating the past has generally been understood to mean negotiating *trauma*.

The emphasis on trauma in South African criticism is part of a wider critical focus on trauma in memory studies globally, particularly in the final decade of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. In this trend, the dominance of Holocaust discourse – through memory studies, museums and memorials – effectively cast the Holocaust as the defining memory event of the twentieth century, at least in Europe and the United States.[3] This interest in trauma was given momentum by various truth commissions worldwide, including South Africa's, as well as increasing concerns

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[1] For the former, see Nuttall and Coetzee (eds) *Negotiating the Past*; Graham; Singh and Chetty (eds) *Trauma, Resistance, Reconstruction in Post-1994 South African Writing*; Mengel, Borzaga, and Orantes (eds) *Trauma, Memory, and Narrative in South Africa*. See also Van der Vlies's "On the Ambiguities of Narrative and of History" for a meta-level discussion of this kind of criticism. For the latter, see Nuttall's "City Forms and Writing the 'Now' in South Africa."

[2] It is likely that this should read "regretfully."

[3] For example, Caruth, Felman and Laub, and the work of LaCapra, such as *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (1994) and *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001).

about poverty, violence and human rights issues (Huyssen, *Present Pasts* 8). As Andreas Huyssen observes, the "privileging of trauma formed a thick discursive network with those other master-signifiers of the 1990s, the abject and the uncanny, all of which have to do with repression, specters, and a present repetitively haunted by the past" (*Present Pasts* 8). Postcolonial writers and scholars of memory, too, have found in trauma a productive framework for thinking through the legacies of colonialism and decolonisation even as the specifics of these contexts complicate existing theoretical paradigms.[4]

The point I would like to make, which undergirds my project in this thesis and my reading of this post-apartheid literature as nostalgic, is that trauma and nostalgia are not mutually exclusive modes of memory. Rather, they are entangled; they can occur simultaneously, jostling against each other within a work of literature, an individual, and a culture – and this admixture can itself be a marketable commodity. In fact, nostalgia has been persistently present in South Africa throughout the post-apartheid period in both literature and culture, surfacing everywhere from informal conversation and popular music to serious literature. Moreover, besides the work of internationally recognised figures such as J. M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer, nostalgic writing accounts for some of the bestselling literary works in South Africa and some of the most prevalent post-apartheid South African fiction in global circulation over this period, though many of its authors were relatively unknown at the time of publication. One of the aims of this thesis is to bring this literature to the fore as a significant genre of post-apartheid South African writing.

Why was this genre of South African literature so prevalent? This, the first question which animates this study, necessitates the use of a wider lens than the purely

[4] See Durrant's *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning*, Lloyd, and Visser.

literary critical. To think in terms of genre is to venture beyond the world of the book, to examine the book in the world; that is, a broader consideration of how texts, their producers and consumers interact. For genres emerge through the relations of those who write, publish and read texts in particular historical, cultural and literary environments. Amy J. Devitt stresses that genre itself is "a dynamic concept created through the interaction of writers, readers, past texts, and contexts" (699). As this relational and dynamic model implies, genres shift across time and contexts, and are subject to redefinition as well as abandonment (Devitt 701).[5] Thomas O. Beebee further argues that "generic differences are grounded in the 'use value' of a discourse rather than in its content, formal features, or its rules of production" (7).[6] In other words, genres are pragmatic, defined by what they *do* socially and culturally, the needs or desires they fulfil in readers and society at specific historical moments.[7]

Given the importance of use value to the definition of a genre, the second question I ask in this thesis is: What kind of *work* is nostalgia doing that it has been so prominent in the post-apartheid South African literary and cultural landscape? Nostalgia's operation through this writing, I will suggest in the following chapters, is multivalent: it is not only expressed within the books themselves, but also implicated in how they have been received by readers, and how publishers both in South Africa and abroad have perceived and responded to the desires of the market. The question may

[5] Cohen observes that genres are, furthermore, "historical assumptions constructed by authors, audiences, and critics in order to serve communicative [or social] and aesthetic purposes" (210). This point has implications for my own critical interest in defining and exploring the post-apartheid white nostalgia genre at a time when South Africa is celebrating twenty years of democracy, and literature seems on the whole to be moving beyond a fixation on the concerns of the writing I discuss.

[6] Beebee's notion of genre is broader than the one I am using here. In fact, the slipperiness of the term is found throughout genre theory: "genre" is used to denote broader literary forms like the novel (versus drama or epic, for instance) as well as narrower definitions within these forms, such as the romance or detective novel. If Beebee's definition is something like the former, mine is closer to the latter. Nonetheless, his point holds at both levels.

[7] In one of the most cited studies of a particular genre, Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1991) found that the romance novel provides a kind of compensation to its (American) female readers, whose role in society proscribes them from actively seeking their own emotional gratification or pleasure.

therefore be rephrased by separating it into its component parts: How does nostalgia manifest in this writing and what purpose do the genre's conventions serve; how and in what contexts have these books been read and who are their readers; and why have the books within the genre interested agents in the publishing industry?

To consider these questions, this thesis adopts a book historical approach which augments genre theory: we may consider genres, like books, to be the product of a relationship between various participants in a "communications circuit," to use Robert Darnton's influential concept ("History" 67). Darnton's communications circuit denotes the full life-cycle of a book, and so encompasses the interactions of numerous agents who are involved in the making of a book, including the author, literary agents, publishers, those who manufacture the printed product, those who distribute it, and the reader, who influences the author in various, often indeterminate, ways before and after the book is written. Each communications circuit is itself caught up in the wider context of a literary field with its own configurations of power and influence, as Pierre Bourdieu's work contends.[8] This field, along with the agents within it, in turn relates and responds to the changing political, social and economic conditions of the wider world (McDonald, "Implicit" 110), which in the case of post-apartheid South Africa makes the issue of nostalgia particularly thorny, but also particularly compelling, as I will show.

My contention in this thesis is that nostalgic white writing has flourished in the post-apartheid moment because it has been valuable to different agents in the literary and cultural field in specific but different ways. In each of the three chapters of this study I explore nostalgia's value at a particular location within the cycles of production, transmission and consumption through which the genre emerged. These roughly correspond to the positions of the author, the reader and the publisher, though they might

[8] See, for example, the eponymous chapter in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993).

be more profitably considered as focusing respectively on the intersecting domains of the literary, of reception, and finally of publication, production and distribution. In examining this value for the writers, readers and publishers of these texts, my greater ambition is not only to explore how nostalgia functions and where it is located in culture, but also to provide a snapshot of the South African cultural field in this transitional moment. I return to the question of the study's interdisciplinary methodology at the end of this Introduction.

It may seem specious to some to continue to speak of black or white writing as distinct entities in what critics now refer to as the "post-transitional" moment in South African literature (Frenkel and MacKenzie 2). Ronit Frenkel and Craig MacKenzie, for example, have argued that current literature in South Africa "often renders nugatory traditional markers like nationality, race or ethnicity" (2). For a great deal of recent literature, however, this kind of statement is more aspirational than self-evident. Literary excavations of the apartheid past are necessarily bound up in the social facts of the era, and so continue to give the "traditional markers" of nationality and race explanatory power and significant purchase, even though the texts may themselves emerge from a post-transitional setting in which these formulations may be critiqued. Moreover, the legacy of these social facts remains palpable in the present as race, difference, and their implications for ideas of national identity, continue to occupy meaningful, though contested, spaces in current South African public discourse.[9]

Nevertheless, my identification of this genre as a phenomenon of *white* writing, and my choice to focus on it in this thesis to the marginalisation of other South African literary nostalgias requires some explication. It is, first of all, a matter of volume: while

[9] See Natasha Distiller and Melissa Steyn (eds) *Under Construction: "Race" and Identity in South Africa Today* (2004), especially the discussion in Distiller and Steyn's introduction to the volume, which stresses the continued relevance of race for identity construction in the post-apartheid present, but also points to the significant limitations of thinking in racial terms (1–11).

some nostalgic life writing by black, Indian and coloured South Africans began appearing in the latter half of this period – Chris van Wyk's *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy* (2004) and Jacob Dlamini's *Native Nostalgia* (2009) being the most prominent – the numbers have been so small that they have been the exception rather than providing evidence of an emergent trend in the literature.[10] In fact, the period saw an almost complete absence of comparable nostalgic fiction by black writers. What I have called nostalgic writing by white writers has, conversely, been ubiquitous. In black nostalgic literature, moreover, nostalgia has a different valence than in white nostalgic fiction. Whereas white nostalgia usually centres on the white self's fraught reckoning with questions of belonging, identity and responsibility in the post-apartheid moment, black nostalgic writing seeks to complicate narratives of the past that dwell only on black suffering or heroic struggle, by celebrating the intimacy of communities and relationships, and the vibrant cultural life and humour that existed in townships even at the height of apartheid.[11] In *Native Nostalgia*, for example, Dlamini uses nostalgia to critique the present state of politics and political discourse in the country by demonstrating that "[t]he present is not the land of milk and honey, the past not one vast desert of doom and gloom, and the ancient past not one happy-go-lucky era" (12). Most significantly, I concentrate on this white literature to illuminate the ways in which post-apartheid nostalgic writing has been produced by and productive of a particular, and racially inflected, configuration of the local and global literary field. As this study will

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[10] The term "coloured" has complex meanings in present-day South Africa. Though bound up in the country's difficult history of racial categorisation, it has also been used in creative and resistant ways in processes of identity construction. In this thesis, I choose not to place terms marking race or racial identities in inverted commas. I do this largely for the sake of minimalism, but also to register the continued social and cultural salience of these constructed categories in the post-apartheid moment.

[11] This is the substance of the celebratory myth of Sophiatown and the *Drum* decade, which concentrates on the vibrancy of the multiracial freehold township, especially the literary and musical achievements of its inhabitants. Oscar Hemer describes this legend as "a projected dream of what South Africa could have been, hadn't it been for apartheid, and thereby also a kind of nostalgic utopian vision of what it may one day become" (4). Kruger has discussed the operation of nostalgia in the 1994 revival of the play *Sophiatown*.

explore in depth, both the producers and the consumers of this literature are in some way invested in the "whiteness" of this literature. Ironically, this thesis itself may be said to share this investment, though my aim here is consciously to expose and critique the mechanisms through which this white writing was produced and flourished.

In offering this account, this study expands on, but also departs from, the work of literary scholars such as Medalie and Dennis Walder who have in recent years begun to attend to nostalgia's persistent presence in South African writing, but who have done so solely from a literary critical perspective.[12] My concern is also to widen the scope of my inquiry beyond the works which have commonly been analysed and celebrated by critics, and to address the popular, the prevalent, and those "less likely . . . to make it into university syllabi," to borrow Barnard's euphemism ("Rewriting" 656). To my knowledge, no other study of post-apartheid literature or culture has yet taken the kind of holistic approach to a genre of South African writing that I adopt, though I draw inspiration from Andrew van der Vlies's pioneering research on the history of the book in South Africa, which has focused on the work of individual authors, as well as Peter McDonald's studies of South African book history.[13] By addressing the material and social conditions which have governed the production and reception of cultural works in South Africa over the past twenty years, this thesis also expands on the research of cultural theorists such as Sarah Nuttall, Melissa Steyn and Leon de Kock, whose analyses of the post-apartheid present have been instructive to this study.[14]

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[12] These include Delisle, Klopper, Moonsamy, Medalie in "The Uses of Nostalgia," and Walder's *Postcolonial Nostalgias* (2011).

[13] Van der Vlies's *South African Textual Cultures* (2007), and, to a lesser extent, the recent volume, *Print, Text and Book Cultures in South Africa* (2012), which he edited; and McDonald's *The Literature Police* (2009) and "The Book in South Africa."

[14] See Nuttall's *Entanglement* (2009); Steyn's *"Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be"* (2001) and *Under Construction* (2004), edited with Natasha Distiller; and De Kock's "Blanc de blanc," "South Africa in the Global Imaginary,"and "A History of Restlessness".

Following this outline of the main premises and scope of the thesis, this introductory chapter now turns to an overview of the key themes and concepts I draw on in this study, as well as the post-apartheid literary, social and cultural terrain out of which nostalgic white literature emerged. In order to do this, it is first essential to introduce nostalgia and its work as a form of memory and cultural commodity more generally. I therefore begin with a brief history of nostalgia which explores its evolution over the past three centuries, after which I outline its psychological, social and cultural functions, including its relationship to individual and national identity. This introductory discussion then focuses on nostalgia's presence in comparable regions (post-communist and postcolonial specifically), before addressing the post-apartheid South African context more directly.

2. Modern nostalgia

2.1. History

From its inception, nostalgia has been a concept intimately involved with the individual's relationship to the nation, but its etymological origins are distinctly pathological. Although variants of nostalgic sentiment had certainly existed well before the seventeenth century, the term *nostalgia* itself was coined in 1688 by the Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer to describe a treatable medical condition which afflicted those who spent extended periods of time away from their home country, especially Swiss soldiers fighting abroad. Combining the Greek words *nostos* (to return home) and *algia* (pain or longing), nostalgia literally denotes homesickness, "the sad mood originating from the desire for the return to one's native land" (Hofer 381). It was suggested that the young and displaced, particularly those from rural regions, were most vulnerable to contracting the disease (Roth 11). Hofer identified the symptoms of nostalgia – which included insomnia, nausea, heart palpitations, brain inflammation, fever, even death – and suggested that treatments for this condition of "an afflicted imagination" (381) included

emetics, mercury pills and opium, though nostalgia was best cured by a return to the "fatherland" (386–88). Following Hofer's medical dissertation on the subject, nostalgia became an accepted disease in medical nosology across Europe, and several studies of the subject appeared in the eighteenth century (Rosen 343–46).

During the nineteenth century, nostalgia's meaning shifted significantly. Due to increasing precision in diagnoses and advancements in cellular pathology and bacteriology, the concept shed its medical connotations, moving to the realm of psychology (Rosen 350–51). It was regarded less and less as a treatable physical condition, and more and more as a condition of the mind, a memory disorder connected to similar ailments such as melancholy. If the concept of nostalgia came into being as a disease of *physical* displacement, this period saw it increasingly regarded as a matter of *temporal* dislocation. Nostalgics longed to return not necessarily to an abandoned home, but rather to a lost time, "a specific and crucial place in one's past" (Roth 8). This is an aspect of the phenomenon which Immanuel Kant identified in his *Anthropology* in 1798, where he recognised the crucial connection between nostalgia and childhood, which is a key feature of post-apartheid nostalgic writing that this thesis takes up in Chapter 1. Kant suggested that the disappointment felt by many nostalgics when they returned home is not "because everything there has changed a great deal, but . . . because they cannot bring back their youth there" (288).

During the early twentieth century, developments in psychoanalysis saw the broad category of nostalgia replaced by ideas about attachment and adaptation, and more specific theories, such as those of fixation and regression (Starobinski 102–103). In current popular usage the term now retains none of its clinical associations, whether physical or psychological. Instead, nostalgia tends to be regarded as simply a mode of memory: a general longing for, even a desire to recapture, a lost time of simplicity and familiarity, which Svetlana Boym, like Kant, lyrically describes as "the time of our

childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams" (xv). It is in this sense that Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (especially *Swann's Way*), with its recursive journeys through memory into the "lost time" of youth, and its emphasis on the sensory details in which memory inheres, is often regarded as a quintessentially nostalgic modern text.[15]

I would suggest that, with its propensity for "semantic vagueness, drift, and ambiguity" (Davis 7), nostalgia retains a metaphorical connection to homesickness. The time for which the nostalgic longs is one when she felt at home in the world, when her relation to and sense of belonging in her surrounding environment was simple, innocent, and secure. As Boym and Kant suggest, for many this time equates to childhood, an age before the "fall" into adult knowledge and responsibility.[16] This thesis recuperates some of nostalgia's ties to homesickness and place, regarding it as a concept which encompasses a yearning for a past time *as well as* a lost sense of home. With this balance, nostalgia becomes a concept particularly well suited to bringing into focus the questions of both memory and the past, and home and belonging that have preoccupied white South African writers and appealed to readers in the post-apartheid period.

Moreover, this dual orientation is closely tied to nostalgia's identity-affirming psychological function, and its consequent prevalence during times of societal change and uncertainty. The next section looks at these two interrelated aspects of the phenomenon, which are important to my argument in this thesis about nostalgia's currency in the post-apartheid moment.

2.2. The comfort of nostalgia

Nostalgia is often described in pathological terms – a "social disease" (Stewart 23), a "global epidemic" (Boym xiv) – which not only capture its ambivalent reputation (and

[15] See, for example, Boym 50, Howard 641–50, Hutcheon, Ritivoi 34.

[16] See also Lowenthal, *The Past* 8.

implicitly recall the term's medical origins) but also emphasise the way in which it seems to come upon us, to take hold when we are particularly susceptible to it, when external conditions encourage its spread across cultures and communities. It is in circumstances of change and disruption that the germ of nostalgia seems to thrive best. Adam Muller observes that nostalgia "frequently erupts in epidemics of (quasi-) historical reflection in the wake of revolutions, or at times of great, real, or perceived sociopolitical instability and stress" (740). Boym notes that it thrives as "a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals" (xiv). In other words, nostalgia emerges in situations which people collectively experience as unfamiliar, disorientating and unstable.

That nostalgia would be a feature of the South African cultural landscape following the profound political and societal shifts of the end of the apartheid system could have been expected, but it is also important to register nostalgia's broader prevalence. Many critics have argued that the accelerated and disorienting societal and technological changes experienced around the world during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have created a particularly fertile environment for nostalgia to flourish globally.[17] It is, for example, almost ubiquitous in Anglo-American popular culture, detectable in everything from vintage fashion trends and the revival of vinyl records to the success of television series like *Mad Men* and *Downton Abbey*. Boym suggests that nostalgia is "coeval with modernity itself," that its relation to "progress [is] like Jekyll and Hyde: alter egos" (xvi). Andreas Huyssen similarly contends that behind the general predominance of memory discourses in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries lies the desire "to regain a strong temporal and spatial grounding of life and the imagination in a media and consumer society that increasingly voids temporality and

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[17] Numerous critics have suggested this correlation. For example: Jameson, Appadurai, Boym, Huyssen's "Nostalgia for Ruins," Rossington and Whitehead, and Whitehead.

collapses space" (*Present Pasts* 6). As Fredric Jameson has pointed out, the 1950s has tended to be the era most often viewed through the soft focus lens of nostalgia in American popular culture (though this is also arguably true of Britain). Constructed as a time of innocence, small town life with distinct social roles, and stability and prosperity, the fifties stand in contrast with the cynicism and disorientation of the present (Jameson 19). There is a difference between personal and collective memory, between nostalgia for one's own past, and nostalgia for a past historical era (or the aesthetic patina of an era created through media representations) which one may not have personally experienced. However, this is a distinction that is often difficult to keep clear, for, as the following chapters will suggest, nostalgia is by nature intermediary: it goes between the personal and the collective, past and present, memory and history.

At heart, nostalgia is born of a desire for wholeness in circumstances of fragmentation and discontinuity. It is a yearning for unity and continuity of identity, both individual and collective, a longing for an anchor in a world in flux (Boym xiv; Davis 33). The nostalgic person attempts to create this anchor through narratives of memory that reach out, often with affection, and always aching, back to times and states which are irretrievably past. In effect, nostalgia pursues and constructs what the sociologist Fred Davis calls a "special" past infused with the positive affects of being – happiness, beauty, pleasure, satisfaction, innocence – by eliding negative memories and bringing pleasant past experiences to prominence (13–14). Considering this elision, which seems to be a kind of selective amnesia through which a subject may attempt to escape having to face the complexities and responsibilities of the present, it is easy to understand why nostalgia has a reputation for sentimentality and bad faith.

Yet Davis argues that, on a personal level, by cultivating an appreciative stance towards a past self whose relation to the world was not in question, we feel better able to cope in an unfamiliar present. Nostalgia, he suggests, "furthers the purposes of continuity

of identity by reassuring the self now that it is ‘as it was then’: deserving, qualified, and fully capable of surmounting the fears and uncertainties that lie ahead” (Davis 39). In her sociological work on Eastern European immigrants in the United States, Andreea Deciu Ritivoi argues similarly that nostalgia is a coping mechanism which enables immigrants to accommodate the dislocation of immigration, and to orient themselves in an alien context. In creating a nostalgic link with their past selves, subjects whose homes and personal histories have become inaccessible to them are able to define and redefine their identities, reinforcing continuity in their life stories, and thus enabling them to adapt to their present situations. She observes: “We derive from our nostalgic remembrance the comfort of identifying with ourselves” (Ritivoi 30).

This kind of identification also happens at a communal level. Here, nostalgia is closely related to Maurice Halbwachs’s concept of collective memory, which highlights the ways in which the many different groups that make up a society (families, associations, classes, races and so on) have their own distinct memories which have been built up over time by their members. Collective memory helps to create and maintain group identity, for it “provides the group a self-portrait that unfolds through time, since it is an image of the past, and allows the group to recognize itself throughout the total succession of images” (Halbwachs 86). While these memories need not be nostalgic, nostalgia is often implicated in them. Indeed, Boym suggests that nostalgia is, perhaps primarily, “about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory” (xvi). Nostalgia’s role in identity continuity, and its intermediary position between the narratives of individuals, groups and nations, forms an important part of my argument in this thesis; I address its relevance for the post-apartheid South African context more directly later in this introductory chapter.

The value of nostalgia is specifically *of the present*, for the needs of the present self, though its gaze is directed backwards. Linda Hutcheon has suggested that nostalgia is "less a matter of simple memory than of complex projection; the invocation of a partial, idealized history merges with a dissatisfaction with the present" (Hutcheon). Thus, Huyssen contends that the nub of the issue "is not the loss of some golden age of stability and permanence" but rather "the attempt, as we face the very real processes of time-space compression, to secure some continuity within time, to provide some extension of lived space within which we can breathe and move" (*Present Pasts* 24). Pierre Nora, whose *lieux de mémoire* project was one of the most profoundly nostalgia-focused (and arguably itself nostalgic) works of cultural memory in the twentieth century, expresses a similar point in terms of difference: "We seek not our origins but a way of figuring out what we are from what we are no longer" (13).[18]

It is clear, then, that nostalgia has a very real, affirming function for individuals and groups in contexts of transition and uncertainty. But nostalgia also operates at a higher level in culture, for it is readily available to commodification. Its proliferation in popular culture in the west suggests that cultural producers have recognised and tapped into both nostalgia's affective, affirming power and the keen appetite for it that clearly exists in the present moment.[19] The question of nostalgia's commercial value plays an important role in my account of the prevalence of post-apartheid nostalgic writing: I return to it later in this Introduction, and explore it in depth in Chapter 3. For the moment, though, it is useful to note here that nostalgia as a *feeling* and nostalgia as a

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[18] Lowenthal also frames this desire in terms of continuity and wholeness: "What we are nostalgic for is not the past as it was or even as we wish it were; but for the condition of *having been*, with a concomitant integration and completeness lacking in any present" ("Nostalgia" 29). The *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) project is a multivolume collection of essays, edited by Nora, which document and discuss the places and objects in which French national memory and identity have been invested.

[19] In fact, in a Season 1 episode of *Mad Men* entitled "The Wheel," the series protagonist Don Draper gives a stirring meta-level speech about the power of nostalgia in marketing in a pitch for the Kodak Carousel slide projector. The clip may be viewed at https://vimeo.com/20736616.

commodity are distinct though entangled ways in which nostalgia functions. In order to understand nostalgia's location and value within the post-apartheid South African literary field, its work as both a psychological tool for (white) South Africans and a marketable product for publishers, it is necessary to clarify these distinctions.

2.3. Levels of nostalgia

The model I propose in this thesis focuses on the three semiotic, and therefore interrelated, functions that nostalgia may have at any one moment, whether in a person or a cultural form. The first of these is the subjective experience of nostalgia – it is longing itself, a yearning for what is lost. This is *nostalgia as affect*. The second occurs when this yearning serves the purpose of a narrative directed towards an end of return or restoration. This is *nostalgia as narrative*. This might be a person's thought or declaration that "those were the good old days," or "I felt at home in the world during my childhood in a way that I don't now." These first two kinds of nostalgia are, I submit, the levels at which the identity-anchoring work of nostalgia is done. Third-level nostalgia occurs when a nostalgic affect or narrative serves the function of any higher purpose. This is *nostalgia as commodity*. This may be a novel, film or television series that represents a nostalgic narrative for commercial or creative ends (whether nostalgia is affirmed or challenged); it could be the use of nostalgia to criticise a current political or economic state of affairs; or even a reader's (or critic's) reflection on the ethical implications of nostalgia. It is important to note that this schema does not suggest a linear or temporal progression between these levels: at any one moment, and in any one person or object, multiple orders of nostalgia operate simultaneously. A nostalgic book, for example, might inspire affects and narratives of nostalgia in a reader (and indeed represent these through characters or settings), even as it functions at the third level as a complex, perhaps critical, literary engagement with nostalgia. This three-tiered model

underlies the analysis in this thesis, and helps to elucidate the different dimensions of nostalgia's operation while attending to the complexity of their interaction.

2.4. Nostalgia in context: post-communism and the postcolonial

With these distinctions in mind, I now turn by way of introductory exposition to nostalgia's appearance in circumstances analogous to post-apartheid South Africa. My aim here is not to address these phenomena in detail, but to sketch out the broad terrain in order to situate the South African trend in context and to highlight the contiguities and contrasts between post-apartheid nostalgia and its recent international counterparts. If the lived reality of globalisation – dizzying changes in technology, mass media and communications, patterns of work and mobility – has provided ideal conditions for a general global outbreak of nostalgia (Huyssen, *Present Pasts* 21), this has been augmented by specific local inflections in a number of contemporary contexts. South Africa is not alone in this regard.

As one key example, the fall of communism created both a culture of nostalgia and a nostalgic culture industry in Russia and East Germany, which Boym, among others, has explored in detail. In their experiences of the aftermath of oppressive and restrictive regimes, these post-communist contexts are useful counterpoints to post-apartheid South Africa – particularly Germany, considering that its complex contemporary memory-scape is at once traumatic and nostalgic. Critics such as Mitja Velikonja and Jonathan Bach have suggested that nostalgia serves various ends within post-communist cultures, including escapism, the preservation of the status quo by the powerful, and even defiance or critique of the post-transitional order.

Significantly, the phenomenon of East German nostalgia (or *Ostalgie*, as it is known in Germany), though not uncontroversial, seems to be primarily kitsch in nature. It is caught up in the fetishisation of German Democratic Republic (GDR) consumer products, as films such as *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003) and institutions such as the GDR

Museum in Berlin demonstrate. The ironically celebratory nature of *Ostalgie* provides a dramatic contrast with the other, traumatic memory industry at work in Germany, which is, of course, no less commodified.[20] Yet many critical accounts of memory in this context curiously avoid explicitly addressing how these two modes of memory and memorialisation interact with or influence each other, or, indeed, how nostalgia is negotiated in cultures which bear a burden of historical guilt.[21] In many studies, Boym's included, these post-communist subjects are styled as victims of history, caught up in over-determining systems, trying to keep their bearings in the midst of bewildering change.

These analyses, moreover, remain distinctly Eurocentric in their purview, focusing on nostalgia's relation to modernity in western consumer societies, on the one hand, and its prevalence among those who have been dominated by oppressive regimes, especially in the post-communist world, on the other.[22] Though sensitive, wide-ranging and productive, they do not take into account the "the parallel and often related experiences of the former colonised, global 'other'," or, I would add, the complex experiences of former oppressors still within these contexts, despite the fact that "the hidden, often violent endings of empire witnessed abroad haunt the multiple histories of the present of all of us," as Walder has noted ("Hysterica Nostalgia" 2). The work of Monica Popescu, who has written extensively and perceptively on the relation of post-communism to postcoloniality, is the exception in this regard.[23] Popescu has explicitly

[20] As Huyssen argues, "trauma is marketed as much as the fun is, and not even for different memory consumers" (*Present Pasts* 19).

[21] For example, Bach, Enns, Velikonja (in relation to post-socialist East Europe more generally) and Brock and Truscott. There is very little scholarship on nostalgia in post-Nazi Germany, perhaps because of the overwhelming emphasis on trauma in scholarship and the culture. I have found only one book-length study devoted to the subject: Schlipphacke's *Nostalgia after Nazism* (2010).

[22] See, for example, Davis, Hutcheon, Huyssen's *Present Pasts*, and Jameson for the first group, and Boym, Ritivoi, Friedman, Enns, and Nadkarni for the second.

[23] Brock and Truscott, who compare *Ostalgie* with post-apartheid Afrikaner melancholia, are also exceptions.

compared the memory culture of post-communist Russia and post-apartheid South Africa, observing a "series of mirroring and reverse-mirroring in the histories of the two countries" (415). The difference, she notes, is that, while "an upsurge of humor, ironies, and deprecating imagery swept away the symbolic remains of communism" in Russia, the predominant postcolonial and post-apartheid South African narrative mode has been tragic (420).

Decolonisation, too, precipitated a trend toward nostalgia. In some contexts, nostalgia allows access to a precolonial identity. Derek Walcott has detected in the work of postcolonial Caribbean poets "an oceanic nostalgia for the older culture and a melancholy at the new" (357). Hutcheon has suggested that the négritude movement might be thought of in terms of nostalgia (Hutcheon), and I would also argue that the work of Frantz Fanon points to a nostalgic phase in the development of the native intellectual (Fanon 222–23).[24] In South Africa, the Bleek-Lloyd archive of San folklore has also proved a rich source of nostalgia in the same vein, prompting attempts at recovery of this lost precolonial culture by the poets Stephen Watson and Antjie Krog, among others.[25] In other contexts, nostalgia has served as a means of critiquing the new order. The anthropologist William Cunningham Bissell has recorded the nostalgia expressed by Angolans and Zanzibaris for their respective colonial pasts, arguing that these "popular nostalgias . . . reconstruct the past as a means of establishing a point of critique in the present, calling to judgment the failures of the state and the mysteries of the market" (239). These examples comprise nostalgic moments which relate to the history of the colonised. However, nostalgia has been particularly pervasive in the

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[24] These may be considered nostalgic insofar as both négritude and Fanon advocated some kind of harking back to an ideal form or golden age of blackness, or lost indigenous traditions or histories, which are located the precolonial past.

[25] Chapter 3 of Walder's *Postcolonial Nostalgias* addresses this topic in greater depth.

cultures of former colonisers, and it is this aspect of the phenomenon that most interests me in this thesis.

As Bill Schwarz's *The White Man's World* (2011) demonstrates, nostalgic memories of empire were integral to a certain construction of white British national identity after decolonisation.[26] In the 1960s and 1970s particularly, Schwarz argues, a narrative of entropy and disorder that was especially popular among the British right led to the prominence of wistful recollections of "a lost time of whiteness," which was directly associated with colonialism: "They imagined that there had once been an age – in the past, a generation ago, in metropole or colony, somewhere, some time – where white authority had prevailed. . . . The disorder of the present worked to project back into the past memories of a lost, fantasized racial utopia" (19). As the vagueness emphasised by Schwarz's description suggests, this was, for the most part, a commodified nostalgia promulgated by those without direct lived experience of the colonies.[27] In the 1980s and 1990s, this "armchair nostalgia," to use Arjun Appadurai's provocative term, took the form of safari-themed fashion catalogues and perfume lines, films such as *A Passage to India* (1984) and *Out of Africa* (1985), and the television miniseries *The Jewel in the Crown* (1984) (Appadurai 78). In these, nostalgia became a kind of "commercialized luxuriating in the culture of the past," an appealing commodity to be consumed (Hutcheon).

But nostalgia has also surfaced in more reflexive and personal ways among those former colonials who felt the loss of this life more directly; it is these engagements with memory that are closest to nostalgia's form within post-apartheid white South African writing. For example, we find nostalgia's persistent yet ambivalent presence in film and

[26] See also Gilmour and Schwarz's edited collection, *End of Empire and the English Novel since 1945* (2011) and Gilroy's *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2005).

[27] Behdad argues in *Belated Travellers* that even those writing in the colonies experienced a feeling of belatedness, which is a kind of melancholic nostalgia.

literature that deals with the former Dutch East Indies, which Sarah De Mul and Pamela Pattynama have explored in depth, and which I will address further in Chapter 1.[28] Closer to South Africa, Walder's pioneering work examines the complexity of this mode of memory for writers in the postcolonial world, focusing particularly on literature from southern Africa. He emphasises the difficulties of nostalgia's identity-founding function in such post-transitional contexts: "In societies with histories of exploiting difference to maintain inequalities of power, the sense of identity is not just a matter of negotiation, as some theorists put it, but a site of profound uncertainty and a struggle to remember and forgive as well as to forget" (*Postcolonial Nostalgias* ix).

The late 1990s and early 2000s also saw an accumulation of childhood memoirs concerning various postcolonial southern African contexts, especially Zimbabwe during the civil war in the 1960s and 1970s. Peter Godwin's *Mukiwa* (1996) and Alexandra Fuller's *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* (2002) are the most prominent examples.[29] These memoirs of carefree white childhood and subsequent ethical and political awakening are for the most part reflexive in their use of nostalgia, though they, too, may attribute at least part of their significant commercial success to a market for "armchair nostalgia" in the United States, United Kingdom and even South Africa. The extent to which post-apartheid nostalgic writing has played into this international market is a question to which I will return in the third chapter of this thesis.

It is significant that, though similar themes might be found in writing from other former colonies in which the white ex-settler population is in the majority, they do not form part of a larger nostalgic trend in the literature overall. In Australia, for example, individual nostalgic texts – such as Tim Winton's *Cloudstreet* (1991) or, arguably,

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[28] In *Colonial Memory* and "Unhappy Endings" respectively.

[29] Nostalgia for the old British colonies in Africa is so common among expatriate whites that the term "whenwe" was invented to describe them, playing on the frequently repeated phrase "when we lived in Rhodesia/Kenya…"

Gillian Mears's *Fineflour* (1990) – have been published in the last few decades by white writers, but their numbers cannot rival the volume of the South African literature, nor can they be said to comprise a major genre in the national literature. This is, I would suggest, a result of the fact that there has been no loss of power or status to be mourned by the white former colonisers in these contexts.[30]

2.5. The problem of nostalgia

It is in relation to these postcolonial settings that the ethical problems of nostalgia become most pressing, particularly in its operation as a narrative or commodity, and especially in its close relationship with whiteness, which I am particularly interested in exploring in this thesis. As I argued earlier, and will expand in Chapter 2, if nostalgia is a mode of memory, it also seems to be a kind of forgetting, and has the potential to be used to construct the past (and the lost home) in idealised terms, eliding or denying its complexities and problems. Closely associated with sentimentality, it is often seen, as Boym observes, as "something of a bad word, an affectionate insult at best" (xiv), or, as Sean Scanlan notes, "the sorry cousin of various ways of retrieving a memory" (5). At worst, the implications are far more troubling, especially when nostalgia is expressed by those who have supported or benefited from oppressive systems such as colonialism. The critic Michael Kammen, for example, has described nostalgia as "essentially history without guilt" (688).[31] Renato Rosaldo has likewise argued that imperialist nostalgia in cultural products like *Out of Africa* works to seduce consumers by disguising the violent realities of colonialism. Using "a pose of 'innocent yearning' both to capture people's

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[30] Nostalgia is, however, present in some writing of Aboriginal Australians. Moreover, as Kossew has shown, Australian and South African literature share other thematic similarities – particularly ideas of history, place and belonging – are variously inflected in white Australian and South African women's writing.

[31] Nora's celebrated *lieux de mémoire* project contained major lacunae, for example. As Perry Anderson has emphasised, in his attempt to affirm a French national identity by preserving and celebrating national symbols and practices, Nora elides "the entire imperial history of the country, from the Napoleonic conquests, through the plunder of Algeria under the July Monarchy, to the seizure of Indochina in the Second Empire and the vast African booty of the Third Republic" (qtd. in Whitehead 145).

imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination" (Rosaldo 108), this is nostalgia as wilful amnesia, allowing former oppressors to look back fondly at the past while masking their own culpability for the evils of colonisation with the language of innocence which comes so easily to nostalgic discourse. Nostalgia used in this way works to defend and perpetuate uneven power relations in the present, which is why some critics view it as fundamentally conservative, "linked to an elitist, escapist perspective designed by the wealthy and powerful to justify their control of the present [and] to palliate its inequities" (Lowenthal, "Nostalgia" 25). The ramifications of this idea for nostalgia's operation in post-apartheid South Africa, where white cultural and economic power has endured despite a loss of political dominance, are repeatedly addressed in this study.

Clearly, nostalgia is a potentially problematic way of recalling the past. But if it is a natural reaction to times of change and uncertainty, its appeal as affect and narrative is also to some extent unavoidable. For this reason, theorists have sought to mitigate its dubious reputation by distinguishing between different kinds of nostalgia, some of which, they suggest, can be ethically and creatively productive. In his sociological account of nostalgia, *Yearning for Yesterday* (1979), Davis distinguishes between three increasingly reflexive ways in which a person may experience nostalgia. These move from the simplest nostalgic reaction ("Things were better/safer/happier in the past"), to questioning the truth of such a reaction ("Was it really like that? What have I forgotten?"), and finally to a person's reflection on his or her own nostalgic responses or their tendency towards nostalgia under specific circumstances (17). In her more widely cited study of the phenomenon, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), Boym argues for the distinction between *restorative* and *reflective* nostalgia, two intersecting tendencies in how nostalgia manifests in cultures. Restorative nostalgia is a response to the loss of home and the past which seeks its literal return. Stressing the *nostos* (return home), it

works towards a reconstruction of what has been lost, or thought to have been lost (xviii). This is the kind of nostalgia that characterises nationalistic and religious revivals, which can easily turn violent.[32] In contrast, reflective nostalgia is knowing, ironic, and ambivalent. It "thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming – wistfully, ironically, desperately" (xviii). With this distinction, Boym seeks to rehabilitate nostalgia as a concept, to make the case that a reflective kind of nostalgia can be a catalyst for ethical and creative engagement, a productive means of dealing with the ambivalences of modernity. Drawing on the model of nostalgia's operation that I outlined above, both types involve all three levels of nostalgia (affect, narrative and commodity), though restorative nostalgia might be conceived of as commodifying the nostalgic narrative while its reflective counterpart does the same to nostalgic affect.

The categories of restorative and reflective nostalgia have been taken up by numerous critics to decry or defend particular instances of nostalgia, but I am less concerned with doing the same in this thesis than I am interested in tracing nostalgia's operation, and its value, in the post-apartheid literary field as it manifested through a particular genre. I do draw on this distinction where relevant, particularly in relation to the literary texts themselves, but in some cases this divide does not help to illuminate the work of nostalgia at all: for example, however reflective a book may be in its use of nostalgia, it may still evoke appealing affects in readers (first-level nostalgia in my model), who may use these to affirm their own nostalgic narratives (second-level), and this appeal might be the very thing that attracts a publisher to the book (third-level, or nostalgia as commodity). In other words, Boym and Davis's distinctions do not account for how nostalgia functions within the field of cultural production, or how nostalgic

[32] Citing the Nazi appropriation of the nostalgic German concept of *Heimat*, Avishai Margalit has observed that "When an innocent place of the past . . . is perceived as threaten[ed], those who are threatening such purity can be nothing but demonic forces of impurity. In countering such demonic forces everything goes, namely, every brutal thing" (274).

products are created, sold and valued within particular networks of transmission. The interdisciplinary approach adopted by this study allows for a focus on both the intrinsic operation of nostalgia within texts and this level of broader analysis.

Following this outline of nostalgia's history, functions and analogous contemporary contexts, the next section of this introductory chapter returns to the post-apartheid setting, where all the aspects of nostalgia I have discussed – its personal, cultural, commercial and ethical dimensions – come together. Here, the changing contours of the cultural and political terrain have made for an environment both inclined towards and inhospitable to nostalgia; it is against this context that my literary critical and literary historical readings of this writing will play out.

3. Post-apartheid nostalgia

Given nostalgia's prevalence during times of social upheaval, its presence in post-apartheid South African culture is to some extent predictable. The years immediately following the transition created an environment especially conducive to nostalgia, combining the bewildering forces of late modernity, which impressed themselves increasingly upon the country after its re-entry into the global economy, with the unprecedented socio-political changes occurring within South Africa itself as the white supremacist apartheid regime was replaced by a black-majority democracy.

The tendency toward nostalgia, however, was both complicated and exacerbated by the deliberate project of nation-building and reform on which the new South African state embarked in the post-apartheid period. The official narrative of the nation, exemplified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), was premised on a particular use and interpretation of the past, which had little room for nostalgic memory or narratives, especially of those considered to be the beneficiaries, and in some cases indeed the perpetrators, of the apartheid system. The first volume of the TRC Report conceives of South Africans as primarily "a traumatised and deeply divided people,"

noting further that "[t]he extent of trauma experienced by victims of the policies of the former state is incalculable, reaching far beyond those who approached the Commission" (19, 371). In the light of this traumatic history, nostalgia has tended to be regarded as a bad and unhelpful kind of memory, obtusely opposed to processes of reconciliation and transformation, deserving of rejection rather than interrogation. It has therefore remained acutely contentious in post-apartheid public discourse, and, although popular, nostalgic cultural products have frequently been met with critical opprobrium. As Martha Evans notes, "Generally, mainstream media equates nostalgia for this bygone era with apartheid apologism. Its prevalence among white South Africans is dismissed as regressive and racist, whereas its occurrence among black South Africans is noted as a worrying indication of the deficiencies of the present" (48).[33]

These tensions raise a theme to which I will repeatedly return in this study: the involvement of nostalgia and nostalgic literature in the complex relationship between the narratives of literature and individuals, and the narratives of the state in post-apartheid South Africa, which has significance for how the nation and national identity were being reformulated both within and outside of the country during this period. Literature has played a central role in the negotiation of this relationship. With the TRC as its central mechanism, the new South African state embraced the psychoanalytical notion that confronting the country's troubled history and narrating its traumas would be a fundamental part of imagining a new national community that could move together into the future (Posel 128–29).[34] In 1998 Njabulo Ndebele spoke of the process as a "restoration of narrative," noting its essentially literary features, and observing that, "[i]n

[33] For example, public controversies which concentrated on the problematic nature of nostalgia followed the success of Jo-Anne Richards's *The Innocence of Roast Chicken*, Bok van Blerk's song "De La Rey" and Dlamini's *Native Nostalgia*. I address some of these controversies, particularly that of Richards's novel, in Chapters 2 and 3.

[34] I draw here on Benedict Anderson's thesis that nations as political communities come into being by, essentially, imagining themselves as such. This process of self-definition is achieved through narratives – of shared history or community, for example – and so an important role is played by literature.

few countries in the contemporary world do we have a living example of people reinventing themselves through narrative" ("Memory" 27).[35] These narrative energies became part of South African public discourse and cultural production more generally. This is evident not only in writing that takes the Commission as its direct subject, like Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull* (1998) and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's *A Human Being Died That Night* (2003), but also in post-apartheid fiction in which the central concerns and mechanisms of the TRC (confession, guilt, memory, healing through narrative) surface at the level of the personal. Referring to novels such as Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples* (1995) in 1998, Ndebele described "an informal truth and reconciliation process under way among the Afrikaners" ("Memory" 24). Susan VanZanten Gallagher, Michiel Heyns and Mark Sanders, among others, have likewise explored the ways in which the confessional processes of the TRC have been thematised in white writing especially – not only in Afrikaans literature, but also in the writing of "bleeding-heart, English-speaking liberal South African[s]" (Ndebele, "Memory" 26).[36] To a great extent, the task of literature in the New South Africa effectively became to expand the broader project of truth and reconciliation, as well as to explore the ironies, fissures and contradictions within it.

Post-apartheid nostalgic writing forms part of this larger enterprise. Nostalgia's appeal in this regard is that it plays in the space between national and personal histories, between public and private memory. Delisle, for example, has suggested that nostalgia

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[35] A particularly durable instance of this was the metaphor of "the rainbow nation," which was used to imagine South Africa as a unified yet diverse community forged through common values of non-racialism and reconciliation. This was narrative envisioned as thread that might stitch together different groups, or be woven with others into a single social fabric. The rainbow nation concept was closely connected to *ubuntu* (the idea that a human being is constituted by and in relation to other humans), an essentially "invented memory" of an indigenous ethos (Sanders qtd. in Posel 129). Commonly thought to have been coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "the rainbow nation" formulation was subject to considerable critical dispute in the 1990s, and was increasingly regarded as obsolete from the early 2000s. For an interrogation of the term's purchase in the mid- to late-nineties, see Baines, "The Rainbow Nation?"

[36] In Gallagher, *Truth and Reconciliation*; Heyns, "The Whole Country's Truth"; Sanders, *Ambiguities of Witnessing*. See also Barnard, "Rewriting the Nation"; Daymond and Visagie; and Horrell, "White lies, white truth."

may be seen as “a means of completing memory, of resisting the notion that memory in South Africa is only traumatic, or that traumatic memory must be purged and forgotten. Both the positive and negative elements of memory must be balanced so that the individual does not become lost in a national narrative” (399). As I will show, in both its content and its reception, the nostalgia genre reflects the increasing bifurcation of these narratives in the post-apartheid period.

The white nostalgic literature trend includes memoirs, novels and poetry, but for the sake of the focus of my argument, the literary analysis in this thesis in Chapter 1 concentrates primarily on the novels of childhood and homecoming, where the genre’s recurrent conventions are most apparent. Much of this literature adopts an undeniably serious tone, and is closely allied to TRC literature in its examination of the white subject’s complex position in post-apartheid society. However, nostalgic writing also includes the less solemn (and less conventional) texts that have appeared increasingly in the post-TRC years, which will be addressed in Chapters 2 and 3. With regard to chronology, despite its connections to the TRC, the genesis of the genre predates the transition and has roots that reach back through the history of white writing in South Africa, as the first chapter will examine. Its immediate predecessors may be found in the memoirs of white childhood and homecoming that began appearing in the late 1980s, such as Hirson’s *The House Next Door to Africa* (1986), Christopher Hope’s *White Boy Running* (1988) and Rian Malan’s *My Traitor’s Heart* (1990), which combined a conflicted nostalgia with the confessional impulse which would become so prominent in post-apartheid nostalgic fiction. In terms of the genre’s dominance in the literary landscape, I submit that its prime years began in earnest in 1996 and lasted until about 2009, though there are nostalgic texts which appeared and found success before and after this window (Appendix A contains a chronology of relevant publication dates). As Chapter 3 will explore, new future- and present-oriented literary narratives of the country

began to proliferate both locally and internationally from around 2007. I suggest that these have heralded the decline of the mode, or at least its predominance in its most conventional form. This thesis concentrates primarily on the first fifteen years after the end of apartheid (1994–2009), the key period in which this genre came to prominence and began to wane. Yet I acknowledge that my own temporal position in 2015 makes it impossible for me to periodise the phenomenon with complete certainty: what I characterise as a decline may in a decade's time prove to be but an evolution. This is, however, a risk inherent in any attempt to analyse the recent past.

The appearance and popularity of less sombre and less conflicted nostalgic texts in the 2000s mirrored the increase in nostalgic narratives circulating in the country since the early 2000s, after Nelson Mandela's term as president, as the initial public enthusiasm and optimism that greeted the creation of the New South Africa began to fade in the face of continuing economic inequality, poor service delivery and widespread corruption and cronyism in government. Although these sentiments have been expressed across racial divides, according to Robert Mattes, this was particularly the case for non-black South Africans: his research observes "a significant increase since 1995 in 'nostalgia' for the way the country is perceived to have been governed under apartheid, especially among white, 'colored,' and Indian respondents" (30).[37] As Chapter 2 will explore in depth, nostalgia has been especially inviting for the white minority who felt keenly the official decentring of whiteness in post-apartheid society, even though their cultural and economic dominance has endured (Steyn, "White Talk" 122). Nostalgia has been particularly pervasive in white popular culture, especially from the 2000s, where it has proliferated in various cultural forms, at least in part facilitated by the increase of

[37] Quinn reports that in 2002, "about 60 percent of South Africans felt the country was better run under apartheid, with both blacks and whites rating the current government less trustworthy, more corrupt, less able to enforce the law and less able to deliver government services than its white predecessor." Kynoch has also explored the nostalgic narratives that are in circulation among black residents of townships about the more efficient ways in which the South African police are alleged to have operated during apartheid.

internet penetration in the country. It has been present in hit songs, YouTube videos of television adverts or film clips of the old South Africa with hundreds of thousands of views, and even Facebook pages with thousands of likes.[38]

It is a conspicuous feature of the post-apartheid literary field, and an important element of my argument in this thesis, that those involved in the production and reception of literature over this period – including writers, publishers, readers and book-buyers – were disproportionately white and middle class.[39] Scholars of South African whiteness such as Melissa Steyn and Mary West have enumerated the ways in which "middle-class white South Africans are still fiercely protecting their unselfconscious entitlement to a sense of home (belonging), autonomy, relevance, legitimacy and honour" (West 26). This thesis contends that nostalgia's entanglement with this kind of whiteness is an important factor in the proliferation of this literature, implicated in the literary features of texts, the ways in which they have been read and received, and their value as commodities in the book market. At the same time, it would be simplistic to think of nostalgic white writing as merely a matter of a predominantly white publishing industry calculatingly producing books for a white market, to the conscious exclusion of other types of books and other types of readers. Rather, as Chapter 3 will demonstrate, this writing emerged within a multifaceted field shaped by the intersection of difficult economic conditions, the normative beliefs of agents in the industry, and uneven power dynamics between local and international publishers.

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[38] For examples of the former, see "Old South African Adverts" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1dEX2HpuNo), "A South African blast from the past" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l742eUor4sY), and "South Africa in the 60's & 70's" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4TcWY5sZZ8). For the latter, "Who remembers the old Durban" (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Who-remembers-the-old-Durban/241806852513286), which I will examine in Chapter 2.

[39] See the demographic information on readers in the 2006 *National Survey into the Reading and Book Reading Behaviour of Adult South Africans* and on publishers in Galloway's "Current State."

As a proviso to my argument, it is important to note that there are key differences within South African whiteness which have a bearing on the appearance and reception of nostalgia in this context. The most salient distinction, which Chapter 2 will address further, is between English and Afrikaans speakers, though I would stress that these are "co-construct[ed]" identities (Steyn, "Rehybridising" 70). Just as there are different "shades of 'whiteness'" (Steyn, *Whiteness* 58), there are also different shades of white nostalgia. Though present in Afrikaans popular culture in often reactionary forms, nostalgia in Afrikaans literary fiction has not been as abundant and has seldom taken the same form as white nostalgic novels in English, which has also benefited from wider promotion and circulation within the international Anglophone literary market. This study proceeds from the hypothesis that the genre of post-apartheid nostalgic literature is for the most part a phenomenon of writing in English with a primarily white, English-speaking readership.

Sarah Nuttall has registered the complex intersection of temporalities and kinds of memory that comprises the lived reality of the post-apartheid moment, suggesting that:

> What is so widely referred to as the post-apartheid present is probably more accurately composed, simultaneously, of modes of nostalgia and melancholia, of inertia and stasis, of presentism (ways of living in the present which lack a sense of the future), modes of equilibrium, and of invention (in which something original, unforeseen, is brought into being) – in other words, a highly complex timescape of entangled and bifurcating layers. (*Entanglement* 156)

This multi-layered characterisation of the post-apartheid present brings to the fore the overarching theme of this thesis, which is the question of the relation of the past to the future as it manifested in South African culture during the transition. As Nuttall's description suggests, the period covered in this study may be seen as one of conflicting temporalities. The past, present and future coexisted at individual, collective and institutional levels, as old ways of being and doing jostled against the exigencies of a new order. Using Raymond Williams's concepts of the dominant, residual and emergent,

we might think of this as the situation of a dominant set of cultural forms and practices on the cusp of its decline (*Marxism* 121–27). Nostalgic white literature provides an especially productive lens through which to focus the cultural implications of this transitional moment, for, as the following chapters will show, its development in this period reflects these tensions between the past and the future at every level: within the texts themselves, in their reception, and in their publishing histories. The genre may be understood, I suggest, as a product of the attempts at self-preservation of certain belated, yet still dominant, institutional structures, modes of expression, and narratives of self in a changed world.[40] In this sense, nostalgic white writing is an archetypal literature of the transition.

4. Methodology and outline of chapters

As my exploration of the post-apartheid literary, social and publishing context will suggest, nostalgia is involved throughout the cycles of production and consumption of this literature. In order to tease out the details and significance of nostalgia's operation at different levels and in different locations within the literary field, this study has adopted what has proved to be the neatest way of dividing up the material, using a structure that I sketched earlier in this Introduction. The following three chapters consider the work of nostalgia in three distinct but intersecting *contexts* within the lives of these books. In each chapter, I attend to the various kinds of "pay-offs" – whether literary, psychological or commercial – that the nostalgia genre has offered participants at different coordinates within the literary field. I do so by drawing on the disciplinary approach that most fittingly illuminates nostalgia's operation in a particular location.[41]

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[40] I draw on Behdad's concept of belatedness here, which is used in relation to postcolonial travel writing to describe the "anxiety of coming after what had come before" (13).

[41] With this approach, I take inspiration from Priya Joshi's work in *In Another Country* (2002), which balances literary critical and book history perspectives in its argument.

The first of these is the literary context. This relates to how nostalgia functions within texts themselves, including elements of theme and content (characters who feel nostalgic or who grapple with their own nostalgia, plots of return and restoration, sensuous recreations of the past) and form (such as recursive narrative techniques). Nostalgia's operation at this level is best examined through a literary critical lens. This analysis also has implications for the second context in which nostalgia functions: the socio-political and cultural milieu, where the nostalgia felt and expressed by white South Africans attempting to adjust to a post-apartheid reality has been animated, fed or challenged by nostalgic writing. In this context, the discourses of psychology and sociology are particularly suited to exploring nostalgia's "memory work." The last location of nostalgia is the publishing field, which involves the commercial concerns of publishers, the market potential of nostalgia novels, and unequal power relations within international publishing networks. A book historical approach is the most appropriate in this regard, as I will demonstrate, though the project as a whole is in a broad sense book historical. The chapters and methodologies are integrated through a sustained focus on core nostalgic texts that are discussed throughout the thesis from different disciplinary angles. These include the novels I analyse in Chapter 1, as well as the experimental poetic memoir *I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)* by Denis Hirson, which is introduced in Chapter 2.

