Post-apartheid Speculative Fiction and the South African City

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Declaration

I, Rowan Roux , hereby declare that the work on which this thesis is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university. I authorise the University to reproduce for the purpose of research either the whole or any portion of the contents in any manner whatsoever.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role that speculative fiction plays in imagining the city spaces of the future. Considering the rapid pace of change that has marked post-apartheid South Africa as an impetus for emerging literary traditions within contemporary South African speculative fiction, the argument begins by sketching the connections between South Africa's transition to democracy and the emerging speculative texts which mark this period. Positioning speculative fiction as an umbrella term that incorporates a wide selection of generic traditions, the thesis engages with dystopian impulses, science fiction, magical realism and apocalyptic rhetoric. Through theoretical explication, close reading, and textual comparison, the argument initiates a dialogue between genre theory and urban theory as a means of (re)imagining and (re)mapping the city spaces of post-apartheid Cape Town and Johannesburg.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> "Just as the new worlds and galaxies of science fiction are often models of already known worlds and galaxies (literary ones, too), so also future history is plainly modelled on past history" – Frederick A. Kreuziger, *Apocalypse and Science Fiction*

South Africa's history could well have been written by a dystopian author. Under colonial settlement and apartheid regulations, South African cities were actively constructed as utopic for the white minority, while not catering to other racial groups, rather exploiting their labour to build cities. The legal end of apartheid, however, does not mean that South Africans have suddenly become equal across all boundaries. People are still divided along the lines of social class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, and, of course, race.

Considering South Africa's long history of colonisation and segregation, the study posits that the modern South African city continues to carry this legacy, allowing for ongoing marginalisation and oppression of the historically disadvantaged. The city, thus, in many ways represents a dual symbol of "civilisation" as progress but also serves as a tangible reminder that this ideology has been established through a dynamic of oppressor-oppressed; a dynamic based on exclusion which continues to be justified through colonial, neo-colonial and nationalist discourse.

The image of the city is often embued with visions of prosperity, order and hope – a utopian vision of progress and stability. Under the apartheid regime, city spaces were legally sanctioned to cater to the minority along the lines of racial categories, but with the end of legislated segregation, the post-apartheid city has not become as egalitarian as was once hoped. With questions about how accessible cities are to all citizens, the regulation of urban spaces like Cape Town or Johannesburg has frequently been rendered possible through a rhetoric of exclusion and difference – especially in terms of what is accessible to whom. As a result,

elements of segregation and social regulation are often evoked in post-apartheid urban fiction. Speculative fiction in particular has become an illuminating mode through which South African writers are exploring themes relevant in post-apartheid society.

The thesis examines representations of Cape Town and Johannesburg in selected post-apartheid speculative fiction. The primary aim of this research project is to explore and account for the uses of speculative fiction in post-apartheid South African writing with a particular emphasis on how and why urban settings are being used. I aim to show how future possible histories are being shaped in the urban spaces of the present, and propose that speculative fiction has an important role to play in imagining alternative ways of being. For more politically inclined writers, speculative fiction offers a means of taking the elements of social unrest they see in the world around them and extrapolating these through narrative. The worlds created in speculative fiction, then, are often not far removed from the context in which they originate.

Defining contemporary speculative fiction as an umbrella term to describe some of the new hybrid novels entering the South African literary scene, this research project examines the genre as something being used to ask particular types of questions in this specific moment of history, and does so in a manner which might not be possible in a purely realist mode of writing. Furthermore, speculative fiction blurs the boundaries of genres, combining elements as diverse as science fiction, fantasy, horror, and crime novels, making it an effective umbrella term and one which tends towards inclusivity of form. In my reading, I explore speculative fiction as a form of narrative which has the capacity, or at least intent, to envision alternative futures. Furthermore, it is this crossing of genre borders that resonates with the application of speculative fiction in South Africa city spaces. Considering Cape Town and Johannesburg as cities which have historically been defined through exclusion, the post-apartheid city becomes a site of daily border crossing.

Building on this suggestion that speculative fiction has the capacity to blur boundaries stylistically and thematically, this research project examines the genre as a narrative strategy being used to ask particular types of questions in this specific moment of history, that of a neoliberal, post-apartheid South Africa. In particular, I focus on the use of genre and how these representations of Johannesburg and Cape Town are shaped by speculative inquiry. The selected texts, Lauren Beukes' *Moxyland* (2008) and *Zoo City* (2010), K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (1999), Rachel Zadok's *Sister-Sister* (2013), Neill Blomkamp's *District 9* (2009), Henrietta Rose-Innes' *Nineveh* (2011) and Karen Jayes's *For the Mercy of Water* (2012), have been critically and commercially acclaimed for their ability to engage with multiple genres or modes ranging from science fiction, magical realism and noir to dystopian, cyberpunk, and apocalyptic visions of the future. Through close textual analysis, I consider the role that multi-generic narratives play in rendering the cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg and how these depictions of city spaces show an interest in prevalent post-apartheid themes of segregation and the anxieties about the direction that future histories may take.

I begin by sketching the national mood of post-apartheid South Africa, before exploring the distinctions between science and speculative fiction, and addressing larger concerns surrounding genre classifications. In order to do this, it is necessary to first outline the historical trajectory of speculative fiction and the various genre associations of this umbrella-term. The discussion of genre is further extended through exploring the distinctions between utopian and dystopian cultural impulses and their relation to speculative narratives. Finally, I turn my attention to reading Cape Town and Johannesburg and the role that speculative fiction plays in postulating possible iterations of these cities.

Speculating on a sense of hope: from rainbow to dystopia

With Nelson's Mandela's release from prison in 1990 and the African National Congress's rise to power in 1994, the "new South Africa" was often portrayed as a united country with a new sense of hope. Despite the anticipated promise of South Africa's fledgling democracy, the last 20 years, have seen many South Africans continue to struggle with increasing inequality and alienation.

The hope ensconced in terming South Africa a "rainbow nation" as the 1990s approached was widely evoked in public addresses by Archbishop Desmond Tutu:

> "Mr. de Klerk, please come here! . . . We say, come, come here, and can you see the people of this country? Come and see what this country *is going to become*. This country is a rainbow country! This country is Technicolor. You can come and see the *new* South Africa!" (Tutu 1989, 187. My emphasis)

Sketching the end of the apartheid dispensation as imminent, Tutu cast his vision for this new nation as something emerging; something that South Africa was "going to become". In attempts at reconciling the "old" South Africa with the "new", Tutu's wording implies that the Rainbow Nation was still in the stages of "going to become". Unsurprisingly then nation-building strategies during the 1990s were focused on sketching a sense of togetherness, suggesting a utopic inversion of the ideologies of separateness ensconced in the term of *apartheid* itself. Of course, the ideology of apartheid was invested in its own sense of utopia – one the inverse of the symbolism of togetherness inspired by the image of the rainbow.

The national rhetoric of rainbow nationalism, therefore, sketched a particular future of freedom and equality through attempts to distance the nation from its past. As Nedine Moonsamy argues, the concept of the Rainbow Nation epitomises the "easy optimism of post-apartheid nation-building," while also suggesting that such a temporal break with the past "implies a national construct that does not extend out of the past but, instead, seeks distance from it"

(Moonsamy 2014, 2). As much as attempts at nation-building have focussed on togetherness, contemporary South Africa is still heavily marked by the effects of apartheid and colonialism. While rainbow nationalism certainly served to promote a unified, multicultural future at a time when South Africa desperately needed to assuage future anxieties, it also made it easier to overlook the complexities of historical oppression and discrimination and the ways in which these would continue to manifest after apartheid. Furthermore, as this attempt at nation building was, by necessity, a unifying image, its application was one that posed no interest in alternative futures. The temporality encapsulated in the rhetoric of the Rainbow Nation, thus, privileges futurist aesthetics through its call for distancing from the present moment. But this distancing enabled by rainbow nationalism also focused very much on establishing *post*-apartheid as a singular event which was legislatively actualised without sufficiently calling into question the scope of conflicts which have marked the country since colonialism.[1]