As I noted at the beginning of this Introduction, I draw on Robert Darnton's concept of the communications circuit for the above distinctions. In terms of the work of nostalgia, however, Darnton's neat separations between the agents participating in the life-cycle of a book are often difficult to maintain. For example, a white publisher might recognise the worth of a certain manuscript not simply because it may appeal to the predominantly white, middle-class market for fiction in South Africa, but because it also resonates with his or her own sensibilities as a white, middle-class reader. In ordering

these chapters, I have chosen not to proceed according to the chronology of production implied by the communications circuit (author – publisher – reader) in favour of situating readers and the sociocultural context at the centre of this study, with the idea that this more accurately traces the movement of nostalgia – that its memory work acts as a bridge between its literary and market work. Moreover, whereas the text itself remains only implicit in Darnton's schema, I dedicate my first chapter to a literary critical engagement with a range of novels in the post-apartheid genre. I do so in service of a clear definition of the genre itself, and because these literary forms are instructive of nostalgia's ambivalent presence in the post-apartheid context more generally. The conventions and logic of the genre reflect certain discourses around whiteness in the post-apartheid moment that are taken up in the rest of the thesis, and are implicated in how nostalgic writing was positioned in the South African literary field and received in the market.

Therefore, Chapter 1 explores the literary work of post-apartheid nostalgic white writing. It identifies and analyses the dominant features of this literature, sampling from a representative group of novels from the period, including Mark Behr's *Kings of the Water* (2009), André Brink's *Imaginings of Sand* (1996), Justin Cartwright's *White Lightning* (2002), J. M. Coetzee's *Boyhood* (1997) and *Summertime* (2009), Lisa Fugard's *Skinner's Drift* (2005), Christopher Hope's *Heaven Forbid* (2001), Jo-Anne Richards's *The Innocence of Roast Chicken* (1996), and Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* (2005). Focusing on the most prevalent motifs of the genre – the farm in decline, apartheid white childhood, and the returning expatriate – the discussion situates these tropes in the context of both South African literary history and broader global trends, and explores how they are used to explore questions of belonging, culpability and memory. In discussion with South African literary criticism, the chapter addresses both prevailing and countervailing tendencies within the genre, as well as the imaginative limitations of its conventions.

The second chapter considers the appeal of nostalgia and the nostalgic book for the predominantly white South African readers of these texts in the post-apartheid cultural context. Combining psychoanalytic (Sigmund Freud, Judith Butler, Derek Hook) and nostalgia theory (Boym, Davis, Ritivoi) with existing critical work on the South African transition and post-apartheid culture, especially in the area of whiteness studies, I examine the psychological and social operation of nostalgia in this environment, including its relation to melancholia and escapism. The chapter then explores the extent of nostalgia's involvement in actual South African readers' experiences of this literature by analysing print and online reviews of novels, using critical concepts garnered from reader response research, including that of James Procter, Janice Radway and Mary Anne Moffitt.

The question of readers and reception leads directly to the question of the market, and so Chapter 3 addresses the involvement of the publishing industry and the influence of various literary markets, both local and international, in shaping the nostalgia trend. Combining work in book history, industry statistics, and interviews with publishers, authors and literary agents, I consider the kinds of capital, both economic and symbolic, that nostalgic South African books offered publishers. The chapter begins with the local South African industry, which experienced numerous significant changes over this period that fed into the phenomenon. It then turns to the value of post-apartheid nostalgic books as cultural commodities which originated and were circulated not only within South Africa but also internationally, particularly in the Anglo-American market. I suggest that the genre was well positioned both to attract acclaim and to cater to the expectations of international audiences about post-apartheid South African literature.

In seeking to provide a holistic account of the boom in nostalgic white writing in the post-apartheid period, this thesis by necessity has to wield the discursive tools of a number of disciplines. The inherent risk in such an approach is that the result may only

skim the surface of multiple investigative streams, rather than plumbing the depths of one to chart its complex currents and counter-currents. This is a risk I have taken advisedly, believing that the benefits of the wide-ranging perspective I have adopted will outweigh its deficits, as I will show, and that the account offered here will illuminate not only the post-apartheid South African literary terrain, but also the complex social, cultural and material conditions which have shaped it.

Chapter 1

Post-Apartheid Nostalgia as a Genre

Your voice speaks out of the empty holes
of the telephone, saying as you once did to me: those
were the golden days of apartheid, meaning the quiet
sun-drenched garden of our childhood, a hidden war
eating the edges of innocence; meaning the fear
of the thickening shadows.

Denis Hirson, "Early Mourning"

"Do you ever think how bloody lucky we were?" he asks.
"We lived in Eden and didn't know it."
"It's gone for ever."
"Gone," and I hear my own voice, like a Messenger
come to announce defeat in battle.

Doris Lessing, *African Laughter*

1. Introduction

"If the Mail & Guardian books editor asks me to review another novel about a white woman and her idyllic life on a farm, I will challenge him to a fencing duel!" exclaimed *Mail & Guardian* journalist Percy Zvomuya in his 2012 review of Imraan Coovadia's *The Institute for Taxi Poetry*. Two years earlier, in 2010, David Medalie had described "My Apartheid Childhood Revisited" as a narrative form within post-apartheid writing "of which . . . there is an inexhaustible supply" ("Uses of Nostalgia" 37). Zvomuya and Medalie's statements draw attention to both the ubiquity of nostalgic white writing in the post-apartheid literary field and its remarkable thematic and formal uniformity. To these concerns with the farm and white childhood, I would add the narrative of post-apartheid homecoming as one of the predominant tropes to which white writers repeatedly returned

in their literary explorations of the post-apartheid moment.[1] Given the prevalence of this writing and its conventionality, I suggested in the introductory chapter that it is useful to consider it a distinct and significant genre of post-apartheid literature. In this chapter, I expand on this assertion by defining the genre, and offering a critical reading of its poetics.

The proliferation of white nostalgic writing might be seen as an inevitable response to the profound ideological and material change and disorientation experienced by South Africans post-1994, as I observed in the Introduction and will explore in greater depth from a sociological perspective in Chapter 2. The sheer amount of it also suggests that nostalgia and nostalgic conventions were particularly generative or rewarding *in literary terms* for white South African writers. The discussion in this chapter therefore considers the work and worth of nostalgia for the authors of this literature, though it is perhaps more accurate to think of it as exploring the value of nostalgia and nostalgic writing for the author's *position* in the communications circuit of this genre, which is the realm of the literary. Put another way, I seek here to give an account of post-apartheid nostalgic writing from a literary perspective, to explore the function of the genre and the operation of nostalgia in and through this writing at the level of narrative, theme and imagery.

What purposes did these generic hallmarks serve? What kinds of questions did they raise, and what investments did they challenge or bolster? In the discussion that follows, I address these questions by examining through a group of representative novels the three key motifs of the genre: the farm in decline, white childhood, and the returning expatriate, along with their related and intersecting themes and images. It is my contention in this chapter, and this thesis as a whole, that this writing and these

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[1] In a 2006 *Sunday Times* article entitled "South Africa: No Woman, No Cry," Celean Jacobson suggests that the profusion of this kind of writing is a phenomenon of white women writers specifically. I consider post-apartheid white nostalgic writing to be more general than this, as my readings will demonstrate.

conventions are above all concerned with the place of the white subject in post-apartheid South Africa. I argue that nostalgia as a concept brings together many of the concerns of white South African writing of this period, and postcolonial white writing more generally, namely: negotiating the past, a preoccupation with the shaping of identity in changing circumstances, and the associated question of what home and belonging might mean for the beneficiaries of the old system in a new country founded on principles of equality and democracy. The works I discuss, which I will outline below, engage with nostalgia in various ways, and with varying degrees of reflexivity, but central to all are nostalgia's core concerns: home, innocence, memory, loss. At stake, I submit, is the question of identity and belonging in the present. This involves not only the relation of the individual self to the collective, which in this context includes the anxious interaction of whiteness and national identity, but also an internal grappling with the relation of the individual's past and present selves.

I begin here with a discussion of the genre as a whole, an overview of its key features and common narrative moves. What follows is three related sections, each of which addresses one of the three motifs I have identified as central to the genre (the farm, childhood, and homecoming), placing them in their literary historical contexts and offering a critical analysis of their work in this writing.

2. The nostalgia genre

Ralph Cohen has suggested that, "[i]f . . . we wish to study literature as an interrelated system of texts and society, generic distinctions offer us a procedure to accomplish this" (213). My focus at the level of genre in this chapter, on trends across multiple novels rather than in-depth close readings of just a few texts (though such readings are certainly instructive in themselves), is in keeping with the overall project of this thesis to explore how nostalgia operates and is negotiated more generally within post-apartheid literature and culture. In order to define the genre, I have selected a group of novels through which

the common tendencies of this writing are discernible. The novels I focus on span the period and vary in the complexity of their engagement with nostalgia and the South African past. They are: Mark Behr's *Kings of the Water* (2009), André Brink's *Imaginings of Sand* (1996), Justin Cartwright's *White Lightning* (2002), J. M. Coetzee's *Boyhood* (1997) and *Summertime* (2009), Lisa Fugard's *Skinner's Drift* (2005), Christopher Hope's *Heaven Forbid* (2001), Jo-Anne Richards's *The Innocence of Roast Chicken* (1996), and Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* (2005). A chronology of publication dates may be found in Appendix A, and brief plot summaries of these novels in Appendix B.

These texts have been selected for a number of reasons: firstly, they focus on at least one (though usually more) of the motifs that I suggest are central to the genre, which were identified by surveying a large range of South African literature published in the first two decades post-apartheid. Secondly, in terms of variety and representativeness, the group includes novels by writers living both in South Africa and abroad, published across the period covered by this thesis, and samples from both popular and so-called high-brow literature. It is worth noting, however, that all of these novels were published outside South Africa by British publishers before being imported into the South African market. This is partially a result of the state of South African publishing over this period, and is a feature of the genre that Chapter 3 explores in greater detail.

In the following discussion, I concentrate primarily on the most common features of the genre. I do so because I wish to describe and define the genre, and for practical reasons it is simpler to do so positively, at least at first; secondly, the recurrent motifs I single out are central to the literary work of this writing. However, I acknowledge that, as important as similarity is to the definition of a genre, difference is also a constant factor within any group of texts. The cohesiveness a genre suggests is always to some extent imposed by critics, and individual texts may simultaneously conform to and contradict

their genres (Devitt 705). Indeed, Jacques Derrida emphasises that "[e]very text participates in one or several genres . . . yet such participation never amounts to belonging" (65).[2] Therefore, although I focus primarily on the unifying elements within the genre, I also recognise that there are significant differences between individual texts, that genres are always already to some extent unstable. For this reason, it is also necessary to take into account those works which frustrate or problematise the genre's conventions; this, too, is part of the literary work performed in post-apartheid nostalgic writing. Rather than constituting a homogeneous group, the genre might be better conceived of as a cluster of individual satellites orbiting in different but intersecting paths around interrelated ideas of memory, identity and belonging. Moreover, because we "know genres by what they are not as well as by what they are" (Devitt 700), this chapter interweaves discussion of countervailing tendencies not only within but also beyond the margins of the genre as I loosely describe them. As part of this account, I also address the roots of post-apartheid nostalgic writing, which may be found in familiar literary forms of South African and nostalgic literature more generally, for, as Thomas O. Beebee notes, "genres are made out of other genres" (264) and are by nature heteroglossic, a tissue of the texts and modes which precede their emergence or definition.

2.1. Defining the genre

If there is one idea which pervades this literature of nostalgia, it is that of return, whether it is a character's physical return to a childhood home, an imaginative return through the act of remembering, or both. Most texts have at least a dual temporal structure: the narrative usually alternates between the apartheid past and the post-apartheid (or very nearly post-apartheid) present, though one or the other perspective might be only

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[2] This is particularly true of the so-called high-brow literary texts I include within the ambit of nostalgic literature, which would correlate with a prevalent critical assumption that "a literary work's adherence to generic rules becomes inversely proportional to its aesthetic quality" (Beebee 8).

implied. This dual focus reflects nostalgia's reliance on the contrast between the *here and now* and the *there and then*, effectively dramatising the work of memory through the form of the novels. Most novels tend to be a variation of the following narrative: a white child (usually English-speaking) has a carefree and adventure-filled early life, which often takes place on a farm. As the two most prevalent features of novels in post-apartheid nostalgic literature, the farm and apartheid childhood converge in the childhood farm, which is the predominant chronotopic marker of the genre.[3] The child has a reasonably close relationship with a black nanny or domestic worker with whom he or she spends a great deal of time (Georgie in *Heaven Forbid*, Nomsa in *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*, Ezekiel/Lefu and Grace/Nkele in *Skinner's Drift*). As the child grows up, he or she begins to realise the implications of South Africa's racist society, but it is usually when the child experiences a trauma, often violent and race-related, that he or she is irrevocably cast out of bliss and initiated into the cruel and segregated adult world. Such traumas include the accidental shooting of a black child on a night hunt in *Skinner's Drift*, the rape and accidental shooting of Nomsa in *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*, and the forced self-castration of a black labourer in *The Innocence of Roast Chicken* (hereafter *Innocence*).

A common variant of this narrative has the story beginning as an expatriate main character returns to South Africa and the family farm due to the death, either imminent or recent, of a parent or close older relative. The return home is also a journey into the past, generally the protagonist's childhood or adolescence, in which the reason for the character's leaving South Africa lies. This is often the traumatic past event mentioned above. In both the childhood and homecoming narrative, the adult character feels

[3] Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope expresses the confluence and mutual shaping of spatial and temporal aspects within literary works; the chronotope is, he argues, crucial to the definition of genre (Bakhtin 84–85). With both spatial (the concept of home or homeland) and temporal (the idea of a lost past state) dimensions, nostalgia itself is inherently chronotopic.

alienated from his or her childhood memories and past self in the post-apartheid present of the narration due to this trauma or estrangement. This alienation is compounded by the changes that have taken place in the country, evident in the deteriorating state of the farm. Without the past harmoniously integrated into his or her life story, the adult protagonist cannot fully participate in post-apartheid South African society or indeed the present world more generally. The narrative is propelled by the move towards revelation and closure – usually, the unveiling of a secret or the unearthing of a repressed memory that has haunted the protagonist since childhood. Once the past is confronted through a work of memory or narration, its disruptive power is neutralised, and the main character discovers a new way of relating to the past free, or closer to being free, of "the tyrannies of nostalgia, loss and guilt" (Behr, *Kings* 149). This release also precipitates an induction into the present which, for some of the expatriate characters, results in a decision to stay on, with the idea that they will participate in the new South African society.

To describe this writing as nostalgic is not to exclude the presence of trauma, as I argued in the Introduction, but rather to suggest that nostalgia is a major force at work at some level in all of these novels, whether it operates as affect, narrative, or commodity (directed towards a higher end) or is present at multiple levels simultaneously. As the following discussion will explore in detail, nostalgia appears prominently as both a thematic concern and a formal feature; that is, it is both represented (or contended with) and performed by this writing.

2.2. Fiction, autobiography, autobiografiction

This chapter is primarily concerned with novels, and does not focus on texts that explicitly present themselves as memoirs, even though the wider nostalgia trend in white southern African literature certainly encompasses more straightforwardly autobiographical writing (particularly in memoirs of childhood from South Africa,

Zimbabwe and Zambia).[4] The decision to focus on novels has been made primarily for the sake of clarity and focus in this chapter: the features of the genre are more pronounced, more developed, in novels than in life writing, as the category of "fiction" gives an author greater freedom to develop symbolism and give a narrative trajectory – and the past – a particular shape, which the rest of this chapter will explore in greater depth. While memoirs certainly rely on literary conventions, they purport to represent the truth of an individual's life and experiences, and so make stronger factual claims than works of fiction.[5]

Yet, nostalgia seems to render the distinction between fiction and life writing particularly porous. In examining the worth of a nostalgic mode for the writers of these novels, the question of autobiography inevitably comes to the fore. Coetzee's *Boyhood* and Hope's *Heaven Forbid* both occupy the indistinct territory between fiction and memoir. *Boyhood*, with its child protagonist John Coetzee, overtly adheres to the author's biography, though it is written in the third person in the style of a fictional narrative.[6] *Summertime* adds a layer of complexity to this schema: its narrator, Mr Vincent, is a biographer writing the story of Coetzee's life after his death. Conversely, *Heaven Forbid* presents itself as fiction, but shares many striking similarities with Hope's own life story, as recounted in his memoir, *White Boy Running* (1988).

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[4] These memoirs of southern African childhoods include Peter Godwin's *Mukiwa* and Alexandra Fuller's *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*. A number of other autobiographical books by white South African authors were prominent in this period, such as Denis Hirson's experimental and bestselling *I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)* (2004), which will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, Annica Foxcroft's *There Are Ants in My Sugar* (2008), and other more straightforward memoirs, like Gillian Slovo's *Every Secret Thing* (1997).

[5] Indeed, identity, authenticity and fidelity are, as Philippe Lejeune asserts, constitutive parts of the autobiographical pact between the author and readers of autobiography. This pact guarantees to readers that what they are reading is in fact a "[r]etrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his [or her] own existence" (4). The intactness of this pact is a significant factor in a memoir's reception, as autobiography is "a mode of reading as much as it is a type of writing" (Lejeune 30). Take, for instance, the vitriolic media backlash that resulted from the revelation that large parts of James Frey's bestselling *A Million Little Pieces* (2003), a harrowing memoir about the author's drug-addiction, were fabricated (see Kakutani).

[6] Both Attridge and Lenta have considered the difficulties of distinguishing between truth, autobiography and fiction in *Boyhood*, and have discussed Coetzee's foregrounding of these very issues.

Even novels in the genre which are explicitly fictional may be considered semi-autobiographical, as they contain noteworthy details and events taken almost directly out of their author's lives. Richards has noted of *Innocence* that the novel includes elements of her own biography: for example, her grandparents owned a farm in the old Transvaal (now Gauteng), which Richards loved as a child ("Personal Interview"). Zadok revealed in our interview that a moment in *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* in which young Faith does not understand that a racist white adult is referring to her nanny Nomsa rather than a playmate when he asks about "that girl" (*Gem Squash* 92) was inspired by a memorable incident in Zadok's own childhood. Admittedly, many of the novels in the genre are debut efforts, and it is common to the point of cliché for an author's first novel to be at least semi-autobiographical, and to take the form of the childhood or coming-of-age narrative.[7] However, even in the other novels, the protagonists resemble their authors remarkably closely in sex, age, expatriate status, even profession – suggesting that there is a kind of identification at work (the exception here is Brink's *Imaginings of Sand*). Numerous authors have, moreover, explained their writing of these novels as also, at least partly, an attempt to understand their own position in or relation to post-apartheid South Africa, a point to which I will return in the discussion below.[8]

Given this entanglement of autobiography and fiction, I would suggest that we might consider the texts of the white nostalgia genre in a broad sense to be autobiografictions. The term "autobiografiction," originally coined by Stephen Reynolds in 1906, has been used by Max Saunders specifically in relation to Modernist texts to denote a "work that cannot be called formal autobiography, but in which something autobiographical is nonetheless happening: work in which autobiography is happening by

[7] *Innocence*, *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* and *Skinner's Drift* are debut novels.

[8] I draw here on personal interviews conducted with Behr, Richards and Zadok, as well as a printed interview with Fugard (Willoughby 11).

fictional means" (Saunders 179). The term is a loose one, and can include texts from semi-autobiographical writing to entirely fictional autobiographies.[9] As such a flexible term, it is well suited to the nostalgia genre, which includes writing along the autobiographical-autobiografictional spectrum. To propose that nostalgia novels are autobiografictions is not to imply that they are simply veiled autobiographies, or to reduce the characters to mere proxies for their authors. It is rather to submit that the writing of these novels was in some way part of these authors' own attempts to explore themes, debates and other issues that have a bearing on their relation to post-apartheid South Africa, and, perhaps, to create a sense of continuity from the apartheid to the post-apartheid era, if not between their past and present selves. Establishing this kind of continuity is, of course, one of nostalgia's primary functions. With these stakes in mind, and having outlined the genre's primary features and narrative shape, I now turn to the first of its hallmarks: the post-apartheid farm.

3. The farm in decline: revisiting the pastoral

The farm is the most common recurring feature of the post-apartheid nostalgia genre, appearing as a setting or object of longing in all but one of the novels I discuss (with the exception of *Heaven Forbid*). An especially loaded symbol in South African literary history, the farm has taken on various meanings at different historical moments within white South African writing, but is associated most frequently with the tradition of the *plaasroman* or farm novel, South African literature's most enduring pastoral genre. Through its use of the farm, post-apartheid nostalgic writing might be understood as situating itself within a long history of white writing in and of southern Africa which engages with the pastoral tradition of western literature. Before addressing the particular

[9] Saunders refers to the autobiographies of Henry James, Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford, James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, among others, in his wide-ranging discussion of the concept.

appearance and significance of the farm in its post-apartheid literary incarnations, I will turn to highlighting a few salient features of this history.

3.1. The pastoral in South Africa: *plaasroman* and farm novel

As Raymond Williams argues in *The Country and the City* (1973), the pastoral as a literary mode is premised on a particular configuration of the relationship between the country and the city which privileges the former. Although what the concept of "the country" denotes has always changed in relation to particular historical circumstances, what is yearned for remains at its core "the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue" which contrasts with "the city," a concept associated with human achievement, technology, worldliness, noise, and so on (R. Williams, *The Country* 1). Nostalgia, charged with longing for innocence and simplicity, has therefore never been far from the pastoral.[10]

The pastoral was one of the primary modes through which European writing from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries tried to engage with southern Africa. Given the promise of a new world, even a new Eden, as well as the kinds of tensions between worldliness and innocence, and technology and primitiveness, encompassed by the mode, this is not surprising. Its application was, however, always fraught with uncertainty, frustrated by the recalcitrance of the region. If the Cape was referred to as the Cape of Good Hope, it was also known as the Cape of Storms, a "southern anti-human world, intrinsically hostile to Mediterranean civilisation and its harbingers" (Van Wyk Smith 117).[11] Early English poetry about the Cape oscillated between images of paradise and

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[10] Natali reads *The Country and the City* itself as a sustained engagement with the politics of nostalgia.

[11] As Coetzee explores in depth in *White Writing*, the Cape was established as a supply post for the Dutch East India Company – a garden – but the myth of Eden never took complete hold in the discourse of the Cape. Unlike the Americas, "Africa was not a new world" that could offer settlers the millennial promise of utopia or a vision of prelapsarian innocence (Coetzee, *White Writing* 2).

desolation, and often relied on the contrast between the two.[12] A concern with the nature of the relationship, or even the possibility of a relationship, between the European self and such a land began here, and would animate the white writing that followed, which returned continuously to “the fraught drama of uncertain domicile, the ongoing arbitration between cultural memories of Europe and the harsh challenges of a resistant Africa” (Van Wyk Smith 118).

The relation of land, belonging and identity, the state of being “no longer European, not yet African” (Coetzee, *White Writing* 11), persisted in white South African writing from this inception through to the nostalgic texts which concern this study. Since Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of An African Farm* (1883), the farm has been the site on which this relationship has most prominently been explored. It is, to use Coetzee’s evocative phrase, one of white writing’s principal “dream topographies” (*White Writing* 6), a setting through which essentially political ideologies have been embedded and played out as part of what Rita Barnard calls “a kind of social dream work” (*Apartheid* 26). With the family farm as an almost constant presence, post-apartheid nostalgic texts clearly locate themselves within this literary history. Schreiner’s *African Farm* questions the possibility of a reciprocal relationship between the settler and an inhospitable landscape which contains no fertile ground in which nostalgia might take root; Coetzee’s *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) took up a similar theme nearly a century later.[13] Indeed, Schreiner initiated what would in the later twentieth century become “a coherent and continuous stream of fiction that is about permanently alienated beings, white beings

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[12] Van Wyk Smith locates the origin of this dichotomy in the experience of the Portuguese explorers at the Cape and Luis Vaz de Camões’s *Lusiads*. *The Lusiads* introduced the mythic figure of Adamastor, the ambivalent Spirit of the Cape which defies European attempts at conquest, and which later came to stand for African liberation and resistance in mid-twentieth century South African poetry in English. The figure enabled poets to “register[] white English-speaking South Africans’ calamitous ambivalence about the European-African antinomies in their heritage and commitments” (123).

[13] Barnard discusses Coetzee’s treatment of the farm as a dream topography in depth in *Apartheid and Beyond*.

who are not part of, and can never be part of, a land which offers them no harmonious, sympathetic growth," to quote Stephen Gray (151).

Despite Schreiner's early scepticism, during the decades after the Anglo-Boer War and before the Second World War, as a response to a time of rapid urbanisation, modernisation and economic hardship, a nostalgic form of the pastoral became a dominant genre in South African writing through the Afrikaans *plaasroman* and its less prominent English relation, the farm novel (Olivier 316). In Afrikaans, writers like C. M. van den Heever almost exclusively concerned themselves with farms and rural society, using the *plaasroman* to dramatise the tensions brought about by urbanisation and poverty over this period, and, accordingly, to create a clear relationship between Afrikaners, rural life and the land (Coetzee, *White Writing* 82–83).[14] According to Olivier, the Afrikaans "farm novel and related idyllic evocations of a 'Boere past' belong to a genre of restitution" which must also be seen as a response to the destruction and dispossession of the South African War (316). In English, Pauline Smith extolled the virtues of simple farm life, and lamented its inevitable decline in *The Little Karoo* (1925) and *The Beadle* (1926). MacKenzie explicitly links Smith's writing to her historical context, noting that she "created characters that hark back to an earlier, more settled era prior to the massive disruptions of the two Anglo-Boer Wars, the First World War and the rapid industrialisation of South Africa in the first half of the twentieth century" (363).

The theme of decline within this early-twentieth-century writing of the farm emphasises that the pastoral, like nostalgia, has not only spatial but also temporal

[14] There are significant differences between the Afrikaans and English traditions in South African literature, and these filter through to the various inflections of their pastoral traditions. In the first instance, Afrikaans writers had much in common with the German *Bauernroman* of the 1930s, whereas English writers identified with British pastoral forms, trying to adapt the "English novel of rural life" to the South African setting (Coetzee, *White Writing* 63, 76). Despite this, there has been considerable cross-pollination. Pauline Smith's work, for example, owed much to the Afrikaans tradition, and writers like Coetzee and Brink seem to straddle the two. The farms in *Innocence* and *Skinner's Drift* are explicitly depicted as a blend between the English and Afrikaans traditions through the marriages of their Afrikaans and English owners.

dimensions. This is a point Klopper highlights in his discussion of nostalgia in relation to Zoë Wicomb's work: "There is an obvious spatial relation between the locations of countryside and city, but also a less obvious temporal relation. If the city signifies an escape from the past, the countryside signifies the compulsion of the past" (152). Williams suggests as much in the first chapter of *The Country and the City* through his demonstration of how, in each generation, the notion of "the country" has been applied to the former generation's way of life, which new economic and societal structures have rendered impossible: for example, the Romantics pitted wild and innocent nature against the encroachment of the industry and culture of the Industrial Revolution. The pastoral is also, as Williams notes, expressed through a longing for a lost golden age, or the Garden of Eden, the time in which the innocence and simplicity associated with the countryside is felt to have prevailed. Here, "myth function[s] as a memory" (R. Williams, *The Country* 43); in other words, the pastoral involves a kind of projection in which memory is implicated.[15] Making a similar point about South African art, Coetzee notes that the pastoral of this time "looks back, usually in a spirit of nostalgia, to the calm and stability of the farm, a still point mediate between the wilderness of lawless nature and the wilderness of the new cities; it holds up the time of the forefathers as an exemplary age when the garden of myth became actualized in history" (*White Writing* 4). Essentially, the form expresses "a nostalgia for country ways" (Coetzee, *Heart* 139); it is an attempt to retreat into an imagined time of simplicity and stability in which settler relations to the land and to the world were unqualified and uncomplicated, and notions of heredity and tradition were unquestioned.

Beneath the specifics of the events or places towards which this nostalgia is oriented lies a more general desire. In *A Writer's Diary* Stephen Watson calls it an "inner

[15] As I will explore in Chapter 2, this is also a feature of nostalgia's function in individual psychology.

need to create a rootedness, a fictional place in which world and self [are] bound to one another, all serving the purposes of [one's] own homecoming" (*Diary* 144). This is a yearning for a sense of unqualified belonging, a kind of homesickness, which is also a form of nostalgia, as the Introduction argued. As Watson implies in his use of the word "fictional," it is more specifically a yearning to construct such a place within a text. The longing for home is, of course, symptomatic of global modernity and its multiple dislocations, but it seems even more keenly felt in settler consciousness. Graham Huggan notes, for example, that Australian writers imagined themselves as "a nation of self-mythologized 'unsettled settlers', untiring in their efforts to reinvent the meaning of home" (*Australian Literature* xi).[16]

In South Africa the very notions of home and belonging have an especially troubled history which makes the task of articulating this desire acutely problematic for the white writer. That the colonial and apartheid projects were fundamentally concerned with land ownership, resource control and dispossession – from Jan van Riebeeck's hedge of bitter almonds to the 1913 Natives Land Act and the creation of the homelands in the 1950s – means that the relation of the subject of European descent to the South African landscape can never be pure, innocent, or natural. As Coetzee argues in *White Writing*, the assertion of a South African pastoral idyll relied on a number of major lacunae, especially the presence of black labour and the history of dispossession and displacement that led to the original establishment and maintenance of farms (71–72).[17]

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[16] The anxiety of belonging is common throughout settler literature, from Australia to Canada, as Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay* and Boehmer's *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* demonstrate. Carter examines the processes by which imperial symbolic frameworks were inscribed onto the foreign and often hostile Australian landscape. Boehmer shows how colonial writers across the British Empire sought to imprint homeliness on the colonies by importing and imposing the frameworks of the metropolitan home onto these foreign lands and their inhabitants.

[17] Here, Coetzee recalls a point made by Williams in *The Country and the City* with regard to pastoral English poetry of the seventeenth century. Williams notes that "[b]y a simple extraction of the existence of labourers," this poetry an Edenic image of the abundant fruitfulness of the natural order in which the land offers its bounty of its own accord (*The Country* 32). In *Imperial Eyes*, Pratt provides an extended account of how colonial naturalist explorers' accounts of the region reduced the regions inhabitants to mere "traces

In the second half of the twentieth century, a number of anti-pastoral novels were published that drew attention to these omissions. In these, the farm came to function as one of South African literature's most potent metaphors for the country itself: a microcosm of the socio-political power relations in wider South African society between resource-owning whites and black labourers who were denied a share in the profits of the land. Writers such as Dan Jacobson, Karel Schoeman and Nadine Gordimer worked assiduously to lay bare these economic and social realities.[18] In Gordimer's *The Conservationist* (1974), for example, the corpse of a black man resurfaces insistently on the farm of the protagonist Mehring, refusing to remain buried – and so refusing to allow the presence of the black body in the landscape to remain repressed.

The post-apartheid era of land reform and redistribution brought a renewed interest in revising the farm novel in white writing. As Jennifer Wenzel notes, the primary features of the *plaasroman* form, that is, "its prominence in a time of profound change, its pastoral response to new modes of agriculture and land ownership, [and] its difficulty with the representation of black labor" became particularly apposite in this context (95).[19] Christopher Warnes argues further that in the post-apartheid period "serious literature cannot but register the fact that socio-political change has overtaken the conditions of possibility for representing the farm as pastoral idyll or locus of identity" ("Engendering" 51). Critically lauded novels such as Anne Landsman's *The Devil's Chimney* (1997), Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and Marlene van Niekerk's *Agaat*

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on the landscape," thereby creating "'empty' landscapes [that might be] meaningful only in terms of a capitalist future and their potential for producing a marketable surplus" (58, 60).

[18] See Jacobson's *The Trap; and, A Dance in the Sun* (1968) and Schoeman's *Na Die Geliefde Land* (1972), translated into English as *Promised Land* (1978).

[19] While the African National Congress (ANC) government opted not to pursue a programme of nationalisation and forced removal, as Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF would do aggressively in Zimbabwe a few years later (though twenty years post-independence), they followed a clear mandate to redress the country's history of economic inequality and dispossession. As a consequence, and with Zimbabwe in mind, white land owners felt considerably threatened. Moreover, because economic and social change proceeded (and continues to proceed) painfully slowly, the late 1990s and early 2000s was a time of particular uncertainty for both white landowners and black claimants (Wenzel 91–92).

(2004)[20] dragged the farm novel into the post-apartheid present, portraying farms pervaded by history, troubled by the often violent dynamics of race, gender and class, and characters for whom a pastoral idyll offers no refuge from the present.[21] These novels problematise the conventional form and work to undermine its nostalgic tendencies.

Nevertheless, even in the most "serious literature" (Warnes, "Engendering" 51), the affective appeal of the rural South African landscape and the issue of belonging still fascinated white writers post-1994, and a pastoral vision of the farm continued to surface in ambivalent and contradictory ways. This vision is particularly potent in post-apartheid nostalgic writing, where it is most conventionally expressed through the image of the farm in decline. Against this socio-historical background of the South African farm novel, I turn now to the value of this specific version of the farm in the genre.

3.2. Post-apartheid nostalgia: the farm in decline

Before I address the function of the farm as a literary device, it is worth highlighting its value for writers at a higher level within the South African literary field. Given the acclaim and critical prominence of the novels and authors, cited above, which have been part of the literary history of the pastoral in South Africa, the farm has accrued a certain status or prestige. To write of the farm, I would suggest, is to situate oneself within a tradition of "serious" South African writing, and to make an implicit claim for the relevance and seriousness of one's work. This is doubly the case for the many first-time writers whose novels I cover in this chapter. There are also publishing implications for this point, especially with regard to the postcolonial publishing field's understanding of

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[20] Published in English in 2006.

[21] For detailed examinations of these novels' engagement with the farm and the *plaasroman*, see Warnes's "Engendering the Post-Apartheid Farm Novel" on *The Devil's Chimney*, Barnard's *Apartheid and Beyond* on *Disgrace*, and Devarenne on *Agaat*.

what constitutes important South African literature; Chapter 3 will examine this aspect in depth.

Of course, this literary history has also meant that the farm is a symbol freighted with accumulated meanings, especially around the question of the white self's place in the country and in relation to the land and others. As a site where the landscape, issues of identity and human relationships – a "dialectic of [the] lyrical and political" (Warnes, "Engendering" 53) – can be kept anxiously in balance, the farm offers writers a fruitful setting in which to stage the attempts of white South Africans to come to terms with their altered status in the post-apartheid order. If the literary farms of the apartheid era functioned as ways of revealing the repressions necessary for the perpetuation and protection of white legitimacy, power and privilege in South Africa, the farm in this literature suggests the precariousness and deterioration of these structures in the post-apartheid moment.[22] As Grant Farred has argued, South Africa has emerged as a space of "unhomeliness" due to the very real threat posed by the overturning of cultures and epistemologies in South Africa after 1994, that is, "postapartheid South Africa's inability to provide physical and mental sanctuary for a community accustomed to such protections by virtue of its race" (73).

The farm in decline is a motif premised on a contrast between the farm of childhood and memory, and the farm of the post-apartheid present. In some novels, the childhood farm is described in unambiguously pastoral terms as a welcoming paradise set apart from the difficult realities of history, until these intrude and corrupt the idyll – I address these texts in the section on apartheid childhood. Most, however, register these realities with more nuance and ambivalence as they grapple with the legacy of the *plaasroman* and its implications for the farm as an anchor of identity. The farm to which

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[22] The rhetoric of decline is a feature of post-apartheid "white talk," as defined by Steyn and Foster (36). The relationship between this rhetoric and South African readers of these texts is explored in Chapter 2.

Michiel Steyn returns in *Kings of the Water* (hereafter *Kings*) is called Paradys (Paradise), a name which is at once wistful and ironic, and immediately invokes the uncertainties of the South African pastoral. Michiel's reflective relation to the farm casts Paradys as *both* a place of "a youth of near bliss," still redolent of the sights and sounds and smells of the past, *and* a place of conservative politics and racial injustice (Behr 82). As with the farms in many of these novels, Paradys's days of prosperity are waning. After the death of Michiel's mother who had administered the workings of the farm, its future is uncertain. There is disagreement about whether it should be subdivided and turned into a tourist destination, sold off, shared among the workers, or left to deteriorate. What is certain is that, with none of the heirs willing to devote themselves completely to it, it will no longer be the homestead of the Steyn family.

Like Paradys, the farms to which the adult characters return in these novels are always in a state of deterioration. In *Imaginings of Sand*, Kristien describes the family feather palace farm, Sinai, noting: "Over the years I've seen the place change, not just bleached and eroded like the surrounding landscape, but a sadder and more subtle kind of change, as the swarms of summer visitors slowly dwindled" (Brink 10). In *Summertime*, all but one of John Coetzee's cousins have abandoned farming; his cousin Margot laments the fact that "Voëlfontein [the family farm] and the Karoo are no longer Voëlfontein and the Karoo as they used to be" (*Summertime* 117). The eponymous farm in *Skinner's Drift* is left untilled and all but abandoned by the time that Eva visits it near the end of the novel. In *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*, the "ordered rows of tomato plants, squash, cabbage, carrots have been replaced by tall maize plants and weeds" (Zadok, *Gem Squash* 259). This material loss is essential to the nostalgic narrative. I have argued that, for white writers engaging with the farm novel form earlier in the twentieth century, the farm became a synecdochic image of South Africa as a whole. The nostalgia genre's image of the farm in a state of ruin, or at least functioning at a more modest scale than

during the apartheid years, is a continuation of this symbolism which has implications for the genre's depiction of the structures of white privilege: the deterioration of the farm registers the (arguable) downscaling of white power in the post-apartheid era. That the farm is frequently associated with a dying parent or close relative of an older generation (*Skinner's Drift, Kings, Imaginings of Sand*) suggests that the old mind-sets, the old structures of power, are themselves moribund.[23]

Contradictory impulses towards and against nostalgia characterise the genre's treatment of this change, not only between but also within individual novels. The decline of the farm is usually attended by the main character's unwillingness to accept ownership of it or to continue the family's farming legacy. Michiel in *Kings* is scrupulous in his attention to history, acknowledging that the farm was probably black sharecroppers' land appropriated after the 1913 Natives Land Act. He refuses to take up his inheritance, saying to his brother: "That you tell me a third [of the farm] belongs to me doesn't change the fact that I've never been a proper boer like you" (Behr, *Kings* 216). Similarly, in *Skinner's Drift*, Eva ruminates on the possibility of leaving the farm to the workers when she returns to America, though it is uncertain whether this will happen. These refusals raise issues of inheritance, responsibility and the individual's relation to a difficult collective legacy (to which I will return in the other major sections of this chapter), but the implication that I would stress here is that, as the older generations pass away, the total loss of the farm and the way of life it represents is imminent.

Despite their desire not to take up their farming inheritance, and despite it no longer being the homely place it was in childhood, the characters still find the farm and the landscape in which it is situated exceedingly poignant. "This place wrenches my

[23] Jacobs explores how the trope of the dying white woman in Schoeman's *This Life*, Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, Brink's *Imaginings of Sand*, and Van Niekerk's *Agaat* focuses "the discursive intersections of memory, gender and race" (72). The self-narration of these women, Jacobs suggests, emphasises the shaping of the self through its relations to others, and, more particularly, the white woman's identity through her relation to another coloured or black woman.

heart," John Coetzee says in *Summertime*, "It wrenched my heart when I was a child, and I have never been right since" (97). Even as they feel at odds with its unequal history and display attitudes appropriate to a post-apartheid society, they still seem to regard the farm as an anchor of identity and belonging – or at least long to affirm it as such. On Paradys, Michiel remonstrates with himself: "Oh, go on, allow yourself: the sense of belonging, almost; as close as there is to any belonging in life" (Behr, *Kings* 215). The novels make clear that the old pastoral yearning for belonging, "some sodden longing for what used to be home" (Fugard 2), remains compelling.[24] These evocations of the farm and the yearning that accompanies them may be read as an investment in a particular national configuration – or structure of feeling, in Williams's terms – which has the white subject's relation to the land at its centre, and which in this period appears increasingly outmoded.

The difficulty of the white characters' desire to affirm their connection and belonging to the farm and the land, and the potency of nostalgic longing, which is expressed here as homesickness, is most complexly conveyed by Coetzee in *Boyhood*, which I include within the nostalgia genre as one of its most ambivalent examples.[25] The sections of the text which deal with the young John's visits to the family farm in the Karoo are striking in their conflicted engagement with nostalgia. The narrator notes that "there is no place on earth [John] loves more or can imagine loving more. Everything that is complicated in his love for his mother is uncomplicated in his love for the farm" (79). Coetzee also reveals that his attachment to the farm is directly related to his sense of belonging and connection to the past. He notes that "through the farms he is rooted in the past; through the farms he has substance" (22). He believes, moreover, that

[24] Page numbers cited for *Skinner's Drift* are from the 2006 Penguin Books edition.
[25] Although *Boyhood* is set in the 1940s and 50s, many of the white protagonists in novels that deal with the post-apartheid farm share these sentiments.

> the secret and sacred word that binds him to the farm is *belong*. Out in the veld by himself he can breathe the word aloud: *I belong on the farm*. What he really believes but does not utter, what he keeps to himself for fear that the spell will end, is a different form of the word: *I belong to the farm*. (95–96)

Here, Coetzee attempts to account for pastoral longing in a way that does not participate in the history of dispossession and dominance in which he is implicated, whose tensions he has laid bare in *White Writing*. The very syntax of this construction, the deliberate replacement of "on" with "to," is deeply concerned with resisting the idea of the farm as a possession, and, consequently, with positing John himself as passive presence in this relation.

Significantly, Barnard refers to the idyllic descriptions that appear in Coetzee's writing as "risky moments," signalling nostalgia's suspect status in South African literature (*Apartheid* 37). Yet Coetzee is vigilant about not allowing such sentiment to go unchecked. The young John understands that his claim to the land he loves is tenuous. "As far back as he can remember," the narrator reflexively notes, "this love has had an edge of pain. He may visit the farm but he will never live there. The farm is not his home; he will never be more than a guest, an uneasy guest" (79). Next to the workers whose families have lived on the land for centuries, furthermore, his own family's presence seems insubstantial: "The Karoo is Freek's country, his home; the Coetzees, drinking tea and gossiping on the farmhouse stoep, are like swallows, seasonal, here today, gone tomorrow, or even like sparrows, chirping, light-footed, short-lived" (87). John senses, too, that as he grows older he will become increasingly estranged from the farm, that "one day the farm will be wholly gone, wholly lost; already he is grieving at that loss" (80).

Whether or not this impending loss is regarded appreciatively by the characters concerned, or within the novels themselves, is ultimately less important than the affective power of the narrative of loss and of lost causes. Even if the traumas experienced by the

main characters suggest that the homeliness of the childhood farm (and the way of life it represented) was a false idyll all along, in many novels the abiding sense that remains with the reader is one of grief at the loss of this idyll, or at least the innocence or ignorance to enjoy it (Medalie, "Uses of Nostalgia" 37). In this sense, the farm's prime nostalgic function in the genre is that the decay of these older, and certainly problematic, structures of power and belonging is felt as a bereavement. That is, even as nostalgia is being used reflectively here (in Svetlana Boym's terms) or is directed towards a higher, critical end (in my model), it is also operating in restorative ways at the level of affect.

3.2.1. "A new and unsettling hardness": workers and the threat of illegitimacy

This sense of grief at the farm's inhospitality is very apparent in the contrast between the black farmworkers of the past and those of the present, an element of the farm-in-decline motif which is worth examining in some detail. Unlike their early twentieth-century precursors, these post-apartheid texts incorporate the presence of labour in their representations of the farm, but do so for nostalgic reasons. In many novels, the childhood farms of the protagonists are populated by benevolent and submissive black servants, including Dora and the friendly workers of *Innocence*, the kind and motherly Alida in *Kings*, and Ezekiel/Lefu in *Skinner's Drift*. The "boys" on Kate's grandparents' farm in *Innocence* are described as "filled with unfettered mirth" (Richards, *Innocence* 92). Although they laugh at the young Kate when she is startled, she knows, "in the humanity that poured warmth into my numbed limbs, there was no mockery in their laughter. Joyful and compassionate in its hearty reach, it had taken me into its circle" (*Innocence* 92). Like Kate, the white child protagonists revel in the welcome and security they receive from these characters, which reinforce the safety of their sense of self and belonging in the world they inhabit. In many cases, the appeal of this relationship appears to have more to do with this comfort than relating to the others as agents in their own right.

There is a useful connection to be drawn between these servant characters and the faithful slave (such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom) or mammy in American literature, particularly that of the South. As with the genial South African servant, the popularity of this image is to some extent a reflection of white American desire to avoid being called to account for their beneficiary position in an unjust system. Micki McElya proposes that:

> The myth of the faithful slave lingers because so many white Americans have wished to live in a world in which African Americans are not angry over past and present injustices, a world in which white people were and are not complicit, in which the injustices themselves – of slavery, Jim Crow, and ongoing structural racism – seem not to exist at all. The mammy figure affirmed their wishes. (3)

In fact, the nostalgic order invoked in this formulation presupposes the disturbing threat of an exacting world in which the opposite is true: black people *are* angry, whites *are* complicit, and structural racism from which they benefit persists. As Chapter 2 will further examine, this threat is implicated in the operation of nostalgia in white South African culture of this period, and in the responses of white readers to nostalgic writing.

In the post-apartheid nostalgia novels, this contrast is explicitly represented. The next generation of black farmworkers, usually the children, directly oppose their elders' subservience, which seems, like the childhood farm, to belong to a dying world. Having become more politically aware, the younger workers reject the old power dynamic, refusing to behave submissively and often expressing outright resentment towards the white farmers. In *Summertime*, Coetzee depicts this shift through Margot, who asserts that Voëlfontein's workers are "certainly not the *plaasvolk* [farm people] of yore. In the attitude of Coloured people in general towards whites there is a new and unsettling hardness. The younger ones regard one with a cold eye, refuse to call one *Baas* or *Miesies*" (117). The terms *Baas* (Master) and *Miesies* (Mistress) have become charged in the post-apartheid period as bywords for the racial power dynamics of the apartheid era.

Margot's lament at their absence, in which she infers a decrease in respect and regard, suggests an underlying reactionary politics informing her attitude. The two-pronged description she uses here – her reference to the "cold eye" of the younger workers and their refusal to use the language of apartheid hierarchy – appears in numerous novels which feature this motif. In *Innocence*, Kate describes John, a young farmworker, as pointedly "not using 'Miesies'" (Richards, *Innocence* 47). "Fury had hardened his features," she observes further, and filled his eyes with "cold, blank darkness" (*Innocence* 47, 48). In *Skinner's Drift*, Lefu's grandson Mpho criticises his grandfather as "a man with so little dignity he use[s] the language of the *boere*" (Fugard 263). Later, he is described as "Mpho with his cold eyes, with his way of fattening his words with outrage" (279). While Lefu is peaceful, compassionate and self-sacrificing – described by an older white character as "a man who will stay with you no matter what" (Fugard 203) – Mpho is belligerent and vengeful, and feels no such loyalty.

This open hostility is troubling to the white characters for it provides no welcoming foothold from which the protagonist may forge a relationship or feel at ease with these others. Indeed, they are perceived to pose the threat of violence. Eva, for example, has "lurid imaginings" of Mpho and his friends "rap[ing] and tortur[ing]" her or "cut[ting] her into pieces while she was still alive" (Fugard 285). These descriptions are congruent with the racial terror rhetoric employed in contemporary white South African stories of farm murders.[26] Although Eva recognises "how base and primitive her fears [are]" and that they reproduce paranoid "fears that had lurked in all [whites'] bellies," this recognition does not allay her anxiety (285). Margot's "unsettling hardness" is a particularly apt description in this context; the antagonism of "new" black characters

[26] Steinberg both dramatises and analyses this phenomenon in *Midlands* (2002). It is worth noting that this rhetoric of terror has gained traction because of erroneous statistical evidence (Africa Check). These stories usually make reference to the disastrous and violent seizure of white-owned farms in Zimbabwe as a kind of precedent (see Godwin's 2007 memoir *When A Crocodile Eats the Sun*).

represents the threat to whites of becoming un-settled through exclusion from an easy home, or at-homeness, in post-apartheid South African society. The discomfort felt by these white characters hints at the possibility that they might be the villains of another's story, and so subject to another's judgment, another's recollection of the past over which they can exercise no agency.

To return to the question of nostalgia's operation here, it is clear that the novels use these characters to register the effects of the transition to the post-apartheid era (the decentring of whiteness, a sense of being called to account) on even the most politically liberal and reflective white South Africans. Although most of the characters approve of the material changes which undergird this attitude shift, and although the novels themselves seem to offer a reflective meditation on this situation, the contrast on which this meditation relies creates a powerful sense at the level of affect that some earlier way of life, an age of dignity and empathy, perhaps, has been disrupted and lost. The "fall" into modernity – with its attendant discontinuities and confusions, and involving the loss of a simpler, even feudal, relation to the land and the rootedness of a family homestead – is also part of what is registered in this distinction.

3.2.2. Nostalgic solipsism in a time of reconciliation

I have suggested that we might view the decline of the farm and its structures of inheritance as portraying the post-apartheid crumbling of "the house of the white race," to recall Nadine Gordimer's resonant phrase for her coming-to-consciousness about the apartheid system and her place in it (qtd. in Barkham 9). It is significant, however, that even as this house crumbles, the "color cocoon," which Gordimer laments, remains intact (qtd. in Barkham 9), for community or relationship with these "new" others are almost never considered as possibilities by the protagonists of nostalgic novels (or indeed the novels themselves). Rather than developing new modes or communities of identification, their most common response to the crisis of belonging caused by the loss of the farm and

the threat of black hostility is to fixate on the lost cause and their own ambivalent pastoral longings.

Njabulo Ndebele has contended that the way out of such a crisis is not to yearn for what is lost and past, but to repudiate it in favour of a present engagement with the other: "Putting itself at risk, [whiteness in South Africa] will have to declare that it is home *now*, sharing in the vulnerability of other compatriot bodies" ("Iph' Indlela?" 53; emphasis added). He calls for "a shift in white identity in which 'whiteness' can undergo an experiential transformation by absorbing new cultural experience as an essential condition for achieving a new sense of cultural rootedness" ("Iph' Indlela?" 52). Yet all but a minority of these novels evade this challenge, failing to depict – or perhaps imagine – what such a sharing or transformation might look like. The nostalgic response is solipsistic and recursive; it rehearses an old yearning in which the real presence of the other is marginal. Walder describes this tendency in terms of inauthenticity, suggesting that writers are "drawn by nostalgia into evoking an apparently true, but inauthentic representation of their personal pasts. . . . because it lacks a sense of connectedness, of the relation between the writers' pasts and the pasts of those around them" (*Postcolonial Nostalgias* 164). In *Skinner's Drift*, for example, Eva recalls an idyllic youth on the farm in which her sense of belonging was entirely untroubled: "she longed to go all the way home, back to those golden late afternoons when she'd ride her horse down a path on Skinner's Drift and feel utterly embraced by birds and sunshine and the distant sound of African music on a radio in one of the kraals" (Fugard 34). This reverie noticeably lacks the real presence of the other; the phantasm of the "African music in one of the kraals" only reinforces this absence. In *Innocence*, too, Kate identifies strongly with the landscape of the farm rather than its people, noting that "that wild expanse . . . touched and fed a wildness deep inside me" (*Innocence* 26). She declares to her husband: "you and I are rooted in that thorny soil. Heart and soul, we're imprisoned by those twining

branches of the wild fig tree . . . . We're pierced and pinned by the acacia. We are part of it. We are this place" (*Innocence* 220).

As many critics have argued, this kind of individual quest for belonging – which the nostalgia genre critiques at best, but more often participates in – tends not to create the conditions for the white self to move beyond its own boundaries and make itself vulnerable to others.[27] Paraphrasing Coetzee's 1987 Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech, Barnard emphasises that "the relationship of white South Africans to the land will be unethical and inadequate if it remains merely a relationship with stones and plants and beautiful scenes. To glamorize such a love is to repress the reality that . . . there is too little fraternity in South Africa" (*Apartheid* 113). In other words, the pastoral deployed without an ethical grounding in hospitality allows racial inequalities and the defence of white privilege to go unchecked.

Cartwright's *White Lightning* dramatises the dangers of indulging this kind of nostalgia, which may consider itself politically and historically aware, but cannot truly move beyond the self's own project to serve "the purposes of [its] own homecoming," to recall Watson's resonant phrase (*Diary* 144). In the novel, James Kronk purchases a rundown farm and begins an attempt to create an Arcadian ideal – a place of innocence and simplicity, untouched by the complications and corruptions of the modern world and the life he wishes to leave behind. His ambition is:

> to create a simple garden, and restore the house, and live in a whole fashion. I don't know what this could mean exactly, but I hope that in some way I can align myself with the land and the mountain and the sea. In fact, typically, I am becoming expansive: I see myself, in Virgilian fashion, as having been touched by the sorrow of dispossession. (101)

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[27] See Marais and Strauss, for instance. Marais suggests that "although we cannot not act on our desire to feel 'at-home', we cannot not interrogate our actions in our ongoing attempts to satisfy this desire. We must always be aware that the differential procedures through which we create 'home' . . . inscribe indifference to others" (51); Strauss argues along similar lines that the individual pursuit of belonging depicted in Antjie Krog's *A Change of Tongue* involves the production of a sense of closure that "serves ultimately self-indulgent impulses" and "comes across as one-sidedly idealistic" (190, 191).

This “sorrow of dispossession” is for James a sense of his own failed life ambitions, but the phrase itself is resonant in the context of a very real material history of dispossession. We are invited to view James’s restorative nostalgic intentions as naive, insular, and certainly ill-fitting in a time of transformation in which such archaic modes are being overturned. James does seem to be aware of some of the implications of his project: as his reference to Virgil demonstrates, he is conscious of the pastoral nature of his enterprise, though perhaps oblivious to the extent of its ironies. He is also acutely attentive to his historical situation, acknowledging that the farmworkers’ “people . . . have lived here since before time” (222). As part of a project of nebulous atonement, he helps an impoverished Xhosa family, including a young boy, Zwelakhe, who is suffering from HIV/AIDS. Later, he invites them to move onto the farm with him despite their apparent lack of enthusiasm, thus awkwardly including them as participants in what becomes a consciously post-apartheid rural idyll.

However, the material forces which James has tried to escape reassert themselves definitively, fatally, as the novel draws to a difficult close. The farm is mysteriously vandalised, possibly by the staff who will not tolerate his housing a family with an HIV-infected member. Later, a domesticated baboon that James has befriended attacks and mauls his protégé, Zwelakhe, who dies from his injuries; James must shoot the baboon, and deal with the violent retaliation of the boy’s family. Rather than the inclusive, communal idyll he has imagined, the endeavour is revealed to have been deeply self-interested, blind to the needs and desires of the people it involved. Eventually, James is driven off the farm by its previous owners. Having retained the mineral rights to the land, they return when a valuable mineral is discovered on it. The novel reveals that the workings of historical, economic and political forces were present on the farm all along, despite James’s attempt to live free from their influence. In fact, it is the pursuit of his

pastoral project that directly leads to the tragedy on the farm. Ultimately, the novel shows that nostalgia is a far more dangerous activity than innocuous escapism, but, crucially, Cartwright does not propose an alternative framework for relating to these issues.

3.2.3. Nostalgia for the pastoral: a belated literature

I have argued above that white nostalgic literature uses the rhetoric of decline in its engagement with the pastoral in the post-apartheid moment. Through the motif of the deteriorating farm, with its attendant tropes of dying parents, forfeited inheritance and hostile workers, nostalgic texts consider the white self's ambivalent project of identification in a changing country. Yet, even as the nostalgia genre dramatises the collision of history with an increasingly anxious farm idyll, the affective appeal of the pastoral mode remains a powerful temptation – or perhaps a boundary beyond which the writers cannot imagine the actual terrain. Accordingly, we might view the structures and metaphors of the South African pastoral as the familiar comfort zones of white writing. Rather than imagining new metaphors through which to think of what a home in post-apartheid South Africa might mean, nostalgic white writing returned again and again to these old forms, wrestling with the desire to affirm the connection of the white self to the land through the farm, and grieving at its impossibility in a new era. That these texts persistently fixated on these tensions and rehearsed the same imagery well into the 2000s suggests that the genre continued to yearn for the pastoral at a time when the pastoral had become untenable. In this sense, post-apartheid nostalgic writing is a literature of belatedness that is itself belated.

4. "The Eden of my childhood": remembering apartheid childhood

The lost innocence and sense of belonging that constitute the most potent content of nostalgia in white South African writing are both spatially and temporally situated. If the locus of this yearning is most often the farm, the time invoked is usually that of

childhood. This focus on white childhood during apartheid enables the genre to consider the formation of the white self in relation to the apartheid system, along with the issues of culpability and complicity which inevitably follow, through a figure which, crucially, embodies a state of innocence and ignorance of that system. I begin here with the literary context of the post-apartheid narrative of childhood, drawing on its history in South Africa and related regions, before analysing the motif in depth.

4.1. Childhood and confession in South African literature and the (post)colony

The post-apartheid emphasis on childhood is a relatively new phenomenon in South African white writing in English, which has for the most part concerned itself with the adult world. Again, Schreiner's *African Farm* proves itself to be the originary exception (but also a generative precursor), as the novel's first section focuses on childhood. Like her engagement with the pastoral, Schreiner's vision of childhood contrasts with her Anglo-European forebears': it is a time of hardship and injustice rather than the innocence and extraordinariness associated with the Romantic child of nature, which was a preoccupation of William Wordsworth in particular.[28] The eponymous farm exists in a world in which adults capriciously dominate children for their own ends, and in which childhood suffering is characterised by "intense loneliness, [and] intense ignorance" (Schreiner 43).

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[28] In *The Prelude* of 1799 Wordsworth describes childhood as a source of poetic vision, though, significantly, the child can be so only as a result of, and in relation to, the memory of the poet:

Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, and lovely forms
And sweet sensations, that throw back our life
And make our infancy a visible scene
On which the sun is shining[.] (1.460–64)

In the century that followed Schreiner's novel, relatively little South African writing featured childhood prominently. A few memoirs and memoir-novels in an anti-apartheid mode were published in the high apartheid years, such as Peter Abrahams's *Tell Freedom* (1954) and Es'kia Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue* (1959), which use childhood to demonstrate the shaping of black subjectivity by the apartheid system.[29] A later text, Njabulo Ndebele's *Fools and Other Stories* (1983) also focuses on childhood, but deliberately marginalises apartheid's significance in the development of the protagonists' selfhood by emphasising the roles played by social and familial factors in this process. In contrast, few stories of childhood by white writers in English featured prominently in the South African literary landscape until the late 1980s. There are tonal, socio-political and cultural differences which make it difficult to consider these stories of black childhood as direct forebears of the post-apartheid focus on childhood in white writing. These coming-of-age texts are more profitably seen as the precursors to the small number of nostalgic memoirs of childhood by black and coloured South African writers that began appearing in the 2000s, such as Chris van Wyk's *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy* and Jacob Dlamini's *Native Nostalgia*.

Rather, as I noted in the introductory chapter, it is with the confessional autobiography, a more recent tradition in white South African writing, that the post-apartheid narrative of white childhood is most closely allied.[30] Emerging as apartheid began to be dismantled, memoirs like Hope's *White Boy Running* and Rian Malan's *My*

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[29] These memoirs participate in the wider tradition of postcolonial autobiography and the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, which feature childhood and memory prominently. From Wole Soyinka's memoir *Aké* (1981) to Ben Okri's novel *The Famished Road* (1991), these are central concerns in literature which deals with the process of decolonisation and the creation of the new postcolonial nation. The child and memories of childhood often have an allegorical function, reflecting "the need for rehearsal-celebration-cum-exorcism of the 'birth', 'growth' and 'maturation' of a new society as well as an escape back to the comforting womb" as Sharrad contends (141). Moore-Gilbert also discusses the relation of postcolonial life writing to the Western autobiographical tradition in "A Concern Peculiar to Western Man?" and *Postcolonial Life-Writing: Culture, Politics, and Self-Representation*.

[30] See Daymond and Visagie for an overview of South African life writing since 1652.

Traitor's Heart (1990) anticipated the confessional mode that would take hold in South African writing of the 1990s in tandem with the processes of the TRC. For both Hope and Malan, their recollections of childhood are an important part of their accounts of themselves, documenting their growing comprehension of the apartheid system and their place in it. Hope, for example, describes the affectionate relationship he had as a young boy with his nanny, but notes that "much later . . . it occurred to me that my games with my nanny George had been quite illegal because the playground, indeed the park itself, was out of bounds to Black people" (*White Boy* 55). Malan observes how he felt "like a little white prince" (33) among black servants and "loved them all, indiscriminately" until he began to realise the racism at the core of the apartheid system and "began to notice that many whites around [him] felt otherwise about blacks" (34).[31]

These memoirs may also productively be seen in the light of a longer and wider history of childhood and life writing. The autobiography of childhood developed as a distinct literary form in the early nineteenth century alongside the Romantic construction of the child, which was largely the preserve of poetry. As Richard Coe has explored, the autobiography of childhood may be seen as a self's attempt to account for itself to itself. Therefore, its "mode of assertion . . . is secondary to the mode of interrogation: '*How* did I come to be like that? *Why* was I impelled to do this?' In essence, the [autobiography of] Childhood is a quest, a search for understanding" (Coe 41). I would argue further that the understanding desired is narrative in nature: the search is for a single narrative seam that can knit together two apparently disparate versions of the self. This is an idea which I will revisit in relation to the trope of homecoming in the following section.

Coe contends that "the need to establish an identity, in one way or another, is one of the most compelling motives for writing a childhood" (61–62). The autobiography of

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[31] Simoes da Silva offers an extended discussion of Malan's negotiation of the politics of South African belonging in *My Traitor's Heart*.

childhood therefore clearly coincides with the confession, a mode which from its earliest instance in Augustine's *Confessions* has frequently addressed childhood in its concern with the narrative establishment of a single continuous self.[32] The idea of culpability, a guilt which requires one to confess "an essential truth about the self," is a crucial component of the form (Coetzee, "Confession" 194).[33] In the pursuit of this truth, confessions tend to involve a disdain for idealisation. Coe stresses that nostalgia is in fact rare in autobiographies of childhood. Yet he also observes that "the desire to recapture something of a paradise which has been lost, or partially lost, forever," can take hold when particular historical circumstances render it especially potent:

> The vision of paradise lost only becomes truly powerful as a motivation when it is given life and intensity by some other force, when it is something more positive than mere regret or homesickness for the unattainable – in fact, when it is felt as the source of something supremely valuable or significant in the present. (62)

This "other force" usually involves circumstances of change and disorientation, which are especially conducive to nostalgia, as I noted in my introductory chapter, and as Chapter 2 will further explore. For Wordsworth and the Romantics, these were the dramatic technological and ideological changes produced by, among other things, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution (Coe 65).[34] The societal shifts involved in decolonisation also provided such a context for former colonisers, as did the changing social, cultural and political circumstances of post-apartheid South Africa. But if

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[32] As contended in Brooks in *Troubling Confessions* and Coetzee in "Confession and Double Thoughts," among others.

[33] See also Foucault, who describes how "confession became one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth," and in turn produced "a literature ordered according to the infinite task of extracting from the depths of oneself, in between the words, a truth which the very form of the confession holds out like a shimmering mirage" (59).

[34] I am, of course, simplifying here. As Taylor's *Sources of the Self* suggests, Romantic conceptions of selfhood and history were shaped by complex interacting forces, among which are the industrial, political, economic and ideological changes of the modern era. Still, Taylor also refers to "the familiar Romantic stance" as being one of "yearning after a richer past, one fuller of meaning, from the standpoint of an empty and shallow present" (464).

nostalgia is especially potent in these contexts, an awareness of history also makes it especially conflicted.

There is a well-developed body of colonial and postcolonial life writing about white childhood that also intersects productively with the South African narratives, sharing a similar preoccupation with childhood and memory. As Sarah De Mul and Pamela Pattynama have shown, Dutch-Indies writing by former colonials often dwells on the *tempo doeloe* (the good old days), the lost golden age of the colonial era in Indonesia.[35] In many Dutch-Indies memoirs, semi-autobiographical novels and travel writing, such as Aya Zikken's *De atlasvlinder* (1958), the *tempo doeloe* is located in childhood. Pattynama notes that the "happy child romping about on sun dappled lawns under huge palm trees" is a familiar trope, along with images of "a paradise-like youth, the usual crowd of servants, the motherly *baboe* (nanny) sleeping on a mat nearby" (97, 100).[36]

As I noted in the Introduction, Renato Rosaldo has been a vocal critic of this kind of nostalgia. He argues that the use of childhood in descriptions of the colonial past allows one to "establish one's innocence and at the same time talk about what one has destroyed" because "much of imperialist nostalgia's force resides in its association with (indeed, its disguise as) more genuinely innocent, tender recollections of what is at once an earlier epoch and a previous phase of life" (108). This is, ultimately, the key ethical problem with nostalgia expressed by the beneficiaries of destructive systems like colonialism or apartheid, and it is a difficulty which is at the heart of post-apartheid white nostalgic fiction, as I will explore below. However, as De Mul and Pattynama both argue, the prevalent nostalgic mode that characterises these texts includes ambivalence and

[35] In De Mul's *Colonial Memory* and "Yesterday does not go by" and Pattynama's "(Un)happy Endings."

[36] Similar images of childhood in India under the Raj became common after Indian independence, and later during the Raj nostalgia trend of the 1980s in Britain, as Buettner has shown in *Empire Families*. With reference to writers such as Karen Blixen and Elspeth Huxley, Lorcin demonstrates that the same is true for the former East African British colonies. Muller has explored the manifestation of these tropes in film.

contradiction about the colonial order and its loss, suggesting that this nostalgia is to some extent reflective, if not self-reflective. For Pattynama, the Dutch East Indies "has come to stand for an ongoing range of partly overlapping, partly conflicting 'textured' memories, which engage different modes of nostalgic *and* shame-bearing discourses" (104; emphasis added).

These textured memories, though differently configured, also form part of the memoirs by other white southern African writers in the postcolonial period. The trajectory of idyllic childhood to loss of innocence through an awareness of racial injustice is common in Zimbabwean memoirs. Peter Godwin's *Mukiwa* (1996), published the same year as *Innocence*, Alexandra Fuller's *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* (2002) and Lauren St John's *Rainbow's End* (2007) all feature young protagonists who begin their narratives as little masters or mistresses of the worlds they inhabit – worlds in which their place and privilege is secure, their families' servants friendly, and the threat of danger is present, but not immediately felt by the child. By the end of these memoirs, however, most have come to a realisation about the world and their place in it which upsets this charmed situation, though nostalgia for it remains.

4.2. Apartheid childhood revisited

Like its non-fictional forebears, the fictional narrative of apartheid childhood which is so common in post-apartheid white writing explores the shaping of white subjectivity within a racist system, the fraught relationship between innocence and ignorance in white childhood, and the curious intimacies – and separations – between white children and black servants in this context. I would argue that the very personal questions which animate the childhood autobiography and the confession were also a significant motivation for post-apartheid nostalgic authors in writing these novels, and in using the literary device of childhood to do so. In our interview, Zadok suggested that her interest in the figure of the child in *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* originated in her desire to explore the

shaping of white subjectivity under apartheid. Drawing a parallel between the esoteric worldview of Faith's mentally unstable mother in the novel and the ideologies through which the apartheid system normalised itself, she reasoned that focusing on childhood was for her the most useful way of exploring "what creates your reality for you, the way you view the world," and "what it means to grow up in a reality that is not real, that is basically dictated by someone else" ("Personal Interview"). Zadok implied that there was a strongly autobiographical (or autobiografictional) motivation at work:

> I thought of [what shapes an individual] in terms of growing up in apartheid South Africa where [the racist order] *was* normal. I never questioned it until I hit my teens. That childhood never seemed strange. My entire neighbourhood was white except for the nannies and gardeners! It seemed that that was just the way the world was and I never thought about it. ("Personal Interview")

There is a clear sense here that Zadok, recognising the insularity of her upbringing, felt driven to grapple with the partiality of her own memories and their social and ethical implications. We might therefore view Zadok's writing process itself as in some way confessional.

Yet in the majority of these novels the figure of the child comes to function in ways which undermine the kind of confessional inquiry the texts purport to be making. The meaning of innocence is central here. In this context, it is an especially loaded term, always pursued by the shadow of guilt. Childhood innocence is *both* the opposite of experience, the precursor to the child's induction into the complex and disillusioned world of the adult, *and* an absence of the guilt which follows the adult's awareness of their own benefit from, or complicity with, the apartheid system. Childhood and the figure of the child function in two primary related ways, each of which hinges on a different side of this equation, which I will now address in turn.

4.2.1. Yearning for the idyll

The first way in which the child figure operates relies on the equation of childhood innocence with a state of ignorance. I noted earlier in this chapter that the white characters in these novels begin as innocent, ignorant, and happy children, but are cast out of this state by the intrusion of history and the adult world, usually in the form of some violent and traumatic event that they witness or experience. This event and the knowledge it produces – "the fall into politics," as Rob Nixon terms it in his memoir (*Dreambirds* 102) – shapes a white self that is aware of the social, economic and political realities of the colonial and apartheid systems which created the lost idyll. Most of these adults are, moreover, "scarred, even spiritually paralyzed" as a result (Medalie, "Uses of Nostalgia" 37). Although the idyll is revealed to have been a false one, this realisation inspires nostalgia for a time *before* this knowledge, before white innocence was revealed to be a lie. Within the novels, adult characters who recall their childhoods long for the time when they were free from responsibility and had not yet had to confront their own historical situatedness.[37] John's cousin Margot in *Summertime* invokes the child of nature (and, significantly, the farm) to describe "those Christmastides of yore . . . when they were children roaming the veld as free as wild animals" (Coetzee, *Summertime* 108). On his return to Paradys, Michiel's ambivalence is palpable as he experiences "waves of nostalgia wash[ing] through him: a youth of near bliss, unmarred by any of what he knew to be truer" (Behr, *Kings* 82). Through these characters' conflicted engagements with their fond memories, the nostalgic novels register, but also tap into, a significant part of the appeal of nostalgia for white South Africans in the post-apartheid moment, which I explore in detail in Chapter 2.

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[37] There are echoes here of the Romantic child as a being free from bondage to memory – which is a projection of the nostalgic adult. Austin has suggested in relation to Wordsworth that the appeal of the child for the remembering adult is that it fulfils a desire "to relive the time before experience had become the object of reflection" (86). See also Hamilton 88–89.

Of course, for the authors of nostalgic texts, depicting the lost apartheid childhood in idyllic terms is problematic. As a result, most novels seek to register the falsity of the idyll in some way; some do so by lurching between traumatic and nostalgic depictions of the past. This is especially apparent in *Innocence*. The narrator tellingly describes her childhood experiences on the farm as "charmed and untouched . . . by ugliness, unpleasantness, poverty, politics" in the opening paragraph of the novel, before noting that "Everything was spoiled" by the trauma that looms over the narrative (*Innocence* 1).[38] This trauma, we learn in the final pages of the text, is that on Christmas Day 1966 Kate witnesses a young black labourer, who has raped a neighbouring farmer's elderly mother, being forced to castrate himself. Kate comes, in her words, to "a sudden and violent knowledge of brutality and a chaotic awareness of the savagery of humans and a God who could allow such things and such people to exist," which presumably results in her extremely jaded and irritable demeanour as an adult (*Innocence* 242).

The implication here is that the childhood idyll was a false one, but the text itself undermines this conclusion. At the level of affect, the novel's most evocative sections are those which evoke Kate's childhood memories in rich sensory detail, including the sights, sounds and smells of her grandparents' farm, and her sense of freedom and adventure. The chapters of the novel set in 1989 contrast with these sections not only because of the adult Kate's bitterness, but also in the fact that their characterisation and descriptions are far less compelling. Medalie argues that:

> ostensibly [these texts] disown the very nostalgia which they have sketched so vividly because they feel it is incumbent upon them to do so; but the narrative energy is focused to such an extent upon those elements that constitute the nostalgia that it leaves one in no doubt as to the force of its embrace. ("Uses of Nostalgia" 37)

[38] Petzold notes that "[t]he farm becomes the location of a golden age that is factually anchored in the political history of South Africa, but . . . emotionally removed from it and connected to the innocence of childhood" (206).

The text therefore turns into a performance of nostalgia as it recreates and preserves the time of childhood, stressing its nostalgic appeal. We can see this in operation in the final paragraph of *Innocence*:

> I know it should never have been the way it was. But sometimes in my dreams I can see the orange flutter of a hoopoe or the white omen streak of a wild cat. Sometimes I can taste a *soetkoekie*, dunked in condensed-milk coffee. And I can never feel the heat of the sun on my skin or hear the buzzing of a lazy fly without hearing the *skree-bang* of the screen door in the Eden of my childhood. The way it really was. The way it should always have been! (*Innocence* 248)

Here Kate shifts from the assertion that "the Eden of [her] childhood" on her grandparents' farm "should never have been the way it was," suggesting that she understands that "ugliness, unpleasantness, poverty, politics" in fact undergirded the idyll, to an insistence that her memories are not only "[t]he way it really was" but also "the way it should always have been!" (*Innocence* 248). In other words, in affective terms, it is the nostalgia for the lost childhood which is most potent for the reader. That this is the last line of the text means that the novel effectively ends with this note of nostalgia resounding. This is the conflict at the heart of the genre: in effect, the novels attempt to maintain a balance between registering the reality and persistence of white nostalgia – allowing white subjects (whether fictional or not) space and scope to express, even cherish, positive memories of a time before their political awakening – and the moral imperative to pay due attention and respect to what their memories omit, to acknowledge the parochiality of the white child's experience as well as the harmful structures that made the idyll possible.

4.2.2. Reclaiming innocence

But there is more at stake here than the escapist longing for the pre-reflective time of childhood. The second, and perhaps more important, kind of work that childhood does in these novels involves the relation of innocence to guilt, confession and the construction

of white selfhood in the post-apartheid moment. For a genre that purports to come to terms with the post-apartheid place of white South Africans as subjects shaped by the apartheid system to be its beneficiaries, the question of complicity is crucial. In this regard, Sarah Nuttall's work on white South African life writing is instructive. Nuttall submits that the construction of a post-apartheid white identity that can affirm its commitment to the new South African nation relies on a complex positioning of the self as an individual who can break from "the collective conformity of whiteness" ("Subjectivities" 128). "To be white in [this] context," she notes, "is to carry a past and a language that is on trial. To break with this is to depend on the possibility of not being found guilty. As such, it depends upon the possibility of becoming an individual, a separate self" ("Subjectivities" 128). These concerns are at the centre of the post-apartheid childhood narrative, and in this genre, child characters and childhood usually function to claim innocence and exceptionality for the post-apartheid white adult, and so distance this self from the problematic legacy of South African whiteness.

It is pertinent here to revisit Rosaldo's point about the function of childhood in imperialist nostalgic writing. While I have argued that Rosaldo does not allow for the nuances and ambivalences – the textured memories – that characterise reflective nostalgic texts, his basic argument remains valid: texts which use childhood to consider questions of memory, selfhood and culpability in this context always risk performing a subtle act of substitution of one kind of innocence (ignorance) for another (blamelessness), and this then leads into ethically dubious territory. Michiel Heyns has written perceptively about the prevalence of child figures in post-apartheid confessional texts by white writers.[39] He argues that their use is ill-suited to critical examinations of the past and the concerns of the confession (truth, guilt, responsibility) because they

[39] Heyns focuses on *Innocence*, *Boyhood* and Behr's *The Smell of Apples* (1995).

allow young white protagonists to be cast as innocent victims of the structures in which they are caught:

> The child's voice may have the advantage exactly in not needing "to demand absolution" in that it is granted absolution through the legal fiction that the child is not accountable, and the related fictional convention that children are "innocent" in a generally unspecified sense. There is, in short, a kind of absolution of form in the rite of passage novel, in its characteristic presupposition of the myth of prelapsarian innocence. ("The Whole" 50)

Once again, *Innocence*, in many ways the archetypal nostalgic novel, provides a clear example. In the novel, references to the traumatic event of Christmas 1966 which precipitates Kate's coming to consciousness about the adult world are repeatedly followed by her assumption of guilt for not having been able to prevent it. "For many years," she observes, she "carried the full guilt of that year" (*Innocence* 1). By concentrating the adult Kate's sense of guilt on a specific violent incident (the castration) for which she could in no way have been responsible as a child, the text effectively affirms her innocence, and avoids having to grapple with the deeper, subtler ways in which Kate might be considered complicit in an unequal system.[40] As Heyns observes, she "becomes, in fact, almost heroic in her assumption of guilt" ("The Whole" 53).[41] Jochen Petzold argues similarly that Kate's "project of identity construction, at the time of political transition in 1989, is based on her assumption of guilt, while her position within her narrative simultaneously creates her as victim and thus demands forgiveness" (203). Even as the novel suggests the young Kate's implication in the apartheid system by acknowledging her sometimes uneasy interactions with black people and the privilege

[40] Significantly, the traumatic incidents that haunt the protagonists of nostalgia novels are all events for which the child could not be considered culpable (whether the characters are causes or merely witnesses).

[41] The unhelpfulness of guilt as an ultimately self-serving "blocking emotion" for white people has also been addressed by Dyer, who argues that "[w]e may lacerate ourselves with admission of our guilt, but that bears witness to the fineness of a moral spirit that can feel such guilt – the display of our guilt is our calvary" (*White* 11).

of her upbringing, it also stresses her innocence and obliviousness of these structures of power. In effect, childhood comes to have an exculpatory function.

A countervailing response to this portrayal of the child is John Coetzee in *Boyhood*, who observes the stark contrast between his own experience of childhood and the images he finds in his *Children's Encyclopaedia*: rather than a "time of innocent joy, to be spent in the meadows amid buttercups and bunny-rabbits or at the hearthside absorbed in a storybook," it is "a time of gritting the teeth and enduring" (*Boyhood* 14). More significantly, from his complex relationship with his mother and his merciless disapproval of his father, to his witnessing the family's English boarder beating a young coloured boy, the young Coetzee is implicated – and knowingly so – in the difficult history he recounts. He is often portrayed unsympathetically, and sees himself as "dark and heavy and guilty" (*Boyhood* 61). As Heyns observes, John Coetzee is "perfectly cold blooded about his own complicity in the events and structures he describes" ("The Whole" 55). This is in keeping with Coetzee's criticism in *Doubling the Point* of Nabokov's depiction of his childhood as a lost golden age. He argues that "we can't wallow in comfortable wonderment at our past" when writing about childhood, but "must look at the past with a cruel enough eye to see what it was that made that joy and innocence possible. Forgivingness, but also unflinchingness: that is the mixture I have in mind, if it is attainable. First the unflinchingness, then the forgivingness" (*Doubling* 29).

4.2.3. The exceptional individual

For all John Coetzee's guilt and secrecy, however, he remains a child "set . . . apart" and "unnatural" (*Boyhood* 8), a fact which Nuttall identifies as in part "a shuddering against community" ("Subjectivities" 130) in her illuminating reading of the politics of identity in *Boyhood*. I would like to return to Nuttall's point about the desire for the establishment of individuality in white South African autobiography and its involvement in the construction of post-apartheid white identity. I suggest that the nostalgic novel of white

childhood is bound up with this desire, but expresses itself in problematic ways through the politics of exceptionality and exculpation.[42] If the novels are concerned with accounting for the emergence of the *white* self through the child, they paradoxically go to great lengths to distance the child from whiteness as a collective community. First, like John, the protagonists of the novels in the nostalgia genre are more often than not portrayed as out of place in their communities and even their families. Second, the white child is often portrayed as affiliated with his or her black caretaker, usually the kind and playful nanny with whom the child shares a closer relationship than with his or her parents.[43]

Whereas post-apartheid black farmworkers threaten the white protagonists' feeling of belonging, the nanny figure effectively bolsters a sense of the child's exceptionality and innocence while functioning in the text as a catalyst for an ethical awakening. Georgina Horrell has argued that the nanny acts as a "a source of privileged information, a 'native informant' who contributes significantly to the white child's political awareness" and who frames and develops the child's identity and "liberal stance" ("White" 60).[44] This intimate relationship in early childhood helps, moreover, to establish the child's removedness from the apartheid system which divides black and white South Africans and which exists in the adult world. In *Heaven Forbid*, for example, the relationship between the young Martin Donally and his beloved male nanny Georgie on the eve of the 1948 elections is central to Martin's growing awareness of the

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[42] The desire, I would submit, is to make a claim reminiscent of the title of Jeanne Goosen's 1990 novel *Ons is nie almal so nie*, translated as *Not All of Us* in 1992 and *We're Not All Like That* in 2007.

[43] This relationship is a common feature in the narratives of white childhood in the Apartheid Archive Project, as Shefer has discussed, arguing that "the nanny is remembered nostalgically as a source of comfort and care" but that she remains a "figure bound with fraught tenderness" (311).

[44] Horrell's "Post-Apartheid Disgrace" makes the same argument about narratives by male writers specifically.

corruption of the segregated adult world.[45] Georgie introduces Martin to the world of the other in South Africa by including him in various experiences of black South African life, such as roadside trading and barber stalls, and the illegal *shebeen* he operates out of his living quarters. As a young child, Martin seems to spend more time with Georgie than with the adults in his family, which implies an alignment with black experience, even as he is able to move fluidly between the separate social spaces. Through this close relationship, Martin also discovers the difficult realities of racism and segregation, as their adventures always take place under the threat of official censure. In one particularly traumatic moment, Georgie is assaulted and arrested by the police for having illegally used the swings with Martin in a local playground reserved for whites. Later, Martin's new stepfather, a cruel and racist man, moves his new family to the outer suburbs of Johannesburg, essentially banishing Martin from Georgie and effecting their permanent separation. Like Martin, many of the protagonists in the childhood narrative experience this loss as a trauma, though it is often also directly precipitated by a traumatic experience.[46]

A significant part of the loss that is mourned in the nostalgic narrative is the loss of the child's intimacy with his or her nanny due to the fundamental racism of the apartheid social order. However, as is the case with the farmworkers, novels like *Heaven Forbid* paradoxically fail to register that this sense of intimacy with the other relied on a system in which the nanny was always available in this way to the child because of his or her subservient socioeconomic position.[47] This emphasis on the lost closeness of the

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[45] The National Party's victory in the 1948 elections led to the formal establishment of the apartheid system.

[46] *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* contains perhaps the clearest example of this. The seven-year-old Faith witnesses her nanny and companion, Nomsa, being raped by her mother's suitor, Oom Piet; in an attempt to protect her friend, she accidentally shoots and kills Nomsa with her father's shotgun while aiming for Oom Piet. It is this repressed traumatic memory, and her own guilt, that haunts her in the present, and which she confronts and works through during the climax of the novel.

[47] Again, there is a relevant correlation here with literature from the American South, where the white child's relationship with a black nanny has been central to a number of popular novels: most recently,

relationship which, to the child's pre-reflective mind and in the adult's fond memories, was simple and reassuring, disguises the fact that what may ultimately be mourned – albeit in unconscious ways, perhaps – are the unequal structures which enabled this relationship. This is a persistent feature of post-apartheid white nostalgia more generally, and is taken up in greater detail in the next chapter.

What I would like to emphasise here is that in much of this writing black figures function less as autonomous characters than as devices through which white children come to consciousness about the evils of apartheid. As such, they and their blackness are instruments through which the child's liberal white identity is shaped and bolstered.[48] It is significant, then, that a kind of confessional encounter commonly occurs between the adult white protagonist and a black nanny figure in writing about white childhood. In *Skinner's Drift*, it is with Lefu that Eva attempts to reconcile when she finally returns to her family farm. She asks his forgiveness for having persuaded him to help her bury the child her father killed over a decade earlier. Implied, too, is an apology for the larger, more nebulous hardship her family and her people have caused his. In response, Lefu astonishes Eva by absolving her with the assertion: "I forgave you a long time ago" (Fugard 292). As Horrell notes, the white characters' return to these figures in a confessional moment seems to register a kind of acknowledgement of complicity in these evils ("Post-Apartheid" 8). Yet the fact that most of the traumatic race-related events experienced by the protagonists are *accidents* suggests an underlying counter-current of exculpation: the site of blame implicitly shifts from the innocent individual to a distorted

Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* (2009), which was adapted into an Oscar-nominated film and box-office hit in 2011. The Association of Black Women Historians cautioned that the novel and film, for all their progressive intentions, perpetuated the mammy stereotype in a way that "reveal[ed] a contemporary nostalgia for the days when a black woman could only hope to clean the White House rather than reside in it."

[48] This chimes with Morrison's account in *Playing in the Dark* of the role played by Africanism (blackness imagined by white writing) in defining whiteness in American literature.

system that makes inevitable such events. In other words, the white character's liberal sense of self is confirmed rather than challenged.

4.2.4. Enjoying innocence

Ato Quayson argues that proper acknowledgement of complicity by all beneficiaries of apartheid is vital "not in order to apportion blame . . . but to recognize the task of working and living together that lies ahead" ("Enchantment" 337). In this section, I have argued that, through its use of the trope of white childhood, the nostalgia genre cannot sufficiently answer this appeal. Rather, in much post-apartheid nostalgic writing, childhood functions to portray the white protagonists as innocent of, and separate from, the framework of privilege which actually constitutes the lost childhood idyll. Though the confessional tone of most of these novels implies that it is not deliberate, there is a kind of disingenuousness at work here. Medalie contends that nostalgic novels "signal an acceptance of what are deemed to be the appropriate sensibilities of post-apartheid society in that they describe a political awakening, the end result of which is, presumably, a political consciousness consonant with the new society," but this "gesture tends to be perfunctory" ("Uses of Nostalgia" 37). In other words, the trope of apartheid childhood enables the nostalgia genre to consider the dilemmas of white selfhood in post-apartheid South Africa in a way that defends rather than challenges white identity. The genre's conventions are themselves limitations to the kind of inquiry that the novels purport to be making. Even as texts adopt the trappings of the confessional mode, many stop short of following the questions that they raise of innocence and complicity through to their end. That to do so might involve putting the white self wholly at risk (of having to relinquish material privileges, be reimagined, or be found guilty) seems unimaginable

for many of the novels.[49] The effect of this is that a nostalgic connection to the innocence of white childhood can be maintained and enjoyed at little cost to the white adult.

5. "Something suspended that is ignited again": post-apartheid homecoming

Having shown how the motifs of the farm in decline and white childhood are used in the nostalgia genre to address questions of belonging and culpability, I now turn to the final trope of homecoming, which is usually explored in the genre through the return of a character to his or her family home after years of estrangement, most often in another country. In what follows, I argue that, through a meditation on memory, the figure of the émigré who returns and confronts their past brings together the genre's primary concerns with home, identity and the relation of the past to the present.

5.1. An expatriate literature?

If nostalgic literature's focus on apartheid childhood has an autobiographical aspect to it, so too does the motif of the returning expatriate. Exile and return are significant features of South Africa's recent history, but it is particularly noteworthy that most of the writers of the novels in the nostalgia genre are themselves expatriates, some of whom have built their entire literary careers on "writing back" to South Africa.[50] Issues of international

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[49] By contrast, works like Van Niekerk's *Agaat* and Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999), as well as *White Lightning*, deliberately engage with this kind of risk.

[50] Political figures such as Oliver Tambo, Joe Slovo, and Thabo Mbeki, and cultural icons such as Keorapetse Kgositsile, Dennis Brutus, Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba count among the most prominent exiles who returned to South Africa as the apartheid state began to be dismantled. See Nixon's "Refugees and homecomings: Bessie Head and the end of exile" for a perceptive account of the exigencies of exile and return in South Africa. Numerous other citizens who left South Africa during apartheid stayed in their adopted countries. Breyten Breytenbach is one of the most prominent writers to do so. The 2004 Letters Home Festival in Cambridge, England, brought together South African writers, poets and literary critics living abroad, and was in many ways a nostalgic exercise. This was followed in 2005 by a special issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, edited by Boniface Davies and Horrell. See also *The Heart in Exile: South African Poetry in English, 1990-1995* for poetry exploring the theme, and Chapter 7 of Gready's *Writing as Resistance* for an extended account of Breytenbach and Dan Jacobson's experiences of exile and return.

Behr, Cartwright, Coetzee (with *Summertime*), Fugard, Hope and Zadok might be included in the expatriate group, although Zadok lived in the UK for only a few years and returned to South Africa after *Gem Squash*

publication and the postcolonial book market are certainly involved in the prominence of these authors and this writing, as I explore in Chapter 3, but for now I wish to focus on the literary ramifications of this trend.

It is helpful to view post-apartheid nostalgic writing, and especially the homecoming narrative, in the context of a broader global literature of exile and diaspora. This literature is a product of rupture and displacement, a particular phenomenon of "our age," as Edward Said argues, with multiple variations, from the writing of Caribbean migrants in Britain in the mid-twentieth century to that of Czech émigrés returning to the Czech Republic after the Velvet Revolution (*Reflections* 137–38).[51] The writing of exile and expatriation fixates on the meaning of identity and belonging in a context of dislocation. Indeed, Susan Rubin Suleiman similarly suggests that "exile appears not only as a (or even *the*) major historical phenomenon of our century, affecting millions of people, but as a focal point for theoretical reflections about individual and cultural identity" (284). Here, identity involves an entanglement of the national and personal, for exile and nationalism are intimately related. Both are caught up in questions of belonging and non-belonging, the meaning of space and location, and the desire to "reassemble [a] . . . broken history into a new whole" (Said, *Reflections* 141). Critics have seen exile as a uniquely productive state which bestows, in Said's terms, a contrapuntal "awareness of simultaneous dimensions" (*Reflections* 148). In other words, due to their experience of other realities which are persistently juxtaposed with the present through memory, exiles have a special understanding of the plurality and provisionality of cultural forms. This

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Tokoloshe was published. Of the novels I refer to in this chapter, six were written outside South Africa and three were written in the country.

[51] Hall's "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" and Hron's "The Czech Émigré Experience of Return after 1989" discuss Caribbean and Czech émigré identity respectively. Said's own memoir *Out of Place* is also saturated with the affects of exile.

contrapuntal awareness, moreover, involves the critical power to keep multiple temporalities and locations in suspense, to maintain dissonance.[52]

Given the above concerns, nostalgia is one of the émigré author's natural companions.[53] As Salman Rushdie has argued, expatriate writers are "haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt" (10). For the South African authors of the genre who have chosen to live away from the country, the South African past – which has the "emotional density of a child's first landscape," in Nixon's words (*Dreambirds* 102) – exerts an affective pull which invokes a return in writing. "Pity the beloved country!" newspaper critic Guy Willoughby declared in 2005, "So many of her best writers, it seems, need to be far from her to write. And what do they write about once they're away? The beloved country, of course" (11). For some, nostalgia is a painful fact: in *White Boy Running*, Hope accounts for his return visit to South Africa (and, presumably, also the impulse to write the memoir) by describing the country as "a fever, an infection, a lingering childhood disease I simply cannot get over" (16).

It is clear, though, that this homesickness is not wholly debilitating. Nixon describes it as a "cruelly creative" condition ("Refugees" 112). Hirson feels the situation of a "Long-Distance South African" to be a generative one, inspiring writing which maintains a connection with the lost homeland and his personal claim to a national

[52] Hirson suggests the nostalgia inherent in this awareness: "The world of childhood in a distant country is less than a split second away from the city where the immigrant makes another home, and which in turn soon fills with memories of its own. But these memories nonetheless appear less rooted than the old ones, lighter though they may be dark, strange with the strangeness of the new place itself" (*White Scars* 157). See Chapter 7 of Hook's *(Post)apartheid Conditions* (2013) for an illuminating consideration of the contrapuntal in relation to nostalgia.

[53] Hall lyrically explains how the "diaspora aesthetic" is shot through with nostalgia: "It is because this New World is constituted for us as place, a narrative of displacement, that it gives rise so profoundly to a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return to 'lost origins', to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning. Who can ever forget, when once seen rising up out of that blue-green Caribbean, those islands of enchantment. Who has not known, at this moment, the surge of an overwhelming nostalgia for lost origins, for times past?" (236). For more on the interaction of nostalgia and exile/expatriation, see Chapter 12 of Boym, and Walters.

identity.[54] He observes that the memories which prompted him to write *I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)*, to which I will return in Chapters 2 and 3, "surfaced after my father died not only in my desire to remember him, but also because something of the bond between myself and South Africa had been shaken" (*White Scars* 147). Of *Skinner's Drift*, Lisa Fugard has asserted: "I had an appointment with South Africa. Writing this book has me coming clean" (Willoughby 11). All of this suggests that we may read post-apartheid nostalgic writing, which is profoundly interested in the return to the South African past both physically and through memory, as to some extent a product of the expatriate perspective of these writers – a literary homecoming, perhaps, in which the author's nostalgia is surely implicated. As Paul Gready observes, there is a psychological consolation to be found here: "The writer finds a home in writing about home, in characters who also seek a home or who can be written home in a kind of vicarious homecoming" ("South African" 510).

This writing can also be seen as a third-level reflection on the relationship between memory, place and selfhood. There is a pertinent connection here with postcolonial travel writing, a kind of life writing that often involves the return of a nostalgic subject to their former colonial home. Many narratives specifically concern the experiences of former colonisers across postcolonial regions: from Aya Zikken's *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* (1981) about her return to Sumatra, to Doris Lessing's *African Laughter* (1992) about Lessing's returns to Zimbabwe.[55] It is this writing specifically

[54] Hirson coined the phrase in his poem of the same name in *The Heart in Exile* (10). He suggests that there is something distinct about expatriate South African nostalgia: "You South Africans abroad, a friend says to me. You can't stop talking about the land, the beauty of this place and that place. I don't know any other group of people, she tells me, who seem so attached to the land itself, you are like stalks that have been snapped off, leaving their roots behind" (*White Scars* 87). Conversely, Behr has argued that "[n]ostalgia suffuses the work of many artists who live away from their childhood homes" and does "not find anything exceptional in this regard from South African literature" ("Email Interview").

[55] De Mul's work explores this genre in detail through these texts, among others. Fuller's *Scribbling the Cat* (2004), and Godwin's *When A Crocodile Eats the Sun* (2007) are more recent narratives of return to Zimbabwe.

which correlates with the questions raised by post-apartheid white South African novels. For these autobiographical texts, the physical journey becomes a return to the past which is fraught with "the settling and unsettling nature of recollection" (De Mul, *Colonial Memory* 14). For all the difficulties of estrangement, the experience of return is likewise complex: Marianne Hirsch describes the process as "a fractured encounter between generations, between cultures, and between mutually imbricated histories occurring in a layered present" (147). Through this return, the estranged subject necessarily engages with the complexities of memory and the self, for as Dirk Klopper observes, "[t]o narrate the return of the protagonist to a childhood or ancestral home is to invoke the problematic of identity and selfhood, the problematic of subjectivity as it relates to place of origin and to memory" (149). This problematic, I would argue, is at the heart of the post-apartheid émigré's narrative of return.

5.2. Portraying the present past: affects of nostalgia

Before I address the complexities of subjectivity directly, however, I want to comment on the genre's representation and evocation of the affects of nostalgia, for which the expatriate and the narrative of homecoming are particularly useful vehicles. On the most superficial level, like the motif of the farm in decline, the expatriate figure creates a clear demarcation between the old and new South Africa, allowing the novels to register the passing away of the familiar old order and the material changes which have taken place in the transition. Eva in *Skinner's Drift*, for example, notes that "the conservative Transvaal, province of stoic farmers, sofa-sized rugby players and insatiable hunters, had been divided into the Northern Province and Mpumalanga. A new country, and she sensed it the minute she passed through customs" (Fugard 5). Because the narratives invariably depict the expatriate's first trip home in many years – in most cases, over a decade – the contrast between the old and new South Africa appears especially stark.

This juxtaposition of the past and the present which the narrative of homecoming creates enables the genre to portray and reflect on the persistent pull of the apartheid past in the post-apartheid present. From the expatriate's contrapuntal perspective, in which memory's workings are particularly apparent, South Africa becomes the territory in which the past collides with the present. While the post-apartheid country presents itself as a strange and unfamiliar place, characters' memories of a past homeland which continues to exist in memory are consistently triggered by the sights, smells and sounds they re-encounter in South Africa, such as the "koer-koer koer-koer of turtledoves" and the sound of a *piet-my-vrou* (red-chested cuckoo) (Behr, *Kings* 14). Demonstrating that memory is, as Pierre Nora notes, "rooted in the concrete: in space, gesture, image, and object" (3), these details become the sites of memory, the *lieux de mémoire*, to use Nora's phrase, which connect the protagonists through memory to the lost home.[56] Michiel in *Kings* finds that each familiar scene on his drive to Paradys spontaneously evokes memories of his youth, making the past palpably present: "The seven steps still lead up between the terracotta-colored cement balustrade and boxes of strelitzia, with its dark foliage and spathes of robust blue, white and gold. For a moment he himself is sitting there, unshaven, nineteen years old with Miemie's [the family dog's] head in his lap" (Behr, *Kings* 15). The fluid temporality of memory is echoed formally, as the narration in many of the novels shifts between present and past events, sometimes within a paragraph, sometimes in alternating chapters.

What is more, these affects of memory resonate beyond the world of the text. If the lost home, the old South Africa, is a place that continues to exist only in vestiges which are animated by memory, it can be revisited through the narrative of homecoming

[56] Ato Quayson describes how to smell his childhood foods in London "is to be yanked back momentarily to a place that can never be properly reached" ("Ethnography" 133). We might also recall the nostalgic memory evoked by Proust's famous madeleine in *Swann's Way*, where the taste of the madeleine dipped in tea spontaneously evokes Marcel's memories of not only his visits with his aunt, but also the everyday life of Combray which he thinks he has forgotten.

and the "fervour of memory" in which the characters find themselves (Cartwright 53). This is also true of novels which concern themselves exclusively with the time of childhood, and which often catalogue the details of the past especially meticulously. Troy Blacklaws's *Karoo Boy* (2004) demonstrates this clearly with a litany of products from South African childhood: "Behind her are coffees: Koffiehuis, Van Riebeeck and Frisco. And the teas: Five Roses and Joko. On the counter are the newspapers, and Lion matches, and sweets: Chappie's, niggerballs, Kojak lollipops" (53). Hirson's *I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)*, which I address in the following two chapters, works primarily in this way. Here, the texts themselves become *lieux de mémoire*, or realms of memory, and writing and reading acts of remembering through which the lost homeland can be reanimated, the past made present. In other words, the emphasis on sensory details in the genre and the expatriate's awareness of the coexistence of the past and the present both portray the characters' nostalgia, and evoke it at the level of affect. Chapter 2 will explore the very significant implications of this for the ways in which these novels have been read and received.

5.3. Memory and the reconciliation of the self

I would like to return now to Klopper's point that what is at stake in homecoming is "the problematic of identity and selfhood . . . as it relates to place of origin and to memory." The distinction between the home of the past and the unfamiliar country of the post-apartheid present, which I have outlined above, echoes the characters' sense of their own identities as split between the past self who left the country during apartheid and the present self who returns. Following Albert Memmi, Horrell describes the expatriate as a "coloniser who refuses" ("White" 65). That is, the expatriate is a figure who flees the country and the guilty privilege into which he or she is born, seeing no way to side with the oppressed, because to do so would require the impossible task of shedding the conditions of privilege and whiteness while remaining in the racially ordered apartheid

South Africa. Inextricably entangled with this motivation to abscond from a collective identification in nostalgia novels is the desire to escape rather than work through a difficult family history, which often involves a more personal trauma (the death of Eva's mother in *Skinner's Drift*, the suicide of Michiel's brother in *Kings*).

In the light of their abandonment of their homeland and their attempts to distance themselves from their past, nostalgia in fact represents an acute *problem* for these characters. Most have forsworn it along with their connection or commitment to South Africa. Michiel, for example, speaks of "the tyrannies of nostalgia, loss and guilt" (Behr, *Kings* 149). In her life in New York, Eva pretends she is from New Zealand, saying of South Africa to an ex-boyfriend, "[y]ou're so in love with that fucking country. Well, guess what? I'm not. I'm never going back" (Fugard 12). If, as critics suggest, a nostalgic connection to the home country can act as a psychological anchor of identity for the expatriate, this break comes at a significant cost. For these characters, leaving South Africa, albeit voluntarily, is figured as a fragmentation of the self. Rather than acquiring a creative capacity from their expatriation, which Said and others claim is the gift of exile, the white protagonists of nostalgic literature tend to be debilitated by it. Without a unified sense of identity they feel estranged from the world and others, wherever they are. Kristien in *Imaginings of Sand* asserts of her life in England: "I remain at one remove. And it will need a miracle, or an act of faith (perhaps they mean the same thing?), to make me part of the – a – real world again" (Brink 42). I would like to suggest further that we may view expatriate characters and the narrative arc they enable as metonymic figures for an idea of South African whiteness which is embedded in the structures overturned by the post-apartheid order. In this sense, the estranged characters

come to represent the white self that feels unwelcome or ill at ease in the new South Africa, subject to an inner exile from a lost homeland which survives only in memory.[57]

The past and these memories demand to be confronted. The characters are pressed to return, often unwillingly, because of the death of a close relative, usually a parent, through whom they have a bond to the country and to the past. Kristien wonders:

> what am *I* doing here, in the midst of it all, drawn into the vortex of a history I'd prefer to deny? This is no place for me; no place for anyone who wants to preserve some sanity. I must get out while it is still possible. Yet I cannot move before Ouma Kristina, a whole virulent past made flesh, releases me. (*Imaginings* 126)

The return is therefore also a journey into memory. In this schema, as with the travel writing I discussed above, physical proximity to South Africa and the family home corresponds to psychological proximity to the past: as the characters traverse geographical distance, their memories impinge increasingly on them.[58] Kristien feels the immediacy of her memories and the past as her aeroplane approaches South Africa: "Hurtling through the night, Africa invisible below but omnipresent. How easily eleven years can be peeled from one, a shift stripped smoothly from an unresisting body, leaving me naked, approaching death. The loss of innocence. Now; here. Not that faraway day" (*Imaginings* 4). Having tried to escape the past, the protagonists are confronted by it continually, surprised at every turn by the potency of the memories, and nostalgia, they have tried to repress. At times, this leads to moments of overwrought sentimentality not only for the characters, but also in the writing itself. For instance, as Eva flies into South Africa at the beginning of *Skinner's Drift*, she sees "Africa . . . stretched beneath her like the ravaged hide of some ancient beast, and something fierce shuddered inside her; a love

[57] Of course, exclusion from society is a more general theme in white post-apartheid writing, seen, for example, in the awkward and/or redundant white male characters in Brink's *The Rights of Desire* (2000), Coetzee's *Disgrace*, and Damon Galgut's *The Impostor* (2008).

[58] De Mul suggests that the deferral of return in Zikken's *Terug naar de atlasvlinder* corresponds to the narrator's desire to postpone her confrontation with the past (*Colonial Memory* 71–72).

that startled her and set off another round of tears, and she turned from the oval window and leaned back into her seat" (1). Later, when she finally visits her family farm, she realises that she "hadn't known how worn thin her soul was and how desperate she was for the sounds of birds. African birds. And she felt quite hysterical when she thought about leaving without visiting the river" (280–81).[59]

This, however, is where white nostalgic fiction most notably diverges from related literature of exile: rather than maintaining the dissonance of the contrapuntal viewpoint, the genre tends to work towards resolution, staging a return in order to restore the estranged self's sense of home and unity. The return-as-restoration narrative trajectory is also central to the novels which do not involve expatriates, such as *Innocence* and *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*. The process of homecoming is figured as a reconciliation of the self, albeit a difficult and halting one. Kristien describes it as a "tensing forward . . . to reassume an identity suspended when I left this place, recovering the self that remained behind" (Brink 31). The return to South Africa becomes, in fact, a kind of confessional quest for the truth – of the past and of the self.[60]

At the beginning of *Kings*, Michiel arrives at his family farm for his mother's funeral, feeling that "his home – whatever a home is – is no longer here" (Behr, *Kings* 50). His return after many years in America forces him to confront the past, as well as the family and childhood sweetheart, from whom he fled. Through the course of the novel Michiel talks through his past with the loved ones he left in South Africa. He accepts responsibility for his part in Karien's abortion of their unborn child and his illicit affair with a male Indian naval officer, the discovery of which led directly to his flight from South Africa and estrangement from his family. As a result of this incipient

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[59] Such moments of sentimentality may reflect the nostalgia of an expatriate author – the intensity of emotion magnified by spatial and temporal distance from the lost home – but sentimentality is not the preserve of the expatriate, and is found in novels by those living within and outside of the country alike.

[60] Breytenbach's assertion in *Return to Paradise* that "My journeys have become embarrassing confessions" echoes this idea (189).

reconciliation, he experiences a kind of emotional homecoming, feeling a "sense of belonging, almost; as close as there is to any belonging in life" (*Kings* 215). As I have suggested, the reconciliation sought by expatriate characters occurs primarily within the self. Michiel feels this to be "[l]ike something suspended that is ignited again. A tiny window or crack opened" (*Kings* 215). He continues:

> Whatever that little crack is . . . nowhere but here is it restored, does it remind you of what in your abundance of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness you live constantly without. And you cannot say that it disappears at the first gate of Paradys or at the airport with its new name, or at the thirty thousand feet above the coast with the seatbelt signs long off. It goes with you. (*Kings* 215)

What is implied, then, is that Michiel's reckoning with his memories and his reunion with those he left behind equip him to move forward into the future with a renewed sense of wholeness that is rooted in this tentative feeling of belonging. For characters in other novels in the genre, like Kristien in *Imaginings of Sand*, this homecoming results in a reaffirmation of their distinctly *South African* identity, and a commitment to stay in the country, "[b]ecause there is work to be done," she notes, "As much for myself as for others" (Brink 351).

Shane Graham claims that "post-apartheid writers have largely called into question the notion that the Truth about the Past, monolithic and final, is buried somewhere out there just beneath the surface, waiting to be recuperated, and if we only dig it out it will be revealed to us in all its totalizing explanatory power" (20). I would argue that in the case of white nostalgic literature, TRC-style (or simplified Freudian) ideas about truth and the liberating power of memory and narrative are in fact largely affirmed: there is a truth which can be revealed.[61] The narration of it achieves a kind of

[61] This is emphasised by the images of locked doors, trunks, and secret diaries in these texts, such as, "the secret cabinet" which contains Faith's father's shotgun in *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* (Zadok 149), the locked room in Ouma Kristina's feather palace in *Imaginings of Sand*, and the hidden pages of Eva's mother's diaries in *Skinner's Drift*.

catharsis or resolution, usually at the climax of the novel; and the main characters are inducted into the present, at least provisionally whole once more, able to participate in the new post-apartheid society should they choose. In many of these novels, the expatriate's state of contrapuntal non-belonging is ultimately overcome through the device of a therapeutic narrative which reconciles the split self and renews its sense of unity and belonging in South Africa.

That the restoration invariably happens on the eve of moments of historical change – Nelson Mandela's release (*Innocence*), the 1994 elections (*Imaginings of Sand*), the TRC's arrival in town (*Skinner's Drift*), the September 11 attacks in New York (*Kings*) – suggests that what the genre seeks to portray is a coming to terms with the past that creates a self which is oriented towards the future. At the same time, however, the lyrical, even pastoral, endings of many of these novels effectively restore a nostalgic connection with the country. The last sentences of *Skinner's Drift* demonstrate this:

> Silence and space hung like golden weights between the riverine trees, the ana trees laden with pods and about to lose their leaves, and the nyalas barely able to stop their branches from caressing the earth, like women bowing down, skirts trailing across the ground. When she reached the river, she splashed through the warm shallow pools, all that remained of the previous summer's rains. (Fugard 295)

In effect, the narrative of homecoming suggests that, with the traumas of the past neutralised, the protagonists' reconciliation with South Africa and the present coexists with, and perhaps is even strengthened by, positive emotional bonds of nostalgia.

As Dennis Walder observes, however, nostalgia tends to blur "the boundaries between sentimentality and critique [and] melancholy and release" (*Postcolonial Nostalgias* 163). Put another way, intensity of feeling does not guarantee truth or transformation, and the affects of resolution and restoration may elide what remains unresolved and troubling. The catharsis experienced by many of the nostalgic characters in the genre posits a simple relationship between memory, narration and truth that is not

thoroughly problematised in the texts. Petzold says of *Innocence*, for example, that the text "does not seriously question its narrator's ability to tell her tale, and to tell it truthfully" (185). The therapeutic mechanism that the genre employs risks contriving closure, sealing off the past and the text from further (or alternative) interpretation. As Chapter 3 will further explore, this therapeutic narrative of reconciliation has also had a particular symbolic currency in the literary field, which may have also contributed to the prevalence of this literature.

5.4. Dis(re)membering reconciliation: *White Lightning* and *Bitter Fruit*

If *Innocence*, *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*, *Skinner's Drift*, *Kings of the Water* and *Imaginings of Sand* tend to various extents to affirm the relation of memory, truth and healing, *White Lightning* puts it into question. In many ways, along with *Boyhood*, it is the genre's anti-nostalgic novel, inhabiting the common conventions in order to challenge them. *White Lightning*'s protagonist James Kronk finds the "unpicking of memory soothing" but doubts that "there is necessarily anything instructive in memory" (Cartwright 114). He understands that "memory contains an element of will" (200) and can therefore be duplicitous, serving the purposes of the remembering self in the present. "Memory," he notes, "is a reordering of the present: it can cast a shadow forwards" (200).

James comes to this understanding by meditating on his dying mother's old photographs from which she has excised specific figures and faces. One of the deleted figures is Sephos, a servant's son who drowned after the young James and a friend had coaxed him into a swimming pool. A traumatic but preventable accident, Sephos's death (and its associated implications about race and power relations) is a blot on the Kronks' history in which James is directly implicated. He realises that "what [his] mother wanted was to remove from her pictures anything discordant. She seemed to be trying to return to a time and a place where she had been happy" (50). The mother's activity serves here to dramatise nostalgia as a problematic and selective amnesia. More significantly,

though, when James first sees the photograph it takes him some time to recognise the excised figure as Sephos. It becomes clear that his own memory has engaged in an activity analogous to his mother's: while he vividly remembers swimming in the pool during the summer, he realises that he has "given no thought to Sephos, who lay on the bottom of the pool splayed out. You would have thought an event like that would have been in your mind every day. But the mind is a strange thing, selective in what it remembers and subject to its own rules" (50).