In her article, "The limits of Rainbow Nation Multiculturalism in the New South Africa", Melissa Tandiwe Myambo argues that "the adoption of a radical multiculturalism was and is literally a matter of life and death," as "it allowed for a reconciliation of opposed forces that were tearing the nation apart" (2010, 95). However, as Myambo argues, terms like "Rainbow Nation" are merely "descriptors that are placed in front of the noun country—a still largely white-owned land—to do the work of transforming it into a multicultural nation-state for all races" (Myambo 2010, 94). Myambo further suggests that, while rainbow nationalism initially

[1] With this perspective, my use of "postcolonial" in this thesis serves to highlight the continuation of the colonial rhetoric and social structures upon which the apartheid state was built and maintained. Furthermore, the very notion of "post-apartheid" is incredibly difficult to frame. As Sarah Nuttall argues "What is so widely referred to as the post-apartheid present is […] probably more, a highly complex timescape of entangled and bifurcating layers" (2009, 156). In other words, despite the prefix "post", the impact of colonialism and apartheid are still indelibly being experienced in South Africa. My use of "post-apartheid" is, thus, more intended to denote the paradigm shift that began with the dismantling of apartheid-era legislation in the early 1990s, and is typically considered an official chronological demarcation of the time period from 1994 to present.

served a reconciliatory function in the newly democratic South Africa, notions of nation building need to transcend the limits of ideology that is met merely in abstract terms:

> Was the multiculturalism advocated by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to end the endemic epistemological and literal racial violence of the apartheid system ever anything other than a nation conceived as ultimate abstraction? Yet, coming from a historical context in which most of the country was/is literally owned by whites, is a feeling of metaphorical ownership of the abstract Rainbow Nation enough for the disenfranchised masses crammed together in overcrowded townships and unsanitary "squatter camps"? Was it ever intended as anything other than a beginning? (Myambo 2010, 95).

Thus, while much of the rhetoric surrounding rainbow nationalism suggests an ideology of equality, there is little sense of equity – especially for those who live in townships on the fringes of the city. Myambo's sense of rainbow nationalism and multiculturalism is, therefore, more apt as "a beginning". In the shadows of the city, the experiences of township dwellers are cast in a dystopic light. Although there has been a shift in legislature, the ideologies which underpinned apartheid, and by extension determined how our cities were developed, there has been little imaginative work done in conceiving social equality. The real life experiences of the disenfranchised, thus, call into question the social and ethical failings of South Africa to transition beyond apartheid – and consequently, contemporary South Africa has been marked by a mood of anxiety and disenchantment.

This change in mood or national *zeitgeist* has certainly affected the type of writing emerging from contemporary South Africa city writing, with many authors visualising Cape Town and Johannesburg in terms of the dystopic. In other words, these emergent narratives foreground conflicting senses of a national identity through the affect of anxiety and disenchantment with the Rainbow Nation – something distinctly articulated through city writing. In "Dystopian Dreams", Caitlin Stobie frames this shift in mood by suggesting that "the initial moment of post-apartheid euphoria has been followed by disenchantment and melancholy" (2012b, 367). Similarly, in "Rewriting the Nation", Rita Barnard notes "a distinct shift in mood that occurred

in the course of Mbeki's presidency," and "the more disenchanted writing that has emerged in the new millennium" (2012, 652). Situating this shift within the timeframe of Mbeki's tenure as president, the concerns of crime, unemployment, xenophobia and AIDS denialism have continued to be exacerbated through Jacob Zuma's leadership, which has been marked by allegations of corruption, rape and the ongoing failures of land redistribution and housing provision for the marginalised.

While critics like Barnard and Stobie draw attention to the disenchanted mood of South Africa, Shane Graham (2014) suggests a different productive lens through which to consider this mood: anxiety. Graham argues that this anxiety permeates the mood and attitude of twenty-first century South Africa in two distinct ways: firstly, through a sense of trepidation or feeling of disenfranchisement, and secondly, through a nostalgic longing for "a social order many perceive as endangered or already broken" (2014, 64).

In literary tropes, the effects of such trepidation frequently present themselves as "a dread of invasion, contamination, infestation, and other encroachments of the new, alien, and other" (Graham 2014, 64). This fear of invasion is notable in many ways, but has particular relevance in light of the xenophobic violence which has escalated in South Africa since 2009. Academics such Renate Meyer (2007) suggest that such fears of violence can be extrapolated into a general sense of "urban terror" in South African cities, where spaces that may once have been perceived as "safe" no longer carry such connotations.

These academic responses suggest a particular interest in capturing the mood of post-apartheid South Africa, reflecting a growing field of inquiry into how we interpret and engage with difference in times of crisis.

Here, my use of dystopic theory aims to highlight literatures that magnify social trends and tendencies, warning of possible negative social perpetuations. This stands in contrast to the utopic vision prompted by visions of the Rainbow Nation which, as argued above, have wilfully ignored social failings in the hopes of some possible future. Thus, while the terming of mood as "disenfranchised" or "dystopic" suggests a certain presentist perspective of South Africa's failings in transitioning beyond apartheid, Graham's suggestion of anxiety is one that also suggests a particular fear of the future and the shape it make take. Broadening this dystopic lens to the speculative fiction discussed in this thesis, I argue that these works serve to generate complex temporalities that suggest a complicated relationship between notions of past, present, and future – something reflected in South Africa's own difficulty in position between the postcolonial, the post-apartheid, and the possible direction that the future may take.

In *Novel Histories* (1997), Michael Green argues that, during apartheid, fiction often used the location of the future, rather than the past, to provide critique of the present. The use of the imagined future as a warning about present concerns leads to Green terming such narratives as "future histories". Thus, working between temporalities allows an author to show the inextricability of time, history and experience. These inextricabilities are particularly relevant when considering the experience of historical time within South Africa's recent history. As Green posits, since the 1990s South Africa has undergone a number of very public transitions, which have been so clearly denoted that such transitions "qualify as a rupture, a break, an end to history as South African history has so long been conceived" (1997, 4). It is within this rupture of historical time that questions about the expected future arise.

In *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (1985), German historian Reinhart Koselleck illuminates how perceptions of "historical time" relate to individual experiences of the past, present and future. In attempting to define a specific meaning to "historical time", Koselleck suggests that such a concept is "bound up with social and political actions, with

concretely acting and suffering human beings and their institutions and organizations" (1985, xxii). Thus, while we can position the terming of a post-apartheid as a specific historical time arising from 1994, but does this speak more to a shift in legislation than actual experience? It is within these gaps between temporalities and experiences that speculative fiction allows for a questioning of how the future may play out. Certainly, what this suggests for South Africa is that is there is an idealized, "official" post-apartheid temporality that seeks distance from the past, while clashing with the present day lived experience of a past that continually returns to invade the present. This disjuncture between temporalities is central to the ways in which post-apartheid speculative fiction questions temporalities in order to interrogate future, or alternate, visions of South African cities.

Moreover, as the texts discussed in this thesis will show, these futures are, for the most part, skewed towards the dystopic. My argument is that, with the failings of rainbow nationalism, there is once again a rising sense of dystopianism within South African literary production. Thus, rainbow nationalism can be viewed as a moment of optimistic respite between historical periods where it is clear that South Africa as a whole, and particularly our cities, continue to be designed to benefit the few.

Defining speculative fiction

For the purposes of this thesis, I take into consideration the broad theoretical definitions of speculative fiction, but read this as less of a genre and more of a narrative strategy. Genre, after all, is the result of scholarly labours attempting to fix very specific descriptors to creative works that simultaneously seek to eschew such classification. As such, I use "speculative fiction" to draw attention to a particular narrative strategy in which some authors attempt to imagine extrapolations of the near future, while other authors employ a similar strategy to defamiliarise

the present, construct alternate worlds, or simply work within historicity to destabilize linear temporality.

Although the opacity of the term "speculative fiction" sometimes leads critics to use it interchangeably with "science fiction", speculative fiction can more broadly be defined as "a particular subtype of science fiction in which "established facts" are extrapolated to produce a new situation" (Wolfe 1986, 122). While science fiction tends towards a focus on *how* such "established facts" could be reasonably extrapolated, speculative fiction suggests more of an interest in *what* such an extrapolation will entail. In this new situation, how do the characters read and interpret their world and how does this correlate with the world with which the reader is familiar?

Genre theorist R.B. Gill proposes a definition which is pertinent to maintain: speculative fiction should entail a "speculative representation of what would happen had the actual chain of causes or the matrix of reality-conditions been replaced with other conditions" (Gill 2013, 73). One of the defining traits of this web of genre distinctions is the lineage of cognitive estrangement, the technique of defamiliarisation popularised by early science fiction that is still evoked by speculative fiction.

Critical attention is sometimes not afforded to speculative fiction, however, because of its associations with science fiction and fantasy. One of the reasons for this, as Gill notes, is that speculative fiction, which constitutes "a widely read but ill-defined grouping of works, fits uneasily into our notions of standard literature" (2013, 71). Speculative fiction serves, on a general scale, as a medium for unconstrained expression of ideas which carry societal relevance, allowing for fantastical extrapolations of the real world. As such, it works to lift aspects of reality and submerge them in alternative renderings so that readers can confront the issues prevalent in their lives from new perspectives (Gill 2013, 81). The genre is incredibly

diverse in its offerings, with limitless micro-subjects, and, therefore, there is seldom a consensus on a standard definition, meaning that speculative works are not always analysed as such.

Critical perspectives, thus, frequently make the distinction between science and speculative fiction, with the latter often being considered better suited, or more interested, in addressing social concerns. According to Judith Merrill, one of the central forces in establishing speculative fiction, the genre is best understood as a narrative mode that draws on the scientific method of observation, hypothesis, and experimentation to "examine some postulated approximation of reality" (1971, 60). Through the introduction of several alterations or inventions to established facts, the mode creates a new environment which still bears a striking resemblance to the real world. The speculative mode, therefore, can be considered as a means to address social concerns – particularly in terms of questioning the malleable nature of "reality".

Beginning in the 1960s, use of the term "speculative fiction" has been seen as a means to distinguish such narratives from the predictability and commodification associated with science fiction. As genre theorist John Rieder suggests, the advent of the term "speculative fiction" was largely an ideological separation intended to distinguish certain literary works burdened by the commercialism and formulaic predictability associated with "science fiction" (Rieder 2012, 3). As part of this distinction, speculative fiction emerged as a genre less concerned with its volume of sales, and more focused on establishing "a higher degree of literary ambition" (Rieder 2012, 2). Similarly, Darko Suvin, one of the most prominent early speculative fiction scholars, extends a warning about the popularity of genre fiction becoming sanitised by commodity culture, noting that Hollywood's "best-seller mentality" has resulted in much science fiction production being "co-opted" or sterilised by economic consideration (1988, xiv).

In “Why Science Fiction?” Janet Kafka argues that science fiction holds a distinct vantage point from which to comment and critique many societal concerns, while simultaneously offering the possibility of alternative futures. Describing the genre as “a pariah, free from the conventions and demands of the mainstream,” however, suggests that Kafka views the genre as something operating on the peripheries of popular culture (1975, 46). Kafka’s own vantage point of science fiction in the 1970s, thus, speaks to a historical view which has dismissed the genre’s potent capability for social critique. During the 1980s, critical pedagogue and science fiction theorist, Darko Suvin termed such narratives “paraliterature”. Suvin posited that these genres are considered as non-literary forms, and therefore, do not always receive the critical attention or appreciation that they deserve, mostly due to “academic elitism wrinkling its none too perfect nose at the sight of popular literature and art” (Suvin 1988, xi)[2].

Of course, since this time there has been a veritable explosion of science fiction novels, TV shows and blockbuster movies, making it clear that such narratives are gaining “mainstream” appeal. Despite what would seem like mainstream success, especially in the world of film, science fiction and speculative writers are still grappling with concerns about how the genre of their work is classified. This sentiment was echoed more recently on a global level by American author Ursula K. le Guin. When accepting her award at the 2014 National Book Awards, Le Guin captured headlines by stating:

> I rejoice at accepting it for, and sharing it with, all the writers who were excluded from literature for so long, my fellow authors of fantasy and science fiction—writers of the imagination, who for the last 50 years watched the beautiful rewards go to the so-called realists. I think hard times are coming when we will be wanting the voices of writers who can see alternatives to how we live now and can see through our fear-stricken society and its obsessive technologies to other ways of being, and even imagine some real grounds for hope. (Qtd in Higgins 2014).

[2] For further commentary on how academic responses have neglected to consider science fiction with the same rigor as other forms of literature, see Steenkamp (2011, 12) and Wood (1991, 24).

While asserting the validity of non-realist texts, Le Guin also took the opportunity to criticise capitalist agendas and consumer culture, stating that there is a need for "writers who know the difference between the production of a market commodity and the practice of an art" (*Ibid*). Le Guin, thus, seems caught between the sense that authors who have been "excluded" are finally being recognised, and the concern that genre fiction will be commodified. Even author Margaret Atwood was stumped when asked about how she defines her genre of work in comparison to Le Guin:

> Though sometimes I am not asked, but told: I am a silly nit or a snob or a genre traitor for dodging the term…. I didn't really grasp what the term science fiction meant anymore. Is this term a corral with real fences that separate what is clearly "science fiction" from what is not, or is it merely a shelving aid, there to help workers in bookstores place the book in a semi-accurate or at least lucrative way? ...These seemed to me to be open questions. (Qtd. in Thomas 2013, 2–3).

After noting that the idea of a concrete definition is lacking because the concept of genre is itself perplexing, Atwood commented that: "the borders are increasingly undefined, and things slip back and forth across them with insouciance" (qtd in Thomas 2013, 8). Thomas notes that "Atwood's nuanced consideration of genre speaks to … work within genre conventions, against genre conventions, and by blending genre conventions" (2013, 2-3).

Certainly, what is at play here is authors who are more forthcoming in self-defining how their narratives differ from conventional genre classifications. Another such example would be Nigerian-American author, Nnedi Okarofor's use of the term "organic fantasy" to describe her writing. Okorafor notes that "the fantasy that I write is far more than what is on the surface … It is not fantasy for fantasy's sake … For me, fantasy is the most accurate way of describing reality" (2009b, 276–77). Here, Okorafor indicates how her writing may align with what other scholars would call fantasy, but clarifies how her organic fantasy lives adjacent to the typical conception of fantasy. Instead of seeing her work as a departure from realism, she views the elements of fantasy within her writing as being something that extends from the real – much in

the way that some speculative fiction authors would argue that their narratives merely extrapolate the speculative elements from what already exisits in their worldview.

While many readers of science fiction might not interest themselves in determining the parameters of the genre, critical theorists have long engaged in debating the need and value in genre determination. Furthermore, there has been extensive debate between critical theorists and authors about what constitutes SF, and whether or not these narratives are considered, for lack of a better word, "literary" texts. Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, seminal utopian thought critics, argue that "Twentieth-century science fiction emerges as the characteristic genre expressing both the hopes and fears of our own era," while "The modern dystopia crystallizes the anxieties that increasingly accompanied the onward march of progress" (Claeys and Sargent 1999, 3). Science fiction, thus, is a genre which can unfold through several common forms – whether it involves travelling through space or time or positions technological invention in relationship to humankind. Utopian or dystopian narratives, in their long lineage from Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) to George Orwell's *1984* (1949), have also come to be associated with science fiction, usually imbuing the narrative with social critique. In other words, dystopic sci-fi shows an inherent interest in issues of social inequality.

In *The History of Science Fiction* (2005), Adam Roberts begins by delineating three forms of science fiction: "stories of travel through space (to other worlds, planets, stars), stories of travel through time (into the past or into the future) and stories of imaginary technologies (machinery, robots, computers, cyborgs and cyber-culture)" (Roberts 2005, viii). In addition to these three types of narratives, Roberts isolates one additional category: utopian fiction. Utopian narratives, which may include these elements of travel through space or time and incorporate imaginary technologies, argues Roberts, are a form of science fiction which "takes as its starting point philosophy and social theory" (2005, viii). Jameson also makes the link between

the genres, positing that the utopian is "a socio-economic sub-genre of that broader literary form [of science fiction]" (2005, xiii).