Moreover, the past, rather than offering James a sense of homecoming, *resists* his advances. He revisits his childhood home, hoping through nostalgia to create a connection between his past and present selves, only to feel estranged from it, like "an intruder, intruding on the half-remembered past" (112). In fact, the novel emphasises that this process can be harmful to others. The spectacular failure of James's paradoxically nostalgic project – his attempt to free himself "from the tyranny of the past which has constrained [him] unfairly" (125), which results in the violent deaths of Zwelakhe and Piet the baboon – demonstrates this clearly.

Here again, the idea of community comes to the fore, and with it the question of whether reconciliation, and what kind of reconciliation, can be brought about through memory and narration. I have suggested that the reconciliation achieved in the nostalgia genre occurs primarily internally, within the protagonists. The novels generally reflect very little on how the therapeutic mechanism they employ might function beyond the limits of the self. This is a limitation that is brought to the fore by Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* (2001), a novel published in the middle of the period that concerns this study and which falls outside the white nostalgia genre.[62] With the processes of the TRC in the background, the text dramatises the Ali family's reckoning with trauma and memory in a

[62] I say this not merely because *Bitter Fruit* concerns coloured South African experience, but also because its depiction of the relation between trauma, truth and the past, and its negotiation with the TRC, directly counters the nostalgic formulations found in the other novels.

way that "disrupts the surface of reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa," as Ana Miller observes (146). Rather than being deferred to the climax of the novel, the truth about the past is revealed early on in the narrative. Michael reads his mother Lydia's diary and discovers that his father is not Silas Ali but Du Boise, an Afrikaans policeman who raped his mother nineteen years earlier, an incident to which Silas was a forced witness. After having run into Du Boise in a mall, Silas notifies Lydia, and brings up the rape after years of silence. But the truth brings no healing or reconciliation. Rather, Lydia is furious at being reminded of the trauma, accusing Silas of being caught up in his pain rather than hers, and of being a coward for having not sought revenge on Du Boise. Lydia responds by externalising her pain, inscribing it vividly on her body in the present by deliberately walking on broken glass and lacerating her feet. The encounter then becomes a direct cause of Silas and Lydia's separation. This excavation of the truth of the past is not only unwanted; it is also a destructive force, cracking the family along its fault lines and eventually leading to its disintegration.

Bitter Fruit demonstrates that telling the truth about past events does not automatically produce reconciliation, and that allowing the past to be manifest in the present does not defuse its explosive potential. Furthermore, Lydia's accusation of Silas ("If you were a real man, you would have killed him on the spot, right there in the mall") suggests that the demands of justice, which are material and not merely symbolic, continue to bear down on the present, impeding reconciliation (Dangor 17). The contrast with post-apartheid white nostalgic literature is stark: having embraced the essentially merciful tenets of the new South Africa, many of these novels emphasise forgiveness and elide the question of justice.

6. Conclusion

As I end this chapter, I wish to return to the idea of repetition with which I began – that is, the fact of post-apartheid nostalgic literature's striking conventionality – and so educe

two possible, and related, conclusions. The first is that the generic hallmarks of this writing (the post-apartheid farm, the apartheid childhood, and the return of the prodigal expatriate) do seem to have been valuable literary devices for white writers in this period. They provided fruitful means of exploring concerns which were particularly pertinent to the construction of white South African identity in the post-apartheid moment. I have argued as much in this chapter by analysing the narratives, and the kinds of interrogation, that were enabled by the conventions of the genre, and contending that they bring to the fore issues of belonging, identity, responsibility, and the relation of the past to the present. However, I have argued further that, if these tropes raise a number of relevant questions for post-apartheid South African whiteness, they also lend themselves to perfunctory resolutions which ultimately serve to protect rather than reformulate existing constructions of white identity. At best, the novels resist these temptations, but on the whole the genre tends to fall short of interrogating what inclusion in a post-apartheid South African community might demand of white selfhood: the troubling of straightforward access to reassuring histories and memories, the interruption of the process of return, or the radical rejection of old boundaries.

Shane Graham has contended that there is a whole body of post-apartheid literature which engages productively and imaginatively with the South African past,

> registering memories of the past so as not to remain trapped in that past but to use it to build new identities in the post-apartheid future. The memories that are recuperated or reconstructed, and the flexible and provisional new identities that are forged, can be used to challenge those who would create new myths about the past and new spatial regimes of power. (8)

In contrast, the genre of literature I have discussed in this chapter, which encompasses a wider range of texts and includes more popular novels than Graham’s distinctly high-brow purview, offers a far more ambivalent picture of the imaginative possibilities of memory for constructions of post-apartheid identity, and white identity more

particularly.[63] As this chapter has argued, these novels demonstrate that memory's power is equivocal: though it may have the capacity to open up new modes of relation and forge new identities, it may just as easily be used to create new myths, or re-establish longstanding ones that protect the boundaries around self and other.

The notion that these tropes tend to confine the terms of inquiry of this literature within certain bounds of whiteness leads to my second conclusion. This is that we might also read these writers' repeated deployment of the same conventions as symptomatic of a paucity of imagination, both literary and ethical. As I argued earlier in relation to the farm-in-decline motif, there is a kind of belatedness about the form of this writing, even as it is itself self-consciously a literature concerned with belatedness. This is particularly, but not exclusively, the case for the novels written by expatriate authors in the 2000s. The recursive staging and restaging of essentially the same narratives and dilemmas with numerous variations suggests an inability to conceive of new metaphors or alternative narrative modes beyond the old limits of white writing. Even texts within this literature which work to unsettle and ironise these forms – the work of Coetzee and Cartwright most noticeably – have remained confined within their terms. This persistent insularity is what Ashraf Jamal, in Coetzeean terms, has called "the gaze of the hermit crab" (159). Writing in 2005, he argued that this gaze was a pathological condition which produced "South Africa's failure to imagine or dream what Homi Bhabha describes as the 'hybrid moment'" (Jamal 24). In this chapter, I have argued similarly that, remaining within its own repetitive conventions, nostalgic white literature largely fails to envision the possibility of a broader South African community, instead consistently emphasising the individual white subject's fraught project of orientation in the post-apartheid moment.

[63] The novels Graham discusses are Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit*, Ivan Vladislavić's *The Exploded View*, Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, and Aziz Hassim's *The Lotus People*.

This reading of the logic of the genre is, however, only one aspect of the greater project of this thesis to account for the prominence of white nostalgic writing. As I argued in the Introduction, genres are formed not only because writers find their forms and conventions productive, but because they resonate with readers at particular moments in particular contexts. While the discussion in this chapter has made reference to the wider South African socio-political and cultural environment, in Chapter 2, the discussion addresses this, and the readers of this literature, more directly. For if the entanglement of nostalgia, insularity and white subjectivity is one of this literature's imaginative weaknesses, it is also a significant feature of post-apartheid South African society, and is implicated in how these novels have been read by their predominantly white, middle-class South African readers.

Chapter 2

Post-apartheid South African Readers and the Nostalgic Book

> *A very great part of the writing of our own period has served as a carrier – yes, and promoter too of this nostalgia. Would such writing succeed – which is to say, be acceptable – if there were not a call for it? I suppose, no. One of the dangerous powers of the writer is that he feeds, or plays up to, desires he knows to exist. He knows of their existence for the good reason that they are probably active in himself. In contacting the same desires in his readers he does something to break down his isolation. If, by so doing, he also may make his living, who is to blame him? But without injustice to him, we should recognize this: that it is easier to recall than to invent, easier to evoke than to create.*
>
> Elizabeth Bowen, "The Cult of Nostalgia"[1]

> *Is it the fear of forgetting that triggers the desire to remember, or is it perhaps the other way around?*
>
> Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts*

1. Introduction

As the following discussion will explore, it is a significant feature of the post-apartheid South African literary field that the buyers and readers of books, and literature in particular, have been predominantly white and middle-class individuals. Statistical data is limited on reader demographics in South Africa, with only one survey into the reading habits of South Africans having been conducted to date. This, the 2006 *National Survey into the Reading and Book Reading Behaviour of Adult South Africans*, found that, in a country in which "more than half of South Africa's households have no books," "those committed to book reading are largely white affluent people" (TNS

[1] Quoted in Davis 91–92.

Research Surveys 14, 23).[2] The approximately 1 in 10 survey participants who claimed that reading was the leisure activity they engaged in most often were found to be "disproportionately white and coloured females and those with a higher education" (6). The study also found that in terms of reading preference South African females were more likely to read fiction books, while non-fiction reading was skewed towards males (12). There is reason to believe, therefore, that the majority of readers of nostalgic literature are likely to have been white and middle-class South Africans; moreover, it is also likely that women would make up a major portion of this group.[3]

In 1995, Dorothy Driver characterised the temperament of "the white reading public" as "pretending to make a turn from the 'old' to the 'new', but not ready to support a vigorous, questioning, experimental cultural life, and apparently fearful of interrogating the sources, manifestations and implications of its economically and culturally privileged position" (157). As the consumers of books, in terms of both reading and book-buying, readers are critical intermediaries between the literary and market work (and worlds) of books. For this reason, the question of who reads post-apartheid nostalgic writing, and what kinds of meanings, values and pleasures they have derived from these texts, plays a crucial role in my project in this thesis to account for the prevalence of this literature in the post-apartheid moment. It is on this aspect of the phenomenon that I focus in this chapter, which seeks to answer the question: what does nostalgic literature do for its readers?

Reading is, as James L. Machor observes, "a product of the relationship among particular interpretive strategies, epistemic frames, ideological imperatives, and social orientations of readers as members of historically specific – and historiographically

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[2] The survey was commissioned and funded by the South African National Department of Arts and Culture through the South African Book Development Council.

[3] This corresponds with South African publishers' conceptions of the market during this period, which I will explore in Chapter 3.

specified – interpretive communities" (xi).[4] In other words, it is a socially embedded activity, historically situated and ideologically inflected. Elizabeth Long, too, suggests that "people's 'habitus' [formative social experiences] carry great weight in determining the cultural values they clarify and develop in their conversations about books" (163). To understand the currency of a book or a genre of literature therefore requires attending to the social and cultural context in which it is produced and consumed, as well as to the responses of individual readers to specific texts. With regard to the value of nostalgic writing for its white South African readers, the post-apartheid construction and reconstruction of white identity comes to the fore, for, as Melissa Steyn notes, "there is a close relationship between the narratives [of self] we tell and the cultural resources we draw on" (*Whiteness* 48). It is my contention that, in a period in which whiteness was increasingly felt to be under pressure in South Africa, nostalgic writing was especially well suited not only to reflect but also to speak to its concerns. I suggest further that, despite its potential for critical and ethical deployment (as many nostalgia theorists propose), it is nostalgia's propensity for defence and preservation that has been most pertinent to its appeal in this context.

The intersection of nostalgic literature and post-apartheid white identity has already been broached in the previous chapter through my literary critical reading of the genre. Indeed, it is impossible to keep the literary features of texts and their wider social and cultural implications wholly distinct. However, I attempt now to come at the phenomenon from a different angle, using the tools of sociology, psychology and reader response criticism to focus, to the extent that I can, on the real readers of nostalgic texts and the memory work – the psychological and social purchase – of nostalgia and nostalgic white writing in the post-apartheid era. In seeking to address these questions,

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[4] The notion of interpretive communities is one that Fish developed in his influential essay "Is There a Text in This Class?"

the chapter comprises two distinct but interrelated halves. The first explores the broader cultural and psychosocial context of post-apartheid South Africa and, more particularly, the ways in which nostalgia has been involved in various constructions of white identity since 1994. The second half turns more directly to the readers of nostalgic white writing, examining a range of ordinary South African readers' responses to nostalgic texts in order to analyse the uses and meanings of this literature for readers in the post-apartheid period.

1.1. Memory work and the location of reading

Before I begin, it is necessary to explain my decision in this chapter to confine my analysis to South African readers, and to the post-apartheid South African social and cultural environment. Firstly, while it is true that these books have been read outside of South Africa, and not only by expatriates, international readers construct the texts differently from South Africans who share a cultural and social background with the writers, and the apartheid world depicted in this literature.[5] I am interested here in the memory work of *personal* rather than "armchair" nostalgia. I attend to the latter in the next chapter when I discuss the influence of the market and the publishing industry in shaping the nostalgia trend. In any case, as Chapter 3 will also explore, the South African readership is a major market for this writing, even for publishers outside the country, and so its currency in this context is important.

Secondly, to focus on readers in this exploration of nostalgic literature's memory work is not to exclude the writers of these books. Writing and reading are, of course, interrelated. What is more, there is significant overlap, demographically and

[5] I take into account Benwell, Proctor and Robinson's argument in "'That May Be Where I Come from but That's Not How I Read': Diaspora, Location and Reading Identities," which calls into question scholars' assumptions about reader identities corresponding to national affiliation or geographical location. However, I argue that, since nostalgia is to a large extent bound up with national identity and the specifics of place, these are salient distinctions in the context of my argument.

culturally, between the authors and South African readers in this context, which suggests similar concerns and investments. The previous chapter has already introduced the idea of memory work in relation to the authors' deployment of the genre's conventions. There, I proposed that the novels in question were used by writers, to various extents, in autobiographical ways: that is, through writing the novels, authors have attempted to work through their own complex and conflicted narratives of belonging and identity, or, particularly for émigré writers, to stage a vicarious homecoming to South Africa. I suggested that, in addition to grappling with the demise of the apartheid world by representing the resulting dilemmas of white selfhood, these texts also perform nostalgia by recreating and preserving the past.

It is true that some of the authors involved have not lived in South Africa for decades, that there is a distinct sense of belatedness about some of these novels, and that some are vulnerable to moments of overwrought sentimentality.[6] It is also true that, as Mary West notes, the white expatriate's exploration of identity takes place at a remove from the immediate challenges of post-apartheid South Africa in which whiteness is "under enormous threat in ways that it simply is not in western countries abroad" (5). But I disagree with West's implication that we should therefore view these texts as disconnected from the post-apartheid cultural context, not least because it was in this context that they were read. I would argue in fact that the genre's belatedness made it, for better or worse, especially well suited to the narratives of whiteness in circulation in South Africa in the post-apartheid period. So, too, did this writing's recreation of the apartheid past, as I will demonstrate in the second half of this chapter. Lastly, the "expatriate factor" of some of these novels seems not to have impinged on

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[6] As I noted in the previous chapter, Behr, Cartwright, Coetzee (with *Summertime*, but not *Boyhood*), Fugard, Hope and Zadok were expatriates at the time of their novels' writing. Six out of nine of the novels to which I referred were written outside South Africa and three were written in the country. As I also observed, sentimentality is not necessarily linked to expatriate writing, and it is also present in novels written within the country.

the conscious reading experiences of many of the English-speaking white South African readers of the novels. More than a shared present, the memory work of this literature relies on a shared *past*.

To understand what is at stake in the sharing of this past, nostalgia's psychological function and significance for white South Africans after 1994 requires attention. I turn now to the cultural and psychosocial environment in which these texts were produced and consumed.

2. Post-apartheid nostalgia and white identities: dealing with loss

Nostalgia is a global phenomenon, a condition of modernity, a symptom of a society which "increasingly voids temporality and collapses space" (Huyssen, *Present Pasts* 6). Andreas Huyssen has argued that "[o]ne of modernity's permanent laments concerns the loss of a better past, the memory of living in a securely circumscribed place, with a sense of stable boundaries and a place-bound culture with its regular flow of time and a core of permanent relations" (*Present Pasts* 24).[7] In this sense, the presence of nostalgia in post-apartheid South African society is not exceptional, but shares in a global nostalgic fixation. As I suggested in the introductory chapter, however, South Africa's history has rendered nostalgia's appeal, and its ethical and political significance, particularly charged.

While nostalgia has been felt throughout South African society in different variations, it has been especially endemic, and problematic, for white South Africans. As a fundamental part of the shift from a system founded on white supremacy to a black majority-led democracy, South Africa experienced, at least officially, "a sudden and fairly decisive de-centering of whiteness within the society, from a position where

[7] Huyssen has further suggested that the "contemporary obsession with ruins hides a nostalgia for an earlier age that had not yet lost its power to imagine other futures. At stake is a nostalgia for modernity that dare not speak its name after acknowledging the catastrophes of the twentieth century and the lingering injuries of inner and outer colonization" (Huyssen, "Nostalgia").

white advantage was legally entrenched, to where it is actively disciplined" (Steyn, "White Talk" 122). White South Africans, with subjectivities shaped by the economic, cultural and psychological privileges that had been systematically protected in the past, effectively found themselves in a new world, stripped of their old guarantees and stable boundaries, though not all of their privileges.

If nostalgia was well suited to reflect the narratives and uncertainties of South African whiteness in this context, the symbolic work of the transition, the psychological and cultural labour to produce a new sense of national identity and community, also rendered it problematic. With no common culture unifying South African citizens, and with their separateness having been entrenched through legislation and centuries of segregation, the idea of what a coherent and cohering national community identity might comprise posed a challenge. As Ivor Chipkin puts it, South Africans "lacked national marks. It was only really clear who they were not. They were not the South Africans of old: those who had perpetrated and endured the injustices of the past" (174).[8] In other words, this new identity would have to be premised not on nostalgic continuity, but on a decisive break with the past, which, as I noted in the Introduction, was conceived of as the domain of trauma. Apartheid became the "other" against which the liberated post-apartheid present and future were defined (Steyn, "Rehabilitating" 150, 154; Norval 299). In effect, therefore, it was through assenting to a certain narrative about the past – a disavowal of it, in fact – that one would become part of the new nation. If "[t]he pressure [was] on . . . to 'bind the nation together' and to take its people decisively from a traumatized past to a reconstructed future," in David Attwell and Barbara Harlow's words (2), nostalgia appeared to run counter to this temporal progression. Indeed, as I noted in the Introduction, public expressions of fond

[8] See also Truscott, "Archaeology" 15–16.

attachment to the past have tended to attract substantial controversy in the post-apartheid era, which I will touch on in the following discussion.

The distinction between the national narrative and the narratives of individuals and smaller groups is crucial to an understanding of the value of nostalgia in this context, for nostalgia is intimately concerned with the relationship between personal and national identity and history. For this reason, before examining nostalgia's valence for post-apartheid white identities more closely, it is necessary to pay attention to the divisions within South African whiteness, for national identity and nostalgia bear differently inflected variants.

2.1. Shades of whiteness, shades of nostalgia

As I noted in the Introduction, and as scholars such as Richard Dyer have also observed, whiteness as a social category is not monolithic. Rather, there are nuances and distinctions within it: people identify and are identified along various lines, including religion, gender, class, sexuality and national identity – and, indeed, "some people are whiter than others" (Dyer, *White* 12). There are numerous sub-groupings within South African whiteness, each of which involves different kinds of affiliations and investments. Overall, however, white identity in South Africa has been primarily defined "in terms of the struggle between English and Afrikaans subjectivities" (Steyn, "Rehabilitating" 147).

White English-speaking South Africans (hereafter WESSAs, to use Tess Salusbury and Don Foster's acronym) form a distinct but heterogeneous group in South Africa. Including a number of ethnicities, from Anglo-Saxon to German, Portuguese, Greek and Jewish, the group has been defined not by a discrete and coherent cultural identity, but in contrast with others, such as white Afrikaners and black South Africans

(Salusbury and Foster 93).[9] As a result, WESSA cultural identity seems rather indistinct, though, politically, WESSAs have tended to be associated with a liberal politics and values. WESSA subjects in sociological studies have regarded their culture as "uniquely uninteresting," seeing themselves as "just ordinary" individuals, unremarkable, and even "culturally void" (Salusbury and Foster 97, 98). This kind of cultural invisibility and individualism is a hallmark of prevalent discourses of whiteness globally, which, as Dyer among others has noted, serve to downplay the considerable social and economic power held by this group ("White" 44). In fact, one of the few features of WESSA identity that researchers tend to highlight is this global dimension, especially the enduring cultural and linguistic connections between WESSAs and white European countries, particularly Britain. The question of national identity and collective responsibility, especially with regard to the apartheid system, has therefore also tended to be an ambiguous one for WESSAs, though in the post-apartheid moment they have embraced discourses of being "proudly South African" (Salusbury and Foster 104).[10]

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[9] In *Dreambirds*, Nixon speaks of the flattening out of ethnic differences in constructions of white South Africanness in his childhood, which required an awkward negotiation of the identity options available to him: "Officially, all of us, our whole family, were English South Africans. The choices were clear-cut. If you weren't black or coloured or Indian, you had to be white. White came with two choices: English or Afrikaans. They called you by what you spoke. All the boys at my school were English – including the Jews, the Hungarians and the Portuguese. . . . So I was born an English South African into a family of fierce Scottish separatists. It was our job to dislike the English, so I knew something strange was going on. If I was English it had to be make-believe, or someone was having me on" (*Dreambirds* 14).

It is significant that most white South African writers of autobiographical and autobiografictional writing that deals with the apartheid era tend to emphasise their access to one or another "subaltern" white identity. These include, for example, Jewishness (Hirson, Gevisser, Landsman), Catholicism (Hope), and homosexuality (Behr, Gevisser, Heyns). These sub-categories of whiteness are certainly valid, and suggest subjects' different formative experiences (as well as different cultural ethics), but I would suggest that there is also some element of exculpation at work. An appeal to a minority white South African identity may also be a way of claiming that one was also in some way marginalised, and, perhaps, not quite as culpable as the other white South Africans in the injustices of the past.

[10] Njabulo Ndebele notes: "Yes, they have a story to tell. Its setting is in the interstice between power and indifferent or supportive agency. In that interstice, the English speaking South African has conducted the business of his life. Now he was indignant and guilty; now he was thriving. This no-man's land ensured a fundamental lack of character. With a foreign passport in the back pocket of the trousers, now they belong – now they don't. When will they tell this story?" ("Memory" 26). See also Salusbury and Foster 94 and Steyn, *Whiteness* 26–27.

All of the above has made certain exculpatory narratives of self available to WESSAs in the post-apartheid moment, as I will explore below.

In contrast, white Afrikaner identity has historically been deeply invested in South Africa as a territory and Afrikaans as a language, and strongly defined by narratives of besiegement by and resistance to other dominant groups (first the British, with the Empire behind them, and later the black majority).[11] It was the Afrikaner National Party that formalised the apartheid system in 1948, and promulgated the white Afrikaner nationalist ideology that would undergird it. As a result, the transition to democracy was arguably a more dramatic loss for Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans, for whom this nationalist ideology had created a particularly fervent sense of national identity, and in whose interests the apartheid system had been expressly implemented (Steyn, "Rehabilitating" 150). For this reason, too, nostalgia for the apartheid past is at once especially appealing and especially problematic for Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans, "those whose ideological creation is the 'other' of post-apartheid South Africa" (Steyn, "Rehabilitating" 154).

The post-apartheid nostalgia genre is principally a phenomenon of WESSA writing, in part because the novels that are written in English have had a wider international circulation, but also because white Afrikaans nostalgia tends to play out differently from the nostalgic writing which interests this study, apart from a number of nostalgic stories of childhood that were published in Afrikaans in the 1990s, as H. P. van Coller has explored.[12] While certainly present in the culture, as in Bok van Blerk's

[11] Steyn suggests that Afrikaner whiteness developed as a kind of "subaltern whiteness" in relation to the English, who were bolstered by their connection to the power of the British Empire ("Rehabilitating" 148). See also Norval, Steyn's *Whiteness*, and Verwey and Quayle for further discussion on this subject.

[12] Naturally, there are exceptions. With regard to the writers, Behr, Brink and Coetzee come from Afrikaner backgrounds, though Brink is the only writer who among them who habitually publishes in Afrikaans. Coetzee has demonstrated in his life writing that his own negotiation with the English and Afrikaans languages and cultures in South Africa is especially complex and fraught, making these kinds of distinctions particularly difficult to make.

extremely popular but controversial song "De la Rey" (2005) and Steve Hofmeyr's novel, *Laaste Dans Drienie* (Last Dance, Drienie) (2014), popular Afrikaans nostalgia's focus is often on the pre-apartheid era, a period of South African history which allows for the portrayal of Afrikaners as an innocent, besieged minority group, and which conveniently elides the apartheid period altogether.[13]

The distinction between English- and Afrikaans-speaking identities remains significant in this chapter, but the fact remains that whiteness alone had guaranteed economic, political and psychological privileges in apartheid South Africa, rendering all whites beneficiaries of the system. Consequently, despite the divergences, there are also overlaps in the discourses of whiteness on which English- and Afrikaans-speaking whites draw. Steyn argues that English and Afrikaans whitenesses in South Africa "cannot be understood outside [their] co-construction" ("Rehybridising" 70). For these reasons, I refer to white South Africans in general terms in the following discussion, but make relevant distinctions where necessary.

According to Steyn, white identities in post-apartheid South Africa have all been characterised to some extent by "an acute sense of loss of the familiar, loss of certainty, loss of comfort, loss of privilege, loss of well-known roles" (*Whiteness* 156). Steyn's seminal sociological studies show that old narratives of whiteness, informed by both colonial and apartheid ideologies, have endured tenaciously despite being ill-fitting, and

[13] Van Blerk's "De la Rey" demonstrates this tendency particularly clearly. The song nostalgically harks back to the South African War, effectively occluding the history of the National Party, and recasting the Afrikaners as outnumbered and victimised, not only during the war, but also in the post-apartheid moment. The song became the centre of significant controversy in 2006, and was accused of historical amnesia, for this very reason. Van der Waal and Robins, and Baines's "Lionising De la Rey" explore the nostalgia of the "De la Rey" phenomenon in depth. A similar nostalgic view of the war was characteristic of some, though certainly not all, Afrikaners during the commemoration of the war's centenary (1999–2002), as historians such as Grundlingh have observed. Grundlingh suggests that Afrikaners "in some circles" found in this nostalgia an "escape hatch" from the complex politics of the present, "an opportunity to showcase a heroic period in Afrikaner history for which they did not have to apologise" (371).

even under threat, in the post-apartheid context.[14] In *"Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be": White Identity in a Changing South Africa*, based on sociological research conducted in the late 1990s with a majority of English-speaking participants, Steyn suggests that "[d]ifferent narratives of what it means to be white are vying for legitimation in the hearts and minds of white South Africans" (*Whiteness* xxxi).

Observing that the "master narrative" of white supremacy which was legally entrenched by the apartheid and colonial systems is no longer available to white South Africans post-1994, Steyn identifies five distinct narratives by which white subjects now identify themselves. The first, "Still Colonial after All These Years," is the closest to a paternalistic colonialist narrative in which white people see themselves as innately superior, able to define themselves and others unilaterally, and called to work (on their own terms) for the good of their black compatriots. The second, "This Shouldn't Happen to a White," regards the post-apartheid environment as hostile, and feels whiteness to be besieged and oppressed in it. In the similar if slightly more ambivalent third narrative ("Don't Think White, It's All Right"), whiteness is still seen as integral to these subjects' identity, and there remains considerable psychological resistance to thinking reflexively through the consequences of continued white privilege; whites in this narrative dismiss "white guilt" as an unhelpful emotion. Denial characterises the fourth narrative, "A Whiter Shade of White," in which subjects attempt to distance themselves from their whiteness, emphasising their individuality and disavowing the need to address questions of collective responsibility. The fifth narrative ("Under African Skies") is the only one which appears to be future- and other-oriented while historically grounded, and it is only this approach, for Steyn, which holds promise for white South Africans' successful adaptation to the post-apartheid era. This, a

[14] *"Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be"*; "Rehabilitating a Whiteness Disgraced"; "'White Talk': White South Africans and the Management of Diasporic Whiteness"; and Steyn and Foster's "Repertoires for Talking White".

hybridising narrative which incorporates self-reflexivity, historical awareness and engagement with South Africans of other races and groups, contrasts dramatically with its counterparts. All of the others employ strategies of denial, abdication and self-centredness to varying degrees, even if many participants consciously approve of the changes that have taken place in the country (Steyn, *Whiteness* 127–44).

In the following, I highlight two interrelated aspects of these feelings that are relevant to both the aptness and appeal of white nostalgia and nostalgic writing in this period. The first is the idea of a lost home and sense of security or legitimacy; the second is a tendency towards defence and denial.

2.2. Yearning for home and melancholic nostalgia

One of the major themes that runs through all the narratives of whiteness Steyn analyses is the loss of a sense of home and belonging. This loss is one of the dominant themes in nostalgic white writing, as I argued in Chapter 1, reflected especially through the recurring motifs of the farm in decline and the expatriate figure. In that discussion, I referred to Grant Farred's point that "South Africa, for centuries the province of white dominance, now presents itself as an 'unhomely' space, a country rapidly becoming inhospitable to, if not uninhabitable by, its white occupants" (73). Steyn traces this feeling of unhomeliness through the narratives of self she examines, arguing that the story of post-apartheid whiteness is "about displacement, about the subjective experience of dispossession," and, while each subject gives "a different spin to the feelings of loss, . . . all the narratives contend with these feelings" (*Whiteness* 155–56). In other words, even the most liberal white subjects who supported the country's transition to majority rule and were reflexive about their positioning in society, grappled with feelings of unsettlement. Anthea Garman has observed the insecurity at the centre of her own WESSA identity: "regardless of the politico-legal and procedural

constitutional status of being South African, the content of subjecthood as a white English-speaking South African in Africa is uncertain" (8).

Considering that nostalgia expresses a yearning for continuity in a context of disruption, and homesickness for a lost belonging, nostalgic sentiment was to some extent inevitable for white South Africans in this period. With its etymological roots in the notion of homesickness, nostalgia is preoccupied with notions of home, homelands, and belonging (Davis 1; Boym xiii). Ivan Vladislavić suggests that "nostalgia will be part of any attempt to affirm the sense of belonging to place that 'home' implies" (qtd. in De Vries). As I proposed in the previous chapter's discussion of the figure of the expatriate, we might regard the end of apartheid and the transition to a majority government as analogous to the experience of emigration, or exile, in that these events represent a rupture in the relationships of white South Africans who were raised under apartheid to their past histories, both private and public.[15] This was the case even for those who welcomed the shift to an inclusive democracy – those for whom it was, in a sense, a willed emigration rather than a banishment. In fact, it is a paradoxical aspect of the nostalgia genre that the peculiar kind of mourning (or fraught desire to mourn) for the lost apartheid world that we find in this literature comes from white South African writers who, as far as we know, hold liberal, and even left-leaning, political views. Nostalgia in this context should therefore not be confused with a desire to restore the apartheid past. I would suggest that, for all white South Africans but the most

[15] Many white South Africans physically emigrated to the UK, Canada, Australia and other countries in the early 1990s. Numerous critics have also drawn attention to an emigration mind-set among certain white South Africans who have remained in the country, but withdrawn from civic involvement, considering themselves to be exiles in their own country (see Ballantine 124; Steyn, *Whiteness* 79; Steyn, "Rehabilitating" 156; Watson, "A Version of Melancholy" 178). I do not wish to affirm this reactionary interpretation of the place of white South Africans in post-apartheid South Africa – I merely wish to draw parallels between the concerns of post-apartheid whiteness and those of nostalgia.

reactionary white supremacists, the actual restoration of the apartheid system is in fact unimaginable.[16]

Rather, it is the longing itself which seems to perform a useful or appealing function. In her study of Eastern European immigrants in America, Andreea Deciu Ritivoi suggests that nostalgic reminiscence provides a helpful psychological tool for her subjects: "Constant 'mental visits' to an inaccessible home or one forever relegated to the past become a way of adjusting to change and coping with difference" (31). In our interview, Jo-Anne Richards, too, asserted that maintaining a fond connection with the home of the past is necessary for white South Africans' attempts to adjust to change and find a place in the New South Africa, but stressed the ambivalence of such a connection in the post-apartheid context. She observed:

> If you're going to move into the future, you need to be rooted. You need to come from somewhere and you need to have a home. And if our home where we come from is *wrong* and *bad*, where do we belong? We have no roots, and, in a way, in order to move forward, we need to recognise and deal with the complexity of where we come from, and be able to take it forward with us. ("Personal Interview")

Richards here echoes nostalgia theorists like Fred Davis, who view nostalgia as a means of anchoring the self by ensuring continuity of identity. Essentially, she considers white South Africans' feelings of rootedness to be undermined by the post-apartheid denigration of their home, which she locates in the apartheid past, as "*wrong* and *bad*." This in turn hampers their ability to "deal with the complexity of where [they] come from" and "move into the future." What is notable about Richards's point is that she

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[16] Indeed, Linda Hutcheon has suggested that nostalgia "may depend precisely on the *irrecoverable* nature of the past for its emotional impact and appeal," adding that "It is the very pastness of the past, its inaccessibility, that likely accounts for a large part of nostalgia's power – for both conservatives and radicals alike" (Hutcheon).

implicates post-apartheid South African public (and critical) discourse as obstacles to a nostalgic connection with the lost home, and therefore to this process of adjustment.[17]

If the potency of white nostalgia and nostalgic writing in post-apartheid South Africa is explicable in psychological terms as having to do with responding to circumstances of change, dislocation and loss, then, I submit, its *persistence* can be understood at least in part as a consequence of its ambivalent status and the difficulty of its expression in this context. In other words, nostalgia persisted because it was both unavoidable and unavowable. Here, the Freudian conception of melancholia, as taken up by Judith Butler, intermingles with nostalgia. Melancholia for Freud is a kind of hindered mourning for a lost loved object which remains, crucially, unrecognised by the ego (Freud 245). The ego is unable consciously to identify what it has lost, or even register that a loss has taken place. Instead, this loss is turned inward, and "an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object" is established (Freud 249). This results, according to Freud, in a conflict within the self that manifests in "profoundly painful dejection," "self-reproaches and self-revilings," and "an impoverishment of [the] ego" (244, 246). Clearly, this kind of diminished self-regard is in contrast to what happens with nostalgia, where an impulse towards self-preservation lies at the very root of the experience, as I will argue in the following section. However, ambivalence remains a central, galvanising feature in both phenomena in the post-apartheid South African context.

Freud suggests that the repetitive, compulsive nature of melancholia derives from an ambivalent relation to the lost object – a conflict in the unconscious between opposing desires to detach the libido from the object and protect the libido against

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[17] I would add here that Richards was not advancing a reactionary agenda in these comments, but suggesting that what needs to be complicated is a certain apartheid-era moralising mentality, which has endured in the post-apartheid era, in which particular opinions or texts are categorised in binary terms as *good* or *bad* along fairly prescriptive lines.

attack – which hinders mourning and the process of working through the loss (Freud 256–57). Extrapolating from Freud, Butler shifts this dynamic into the realm of the cultural, arguing that "where there is no public recognition or discourse through which [an ungrievable] loss might be named and mourned, then melancholia takes on cultural dimensions of contemporary consequence" (171). Reading melancholia as the fraught yearning to mourn for a lost object over which grief is not permitted, Butler suggests that in a culture that cannot without great difficulty mourn the loss of an object (in the case of her argument, homosexual attachment), a culture of melancholy arises in relation to that object (170, 172).

I would suggest that we can interpret the persistence of nostalgic white writing, along with nostalgia among white South Africans more generally, as resulting partly from a frustrated, though not necessarily conscious, desire to mourn the loss of the apartheid world and, more specifically, the kinds of order and certainties it generated along with its material benefits.[18] In readings of texts from the Apartheid Archive Project, Derek Hook points to the significant psychological role played by the apartheid system and its structures of meaning, which he calls the "apartheid symbolic," in shaping white selfhood ("Apartheid's" 67). Psychologist Ross Truscott also observes that apartheid provided white South Africans with a powerful sense of agency and legitimacy which was bolstered by a system of meaning that ordered and interpreted the world in their favour.[19] Hook goes so far as to describe the apartheid era as "a glowing period of 'white narcissism'" produced by a system which "continually affirmed

[18] Truscott's work on post-apartheid Afrikaner melancholia is especially instructive in this regard, and my discussion here takes inspiration from his insights in his PhD thesis, "An Archaeology of South Africanness," and his article, "National Melancholia and Afrikaner Self-Parody in Post-Apartheid South Africa." Truscott focuses on Afrikaans white South Africans, whose melancholia is more pronounced as they are perceived to be unambiguously the heirs of the shameful apartheid past. I would argue, however, that a similar melancholic dynamic also applies to WESSAs, though perhaps in subtler or less predictable ways.

[19] See also Steyn, *Whiteness* 40.

notions of white privilege and entitlement, producing . . . a *jouissance* of assumed superiority" ("Apartheid's" 67).

While this is particularly the case for white Afrikaner national identity, which was strongly supported by apartheid ideology, WESSAs were also interpellated through colonialist ideologies of whiteness which combined with the racialised structures of apartheid to bolster their sense of racial superiority and their at-homeness in the world (Steyn, *Whiteness* 58). That so many nostalgia novels focus on a child's expulsion from the Eden of white childhood through an ethical or political awakening suggests that the loss of that *jouissance*, which is equivalent to an unselfconscious belief in white innocence, is a crucial part of what nostalgic writing records.[20] What was removed when the apartheid symbolic was overturned was therefore a "strong sense of ontological security" (Hook, "Apartheid's" 67) as well as a hermeneutic framework through which the world and the white self's relation to it and others might be understood.[21] This is a loss of home or homeliness in a deeper sense, which may not even be consciously recognised by a subject, but which affects even those who welcomed the end of apartheid.

If many white South Africans felt the crumbling of apartheid's symbolic structure keenly, mourning or working through this loss outright has, however, remained impossible in a post-apartheid order which calls for the repudiation of apartheid and its consequences, as well as the celebration of the system's dismantling.

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[20] Steyn writes: "In the old South Africa massive official rationalization retarded the conscious confrontation of white guilt. However they may handle the feelings, whites have to deal with having shared a positionality that wronged others, of having benefited at others' expense. The issue pervades the entire spectrum of narratives, although the level of willingness to deal with this collective guilt varies greatly. The *desire* for innocence is overwhelmingly evident in all the narratives, though again some narratives are more able to separate the desire from the actuality" (*Whiteness* 160).

[21] This is a central theme in Vladislavić's *The Restless Supermarket* (2001). In this novel, Aubrey Tearle, a retired proofreader, finds the emerging new post-apartheid world incomprehensible and disorienting. Seeking solace, he writes a nostalgic, escapist fantasy about a superhero who "proofreads" the world, imposing order on an unruly environment with his blue pencil.

As I have argued, the official narrative leaves little room for the apartheid era to be conceived of as something other than a period of injustice, hatred and struggle, and its demise, a triumph to be celebrated. Sara Ahmed's perceptive work on the role of emotions in defining national communities is helpful in this regard. Emotions, Ahmed suggests, "become attributes of collectives, which get constructed as 'being' through 'feeling'," so that "[i]t is now 'having' the right emotion that allows one to pass into the community" (2, 135). In other words, belonging is a matter of feeling the "right" way. In Australia, for example, it is through (white) Australians' correct emotional response of shame in relation to the country's past, particularly white Australia's treatment of indigenous Australians, that their national identity and national belonging is constituted: "Those who witness the past injustice through feeling 'national shame' are aligned with each other as 'well-meaning individuals'; if you feel shame you are 'in' the nation, a nation that means well" (Ahmed 109). In the case of the New South Africa, I would suggest, the post-apartheid national narrative of belonging required the cutting of sentimental ties to the apartheid past. White South Africans would, like their Australian counterparts, become part of the nation by feeling shame about this past, as well as love for the new multicultural nation and its various inhabitants.[22] Nostalgic sentiment, the yearning for a lost time or state of at-homeness located (at least supposedly) in a previous era of injustice and separateness, runs directly counter to this emotional requirement. Truscott has observed the resulting dilemma for white individuals: "the conditions of belonging are that *the injustices of the past must be recognised*; but in one's conduct and speech, thought and desire, *this past must not be recognisable*" ("Archaeology" 17).

[22] Chapter 6 of Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* explores the work of love as a "sticky" emotion that "allows cohesion through the naming of the nation or 'political community' as a shared object of love" (135).

As Maria Brock and Truscott argue, "there is a melancholic blockage here, a paucity of symbols with which to register this loss, the result being that one can mourn the loss of apartheid only with great difficulty, alone or in private, at the risk of a certain 'political insanity'" (325).[23] That is, to acknowledge and express grief publicly is to some extent to forfeit participation in the post-apartheid South African nation, to become "'the other from the past' against which the post-apartheid nation has constituted itself, the other that impedes national cohesion" (Brock and Truscott 325). Put another way, ordinary white South Africans, as the beneficiaries of "a past marked by conflict, injustice, oppression, and exploitation" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 5), are constrained by a story of the nation and its past that they must accept or risk expulsion from it. This is a story, moreover, in which they are the losers: the remnants, in some sense, of a lost cause.[24] It is for this reason that nostalgia surfaces so ambivalently but persistently in nostalgic writing, and why most white South African nostalgic conversation takes place privately, in culturally homogeneous enclaves of whiteness, such as around the *braai* (the word used in South Africa for barbecue).[25] The

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[23] In "National Melancholia," Truscott argues that self-parody, exemplified in the Oppikoppi music festival, is the Afrikaner response to this double bind. He argues that this, a unique response among white South Africans, is a form of national melancholia. Self-parody is notably absent from WESSA cultural responses to this loss. The nostalgia genre tends to be, if anything, agonisingly earnest.

[24] There is a resonance here with the idea of the Lost Cause in the American South, a myth which has had a long and profound effect on the shaping of Southern identity since the Confederate loss in the American Civil War in 1865 (see Gallagher and Nolan for just one collection of scholarly essays among many on the subject). I noted a similarity of tropes (particularly the black nanny figure) in nostalgic Southern and South African writing in Chapter 1. Of course, there are significant differences between these two contexts (chief among which is the fact that the Confederates were the *actual* losers of a civil war, whereas the South African transition was a more or less peaceful affair in which the apartheid government relinquished control, albeit reluctantly).

[25] Verwey and Quayle have examined the *braai* as an enclave of whiteness. As Feldman has explored in detail, the *braai* was also infamously associated with state-sanctioned apartheid torture. It is interesting to note that Heritage Day – the South African public holiday dedicated to celebrating South African cultural heritage(s) – has been rebranded National Braai Day by a media group calling themselves Braai4Heritage. Braai4Heritage conceived of the *braai* as a potentially unifying symbol of South Africanness, since barbecuing is in fact a common activity among South Africans across all cultures (see Braai4Heritage, "Our mission"), though *braais* themselves tend to be culturally homogeneous affairs. The rebranding was a conscious effort to recast the *braai* as an inclusive national tradition, countering its usual association with white South Africans, and Afrikaners in particular.

defensiveness involved in both whiteness and nostalgia, which is suggested in this *laager*-like image, forms the subject of the next section.

2.3. Defending and denying

Significantly, despite strong feelings of loss and uncertainty about their place in the country, white South Africans have been far from marginalised in all respects in the New South Africa. While the end of apartheid meant that they lost political dominance, they have continued to reap the rewards of their long history of economic privilege over this period. As Achille Mbembe noted in 2008, "[b]lack South Africans still command less than 5 percent of the national economy" while "[w]hites still occupy about 75 percent of top management posts in South Africa" (6).[26] Salusbury and Foster suggest further that the weight of this economic power rests in WESSA hands (94). WESSAs have also maintained cultural power, given their cultural and linguistic connections to the global hegemony of English, and the investment of post-apartheid South Africa in forging cultural and economic ties with western global powers (Steyn, "White Talk" 122; West 26).

Investment in the "cash value" (Lipsitz vii) of whiteness is directly linked with the reticence of many white South Africans to acknowledge their complicity in the apartheid system. Mbembe argues that, "[m]any whites have retreated to a comfortable position of personal nonculpability and are unwilling to tell the truth about past misdeeds. Born to positions of enormous social and economic advantage, they are reluctant to wash their hands of the privileges they accumulated over three and a half centuries" (9). The suggestion here is that an appeal to the personal, to individualism, rather than attending to the question of collective responsibility was and continues to be

[26] Of course, the apartheid system itself (along with the political and ideological development of Afrikaner nationalism which preceded and undergirded it), was arguably primarily geared toward the economic end of accumulating and protecting white capital, and Afrikaner capital in particular, as O'Meara argued in his influential *Volkskapitalisme* (1983).

a strategy used by many white South Africans to obscure the continuing social and material privileges their whiteness has afforded them.[27] This is especially true for WESSAs, who are able to avail themselves of an exculpatory narrative in which Afrikanerdom is conflated with racism and apartheid, and Englishness with liberal humanism (Steyn, *Whiteness* 107).[28] "As far as many English-speaking white South Africans are concerned," Steyn notes, "they did not institute or support Apartheid; indeed they may actively opposed it" (*Whiteness* 104). This, I suggest, makes nostalgia an activity somewhat more easily justified for defensive WESSAs. As I argued in the previous chapter, the motif of the innocent white child is the most apparent means by which this exculpatory manoeuvre is made in nostalgic white writing. In this regard, it is significant that the villains of many of these novels are Afrikaners.

This disavowal of apartheid complicity and defence of privilege was paradoxically supported by the processes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Here, two interrelated observations are in order. First, few acts of contrition and little expiation accompanied the TRC's ethic of truth and forgiveness. Secondly, the hearings focused on individual perpetrators of apartheid atrocities rather than the everyday institutional structures which undergirded the system (and in fact most perpetrators escaped incarceration or prosecution) (Mbembe 7).[29] As a result, many ordinary white South Africans have been able to deny their own messy everyday complicities in

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[27] Steyn notes that "'White Talk' establishes enough *personal* innocence to provide levels of psychological comfort in dealing with questions of the past" (Steyn, "White Talk" 129). See also Steyn, *Whiteness* 109–10 and Dyer, *White* 11–12.

[28] This is a point also made by Simoes da Silva 295 and Truscott, "Archaeology" 28.

[29] Alexander critiques this aspect of the TRC at length in *An Ordinary Country* (2002). The TRC report did, however, acknowledge its shortcomings in this respect: "This focus on the outrageous has drawn the nation's attention away from the more commonplace violations. The result is that ordinary South Africans do not see themselves as represented by those the Commission defines as perpetrators, failing to recognise the 'little perpetrator' in each one of us" (133).

apartheid, and a certain kind of uncritical white national identity was allowed, even supported, by the new government in the interests of reconciliation.[30]

Yet this identity has not been maintained without considerable effort. If middle-class "whiteness in South Africa continues to exude a powerful sense of normativity" (aligned in this respect with the western hegemony of whiteness), the unhomeliness of the post-apartheid world for unselfconscious white entitlement means that this normativity has increasingly become "overlaid with defensiveness, an ambivalent combination that resists rather than assists the process of reconciliation, and in many ways deepens the racial divisions" (West 11–12).

There is a close connection between nostalgia and defensive forms of post-apartheid whiteness of the sort Steyn has explored, and which I have enumerated above. This is most obvious in online forums, which are ambiguously private *and* public spaces that are ready platforms for the expression of nostalgia. I take as an example the resonant and typical Facebook community page "Who Remembers the Old Durban."[31] Self-designated as a "platform for Durbanites, young and old, who share fond memories of Durban," the page features hundreds of photographs and community members' reminiscences of Durban in the past. Durban, a popular holiday destination, is a city associated with warm weather, the beach and school holidays, and as such has particular nostalgic currency, especially for those who were financially able to make the journey from the landlocked cities of the interior for a holiday. Most users who are

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[30] We might recall the post-apartheid nationalist rhetoric of unity and triumphalism that accompanied the 1995 Rugby World Cup, which was especially remarkable because rugby was popularly considered to be a bastion of old South African whiteness. The new government's desire not to alienate white South Africans was especially apparent in Nelson Mandela's symbolic act of validation and celebration of this institution (and perhaps this kind of white patriotism) by wearing the number 6 Springbok rugby jersey, that of Francois Pienaar, the team captain, at the tournament final.

[31] Similar examples may be found the comments below YouTube videos such as "A South African blast from the past" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l742eUor4sY) and "Old South African Adverts" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1dEX2HpuNo). Evans has analysed the way in which the internet provides a particularly fruitful space for the expression of white South African nostalgia, especially among expatriates.

active on the page are white South Africans. It is regularly updated with new material by various members, and has a lively culture of comments that demonstrate users bonding over shared experiences and the affects of nostalgia, but also different narratives of whiteness jostling against one another. The ambivalence and anxiety of white nostalgia is clearly represented in general comments made on the page: “This is a brilliant idea even if not ‘politically correct’ to miss those wonderful carefree days,” notes one user. Photographs or postcards such as “Beachfront in 1981” (Figure 1 below), posted on 16 March 2013, have inspired hundreds of shares, likes and comments – and generated passionate arguments.

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 1"Beachfront in 1981," posted by Andre Hoffman on “Who Remembers the Old Durban” Facebook page

Many of the comments beneath this photograph, which has been shared 250 times and attracted 985 likes and 290 comments, are archetypal cases of nostalgia operating as a narrative (Appendix C contains the comment thread from the first few days after the post appeared). One commentator notes: “I remember catching a bus to the beach, having a wonderful time and then either walking home or getting back onto

the mynah bus and guess what - ALL THE WHILE BEING SAFE... and nothing to do with racsim [sic] but SAFETY!!!! . . . Those were the days!!!!!!! The good old days!!!!!!" This seemingly frenzied declaration, with its hyperbolic exclamation marks and capital letters, suggests not an unselfconscious sense of entitlement, but the sense of its loss. What is expressed here is a fierce desire to assert and defend a nostalgic identification with a version of the apartheid past depicted in the postcard – a past of "innocent" fun and innocuous surroundings – an identification which the commentator clearly perceives to be proscribed in the post-apartheid moment. She couches the lost "good old days" in terms of working public transport and physical "SAFETY," specifically negating the involvement of racism in order to defend against anticipated criticism.[32] Here, the commentator echoes what Steyn calls "The dismal refrain of South African white talk," which is characterised in part by the rhetoric of decline, citing issues like "crime, Zimbabwe, falling standards in education and health care, economic decline – and so on and on" ("Rehabilitating" 156). What is elided by this move is that it was the inequality, injustice and racism of apartheid structures which in fact safeguarded these privileges for her. Ultimately, her disavowal of racism paradoxically suggests not its insignificance, but its central importance, to the idyll she describes.

It is significant that considerable debate ensued in response to this and other similar remarks in the days after the image was originally posted on the page. A number of contributors called attention to what is obscured by the nostalgic reverie. One white user observed the glaring whiteness of the beach, showing how it troublingly reflects the work of apartheid, and affirming a commitment to the present rather than the past: "Looks pretty nice. Too bad about all the apartheid that made it look like that, though.

[32] I would add that this insistence on a lost sense of "SAFETY" unconsciously registers the deeper loss of the ontological and hermeneutic certainty that apartheid provided.

I'll happily take today's still-beautiful Durban beachfront over this any day." Sharply undermining the entire nostalgic aim of the photograph, moreover, one of the very few black commentators added a sobering anecdote: "I shared this pic with my mom, she remembers it well. it's the beach where she got hosed down with sewer water cos the racists aka people-who-had-no-idea-apartheid-was-inhuman wanted to keep it to themselves" (sic). It is pertinent that these contributors appear to be of a younger generation than most of the nostalgic commentators on this site. Having grown up in the post-apartheid era, their epistemic and ethical frameworks differ from their elders. I take up the significance of this generational shift in the thesis conclusion. Spirited defences and counterattacks followed these comments; as with much internet debate, rather than reaching a resolution, the commentators became more entrenched in their various positions. Overall, the majority of comments repeat some form of the nostalgic refrain: "Those were the good old days."

I suggested in the Introduction that we might understand nostalgia as a reaction, as well as a supplement, to a story of the past which left little room for the complexities of everyday life under apartheid for ordinary South Africans of all races. In this sense, nostalgic reminiscence may be understood as a means of recuperating some of this quotidian detail, and making a claim to an individual identity and history not solely determined by the official national narrative. In Jennifer Delisle's words, it is "a means of completing memory. . . . so that the individual does not become lost in a national narrative" (399). As the Durban beach example suggests, however, rather than leading to a more complex engagement with the past, nostalgia has frequently been deployed by ordinary white South Africans in social media and related forums as a defence against such an engagement.

Indeed, the example hints further at the possibility that, at its core, nostalgia is simply defensive. This is a point that Hook has made by examining nostalgia's

psychological function. Casting doubt on its usefulness as a transformative process of memory, Hook challenges nostalgia theorists like Boym and Davis, who have confined their arguments about nostalgia's ethical and creative possibilities within the discourse of sociology. These accounts, which I outlined in the Introduction, hail nostalgia as a form of memory which enables one to anchor and acclimatise oneself in circumstances of change. Boym makes the distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia, moreover, in order to recuperate the latter as a way in which nostalgia can become a laudable "ethical and creative challenge" (xviii) through which the subject learns to be at home in a state of homelessness. While Boym views restorative and reflective nostalgia as tendencies rather than completely discrete types of nostalgia, Hook suggests that, in psychological terms at least, the distinction is even less significant: "the factor of critique, of apparent critical distance – even of radical opposition – by no means dissipates the ongoing libidinal investment in what is being scrutinized" (*Postapartheid* 175). In other words, reflective nostalgia does not overcome the ego's resistance to change, or its investment in a nostalgic connection to the past, which operate at the level of the unconscious, and as such are beyond superego control. As I noted in Chapter 1, David Medalie has likewise suggested that the presence of trauma and criticism in nostalgic works of fiction does not necessarily contradict the power of their nostalgia, or, indeed, the work of preservation effected in the novels ("Uses of Nostalgia" 37). Psychologically, then, nostalgia may essentially be a "defensive formation [and] an *obstruction*" to the process of working through and opening up that might bring the kinds of identity changes necessary for white South Africans to find a home in post-apartheid South Africa with their fellow citizens (Hook, *Postapartheid* 171).