Prominent works such as P.L. Thomas' *Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction Challenging Genres* (2013), R.B. Gill's "The Uses of Genre and the Classification of Speculative Fiction" (2013), and James Gunn and Matthew Candelaria's *Speculation on Speculation: Theories of Science Fiction* (2005) are useful in mapping the distinctions in genre, as well as providing an understanding of how and why speculative fiction offers a distinct ability to dissect present social problems. Michael D. Gordin, Helen Tilley, and Gyan Prakash's volume *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility* (2010) is useful in exploring the relationship between utopia and dystopia. In particular, their interest is rooted in exploring the "historical location and conditions of utopia and dystopia not as terms or genres but as scholarly categories that promise great potential in reformulating the ways we conceptualize relationships between the past, present, and future" (Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash 2010).

Utopic cities

> "All fiction describes a no-place; utopian fiction generally describes good or bad no-places" (Claeys and Sargent 1999, 1)

The focus on urban settings further prompts investigation into utopian and dystopian cultural practices and theory. Theorists such as Frederic Jameson and Darko Suvin have suggested that utopianism is a form of science fiction[3]. In this reading, the *novum* would be considered the new social structures, and thematically the narrative would focus more closely on the socio-economic ramifications of emerging societal constraints. Thus, speculations on utopian cultural production allow for a critical perspective in discussing the multitudinous forms of oppression which continue to dominate South African urban spaces.

[3] See: Jameson (2005): xiii-iv; (Suvin 1977, 4)

Furthermore, the very notion of the city has been shaped and viewed as a utopian sign of regulated order. Cities are organised and extensively planned as to correspond to the needs of their citizens. Thus, a city that has been planned on the basis of exclusion, is one that will continue to function as such. Frederic Jameson argues that the city is shaped with the intention of a utopian image (2005, 4), but by definition utopian ideals always imply an undercurrent of dystopia – the sense of a system which only functions for the few (Gordin et al., 2010:1). Jameson suggests that utopian ideals are formed because we lack the imagination to envision alternative forms to economic and socio-political structures, making the city an archaeology of the future; that is, the present day city will soon need to be viewed and questioned in retrospect (2005, 4).

Utopia then is a product of social engineering; the manner in which we construct spaces in order to attempt some sort of ideal, which in all likelihood is unattainable. As Ashcroft argues, utopia is essentially "the concept of boundaries ... [which] are necessary in the regulation of life, but they are also the source of repression and cultural and economic control" (2007, 441). It is unsurprising then that a discussion of how contemporary cities function will entail looking at the power struggles inherent in the tension between idealism and equality. After all, the two terms are not mutually exclusive.

Dystopia, however, is not defined as the antithesis of utopia, but is rather conceived as a "utopia that has gone wrong, or a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society" (Gordin et al., 2010, 1). The planned form of the city, then, is one which leans towards the utopic in vision, but such a place is shown, in reality, to belong more to the terming of dystopia.

Herein, lies a key difference between utopia and dystopia: utopia sketches idyllic visions of the future that illuminate the failings of the present, while dystopia conjures a terrifying vision of the future that could come to pass – unless we take action in the present (Gordin et al. 2010,

4). A dystopia, however, is not necessarily a broken-down or apocalyptic society; in fact, it could seem like a utopia until one realises the regulations and oppressions required to maintain the structure. In other words, a dystopian society could function as a utopia for a certain group of people within the society, while others could find themselves victims of the society's organization. This is quite common in dystopian novels and films where the leaders of a new society create what they believe to be a utopia, maintaining this definition by the simple fact that they are not the ones experiencing or suffering from oppression. Thus, as Gordin et al. posit, "every utopia always comes with its implied dystopia" (2010, 2). Inherent in its formulation, every utopian society faces the likelihood of failing its purported people or morphing into something entirely beyond its conception or intention.

As such, I take utopianism to be a conceit which draws heavily from its science fiction origins in order to provide a critique of the social impulses governing the time of the author. While utopia typically refers to "a future society, a perfect society" in which all modern day problems have been solved, many critics argue that utopianism fails its original conception (Gordin et al. 2010, 1). As Bill Ashcroft intuits, however, "Utopia is by definition impossible, an unachievable ideal, a fanciful dream, unrealistic and naïve" (2007, 411). The term has come a long way since Thomas More's fictional island described in *Utopia* (1516). Derived from the Greek: *οὐ* ("not") and *τόπος* ("place"), More's use of the word directly translates to "no-place", suggesting an essence of impossibility. The colloquial understanding of the term, however, has been narrowed to an image of an ideal society, and one that is vastly superior and therefore more preferable than our current circumstances.

This sense of possibility is further echoed in Frederic Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005). "Utopian fantasy production," he argues, "will necessarily illuminate its historical conditions of possibility: for it is certainly of the greatest interest for us today to understand why Utopias have flourished in one period and dried up in another" (xiii). One pertinent notion

to consider is Jameson's assertion that utopian fiction flourishes as a response to the "invincible universality of capitalism" (2005, xii). In such instances, utopian fantasy production is a means of conceiving alternate systems and questioning how systemic forms of social regulation have become.

Drawing on Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*, Bill Ashcroft notes that Jameson has argued that narratives are "socio-symbolic acts," which attempt "to achieve symbolic resolutions of real political and social contradictions," thus suggesting that "Utopias function in much the same way as realist narratives" (Ashcroft 2007, 417). Ashcroft further posits that "It is by narrative, by the stories we tell, that we have a world and it is by utopian thinking, utopian forms, utopian narrative, that we may have a conception of a radically changeable world" (2007, 417). The impulse behind utopian narratives can, therefore, be understood as our means of envisioning the world and the stories we tell in an attempt to shape the future.

Simply stated, utopic literary representations are rooted in their empirical context. Like satire, a utopian or dystopian depiction draws from the real world and then distances the reader through exaggeration or distortion. Or, as Gordin et al. would phrase this: "Utopias and dystopias are histories of the present" (2010, 1). Thus, while the terms are sometimes considered to be antonyms, Gordin et al. argue that a dystopia is better considered as a failed utopia, or a utopia which only functions for certain individuals within the society (2010, 1-2).

The dystopic, then, is that which inherently borders the ideal world of utopia, showing the ways in which the utopic is founded upon the discrimination of others. It is these "symptoms" of an unequal and unjust society that prompt many authors to utilise fictional future worlds. This understanding, as Gordin et al. acknowledge, means that many still approach the term with conception "of a space — typically a city, but not necessarily so — that has been organized and mapped out geographically" (2010, 4). Unsurprisingly then, utopic fiction frequently

foregrounds the concept of boundaries. As Ashcroft argues, "Boundaries are necessary in the regulation of life, but they are also the source of repression and cultural and economic control" (2007, 412).

As suggested through outlining the influences of economic policy on built environment, a utopia is viewed as a product of social engineering; the manner in which we construct spaces in order to attempt some sort of ideal, which in all likelihood is unattainable. It is unsurprising then that a discussion of how contemporary cities function will entail looking at the power struggles inherent in the tension between idealism and equality. It is this tension between idealism and equality that evokes comparisons with South Africa's formulation of the rainbow nation. The hope speculated upon in skethcing this new era is, thus, rooted in its own utopic idealisation.

Speculative fiction and dystopia in South Africa

Trying to analyse the role of speculative fiction in South Africa necessitates that the study engages with genre theory in order to position speculative fiction in relation to others genres, such as science fiction and fantasy, as well as to establish the uses for speculative fiction in a post-apartheid context. Within this first area, it is useful to understand why and how authors began deviating from writing within a mode of fiction which was rooted in realism. Nick Wood notes that "apartheid policies divid[ed] educational resources to try and maintain a large skill divide between a deliberately less literate black 'underclass' and a more skilled white hegemony" (2009, n.p.). At the time, the realist mode of fiction was considered by some as an excellent medium for expressing exactly what the lived experience of black South Africans was like. Works like these, however, were quickly banned by the apartheid government. It was only during the 1970s, as the political tensions in the country began to rise that authors started exploring more fantastical elements to their writing. For more politically inclined writers then,

speculative fiction offers a means of taking the element of social unrest they see in the world around them and making it manifest in a dystopian reality.

In the last decade, science fiction and speculative writers have been gaining a steady foothold in South African literary circuits, with authors like Lauren Beukes, Sarah Lotz, and Charlie Human having their work being lauded both at home and abroad. What is even more striking is that upon closer inspection, the genre of speculative fiction is not a new phenomenon in South Africa, with some of our most notable local authors, such as Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee, having employed elements of the speculative in their work as far back as the 1980s. Gordimer's *July's People* (1981) and Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) all have elements of speculative fiction, but while *July's People* was more Gordimer's speculation on "the inevitable collapse of white South Africa" (Erritouni 2006, 68), or what Elleke Boehmer terms "end-stopped writing" (1998, 47), *Waiting for the Barbarians* moves into a completely allegorical realm, using a never-named empire on the brink of potentially being overthrown.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the emerging work which examines science and speculative fiction from a postcolonial context. In *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World: Essays on Postcolonial Literature and Film* (2010), Andy Sawyer notes that much of the criticism surrounding the genre is focused on the historical lineage of Western science fiction. Sawyer, therefore, finds interest in the genre from a different perspective: as a genre which examines change from a more global perspective, allowing for a more open discussion of the concept of "otherness".

Alterity is, therefore, one of the major concerns of science and speculative fiction – particularly when considered within the context of postcolonialism. There is already some notable work that establishes speculative fiction within both a South African and postcolonial context, such

as Elzette Steenkamp's Ph.D. thesis, *Identity, Belonging and Ecological Crisis in South African Speculative Fiction* (2011). Steenkamp considers the use of speculative fiction in examining ecological crisis, finding the speculative mode to be conducive in mapping connections between identity, belonging and the role of humans. Alterity, she suggests, continues to be a prevalent theme in ecological studies as well as speculative fiction, allowing the speculative mode to question anthropocentric narratives and postulate possible futures. Eric D. Smith's *Globalization, Utopia and Postcolonial Science Fiction: New Maps of Hope* (2012), and the 25th volume of the journal *Paradoxa* (2013), which focused on speculative and science fiction in Africa, show a growing interest in genre fiction and the role it could play in revitalising postcolonial discourse. Similarly, The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry has a special issue on African Science Fiction (2016) that explores how African authors make use of science fiction elements to interrogate postcolonial African sociopolitical arrangements, Online publications from blogs to news sites have an even greater variety of writing on the emerging genre[4], perhaps indicating that the genre has achieved more critical attention from the public sphere than academics. What is lacking, however, is a study with a prominent focus on the use of city space within post-apartheid South African speculative fiction.

In beginning the study, there is a need to establish how the South African, as well as global, climate has shifted and what this means for authors operating within the genre of speculative fiction. Other than changes in built environment, the South African landscape has also seen a significant shift in economic situation. One such development is that the emerging economic situation largely favours the few, meaning that many South African cities have failed to transition beyond apartheid in ways previously imagined. South Africa as a nation, then, is

[4] See also Wood, 2009; Wood, 2015; Hatfull, 2015; Bridle, 2015; Chigmudazi, 2014; Smith, 2015; Jacobs, 2015.

being reimagined both within a post-apartheid lens and a global context of a neoliberal economy and worldwide environmental degradation.

Christensen argues that in Africa it is with neoliberal governance policies, arising in the 1970s, that crime narratives began being popularised over narratives with a more social or historical realist perspective (2013, 103). These emerging popularist genres are not limited to crime fiction, however, and extend across a wide array of genres. From "chick lit" to science fiction and dystopian thrillers, the global market is demanding an ever-increasing supply of works that are easily digestible. The "corporate fatwa" identified by Le Guin can, thus, be seen as publishers making demands on writers who operate within these genres to churn out works that sell (qtd in Higgins, 2014). Similarly, Elliott and Harkins argue that literary and cultural production and reception are often limited by political or economic terms that seek to cast narratives into easily digestible genre categories (2013, 2).

This state of neoliberalism has had varying effects across the globe, but Elliott and Harkins note that particularly in the southern hemisphere, there have been "radical redistributions of capital upward through radical redistributions of development downward – uneven geopolitical relations of production are often forcibly instituted against nationalized distribution" (2013, 6). Calling attention to the idea that "capitalism is crisis", Cunningham and Warwick note that "crisis as constituting the very form of urban capitalist development itself has taken on a more explicitly apocalyptic tone" (2013, 433). Unsurprisingly, then, the sense of crisis that underpins such urban developments arises in speculative fiction with an increasing number of narratives that focus on the possibility of the present being cast as the end times.

This atmosphere of the apocalyptic and the crises humanity is facing has become a very significant thematic feature within speculative fiction. Cunningham and Warwick observe this trend and argue that what we glimpse in such novels is a speculation is a political strategy

which seeks to make the reader realize that catastrophe is not some future clamaity, but rather a crisis which is already visible in the (2013, 433). Speculative fiction, then, can be viewed as a genre which is capable of alerting readers to what the future could possibly look like if nothing is changed in the present.

It is these speculative moments, those that beg the question of what comes next, that the project wishes to interrogate in a selection of novels. In particular, the study explores the dystopian overtones present in city writing. The speculative element at work in the selected texts is the type that questions how we will view these cities in the near future and whether this vision will appear more utopian or dystopian.

Speculative fiction's interest in exploring alterity is especially useful when confronted with contrasting narratives about African city spaces. Utopic thought, argues Jessica Langer, is a product of colonialism, and thus it is based on exclusion "that is constructed in direct opposition to the variety and hybridity of the multicultural colonial metropole" (2013, 179).

As utopic fiction is largely anchored in Western history and discourse, it is necessary to counterbalance this legacy when discussing texts which are postcolonial. In "Living in Dystopia Past, Present, and Future in Contemporary African Cities" (2010), Jennifer Robinson posits that "one of the common strategies of the genre is to create plausible futures, taking the reader from a more or less recognizable present into a future that might be," ultimately resulting in "a temporal shift drawing the present into the future". Robinson, thus, positions dystopia as "not an imaginative futuristic elsewhere but an immediate and present geographical elsewhere" (2010, 220). This, however, places a particular imaginative burden on African writers who inhabit cities that are considered merely through the framework of the dystopic elsewhere.

In attempting to work between urban theory, genre theory and a post-colonial African context, Robinson argues, the very notion of urbanity employs a binarist rhetoric, which casts the city

and its industrialised "progress" in the image of utopia, while also positing contemporary African cultures as "backwards" (2010, 218). Thus, in privileging spatial estrangement over temporal displacement, Western-orientated dystopian texts have tended to project their "unwanted" city features onto this geographical elsewhere. The intersection of dystopian genre and contemporary urban theory, therefore, typically positions the dystopic as a pre-existing condition of the city, rather than an imagined future which may come to pass. Robinson further notes that contemporary dystopic narratives now carry "the burden of imaginative spatial and temporal projection," which results in "casting (mostly African) poorer cities as the future of all cities" (2010, 218) Similarly, this viewpoint is echoed by John and Jean Comaroff when defining the status of the cities in the Global South (2012).

In acknowledging the role of past and present in shaping the future, Robinson calls attention to the possible failure of dystopian texts that provide no future alternatives beyond the problems themselves (2010, 219). Robinson, thus, suggests that not all dystopian texts ask for an act of imagining changes in the world beyond the narrative. Here, Robinson evokes Moylan's notion of the critical dystopia. Much like Moylan, Robinson affirms that necessity of aligning critical dystopian narratives with its utopian rhetoric as a means of not only critiquing dominant order, but as a genre which has the capacity for hope and change. Unlike conventional understandings of dystopia, a critical dystopian perspective is one which attempts to open "spaces of possibility", rather than a resigned scepticism that suggests dystopia as overwhelming, inescapable and distinctly removed from social imagining. In other words, the act of imagination is seen as a necessary constituent of the critical dystopia. The importance of imagination is, thus, a crucial factor in determining a text to be a critical dystopian narrative.

Reading Cape Town and Johannesburg

Mother City, Tavern of the Seas, Cape of Good Hope. City of Gold, Joburg, Jozi.