The idea of home which is so central to nostalgia is again of crucial importance here. In a 1996 article, "A Home for Intimacy," Njabulo Ndebele proposes a

redefinition of the concept, rooting it not in place, as Jo-Anne Richards's interview comment above implies ("you need to have a home . . . our home where we come from is *wrong* and *bad* . . ."), but in *relation*, which he describes as a kind of intimacy in the present. Regaining a sense of home and belonging is thus a matter of "enriching ethical consciousness in the public domain," negotiating the "complexity, ambiguity, nuance" of being with others ("Home" 28). In his 2000 Steve Biko Memorial Lecture, to which I also referred in Chapter 1, Ndebele develops this idea further, shifting the temporality of home from the past to the present, claiming that South African whiteness must "Put[] itself at risk" and "declare that it is home now, sharing in the vulnerability of other compatriot bodies" and "that its dignity is inseparable from the dignity of black bodies" ("Iph' Indlela?" 53). Speaking of whiteness in the United States, Alison Bailey similarly suggests that whites "must get out of those locations and texts in which they feel at home" and "put [their] privileged identities at risk by traveling to worlds where [they] often feel ill at ease or off-center," explicitly resisting "the temptation to retreat back to those worlds where [they] feel at ease – whole" (40).[33]

Nostalgia, however, works to comfort and buffet the ego against psychological change. It "seems typically to *support* an identity – be it of the single subject or a broader community – and those narrative forms that work to sustain it," and so retains a "defensive and narcissistic quality" (Hook, *Postapartheid* 178). Hook suggests, moreover, that nostalgia is intimately connected to other psychological phenomena (such as the fetish, the fantasy and the screen memory) which allow a subject to *forget*, and to avoid confronting what is threatening or uncomfortable to the ego. Therefore, the questions we must ask of any example of nostalgia are: "what does it enable one to

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[33] Ahmed describes her own feeling of "un-homing" which have attended her acceptance of her implication in Australian history (and the fact that her childhood home is situated on indigenous land): "To 'feel' differently about this land, as belonging to others, is not about generosity; it is not premised on giving up one's home, but on recognising that where one lived was not one's home to give or to give up in the first place" (36).

disavow, to forget? What identification does such a reminiscence allow one to assert? What ideological worldview is thus maintained? Similarly: what threat is domesticated[?]" (*Postapartheid* 181).[34] From this standpoint, nostalgia's anchoring effect, praised by Ritivoi et al, takes on rather more troubling implications for a society at least officially pursuing an idea of moving towards greater integration and equality. In effect, it is nostalgia's closeness to amnesia that makes it so consoling. It all too easily operates as means by which white South Africans may forget the direct ways in which they participated in and profited from apartheid, as well as to disavow the ways in which they continue to benefit materially from its gross inequalities in the present. In this context, nostalgia may also enable an abdication of ethical responsibility and engagement as it resorts to and protects the safety and insularity of the familiar. In other words, it is in some sense a retreat into affects of pleasure that is also a shying away from the ugly feelings, like shame, which inevitably attend the emotional entanglements and complications of being with others.[35]

3. Nostalgic literature and South African readers

With the conflicts and temptations of nostalgia's interaction with constructions of post-apartheid white identity kept broadly in mind, I now narrow my focus to consider the actual readers of nostalgic writing. In this second half of the chapter, I investigate the value and appeal of post-apartheid nostalgic writing for the South African individuals who read these texts. The questions that guide the discussion are as follows. What themes emerge across readers' responses to nostalgic writing? Did nostalgia play a role in their reading experiences, and if so, how might this role be characterised? Given the socially embedded nature of reading practices, it would seem likely that the discourses

[34] Boym herself has acknowledged nostalgia's ambivalent power, suggesting that it "too easily mates with banality, functioning not through stimulation, but by covering up the pain of loss in order to give a specific form to homesickness and to make homecoming available on request" (339).

[35] See Barnard, "Ugly Feelings" and Nuttall, *Entanglement*.

and identities of whiteness in South Africa, many of which share a close relationship to nostalgia, would be implicated in the interpretive frameworks brought to bear on nostalgic writing by its predominantly white, middle-class readers. Yet in my desire to guard against constructing "a 'straw' audience," I am wary of criticism that "generalise[s] about abstract audiences, rather than engaging with them in more concrete, differentiated terms" (Benwell, Procter, and Robinson, "Introduction" 7). I am also concerned not to presume that just because nostalgia is prevalent in a certain culture, a novel's nostalgic content and the ideologies it might express will necessarily chime in obvious ways with readers from within that culture. Jonathan Rose warns against such conjecture:

> Because literature was recreated by historical audiences, and may have been recreated in a fashion quite unlike anything envisioned by the author or the critic, the world view of the novel does not necessarily equal the beliefs of the reader, no matter how popular the work may be. We cannot even assume that popular fiction does not offend its readers. (429)

Consequently, rather than assuming that the reading motivations and experiences of readers simply and neatly correspond to the kinds of white narratives I outlined earlier in this chapter, I have pursued an empirical approach to the task. In the following, I engage with a sample of responses to specific texts in order to analyse the extent to which nostalgia is implicated in specific readers' encounters with the genre.

The question of methodology in this section is an important but difficult one. Data is not easy to come by in discussions of reception and reader response, quite apart from the fact that the subjective, affective experience of reading is by nature difficult to quantify. Information on book-buying and publishers' conceptions of the market are useful, and I address these in Chapter 3, but they cannot tell us *why* particular books, or kinds of books, resonate in specific contexts. "The 'who,' 'what,' 'where,' and 'when' questions" are easier to answer than the "'whys' and 'hows,'" as Robert Darnton

phrases it ("First Steps" 168). Without engaging in a full-scale ethnographic or sociological study such as Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1991) or Elizabeth Long's *Book Clubs* (2003), available information on the responses of South African readers to nostalgic writing for much of the post-apartheid period is limited.[36] As I noted at the beginning of the chapter, my focus at this point is on the psychological and social operation of nostalgia in the post-apartheid South African cultural milieu, and so I confine the scope of my analysis in this section to South African readers. I include expatriates in this group, but distinguish their responses from other South African readers where possible, knowing that their predilection for nostalgia is likely to be greater, given their geographical as well as temporal distance from the South Africa represented in this literature.[37]

The helpfulness of academic responses to the genre is minimal in this line of investigation. Here, a major explicatory factor is that South African critics have tended not to pay substantial attention to much of post-apartheid nostalgic white writing, and there has been relatively little written on the subject. Another is that the few literary critics who have addressed nostalgic literature (Michiel Heyns, David Medalie and Jochen Petzold, for example) have been for the most part wary of the phenomenon. In this they have, as James Procter observes (drawing on David Carter), operated within a framework of aesthetic value common to professional postcolonial reading practices, prizing qualities such as subversion, resistance and formal invention (Procter 195–96). My own reading of the genre in Chapter 1 is informed by a similar aesthetic (and ethical) stance. Critical responses will not help a great deal to illuminate the ordinary reader's engagement with a text, for the greatest difference between the reading

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[36] Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis, such a study was a practical impossibility. In any case, it would have needed to be conducted retrospectively to take much of the post-apartheid period into account, and would therefore be potentially inaccurate in elucidating readers' responses and reading practices from a decade and more ago.

[37] See section 5.1. "An expatriate literature?" in Chapter 1.

practices of literary critics and those who read for pleasure is, after all, precisely that: pleasure. As Procter has suggested, among "lay" readers, enjoyment is "a primary motivation for reading," whereas "the professional reader must always be vigilant and therefore dubious around pleasure" (190). This would seem an especially relevant point in relation to nostalgic writing and South African readers, for the potential pleasures derived from reading a nostalgic text, of which critics are particularly suspicious, are precisely what I wish to explore.

In probing readers' responses to this literature, the sources I draw on include my interviews with authors, as well as numerous responses to specific novels by both professional reviewers in journalism and ordinary readers. I have consulted an average of 6 ordinary South African readers' reviews for each novel I discuss and 12 reviews by South African journalists. This amounts to a total of 98 individual responses analysed (41 readers' responses and 57 journalist reviews). These cover a number of media, including print (magazines, newspapers), broadcast (radio), and online (Amazon and Goodreads). The majority of the evidence I use for ordinary readers' responses to nostalgic writing is drawn from online testimonies (the responses from which I quote in this chapter are collected in Appendix D, organised according to the order in which they appear here).[38] While I acknowledge that the sample of responses gained from these testimonies is limited in number, I would also argue that these online review spaces are ideally suited to providing a conversational forum, and in some cases the anonymity, for such inherently subjective responses and sentiments to be voiced and discussed. Moreover, I am not alone in using this kind of methodology. Neelam Srivastava, for example, has used Amazon as a legitimate and helpful source for reader response

[38] I have tried where possible to limit the online reviews I draw on to the narrower period which interests this study (1994–2009). However, Goodreads was founded only in 2006, after which it took a few years to be taken up by South African readers, so I have cautiously included more recent reviews in my analysis.

analysis, arguing that "the reviews are used as 'guides' for future readers, or for potential readers debating whether to buy the book. Readers often respond to previous readers' comments, thus engendering a lively debate around the novel, a sort of online reading group" (179). Using this information, I do not wish to, and indeed cannot, make a general claim about South African readers' responses to nostalgic literature.[39] However, I would argue that it is possible – and worthwhile – to operate "within the limits of an imperfect body of evidence," as Darnton suggests ("First Steps" 174), in order to make some inferences about how some South African readers responded to nostalgic novels in this period.

It is impossible to know with certainty the demographic details of every online reviewer in my sample, but of those for whom this information is readily apparent, the majority fit within the demographic profile of book readers established by the 2006 *National Survey into the Reading and Book Reading Behaviour of Adult South Africans* – that is, they are predominantly white and (in all likelihood) middle class.[40] Moreover, most appear to be WESSAs. A considerable number of those who write online reviews of South African books are expatriates. It is uncertain whether this last fact is due merely to a disparity in internet access and usage habits, or whether it indicates something more significant about expatriate readers and nostalgic writing – perhaps either a deep affinity with the books, or a strong desire to affirm a connection to South Africa by adding their review to a novel in a public forum.

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[39] The relatively small number of reviews and responses available would make this a deductive stretch, especially since those who respond to a book strongly enough to write an online review constitute, in some sense, a self-selecting group. It is worth noting, however, that Steyn's argument in *Whiteness* is made on the basis of a sample size of only 54 respondents.

[40] I have inferred these details from user profile pictures and information given by users themselves in their profiles or reviews. I have chosen to trust that users represent themselves truthfully on sites like Amazon and Goodreads, at least with regard to the details of their origin or country of residence, name (if given), and the photographs used in profiles. Where possible, I have corroborated this information through user profiles on other social networks, like Facebook, Twitter and Google+. Class represents a highly contested category in respect of white South Africa. Though most white South Africans are generally assumed to be middle class, certainly for those abroad, there are a number of subtle class gradations that pertain across the demographic, as I have attempted to draw out so far in my comments.

3.1. "You feel you become part of the story": Readers' responses to nostalgia novels

In surveying the reactions to the nostalgia novels which were analysed in the previous chapter as well as other nostalgic texts published in the post-apartheid era, two common tendencies emerge across the surveyed white readers' responses. The first of these is that readers often remark on the recognisability of the situations and settings depicted in this writing. The second is readers' appreciation for texts which, they feel, avoid taking up an overtly political stance. This section will address each of these in turn, including variations and counter-responses where relevant. I focus primarily on readers' responses to *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* and *The Innocence of Roast Chicken*, both due to the relatively substantial amount of information available about readers' engagements with these two books (online, in print, and through author interviews) and for the sake of clarity of argument, seeing as the responses to these texts are for the most part representative of the group. I also consider criticism levelled against the texts in reviews. I bring in other salient examples where helpful. The most prominent of these is the case of Denis Hirson's *I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)* in section 3.1.4. My analysis of these responses follows towards the end of the chapter.

3.1.1. Memory and familiarity

The most common response to South African nostalgia novels among South African readers centres on the ideas of recognisability and identification. In our interviews, both Richards and Zadok observed that, when giving feedback to them, readers frequently refer to the familiarity of the experiences described in their novels. For these readers, *Innocence* and *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* capture the everyday realities of the bygone era they represent: the emotions of childhood, its smells and sensations, and details of popular culture. It is this verisimilitude rather than the plots, characters or themes of the novels, that has tended to draw the most praise. According to Richards, the response to

Innocence "from ordinary readers, and still now, it's kind of rapturous and [it] astonishes me that that book had so much reaction" ("Personal Interview"). "When people come up to me about it," she asserted in our interview, "it's always that it's recognisable." Similarly, Zadok noted that many readers favour the first half of *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*, which deals with childhood, to the second in which the adult Faith's confrontation with the past takes place:

> A lot of the feedback that I got was that it reminded people of their childhood. People really felt that I'd captured something of childhood in it, and I think that's why a lot of people preferred the first half of the book, because it resonated with them. They could feel what it was like to be a child and not understand the world, and then growing up and realising the world is not as you think it is. ("Personal Interview")

From these comments, it would seem that readers' identification with the experiences and environments represented in the novels – which are located, more significantly, in the past – has been an important part of their enjoyment of the books.

Yet the feedback that writers receive from readers is very likely to be mediated in certain ways; readers' negative opinions of a book might, for instance, be understated in face-to-face encounters. This is demonstrated by Sarah Britten's assertion that she "did a lot of asking around about the chicken book, and readers from English Honours students to book club matrons thought it was awful" (Britten) – a point which counters Richards's reports of rapturous responses. Nonetheless, and despite Britten's ad hoc survey results, comments by South African readers in online forums such as Goodreads and Amazon about *Innocence* (as well as a range of other nostalgic novels) do on the whole tend to corroborate the observations made by the writers above. One anonymous Amazon reviewer of *Innocence*, for example, gave the novel five out of a possible total of five stars, stating: "As a fellow South African, I could identify with the writer (as a young white girl). She sums up the South African life during the 60's and 70's excellently, and so much so that you feel you become part of the story" (Appendix D,

Figure 1).[41] The implicit link between verisimilitude, identification, and being drawn into or "becom[ing] part of the story" is worth highlighting here, as is the reader's implication that this kind of immersive emotional experience is synonymous with enjoyment. This hints at the novel's having facilitated a nostalgic experience in the reader (that is, nostalgia operating at the level of affect). I will examine this aspect in greater detail in my analysis which follows later in this chapter.

If we consider a reader's pleasure at identifying with the paraphernalia of a past era to be at least partly nostalgic in nature, even books that undercut idealised visions of the past were available to this kind of nostalgic use. Michiel Heyns's *The Children's Day* (2002), for example, has been praised by numerous critics for its careful handling of childhood and memory.[42] On a 20 October 2002 episode of the SAfm radio programme, *The Bookshelf*, guest reviewer Anne Williams had the following exchange about the novel with presenter Alan Swerdlow:

> ANNE. So it's references to things like *Die Volksblad*, *Huisgenoot* and the movies that were showing in the hall at the time. Do you remember "That Darn Cat", and do you remember the much-publicised, under-age love scene in *Romeo and Juliet*?
>
> ALAN. Oh, yes! [Laughter]
>
> ANNE. Well, if you relate to that time in history, this is your book!

A review of Barbara Trapido's *Frankie & Stankie* (2003) on Goodreads suggests that the pleasure of memory may also be a conflicted one:[43]

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[41] Amazon.co.uk's review section further notes that this review was found helpful by four out of four fellow Amazon users.

[42] The novel is a coming-of-age story set in a small Afrikaner town. Critics in the press included Isaacson, "Children's Day 'a recognition of being taken up in apartheid's structures'"; Medalie, "Heyns's debut set apart by wry understatement" and Britz, who reviewed the 2006 Afrikaans translation of the book, *Verkeerdespruit*. It is also worth foregrounding the overlap between the writers of these novels and their reviewers. Heyns is the author of an influential critique of apartheid childhood novels, "The Whole Country's Truth," on which I drew in the previous chapter.

[43] *Frankie & Stankie* is a semi-autobiographical novel about two sisters growing up in 1950s Durban. The novel made the Man Booker Prize longlist in 2003.

> Trapido has a remarkable ability to make you remember. Her description of smells and places is always dead on, right down to big baggy school knickers. She also possesses the gifty [sic] of being able to describe something that is shocking today, that was the norm of yesterday, in a way that makes you laugh and feel embarrased [sic] at the same time. (Appendix D, Figure 2)

Here the reader expresses the ambivalence of nostalgia: in the post-apartheid moment, one laughs and feels embarrassed simultaneously.

I would stress that the pleasure readers gain through the novels' recognisability is not always, or necessarily, related to the lighter side of nostalgia. Reviewing *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*, expatriate South African Ruth Levine found the novel "Gripping!" as the title of her five-star Amazon review declares. Continuing, she explicitly connects the value of the novel to its chiming with her own experience:

> Being South African and growing up with much of what Zadok describes, I found the story easy to follow and despite being so sad a worthwhile read. While there is a lot of imagery, the story reaches out and tells it like it is from the rejection of blacks for the sake of being black and the emotional wounds the country is still recovering from. (Appendix D, Figure 3)

Levine's statement that the novel "reaches out and tells it like it is" despite its having "a lot of imagery" (which I read as an expression of the novel's descriptive complexity) suggests that she feels the novel to be successful in engaging the reader and telling an authentic story of South Africa (the apartheid-focused shorthand for which is the "rejection of blacks" and national "emotional wounds"). Thus, the familiarity she appreciates, which she connects to her own experience of "growing up with much of Zadok describes," does not require the content of the novel to be light or even especially nostalgic in nature. It merely requires a recognisable world to be represented. This is corroborated by the assertion of Mademoiselle S, another Amazon reviewer who gave *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* five stars: "If you didn't grow up in South Africa and you

haven't been broken in life, I don't think you can fully appreciate the significance of this book" (Appendix D, Figure 4).

While familiarity is certainly not *required* by readers for their enjoyment of a novel, it is noteworthy that so many positive responses to the novels by South Africans cite this aspect of the books and make a claim for the texts' authenticity. That many such commentators identify themselves as expatriate South Africans in their reviews suggests that there may also be a form of substitution or projection at work, with the claim for authenticity pertaining as much to the reviewers as to the books.[44] Much as expatriate authors "write back" to South Africa, these expatriate readers affirm their connection to South Africa through reading, and through writing reviews. I would propose further that there is an element of patriotic celebration, or even perhaps cultural cringe, involved in these responses. Given the fact that the South African book market was dominated by titles from the US and UK over this period – a situation whose implications I explore in detail in the following chapter – the novelty of local familiarity, of recognisable "South Africanness," and the pleasure of seeing something of their own context represented, is an aspect of the novels that readers feel is worth emphasising.

3.1.2. Political fatigue

So far, this chapter has contended that these South African readers attributed their emotional involvement in the story to the familiarity of the experiences and the apartheid setting which is depicted in nostalgia novels. It has also been proposed that this involvement, the connection they felt with the material, was to some extent nostalgic in nature. I would like now to suggest further that the pleasure derived from

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[44] In their "Devolving Diasporas" project, which studied postcolonial reading practices, Benwell, Proctor and Robinson found that readers tended to claim a particular contextual locatedness in offering their readings of texts: "One of the observations that arose more or less consistently from the book group recordings was the way in which readers grounded *themselves* in their 'local' contexts in ways that supported, legitimised or justified their interpretations or evaluations of the texts" ("That May" 45).

these texts by many readers also stemmed from an experience of validation – of their own memories, experiences, and, in some cases, their nostalgic inclinations. Richards believes that this is a major component of the appeal of *Innocence* to the South African readers with whom she has engaged:

> You know, people were ashamed, I think, to express the kind of beauty of their childhoods because it was wrong, and perhaps what that book did was give the smells and the sounds and the way you loved your nanny, and those things that people were ashamed to express at that time. They couldn't say it, but the book gave voice to something of that, a kind of poignant [sense of] "Yes, it was beautiful, but there was the ugliness underneath. We all know that, but can we look at the beauty too?" ("Personal Interview")

Here Richards raises the second theme in responses to this writing, which resonates with what I argued earlier in this chapter about the appeal of nostalgia as a retreat from the demands of the post-apartheid political and cultural context, and a response to a national narrative that has little scope for the ordinary lives of individuals. A number of readers value texts which, in their view, go against prescriptive narratives about the past in which white South Africans are inevitably portrayed as the "others" or villains of the country's history (or, more rarely, activist do-gooders). There is, according to Richards, a kind of reassurance, a "great relief," to be found in these books:

> Suddenly after '89, from 1990, there started to be a burst of books that were much more descriptive, that didn't make excuses or say "This was bad," but that described or tried to make sense of the way we were, not in order to advance an agenda, but just to explore it and rummage around in it and see why people were the way they were. And I think it was a great relief for people; I think that's why suddenly there was a burst of reading. I think people got tired of that kind of [thing] – you know, the struggle theatre etc. I think it was a relief in a way to read stuff that explored our past without saying "Bad people!" ("Personal Interview")[45]

[45] It is not in fact clear that there was in fact a "burst of reading" in South Africa: as Chapter 3 will explore, publishers believed that the opposite was the case. However, there was arguably such a surge for Richards's own novel which was a major sales success in South Africa, topping the bestseller list for fifteen weeks.

These books, Richards suggests, provide a space in which these stories about the past, ones that are perhaps kinder to white South Africans, can be expressed and explored.

Significantly, after its publication, *Innocence* was much less rapturously received by a small number of professional reviewers for this very reason. Most of these found the novel's nostalgic sections ethically troubling. Maureen Isaacson, for example, wondered,

> Could it be that Richards's *Roast Chicken* offers an undigested return to our own childhood innocence? Or do we resemble the white Americans whom [James] Baldwin said were still hoping for the recovery of what he called "the jewel of white naivete"? Or "the European innocence, in which the black man does not exist"? ("Defending" 19)

Few of these reviewers were as vituperative as Ronald Suresh Roberts, the Caribbean-born critic who began a debate about the book's literary quality when he lambasted it in *The Sunday Independent* on 24 November 1996 as a sentimental glorification of white naivety. Roberts argued that the novel was part of "a new rash of writing" by white South African authors who included Richards, Mark Behr, Peter Godwin and Justin Cartwright (Roberts 22).[46] This "New White Writing," he contended, recalled white South African childhood without adequately confronting questions of ethical responsibility (22). "For Jo-Anne Richards," he asserted, "childhood's moral imagination is congested with candy floss and conditioning" (22). Contrasting this trend with the "more substantial" writing of Nadine Gordimer, he found post-apartheid white writing lacking (22). His comments betray an irony to which he himself seems to have been unaware, namely that his critique of the nostalgia in *Innocence* relied on his own

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[46] Roberts mentioned specifically Behr's *The Smell of Apples* (1995), Godwin's *Mukiwa* (1996), and Cartwright's *Not Yet Home* (1996).

nostalgic longing for a politically engaged literature whose popularity had waned in the post-apartheid era.[47]

Significantly, the majority of contemporary South African newspaper critics did not hold this negative view of the novel. Before Roberts's attack on *Innocence*, a number of reviewers had hailed the novel as inventive and relevant, arguing that it had important value for the incipient New South Africa. One called it a "masterpiece" (Bosman 36); another noted that it contained "truly exciting freshness" and "addresse[d] matters which, as South Africans, should be of special concern to us all" (Shafto); and yet another described it as "a sensitive and refreshing insight into the paradox of privileged whitehood in South Africa" (Cooper 4). "The narrator's feelings of guilt, responsibility and disillusionment are feelings with which most white South Africans can identify," claimed Toni Gennrich, who specifically highlighted "the nostalgia" as the element "which makes it an enjoyable read" (3). Moreover, Roberts's diatribe caused considerable controversy: passionate rebuttals and responses continued to appear in *The Sunday Independent* well into 1997, making *Innocence* the centre of a public debate about the state of contemporary South African literature and culture. I examine this aspect of the controversy further in Chapter 3 with reference to the state of South African publishing over this period.

The strongest opposition to Roberts came from ordinary readers (Appendix D, Figures 5 and 6). In a letter to the editor entitled "Roberts is just a bitter, opinionated academic," one reader argued that "[t]he implication that white people should edit their childhood memories so as to appease Mr Roberts's present day, politically correct sensibilities is alarmingly conceited and insulting" (Surgison 11). Another reader retaliated by declaring that Roberts "obviously felt it was his duty to rescue us all from

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[47] Roberts went on to write a biography of Gordimer which he self-published as an unauthorised version after Gordimer objected to various elements of the book (Donadio).

the innocence of childhood, from the simplicity of telling things the way they were and, of course, from the dreaded New White Writing" (Furber 11). In these defensive responses we see again both tendencies I have identified in readers' responses to nostalgic writing: the insistence that it "tell[s] things the way they were" and a hostility towards "present day, politically correct sensibilities."

A sentiment among white South African readers against what they feel to be prescriptive or ideologically-charged texts seems to have persisted, and perhaps even grown, since the early 2000s. In describing readers' feedback to him about his novel *The Native Commissioner*, Shaun Johnson observed a similar response: "a particular generation, particularly of whites who are really your parents' generation, related hugely to a story about their era that was not a blaming, not a redemptive story. Make of it what you will" ("Personal Interview"). This appreciation for a complex, personal narrative does not necessarily involve a complacent engagement with the text: "What an uncomfortable but good read" notes one South African Goodreads reviewer of Johnson's novel (Appendix D, Figure 7).

Comments about other novels by readers in online forums echo this preference for books that they perceive to eschew an overtly political focus. Amazon user ditalamocc (in a five-star review) praises *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* for its focus on the personal: "I am South African and it is a great pleasure to read a book written by a South African author that deviates from the usual heavy political subjects" (Appendix D, Figure 8). It is worth noting, however, that not all readers agree on this particular novel. Amanda Patterson's Goodreads review gives the novel only one star out of five, adding the sharp criticism that "Rachel Zadok wishes that she had been born 40 years earlier so that she could be a Nadine Gordimer or soneone [sic] like that. She says that South African writers have to carry on writing about apartheid and angst and drama" (Appendix D, Figure 9). While Patterson's criticism of the novel is not characteristic of

responses across online forums (and would seem to be an unsubstantiated, even unfair, appraisal of the novel), it is noteworthy because Patterson herself is a writing teacher who, according to her company website, writes a book club newsletter that is sent to 14,000 email subscribers (A. Patterson, "Amanda Patterson"). Moreover, Patterson here paradoxically demonstrates the point that among some readers, at least by the mid- to late-2000s, there was considerable fatigue with apartheid-focused fiction, and writing which was felt to toe a particularly "political" ideological line.[48]

3.1.3. The limits of identification

There are, however, detractors in the sampled reviews who take issue with this very aspect of this writing. While they are in the minority – a significant fact in itself – these dissenting voices cannot be overlooked. For example, Deena Dinat, a Goodreads reviewer, strongly criticises *The Native Commissioner*, and the body of writing of which he considers it a part: "The white English speaking South African voice is one so disproportionally well represented, it now seems an act of deliberate and troubling rewriting of apartheid history. There are no bad guys, only men with a troubled conscience" (Appendix D, Figure 10). The specificity of Dinat's critique of the "white English speaking South African voice" indicates a particular attentiveness to the politics of identity in South Africa, and, indeed, Dinat's public Google+ profile suggests that he may identify as an Indian South African, a fact which positions him outside the ideological bounds of WESSA discourse. Dinat's critical review confirms that reading and sense-making practices depend on the reader's subject position – those within the epistemic frame of English South African whiteness are more likely to identify with

[48] On her Goodreads review for John van der Ruit's *Spud*, Patterson again made this point: "At last, a South African novel that is just a novel! Someone up there is finally taking note that South Africans are tired of political memoirs and high brow literary offerings that sell 3000 copies and die a lonely death" ("Spud Review"). I return to the *Spud* phenomenon, and this very point, in Chapter 3, when I address the value of light, nostalgic humour as a commodity in the South African market.

nostalgic writing, and be blind to a text's insularity, while those outside are more likely to take a critical stance towards it.

The case of Christopher Hope's *Heaven Forbid* illustrates this particularly clearly. *Heaven Forbid* was a *Fairlady* book choice that was featured in the "Wellread" section of the glossy women's magazine, along with comments about the novel by a number of readers (Appendix D, Figure 11). All of those quotes are, significantly, white males.[49] Their responses demonstrate a clear disparity between English- and Afrikaans-speaking readers' experiences of the kind of nostalgic writing featured in the novel. The WESSA readers tend to echo the responses I have explored above. A fifty-one-year-old architect associates his enjoyment of the novel with its recognisability: "For a 50-something ou ballie [old codger] like me who grew up there in the '60s, the book is loaded with familiar themes and images, which I enjoyed. Characters and types became real for me" ("Wellread" 131). Another WESSA, a forty-four-year old educator, asserts that: "To tell of these times in this way was a gamble that mostly succeeds – touchingly so, and with a *refreshing disregard for ideology*" ("Wellread" 131; emphasis added).

Two Afrikaans-speaking readers in the group are, however, strongly critical of the novel, finding it lacking in complexity and authenticity.[50] One, a thirty-eight-year-old Public Relations consultant, feels that the novel has "not enough grit in the black and Afrikaner characters, and too little menace in the blinding whiteness of Johannesburg" ("Wellread" 131). A forty-four-year old Afrikaans journalist describes the novel as "just another soutie[51] trying to get to grips with his lost childhood in Africa. Slow and boring, it somehow never moved beyond the views of an outsider"

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[49] As I noted earlier, most fiction readers in South Africa are middle-class women. The panel of readers was, it seems, drawn from a book club for men, all of whom were white.

[50] I have inferred that these readers are Afrikaans based on their Afrikaans names (Emile Joubert and Willem Pretorius) and their common use of the term *soutpiel*, which I explain in the next footnote.

[51] Abbreviation of *soutpiel*, a derogatory Afrikaans term for an English-speaking South African male. The term describes a man who has one foot in Africa and the other in England, with his penis (*piel*) dangling in the salty (*sout*) ocean which separates the two.

("Wellread" 131). Significantly, while a WESSA reader found the book to be "loaded with familiar themes and images," both Afrikaners criticised it for not being authentic enough, citing its "blinding whiteness," its one-dimensional portrayals of others, and its being trapped in "the views of an outsider." The latter is, as I have already suggested, one of the pitfalls of an "expatriate literature."

The same disparity between English and Afrikaans responses to nostalgic literature is apparent in newspaper reviews of Lisa Fugard's *Skinner's Drift*. English-speaking reviewers in *The Citizen* and *The Sunday Independent*, respectively, referred to it as "one of the best South African novels I have ever read" (Paterson 6), and noted that the "strength of this novel is really in its verisimilitude" (Hurry 18). In contrast, an Afrikaans journalist in *Beeld* noted in a review entitled "Fugard se Afrikaners oortuig nie" ("Fugard's Afrikaners aren't convincing") that the novel not only contained numerous errors in its use of the Afrikaans language, but also failed to ring true in its portrayal of Afrikaners: "Benewens die taal- en spelfoute het die invalshoek van *Skinner's Drift* my as Afrikaanse leser egter nie oortuig nie" ("In addition to the language and spelling errors, the perspective of Skinner's Drift did not convince me as an Afrikaans reader"; Nel 11). These clear discrepancies between the reception of this writing by English and Afrikaans readers suggest that the genre tends to be affecting and convincing only to those who share its (WESSA) purview.

3.1.4. "A small, impalpable feeling of nostalgia": responses to **I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)**

It is a telling fact that the most common tendencies in the responses to nostalgic novels by white (predominantly WESSA) readers I have surveyed make little reference to the noteworthy elements of plot, characterisation and literary genealogy that I examined in depth in Chapter 1. Rather, they dwell on the familiarity of the setting and experiences depicted in this writing, and its seemingly non-political, or personal, stance towards the

past. This is certainly in part an illustration of the difference between the critic's and the ordinary reader's approaches to reading literature. But it may also suggest that the appeal of nostalgic novels for these readers did not, or at least not consciously, have very much to do with these facets of the texts. This is an aspect of the phenomenon which is well demonstrated by South African readers' responses to Denis Hirson's *I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)* (hereafter *King Kong*), which was published in 2004. The book is a poetic memoir of Hirson's childhood, experimental in form, at least in the South African context, and without a conventional plot, which nonetheless received remarkably warm and creative responses from critics and ordinary readers alike. Such an exuberant reception for such an unusual literary text makes *King Kong* a key example of nostalgia's appeal in this context.

Combining memoir and poetic form, *King Kong* evokes the author's South African childhood experiences in vivid and affective detail. Modelled on Georges Perec's *Je me souviens* (1978), which documented life in France in the years following the Second World War, and was itself inspired by Joe Brainard's *I Remember* (1970), Hirson's text presents fragments of everyday life in Johannesburg in the 1960s and 1970s. Like *Je me souviens*, each statement begins with the phrase "I remember" and recounts events and experiences, both personal and national, from Hirson's youth. These include reminiscences of popular and consumer culture, such as, "I remember Jeremy Taylor singing: Ag pleez Daddy won't you take us to the drive-in" and "I remember Chappies bubble-gum with Did You Know? questions on the wrapper, and Wick's which was thick and pink and covered in fine white powder" (*King Kong* 21, 122). Significantly, Hirson does not elide the ethical, economic and political complexities of growing up as a privileged white child in apartheid South Africa. The country's fraught political climate played an important role in Hirson's own childhood: his father, Baruch Hirson, was jailed for nine years of it due to his anti-apartheid

activities. These other everyday realities are therefore also the subject of his reminiscence:

> I remember sitting in our school-bus on the day that John Harris[52] was hanged, looking around at all the boys in their uniforms, trying to imagine him and them and me in the same country at the same time, and not managing.
>
> . . . .
>
> I remember that the only thing I shared with boys at school about my father being in jail was the taboo of speaking about him.
>
> I remember blank spaces in the newspaper and other publications to escape censorship. (*King Kong* 71–72)

The text's form itself mimics the connotative nature of remembering. The statements are spaced apart from one another on the page, allowing for loose, associative connections to be made between these memories by the reader:

> I remember the game of "sardines", when you hid and whoever found you hid with you.
>
> I remember sardine tins with keys.
>
> I remember the irresistible attraction of lucky dips. (*King Kong* 121)

Hirson has noted that Perec's explicit aim in *Je me souviens* is to elicit "a small, impalpable feeling of nostalgia" in the reader (Perec qtd. in *White Scars* 140). Judging by the responses to *King Kong* by both reviewers and ordinary readers, which I address below, this is something that Hirson achieved in his own poetic memoir. Moreover, as the Chapter 3 will further explore, this reception translated into significant book sales and bestseller status in South Africa, prompting a sequel, *We Walk Straight So You*

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[52] John Harris was an anti-apartheid activist who was executed for having bombed the Johannesburg Railway Station in 1964.

Better Get Out The Way (hereafter *We Walk Straight*), in 2005. Most contemporary reviews in the press focus on the kinds of memories that Hirson records. As with nostalgia novels, the "agonisingly familiar" (Bartlett) nature of the experiences is something that is particularly emphasised.[53] Another common thread in reviews is what the book means for an understanding of the South African past, and where ordinary (white) people's life histories might fit in contemporary narratives about South African history. Pat Schwartz, for example, argues of *We Walk Straight* that "[t]his captivating book is funny and moving and tender and ultimately tells us more about our country and ourselves than many a more obviously serious work" (Schwartz). Almost all the reviews of the text, which are written by white reviewers, tend to speak in generalisations about the familiarity of the lifestyle Hirson describes, revealing an implicit presumption that readers of the books (and the reviews) would share the experiences recounted in the book, many of which are specific to white, middle-class, urban South African experience of the period represented. A notable exception to this trend is Robert Berold, who stresses the parochialism of the lifestyle Hirson describes even as he praised its merits: "White South Africans, or white children at any rate, had a baffled innocence mixed in with their violence and racism, and it is this innocence that Hirson salvages so well" (11). He continues: "For those (including the next generation of white kids) who are not sure if whites living under apartheid were human, this is a wonderful book to read" (11). Berold's review also emphasises that one of the strongest attractions of the book is that it seems to render nostalgia a legitimate and reflective means of engaging with the past, that it gives ordinary apartheid a human face, emphasising its everyday banalities.

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[53] See also Viall's "Playful and Poetic" and Horler's "A World Gone By" for similar responses.

Ordinary readers responded just as enthusiastically to the book. Patterson, the Goodreads user I quoted earlier, posted a review for *We Walk Straight* which commented on both books, exclaiming: "Hirson's memories will take you back in time so vividly that they will leave you breathless" (Appendix D, Figure 12).[54] The most significant aspect of readers' responses to *King Kong* was the fact that the book attracted a number of tributes and imitations by readers (Appendix E contains excerpts from these). There seems to be something especially evocative in the combination of the text's nostalgic content, its repetitive, litany-like form, and those white spaces on the page, which invites, perhaps even compels, readers to participate in its memory work by supplementing the text with their own reminiscences. In a 2009 editorial for the magazine *Fairlady*, Suzy Brokensha recalls having read the book with her book club, and having found it "hugely evocative – so much so that after several glasses of wine, we all spontaneously launched into our own 'I remembers' (not all of them about South Africa, and not all of them printable, but that's another story)" (Brokensha). In 2012, YouTube user Arixkaapie posted a series of video montages of South African radio clips, images of Cape Town in the past, and text slides of his own "I remembers."[55] Also inspired by Hirson, the blogger Jeanne Horak-Druiff (an expatriate who writes under the name Cooksister) compiled and published two posts for the *SA Rocks* website which featured her own nostalgic "I remembers," along with enthusiastic responses from online readers.[56] Another blogger named Doc created a whole website called "It's 1970 Now" which comprises two lengthy posts about South Africa in the

[54] Davie's piece on *King Kong* in "Johannesburg Books" gives a similar response.

[55] The first video may be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3InWKGw1Nc.

[56] Blogposts are a useful resource in this case, not only because they contain direct comments by readers about their experience of *King Kong*, but also because, as readers' imitations of the text, they demonstrate how effectively *King Kong*'s form evokes nostalgia (and what is imitation, if not a form of reading?). Additionally, as a form, the blogpost's capacity to include comments by other readers makes it particularly compelling evidence for the infectious spread of nostalgia in this context.

1970s, using Hirson's textual form, but with the addition of images. The author's profile explains:

> Most people my age were blissfully unaware of the South African political situation in the 70's. This blog hopes to capture that innocence and prod some memories of that era as well as serve as a record of ordinary things of those days. I was inspired by Denis Hirson's fabulous book "I remember...King Kong (the boxer)" and admit to pinching the style his book was written in.

Here again, we find nostalgia and the insularity of whiteness paired together. The statement that "[m]ost people my age were blissfully unaware of the South African political situation in the 70's" assumes a white audience that will identify with the experiences the blog recounts.[57] In fact, the majority of South Africans of Doc's age, who were certainly not of his race or class, would have been entirely aware of the country's oppressive political and economic policies through their direct impact on their lives.

This parochialism is one of the greatest risks of this kind of nostalgic project, and a criticism that has been levelled at *King Kong*'s antecedent, *Je me souviens*. Gilbert Adair notes of Perec's work that its specificity, and therefore its potential to exclude those who cannot identify with the experiences it represents, is its weakness:

> its "memories" are rather seeds of memory planted by the author in tidily aligned rows to be cultivated by someone else (to wit, the reader, except that from the outset he or she has to be an "ideal reader," belonging more or less to the author's own generation and nationality and sharing more or less his own cultural history). (Adair 101)

As Adair suggests, Perec's text, and Hirson's by extension, relies on a very particular reader, and a very particular reading practice, for its efficacy. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that *King Kong*, as well as the kinds of memory work it stimulates, seems to

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[57] Doc's profile picture and information indicates that he is white, male, and was born in 1964.

have been taken up primarily by WESSA readers. Many of the kinds of experiences recounted in the book would not have been shared by those outside of Hirson's social and economic sphere. As Chapter 3 will further explore, this specific appeal had implications for how it fared with British publishers.

Yet it is not entirely true that the book's nostalgic power was limited to white readers. The book's front matter features a quotation by Njabulo Ndebele in praise of the text. There, he reveals that, as he read it, the book's poetic form created a "miracle of literary incantation" in which he was caught up, and through which he "began to enjoy the recall of memory through instantaneous vignettes of [his] own."[58] In December 2005, Professor Jonathan Jansen, a well-known cultural commentator and the Dean of Education at the University of Pretoria at the time, published a piece in the Afrikaans newspaper *Beeld* entitled "Kindertydse Herinneringe" ("Childhood Memories"). Beginning each line with "Ek onthou" ("I remember"), Jansen acknowledged that he was inspired by "Denis Hirson se uitnemende boek" ("Denis Hirson's outstanding book"). Jansen's own recollections of his childhood as a coloured South African are notably different from Hirson's, however: "Ek onthou hoe ons elke Sondag ten minste vier keer per dag die vier myl kerk toe en terug gestap het / Ek onthou dat ons woorde soos 'bloedbad' gebruik het omdat ons geglo het Afrikaners sou tot die bitter einde veg om die land in wit hande te hou" (12).[59] These responses suggest that the text's litanic form – its incantatory quality, the looseness of its associations and even that white space on the page – also invites and makes room for alternative experiences and subjectivities to be expressed. It is noteworthy, however, that I can find

[58] Given the fact that this quotation did not originate in a published review, however, it is likely to have been solicited specially for the book, suggesting that Ndebele's exposure to the text was possibly engineered.

[59] "I remember how every Sunday we'd walk the four miles to and from church at least four times in a day / I remember that we used words like 'bloodbath' because we believed that Afrikaners would fight until the bitter end to keep the country in white hands."

no responses to the text from ordinary black South African readers beyond the intelligentsia.

3.2. Analysis: the memory work of nostalgic writing

I now return to the anonymous Amazon reviewer's statement about *Innocence* that I cited earlier: "[Richards] sums up the South African life during the 60's and 70's excellently, and so much so that you feel you become part of the story" (A Customer). There, I interpreted the idea of "becom[ing] part of the story" as this reader's feeling of being drawn into the world of the novel, her becoming emotionally involved in it, immersed through a process of identification with the context and the experiences it describes. I wish to push this point a step further, albeit speculatively, by referring to another reader response study that examines an analogous dynamic between reader, text and context.

Mary Anne Moffitt's 1993 ethnographic investigation of female adolescent romance readers in the US offers a cogent analysis of how meaning emerges for readers in a specific social, historical and ideological context. Moffitt uses the articulation model developed by Stuart Hall to construe "meaning as *an historical moment* in which cultural forces, textual features, and social pressures on the individual receiver all intersect and articulate meaning to the receiver" (234). That is, the interaction of readers' social, economic and cultural positions and contexts are fundamentally implicated in the kinds of meaning and meanings they derive from a text. As Moffitt puts it, "the text *has* meaning and *articulates* meaning because events and characters portrayed in the text speak to the reader's lived experiences and felt social expectations" (239). For Moffitt's teenage romance readers, social pressures to look and act a certain way, fear of group and partner rejection, as well as the need to negotiate the patriarchal, capitalistic structures of their society, combined in their reading practices. The formulaic nature of the romance genre, Moffitt suggests, reinforces the

ideological requirements of patriarchy, providing happy endings premised on, for example, heterosexual relationship and wealth.

Yet it would be erroneous to assume that readers are simply and invariably taken in by a text's ideological function. Rather, readers are active participants in the interpretation of texts: they misread, part-read and extract from texts in the process of reading, adapting them to their own needs and desires, *as well as* being affected by the ideological messages conveyed in them. In *Reading Cultures*, Molly Abel Travis argues that readers "are both constructed and constructing" in their reading practices (6). Elizabeth Long, too, suggests that the primary understanding of the purpose of literature among reading group participants is as "equipment for living" (131), implying that many readers take quite instrumental approaches to the books they read.[60]

Moffitt finds that her adolescent readers interpreted romance texts as reflecting real-life relationships and situations, and looked to the novels for information about life situations they were yet to face. Identifying with the romance heroines, they experienced these fictional situations through them, and derived real pleasure as well as a sense of *empowerment* from the characters' actions in the text. Fantasy is intimately involved here as it is partly their immersive reading experience that allowed this kind of identification. Moffitt notes an evident blurring of the distinction between fantasy and the real in her readers' engagements with romance novels, arguing that "[f]or most readers the reading practice involves their complete immersion in the fantasy of the romance story and a pseudoexperience of the real" (246). Moreover, emphasising the enjoyment they took from characters' abilities to behave in ways they perceived to be impossible for them, such as "telling a guy off" (241), readers described changes in their actions and feelings as a result of reading romance novels – including

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[60] This is a reading practice especially championed by Oprah Winfrey in her Book Club, as Barnard has thoughtfully analysed in "Oprah's Paton."

modifications in their behaviour and appearance – which they felt reflected a greater sense of agency in their lives.

Yet Moffitt finds that, while her adolescent readers may have perceived their emotional investment in novels to be empowering to them in their real lives, this effect did not last: "the empowerment these readers feel is nevertheless experienced only momentarily, only during the moment of reading or brief periods afterwards. . . . Real changes in their social position, gender position, character, physical traits, or behaviors have not been accomplished" (247). The suggestion here is that romance reading provided only temporary relief to these readers, and could not make more material changes in their lives or behaviour. From a reader response point of view, however, this fact is not more important than the readers' own feelings that romance reading was a helpful resource to them. In *Reading the Romance*, Radway, too, observes that her group of Smithton romance readers in the 1970s and 1980s felt that their similarly immersive and fantasy-rich reading experiences, which they explicitly associated with asserting their own right to leisure time, impacted their lives in real and positive ways:

> Although this experience [the joy derived from fantasy in reading romance novels] *is* vicarious, the pleasure it induces is nonetheless real. It seems to sustain them, at least temporarily, for they believe reading helps to make them happier people and endows them with renewed hope and greater energy to fulfill their duty to others. (Radway 100)

Radway argues further that this sustaining pleasure is due to the novels' "supplying vicariously certain needs that, if presented as demands in the real world, might otherwise lead to the reordering of heterosexual relationships" (217). For these readers, romance reading addressed needs that could not otherwise be accommodated in their current contexts – whether within their relationships, or the gender roles and belief systems to which they subscribed.

The kind of immersive, escapist experience that Moffitt's (and Radway's) readers report, and their consequent feelings of empowerment, are what I wish to bring to bear on the South African reader response trends that I have identified above. There are certainly significant differences between these contexts and the work of the romance and nostalgia genres. Primary among these is the *actual* disempowered status of women in the patriarchal US culture in which romance reading flourished versus the merely *perceived* disempowerment of certain white South Africans in the post-apartheid moment where white economic and cultural privilege persists. Yet, I would suggest that there are useful analogies to be drawn in the ways in which romance readers associate feelings of empowerment with the experiences of identification and emotional investment that are part of their reading of these novels. If Moffitt's conclusion can be usefully translated to the (white, English-speaking) South African reader's situation, we might view the process of reading as offering certain readers an escape from feelings of disempowerment, precariousness and ambivalence – sentiments which, as I argued earlier in this chapter, threatened (though perhaps also underlay) many white South African narratives of self in this period. To "become part of the story" would be, therefore, to be immersed in a sense of affirming continuity between the past and the present, and, perhaps, to experience once more the pleasures of a world that is irretrievable.

Through the work of preservation they offer – (re)creating the lost time of childhood, staging various kinds of returns to the apartheid past – nostalgic texts become archives of this past, and triggers for memory, not only for writers, but also for readers. In this, they function much like the souvenir, as theorised by Susan Stewart. For Stewart, the souvenir object serves a double purpose: "to authenticate a past or otherwise remote experience and, at the same time, to discredit the present" (139). The immediacy of the physical experience of the object provides the subject access to the

authenticity of a past experience which becomes more real, more significant, than the present, for "[t]he present is either too impersonal, too looming, or too alienating compared to the intimate and direct experience of contact which the souvenir has as its referent. The referent is authenticity" (Stewart 139). Drawing on Stewart's comments about nostalgic narrative, I would suggest that sense of the real that she attributes to the physical object is also something we see reflected in the experience of nostalgia through reading. In this case, the object is an imagined one: it is the referent of the text, the world represented in a novel, which is what Salman Rushdie might call an "imaginary homeland[]" (10). The analogy is an imperfect one, but it is, as I have demonstrated, borne out by readers' comments about the authenticity they experience in these texts. Stewart emphasises how nostalgia recreates and reanimates the past through narrative: "By the narrative process of nostalgic reconstruction the present is denied and the past takes on an authenticity of being, an authenticity which, ironically, it can achieve only through narrative" (23). In other words, a nostalgic narrative allows the past to be (re)constructed, preserved, and experienced in a profoundly affective and immediate way. Applied to the nostalgia genre, Stewart's insight suggests that we may view nostalgic texts as narrative reconstructions of memory which recreate a lost world that holds more affective power, and seems more authentic, than the present. Therefore, even as the narratives of childhood and return are deployed by writers for higher confessional or critical ends, they also provide a means of recreating the past in sensuous detail, to which readers are granted imaginative access.

Stewart suggests that there is an inwardness, a privacy, about the souvenir that enables a personal nostalgic reverie which is set in contrast to the vicissitudes of history: "Temporally, the souvenir moves history into private time" (138). Hence, the demands of history become subordinate to the investments of the private, the personal experiences of lived time and memory. Nostalgia is, as Boym argues, "about the

relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory" (xvi), but in relation to the souvenir, it affirms the lives of ordinary individuals, the small sensory details and textures of quotidian life in the past that may not be represented in official historical accounts of an era. In fact, the narrative that is generated by the souvenir "reaches only 'behind,' spiraling in a continually inward movement rather than outward toward the future" (135).[61] The souvenir therefore creates a space of nostalgia and interiority that is removed from the historical and political demands of the present. As Hook observes, "the 'sweetness' of nostalgia – as in the fetish – perhaps has more to do with what *it has enabled one to avoid*, what is screened, than with the obvious content of what has been recalled" (*Postapartheid* 183). In other words, the souvenir enables a work of memory that is also a kind of forgetting.

Through the souvenir text, readers might revel unquestioned in a nostalgic connection to this past time (and perhaps a past self), or have a vicarious cathartic experience of homecoming in which tensions are resolved in the character's life stories that are, perhaps, irresolvable in their own. Additionally, as I argued in Chapter 1, the kinds of resolutions offered by and within many nostalgia novels are essentially restorative to and protective of white selfhood, requiring the protagonists to make little sacrifice in the present to move from estrangement to incipient belonging, from doubt and cynicism to hope. This narrative trajectory in itself may be reassuring to white readers who feel besieged by social and political change. While I can suggest this last point only speculatively as there is little evidence of it in readers' reviews (which do not tend to comment at this level), the fact that the kinds of narratives of self in circulation among white South Africans in the post-apartheid period were characterised by

[61] The narrative movement in much of the nostalgia genre purports to be oriented towards the future, but, as I argued in Chapter 1, the narrative and emotional investment of many of these texts remains in the past.

significant elements of uncertainty and defensiveness suggests that this kind of memory work might also have been especially appealing.

Their persistent association of their enjoyment of a text with its familiarity, with their identification with the setting and experiences described in it, suggests that many WESSA readers felt a profound sense of validation in perceiving their own past experiences and memories to be mirrored in this way. Discussing how nostalgia is so often fuelled by the sharing of memories through conversation, Davis describes how this activity can be enormously reassuring. "What we witness in this kind of nostalgic memory exchange is," he argues, "the wonderment of the revelation of how much more alike than different our 'secret' pasts are" and this "becomes the basis for deepening our sentimental ties to others and for reassuring us that we are not that strange after all" (43). Davis's observation also implies that the reassurance felt in nostalgic exchange has clear implications for the social realm: this kind of sharing, he asserts, has a cohering function, it can be "the basis for deepening our sentimental ties to others."[62] Part of the validation experienced by these readers of nostalgic writing comes, I would suggest, from the creation of a virtual community of memory, or at least an imagined one, through the process of reading and identifying with the text. To return to the anonymous Amazon reviewer's phrase, readers "become part of the story" by feeling part of this community – an inclusion which may counteract general feelings of loss and marginalisation that have been common in post-apartheid white narratives of self. In fact, through their personal responses in public forums, readers have included themselves actively by participating in the memory work performed by nostalgic texts. While the supplementary personal memory texts produced by readers in response to Hirson's *King Kong* and *We Walk Straight* demonstrate this particularly clearly, it is

[62] We might recall Halbwach's notion of collective memory here, and how it functions to cohere and preserve communities and community identities.

also evident in the reviews in which readers assert their own similar experiences or identification with a novel.

Inevitably, the idea of such an imagined community of memory raises questions of inclusion and exclusion, especially given the probability that most readers of these texts, and indeed the overwhelming majority of those who have offered opinions about them in public forums, are middle-class English-speaking whites. If "nostalgic memory exchange" relies on shared experiences and memories, then the bonding it engenders risks solidifying static group identities and reinforcing boundaries between them rather than fostering communication, community and hybridity across them. It is significant that few, if any, WESSA readers noted the parochial nature of the experiences with which they identified in their reviews, and that it was only Afrikaner readers who took issue with Hope's *Heaven Forbid* and Fugard's *Skinner's Drift* in my sample. While the example of *King Kong* demonstrates that nostalgic writing does not necessarily entrench such circumscribed community boundaries, it is notable that Hirson's text is the exception in this regard, as it is in its experimental form.

Moffitt argues that the empowering effects of being drawn into a romance novel last only momentarily. The same could be true for the experiences of the white South African readers of nostalgic texts. If this is the case, we might read the supplementary memory texts produced by readers in response to Hirson's books differently, as reflecting a desire to prolong a nostalgic pleasure which is by nature transient (that "small, impalpable feeling of nostalgia"). It is likely, then, that reading nostalgic texts would have neither diminished readers' inclinations towards nostalgia, nor necessarily empowered them to come to terms with their own memories, or indeed the politics of memory in post-apartheid South Africa. Rather than making a case for post-apartheid nostalgic writing's efficacy in shaping white South African readers' subjectivities, however, I wish simply to suggest that readers' own inclination towards nostalgia was

involved in the appeal of this writing to them, particularly because these readers experienced nostalgic writing as validating.[63] Given the post-apartheid cultural and political context in which these texts were consumed, which I explored in the first half of the chapter, this research suggests that they were read by these readers in ways that aligned with other discourses of whiteness prevalent at the time.

But we might also view the temporariness of this writing's empowerment (or escapist) effect as successfully serving a different kind of end for a different group of people: that is, those in the book industry. The publishing industry essentially relies on what South African publisher Jeremy Boraine calls "the most screwed up business model, because [it] create[s] hundreds of thousands of millions of unique products around the world" which must then be sold to buyers (Ball and Boraine). In this kind of marketplace, there is a commercial logic to a genre like romance: the temporary nature of its satisfaction perpetuates a desire for a particular formula, and therefore ensures continued demand for similar products. Essentially, genre texts provide a way of scratching an itch in their readers without relieving it completely. To be sure, the romance genre operates at a vastly greater scale than post-apartheid nostalgic literature, and certainly seems to involve a far more conscious propagation of the generic formula (Radway 29; Moffitt 242). I do, however, want to suggest that the ways in which these nostalgia texts were read by white South African readers had commercial implications for publishers in this period. It is this aspect of the nostalgic boom that I address in greater detail in Chapter 3.

[63] The mere popularity of a text or genre need not entail that its effect on a reader or culture is especially significant. As Rose notes, "Equally 'popular' texts do not necessarily have equal influence: some transform the lives of their readers, whereas others are consumed like literary chewing gum, leaving no taste behind" (430).