For most South Africans, Cape Town and Johannesburg are enshrined in the national imagination with such clarity that everyone has their immediate associations. Contemporary Cape Town is praised for its tourism and natural beauty, while Johannesburg is the economic centre of South Africa. As the two most populous cities in South Africa, Cape Town and Johannesburg have often been heralded as shining examples of global cities. When questions arise about how accessible these cities are to all citizens, however, the presentation of urban spaces like Cape Town or Johannesburg as utopic is revealed to only be possible through a rhetoric of exclusion and difference. In fact, the misalignment in positioning Johannesburg and Cape Town as global cities, reveals the sense that South Africa finds itself caught between conflicting temporalities and ontologies by trying to demarcate a clear temporal split between apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa.

From a literary standpoint, there is a sense that textuality is, in broad definition, a collection of signifers that can be "read". The city can, therefore, be considered a text of its own, and one that, if read that way, necessarily asks for an act of imagination. This study explores the manner in which speculative elements are being used in recent narratives set in Cape Town and Johannesburg. This thesis aims to examine and account for the ways in which the selected texts employ narrative techniques associated with SF to offer readers an opportunity to reflect on how these cities function beyond the usually represented utopic visions of gleaming Egoli or the postcards of Table Mountain. I argue that, in order for critiques of social order to flourish, speculative and science fiction have an important role to play in imagining the cities of the future. In terms of this thesis, this research aims to show how future histories are being shaped in the urban spaces of the present, and posits that fiction which is speculative has an important role to play in imagining alternative ways of being.

Speculative narratives serve an important function when writing about city space. In crafting a narrative about a specific city, an author has the ability to bring into being a vision of what it

means to inhabit that city. Drawing from Maurice Blanchot's notion of "literariness", Lindsay Bremner suggests "that to write is to form, to bring to the surface something that is not yet there" (2010, 3). Bremner further argues that:

> Writing, precisely because it negates the city as lived space and substitutes an idea city to fill this absence, becomes the locus of theoretical and/or cultural work and a model for productive practice. How we write the city invents it, brings it into being, allows it to exist in very specific ways. (2010, 3–4).

City writing, thus, is a form of cultural production which not only "brings [the city] into being", but also makes it possible for the city to exist and be read as a text itself. In setting a narrative within a specific city, such as Johannesburg or Cape Town, the author creates an "idea city" shaped by their own experiences and perspectives. As such, city writing serves an important role in determining how we view and understand its subject as well as articulating the ways in which the city is allowed to exist.

The city of Johannesburg is typically associated with the gold rush of the early 1900s, leading to the city being referred to as "the empire's great gold centre" (Rogerson qtd in Bremner 2000, 186). Construction was predicated by notions of western modernity and economic development, made possible by cheap labour. As the epicentre of South Africa's mining industry, the Vaal Triangle established three major points for gold mining around which the city grew. Contemporary Johannesburg has continued to maintain the image of economic development, frequently positioning the city as "world class". Although Johannesburg is often touted as the largest human-made forest city, for many the city is defined by the urban development and skyscrapers which surround the central business district.

In the case of Cape Town, the city is framed by its natural beauty and tourist allure. As Damon Galgut comments:

> in so far as it thinks of itself at all, Cape Town thinks of itself as a tourist city. That is, a city which gives pleasure to people who are, by definition,

> passing through. And the pleasures that it offers are not those of 'history' or 'culture', but in a certain sense their opposite: what it offers is beauty. The idea of beauty – ephemeral, abstract – has always been connected with Cape Town. (Galgut, 2006, 14).

The notion of its beauty, in many ways, has come to define ape Town as a city of natural beauty, flanked by two oceans and the mountain that provides a stunning, natural skyline. In *A City Imagined* (2005), Stephen Watson suggests that this beauty leads to Cape Town being "a city haunted by its own clichés," with its "physical beauty being the sort of thing that cannot easily be intellectualised, let alone tamed" (2005, 9). The city has grown and been shaped by many factors since it was established by the Dutch East India Trading Company as a refuelling station for trade ships. Since then, however, Cape Town "persists as a place not much mythologised by its writers" (*Ibid*). While many writers have attempted to depict Cape Town, the proliferation of literature on the city tends to focus on the tourist appeal of its setting (Bickford-Smith 2009, 1765). Vivian Bickford-Smith argues that, despite the city having multiple meanings for those reside there, "destination branding would appear to be a major way in which we are told both how to imagine and 'consume' places" (*Ibid*). Such elements of "branding", however, also serve to neglect acknowledging the vast history of slavery within the Western Cape. Often when discussing South Africa, slavery is rendered as somewhat separate from the later history of apartheid. As Gabeba Baderoon notes in *Regarding Muslims: From slavery to post-apartheid* (2014), already during colonial times, the reality of slavery was absent from representations and imaginings of Cape Town. For instance, Signal Hill, a common focal point of colonial-era landscapes, was originally a Muslim slave graveyard, meaning that "the urbane and aesthetically pleasing city represented in colonial-era paintings was therefore literally founded on slave bodies and their labour, but the picturesque landscape rendered the violence of slavery invisible" (Baderoon 2014, 2).

These contrasting narratives which have shaped Cape Town and its inhabitants are further echoed in the introduction to Sean Field and Felicity Swanson's *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town* (2007). As Sean Field and Felicity Swanson argue:

> The geographical and legal limits of a city are marked on maps and policies, but these boundaries do not restrict people's imaginative construction of what it means to be a resident or citizen of, or an outsider in, a particular city. The real and imagined geographies are inseparable and are central to understanding how people with differing histories and identities frame their senses and memories of Cape Town. (2007, 3).

The role of the city, thus, can be considered from the viewpoint of those who occupy and traverse the space, suggesting that the imagined or experienced city stands in contrast to geographical or legal limitations.

AbdouMaliq Simone in particular suggests a move towards considering the role of people and their activities within a city as infrastructure, noting that "African cities are characterised by incessantly flexible, mobile, and provisional intersections of residents that operate without clearly dilneated notions of how the city is to be inhabited and used" (2004, 407). The notion of intersecting paths and citizen collaboration in producing city space is frequently drawn on in urban studies – and is especially visible within a South African context where access to the city has previously been heavily legislated. The study further draws on urban theory including Michel de Certeau and the influence of Jane Jacobs. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) Jacobs develops her concepts of organic city development, a sense of anti-utopianism, and, most important to this research project, the notion of sidewalk ebb and flow – the means through which, on a micro-level, the individual walker shapes their city. This notion is similarly explored by De Certeau in his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). In a well-known chapter entitled "Walking in the City", De Certeau describes the view from World Trade Centre. Positing himself as spectator, he reads the city as text within which "pedestrian speech acts" are performed by walkers who are able to affirm or transgress urban

boundaries with their movements. De Certeau also explores the distinction between place, that which is physically named and regulated, and space, the unlimited potential of place as actualised by movement. According to de Certeau, "[t]he motions of walking are spatial creations. They link sites to one another. Pedestrian motor functions thus create one of those 'true systems whose existence actually makes the city'" (1984,105).

Extensive work has also been published on the 'elusive' nature of Johannesburg with notable contributions being Loren Kruger' *Imagining the Edgy City: Writing, performing and building Johannesburg*, and Nuttall and Mbembe's *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis* (2008). Nuttall and Mbembe depart from reading Johannesburg within the global city paradigm, suggesting that beyond "infrastructures, technologies and legal entities", the city needs to be read as a space which "also comprises bodies, images, forms, footprints and memories" (2008, 8). They, therefore, argue for "a more complex anthropology of things, forms, and signs in order to account for the life of the city in Africa" (*Ibid*). Urban studies in South Africa have often been framed by the global city paradigm. First posed in Saskia Sassen's *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (1991), the term "global city" is intended to provide an analytic which considers the role that globalisation and its economic implications have played in a growing network of cities. For Sassen, the global city paradigm "presumes that global processes, from the formation of global financial markets to the rapid growth of national labour markets, can be studied through the particular forms in which they materialise in places" (Sassen 2000, xvii). Similarly, when looking at the city of *Cape Town, World City Syndrome: Neoliberalism and inequality in Cape Town* (2008) by David McDonald is useful in illuminating the systemic practices which have built the city, while positioning Cape Town as three types of city: world, capitalist and neoliberal.

In *Writing the City into Being: Essays on Johannesburg 1998-2008* (2010), Bremner draws attention to what she terms an "evasive city" (1). With a focus on how writing brings the city

into being, Bremner works between notions of the imagined city and Johannesburg's history under colonialism and apartheid. Bremner characterises contemporary Johannesburg as a city of "radical uncertainty, unpredictability, ethereality and insecurity" (2010, 4). With the legal end of apartheid, Johannesburg has found itself in flux and constantly being redefined by the everyday interactions of those who inhabit the space. Noting the common occurence of "messy intersections and overlapping realities," Bremner argues that "Ordinary, everyday lives, which were excluded from the city by western urban management practices, town planning codes or by the legal and administrative apparatus of apartheid, have brought distant geographical, social and cultural worlds into contact" (2004, 120).

Among South African urban critical writing, there is also a wide field of existing work to navigate. AbdouMaliq Simone has several useful works, including *The City Still to Come* (2004) and *City Life from Jakarta to Dakar: Movements at the Crossroads* (2010), both of which contribute to an understanding of South Africa in the ways that subjects renegotiate the city in terms of the power structures inherent in the infrastructre, both inherited and the ways in which development is continuing to divide and exclude. South Africa's economic climate can also be further understood by its grouping within the global South. According to Levander & Mignolo, the global South can be defined as mostly southern-hemispheric countries "where new visions of the future are emerging and where the global political and decolonial society is at work" (2011, 3). South Africa's process of decolonisation has a long ongoing history with the effects of western imperialism continuing to be felt from economic structures under apartheid designed to benefit one racial group, and in post-apartheid the African National Congress following a neoliberal path, favouring cheap imports over local manufacturing. Ultimately, this positions the country as being ruled by a governmental class who position themselves as consumers and not producers (Connell & Dados, 2014:126).

The south, although often determined in terms of its relation to the northern hemisphere, is attempting to envision alternative, and often hopeful, visions of the future. Jean and John Comaroff have written extensively on this perspective. They argue that "given the unpredictable, under-determined dialectic of capitalism-and-modernity in the here and now," it is unsurprising that the south is "the first to feel the effects of world-historical forces, the south in which radically new assemblages of capital and labor are taking shape, thus to prefigure the future of the global north" (2013, 19). Despite, and essentially in response to the past, the south is establishing itself as a global force both haunted by historical past as well as attempting to determine future modes of being. As the Comaroffs argue in "Theory from the South", our inheritance of colonial institutions combined with access to neoliberal developments, have allowed Africa to step "ahead of the curve" (2013, 19).

Locating the south as a prime example in the production of future global dystopian texts, this study aims to analyse the literary ways in which the shift in South Africa's economic climate continues to determine the development, or sometimes lack thereof, in urban spaces. Moeletsi Mbeki's *Architects of Poverty: Why African capitalism needs changing* (2009) and Achille Mbembe's *On the Postcolony* (2001) are among the key texts in this field. While Mbembe explores the spirit of the postcolony, the role of private indirect government and conceptions of power and subjectivity in Africa, Mbeki examines the role that capitalism has played in institutionalised poverty. Both texts will ultimately help the research project expand upon the ways in which our economy is shaping day-to-day lived experiences in the post-apartheid South African city. With a broad understanding of how post-apartheid economic policies have shaped our urban landscapes, the study then intends to question how depictions of Cape Town and Johannesburg have, in turn, shaped individual and social identities within the realm of global imagination.

Chapter outlines

What role does speculative fiction play in imagining city spaces? In my analysis of the selected texts, I examine how the authors render their versions of Cape Town and Johannesburg, and consider the role that genre plays in imagining these city spaces. While there has been a proliferation of speculative narratives emerging from South Africa in the last twenty years, my selection of texts has hinged upon novels that are not only set in these two cities, but texts that truly foreground an interest in examining how the character of Johannesburg and Cape Town is re-envisioned after the ostensible end of apartheid.

The selected texts are by no means intended to be a comprehensive exploration of South African authors invoking a speculative strategy. More broadly, other novels that venture into similar narrative strategies, including Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001), Nicky Drayden's *The Prey of Gods* (2017), Mandla Langa's *Lost Colours of the Chameleon* (2008), Zinaid Meeran's *Tanuki Ichiban* (2012) and Nedine Moonsamy's *The Unfamous Five* (2019). My choice of texts is predominantly predicated by their focus on Cape Town and Johannesburg, alongside thematic coherence of the dystopic and apocalytic overtures. On the one hand, my selection of texts does draw attention to a number of white authors writing within the narrative strategy of speculative fiction, and raises questions about which voices are being heard. On the other hand, this also serves to raise the question of why white authors in particular are producing urban fiction which capitalises on a sense of anxiety and apocalyptic dread.

In the case of the selected texts, the cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg are defamiliarised through a variety of speculative techniques, allowing for a critical pespective and questioning of what it is like to traverse these spaces on a day-to-day basis. In particular, I pay close attention to the ways in which these characters interact with and establish their sense of self in

relation to the city. For my analysis then, I have selected texts that bring a complex relationship between the chosen cityscape and speculated extrapolations of the author.

In the first chapter, I examine the prominence of Lauren Beukes in speculative fiction criticism. In *Moxyland* (2008) and *Zoo City* (2010), Beukes relies on speculative fiction and the dystopian genre to present a commentary aimed at critical social, political, and economic issues within, specifically, the South African context, and, broadly, the global context. In sketching Cape Town and Johannesburg, Beukes relies on sci-fi tropes to create versions of these cities that are simultaneously familiar, and yet, disconcertingly foreign. By tracing the dystopian impulse in her work, I consider the role that genre and the speculative mode enable Beukes to deliver social critique that draws on present concerns as well as an understanding of how the past has shaped this moment in order to pose questions about the possible future/s of South African city spaces. Thematically, Beukes draws on South Africa's long history of segregation, both colonial and apartheid, but casts these concerns through the lens of possible future means of segregating humans – whether this be through race, class, technology or even unexplained phenomena which deconstruct the very notion of what we consider "human".

In comparison with the other texts, Beukes's two novels already have received a wealth of critical work. Although much of this engagement does center of the use of genre in the two novels, my reading of *Moxyland* and *Zoo City* aims to extend this critical work by reading between the two texts, their city representations, and the emergence of the Anthropocene.

Having explored the ways in Beukes speculates on our city futures, Chapter 3 examines the experiences of children who live on the streets. K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and Rachel Zadok's *Sister-Sister* (2013) interrogate boundaries and city experiences of marginalised individuals. *Thirteen Cents* is not strictly speculative, but the uses of magical realism and apocalyptic visions position the text as a useful lens through which to discuss the

real-life dystopian elements present in how a child's life on the street can be shaped by the city and the other people who inhabit it. Azure is nearly thirteen years-old and lives in the streets of Sea Point. Daily, he transgresses old spatial boundaries as he moves across the city, gaining access to places that would have once been denied. "She's bad, Cape Town," Azure tells the reader, "She takes you in, in the beginning, but be careful. She'll destroy you if you're not watching" (2000:116). In Rachel Zadok's *Sister-Sister* the twin sister protagonists, on the basis of traditional beliefs, have faced discrimination due to the stigmatisation of having shared a womb. Zadok also casts a speculative lens on the ecology of the landscape in a South Africa where parts of the country are suffering extreme drought while Durban faces rising sea levels. The time is not the distant future, as shows like *Generations* and *Isidingo* are still in circulation, but diesel has been outlawed and all cars are expected to run on electricity. The novel remains in the speculative fiction genre, which allows it to draw on other elements, such as magical realism, but still poses current questions of poverty, disease and social inequality and how these will likely continue to plague our country. Reading the novels with a focus on their speculative elements, I consider how Duiker and Zadok work between the form of the *bildungsroman*, the narrative strategy of magical realism and eschatological rhetoric, to capture the experience of growing up disenfranchised by the rainbow nation.