4. Conclusion

This chapter has considered the appeal of nostalgia as a mode of memory and a form of literature to white South Africans in the post-apartheid moment. I have argued that white nostalgic writing appeared in South Africa at a time when nostalgia was an ambivalent but systemic cultural presence, particularly among those white South Africans (the majority, according to contemporary sociological accounts) who were still defensively clinging to narratives of white identity that had lost their purchase in the post-apartheid present. If this writing is to some extent a belated and (largely) expatriate literature, as I argued in Chapter 1, these features made the genre especially conducive to reflecting and feeding certain kinds of post-apartheid nostalgias and nostalgic identifications in WESSA readers in particular. By analysing the responses of a sample of ordinary South African readers to this writing, I have suggested that nostalgia was implicated in their reading experiences, and the pleasure they derived from these works. In effect, the book of nostalgia comes to function like a souvenir, providing the reader with a temporary experience of the lost apartheid world – a reassuring object of memory to be mulled over and cherished by those for whom this home is irretrievable. The appeal of these experiences is, however, circumscribed, depending to a great extent on an identification with the culturally, socially, and economically specific world depicted in the texts.

Ultimately, in conversation with the previous chapter's consideration of the literary features of nostalgic texts and the author's perspective, this chapter submits that the phenomenon of the nostalgia genre effectively involved a consoling dynamic in which predominantly white English-speaking writers produced texts for the nostalgic pleasure of predominantly white English-speaking readers. In proposing this account, however, it becomes increasingly apparent that a crucial coordinate in this schema is missing. As Radway argues, "[b]ook buying . . . cannot be reduced to a simple

interaction between a book and a reader. It is an event that is affected and at least partially controlled by the material nature of book publishing as a socially organized technology of production and distribution" (20). It is to this aspect of the post-apartheid nostalgia boom that I turn in the next chapter, where I argue that the state and involvement of the publishing industry, both in South Africa and globally, had a profound effect on the shaping of this genre both as a literary trend and in its particular material manifestations.

Chapter 3

"The Golden Days of Apartheid": Publishing Post-Apartheid Nostalgia

> *Analyze trends as we may, we are not going to find, at least in South African publishing as it presently exists, the seeds of any renaissance of writing and creativity that could fuel a conference of African bibliophiles in the next century. Speculative laments in the book pages of our newspapers confirm the barrenness of our literary landscape and the lack of any real signs of vitality in creative writing. Six years after Mandela's release, we still await a literary explosion.*
>
> Eve Horwitz Gray, "The Sad Ironies of South African Publishing Today"

> *Oh, the plot is standard ex-pat. We have had about twenty of those, treating us to their momentous return to the mother country and the examination of their own entrails and consciences. . . . Your novel, like the others before it, will sell reasonably well and be commended in the press. The Brits like being reminded that South Africa is after all as backward as they always suspected before they were obliged, for a short while, to profess admiration.*
>
> Michiel Heyns, *Lost Ground*

1. Introduction

In the mid-1990s, the book pages of South African newspapers were host to substantial debate about the state of South African publishing, as the 1996 quotation from Eve Horwitz Gray in this chapter's first epigraph suggests. In these discussions, the lack of investment in new black authors and innovative publishing programmes, the overwhelming influence of Anglo-American publishing in the marketplace, and the demographic make-up of local publishers were central to the question of how South African literature would develop in the post-apartheid moment. "We have to emerge,"

Gray noted at the time, "from the grip of the past, a mould that does not crack easily" (263). It is the shape of this mould, and the halting process of its cracking, that I take as my focus in this chapter, for it is out of this context that post-apartheid nostalgic writing developed as a phenomenon in the marketplace. In the following discussion, I explore this emergence across the 1990s and into the new millennium, tracing the operation of nostalgia and the nostalgic book as commodities in the market, along with the role of the publishing industry in fostering and shaping this trend. As this focus suggests, this chapter offers a different, more specifically book historical, analysis of nostalgic white writing, which Chapters 1 and 2 examined from broadly literary critical and sociological perspectives, respectively.

From the previous chapter's discussion, it is clear that there were readers in post-apartheid South Africa who would enjoy nostalgic white writing. Just how significant a market they might have comprised for publishers, and to what extent this market influenced the rise of the nostalgia genre are, however, more complicated questions. Although white nostalgic books have tended to sell fairly well in the South African market, to attribute their proliferation to a conscious (and perhaps cynical) effort on publishers' parts to capitalise on nostalgia's appeal belies the considerably more involved tangle of different agents, values and industry conditions which was involved in the publication and circulation of this literature, as the following discussion will show. The proliferation of post-apartheid nostalgic white writing also needs to be understood as a product of the complex and uneven relationships between various coordinates in the international literary field, which Pascale Casanova describes as a "world republic of letters" whose "history is of incessant struggle and competition over the very nature of literature itself" (11, 12). In fact, the majority of the more conventional novels in the nostalgia genre as I have defined it originated *outside* South Africa in the Anglo-American book industry, where this literature has had an altogether different appeal. It is

this multifaceted material and commercial context, and the value of nostalgic writing within it, that forms the focus of this chapter.

Value in the publishing field may be understood as a book's capacity to satisfy one of two criteria, as John B. Thompson has noted (10). The first of these is its worth as an economic commodity, which is its sales potential. The second is its worth as a cultural commodity, which involves its ability to generate symbolic capital, which is Pierre Bourdieu's term for "the recognition, institutionalized or not, that [agents] receive from a group," that is, "prestige, reputation, fame etc." (*Language* 72, 230). As Thompson suggests, for publishers, symbolic capital comprises, among other things, a book's "potential for winning various forms of recognition such as prizes and glowing reviews" (10). It may be converted into economic capital by strengthening a publisher's position in the field through making the house more appealing to authors, agents, booksellers and reviewers, or by increasing the sales of a particular book significantly (Thompson 8).[1]

In seeking to address nostalgia's worth as a commodity in the post-apartheid literary field in these terms, the discussion that follows comprises two major sections, both of which draw on industry statistics and interviews conducted with various publishing industry agents in South Africa and the UK.[2] Continuing on from the previous chapter's focus on South African readers, the first half of the chapter explores the South African book-buying market and the local publishing context of the 1990s and 2000s. It addresses the equivocal worth of nostalgic white writing for the South African book industry during a period of significant change, both financial and ideological, in which

[1] Insofar as publishers see themselves as "cultural mediators and arbitrators of quality and taste," the recognition of a firm as a purveyor of quality, however that might be conceived, is important to its brand, or its imprint's brand (Thompson 8). Bourdieu suggests that symbolic capital should in fact "be understood as economic or political capital that is disavowed" and "a 'credit' which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees 'economic' profits" (*Field* 75).

[2] Appendix F contains details of publication, sales figures and awards for a range of works surveyed for this research, including the novels analysed in Chapter 1, as well as memoirs from Zimbabwe, and examples of black South African nostalgic writing.

the question of the market for literature came to the fore. In the second half of the chapter, the scope of the discussion broadens to address the currency of post-apartheid nostalgic writing within the international literary field, and the Anglo-American publishing industry in particular. By all accounts, these books appeared during a period in which international interest in trade books from or about South Africa surged only briefly before dwindling. Why these nostalgic South African texts successfully ran the publishing gauntlet overseas where many others had failed, and what effect publication in the Anglo-American industry had on the presentation and reception of these books in the marketplace, are the questions which animate the discussion in this section. Central to these is South African literature's symbolic value, and indeed its meaning as a category, in the postcolonial field.

2. South African publishing and post-apartheid nostalgia

To understand the proliferation of nostalgic white writing in the post-apartheid period, it is vital to take into account the state of the South African book industry over the past two decades. A number of factors are salient in this regard, which I will address in turn in the following discussion. First are the conditions which have remained relatively constant throughout the post-apartheid era: the size and makeup of the market for literature, the composition of the publishing industry, and the dominance of British books in the marketplace. Second are the changing material conditions under which publishing in South Africa operated post-1994, which I chart in two distinct periods (pre- and post-2004), and in which nostalgic books were implicated in slightly different ways.

2.1. A limited market, an insular industry, international competition

The South African market for general trade books during the 1990s and early 2000s was very small. In 2000, it was suggested that South Africa had "a book-buying community of around 400 000 people out of a population of over 40 million [which is 1%] – with

illiteracy levels running at between 12 and 15 million people" (Combrinck and Davey 227). This community, moreover, purchased relatively little fiction, and even less local fiction.[3] This feature persists to the present, where, in English literary fiction, publishers' sales goals are decidedly modest: Pan Macmillan South Africa expects to sell around 1,500 copies of a work (Morris); for Kwela, the break-even point is 800 copies, though they hope to sell 2,000 (Woodhouse). In 2009 the average print run across the industry for an English South African fiction title was 2,000 copies, and sales of only 5,000 copies are needed for an English-language title to be considered a bestseller in South Africa (Galloway, "Current" 211).[4] In a self-perpetuating cycle, such small print runs have driven up book prices, making them prohibitive for the majority of the country's population.

As the publishers and industry players see it, the buyers of trade books over this time, and fiction in particular, were mostly white and mostly middle class.[5] Maggie Davey, publisher at Jacana, has gone so far as to describe the market as "resolutely . . . white middle class" ("Personal Interview 1"). In *Get Your Book Published in 30 (Relatively) Easy Steps: A Hands-on Guide for South African Authors* (2010), Basil van Rooyen, a veteran South African publisher, suggests similarly that "[d]emographically the profile of a buyer of trade books in South Africa could be described as mainly affluent, urbanised, well educated – and white," and adds that "the core market is firmly

[3] Non-fiction is the South African trade publishing market's strongest sector. James Woodhouse of Kwela summarised the situation from his point of view: "60-65% of sales in this country are driven by non-fiction. The other 35-40% is fiction. Of that 35% of sales I think it's something like 14% . . . is local fiction. . . . Of that 14%, 10% is Afrikaans, and the 4% is local English sales. Of that 4%, almost all of it is *Spud*" (the first three novels in the *Spud* series have sold over half a million copies in South Africa alone). Morris noted in our interview that "South Africans are fascinated by current affairs and politics and their own stories," adding that "non-fiction . . . allow[s] us to publish the literary fiction."

[4] The Afrikaans market is significantly larger than the English, given that it is endemic to South Africa; there has also been an investment in the community identity fostered by this literature. Afrikaans bestsellers may sell ten times as many as their English counterparts (Galloway, "Current" 211).

[5] Whether or not the demographics of book-buyers have changed significantly in the past few years, this perception still persists among publishers.

entrenched in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg and the southern suburbs of Cape Town" (420–21). As I noted in Chapter 2, the 2006 *National Survey into the Reading and Book Reading Behaviour of Adult South Africans* corroborates these impressions, but research in this area is limited, and publishers themselves in fact do little demographic market research. In our interview, James Woodhouse, current publisher at Kwela, described the situation in the early 2000s as follows:

> I think that when I first worked [at Kwela] . . . this [the white middle class] was who we thought the market was. I think it's very difficult now; we don't really do demographics on the market, so we don't really know. . . . We have no idea why people buy books. . . . I've never seen any hard demographics to tell us anything. (Woodhouse)

For the most part, therefore, publishing decisions in South Africa are made in the absence of real data about book buyers.[6]

These publishers' conception of the market must be viewed in relation to the composition of the South African book industry, and its editorial departments in particular, over this time. The demographics of the publishing industry in the 1990s and 2000s show a distinct correlation with the market. In 1996, Gray described a "particularly vicious circle, in which a predominantly white publishing industry direct[ed] itself towards a predominantly white and middle-class reading public in an ever-decreasing circle" (262). Six years later in 2002, the situation had not changed significantly: approximately 45% of editorial staff in publishing were white females, where the nearest two demographic groups were black females at 21% and white males at 16% (Galloway, Bothma, and Greyling 23). In 2009, white women accounted for 53% of editorial staff, indicating clearly, Francis Galloway argues, that "editorial departments in publishing

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[6] Van Rooyen gives the following advice to budding authors: "Don't be too intimidated by the term 'market research'. Publishers often use the words in a very loose sense, when all they mean is 'gut feel' but, as we know, 'gut feel' is just another word for experience. The publisher you are dealing with may not actually do any formal market research but she will have the advantage of having spent some years in the industry, often in a specialised niche, where one should be able to pick up what sells and what does not" (35).

houses [were] still not diversified enough to make a significant impact on commissioning strategies and new product development" ("Current" 214).[7]

Another significant feature of the post-apartheid South African publishing field is the dominance of international titles in the market, principally from the UK, whose publishing industry and market has historically been linked with South Africa's. In the Adult Fiction category in 2007, for example, books originating in the UK had nearly three quarters of the total Adult Fiction market share – almost four times as much as South African fiction titles (BookData/SAPnet 17).[8] It is clear that the market embraced (and continues to embrace) bestselling international genre fiction by brand name authors (a term the publishers themselves use) rather than South African fiction, especially literary fiction. According to Jonathan Ball, a major distributor of international titles in South Africa, "we see the waves of what middle-class South Africa wants to read. We . . . see pretty strongly the brand authors that have got a very nice [following]. The Dean Koontzes that we sell 8,000 of every time they come out. Harlan Coben, [Ian] Rankin, all of those guys" (Ball and Boraine). He added that these sales followed only fiction that is "middle-brow, not upper-middle-brow. When a novel moves to upper-middle-brow your sales will come down radically."[9] This predominance of imported books benefited certain players in South African publishing: distributors of international titles like Jonathan Ball, and the South African offices of multinational firms, like Pan Macmillan South Africa,

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[7] Morris spoke candidly about this situation, adding that this is an area Pan Macmillan South Africa is consciously working on: "I think it's largely been a factor of who is publishing. I think it is changing. 36% of our authors are black, and that's something we aim to grow. There's a big reading market, I think, that have been neglected to a large degree."

[8] According to the *Nielsen BookScan South Africa – 2007 52 Week Standard Executive Report*, out of a total of R293,778,016 in Adult Fiction sales in 2007, UK books accounted for R217,821,585 (74.1%) and South African books, for R56,993,462 (19.4%) (BookData/SAPnet 17). Reliable statistics on this are not available prior to the mid-2000s, but researchers like Galloway have suggested that the market was dominated in this way by international titles (especially from the UK) throughout the 1990s as well ("South African" 92). See also Van Rooyen 235.

[9] When asked to clarify what was meant by "upper-middle-brow" Ball and Boraine mentioned Barbara Kingsolver's novels and *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* (2008) by David Wroblewski as examples.

Penguin South Africa and Random House South Africa, which served as local distributors for their parent companies.[10] For publishers building local fiction lists, however, this also meant stiff competition. As Terry Morris, current Managing Director of Pan Macmillan South Africa, observed, “in that literary fiction genre, you’re up against every other big literary novel in the world. That’s why it’s a tough market.”

Various South African publishers have stated with disappointment their belief that a kind of cultural cringe was, and still is, at work in the book-buying behaviour of the South African English market especially. “A lot of English South Africans culturally have a certain ambivalence about local culture,” observed Annari van der Merwe, the founding publisher of Kwela and later Umuzi, commenting further that local book club circles such as Leisure Books favour the international bestsellers rather than South African fiction.[11] “With people,” observed Davey, “they vote with their feet and their money, and they voted for UK books” (“Personal Interview 2”). This is how the enduring international cultural connection between WESSA identity and western white (and particularly British) culture, discussed in Chapter 2, plays out in the South African reading market. In the second half of this chapter, I explore the implications for the ways in which nostalgic South African writing which was published in Britain circulated and was received in South Africa.

This is a trend which has been reflected in and fostered by the relative prominence given to international publishers by South African booksellers, especially the biggest chain stores over this period: the Central News Agency (CNA) and Exclusive Books. In numerous visits to South African bookstores in July and August 2012, I observed that

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[10] Random House South Africa and Struik Publishers merged to form Random House Struik in 2008. Following the merger of Penguin and Random House in 2013, Penguin South Africa and Random House Struik are now both owned by Penguin Random House.

[11] Leisure Books is the English-language version of an immensely successful Afrikaans-language book-buying club, Leserskring. In 1997, Leserskring and Leisure books had a combined membership of over 250,000 (Mpe and Seeber 37).

most of these, and certainly Exclusive Books stores, continue to confine the titles which originate within the South African publishing industry to a single stack of shelves, usually labelled "Books of Africa" or "African fiction," with international titles filling the rest of the store. Only a minority of independent stores, such as the Book Lounge in Cape Town, do not distinguish between South African and international titles. Speaking of the difficulties of getting Jacana's fiction output into bookstores, Davey declared, "South African writing was never privileged by the bookstores. Terrible thing." She added that "there was a gulf, and there still is a gulf" between how local and international titles are sold, noting that: "There was no responsibility, except amongst very few people, to sell on what we were making" ("Personal Interview 1").

2.2. 1994–2003: South African publishing in survival mode

The dominance of British books, and the lack of diversity in the South African publishing industry and the market for which it published are key factors in the prevalence of white nostalgic writing in this period, as I will argue, but it is also the case that the industry's economic circumstances in the 1990s and early 2000s were particularly antithetical to the expansion of the market or the pursuit of new markets. The transition to democracy had the effect of eliminating various support structures on which publishers had historically relied to guarantee the viability of their literary fiction output. The school book market had long been a lucrative source of income for so-called collaborator publishers, many of whom had traditionally used textbook profits to subsidise less viable projects, such as literary publishing (Mpe and Seeber 40). At the end of 1997, the National Department of Education announced that it no longer had the funds to purchase textbooks, precipitating a textbook crisis whose consequences were felt across the industry (Mpe and Seeber 38–40; Galloway, "Statistical Trends" 211). Simultaneously, the public library system all but collapsed post-apartheid, severely diminishing what had been a guaranteed market for literary fiction titles (Galloway, "Current" 207). As Van der Merwe noted in our

interview, “where the libraries would’ve helped tremendously to stabilise the new publishing if they had bought [books], that support wasn’t there” (Van der Merwe). Consequently, according to Galloway, between 1998 and 2003 the South African industry was in a state of “survival mode” (“Current” 207).

Perhaps hardest hit by the end of apartheid were the independent “oppositional” or interventionist publishing houses. Founded during the 1970s and 1980s, prominent firms such as Ravan Press and Skotaville had relied on solidarity funds from international donors sympathetic to the anti-apartheid cause.[12] After 1994, however, these funds ceased (Oliphant 120–21). As a result, the majority of these houses went into decline and were eventually bought by larger companies, signalling the effective collapse of alternative publishing in South Africa (E. H. Gray 264).[13] As Peter McDonald notes, “[b]y 2008 most of the publishers that shaped the literary cultures of South Africa in the twentieth century had either ceased to exist or they had been absorbed into larger groups, surviving only as imprints” (“The Book” 814). Speaking of this period, Andries Oliphant observed that its “net result . . . [was] that South African publishing . . . regressed, in terms of diversity in ownership, as well as in the variety of its output, and perhaps also in its social importance” (121). In economic terms, the apartheid system had effectively both sustained and stunted the South African publishing industry, so-called collaborator and oppositional publishers alike.

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[12] Ravan Press was funded by the Dutch, Swedish and Norwegian governments, and Skotaville’s financial support came from the South African Council of Churches, local corporations and the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations (McDonald, “The Book” 812–13).

[13] For example: Hodder & Stoughton Educational South Africa acquired a majority share of Ravan Press in 1994; in 1992, Ad. Donker was bought by Jonathan Ball, which itself became a part of NB Publishers (the renamed Nasionale Pers) the same year; Skotaville was involved with Nolwazi Publishers (owned by the UK’s Macmillan) from 1992, before its reinvention in 1999 as a joint venture with Juta and the Black Management Forum (McDonald, “The Book” 815). David Philip Publishers was one exception in this trend as the only oppositional house not to have relied on foreign donors, but its independent operations also came to an end in this period with the retirement of its founders, David and Marie Philip, in 1999 (Essery 152–53; McDonald, “The Book” 815).

Rather than experiencing "a multicultural celebration of books written by authors from different racial, cultural and language backgrounds; an upsurge of local books produced and distributed by a transformed industry . . . ; [or] the blossoming of reading and book-buying" (Galloway, "Current" 206), as might on one level have been expected given other cultural changes in the country, trade publishing was in a precarious position during the 1990s and early 2000s. Without the various apartheid-related sources of subsidisation on which they had depended, it was increasingly the case that, for publishers to survive, let alone turn a profit, titles would need for the most part to be viable individually and market-driven decisions would have to become the norm. What we effectively see in this period, therefore, is a significant shift in the way that the surviving publishing houses operated in South Africa.

It is important to acknowledge that, although they were precipitated by the end of apartheid, these industry changes were not unique to South African publishing. Rather, they were part of a broader global trend. A similar shift had, for example, happened in the UK somewhat earlier. In the latter half of the twentieth-century, the British industry experienced the "consolidation of small, often family-run companies into global multimedia conglomerates" which introduced "new operational paradigms," resulting particularly in "the ascendancy of marketing over the editorially led tradition" (Squires 20). If the end of apartheid meant the end of isolation for the South African industry, it also brought with it exposure to these business models. However, as Davey observed in 2000, this was not a smooth transition: "general trade publishers were slow to appreciate the reading needs of a newly liberated country, and oppositional publishers found it difficult to re-focus the advocacy of their lists" (Combrinck and Davey 229). Publishers of trade fiction in this period were, it seems, at a loss, lacking the finances to invest in pioneering projects, and scrambling to cater to a market whose desires became

increasingly inscrutable now that apartheid was no longer a central feature of the cultural landscape.

2.2.1. Pleasing "the small and fickle local market"

With much at stake over this period, South African publishers were reticent about taking risks in their publishing decisions, especially with regard to literary fiction, the market for which is particularly small and competitive, as I have noted. Rejection letters from David Philip Publishers in the mid-1990s demonstrate a keen apprehension about the viability of certain projects. David Philip, which had a strong reputation for oppositional publishing and the high calibre of its authors, tended to avoid publishing the kinds of books which interest this study. Nonetheless, as one of the few local publishers operating throughout the 1990s and the only independent publisher not to have relied on foreign donors, its archives offer valuable insights into the South African industry and its conception of the market over this time. It was, for example, nearly habitual for David Philip rejection letters to cite concerns about "marketability in the small and fickle local market" as the principal reason for a manuscript's rejection in the mid- to late-1990s (P. Anderson, "Letter to Mtutuzeli Matshoba").[14] These letters are moderated in that they were written to reject the submissions of prospective authors, and blaming the market is certainly a polite way of turning an author down. Yet even with manuscripts that the publishers clearly believed to have real literary merit, it seems the exigencies of the market were David Philip's primary concern. A 1995 letter from Peter Anderson to an author of a science fiction title notes that, "[c]hief among our reasons for [rejecting the manuscript] are our lack of experience with the science-fiction market and our corresponding anxiety about the actual state of that market in South Africa" (P. Anderson, "Letter to Nic

[14] This phrase was a favourite of David Philip reader Peter Anderson in this period, but it is noteworthy that the writer to whom this particular rejection was written, Mtutuzeli Matshoba, was a successful and well-known anti-apartheid author. Matshoba's collection of short stories, *Call Me Not a Man* (1979), had been one of the bestsellers in Ravan Press's Staffrider Series (McDonald, *Literature Police* 323–24).

Borain").[15] The manuscript, he noted further, was turned down "with distinct reluctance," having been praised for its "inventiveness and its ideas."

It seems, then, that literary "inventiveness" was not what the market desired. As it is in other major markets more generally, writing that was seen as experimental, unconventional or difficult had (and continues to have) little appeal to the majority of South African book-buyers, and, indeed, relatively little experimental writing in English was published in the mid-nineties. Speaking of her time at David Philip during this period, Davey expressed her frustration at the state of the market: "It was like here you were . . . in support of the vanguard of the struggle, but the avant-garde in fiction wasn't of interest," adding that "we would've wanted to do more fiction publishing of that kind but we had to pull our horns in" ("Personal Interview 1").[16] Davey wistfully contrasted this time with the high demand throughout southern Africa for David Philip titles during the 1980s: "They were extraordinary days: there was the hunger, and we could feed that hunger with great writers" ("Personal Interview 1"). Implicit in this statement is the idea that apartheid and the various liberation struggles in southern African had sustained this demand.

In contrast, the mainstream publishers who had substantial successes in the tight market of the late 1990s and early 2000s found these by making fairly conservative publishing decisions, such as directing their lists toward an already existing white, middle-class audience rather than actively attempting to reach new readerships. Pan

[15] It is interesting to note that since 2008 the number of South African science fiction (now generally termed speculative fiction) titles has grown significantly. Especially with the success of Lauren Beukes's *Zoo City* (Jacana, 2010) – which was published in the UK by Angry Robot and won the 2011 Arthur C. Clarke award – publishers are seeing this genre as significantly more profitable, and more fashionable, than before. I discuss this shift towards the end of the chapter.

[16] The relationship between experimentalism, realism and political commitment in literature has a long genealogy in the twentieth century, ranging from discussions concerning Marxism and social realism in Europe in the 1930s (see Lukács; Brecht), to those about postcolonial literature from the 1960s. In South Africa, this was an especially charged debate in the 1970s and 1980s as the struggle against apartheid intensified, bringing to the fore the tensions between (populist) realism and modernist experimentalism in literature (see Bethlehem; Nkosi, "Postmodernism"; Sole; Vaughan).

Macmillan South Africa, for example, bought the rights to the conflicted (but also nostalgic) memoirs *Mukiwa* (1996) by Peter Godwin and *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* (2002) by Alexandra Fuller from Macmillan in the UK with a specifically white, middle-class market in mind. "You were marketing it to a white middle-class audience," observed Morris, "and you knew they existed and you could get the numbers right" (Morris). The company reaped the sales benefits, selling tens of thousands of copies of each.[17] As Morris commented, "I do think that publishers were maybe a bit slow at that time to embrace new black markets. When I say 'new' . . . I guess we weren't publishing for those markets, to a large degree. *Mukiwa* was going to have a limited appeal to a black [market]."

Nostalgia played a role in this conservatism, as it could cater to the demands and desires of the white reading public which, as I argued in Chapter 2, felt threatened to various degrees in the New South Africa, and sought consolation rather than challenge from its reading. To recall the quotation from Dorothy Driver with which I began the previous chapter, this was a market perceived to be "pretending to make a turn from the 'old' to the 'new', but not ready to support a vigorous, questioning, experimental cultural life" and "fearful of interrogating the sources, manifestations and implications of its economically and culturally privileged position" (157). In the 1995 *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* article in which Driver made this claim, she further argued that the circumscribed makeup of the book-buying market and the marginalisation of black writers in mainstream publishing (along with black readers and publishers, I would add) were mutually reinforcing factors contributing to the state of contemporary South African

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[17] These books, both international bestsellers that launched Godwin and Fuller's careers, continue to appeal to South African book-buyers, according to Morris. Although exact sales figures were not available in South Africa until the mid-2000s, it is significant that between 2006 and 2012 *Mukiwa* sold over 8,000 copies in South Africa, despite the fact that the book was over a decade old (statistics provided by SAPnet). In 2012, Morris estimated that the *Mukiwa* and *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* had in total sold as many as 50,000 and 20,000 copies respectively. It is, however, worth noting that these books are sold as non-fiction, and non-fiction titles tend to fare better in South Africa than fiction, as I suggested above.

cultural life. Their effect, she suggested, was a culture of “bland consumerism” which would superficially affirm the values of the new South Africa, but do so only in order to maintain the previous status quo and its multiple accompanying privileges (157). As I contended in Chapters 1 and 2, the nostalgic narrative lent itself especially well to this kind of consumption, available as it was to ostensibly liberal, but essentially conservative, interpretations and uses.

The decline of the independent alternative publishers was a significant aspect to this trend. Contemporary industry commentators eulogised these struggling houses as having been the origins of “much of the creativity and innovativeness at the heart of South African publishing” (E. H. Gray 264). Their demise was seen as a severe blow to the industry because it was believed that “mainstream publishing cannot perform the role of innovation and renewal” (Galloway, “South African” 91). It is for these reasons that Gray denounced the state of the industry in 1996, claiming: “we are not going to find, at least in South African publishing as it presently exists, the seeds of any renaissance of writing and creativity that could fuel a conference of African bibliophiles in the next century” (266).

One of the significant commercial successes in fiction over this period was Jo-Anne Richards’s *The Innocence of Roast Chicken*, published in 1996. The interaction between nostalgia, white writing and the state of the South African book industry which I have outlined above was central both to the novel’s commercial success and the controversy that followed it in the South African media in 1997. The story of the novel’s publication in London, its remarkable sales in South Africa, and its subsequent portrayal by some newspaper critics as proof of the impoverishment of South African literature and publishing is worth examining in greater depth.

2.2.2. The contentiousness of roast chicken

Innocence was published in November 1996 in the UK and Commonwealth by British publisher Hodder Headline's newly formed Headline Review imprint. Richards had been unable to find a publisher for her manuscript in South Africa before she sent it to an agent in the UK, in part because of the limited scope of the local industry at that time. The manuscript was rejected by Heinemann before being picked up by Geraldine Cooke at Headline Review, who saw in the book "a literary quality that I was looking for, whilst being perfectly readable and accessible at the same time" (Cooke).[18] Cooke offered Richards a two-book deal. The sales potential of the book in South Africa was also a significant influence in Cooke's decision – a point to which I will return in the second half of this chapter. Richards believes she hit a "lucky patch" with the timing of her manuscript because global interest in South Africa was high in the immediate post-apartheid period ("Personal Interview").

In South Africa, *Innocence* seemed ideally suited to appeal to the kinds of reader sensibilities identified by Driver. The novel's archetypal nostalgic plot – an idyllic apartheid-era farm described in sensuous detail, an incident of racial violence, the loss of a white child's innocence through this trauma, and a restoration following confession – allows something of a reckoning with the past. However, as I argued in Chapter 1, it is an engagement that remains for the most part superficial and resistant to "a vigorous, questioning" approach that would "interrogat[e] the sources, manifestations and implications of [the white subject's] economically and culturally privileged position" (Driver 157). *Innocence* was an unquestionable commercial success in South Africa: it

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[18] Headline was a mass-market publisher looking to branch out into literary fiction with Headline Review, which was formed in 1994 (Squires 93). At the time, the imprint was in the process of establishing itself under publisher Cooke. In our interview, Cooke noted that she "wanted to have books that were literary in some way, because that's the only way you could get them reviewed. And I needed the reviews to sell the book. You do for literary fiction" (Cooke). This was a particular concern because, as a mass-market publisher, Headline's titles were not ordinarily reviewed in the literary press.

shot to the top of the local bestseller list and remained there for fifteen weeks, eventually selling a remarkable 19,000 copies locally and 8,000 more worldwide (Richards, "Personal Interview"). The novel was also recognised critically when it was shortlisted for the M-Net Literary Award in South Africa in 1997, and made the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award longlist in 1998 (awards details may be found in Appendix F).

Innocence's success may be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the book's subject matter and nostalgic elements were in themselves certainly appealing to readers, as I explored in detail the previous chapter. Richards continues to receive positive comments from South African readers about the novel's fidelity to their memories of childhood ("Personal Interview"). Secondly, the book was widely publicised in South Africa. According to Jonathan Ball, who distributed it locally, his company promoted *Innocence* heavily, doing "a huge selling job on it" (Ball and Boraine). The novel was advertised through "dedicated displays in 'quality' book shops" (Britten), gaining the kind of physical promotional real estate often denied to local fiction, but bestowed upon imported novels. It is significant that Godwin, author of the highly successful *Mukiwa* which was published the same year, provided a glowing endorsement on the cover of the book, describing Richards as "[o]ne of the freshest voices to emerge from South African literature in years."[19] Godwin also introduced Richards and the novel at its launch, suggesting the operation of a mutually supportive network of (nostalgic) southern African writers.

Lastly, *Innocence* had extensive marketing exposure in the South African media, from pre-publication interviews with Richards in newspapers (such as Accone,

[19] According to Cooke, the Godwin quotation was secured through her personal connection to Wendy Woods, the South African activist and wife of Donald Woods. As Cooke observed: "Peter Godwin's word was quite strong at that [time]. A lot of people would recognise it. . . . And the thing is, to get it onto the literary pages, coming from a non-literary company, was a very big job for me because they wouldn't review Headline books at the time."

"Superstitious" 4) to television appearances with the author (see Ackermann, "Dreadfulness" 21). The book was also widely reviewed in both the British and South African presses.[20] In the former, the novel was universally praised, with reviewers describing it as a "rapturous and tactile evocation of dust, food, noises and a childhood domain" (Buchan 8) and "a fresh and memorable addition to the literature of apartheid" (C. Patterson 62). In the latter, the critical response was more mixed. I discussed the novel's conflicted contemporary reception in the South African press in Chapter 2, citing Ronald Suresh Roberts's condemnation of the novel, which he accused of using nostalgia to "launder[] apartheid childhood" (22). Roberts described *Innocence*, along with other books about white childhood by southern African writers (including *Mukiwa*), as symptomatic of a "New White Writing, which is really more a malaise than a genre" (22). As I noted, Roberts's review was followed by responses by ordinary readers who fiercely defended Richards and her vision of childhood innocence. If my attention in the previous chapter's discussion was on the question of the appeal of innocence and nostalgia to readers, I now wish to focus on another aspect of the controversy around this novel, which is that it catalysed a debate about the state of the South African book industry and contemporary white South African cultural life more generally.

Lourens Ackermann's *Sunday Times* review in April 1997, entitled "The dreadfulness of roast chicken – and what it says about SA," used *Innocence* as the focal point in his lamentation of the consequences of (English) South African cultural cringe. "Why," he asked, "does a book which so lacks vitality and originality, which is badly written and maudlin, appeal to the public? Is this the state of our literature? How can a country such as South Africa inspire such a limp response?" ("Dreadfulness" 21).

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[20] Reviews appeared in the UK in *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, the *Sunderland Echo*, *The Literary Review*, *The Mail on Sunday*, *The Observer*, *The Times*, and *The Sunday Times*. In South Africa, the novel was reviewed in *Business Day,* the *Cape Times, City Press, Eastern Province Herald, Financial Mail, Mail & Guardian, Rapport, Sunday Times, The Star, The Sunday Independent,* and *The Weekend Post*.

Ackermann suggested that the success of *Innocence* was symptomatic of a kind of South African "insecurity about not being able to compete with the world" and consequent "[t]hankfulness that at least somebody is writing something, no matter how bad, that we can claim as our own" ("Dreadfulness" 21). He accused South African readers and reviewers of praising the novel not for its literary merit or originality, both of which he believed to be lacking, but simply because it attempted to contribute to discussions of South Africa's past which were popular at the time. This, he argued further, had much to do with white South Africans' anxieties about the worth of their opinions:

> We have made huge mistakes in the past and been told by the world that white South Africans are the worst people in the world. Our isolation has caused us to be chauvinistically overconfident one minute and unsure the next. . . . Then we get tired because it is hard work building a middle ground, and so, eventually, we give in and let others decide for us. ("Dreadfulness" 21)

These "others" are not identified explicitly, but implicit here is that, through the novel's publication in the UK and its warm reception there, the validation of what Richards herself has sardonically called "the great and wonderful land of Overseas" ("Personal Interview") played a significant role in the novel's success. In suggesting that a culture of acquiescence characterised the South African reading public, Ackermann affirmed Driver's comments about the state of the market in the mid-1990s. He expressed exasperation that book-buyers preferred authors like Richards to "superior writers" like Ivan Vladislavić, when "Vladislavic [was] taking risks, and with originality and good writing he [was] succeeding in ways Richards could never dream of" ("Critics" 21).

Like Roberts's diatribe against Richards, Ackermann's article prompted a flurry of responses from ordinary readers, authors and journalists, both defending Richards and affirming Ackermann's summation of the state of South African publishing. Author Pat Hopkins bewailed the "deep malaise in which the South African book industry [found] itself" (11). Darryl Accone defended Richards by arguing that the vitriol directed at

Innocence was evidence that the South African arts culture was characterised by a "lack of generosity and recriminations" ("South Africans" 13). Yet Accone also decried the fact that non-white writers like Zakes Mda and Chris van Wyk had been "marginalised in the media and in terms of their availability at bookshops" (Accone, "South Africans" 13).[21] The debate continued for months, effectively keeping *Innocence* in the public eye and no doubt contributing further (and by strange irony) to its impressive sales success.[22]

Innocence became the occasion for such heated discussion because, for its harshest critics, it demonstrated all that was wrong with South African culture and cultural production: subservience to the former colonial metropole, and a limited imaginative, ethical and demographic scope. Yet the success of the novel also demonstrated that nostalgia was commercially attractive and therefore *bankable*. It was clear that the book's appeal to white readers, and indeed the most evocative moments of the novel, lay in its nostalgic sections. Those South African reviewers, the majority in fact, who did not take issue with the book's employment of nostalgia unanimously agreed on this point, praising the parts of the novel set in the 1960s for their "marvellous eye for tiny, telling details" (Shafto). It was "the nostalgia," one reviewer noted, "which makes it an enjoyable read" (Gennrich 3). "Read it for the vividly realised, idyllic memories of childhood days on a farm in the Eastern Cape . . . rather than the void of married life which strains credibility" (J. Baker 27), asserted another, suggesting that Richards was at her most compelling in a wistful mode, as I also argued in Chapter 1.

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[21] Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1995) had been published by Oxford University Press South Africa the year before *Innocence*, and Van Wyk's experimental novel, *The Year of the Tapeworm* (1996), was published by Ravan Press the same year as Richards's novel.

[22] As Bourdieu has noted, scandal is the "instrument *par excellence* of symbolic action" (qtd. in English 190).

2.3. 2004 and beyond: The rise of post-apartheid nostalgia in South Africa

The commercial appeal of nostalgia was, I submit, implicated in a number of local trade publishing successes in the years following the "survival mode" of the late 1990s and early 2000s. According to Galloway, the South African book industry experienced a period of relative prosperity from 2004 ("Current" 207). This was supported by various factors, including the South African economy's general strength over this time and the new Outcomes Based Education curriculum, which was phased in by the government in 2004 and bolstered educational publishing. Another important feature was the general professionalisation of South African publishing and its greater integration with the international industry (Dixon; Morris).[23] As I noted earlier in this chapter, part of this professionalisation process involved the adoption of more market-driven publishing strategies. With the domination of international titles in the market, it made business sense to focus on serving the local South African market with specific local content. This desire is demonstrated by the fact that, in the early 2000s, South African offices of multinational firms like Macmillan, Penguin and Random House began developing their own local lists in earnest, and new independent houses like Jacana Media were established.[24]

Although this greater professionalism and increased market focus were crucial to the survival of publishing houses, some publishers did not embrace these changes so readily. Van der Merwe, whose career was rooted in the older apartheid-era tradition, observed that "now, I think, there're very few publishers that can allow themselves to

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[23] Literary agent Isobel Dixon noted: "The whole professionalisation and the opening up is simply linked to the fact that this is a country that was isolated – properly culturally boycotted and isolated – for so many years. And it needed to breathe a bit, and have more interaction and more flow of expertise."

[24] Jacana had actually been established in 1991 as a small natural history and primary healthcare publisher, but branched out into general book publishing in 2002 under the leadership of Mike Martin and Maggie Davey (Davey, "Personal Interview 1"). Jacana might be viewed to some extent as an heir to David Philip Publishers, for whom Davey had worked along with numerous other Jacana staff members. Macmillan established the Picador Africa imprint in 2004, and Random House the Umuzi imprint in 2005, under the leadership of Van der Merwe.

have considerations beyond just making money. It's a different environment." She lamented the shift:

> I think it's changed, definitely. Definitely, the whole role that marketing and accounts people have got in publishing decisions… I think that's extremely dangerous because of the nature of publishing. It's not a biscuit factory where you've got a recipe. And if you can't leave that decision to people that have got a gut response to and can work with a writer, for me it's an impossibility.

Van der Merwe's words here demonstrate one of the nostalgic narratives in circulation in the industry itself, particularly from those who were active in publishing before the end of apartheid.[25] In contrast, Davey attributes Jacana's significant growth in market share in recent years to the company's having embraced these new market-oriented operational paradigms:

> I think what's helped us tremendously has been that professionalisation process. Not relying so much on one person's conviction. That can be right sometimes, but gee whizz a lot of the time it's not. . . . I think it's just a greater professionalisation and internationalisation. ("Personal Interview 2")

Given the prevalence of nostalgia among white middle-class South Africans over this period, which I discussed in detail in the previous chapter, and this market's clear openness to nostalgic commodities, it is perhaps not surprising that nostalgia featured in some of the most commercially successful trade fiction titles published by the South African industry in the 2000s. One of these was Annica Foxcroft's *There Are Ants in My Sugar*, published in 2008 by Thomas Stein Publishing, an obscure and tiny South African

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[25] This theme is also not peculiar to the South African industry. Quoting Michael Lane, Squires has argued that analogous narratives, such as "the golden age myth of the editor as cultural entrepreneur" who makes "intuitive and individual decisions," are also in circulation in UK publishing (47). (See also Wirtén, and Schiffrin's *The Business of Books* for a book-length lamentation of this shift.) Perhaps more significantly, what is left unacknowledged by Van der Merwe is that apartheid itself had undergirded the kind of publishing she describes. The Nasionale Pers (which owned Tafelberg and Human & Rousseau Publishers, where Van der Merwe worked in the 1970s and 1980s) had been able to fund and protect its literary output because it had occupied a dominant position in the lucrative school textbook market. It was apartheid legislation that had guaranteed the industry a captive audience and large profits through the nineteen segregated departments of education it established, each of which had required its own textbooks, with purchases funded by the state (Joubert 9).

publishing house for which the work was their first published novel. The light-hearted semi-autobiographical story of the author's move from Johannesburg to the rural countryside in the 1960s, in the vein of Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence*, sold over 9,500 copies in South Africa and was followed by two sequels (SAPnet). The nostalgia and humour in *There Are Ants in My Sugar* was certainly a large part of its appeal to readers.[26] What made the book's success so remarkable was that, with scant resources behind it, it succeeded primarily through word-of-mouth marketing. As Woodhouse of Kwela incredulously remarked in our interview, the book's success came "off nothing. Off no marketing, off nothing!"

Light, nostalgia-peppered humour also played a role in the biggest success story of post-apartheid South African fiction publishing: John van de Ruit's *Spud* series (2005–2012), which has shattered South African sales records.[27] *Spud* charts the coming-of-age of a teenage boy in a colonial-style boys' boarding school in the early 1990s, and emphasises the comedic aspects of this experience. Nostalgia for both the optimism of the early transition years and the British and colonial schoolboy novels that it emulates are, I would suggest, important elements in the novel's success. Accounting for this, Van Rooyen emphasises that the *Spud* books "brought something new into South African English fiction. Not great characters or story lines but something more basic: they made people laugh" (29). He adds that South African "fiction output on the whole is not funny. It tends to be full of racial angst and apartheid issues and getting to terms with bad people, bad policies, the heavy weight of our unjust past and inept present," and that

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[26] One of the few newspaper reviews of the novel observes: "Set in the sixties and peopled with an array of memorable characters and lively cross-cultural languages, . . . Foxcroft's first published novel allows one to visit (or re-visit) the life of an earlier South Africa where the old Stuttafords and the *Outspan* magazine (the only one then available) played large roles" (W. Baker 9).

[27] The first novel, *Spud*, was published by Penguin South Africa in 2005, and sold over 220,000 copies ("About John van de Ruit"). It was followed by three sequels in (2007, 2009 and 2012). The first three *Spud* novels have also been adapted into films, with John Cleese in one of the starring roles.

"[h]ere, suddenly, we have someone who tells a funny story well without invoking a million hang-ups. What a relief" (Van Rooyen 29).

In 1996, a reader at David Philip had expressed to a rejected author his feeling that "everyone [was] wanting a holiday from the worst excesses of the South African nightmare" (P. Anderson, "Letter to John Reynolds"). If book-buyers wished to escape from the traumatic aspects of the country's past, it is significant that the most successful of these literary "holidays" were nearly always *also* located in a bygone era. It was not the past that no longer interested the South African market, but serious, politically laden narratives about it. Conversely, lighter, and somewhat nostalgic, writing resonated with readers and book-buyers, appearing as "something new" and exciting (Van Rooyen 29). This chimes with my contention in Chapter 2 that post-apartheid white readers have demonstrated considerable fatigue with overtly political themes in novels, and that nostalgic writing has offered a respite from these.

A less tonally serious approach to the past is what most clearly distinguishes the post-apartheid nostalgia boom within local South African publishing from the nostalgic writing which came out of the Anglo-American industry, to which I will return later in this chapter. For the most part, moreover, nostalgic books originating in the South African publishing industry have been less conventional – by which I mean less confined within the conventions of the nostalgia genre that I identified and explored in Chapter 1, especially the tendency towards a TRC-style confessional resolution and the prominence of the expatriate's perspective.[28] This tonal difference suggests, I would argue, that South African publishers had succeeded in tapping into the specific desires of the local white

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[28] This is, however, a generalisation to which there are exceptions, and multiple points of intersection may be drawn between texts originating in the South African and British publishing industry. Novels published first within South Africa which arguably fall within the bounds of the conventional nostalgia genre include Troy Blacklaws's *Karoo Boy* and *Blood Orange*, published by Double Storey in 2004 and 2005 respectively, as well as Sarah Penny's *The Beneficiaries*, published by Penguin South Africa in 2002. I would also suggest that nostalgia operates similarly in the *reading* of these books.

reading and book-buying public in this period. By this, I do not wish to contend that this trend was cynically fostered by publishers. Rather, I would like to suggest that it was the result of a fortuitous correspondence between the nostalgic content of these books, their having resonated with (white) publishers, and their popularity in the (white) South African market to which publishers were more deliberately directing their operations.

This synergy, but also the parochialism that it implies, is well illustrated by the case of Denis Hirson's *I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)*, which was published by Jacana in 2004. The sales success of *King Kong* in South Africa, and Jacana's subsequent attempts to replicate it, demonstrate not only how the appeal of nostalgic content could be so strong that it could override the market's alleged antipathy to experimental form, but also the limitations of publishing from within a white, middle-class paradigm. It is to this case study that I now turn.

2.3.1. White nostalgia and the limits of the market: **I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)**

Memory has in many ways been the fuel for Hirson's literary career. His first book, *The House Next Door to Africa* (David Philip, 1986), is a lyrical memoir of his family's history.[29] His second, which followed nearly two decades later, was *I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)*. This was another memoir, but focusing on Hirson's childhood and youth in Johannesburg in the 1960s and 1970s, and presented in an experimental, poetic format, as I noted in the previous chapter. Isobel Dixon, Hirson's agent in London, offered the manuscript of *King Kong* to publishers in both the UK and South Africa. According to Dixon, "there was a lot of admiration in the UK, but it was too South-African-specific" for British publishers. The tension between specificity and universality in South African writing is a key one for British publishers, as I will explore in the second

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[29] Carcanet published the book in the UK in 1987. The strength of the writing, its "delicacy and detail," secured Isobel Dixon as Hirson's agent (Dixon).

half of this chapter. It is also an important factor in how familiar, and therefore appealing, nostalgic writing is to a reader, and so is also central to nostalgia's value as a commodity in a particular context.

If the specificity of the experiences and memories recounted in *King Kong* made the book too local for the UK market, in South Africa this very quality was potentially a boon to publishers. The book was quickly taken up by Jacana Media, which was in the process of establishing itself as a trade publisher. Davey recalls how she "read it one weekend and I didn't even think twice, just bid on it, and I think other people were slower to say that this new form [could succeed]" ("Personal Interview 1"). As Davey's statement indicates, the book's idiosyncratic and poetic format was thought to be risky in the South African market, whose readers are perceived by publishers to be very resistant to experimental and poetic forms. *King Kong* was to prove an exception to this trend. The book became a bestseller, selling just over 6,000 copies in South Africa.[30] As Dixon observed in our interview, and as I also explored in the previous chapter, for South African readers,

> *I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)*'s nostalgic content was so powerful that . . . it won even readers who would not normally go for such an adventurous format. . . . They just saw a wonderful, poetic, resonant record that chimed with their own remembrance of Chappies bubble-gum, and going to the drive-in, and all those things.

Davey also points to the book's nostalgic elements, "that thread of the golden years of apartheid," as the key to its success: "It did speak to a nostalgia of a whiteness that wasn't all criminalised" ("Personal Interview 1").[31]

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[30] Sales figures courtesy of Jacana.

[31] With the phrase "the golden years of apartheid," Davey explicitly recalled Hirson's phrase "the golden days of apartheid" in his poem, "Early Mourning," which I quoted in the first epigraph to Chapter 1.

Jacana emphasised just this in the book's presentation: the cover was particularly striking (Appendix G, Figure 1), featuring a black and white photograph of a young boy framed by a magnified Chappies bubble-gum wrapper, which is emblematic of childhood for many South Africans.[32] According to Davey, "the Chappies wrapper really got everybody's attention" ("Personal Interview 1"). In addition, positioned front and centre on the book's cover was a quotation from Antjie Krog that read: "Extraordinary. This is unlike anything I have ever read . . . The form is as surprising as its subtle ability to tell the tales of our past." This endorsement from Krog, whose *Country of My Skull* has in many ways been a benchmark among serious books by white writers that "tell the tales of [the South African] past," acts as a validation of *King Kong*'s approach to the South African past. The reception of the book in the media, which I analysed in detail in Chapter 2, echoed Krog's admiring response. *King Kong*'s success prompted a sequel, *We Walk Straight So You Better Get Out The Way* (2005), which departed somewhat from the pithy form and childhood focus of *King Kong*, and did not garner the same attention in the media or sell as many copies as its predecessor (SAPnet).[33] *King Kong* may also have prompted Penguin South Africa to publish Trevor Romain's illustrated *Random Kak I Remember about Growing Up in South Africa* in 2013 and a sequel the following year.

Crucially, it seems that it was the book-buyers' ability to identify with the experiences Hirson recounted that played a key role in *King Kong*'s sales success. This is

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[32] Chappies bubblegum is something of a childhood institution in South Africa, having been the market-leading bubble-gum brand since its invention in the 1940s. The wrappers are striped in bright colours, featuring Chappie the Chipmunk as well as a series of "Did you know?" facts on the underside.

[33] However, I am told by publishers that this is not unusual for a sequel. *More Ants!* (2009), the first sequel to Foxcroft's *There Are Ants in My Sugar*, also sold considerably fewer copies than the first novel (SAPnet).

As a proviso for the sales figures I utilise in this chapter, those provided by SAPnet (the Nielsen agent in South Africa) usually reflect a lower total than actual numbers of copies sold, as they do not take into account independent booksellers' sales. However, these figures do give a sense of the relative sales success of particular titles.

suggested by the fates of two similar memoir-style projects by the same publisher, which involved the experiences of those outside the narrow demographic of the white, middle-class market, and did not attract readers in the same numbers. The first of these is *Maak 'n Skyf, Man!* by Harold Strachan, which Jacana published in the same year as *King Kong*. The book is a memoir of Strachan's time in prison and, despite being "very funny" according to Davey, it did not represent the kind of experience which ordinary book-buyers would recognise or for which they might feel nostalgia. As such, "people didn't lap it up the way they went for Denis's memoir" ("Personal Interview 1"). The second book was Mokone Molete's *Postcards from Soweto* (2007). *Postcards* comprises a series of twenty-five vignettes about growing up in Soweto, and was figured by Jacana as the black South African *King Kong*. The publisher hoped its comparable themes and form would find similar success with readers, but sales of the book were fairly low (SAPnet). The question of recognisability and identification – the idea that nostalgia becomes a valuable commodity only when the buyer shares a certain cultural history or epistemic frame with the text – is key here, for it seems that the predominantly white market responded most enthusiastically to nostalgic recollections which they shared.

More significantly, Jacana had hoped that, considering its subject matter, *Postcards* might be marketed successfully to black readers. Consequently, they promoted the book in the new Exclusive Books in Maponya Mall in Soweto, hoping that a book about Soweto would find an audience in the area of its origin. This did not pay off for the publishers, though it is important to note that sales in general at the Soweto Exclusive Books were poor, prompting the store to close in 2009 after only two years in business ("Maponya Mall Exclusive Books Closure").[34] This significant example indicates that the

[34] The closure of the Soweto Exclusive Books prompted emphatic responses in newspapers by black intellectuals, who lamented the fact that stereotypes about black South Africans' poor reading habits appeared to have been confirmed. See, for example, Khumalo's "It's a fact: darkies just don't read" and Leshilo's "Reading is an alien right in South Africa."

kind of nostalgia that worked in South African trade books which catered to a white, middle-class demographic would not necessarily appeal to a black South African market. Davey observed in retrospect that "we were probably indulging in our own . . . simplistic thinking," by assuming that the success of a product which worked well for one sector of the population would be simply replicable in another. This case also exposes the difficulties and risks involved in attempting to expand the book-buying market when the paradigms and assumptions through which predominantly white publishers operated had been developed to appeal to a very narrow, and very specific, portion of the population. In other words, even if they were eager to reach out beyond the established market, trade publishers found it difficult to conceive of *how* to cater to "the tastes of readers amongst the black majority who form part of 'reading pockets' with specific needs" (Galloway, "Current" 215). This is, ultimately, the limitation of the "ever-decreasing circle" of whiteness in the publishing industry that Gray warned of in 1996 (262).

The makeup of the book industry was a significant feature of the debate which followed the closure of the Soweto Exclusive Books. In describing the "deep crisis" of black South African reading in 2010, Oupa Lehulere argued that "[t]he structure of the industry acts [as] a barrier to the development of a broad culture of reading in South Africa" (Lehulere).[35] This is something to which publishers have become increasingly attentive in recent years, perhaps a sign of the development in the industry's market-focused approach. In 2012, Morris noted that Pan Macmillan South Africa has made a concerted effort to increase the numbers of black authors it publishes, adding that South African publishing is "becoming a much more vibrant industry, we just need to diversify

[35] As I noted earlier in this chapter, the industry's market concentration, which has meant only small print runs, has meant that individual books have had to be priced beyond the financial capacity of the majority, effectively adding an unintended irony to the Exclusive Books store name.

the actual publishers a bit more. . . . Well especially if we want to get to new readers, we have to have quite a good look at ourselves."

2.3.2. Nostalgia with a broader appeal: **Shirley, Goodness & Mercy**

Despite the disappointing fate of *Postcards*, it was not the case that *only* white nostalgia was bankable. One of Pan Macmillan South Africa's first publications under its new Picador Africa imprint was Chris van Wyk's *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy* (2004), a humorous memoir of Van Wyk's childhood in the coloured suburb of Riverlea, Johannesburg in the 1960s and 1970s. The book, which had sold around 20,000 copies by 2012 (according to Morris), celebrates the close and lively community and family life of Riverlea. Although apartheid and its effects on Van Wyk and his family feature in the memoir, the book is characterised above all by nostalgia, warmth and humour.[36] Morris notes that "when Chris delivered it, I remember us getting quite excited, because it was that real nostalgia. I think there was a sense of everyone could identify. . . . but there was also a fascination with Riverlea." Morris suggested further that the book's appeal was in its focus on ordinary people's lives rather than the big political figures of the struggle:

> I guess it was at this stage that people were saying there was a sense of people's individual stories coming out. It wasn't all about *The Long Walk to Freedom*, the Sisulu biographies and the Tambo biographies. There was a place for those. . . . [but] these were the smaller, everyman stories, and there wasn't a lot specifically around the coloured communities. And his writing has just a great sense of fun and we loved that because there's not a lot of humour in a lot of South African writing!

Significantly, the market targeted for this memoir was more diverse than a narrow white readership. It was, as Morris observed, "one of the first books where we did reach quite different audiences." There are a number of possible reasons for this. Firstly, the

[36] Van Wyk read from the book at the "On Memory and Creativity" discussion during the "Narratives, Nostalgia, Nationhoods" 3rd Apartheid Archives Conference at the University of the Witwatersrand in July 2011. The conversation, chaired by Mark Gevisser, also included Nadine Gordimer, William Kentridge, Hugh Masekela, and Zoë Wicomb.

text is a fairly conventional non-fiction autobiography, and non-fiction sells better in South Africa than fiction. Secondly, I would suggest that, as with the *Spud* phenomenon, it was the humour in the writing that broadened its appeal. Lastly, as Morris noted, Pan Macmillan also deliberately marketed the book to as wide as possible a national audience: "we didn't necessarily say we wanted to reach a coloured audience, or a white audience, and that was the beauty of that. It wasn't necessarily race-based." Of course, nostalgic identification is not simply a matter of race. If *Postcards* had failed to produce the nostalgic identification in white readers that would have made it appealing to the market, Van Wyk's memoir was more easily available to a class-based identification by white readers. Moreover, "the publicity campaign for *Shirley, Goodness* was *huge*," with Van Wyk working tirelessly to promote the book: "I remember we just got him everywhere: we got him on TV, we got him on radio . . . We took him on school visits." Pan Macmillan South Africa also struck a deal with the South African Broadcasting Corporation to adapt the memoir into a radio play, and a stage play was produced by Janice Honeyman. In other words, unlike the more spontaneous success of *There Are Ants in My Sugar*, or the serendipity of *King Kong*, *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy* benefited from a publisher's willingness to invest a great deal in reaching new markets. In this way, Van Wyk's success was produced by the very market focus that had previously constrained publishers within the bounds of whiteness.

It is also important to acknowledge that, towards the end of the period covered by this study, there appears to have been a shift, or the beginnings of a shift, in the market for fiction. Jacana, for example, had significant commercial success with Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007) which sold an impressive 20,000 copies between 2007 and 2015 (Matlwa), and, according to Davey, began to open up new markets of black fiction buyers. It is significant, however, that before winning a publishing deal with Jacana through the 2006 EU Literary Award, Matlwa had been turned down by a number of

South African publishers, at least one of which had told her candidly that they did not know how they would market *Coconut* to white, middle-class South African readers ("Personal Interview"). Jacana's next black nostalgic publishing venture, Jacob Dlamini's *Native Nostalgia* (2009), also fared better than *Postcards* in terms of sales, selling around 2,500 copies by 2013 (SAPnet). Morris believes, therefore, that "publishing is evolving" and that this has led to "much more riskier – and when I say riskier, kind of *new* – projects happening for different audiences: younger black audiences, or middle-class" (Morris).[37] The rise of genre fiction in South Africa from the late 2000s is also part of this new trend, to which I will return in the conclusion to this thesis.

2.3.3. The "imported" nostalgia genre in South Africa after 2004

As we have seen, nostalgia's worth as a commodity played an important role in a number of significant commercial successes in South African publishing over the period which interests this study. In sum, this was the result of local publishers' more deliberate pursuit of economic capital through market-oriented publishing decisions. For the most part, and certainly in the lean years of the late 1990s and early 2000s, these tended to remain conservative, tapping into the known needs of a white, middle-class reading public in the rights they bought or the books they published. But if this trend was beginning to shift and diversify as local publishing developed during the 2000s, there was also a second, somewhat *belated*, strand of nostalgic white writing in circulation in South Africa over this period which remained more persistent. This comprised the more formulaic nostalgic

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[37] These projects include the establishment of Kwela Books' Sapphire Press imprint in 2010, whose explicit focus is the publication of low-cost romance novels for black female readers with the aim of expanding the market (see Warnes's "Desired State" for an exploration of the intersection between the rise of the black South African romance and the changing post-apartheid South African political economy). Kwela Books has always been something of an exception in South African publishing, however, as it was launched with the deliberate aim to publish new, particularly black South African, voices, and reach new readers. In our 2012 interview, Woodhouse reiterated Kwela's commitment "to engage with this new reality, and to find new audiences," asserting that "that's what the Sapphire's about. That's what we have to do, and it's not easy, but if we don't do it, then we won't find new audiences, and we basically don't exist. That's what Kwela has done. I think we have very successfully."

narratives, the books which most consistently demonstrate the conventions I identified and analysed in depth in Chapter 1. Like the early example of *Innocence*, these books were, for the most part, first published overseas, usually in Britain, before being imported and circulated within South Africa by a distributor or the local office of a multinational firm. One of the most prolific of these was Pan Macmillan South Africa, which was responsible for bringing *Mukiwa, Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight, Heaven Forbid, Skinner's Drift* and *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* into South Africa. All of these, except *Skinner's Drift*, were originally published by Macmillan in the UK under various imprints, a detail to which I will return later in the chapter (see Appendix F).

Before I address the worth of this writing to international publishers, it is important to note that there were South African publishers who deliberately avoided publishing this kind of nostalgic confessional white writing. Jonathan Ball, speaking about the relatively small amount of fiction he has published, staked a claim for the symbolic capital he has accrued through it by declaring: "we're very proud of the fact that it isn't the type of fiction [this study] is talking about – all this *the agony of being South African*, and remembering how you grew up and how nanny looked after you . . . All of which I . . . find *amazingly* boring" (Ball and Boraine). "We know," Ball added, "how little it sells."[38] As early as the late 1990s, publishers at David Philip had remarked in rejection letters that they were "looking . . . for more forward-looking material" (Martin), and had expressed their "feeling that the market for 'confessional' accounts of white South Africa [was] shrinking" (P. Anderson, "Letter to to B. J. J. van Rensburg"). While

[38] Ball made this comment in 2012, after the boom in so-called confessional writing was over in South Africa. Moreover, the Jonathan Ball imprint is known for publishing biographies and other non-fiction rather than fiction, which comprises only a very small portion of its list. It is interesting, however, that Jonathan Ball published Michiel Heyns's *The Children's Day* (2002) and *Lost Ground* (2011), which take the forms of the apartheid childhood and the expatriate homecoming narrative respectively, though these forms are deployed knowingly and for critical ends.

the notable success of Richards's *Innocence* later that same year belied this intuition, there was a sense among at least some publishers that this writing was of waning import.

This kind of sensibility might explain the multiple rejections that Lauren Liebenberg's manuscript for *The Voluptuous Delights of Peanut Butter and Jam* apparently received from a number of South African publishers before it was published in the UK in 2008. The novel adheres closely to the conventions of the nostalgia genre: set in the last days of the old Rhodesia in the late 1970s, it tells the story of two young sisters whose idyllic life on a farm (including a close relationship with a friendly black farmworker) is disrupted with the arrival of their cousin, who precipitates the tragedy at the climax of the novel. Liebenberg, who lives in Johannesburg, has asserted in a published interview that, when she pursued publication in South Africa, "Die een deur ná die ander het plaaslik voor my toegeklap" ("Locally, one door after another slammed shut in front of me") (Fowler 18).[39] She has suggested further that the South African publishers she approached appeared specifically averse to the kind of memoir-like, confessional narrative she proposed, which by the late 2000s seemed simply out of date: "En dan is sekere idees op sekere tye vuurwarm en ander passé. Ek het naderhand agtergekom jy moet om vadersnaam tog net nie sê dit lees soos 'n memoir nie!" ("And then some ideas are red-hot at certain times, and passé at others. I later realised that you must for heaven's sake just not say it reads like a memoir!") (Fowler 18). After these South African rejections, Liebenberg pursued overseas publication, eventually not only finding a publisher in Virago, but also receiving a nomination for the 2008 Orange Award for New Writers and a place on the longlist both for the main Orange Prize for Fiction

[39] In our interview, however, Maggie Davey was adamant that Liebenberg cannot have submitted the manuscript to Jacana, because she was sure that Jacana would have taken on the book.

and the 2009 *Sunday Times* Fiction Prize in South Africa.[40] In South Africa the novel sold over 5,000 copies between 2008 and 2013, which grants it bestseller status in the South African English fiction market, and perhaps puts in doubt Ball's dismissal of this writing as wholly unprofitable (SAPnet).

What should we make of this success? What kind of worth might Virago have seen in the book that South African publishers apparently did not? And what did the proliferation of this and similar nostalgic narratives mean for post-apartheid South African writing as a category in the global literary field? Taking this case as a starting point, my focus in the second half of this chapter turns to the involvement of the international publishing industry and market in the post-apartheid nostalgic literature phenomenon.

3. Post-apartheid nostalgia and the wider literary field

That *Voluptuous Delights* found a publisher in the UK after allegedly failing to find one in South Africa raises two related aspects of the nostalgia trend which I wish to highlight. This will begin to allow me to account for the prevalence of the more conventional nostalgic books in circulation over this period. The first aspect is the kind of profit that publication in a major global market can afford a writer or a book, not only internationally but also within South Africa. The second, which I will spend much of the rest of the chapter unpacking, is suggested by the apparent difference between the tastes of South African and international publishers, and concerns the value that Anglo-American publishers in particular saw in the conventional nostalgic narrative as a cultural commodity in the literary marketplace. Implicated in both of these is the configuration of the "world republic of letters" which has "its own mode of operation . . . its own

[40] According to Liebenberg, after having found an agent in London (Patrick Jansen-Smith, then at Christopher Little), the manuscript was sent out to eleven publishers, four of whom showed interest (Fowler 18).

economy, which produces hierarchies and various forms of violence" between different markets and literatures (Casanova 11).

3.1. South African books and the international market

Why might a South African writer pursue overseas publication for a novel? As I noted in Chapter 1, part of the reason that many post-apartheid stories of childhood and homecoming originated outside of South Africa is that many of them were written by expatriate South Africans or southern Africans, who tended to submit and have their work published where they were based. In the 1990s, moreover, when South African publishing was at a low ebb, it was also customary for South Africa-based English-language writers to send their manuscripts to publishers in the UK, as Richards did with *Innocence*.[41] In Liebenberg's case, the British publishing industry was her second choice after encountering rejection in South Africa. Then and now, seeking overseas publication has offered writers and their books a number of benefits. One of these is economic: the potential for a book to reach a much wider audience, not only in a major literary market like Britain, but also in South Africa, where, as I have noted, international titles have tended to be privileged by booksellers and readers. In effect, the horizons of the South African English-speaking market were, and continue to be, conditioned by the country's (post)coloniality, as Leon de Kock suggests: "For white English speakers, 'South African literature' has often appeared to consist of its most visible monuments, mostly in English and mostly endorsed by the gaze of metropolitan approval" ("Global Imaginary" 267).[42] WESSA readers were therefore more likely to read imported fiction, even when it was about South Africa, than locally-produced books over this period.

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[41] As McDonald has explored, this publishing dynamic has a long history in South African writing (*Literature Police* 103–104).

[42] So strong was the force of this cultural cringe that in 2000 Nicholas Combrinck described how many publishers and agents "believe that making cosmetic changes to an indigenous fiction title and bringing it out under a foreign imprint will fool South African readers into think[ing] it is worthy of being read, and perhaps they're right, because frequently it certainly has worked" (Combrinck and Davey 226).

Related to this wider circulation is another benefit, which I will address in more detail below: the potential for greater exposure to international literary prizes and the accrual of literary capital within a highly competitive and unequal global literary field.[43] Casanova describes literary capital as "[t]he immense profit that writers from literarily impoverished spaces have obtained in the past, and still obtain today, from being published and recognized in the major centers" (17). This profit is not only or primarily material, but also symbolic, a matter of prestige and reputation. And as the above suggests, it is also not necessarily confined to or even located in the major publishing centre, but might consist in the deference and support of local readers. This is part of what was at stake in the controversy surrounding *Innocence* in 1997, and it is a point to which I will return at the end of this chapter.

Despite the significant potential benefits of publishing first in a major global market, by pursuing this avenue, southern and South African authors also risk having their work substantially altered to suit the perceived tastes of that market. For a book to be published, the material is essentially "exported" – sent to be edited in the UK or US – and then imported back into South Africa. The effect of this process on a book can be significant, influencing everything from its content to its paratextual materials, as I will explore below.

Before I address the consequences of overseas publication for these South African books in greater detail, it is necessary to understand how publishers outside of South Africa have conceived of their target market and the potential value of the post-apartheid nostalgic narrative within it. The first significant factor in this regard is that "the economic legacies of the colonial book trade" have endured (McDonald, *Literature Police* 103): the South African sector of the UK and Commonwealth market was and

[43] This was also the case in the apartheid years, as McDonald has shown (*Literature Police* 106).

remains very important for British publishers when evaluating a South African manuscript. For example, Richards's *Innocence* was aimed primarily at the South African market, according to the book's British publisher, Cooke, who noted that "it had to do well in South Africa, otherwise what would the point be? Certainly very hard to get it going [in England] on its own" (Cooke). In fact, Cooke asserted that the manuscript was taken on partly because Headline's export director had strong ties with South African booksellers and library suppliers at the time, and felt that the novel would sell very well in that market, which it did. Peter Straus, publisher at Picador (Macmillan) in the 1990s, and now a literary agent in London, observed in our interview that:

> The main market would be South Africa for some of these books. And you would look to sell at least two thousand to five thousand in the local community, which is sometimes more than you would sell in total [in the UK], especially nowadays, it's got much worse. . . . part of the reasoning [is] that . . . , if the book's really good, you know you'll get two to five thousand in Africa, and then the rest is not *gravy*, but it helps. (Straus)

Several British publishers will only buy a South African book if they are able to sell it into South Africa (Van der Merwe; Dixon). For this reason, selling South African rights separately, or publishing a book in South Africa first, can deter British publishers from buying the rights because they will have lost part of the UK and Commonwealth market (Dixon). Consequently, South African publishers have often found it difficult to sell on rights into the UK. Van der Merwe flatly stated: "the English market, you can forget."

The significance of the South African market for British publishers tallies with the appetite for South African books in the Anglo-American markets themselves, which appears to be very limited, as Straus's comment above implies. A prevalent perception among South African publishers I have interviewed is that South African stories are seen as holding little sales potential in these markets beyond the appeal of the exotic, which is itself fairly small. This is, however, true not only of South African writing but also of

literatures from other, particularly postcolonial, regions, from the Caribbean to Zimbabwe (Dixon). The only exception to this is the small number of authors like J. M. Coetzee, André Brink and Nadine Gordimer, the "mainstream internationals" in Michael Chapman's terminology (qtd. in Brouillette 116), whose names acquired a certain currency or brand value during the apartheid era that continued into the post-apartheid period.[44]

The American market is perceived as particularly closed to new South African writing. Few South African publishers or agents have found success in the US beyond a small number of rights sold to university presses.[45] Literary agent Isobel Dixon noted in our interview that a common opinion voiced by American publishers to her is that "American readers are not very interested in Africa" and that, even if they admire a book, "how much of the exotic publishers are prepared to gamble on" and "how much of the exotic readers want" is quite limited. There is a pertinent correlation here with tourism: Hitchcock et al. have noted about Southeast Asia that, despite the fact that "large numbers of tourists may be attracted to the region by its perceived 'differentness' . . . few are able or willing to tolerate a great deal of novelty" (qtd. in Hall and Tucker 8). The link between tourism and postcolonial publishing is a significant one which I will revisit towards the end of this chapter.

There does, however, appear to have been a phase in the 1990s in which publishers and readers from these regions *were* interested in stories from and about South Africa, but, from the points of view of South African publishers, this period was fairly short-lived. Jeremy Boraine, publisher at Jonathan Ball, observed that "there probably

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[44] Exceptional brand name authors whose work is feted internationally in both economic and symbolic terms is a more general trend. Among African writers, we might count the stalwarts of decolonisation such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe, as well as newer writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, whose *Half of a Yellow Sun* won the Orange Prize and sold a million copies worldwide between 2006 and 2014 ("The Making of Half of a Yellow Sun").

[45] Ball and Boraine, Morris, Potgieter, and Woodhouse all asserted this.

was a time post-'94 when you could sell rights more easily, but I don't think it was a big window. Now, South Africa's not interesting anymore to the world" (Ball and Boraine).[46] Davey described how during the late 1990s "at the book fairs you started feeling that South African stories were simply not special in that way anymore. . . . When you had something that was bloody brilliant and it wasn't picked up, then it made you wonder. Now I suppose it's competing with everybody else" ("Personal Interview 2"). Richards attributes some of the success of *Innocence* to the fact that it was published "when South Africa was very sexy, and so I was lucky. I hit a lucky patch. Now, people aren't that interested in South Africa, because it makes people sad and dreary." Cooke similarly observed that "in those days . . . South Africa was much more prominent in people's minds . . . It's retreated and come up for different reasons now. At the time, you might imagine maybe that people were more switched on. Mr Mandela hadn't been out of jail for that long."

The respective publishing histories of Elleke Boehmer's *Screens Against the Sky* (1990) and *Bloodlines* (2000) illustrate this general trend very clearly, though neither novel would be considered nostalgic according to this study's schema. The former, Boehmer's debut, was rapidly embraced by two London publishers and accepted for publication by Bloomsbury towards the end of 1989 ("Personal Interview"). That the novel took a strong line against apartheid, and that Boehmer could be figured as a young Gordimer, seemed particularly attractive to publishers and reviewers at a time when apartheid's end seemed imminent and South Africa was featuring prominently on the global stage. Yet, by the time Boehmer submitted her third novel, *Bloodlines*, to various UK publishers in 1999, attitudes towards South African books had changed completely.

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[46] However, interest in South Africa as the backdrop for the story of Nelson Mandela (especially in relation to the end of apartheid) had greater longevity in film and television movies over this period: *Mandela and de Klerk* (1997), *Goodbye Bafana* (2007), *Endgame* (2009), *Invictus* (2009), *Mrs Mandela* (2010), *Winnie* (2011), and *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013). Mandela was a particularly popular figure in film in the late 2000s after his official retirement from public life in 2004.

Declining the novel politely, publishers' responses were uniform, as Boehmer noted: "South Africa isn't a theme that's interesting to us anymore. Serious literary fiction about a country whose problems are now resolved? Sorry." It was, she observed, made "palpably clear" to her that "there were certain exigencies of the market, as in *this* is current and *this* isn't, and no matter how good the writing was, the market couldn't be bucked; the market couldn't be manipulated."

The reluctance of British publishers needs to be seen in relation to the condition of UK fiction publishing and the market at this time. In the early nineties, the industry had "fallen headlong into recession" due to the collapse of the Net Book Agreement (Jones and Slingsby 26), a series of mergers and acquisitions in the 1980s, and "an unprecedented collapse in the sale of books" (Beaumont 11). In such a state, UK publishers, like their South African counterparts, became especially careful about choosing their projects. As South Africa slipped out of global focus towards the end of the decade, they were less likely to see commercial promise in South African writing.[47]

South African books have, however, fared considerably better in mainland Europe, where translation rights are more easily sold. South African publishers unanimously agree that the European markets – especially Germany, France and Holland – *are* interested in stories from South Africa and have been since the apartheid era. Greater interest from publishers in these countries is certainly in part due to the fact that there is not the same overlap in target market as we see with British publishers looking to sell into South Africa. But some South African publishers also attribute this to what they perceive as a greater appetite for the exotic in the European market than in the Anglo-American. These publishers do have ethical reservations about the kinds of exoticism

[47] South Africa was selected as the Market Focus Country at the 2010 London Book Fair – which might be seen as an attempt to revivify interest in writing from the country – but this was unfortunately undermined by Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull volcano eruption in April 2010, and the consequent ash cloud which stranded most of the South African writers and publishers slated to attend in South Africa, and prevented the travel of many of the fair's international delegates.

they might be feeding with certain European sales, but counter these concerns with reference to the poor financial opportunities for authors in South Africa: "in the end it's so hard for authors to make money in this country. If they sign an Italian deal, or they sign a German deal or whatever, and it's money for them, then who are we to then say 'Yes, but you are being kind of exploited on some [other level]'?" (Woodhouse). Despite the greater interest from European markets, overseas rights sales in the post-apartheid period were relatively small and all South African publishers interviewed generally view them as peripheral. Morris noted that Pan Macmillan South Africa "used to think about the global market a lot more" but "now publish first and foremost for a South African market."

For these reasons, South African stories originating in South Africa have had a more limited global circulation than the South African, or South Africa-set, books which have been published first in major international book markets. As an example of these books' relative reach in English-speaking markets, by January 2014 Goodreads had 279 ratings and 54 reviews for *Skinner's Drift*,[48] while Michiel Heyns's *The Children's Day* (Jonathan Ball, 2002 and Tin House in the US, 2009) had only 57 ratings and 16 reviews, and Hirson's *King Kong*, which appeared only in South Africa, has only seven ratings and no reviews. In addition, Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* (Pan Books in the UK and Picador Africa in South Africa, 2005) had sold around 60,000 copies worldwide by 2010 (Bills), whereas Hirson's sales of fewer than 10,000 in South Africa are considered very impressive.

[48] Published in 2005 by Viking in the UK, Picador Africa in South Africa, and in 2006 by Scribner in the US.

3.2. Telling the right story: symbolic capital and the (nostalgic) national narrative

That the nostalgic South African narratives in prominent global circulation originated (or were at least edited and prepared for publication) in the Anglo-American publishing industry, and especially Britain, raises important questions about the place of post-apartheid nostalgic writing, and the constitution of "post-apartheid South African literature" as a category, in the postcolonial field. If so few South African books have been embraced by British publishers, why, besides the work of brand name authors like Coetzee and Brink, were these nostalgic texts so prevalent? It does not seem to have been a matter of significant sales potential. Despite the assertions of critics such as Rory Pilossof that "'Africa' sells" (632), the common narratives about African books in circulation in the industry, which I have outlined above, indicate that they are actually viewed as commercial risks.

Rather, what appear to be at stake are alternative forms of capital gain: specifically, symbolic capital, that is, prestige, good reviews and prizes. It is noteworthy that many of the nostalgia genre novels published in the Anglo-American market have attracted substantial critical acclaim, and were shortlisted for numerous awards in the years in which they were published (see Appendix F). Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* is a good example in this regard, though its overall dark tone makes it less nostalgic in mood than other examples of the genre. Zadok was awarded a publishing contract with Pan Books as one of five finalists out of 46,000 entries in the "How to Get Published" competition run by the Richard & Judy Book Club on Channel 4 in the UK in 2005 (see Alberge 15). The book was then nominated for the 2005 Whitbread First Novel Award, and received an "insane" and "shell-shock[ing]" amount of media attention as a result (Zadok, "Personal Interview").[49] In this case, symbolic capital was converted into

[49] Zadok's fame was short-lived, though this has as much to do with Zadok's own decisions as it does with the short-term memory of the field. After her experience with *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*, Zadok returned to

economic gain: *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*'s impressive sales of about 60,000 copies are evidence of this. In fact, with regard to literary fiction, Straus asserted in our interview that "the one thing that people say really sells books now still is literary prizes." Among the books that I have included within the category of nostalgic literature are at least two other Whitbread nominees, a number of *New York Times* Notable Books, and novels shortlisted for various other awards, including the Commonwealth Writers' Prize and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. All this suggests that the potential of this writing to generate symbolic capital has been fairly significant.

While I do not wish to imply that the quality of the writing is not involved in the acclaim garnered by these books, I submit that this symbolic value is also bound up with the endorsement or perpetuation of particular recognised narratives. Speaking of the international publication of South African writing during apartheid, Sarah Brouillette notes that "multinational firms then and now functioned less as outlets for new South African writers and more as distributors of already recognized brand name figures" like Coetzee, Brink and Gordimer (116).[50] To understand why so many similar novels have predominated among the South African books in international circulation, the same logic may be applied to the content of the books published by international publishers after 1994. As a new generation of unknown post-apartheid South African writers emerged, rather than taking risks by betting on new South African stories, these firms became outlets for already recognised *narratives* which were perceived to be representative of the country and its history. In other words, international publishers functioned as distributors not of brand name authors, but a national brand narrative.

South Africa and shunned all media attention: "I didn't exploit that fame; I withdrew from it," she noted in our interview. It took eight years – and much difficulty, by Zadok's account – before her second novel, *Sister-Sister*, was published by Kwela in 2013.

[50] Of the authors whose novels I analysed in Chapter 1, Justin Cartwright, Christopher Hope, and Mark Behr may arguably also be included in this group.

Numerous critics have suggested that the accretion of symbolic capital for a postcolonial writer, which might then be harnessed by a publisher, is often premised on and related to his or her work being clearly identified and involved with a specific political context or history (Brouillette 71). This identification is usually connected to a writer's biography and country of origin: Graham Huggan notes that even writers "who think of themselves as global migrants are repositioned as 'native informants' for their original (natal) cultures" (*Postcolonial Exotic* 27). James F. English, too, stresses the ways in which high-profile world literary prizes like the Nobel have deliberately honoured "writers of *world literature* who could nonetheless and simultaneously be identified with *local* roots or sites of production, and indeed whose place within world literature was a function of their particular relationship to those local roots" (303; emphasis in the original). In this field, authenticity and value are therefore equated with involvement in narratives associated globally with a region or country, whether writers perpetuate or problematise them, and whether they continue to be relevant or not.

The South African case demonstrates this particularly well because of the relative clarity with which its global identity (or national brand) has been defined. During apartheid, South Africa functioned in the global imaginary as an emblem of racial oppression as well as resistance to it. Augmenting older romantic colonial images of the country, which have been analysed by critics such as Laura Chrisman in *Rereading the Imperial Romance*, and which I will return to below, the country became in this period what De Kock calls "one of the world's great allegories of racial strife, of the struggle for humane justice in the wake of successive waves of imperial, colonial, and neocolonial misrule" ("Global Imaginary" 286). In the 1970s and 1980s, as the struggle against apartheid intensified, serious books by South African writers became a matter of serious symbolic capital. These books were usually expected to affirm a certain resistant commitment, congruent with a Manichean aesthetics, to use Abdul JanMohamed's

resonant phrase.[51] English suggests that Gordimer's Nobel Prize win in 1991 came at a time when global attention was focused on the end of apartheid, and had a great deal to do with her "strenuous efforts" in opposing the system (309).

Jane Kramer observed in her 1982 *New York Review of Books* review of Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Brink's *A Chain of Voices*, that apartheid had become "the revealed outrage of the literary season" (8). Kramer observed further the ways in which readers in the US imaginatively identified with white South African writers who represented resistance to this unambiguous moral crime: "We love them for being South African *for* us. They are our surrogates in resistance" (8). It is important to register the implicit whiteness of this formulation – that this relationship of surrogacy relies on certain identifications and associations between western and South African whiteness, which I examined from the South African point of view in the previous chapter.[52] Indeed, Jeanne Colleran suggests the popularity of Athol Fugard's plays in America has had much to do with American audiences viewing the white "South African heroes" of his 1980s plays as "long-lost cousins" ("South" 228). These examples also corroborate Brouillette's characterisation of the global market as comprising "typically apolitical *consumers* of products with themes reliant upon, but not overly invested in, specific political objectives" (117).

The global narrative of South Africa was modified by the transition to democracy, which transformed the country into a test-case for racial reconciliation and healing through confession and forgiveness. This shift accompanied renewed interest in South Africa in the early post-apartheid years, creating the "lucky patch" Richards identifies as one of the reasons for the publication and success of *Innocence*. As the post-apartheid

[51] JanMohamed suggests that the "manichean organization of colonial society . . . reached its apogee" in apartheid South Africa (4).

[52] Van der Vlies ("Global Imaginary" 699–700) discusses this particular case in greater depth.

years drew on, very little of this narrative about post-apartheid South Africa altered despite considerable changes in various national narratives circulating within the country – including narratives of disillusionment with the processes of the TRC and the dream of racial equality and economic redistribution, as well as widespread corruption and violent crime. According to Rita Barnard, in 2006 images of South Africa in the US were still hovering haltingly at the beginning of the post-apartheid moment in 1994 "with the image of Mandela being sworn in as leader of what Jeremy Cronin has sardonically called the 'winning nation'" ("Oprah's Paton" 7).

As South Africa's place in global culture was (and to a great extent remains) so bound up with apartheid and its demise in this period, it was very unlikely that a South African book would be published in the UK or US without a clear relation to this system and its history. Put another way, insofar as it had a distinct identity as a category in the market over this period, "South African literature" was inextricably associated with apartheid, and generally expected to deal with South Africa's political history or its aftermath, according to the serious precedent set by the "mainstream internationals." Indeed, international readers have often complained in online reviews when they feel a book has not given them enough detail about South Africa's political history (reviews from which I quote in this chapter are collected in Appendix D). One British Goodreads user noted of *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* that "I think I wanted a different book – set during and after aparteid [sic] but I wanted more info on SA and the political background which was missing" (Appendix D, Figure 13).[53]

Andrew van der Vlies has argued that "[s]ome writing is clearly amenable to international takeup, whether or not it is so intended, while other writing engages global

[53] It is interesting in this regard that Straus, who is Zadok's agent, has been unable to find a British publisher to buy rights to her second novel, *Sister-Sister*, published by Kwela in South Africa in 2013. The book is another fairly esoteric novel, but is set this time in an apocalyptic near-future South Africa rather than maintaining an explicit connection to the apartheid past.

strategies of expression or performance for ends directed locally" ("Global Imaginary" 698). The post-apartheid nostalgic book, I submit, most fits the profile of the former, confirming the configuration of the Anglo-American (postcolonial) literary field. Firstly, the concerns of nostalgia as a kind of cultural memory intersect substantially with the general demands placed on so-called postcolonial books by the market. As I discussed in the Introduction and Chapter 1, nostalgia and the forms of post-apartheid nostalgic writing are deeply involved with questions of identity, belonging and place, as well as the relationship between individual and national narratives. As such, they can satisfy the market's desire for regional and historical specificity. Secondly, with regard to the particulars of the South African brand narrative, nostalgia novels explicitly reflect and perpetuate the image of the country I have outlined above. With its dual temporal structure, the nostalgic story pivots on the moment of transition, allowing books to register both the horrors of apartheid and the kinds of social and political changes that have followed its demise. The common TRC-related plot trajectory of confession and reconciliation, moreover, means that the mood in this writing is by and large ultimately one of hope, which also plays into this essentially optimistic narrative.

Apartheid remains the animating force in the plot of the South African nostalgic book. This usually translates into a refracted exploration of the racist system's legacy in the post-apartheid moment through its intrusion into family relationships or the self's identity – a theme which was especially resonant in the late apartheid years. Boehmer notes that the impingement of the political on the personal was something that readers of her first novel responded to particularly enthusiastically in 1990:

> I went around a lot of literary festivals . . . readings in bookshops, and that's the thing that people always wanted to come back to . . . how apartheid, this massive crime against humanity, could actually rub up against family, relationships, to the extent of causing rupture, almost irresolvable rupture. That clearly was fascinating. ("Personal Interview")

A decade and a half later, in 2005, both *Skinner's Drift* and *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* featured this idea as an important theme. That it continued to be something attractive to publishers suggests not only a kind of "homogeneity or 'me-too' publishing" that Thompson identifies as a result of the inter-organisational competition among firms operating in the same areas (10), but also that this is the global narrative of South Africa par excellence. In short, the nostalgia novel tells the right story of South Africa for the market, and it is for this reason that the more generically conventional novels were the books that proliferated in the Anglophone literary field in the post-apartheid years.

The stagnation of this story over this time coincided with the apparent decrease in interest in South African books, yet its persistence in the 2000s, and the continued accretion of symbolic capital to these novels over this period, also suggests a kind of nostalgia among publishers and cultural gatekeepers like literary prize judges, for the universal moral certainties, the Manichean clarity, that apartheid provided. This is a tendency that Brouillette, quoting David Simpson, has identified in postcolonial publishing more generally, calling it "a form of nostalgia for . . . 'the imagined lost world of metaphysical and epistemological assurance'. The condition of postcoloniality that makes such a world 'lost' to begin with simultaneously creates panicked appeals to its continued desirability" (71).[54]

3.2.1. South Africa as mediascape

Arjun Appadurai's mediascape is a particularly helpful concept through which to understand the continuing salience of the post-apartheid nostalgia novel. For Appadurai,

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[54] Of course, as I noted in the Introduction, this nostalgia is paradoxical, for it as easily attaches itself to the lost colonial order as the struggle against it. The 1980s vogue for stories of the Raj (such as *The Jewel in the Crown*, *Raj Quartet*, and *A Passage to India*), and the later popularity of Indian novels such as Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) in the 1990s are examples. Of the former, Linda Hutcheon has suggested that the popular success of these stories may have had less to do with an "intended anti-nostalgic exposé of the corruption and exploitation of empire in India" than "a nostalgic memory of the time when Britain was not a minor world power but, rather, ruler of an empire upon which the sun never set" (Hutcheon).

“-scapes” describe “the global movement of people and ideas, and the ways these influence the lives of ‘historically situated’ individuals and groups in national or regional communities” (Newell 10). The mediascape therefore also refers to the ways in which various technologies of information dissemination (film, newspapers, the internet) create “large and complex repertoires of images” for global viewers (Appadurai 35). Moreover, these “image-centred, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality” become frameworks through which audiences throughout the world imagine their lives and the lives of others, negotiating between “sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility” (35, 31).

Drawing on Appadurai, Barnard has suggested that in a context of increasing indeterminacy around the geographical location of cultural production and reception, “nations will come to signify in a new way, as mediascapes, occasions for certain kinds of stories, and (to be sure) certain kinds of touristic experiences” (“Oprah’s Paton” 15). According to this approach, South Africa can be read as a metaphorical site in which narratives of reconciliation and coming to terms with a troubled past might be enacted more generally, with the nostalgia novel as their ideal vehicle. As I argued in Chapter 1, encoded into the nostalgic plot structure is the excavation of the (traumatic) past, the confrontation of the subject with it, and a resolution – or the hope of resolution – that allows the subject to be reintegrated into society, whether in South Africa or elsewhere. It is, in short, a therapeutic narrative, of the kind which Barnard attributes to Oprah Winfrey’s highly influential mode of discourse, and, certainly, her reading of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the second book featured in her revamped Book Club of 2003.[55]

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[55] Winfrey’s influence in shaping the conceptions and reading habits of middle-brow readers cannot be underestimated. As a result of its appearance as part of Oprah’s Book Club, *Cry, the Beloved Country* sold more than 617,000 copies in 2003, fifty-five years after it was first published (Maryles and McEvoy). Her influence was enormous even within the small South African market, where titles that might have sold a few hundred copies, or a couple of thousand at most, could sell as many as 14,000 (Ball and Boraine). As the South African distributor of many of the titles Oprah recommended, Jonathan Ball called her “a boon to

Drawing on the work of Eva Illouz, Barnard suggests that Winfrey's TV show transformed Paton's "'Story of Comfort in Desolation' into something more like 'A Story of Desolation Overcome'" ("Oprah's Paton" 11), and cast South Africa's twentieth-century history in a similarly redemptive light. That similar discourses of confession and therapeutic schemas were at work in the TRC suggests that the post-apartheid South African context has been particularly well aligned with Winfrey's modus operandi.[56]

This operation of South Africa as a mediascape is demonstrated clearly in the ways that nostalgia novels were packaged and positioned in the market. The back cover blurb of the Pan Books edition of *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* reads: "Rachel Zadok examines the story of a young girl growing up during the height of apartheid unrest in South Africa. This powerful debut tells a richly compelling, emotionally resonant tale of courage set against the backdrop of a chaotically divided, beautiful country." The American edition of Troy Blacklaws's *Karoo Boy* (published by Harcourt) similarly states:

> Blazing with color and light, *Karoo Boy* offers a sensuous and lyrical evocation of South Africa that leaves a lasting impression and ultimately ends on a note of hope. . . . Against the backdrop of the bitter conflict of 1970s South Africa, Douglas develops a clearer insight into himself and his place in the world . . .

For both of these novels, South Africa under apartheid, a "chaotically divided, beautiful country," becomes the ideal "backdrop" for "emotionally resonant" stories of self-discovery, "courage" and "hope" to play out.

Implicit in the concept of the mediascape, certainly as Barnard deploys it, are the ideas of transferability and accessibility, that is, the openness of a text to a mode of reading that connects the specifics of its context and history to more general themes that

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us," and lamented the end of her talk show in 2011, stating that "Oprah going is a serious problem for us. It really is."

[56] Oprah's involvement in and promotion of South Africa has, of course, extended beyond its literature to direct investment – The Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls was opened outside Johannesburg in 2007, with Nelson Mandela's encouragement (and that of his Foundation).

can be appropriated in a personal capacity by the reader through particular "modes of self-recognition" (Barnard, "Oprah's Paton" 11). In other words, to resonate within the Anglo-American book market, books and their settings must be able to function as allegories for readers.[57] It is not surprising, therefore, that the importance to Anglo-American publishers of universal, transferable themes in South African texts was stressed by many of my interviewees. Many South African publishers suggested that overseas publishers care more for the "human interest" elements than the particularity of a book and its setting, which could in fact alienate readers unfamiliar with them. Cooke, the ex-publisher and current London literary agent, noted that even if a book is written very well, "it would be difficult [to sell] . . . if it's all internal and about South Africa completely" (Cooke). And indeed, titles that succeed in combining the two tend to fare well in these markets.

This tension between universality and specificity played an important role in the publishing history and reception of Lisa Fugard's *Skinner's Drift*, a novel which demonstrates how the nostalgic narrative can also function as a mechanism for older, colonial images of South Africa to blend with the meanings the country has taken on in the post-apartheid era. The following section examines this important case in greater detail.

3.2.2. Drifting between therapy and tourism

Peter Straus, who was the UK agent for *Skinner's Drift*, is a central figure in the story of its publication. His involvement with the novel began when he was sent the manuscript by Bob Gottlieb, ex-publisher at Simon & Schuster and Knopf, who was friends with Fugard's father, Athol, and became "a kind of godfather figure to the book" (Straus).[58]

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[57] Van der Vlies argues similarly in "South Africa in the Global Imaginary" ("Global Imaginary" 702–704).

[58] Fugard has nonetheless claimed that her family name was not an asset to her in pursuing publication, and that it was "an uphill battle over four years, and involved major rewriting upon acceptance" (Willoughby 11).

Straus, who maintains that he assesses work primarily on the basis of quality, "thought the book was very good" and took it on just as he was starting out as a literary agent after having left Pan Macmillan, where he had been the publisher with the Picador imprint from 1990 to 2002, and editor in chief of all adult trade imprints from 2000. Straus's role in the publication of *Skinner's Drift* is worth highlighting for another reason. As a key figure in Pan Macmillan's fiction publishing, and subsequently as a literary agent with Rogers, Coleridge & White, Straus is interestingly connected to many of the nostalgic books which interest this study, most of which were first published by Macmillan imprints. Although his influence on the post-apartheid nostalgia trend should not be overestimated, Straus is agent to Hope, Rachel Zadok and Lisa Fugard (or, at least, he acted as the UK agent for *Skinner's Drift*), and Picador published Godwin's *Mukiwa* and Fuller's *Dogs* during his tenure there.[59] Straus noted in our interview that African and southern African writing "was something I was interested in personally," citing South African writers like Coetzee, Gordimer, Alan Paton, Athol Fugard and Stuart Cloete as influences. Because his mandate at Picador was essentially one of economic viability ("one could do anything with the mandate as long as there was no red ink at the bottom"), there was some leeway for such personal interests to be pursued in publishing decisions as long as they made financial sense. Straus also noted that it was during his time at Picador that Picador Africa was conceived because "I thought there was a real hunger, an appetite, for African/southern African writing."[60]

After taking Fugard on as a client, Straus worked with her "quite a lot" on the manuscript of *Skinner's Drift*, bringing his experience in the postcolonial publishing field

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[59] Straus became Zadok's agent only after *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*'s publication, however.

[60] Straus attributes the worldwide sales success of Godwin and Fuller's memoirs to the combination of this appetite with the "real vogue for the memoir" of the late 1990s that followed Mary Karr's *The Liars' Club* (1995) and Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* (1996). In our interview he added: "I think the quality of the writing and the observation superseded the setting, really, for both books, although obviously it drew attention onto the areas that the books were writing about."

to bear on the novel: "Certain scenes needed to be changed, and certain characters developed, I felt, to make it in a way more appealing to the marketplace." When Straus subsequently sent it out to British publishers, Mary Mount at Viking (Penguin) "liked the book immensely" and bought UK rights. Melanie Jackson, a highly regarded agent in New York who also represents Fuller and Athol Fugard, sold it in the US to Scribner (Simon & Schuster). There is little doubt that the cachet of the Fugard name would have been a consideration for publishers, certainly with regard to the marketing of the novel.[61]

According to Straus, "the perceived market was obviously quite a strong market in South Africa," and indeed South African rights were sold to Pan Macmillan South Africa and the book was published under the Picador Africa imprint. However, Straus also believed that the book struck the right balance between the specific and the universal, and hoped that there would be "a general interest in a kind of strong story, which told you a bit about the land and the country, but also about human mores and human nature, and families disintegrating and all that." For this reason, Straus felt it "would be possibly a reading group book; we hoped it would get into promotions . . . [and] appeal to the big chains to take." The Scribner paperback edition of the novel notably includes a Reading Group Guide at the back, comprising a number of questions for discussion along with a question and answer section with Fugard. As with the use of Godwin's endorsement on the cover of *Innocence*, the book covers of the Viking, Penguin, Scribner and Picador Africa editions feature a quotation from Fuller, evidently part of an attempt to associate the writers, and appeal to Fuller's sizable audience. The quotation stresses the therapeutic narrative of the book, proclaiming it to be "[a] wonderfully brave novel – unflinchingly and lovingly written. It is books like this –

[61] Athol Fugard remains particularly popular in America (see Van der Vlies, "Global Imaginary" 701; Colleran, "Athol" 390). The film version of his *Tsotsi*, directed by Gavin Hood, won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 2005, the year of *Skinner's Drift*'s publication.

books that shake the dust out of our heads and hearts – that allow us all to understand our past slightly better and walk forward more confidently."[62]

Even though the book would not be considered a sales success in the UK, it garnered critical acclaim in the US as a *New York Times* Notable Book for 2006, a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction, and runner-up for the 2007 Dayton Literary Peace Prize.[63] It was also published in six different editions by four different publishers: Viking hardcover (2005) and Penguin paperback (2006) (both Penguin imprints), Scribner hardcover (2005) and paperback (2007), Picador Africa hardcover (2005), and Center Point large print (2006). The reception of *Skinner's Drift* in the Anglo-American press, moreover, demonstrates once again how value in this context is equated with the perpetuation of the recognisable therapeutic brand narrative of South Africa. A review in the January 2006 issue of Oprah Winfrey's *O Magazine* emphasises the way in which South Africa becomes an occasion for an Oprah-style therapeutic narrative for Anglo-American readers:

> Eva's journey home coincides with her country's Truth and Reconciliation hearings. Just as her long-suffering nation finds the courage to face the horrors in its past, so Eva reaches a shaky forgiveness of her own. It's that spirit of compassion and commitment to telling it straight that truly enlightens this passionate book. (Henderson Richardson)

In *The Guardian*, Rachel Hore declared:

> The greatest tensions in this rewarding, slow burn of a novel emanate not from the political situation, but from the breakdown of family relationships . . . Lisa

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[62] The full quotation is featured on the Viking and Picador Africa editions. The Penguin paperback and Scribner editions have an abbreviated version: "Wonderfully brave and lovingly written." The Fuller quotation was obtained through Melanie Jackson, Fuller's agent, who also handled the US rights for *Skinner's Drift*.

[63] *Skinner's Drift* sold about the average for a literary fiction title in South Africa (SAPnet), and about the same in the UK (figures courtesy of Straus), making its combined sales in these markets of under 5,000 copies not particularly impressive, though not especially poor either. I have been unable to secure sales figures for the US market. In a *Guardian* feature in December 2005 on British publishers' "disappointments of their year," Viking's Mary Mount cited *Skinner's Drift* as the 2005 book which she believed "deserved better," attributing its lacklustre sales to the fact that "the reviews in the UK, although positive, were scattered and brief" (Figes).

> Fugard's achievement is not only to supply a microcosm of recent South African history, but simultaneously to evoke the breathtaking beauty of landscape, flora and fauna. (Hore)

Clearly, the intersection of the personal, family story with South African history is implicated in reviewers' interest in the novel, but I would also like to call attention to the way in which the "breathtaking beauty of landscape, flora and fauna" is stressed in Hore's review. An element of the South African mediascape which has until now been left implicit in this discussion, but which I will turn to directly in the next section, is the enduring currency of the exotic – South Africa's touristic appeal – which was involved in the reception and the marketing of nostalgia writing in the postcolonial literary field.

3.3. Nostalgic books and the exotic

For northern Anglophone readers, the nostalgia novel effectively combines the stock post-apartheid narrative with a touristic (and perhaps older) image of South Africa: the unforgiving but affecting *veld*, inhabited by wild animals, becomes the setting for a reckoning with the fraught, racist past of the country and the region, which then leads to a resolution that affirms notions of redemption and healing through truth-telling. Allegra Goodman's January 2006 review of *Skinner's Drift* in the *New York Time*s *Book Review* illustrates this particularly clearly. The piece carries the headline "By the Green Limpopo," explicitly connecting the novel to Kipling's "Limpopo of legend," which is also referenced in its review's first paragraph (Goodman 15).[64] The exotic appeal of the "fearsome" landscape and wildlife described in the novel is palpable in the reviewer's initial summary of the novel, which includes a list of featured animals – "jackals, impala,

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[64] Rudyard Kipling's description of "the great grey-green greasy Limpopo river" appears in almost every white southern African memoir or nostalgia novel in which the Limpopo river features (see Fuller 39; Liebenberg 36; St John 4; Fugard 168). The deliberate deployment of Kipling both expresses the writers' (and, by extension, their culture's) heritage link to the British colonial past, and may go some way to familiarise the memoirs' locales to overseas audiences, for whom Kipling's "Africa" may itself be an item of colonial nostalgia and a constitutive feature of their sense of national community. Kipling is, of course, also a symbol whose nostalgic currency extends beyond Africa, and is especially entangled with nostalgia for colonial India.

vervets and chacma baboons" – and references to a character's efforts to "tame [the] land" (15). In the latter half of the piece, apart from identifying the "family story" Fugard tells (an attempt to stress the universal themes in *Skinner's Drift*), Goodman explores the novel's "second story," that is, "the larger tale of race and class and injustice, the corrosive legacy of apartheid in South Africa" (15).[65]

Though it is not enough to account for the prevalence of this writing on its own, the perpetuation of certain stereotypes about Africa is evident in both the textual and paratextual features of the southern African nostalgic writing in international circulation.[66] These in turn play into the kind of colonial "armchair" nostalgia that I discussed in the Introduction. This tendency is most conspicuous in books about Zimbabwe, in part because the imperial romance genre developed, through Henry Rider Haggard, in relation to Zimbabwe/Rhodesia, as Laura Chrisman has explored. Furthermore, Zimbabwe and other southern African regions have historically been more rural than South Africa (allowing romantic depictions of wildlife, landscape and pastoral life), and their own troubled colonial histories have not had quite the international notoriety that apartheid afforded South Africa. This means that, while South Africa is usually recognised as a discrete country through reference to its apartheid past in most paratextual materials, Zimbabwe is more often located within departicularised "Africa," which is usually a conflation of a number of sub-Saharan contexts.[67] Many Zimbabwean

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[65] The Amazon.com reviews of the novel by ordinary American readers also emphasise this combination: "I urge people to read this book for its insight into Africa, its poignant study of apartheid from both sides of skin color but also from the myriad sides of the emotions and feelings of those who were there . . . I could smell the bush of Africa in these pages," said one (Appendix D, Figure 14). Another asserted: "I absolutely loved this book. Great feel for S Africa emerging from apartheid, great descriptions of nature . . ." (Appendix D, Figure 15).

[66] Binyavanga Wainaina offers a particularly trenchant critique of these stereotypes in his 2005 *Granta* essay, "How to Write about Africa."

[67] The blurb for the 2007 Scribner paperback edition of *Skinner's Drift* names South Africa twice, drawing specific attention to the protagonist's "homeland, South Africa," as it "confronts its own bloody history." Conversely, the blurb on the back cover of the 2003 Random House edition of *Dogs* notes that "Alexandra Fuller remembers her African childhood with candor and sensitivity."

texts include phrases which confirm this conflation. These include: "the lush rain of Africa" (Liebenberg 1), the "incongruous, lawless, joyful, violent, upside-down, illogical certainty of Africa" (Fuller 295–96) and "[s]omething as old as Africa, like the loamy earth" (St John 4). "Africa" as a homogenising term functions here, and in the texts themselves, as a sign of the exotic; its presence in the works of writers whose experiences are very specific to a certain southern African context suggests the conscious framing of the work outwards, in terms of a foreign audience for whom an essentialised notion of "Africa" – the continent rather than a country or region within it – has some appealing resonance.

"Africa" itself then becomes a nostalgic concept, a term redolent of the kinds of romantic colonial imagery one finds in films such as *Out of Africa* (1985), which also may comprise the content of readers' cinematic nostalgia.[68] Harilaos Stecopoulos interprets Fuller's deployment of this kind of imagery as evidence that she understands that "the aura of the savage frontier" appeals particularly to a readership that still associates white settler history with notions of adventure and romance (236). Although Stecopoulos refers specifically to the book's American readership, my interviewees observed that this kind of audience is as likely to be European as Anglo-American. Significantly, the nostalgia in Zimbabwean texts is also premised on the history of the country in the postcolonial period, specifically the violent and disastrous history of the ZANU-PF. The resulting near collapse of the country post-2000 and its extreme poverty augments the colonial-era romantic imagery with the construction of Africa as a site of privation, in need of international aid efforts – the kinds of narratives perpetuated by popular media campaigns, such as Kony 2012.[69]

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[68] Interestingly, the German translation of *The Innocence of Roast Chicken* appeared under the title *Ich war ein Kind in Afrika* (I Was A Child in Africa) (2008), which quite explicitly recalls the first lines of *Out of Africa* – both the novel and the film.

[69] The Kony 2012 campaign, launched by the organisation Invisible Children, was a viral phenomenon in March 2012. Comprising an emotive online video about Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord's Resistance

While they are more prevalently associated with other southern African locations, these kinds of narratives are also increasingly in operation in the UK about South Africa, perhaps indicating that in very recent years South Africa has begun to lose some of its individuated identity in the global imaginary. Citing recent experiences of feedback from London agents, Richards claims that "overseas publishers are looking for something that's not *real*" ("Personal Interview"). In 2012, agents noted of her latest novel (*The Imagined Child*, published by Picador Africa in 2013), which is set in a small Free State town and lacks the picturesque appeal of her debut novel, "that the characters are not as they expect South Africans to be." She believes that "they think that people would like to read transcendent things about good people who are working to uplift [others]" and in "more lyrical" settings. They are seeking, she alleges, the kinds of western saviour stereotypes perpetuated by films like *The Constant Gardener*.

Nostalgic texts set in South Africa tend to eschew the more obvious trappings of colonial nostalgia, but there are ways in which many of them may be seen nonetheless to endorse, sometimes obviously though often obliquely, similar formulations. Within the novels, especially the expatriate novels, there are descriptions of "the bush smell, the African silence, the vibrating heat" (Zadok, *Gem Squash* 253) or references to "Africa [lying] stretched . . . like the ravaged hide of some ancient beast" (Fugard 1).[70] According to Shaun Johnson, "a lot of the South African writers" within the country call the particularly overwrought examples "nostalgia porn" (Johnson). We might also understand the frequent emphasis on the land and landscape, particularly its emotional pull, as inviting similar interpretations by foreign readers, even as it is utilised for more personal

Army, and his group's use of child soldiers, the campaign aimed both to spread international awareness of the LRA's practices and to pressure international peacekeeping organisations to arrest Kony by the end of 2012. It was widely criticised for its factual inaccuracy and perpetuation of stereotypes.

[70] Wainaina notes that "[r]eaders will be put off if you don't mention the light in Africa. And sunsets, the African sunset is a must. It is always big and red. There is always a big sky. Wide empty spaces and game are critical—Africa is the Land of Wide Empty Spaces."

reasons, as I argued in Chapter 1, and even if particular texts actually challenge such interpretations.

Publishers, more importantly, have continued to deploy the exotic in their presentation of this literature to the market through paratextual materials. As Huggan has argued of Indian writing, “the *resistance* to such nostalgia that is obviously exercised by many of the writers is effectively recuperated by an ‘otherness industry’ that banks its profits on exotic myths” (*Postcolonial Exotic* xiii). Squires emphasises that marketing strategies and the paradigms through which readers interpret texts (which we may understand as the pervasive influence of mediascapes) are mutually reinforcing: “marketing by ethnicity is . . . not only symptomatic of the publicity machine of contemporary UK publishing, but also the interpretive parameters that it both nourishes and feeds upon” (142). The packaging of post-apartheid nostalgia novels demonstrates this particularly clearly. There are no fewer than five different cover images used for the six editions of *Skinner’s Drift*, four of which involve atmospheric “African” landscape scenes (see Appendix G, Figures 2–7). These variously feature wild animals (wild dogs and a lion), round huts and a farmhouse, with the landscape remaining a ubiquitous but hazy background presence. One very small human figure is suggested on only one of the covers. Other novels’ covers follow a similar logic (Appendix G, Figures 8–11), either featuring a dramatic landscape (a lightning storm for the Sceptre edition of *White Lightning*, a luminous aloe for the Harcourt *Karoo Boy*, along with an endorsement from Chris Martin, the lead singer of the band Coldplay, who calls the novel “the most colorful book I have ever read”) or a lone farm in an empty landscape (*Innocence* and the Pan Books edition of *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*).[71] There is a connection here with the

[71] The cover image for *Innocence of Roast Chicken* (Appendix G, Figure 10) was designed in London by Headline’s in-house designers who used a stock image of a South African farm that was almost certainly not taken in the Eastern Cape where the farm in the novel is set. Judging by the terrain, the photograph is most likely from the Western Cape or the eastern Free State – both of which are hundreds of kilometres from the novel’s location. This is a distinction to which a reader in the UK would probably be oblivious,

stultifying conventionality evident in the cover designs of novels about Africa – "the acacia tree sunset treatment" – which Elliot Ross has lamented in a post for the blog *Africa is a Country* that went viral in 2014.[72] Ross suggests that "the covers of most novels 'about Africa' seem to have been designed by someone whose principal idea of the continent comes from *The Lion King*," showing little regard for the actual content of the novels themselves or the great variety within the group.

There are, of course, exceptions within the group. The covers of novels such as Coetzee's *Boyhood*, Hope's *Heaven Forbid*, and the Duckworth edition of *Karoo Boy* avoid these "African" images (see Appendix G, Figures 12–14). They tend nevertheless to follow the generic conventions of the childhood memoir cover (that is, a monochromatic image of a pensive child), suggesting an attempt by their publishers to appeal to a more general market for memoirs by stressing the universality of the themes explored in the texts. The tension between the universal and the specific in the marketing of books is again implicated here, with the emphasis falling on the former in these cases.

To understand the implication of these exoticising paratextual strategies and the paradigms of interpretation that they feed, we cannot miss the considerable overlap they have with tourism discourses, as a number of discussions of postcolonial texts in the market have recognised. Huggan suggests that, in addition to selling books, paratextual devices such as covers, blurbs and glossaries interpellate "a globalised 'market reader', who is constructed as a kind of 'anthropological tourist' of the unfamiliar world(s) represented in the text" (*Postcolonial Exotic* 164–65); Brouillette draws an explicit link

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but one that would be glaring for many South African readers. Moreover, the farm in the novel is neither isolated nor in a mountainous region, yet the image is of a single farmhouse overshadowed by a mountain range and dwarfed by the landscape. This suggests the perpetuation of an archetypal image of the farm in "Africa" that can trace its genealogy back to Olive Schreiner via Karen Blixen. A similar visual translocation occurs in Steve Jacobs's 2008 film version of Coetzee's *Disgrace*, where the scenic Western Cape stands in for the dry Eastern Cape as the surrounding landscape to Lucy Lurie's farm.

[72] The article was inspired by a Twitter image posted by Simon Stevens, a user of the website (https://twitter.com/SimonMStevens/status/464049317926686720/photo/1).

between "the business of tourism" and "postcoloniality industr[ies]" (7); and we might also recall Barnard's description of mediascapes as occasions for "certain kinds of touristic experiences" ("Oprah's Paton" 15). It is no coincidence, then, that the episode of Oprah Winfrey's talk show which focused on *Cry, the Beloved Country* explicitly linked the literary and touristic by including a "Trip of a Life Time" for three lucky viewers to South Africa (Barnard, "Oprah's Paton" 11), or that at least one Canadian reader of Richards's *Innocence* "travelled to South Africa after she read the book, and she's come now about three times" (Richards, "Personal Interview").

South African tourism discourse and the novels of the post-apartheid nostalgia genre in fact share very similar representational strategies. The home page of the Official South African Tourism website stated the following in 2012: "Our people are ready to show you our country's natural wonders, draw you into the rhythm and soul of Africa, give you close encounters with our regal wildlife and take you on an unforgettable journey through our ancient and recent past." The journey promised here is explicitly one into the past – the domain of nostalgia – yet, crucially, it is only the "ancient" and "recent" past that are offered for tourists' consumption.[73] Presumably, it is the history of colonialism and most of the apartheid years that are elided in favour of an emphasis on the precolonial past (including the Bushmen or San, perhaps, but focusing on the landscape and wild animals) and the triumphant narrative of the anti-apartheid struggle and the transition to multicultural democracy.[74] These are two elements of South Africa's

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[73] Touristic discourse and nostalgia have always been intimately associated, especially in southern Africa. See Wels for a discussion of how southern African landscapes were romanticised by Scottish writers in the nineteenth century who figured the region as a lost Eden. See also Simmons on how nostalgia for colonial forms of touristic discourse informs contemporary popular travel writing.

[74] As Wels suggests, the performance of European expectations of precolonial "Africa" and "Africans" is financially necessary to the tourism industries in southern Africa because it is these expectations which attract visitors and sell tickets (90). Insofar as metropolitan expectations and tastes determine the form and development of tourism industries in ex-colonies, the dependent economic relationship between these becomes in many ways an extension of the colonial relationship. Dennison Nash goes so far as to say that metropolitan "power over touristic and related developments abroad" makes "tourism a form of imperialism" (qtd. in Carrigan 3).

image which come together in the marketing and the content of the nostalgia genre. Both touristic discourse and these nostalgic books, despite having different sites of production, are ultimately shaped by the expectations of a global audience about South Africa.

Perhaps more significant, however, is the way in which these expectations, and the representations they produce, have been internalised within South Africa and South African cultural production. The idea of nation building, the development of a coherent national identity within the country, is commonly invoked as one of the South African tourism industry's important functions. In 1998, the Minister of Tourism Valli Moosa argued that "[w]e cannot say that our campaign to market SA to potential British tourists can be separated from nation building" (qtd. in Marschall 97). In other words, the performance of "South Africanness" for a foreign audience is an inextricable element of the invention of South African national identity, for "[t]he foreign (usually European) tourist as Other looks in and helps define the South African Self" (Marschall 97). Because the South African readership was a major, if not the primary, market for the novels of the nostalgia genre, and many of them have fared suitably well in the country, what we see in these books is effectively a kind of double exoticisation: the South African text is "exported," prepared for publication and packaged in the UK or US according to the tastes and expectations of an Anglo-American market, and then reimported into and circulated within South Africa. Having gone through a process similar to a game of broken telephone or Chinese whispers, such a book gives South African readers a tourist's eye view of the country that their self-image in fact endorses.

The conflicted effects of this process are discernible in the reception of *Skinner's Drift* in the South African press in 2005. Ronel Nel of the newspaper *Beeld* criticised the novel for covering already well-trodden narrative ground, but noted that she expected it to do well, referring explicitly to its touristic appeal: "Ek vermoed wel dat die boek in lughawe-kiosks opgeraap sal word deur reisigers" ("I suspect, however, that the book will

be snapped up in airport kiosks by travellers") (Nel 11). Shaun de Waal of the *Mail & Guardian* also highlighted his sense of the book's belatedness and its perpetuation of stereotypes:

> The book feels American in some ways – it's as though Fugard has taken a clutch of tropes common to South African fiction and recycled them. . . . [M]uch of it feels old. Perhaps it's the racial encounter, and our tortured history more generally, that still defines South Africa for an overseas readership, but it would not be surprising to discover that white writers writing from within the country simply feel that at this moment they have nothing fresh to say about all that. (De Waal)

Yet there was another strain in South African newspaper reviews that was far more deferential to the novel, and, perhaps, to the cultural industry that produced it. I referred to some of these in the previous chapter when noting the difference between English and Afrikaans reviews of the novel. Julia Paterson in *The Citizen* found *Skinner's Drift* "easy to adore – it's evocative, filled with lyrical prose and is one of the best South African novels I have ever read. I devoured it during a Sunday afternoon" (6). Michael Hurry in *The Sunday Independent* praised the novel for its "verisimilitude," emphasising its handling of "the need for mutual forgiveness and the hope for peace and reconciliation in the New South Africa" (18). Another reviewer who acknowledged the book's conventionality nonetheless argued that Fugard "manages to turn the tired I-write-overseas-but-I'm-a-South-African trope to good account, crafting a fiction from what sounds like well-worn materials . . . that positively sparkles with rich, tortuous life" (Willoughby 11).[75]

[75] Ordinary South African readers have echoed these positive responses to the novel in online reviews, noting that they "found this book profoundly moving and compelling throughout" (Appendix D, Figure 16) and that Fugard "manages to capture the essence of life on a south african farm, . . . the apartheid era, the truth and reconciliation era . . . some of the scenes she creates are so very true to life, they hit me in the gut. . . . if you want to experience south africa in all its beauty and strength and tragedy and pain, this is a great book to read" (sic) (Appendix D, Figure 17). It is unclear which, if any, of these readers are expatriates.

Most tellingly, the estrangement of the tourist's eye view has noticeably affected works produced in South Africa for the South African market. The immensely popular *There Are Ants in My Sugar* features an intrusive series of footnotes throughout the text which provide definitions for South African terms such as "*klippies en coke*" (Foxcroft 13), despite the fact that the novel was published only within South Africa by a local publishing house for a local audience that would be very familiar with all these expressions.[76] Even the word "apartheid" is footnoted, apparently without irony, and with a puzzlingly contradictory explanation: "This needs no footnote. South Africa is famous for the Apartheid system" (13). In addition, the book includes nine pages of glossary and endnotes with further explanations of select terms (261–69). At least one ordinary South African reader has remarked on this feature in a public forum, including the following comment in an otherwise very positive Goodreads review: "I wonder, though, what the thinking was behind giving *every single* non-English word a translation in a footnote. Surely this is going to be read overwhelmingly by S'theffricans?" (Appendix D, Figure 18). This conscious orientation of the book toward a phantom foreign audience demonstrates the extent to which, in De Kock's words, "the balkanized ex-colony sees its own terrain as a scene of perpetual tourism" ("Global Imaginary" 266). As this example demonstrates, even as the South African publishing industry matured and began to increase the diversity of its literary output and its appeal to the market in this period, the unequal relationship between the Anglo-American and South African cultural industries continued to influence the production and reception of English South African literature.

The international currency of the post-apartheid nostalgia novel does, however, seem to be waning. Images of South Africa in the fiction published in the Anglo-American industry have arguably begun shifting in recent years, as different

[76] The book was not distributed outside South Africa until 2014, when it was published as an eBook by Overdue Press in the US.

representations of the country have gained traction in the global cultural landscape since 2009. These include the Afrofuturist/Afrodystopian scenarios of Neill Blomkamp's 2009 film *District 9*, the music phenomenon of Die Antwoord, and Lauren Beukes's 2010 novel *Zoo City*, all of which have gained international acclaim and commercial success. With lucrative international deals following highly competitive bidding wars between publishers, authors like Beukes and Sarah Lotz have moved from serving a niche market for South Africa-based speculative fiction to writing mainstream international bestsellers. Concurrently, South African crime fiction (Deon Meyer, Margie Orford) has also found international success, which is to some extent an outgrowth of the Scandinavian crime boom of the 2000s in the Anglo-American market. These examples of genre fiction could be construed as refractions of older, stereotypical narratives (South Africa as a place of wildness, mystery and danger, for example), but they nonetheless represent a clear alternative to the apartheid-centric, TRC-style confessional narrative of the conventional nostalgia novel.[77]

4. Conclusion

The value of nostalgia and the post-apartheid nostalgic book has been inflected differently in the two distinct but intersecting publishing contexts that this chapter has explored. For South African publishers struggling to adjust to the economic and ideological changes brought on by the end of apartheid, the worth of nostalgia and nostalgic white writing was primarily economic, for it could appeal to an established white market for literature in the country. Although nostalgia in various forms was involved in a number of major sales successes, for much of this period, with some exceptions, this literature did little to expand the market beyond its traditional, limited

[77] Dennis Walder has, however, suggested that *District 9*, for all its technology and futurism, is characterised by a different kind of nostalgia that relates to apartheid, which he suggests is *hysterical* in nature ("Hysterical Nostalgia").

bounds, regardless of publishers' intentions. In effect, nostalgia played an integral role in an insular cycle of predominantly white publishers publishing books by predominantly white writers, for a predominantly white, middle-class readership. Yet, paradoxically, the greater market focus that enabled nostalgic literature to flourish within South Africa has also led to the increasing diversification within the field in recent years, both in terms of the books published and the composition of the market and industry.

Diversity was not, however, a hallmark of the most prevalent and most conventional post-apartheid South African literature in international circulation over this period, which originated outside South Africa in the Anglo-American, and most often the British, publishing industry. As the second half of this chapter has explored, the worth of the novels in the post-apartheid nostalgia genre was connected to the promise of capital gain primarily within the symbolic economy of the postcolonial field, through the commodification and perpetuation of particular narratives already associated with the country in the international market. Allowing for a potent combination of the therapeutic and touristic, the nostalgia novel was especially available and well suited to this kind of use. That there was, and still remains, an uneven relationship between the South African and British industries has meant that this "doubly exoticised" aspect of the nostalgia trend was in turn imported into and valorised within the South African market itself.

If post-apartheid nostalgic literature held different kinds of value for the South African and Anglo-American publishing industries, common to both is the way in which it frequently functioned as a conservative means of preserving, perpetuating, and capitalising on well-worn paths between known coordinates in the literary field. In both cases, the book of nostalgia was circulated as a cultural commodity by publishers within established networks, reinforcing certain narratives and ideas in the pursuit of capital gain. Here again, as with the kinds of work it performed for its writers and readers over this period, which I explored in the preceding chapters, nostalgia and the post-apartheid

nostalgic book have had less to do with challenge than preservation – whether of the forms of white writing, the boundaries of white identity, or the position of a publisher in a precarious market. In all of these contexts, nostalgia remained a valuable resource: for writers, a generative if circumscribed mode of engagement with the past; for white readers, a source of psychological protection; and for publishers, a mine of economic and symbolic capital. In this regard, Hirson's lyrical description of "the golden days of apartheid" takes on surprising new meanings.

Conclusion

Nostalgia and the Future

> *Thus the past as I once knew it is slowly defaced. New images overlay the old. . . .*
>
> Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*

In 1994, the year of South Africa's official transition from the apartheid system to democracy, Njabulo Ndebele made the following declaration: "the past is knocking constantly at the doors of our perceptions, refusing to be forgotten, because it is deeply embedded in the present. To neglect it at this most crucial of moments in our history is to postpone the future" ("Guilt" 158). In this spirit, South African writers of the post-apartheid period worked insistently to uncover and interrogate the events and memories of the past. Yet, though generative and often valuable, this backward glance has also been compulsive, and its effects on post-apartheid literature have in some cases been limiting and even detrimental. Indeed, Ronit Frenkel and Craig MacKenzie have referred to the focus on apartheid in South African literature of the late twentieth century as "often imaginatively stultifying" (3). Recognising this fixated quality, Elleke Boehmer has described South African literature of the post-apartheid period as "a writing, above all, of stuttering repetition" ("Permanent Risk" 29). According to Boehmer, this writing was so conditioned by the modes of thought and expression of crisis, that it was stuck in a creative and temporal rut characterised by a "seemingly ceaseless recurrence of traumatic affect" ("Permanent Risk" 42).

This thesis has focused on another similarly repetitive retrospective trend within South African literature: the persistence of nostalgia and nostalgic affect in post-apartheid white writing. The preceding chapters have examined how this nostalgic literature moved

along the deep-cut tracks of familiar plots, themes and settings, which served to affirm consoling narratives of white selfhood as well as a particular brand narrative of South Africa in the global literary field amidst the changes brought by the end of apartheid. If tracing around these well-worn trails produced a circumscribed body of literature, as I have shown, it has also been my contention, especially in the later sections of this thesis, that these paths have become increasingly eroded, questioned, and even abandoned in the past five years. During the period of research and writing, significant shifts have taken place in the South African cultural landscape. The passing of Nelson Mandela, Nadine Gordimer and André Brink within the last two years, for example, has contributed to a growing sense that, twenty years after the advent of democracy, South African politics and cultural production are in yet another transitional moment. At the end of this account of nostalgia's presence in post-apartheid South African literature and culture, therefore, the question of the future is ever more pressing. What lies ahead? What emergent forms are becoming the dominant modes of expression and of identification, in a period that has been called the "post-transitional" and even "post-postapartheid"?[1]

Already, since the late 2000s, the temporal focus of South African writing has shifted. With the rise of genre fiction, particularly crime novels and speculative fiction, as well as the phenomenon of literary non-fiction, the orientation of much South African literature has turned directly to the present, to its exigencies and uncertainties, and to the future, both near and distant, to alternative, speculative realities. The spatial grounding of this new literature has also changed, as authors like Lauren Beukes turn their attention not only forwards, but also outwards, feeling less pressure to situate their work within the geographical limits of the country, or the expected thematic bounds of South African

[1] "Post-transitional" is the term favoured by the Special Issue of *English Studies in Africa* on 'Post-Transitional' South African Literature in English, edited by Frenkel and MacKenzie; "post-postapartheid" is used by Chapman (15).

literature. If South African publishing continues to grow, pursuing and embracing new black authors and readerships, what new fixations may emerge?

Although Anglo-American publishing continues to occupy a dominant position within the local industry, and metropolitan approval still seems to be the most compelling mark of a South African author's accomplishment, the international success of such writers as Beukes, Deon Meyer, Margie Orford, and Sarah Lotz, all of whom continue to reside in South Africa, indicates that South Africa's place in the global imaginary is transforming, as, too, is the configuration of the international literary field. (Of course, the fact that *white* writers continue to dominate this group, with few notable exceptions, indicates that much, unfortunately, remains the same.) These new South African stories have fed off and also contributed to various international media narratives in circulation over the past half-decade, including the music phenomenon of Die Antwoord and the blockbuster success of the film *District 9* in 2009, the FIFA World Cup in 2010, as well as the media frenzy around Oscar Pistorius and the death of Mandela in 2013. While the country continues to be associated with apartheid and its aftermath, through these media narratives it has also been portrayed increasingly as a zone of instability, of danger and even dystopia, though also of exciting creativity and resourcefulness. What "South Africa" and "South African literature" as a category will designate in the future, if indeed such national literary categories will continue to have purchase in the market, is to be seen. Will it lose its particularity and gradually become part of the rest of Africa, finally putting to an end the exceptionalism which has so persistently been invoked, and also critiqued, in narratives of the country? Or will it come to play some other role in an increasingly homogeneous global symbolic landscape? The work remains to explore this changing terrain.

To return, finally, to the South African social and cultural environment, what, may we say, is the future of nostalgia? As a form of cultural memory, it is likely to persist, especially in the light of a perceived increase in political and economic instability in the

country, and indeed globally. What form such nostalgia will take, and by whom it will be expressed, will, I venture to say, diversify in the next five to ten years. According to Maurice Halbwachs, while collective memory helps to shore up the boundaries of group identity, this memory and these identities are also mutable. As group and community identifications slowly shift over time, so too do the memories which support them: “new images [of the past] overlay the old” (Halbwachs 72). In South African public discourse, the kinds of insular and nostalgic white identities I have explored in detail in this thesis are increasingly under discussion, and in doubt, in the public sphere, as the aftermath of Samantha Vice’s 2010 article, “How Do I Live in This Strange Place?” has made clear. Deliberately concerned with how white South Africans ought to negotiate the ethical complexities of living in the present with other South Africans as subjects shaped by the privileges of an unjust system, Vice has provoked passionate public debate about the place and ethical responsibilities of white South Africans in the country. In 2015, these discussions seem only to be gaining momentum. What is certain is that the old narratives, boundaries and structures of whiteness can no longer be sustained, though certain *bittereinder*[2] nostalgic impulses will no doubt continue among particular groups of white South Africans. This thesis itself may be read as evidence of this shift, for, as Svetlana Boym notes, one “becomes aware of the collective frameworks of memories when one distances oneself from one’s community or when that community itself enters the moment of twilight” (54).

If the domain of memory is not fixed, future South African nostalgias will not resemble the nostalgias of the past. This is especially likely to be the case if publishers are able to continue expanding and diversifying their outputs and markets – this thesis, I hope, has made clear that publishers bear a significant responsibility in challenging white cultural

[2] Literally “bitter-ender”: a term used to describe the Boer guerrilla fighters in the South African War who were determined to fight the British until the “bitter end.”

hegemony. In this context, Jacob Dlamini's *Native Nostalgia* may become an important precursor, and we may yet see the emergence of a range of resistant, melancholic, or even joyful nostalgias in literature and culture, expressed by all South Africans. In a 2011 essay for the Stellenbosch Literary Project, Wamuwi Mbao contemplated the possibility of a South African version of the American television show *Mad Men* – "a lush reimagining of 1960s Johannesburg" – but concluded that "[t]he SABC would not make it" at this historical juncture because nostalgia and apartheid are still too controversial a combination (Mbao). In response, Mbao wistfully imagined the creative opportunities that might arise should South African writing one day be able to "suspend[] the fear of not saying enough," and move beyond the time of sombre political and ethical hyper-vigilance into a state of "ecstatic, flippant *jouissance*." While the account given in this thesis suggests that such a time of freedom cannot arise so long as social, economic and cultural inequalities remain insufficiently addressed in South Africa, the prospect is a tantalising one. The future of South African nostalgia may yet surprise us.

Appendix A: Chronology of the genre

Year	Political developments	Publishing developments	Books first published in SA	Books first published outside SA
1986			*The House Next Door to Africa*	
1987				
1988				*White Boy Running* (UK)
1989				
1990				*My Traitor's Heart* (USA)
1991				
1992				
1993				
1994	First democratic election: Nelson Mandela elected president	Kwela Books established		
1995				*The Smell of Apples* (first published in Afrikaans as *Die Reuk van Appels* in 1993) (UK)
1996			*Childish Things* (first published in Afrikaans as *Die Dinge van 'n Kind,* 1993)	*The Innocence of Roast Chicken* (UK) *Imaginings of Sand* (UK) *Mukiwa* (UK)
1997		Textbook crisis begins		*Boyhood* (UK) *Heartland* (UK)
1998				
1999	Second democratic election: Thabo Mbeki elected president			
2000		David Philip ceases independent operation		*Dreambirds* (UK)
2001				*Heaven Forbid* (UK)
2002		Jacana Media begins general trade publishing	*The Children's Day* *The Beneficiaries*	*White Lightning* (UK) *Before the Knife* (UK) *Don't Let's Go To The Dogs Tonight* (UK)
2003				*Gardening at Night* (UK) *Frankie and Stankie* (UK)
2004	Third democratic election: Thabo Mbeki re-elected; Mandela retires from public life	Picador Africa established	*I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)* *Karoo Boy* *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy*	*The Persistence of Memory* (USA)
2005		Umuzi established	*We Walk Straight So You Better Get Out The Way* *Spud* *Blood Orange*	*Gem Squash Tokoloshe* (UK) *Skinner's Drift* (UK)
2006			*The Native Commissioner* *Stargazer* (first published in Afrikaans as *Roepman*, 2004)	*The Syringa Tree* (USA)
2007				*The Rowing Lesson* (USA) *Every Secret Thing* (UK) *Rainbow's End* (UK)
2008	Thabo Mbeki resigns as president		*There Are Ants In My Sugar*	*The Voluptuous Delights of Peanut Butter and Jam* (UK) *The Scent of Oranges* (Australia)
2009	Fourth democratic election: Jacob Zuma elected president		*Native Nostalgia*	*Summertime* (UK) *Kings of the Water* (UK)
2010		Sapphire Press established		
2011			*Lost Ground*	
2012			*The Dancing and the Death on Lemon Street*	*Absolution* (UK)
2013			*False River* *Random Kak I Remember About Growing Up in South Africa*	

Analased in Chapter 1

Set in Zimbabwe/Zambia

Appendix B: Summaries of novels

The following are brief synopses of the main plot points in the novels that are analysed in Chapter 1 (ordered chronologically).

André Brink's *Imaginings of Sand* (1996)

In the days leading up to South Africa's 1994 elections, Kristien Muller returns from the UK to the deathbed of her beloved grandmother, Ouma Kristina, on the family farm in the Little Karoo. Much of the novel is taken up by the stories that Ouma Kristina tells about the family's matrilineal history. Through these arguably magical realist accounts of her foremothers, Kristien is reconnected with her history and the country. The novel comes to a tragic end when, after Ouma Kristina's inevitable death and the national elections, Kristien's sister Anna murders her husband and five children before killing herself. Kristien stays on in South Africa.

Jo-Anne Richards's *The Innocence of Roast Chicken* (1996)

In 1989, on the eve of Nelson Mandela's release from prison, Kate looks back to her family's 1966 Christmas holiday at her grandparents' idyllic chicken farm in the Eastern Cape. The irascible and belligerent adult Kate traces her pessimism (and strained relationship with her husband) back to an event on Christmas Day 1966 that shattered her innocent childhood paradise: her witnessing the forced castration of Johannes, a farmworker who had raped the mother of a cruel Afrikaner neighbour in retaliation for having been brutally treated. In 1989, with the story told, she begins to reconcile with her husband and face the future with hope.

J. M. Coetzee's *Boyhood* (1998)

Told in the third-person, *Boyhood* is an account of the childhood of John Coetzee, an Afrikaans boy growing up in the 1940s and 50s. The text documents John's complex, often ambivalent, relationships with his parents and his younger brother, with his extended family, and with the Afrikaans culture and language.

Christopher Hope's *Heaven Forbid* (2001)

Heaven Forbid is told from the perspective of Martin Donally, a young boy who lives with his mother and Irish grandfather in Johannesburg. Martin is cared for by Georgie, his kind and imaginative black nanny who runs a shebeen (an illegal bar) from his quarters on the Donallys' property, and with whom Martin has a close and loving relationship. The novel is set in the period leading up to, and following, the South African elections of 1948 that brought the National Party to power, and the formal implementation of the apartheid system.

Justin Cartwright's *White Lightning* (2002)

James Kronk leaves a life of broken relationships (a divorce and the tragic drowning of his young son) and disappointed ambition in London to attend to his dying mother and her affairs outside Cape Town. After his mother's death, Kronk buys a farm with his inheritance money, hoping to transform it into his own restorative pastoral idyll. His befriending of a local Xhosa family and a tame baboon as part of this project leads to tragedy. In the end, defeated, Kronk returns to London and becomes a motorcycle messenger.

Lisa Fugard's *Skinner's Drift* (2005)

After a decade in New York, Eva van Rensburg returns to South Africa in 1997, to the presumed deathbed of her elderly father in Louis Trichardt (Limpopo province). On the eve of the TRC's arrival in town, Eva revisits her past, including the two accidental shootings that led to her estrangement from her alcoholic Afrikaans father and Skinner's Drift, her beloved family farm: the first is her father's (presumably) mistaken shooting of a young black child, and the second is the death of Eva's English South African mother Lorraine, the casualty of a neighbour's misfired rifle. Although Eva is the protagonist, each chapter is narrated by a different character, including Eva, her father Martin, their old farmworker Ezekiel/Lefu, and his daughter Grace/Nkele. At the end of the novel, Eva returns to the now declining farm and reconciles with the elderly Lefu.

Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* (2005)

When Faith's psychologically troubled mother Bella dies in an institution, Faith must return to the farm on which she grew up to settle her mother's affairs. Moving between the present and the past, the novel recounts Faith's childhood on the farm, which was ruled by her mother's esoteric and paranoid cosmology, and alleviated by the arrival of Nomsa, Faith's kind and resourceful nanny. The plot hinges on the young Faith's witnessing Bella's Afrikaner suitor Oom Piet attempting to rape Nomsa, who is shot and killed in the struggle. Faith's return to the farm leads to her recollection of the truth about that night: that it was she who, trying to protect Nomsa, accidentally shot her with her father's shotgun.

J. M. Coetzee's *Summertime* (2009)

Summertime is the third of Coetzee's memoir/fictions. After the death of John Coetzee, his English biographer, Mr Vincent, interviews a number of people who were close to him, including his cousin, Margot, with whom John shared a close relationship in his youth, who now ekes out a living with her husband on a farm in the Karoo. The book is divided into seven sections: the first and last are ostensibly extracts from notebooks, and the middle five comprise the individual interviews. The period covered by the text is the early 1970s, the years in which, Mr Vincent believes, Coetzee's writing was most profoundly shaped.

Mark Behr's *Kings of the Water* (2009)

When Michiel Steyn's mother dies, he returns to South Africa for her funeral after fifteen years of estrangement. As he revisits the family farm, Paradys, in the Eastern Free State, he also revisits the past and the life he abandoned. While his relationship with his father remains strained, he reunites with his brother, the farmworkers, and his childhood sweetheart, Karien. The process of remembering precipitated by his return, as well as conversations with those close to him, helps Michiel to begin to come to terms with his past that, fraught with regret, includes his older brother Peet's suicide, Karien's abortion of Michiel's unborn child, and an interracial homosexual romance which led to Michiel's flight from South Africa.

Appendix C: Who Remembers the Old Durban Facebook Page

As cited in Chapter 2, section 2.3. I have included only the first four pages of comments (out of a total of twelve), which contain the comments from which I quote, and are representative of the general tenor of the online debate. The full list of comments may be found at: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151524394145923&set=o.241806852513286&type=1&ref=nf

Now thats what you call a beach. A place where you could relax anytime of the day, white sandy beaches, clean water - today NEVER.....what a shame
17 March 2013 at 23:39 · 3

yes the good old days ....the youngester of to day are really missing out on wondeful times....beach parties and late night swims....
17 March 2013 at 23:39 · 1

Those were the days my friend - the more we are free, the less freedom we have
17 March 2013 at 23:49 · 1

And you could always find a parking(sloped) in the one way along the beach. Damn fine times.
18 March 2013 at 00:45 · 1

GREAT TIMES
18 March 2013 at 01:47

Absolutely awful. To think we live in an African country and look at the demographics of those on the beach. Anyone who yearns back to these times is harbouring some deep seated, or probably not even very deep seated, racism.

And for those saying the beachfront is not like that any more, either you have not been down for ages or, when you do go down, you choose to only see what you want to see. Negativity can be blinding.
18 March 2013 at 02:17 · 17

Good memories
18 March 2013 at 02:18 · 1

Well that is definately me,
I remember catching a bus to the beach, having a wonderful time and then either walking home or getting back onto the mynah bus and guess what - ALL THE WHILE BEING SAFE...
and nothing to do with racsim but SAFETY!!!!
Oh and you could leave your stuff on the beach, go for a swim, come back and your stuff was still there untouched.
Those were the days!!!!!!! The good old days!!!!!!
18 March 2013 at 02:20 · 8

What GOOD days.
18 March 2013 at 02:25

All the white people laying in the sun trying to go brown.While all the brown people banned from the beach because they were too brown .Madness .
18 March 2013 at 02:37 · 7

Yip!! those were the days.....
18 March 2013 at 02:41

Those were the days, the freedom to assume that your rights wouldn't be violated the minute you turned your back. I'm happy I experienced that in my life, was it The Nest or The Cuban Hat that had the PacMan game?
18 March 2013 at 04:00 · 3

Oh shut up !!
18 March 2013 at 04:04 · 3

@
There were black men on the beachfront.
They rented out the chairs and sold ice-cream.
What they didn't do is steal shit!
18 March 2013 at 04:24 · 7

yeah so there ou big cock!
18 March 2013 at 04:25 · 2

Reckon he's back in place now huh what do you say?
18 March 2013 at 04:26 · 2

He's out saving whales boet.
18 March 2013 at 04:27 · 2

I wonder if he was a NDP or JW?
18 March 2013 at 04:28

yip wid no color on the beach either.. It looks like snow white! haahha
18 March 2013 at 04:29 · 2

sanctions from australia hahaha
18 March 2013 at 04:36 · 4

"eish...good times"
18 March 2013 at 04:43 · 1

Those were the days my friend ... !!
18 March 2013 at 04:51

To think all those people there are now "old " many possibly dead!!
18 March 2013 at 05:00 · 1

Haha rides bicycles ergo a tosser! Enough said!
18 March 2013 at 05:01

needs more black people hey my brother!
18 March 2013 at 05:02 · 1

ya not only is the sun bright but now the beach is over run by op-ague folks aswell... Sheeeesss Gone are those days.. hahha
18 March 2013 at 05:05

I was there in '81 surfing from Aug to Oct, stayed in the Lonsdale Hotel, R200 per month included breakfast and dinner.
18 March 2013 at 05:09 · 1

Happy Happy days. The rock piers were great. Jeeze lighten up bro.
18 March 2013 at 05:10

The way it should still be.
18 March 2013 at 05:16

Now you get skin diseases in the water from all the shit we're pumping in there.
18 March 2013 at 05:31

The irony of a guy called "Schwartz" making a comment that could be read as a call for a return to apartheid.
18 March 2013 at 05:39 · 8

shem ...
18 March 2013 at 05:43

this picture looks like an advert for apartheid.
18 March 2013 at 05:45 · 8

And so do the comments.
18 March 2013 at 05:45 · 7

I shared this pic with my mom, she remembers it well. it's the beach where she got hosed down with sewer water cos the racists aka people-who-had-no-idea-apartheid-was-inhuman wanted to keep it to themselves. there are beaches exactly like this one in Brazil today but they are multicolored and i don't mean just the umbrellas and that country has as dodgy a political past as any. maybe south africa has more white assholes per square meter than any other cunt-ry. who knows?
18 March 2013 at 05:59 · 6

Morning in Durban
With church bells ringing out and the clatter of milk-bottles
the morning returns
in blazing light among the wind-swept trees.
The burning lion's many shapes and his wildness
are displayed in the sky. The sea
rises with festive surf to greet the towering hotels
and cranes on the shore.

Beautiful, like rivers in flood, the widening streets
carry the victims in cars and in buses, a torrent of workers
to ware-house and factory.
Laughing policemen open and close the sluices
and supervise the suppression of riots
an the orderly segregation into colours an races.

Beautiful the blue sky under which the magnates
rise to their task
blue are the great expanses of happiness and sadness,
beautiful the blue sky on the horizons, bending
down to caress
the sea, the trees, and a solitary drunkard,
who resists the temptation to join the general contentment,
beautiful the blue sky under which thousands
will die of hunger.
18 March 2013 at 06:03 · 3

I agree, but sadly never to be seen like this again.
18 March 2013 at 06:08

It looks like Tel Aviv today
18 March 2013 at 06:15 · 2

.Your mom is talking sh!t. The only assholes per square metre then any other country we have are those that steal, murder and rape with impunity on a contstant basis.
18 March 2013 at 06:16

You people are all fucking racist.
18 March 2013 at 06:17 · 4

White sandy beach or sandy white beach?
18 March 2013 at 06:24 · 2

it depends on why they're nostalgic for this beach. If it's because they're nostalgic for their youth, it's cool but if it's because there are no black people, it's fucked up. But if it's because there wasn't radioactive waste and sewage in Durban's sea back then, it's also OK.
18 March 2013 at 06:26 · 6

summed it up perfectly. P!ss of with your ' you are all racist ' mentality. Christ cant people even be nostalgic without the race card being played.
18 March 2013 at 06:34 · 3

Yes I was 11... I think I am in this pic somewhere...
18 March 2013 at 06:38 · 2

looks a bit (alot) like one of your paintings
18 March 2013 at 06:40 · 1

Er ..
18 March 2013 at 06:40 · 1

18 March 2013 at 06:40

It's not the nostalgia per se, so much as the veiled racist commentary that implies that the real nostalgia is for a time when one didn't have to ruminate on ones complicity in apartheid. It's not wrong to wish for a time of youthful simplicity, to not recognise that that simplicity was founded on oppression of others is a little myopic but, okay nostalgia is, by its definition myopic.

However the comments above are really really saddening, the wistful desire for a

time when "the blacks" were too scared to steal, the casual attribution of all SA's current problems of sexual violence on the other, etc.
18 March 2013 at 06:41 · 6

Indeed... View of the bluff in the distance. No photos were allowed there...
18 March 2013 at 06:44

Oh people! When are you going to learn, we are all the same race!
18 March 2013 at 06:45 · 1

The golden sands and the mighty ocean are still there! So join the 21st century because it's still lekker by die see!!
18 March 2013 at 06:45 · 3

Had left Durb's already!
18 March 2013 at 06:46

ctually what I wanted to say was that, I cannot agree with you more Roger.
18 March 2013 at 06:48

Looks pretty nice. Too bad about all the apartheid that made it look like that, though. I'll happily take today's still-beautiful Durban beachfront over this any day.
18 March 2013 at 06:53 · 8

I'm deeply disturbed by all the racist comments here, and by the fact that people think they can be nostalgic for apartheid without it having anything to do with race. What the fuck!?

Head on down to the beachfront right now for one of Durban's most beautiful and beautifully democratic spaces.
18 March 2013 at 06:59 · 7

Fuck off Nick Mulgrew.
18 March 2013 at 07:00

Thanks, Karl! I'm so happy we can engage intelligently on a public forum. Enjoy staying trapped in our country's disgusting past.
18 March 2013 at 07:03 · 6

I'm deeply disturbed that a simple picture of Durban Beachfront in 1981 along with nostalgic comments, which are not without merit, has been turned into a ' race thing ' by some here. Must be terrible to go through life looking for ' racists ' here, there and everywhere.
18 March 2013 at 07:10 · 3

I remember the beach like that, we could run around without cutting our feet, and swim in the water without worrying about getting a rash from polluted water.
18 March 2013 at 07:17 · 2

.. Bottom Right... thats so me!?!
18 March 2013 at 07:17 · 1

I don't look for racists. Unfortunately I still see them...
18 March 2013 at 07:19

It's your doppelganger, Not skinny enough though.
18 March 2013 at 07:21

not everyone on this thread is being accused of racism, however you cannot deny that some of the commentary on here is racist.
18 March 2013 at 07:26

I spent so many beautiful days on that beach, lived in highspray flats...miss my durban
18 March 2013 at 07:26

I'm deeply disturbed that people find it deeply disturbing that some people might make a comment about the social context that this photo was taken in, especially when it's so fresh in the memory. Must be terrible to go through life being so adverse to people pointing out that apartheid did happen, that it still matters that it happened, and it was – these nostalgic photographs and great memories aside – a horrible thing.
18 March 2013 at 07:26 · 1

Brings back so many great memories.
18 March 2013 at 07:28

The Fantabulous old days!!! Had to get there early to get a spot against the wall!! :))
18 March 2013 at 07:32

every comfort you have is based on oppression. Your computer and most of your electronics is made by slave labour in China, your food is picked and processed by an underpaid and exploited underclass, your petrol is coming from totalitarian states. So basically according to your statement, you are being myopic and oppressive if you ever enjoy yourself anywhere. If you take your statement to its logical conclusion, you should probably just kill yourself.
18 March 2013 at 07:33 · 5

And if you take your comment to it's logical conclusion then it's okay if I come over and kill you now?

Reducing the argument to an absurdity is just another diversionary tactic often used by people who cannot see context.

I'm not saying that it's bad to look back on good times, times of youth. Many of the people in this photograph were unaware of the nature of their complicity in Apartheid. They look back fondly on the good times they had as young people. However, to use that nostalgia to denigrate on a racial basis the circumstance of the present is just plain wrong.

"Hey we were safe then so hence black people are bad and apartheid was good because ICE CREAM!"

Appendix D: Readers' responses

The following are the full text responses from ordinary readers on which I draw in in Chapter 2, section 3 and Chapter 3, section 3, which readers of this thesis may have trouble locating otherwise. I have included only the responses from which I quote directly; they are arranged in the order in which they appear in the chapter.

The review originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions, but the URLs for each quoted review may be found in the bibliography.

Figure 1

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Figure 2

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Figure 3

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Figure 4

The article originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 5. Surgison, Katy. "Roberts Is Just a Bitter, Opinionated Academic." The Sunday Independent 8 Dec. 1996.

The article originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 6. Furber, Paul. "Comrade Ogilvy." The Sunday Independent 1 Dec. 1996.

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Figure 7

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Figure 8

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Figure 9

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Figure 10

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Figure 11. "Wellread." Fairlady June 2002.

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Figure 12

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Figure 13

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Figure 14

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Figure 17

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Figure 18

Appendix E: Tributes to Denis Hirson's *I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)*

The following are the nostalgic tributes to Hirson's King Kong *which are discussed in Chapter 2, section 3.1.4.*

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Suzy Brokensha. "Editor's Letter." Fairlady June 2009

Jeanne Horak-Druiff (Cooksister). "I remember…" South Africa Rocks blog, 2007

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The article originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions, but the relevant URL may be found in the bibliography.

Jeanne Horak-Druiff (Cooksister). "I remember… (part II)" South Africa Rocks blog, 2008

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Doc. It's 1970 Now blog, 2010–2011. Note: I include only the first three pages of this post, which continues in the same vein. The full post may be viewed at: http://saintheolddays.blogspot.co.uk/2010/08/all-that-happened-up-to-1976.html

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Appendix F: Publishing details database

Author	Title	Year	Author Location	Imprint	Publishing Firm (country)	Agent	Awards	Sales figures (approx. & to nearest 500)	Other Editions	Notes
Awerbuck, Diane	*Gardening at Night*	2003	SA	Secker & Warburg	Random House (UK)		Winner: 2004 Commonwealth Best First Book Award (African region). Short-listed: 2005 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award		Vintage (Random House), 2004	
Behr, Mark	*Smell of Apples, The*	1995	USA/SA	St Martin's Press	Macmillan (UK)	Mic Cheetham Literary Agency	Winner: 1994 Eugène Marais Prize, 1996 CNA Literary Debut Award, 1995 M-Net Literary Award, 1995 Art Seidenbaum Award from the *Los Angeles Times,* Betty Trask Award (UK). Nominated: Booker Prize		First published as *Die Reuk van Appels* by Queillerie, 1993. Abacus (Little, Brown, Hachette Livre), 1996.	
Behr, Mark	*Kings of the Water*	2009	USA/SA	Abacus	Little, Brown (Hachette Livre) (UK)	Mic Cheetham Literary Agency	Shortlisted: 2010 Africa's Best Book - Commonwealth Writers' Prize, 2010 University of Johannesburg Main Prize	Redacted	*Les Rois du Paradis* (JC Lattès, 2010)	Distributed/ promoted by Penguin SA in South Africa
Blacklaws, Troy	*Karoo Boy*	2004	SA	Double Storey	Juta (SA)	Isobel Dixon (Blake Friedmann)	Shortlisted: 2005 Sunday Times Fiction Award, 2006 Prix Femina Etranger	Redacted	Duckworth (UK), 2005; Harcourt (US), 2005; Ambo (Netherlands), 2005 (as *Jongen uit de Karoo*); Flammarion (France), 2006; Liebeskind (Germancy), 2008 (as *Malindi*).	Film rights optioned to Videovision (Anant Singh)
Blacklaws, Troy	*Blood Orange*	2005	SA	Double Storey	Juta (SA)	Isobel Dixon (Blake Friedmann)	Shortlisted: 2008 Prix Femina Etranger		Ambo (Netherlands), 2006 (as *Bloedappel*); Flammarion (France), 2008 (as *Oranges Sanguines*).	
Botha, Dominique	*False River*	2013	SA	Umuzi	Penguin Random House (SA)	Isobel Dixon (Blake Friedmann)	Winner: 2014 University of Johannesburg Debut Prize (in both English and Afrikaans), 2014 Eugéne Marais Prize, 2014 Jan Rabie-Rapport Prize. Shortlisted: 2014 *Sunday Times* Literary Prize, 2014 Kyknet Rapport Prize, 2014 Versindaba Lykgedig Competition		Afrikaans translation (as *Valsrivier*), Umuzi 2013	
Brink, André	*Imaginings of Sand*	1996	SA	Secker & Warburg	Random House (UK)	Liepman Agency, Zurich	Shortlisted: 1998 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award		Vintage (Random House), 1996	
Cartwright, Justin	*White Lightning*	2002	UK	Sceptre	Hodder & Stoughton (Hachette Livre) (UK)		Shortlisted: 2002 Whitbread Novel Award			

* Sales figures marked with an asterisk are courtesy of SAPnet (Nielsen's agent in South Africa). It is important to note, however, that Nielsen's figures usually reflect a lower total than actual numbers of copies sold, as they do not take into account independent booksellers' sales.

Analysed in Chapter 1

Set in Zimbabwe/Zambia

Chimeloane, Rrekgetsi	*Whose Laetie Are You? My Sowetan Boyhood*	2001	SA	Kwela	NB Publishers (SA)					Intended for the schools market
Coetzee, J. M.	*Boyhood Scenes from Provincial Life*	1997	SA	Vintage	Random House (UK)	Anthony Goff (David Higham)	2003 Nobel Prize for Literature		Viking (Penguin), 1997	
Coetzee, J. M.	*Summertime Scenes From Provincial Life*	2009	Australia	Harvill Secker	Random House (UK)	Anthony Goff (David Higham)	2003 Nobel Prize for Literature. Shortlisted: 2009 Man Booker Prize			
Dlamini, Jacob	*Native Nostalgia*	2009	SA		Jacana (SA)		Winner: 2010 University of Johannesburg Debut Prize	Redacted		
Eprile, Tony	*Persistence of Memory, The*	2004	US		W. W. Norton (US)		Winner: 2004 Koret Jewish Book Award. New York Times Notable Book of the Year, Washington Post and Los Angeles Times best book of 2004			
Flanery, Patrick	*Absolution*	2012	UK		Atlantic Books (UK)	Sarah Chalfant (The Wylie Agency)	Winner: 2012 Spear's/Laurent Perrier Best First Book Award. Shortlisted: 2014 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, Prix Page/America (France), Royal Society of Literature's Ondaatje Prize, 2012 Flaherty-Dunnan First Novel Prize, Authors' Club (UK) Best First Novel Award, 2012 Spear's Best Novel Award. Longlisted: Prix du Premier Roman Étranger (France), 2012 Guardian First Book Award, 2012 Desmond Elliott Prize		Riverhead Books (US), Knopf (Canada). In translation: De Bezige Bij (Netherlands), Cappelen Damm (Norway), Galaxia Gutenberg (Spain), People's Press (Denmark), DVA (Germany), Éditions Robert Laffont (France), Achuzat Bayit (Israel), Garzanti Libri (Italy), Świat Książki (Poland), Editura Univers (Romania), Alfaguara (Brazil)	
Fortune, Linda	*House in Tyne Street, The*	1996	SA	Kwela	NB Publishers (SA)					Intended for the schools market
Foxcroft, Annica	*There Are Ants In My Sugar*	2008	SA		Thomas Stein (SA)		Longlisted: 2010 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. 4th best selling book of the year at Exclusive Books in 2008, Radio 702 Book of the Month in 2008, read in full on SAfm	Redacted	Two sequels: *More Ants!* (Thomas Stein, 2009), *Ants in the Big Onion* (Umuzi, 2011)	
Fugard, Lisa	*Skinner's Drift*	2005	USA	Viking	Penguin (UK)	Peter Straus (Rogers, Coleridge and White)	Finalist: LA Times's Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction. Runner-up: 2007 Dayton Literary Peace Prize. 2006 New York Times Notable Book.	Redacted	Picador Africa (Pan Macmillan), 2005. Scribner (Simon & Schuster) hardcover, 2006 and paperback, 2007. Center Point, 2006. Penguin paperback, 2006.	
Fuller, Alexandra	*Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight An African Memoir*	2002	USA	Picador	Pan Macmillan (UK)	Melanie Jackson Agency	Winner: 2002 Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize, 2002 *New York Times* Notable Book, 2002 Booksense Best Non-fiction book. Finalist: Guardian First Book Award			

Fuller, Alexandra	*Scribbling the Cat Travels with an African Soldier*	2004	USA	Picador	Pan Macmillan (UK)	Melanie Jackson Agency	Winner: Ulysses Prize for Art of Reportage		Picador Africa (Pan Macmillan), 2004	
Fuller, Alexandra	*Cocktail Hour under the Tree of Forgetfulness*	2011	USA	Simon & Schuster	Simon & Schuster (UK)	Melanie Jackson Agency				
Galgut, Damon	*In a Strange Room*	2010	SA		Atlantic Books (UK) / Penguin South Africa	Tony Peake	Shortlisted: 2010 Man Booker Prize; 2011 Ondaatje Prize; 2011 M-Net Literary Award			
Gien, Pamela	*Syringa Tree, The*	2006	USA	Random House Trade Paperbacks	Random House (US)				Re-issued 2006, 2007. Dutch translation: Luitingh-Sijthoff, 2008.	Originally a one-woman play which won the 2002 Obie Award for Best Play
Godwin, Peter	*Mukiwa A White Boy in Africa*	1996	USA	Picador	Pan Macmillan (UK)		Winner: George Orwell prize, Esquire-Apple-Waterstones Award	Redacted		
Godwin, Peter	*When a Crocodile Eats the Sun A Memoir*	2007	USA	Picador	Pan Macmillan (UK)		Winner: Borders Original Voices Award, 2008 American Libraries Association Notable Book	Redacted	Picador Africa (Pan Macmillan SA), 2006	
Heyns, Michiel	*Children's Day, The*	2002	SA		Jonathan Ball (SA)	Isobel Dixon (Blake Friedmann)	Shortlisted: 2002 Booksellers' Award. Longlisted: Prix Femina in France. #2 on FNAC's list of best books in 2010		Tin House Books (US), 2009	
Heyns, Michiel	*Lost Ground*	2011	SA		Jonathan Ball (SA)	Isobel Dixon (Blake Friedmann)	Winner: 2012 Sunday Times Fiction Prize, 2012 Herman Charles Bosman Prize			
Hirson, Denis	*I Remember King Kong (The Boxer)*	2004	France		Jacana (SA)	Isobel Dixon (Blake Friedmann)		6,000 in SA		
Hirson, Denis	*We Walk Straight So You Better Get Out The Way*	2005	France		Jacana (SA)	Isobel Dixon (Blake Friedmann)		Redacted		
Hirson, Denis	*Dancing and the Death on Lemon Street, The*	2012	France		Jacana (SA)	Isobel Dixon (Blake Friedmann)	Shortlisted: 2012 Commonwealth Book Prize			
Hope, Christopher	*Heaven Forbid A Novel*	2001	UK	Macmillan	Pan Macmillan (UK)	Peter Straus (Rogers, Coleridge and White)			Picador USA, 2004; Atlantic Books (UK), 2010	

Johnson, Shaun	*Native Commissioner, The*	2006	SA		Penguin (UK) / Penguin South Africa		Winner: 2007 Commonwealth Writers' Prize - Best Book in Africa, 2007 M-Net Literary Award for English, 2007 Nielsen Booksellers' Choice Award. Shortlisted: 2007 Sunday Times Fiction Prize, 2007 University of Johannesburg Creative Writing Prize			Independent Examinations Board matric set work
Landsman, Anne	*Rowing Lesson, The*	2007	USA		Soho Press (US)	Lippincott Massie McQuilkin	Winner: 2009 Sunday Times Fiction Prize, M-Net Literary Award. Shortlisted: Top 10 South African Books of 2008 (*The Times*), Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature, 2008 Harold U. Ribalow Prize, Top 29 Fiction Books of 2008 (*Financial Times*)		Kwela (SA), 2008; Granta (UK), 2008	
Liebenberg, Lauren	*Voluptuous Delights of Peanut Butter and Jam, The*	2008	SA	Virago	Little, Brown (Hachette Livre) (UK)		Shortlisted: 2008 Orange Award for New Writers, 2008 University of Johannesburg Debut Literary Prize. Longlisted: 2008 Orange Prize for Fiction, Richard & Judy's Summer Read, 2009 Sunday Times Fiction Prize	Redacted		
Malan, Robin	*Cheesecutters and Gymslips South Africans at Boarding School*	2008	SA	Umuzi	Random House Struik (SA)					
Molete, Mokone	*Postcards from Soweto*	2007	SA		Jacana (SA)			Redacted		
Nixon, Rob	*Dreambirds The Natural History of a Fantasy*	2000	USA	Anchor/ Doubleday	Random House (UK)		2000 *New York Times* Notable Book		Picador USA, 2000	
Penny, Sarah	*Beneficiaries, The*	2002	SA		Penguin South Africa					Independent Examinations Board matric set work
Richards, Jo-Anne	*Innocence of Roast Chicken, The*	1996	SA	Headline Review	Hodder & Stoughton (Hachette Livre) (UK)		Shortlisted: 1997 M-Net Literary Award. 1997 Dillon's Debut novel in London. Longlisted: 1998 IMPAC International Dublin Literary Award	19,000 in SA, 8,000 worldwide		#1 on SA bestseller lists for 15 weeks
Romain, Trevor	*Random Kak I Remember About Growing Up in South Africa*	2013	SA		Penguin South Africa					Sequel: *Random Kak 2 Living, Loving and Laughing in South Africa* (2014)
Slaughter, Carolyn	*Before the Knife Memories of an African Childhood*	2002	USA	Doubleday	Random House (UK)				Black Swan (UK), 2003	
Sleigh, Dan	*Islands*	2004	SA	Secker & Warburg	Random House (UK)					Translated by André Brink

Slovo, Gillian	*Every Secret Thing My Family, My Country*	2007	UK	Virago	Little, Brown (Hachette Livre) (UK)	Clare Alexander (AAA Ltd)				
St John, Lauren	*Rainbow's End A Memoir of Childhood, War and an African Farm*	2007	UK	Hamish Hamilton	Penguin (UK)		2009 Top 50 of Spread the Word's "Most Talked About Books"			
Trapido, Barbara	*Frankie and Stankie*	2003	UK		Bloomsbury (UK)	Victoria Hobbs (A. M. Heath)	Shortlisted: 2003 Whitbread Novel Award			
Turner, Jann	*Heartland*	1997	UK/US		Oriel (UK)					
Van de Ruit, John	*Spud*	2005	SA		Penguin South Africa		2006 Bookseller's Choice Award	220,000+ in SA	Penguin (UK), 2008	Three sequels: *Spud – The Madness Continues...* (2007), *Spud – Learning to Fly* (2009), and *Spud – Exit, Pursued by a Bear* (2012)
Van der Vyver, Marita	*Die Dinge van 'n Kind*	1994	SA	Tafelberg	NB Publishers (SA)				English translation (as *Childish Things*): Tafelberg 1996, Dutton Books (Penguin, US) 1996. Also translated into Dutch, German (as *Welten Entfernt*)	
Van Tonder, Jan	*Roepman*	2004	SA	Human & Rousseau	NB Publishers (SA)		Shortlisted: 2005 WA Hofmeyr Prize, 2005 M-Net Literary Award		Re-issued 2011. English translation(as *Stargazer*): Human & Rousseau 2006.	Adapted into the Afrikaans film, *Roepman*, in 2011
Van Wyk, Chris	*Shirley, Goodness & Mercy A Childhood Memoir*	2004	SA	Picador Africa	Pan Macmillan (SA)		Shortlisted: 2005 Sunday Times/Alan Paton Award	20,000+ in SA	Reissued 2005	
Zadok, Rachel	*Gem Squash Tokoloshe*	2005	UK	Pan Books	Pan Macmillan (SA)	Peter Straus (Rogers, Coleridge and White)	Shortlisted: 2005 Whitbread First Novel Award, 2005 John Llewellyn Rhys Prize. Finalist: 2004/5 Richard & Judy "How to Get Published" Competition	60,000 worldwide by 2010		
Zawatzky, Joan	*Scent of Oranges, The*	2006	Australia	Jojo Publishing	Classic Author & Publishing Services (Aus)					

Appendix G: Book cover designs

As discussed in Chapter 3, section 2.3.1 and 3.3.

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Figure 1. I Remember King Kong (The Boxer) (Jacana, 2004)

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Figure 2. Skinner's Drift (Viking edition, 2005)

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 3. Skinner's Drift (Penguin paperback edition, 2006)

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 4. Skinner's Drift (Scribner hardcover edition, 2006)

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 5. Skinner's Drift (Scribner paperback edition, 2007)

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 6. Skinner's Drift (Picador Africa edition, 2005)

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 7. Skinner's Drift (Center Point edition, 2006)

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 8. White Lightning (Sceptre edition, 2002)

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Figure 9. Karoo Boy (Harcourt edition, 2005)

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Figure 10. The Innocence of Roast Chicken (Headline Review edition, 1996)

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 11. Gem Squash Tokoloshe (Pan Books edition, 2005)

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 12. Boyhood (Vintage edition, 1998)

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 13. Heaven Forbid (Macmillan edition, 2001)

The image originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright restrictions.

Figure 14. Karoo Boy (Duckworth edition, 2005)

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