These types of speculations on the relationship between human beings and their environment, both built and natural, demonstrate a need to approach the genre with an ecocritical perspective – something which is particularly apparent in the last two texts to be discussed. *Nineveh* (2011) by Henrietta Rose-Innes confronts issues of ecological nature when protagonist Katya Grubbs is called to investigate an insect infestation which is halting the progress on a luxury housing estate just outside of Cape Town. Katya, however, is not an exterminator in the strictest sense, as she runs a company called "Painless Pest Relocations", which merely rehouses the critters. The novel concerns itself with invasion, almost as if nature is attempting to reclaim the concrete

urban spaces of Cape Town. Throughout the course of the novel, Katya becomes increasingly aware of a "sense of downness – of space under the surface … Depth, which the city conceals with its surface bustle," and is plagued by visions "of the deeps beneath the city, alive with a million worms, with buried things" (*Nineveh* 29). I read Katya's distrust of the built environment alongside Neill Blomkamp's *District 9*, which features an extra-terrestrial invasion in Johannesburg. Through a rhetoric of invasion and anxiety, these two texts are useful to examine South Africa's history of segregation and colonial invasion. As they interact with the "non-human", Katya and Wikus find their own sense of humanness challenged to such a degree that they are unable to return to their former lives.

Finally, I turn my attention to Karen Jayes's *For the Mercy of Water*. Set in a Cape Town where water supply has been privatised, Jayes's examines a drought-stricken country caught in the midst of a war over natural resources. In this chapter, I read Jayes's novel alongside the water shortages that have impacted Cape Town over the last few years. In comparing the hydro-apocalypse of Jayes's narrative with Cape Town's "Day Zero", I reflect on the how speculative fiction allows a greater understanding of the Anthropocene. In particular, I draw attention to the connections between body, memory, temporality and landscape in order to highlight the intersections between race, gender and the capitalisation of natural resources.

Chapter 2: Apartheid(s) future and past in Lauren Beukes's *Moxyland* and *Zoo City*

Introduction

As the first set of texts to be examined, Lauren Beukes's *Moxyland* (2008) and *Zoo City* (2010) are used to explore the functionings of urban post-apartheid speculative fiction. With one text set in Cape Town and the other in Johannesburg, these two novels inhabit alternative urban landscapes in a way which is simultaneously familiar to readers who know these cities, as well as disorienting enough for the reader to move beyond their own experiences and presumed knowledge of these places. *Moxyland* relies on elements such as new technology and urban developments to indicate that its setting is not current day Cape Town, while *Zoo City* positions its *novum* as magical animal familiars which serve as markers of criminal actions or guilt. As such, the novels defamiliarise their settings by evoking future dystopic visions of cities which are still recognisable as Cape Town and Johannesburg. Moreover, despite estranging the reader in these imagined versions of the real world, Beukes continuously evokes South African history and parallels to suggest that, if left unacknowledged, our colonial legacy will likely continue to determine and regulate our future. This results in narratives which show a temporal interconnectedness between the past, present and future. In reading Beukes's work, I consider how she interprets space and time through a distortion of genre. That is, how her blurring of genre conventions gives rise to representations of Cape Town and Johannesburg through a lens of futurity and alterity, creating a distinct literary city.

The narratives of the sgere*Moxyland* and *Zoo City* emphasise a variety of social structures built around restricted mobility and segregation. In the case of *Moxyland*, the restrictions are monitored and regulated largely in terms of corporate interests and technological advancements, while *Zoo City* displays similar interests but focuses more on the societal

dialectic of difference and xenophobia. In both cases, however, this works within the context of the narrative as a critical commentary on South Africa's past and present segregation, while also casting these issues in a manner that includes possible future iterations of oppressive regimes. Both novels use aspects of apartheid history, such as the passbooks and police violence in *Moxyland* and the segregation in *Zoo City*, as material with which to create fictional cities, narrative, and histories, that are still explicitly connected to the cities that inspired them. The geographical setting in combination with societal regulation is, thus, a crucial aspect to consider when examining the texts and their dystopic elements. Moreover, in sketching these cities, Beukes establishes a dialectic between familiar conceptions of Johannesburg and Cape Town and the unfamiliarity of her *novum.*

Although they differ in setting and literary intervention, the novels are both driven by issues of segregation in a manner that connects South Africa's past, present and speculated futures. *Moxyland* and *Zoo City* explore boundaries imposed by history, technological innovation, bio-political regulation and anxiety about the future, while also commenting on how neoliberal economic practices have led to the commodification of South African history and a craving for the spectacular. In these versions of Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa's past is shown to still be a determining factor in the oppressive ways in which we impose social regulations in present and the future.

This type of concern is highlighted by Beukes who, when questioned about her writing motives, comments: "we seem to be heading in the wrong direction, the new regime replaying the corruption and nepotism and stupidities of the old regime like we're stuck on a loop" (Beukes & Jones, 2011:4). It is to this end that the dystopian and speculative functions aid her motives: in asking readers to critically question the imagined worlds presented, Beukes pushes readers to consider the inequalities in their own society. Her novels, thus, offer a view of South African society which holds up to scrutiny the dystopia of institutionalised segregation, criminality,

violence, oppression and human rights violations which have characterised the past and present, and will persist into the future.

In *Moxyland*, Beukes creates an allegoricl apartheid setting which houses pertinent social, political and economic issues. Published in 2008, but set in 2018, this Cape Town closely resembles apartheid South Africa in several ways, although instead of racial segregation, restrictions are typified by socio-economic class stratification and heavily policed through technological advancements. The novel is told from the perspective of four narrators who, as the plot progresses, find themselves intertwined in the ways in which they attempt to resist corporate governance. The corporate realm is a somewhat secretive one and throughout the novel their intentions and plots are kept hidden, often resulting in paranoiac uncertainty amongst the characters. These activities help to make the power and cunning of *Moxyland*'s corporate elite seem analogous to the apartheid government and even an alleged collusion-filled post-apartheid government, illuminating South Africa's resemblance to a real life dystopia.

In *Moxyland,* this near-future Cape Town is shown to have made major strides in new technological innovation. The city has harvested the motion of the tides to power its equivalent to the Gautrain, and the city's skyline is obscured by the towers of major corporations. Cell phones are the new medium of control and everything from financial transactions to gaining access to one's own place of residence is done via mobile devices. Gene experimentation has progressed to the point that humans can be genetically modified with a simple injection of nanobots. Online platforms allow an escape through virtual worlds and corporate advertisement is even more prolific and invasive. Despite the advances and freedoms of technology, however, the corporate-ruling class have taken authoritarian measures to regulate access to technology. For instance, officials have the power to "disconnect" citizens from the network, essentially casting them out of society. The best way to survive is to follow corporate guidelines or risk

being disconnected and forced into the never-glimpsed rural environment. As one focaliser comments, we cannot conceive of "how fucked up the rural is" (*Moxyland* 34).

In *Zoo City*, Beukes presents a version of Johannesburg in which "criminals" are magically imbued with an animal familiar. *Zoo City* is a re-envisioned Hillbrow where people's sins are made visible by the animal familiar from which they cannot be separated. As it is assumed that those who possess an animal have perpetrated a crime, all aposymbiots are considered criminal and treated as such. These individuals, many of them foreign nationals, are then socially exiled and, struggling to find work and housing, they are mostly forced to inhabit the dilapidated areas of the city. Beukes invokes various kinds of stigma, including comparisons to those with HIV/AIDS, but the text sticks closely to examining South Africa's xenophobic attacks in recent years while incorporating various genre styles, including the newly termed "muti noir" (Beukes qtd. in Jones 2011).

Beukes notes that this novel was inspired by the xenophobic attacks which escalated in 2008. While not all the aposymbiots are illegal immigrants, the frequent mentioning of refugees works to highlight how the discrimination experienced by those stigmatised by society for being "animalled" is similar to the treatment given to the refugees in South Africa. Beukes further extends the fear of difference and contamination to multiple communities, such as those who have contracted HIV/AIDS, allowing the theme of marginality and discrimination to be read in several contexts. It is in this way that Beukes avoids being confined by a reading of xenophobia, and is not forced to present an accurate depiction of the issue; instead she is able to highlight the issue in the broader context of the discrimination and societal segregation that the aposymbiots experience in the text.

This chapter begins by contextualising the generic traditions which Beukes's novels utilise. As Beukes draws from multiple genres to sketch her versions of Cape Town and Johannesburg, I

argue that the use of a speculative lens offers valuable insight into the novels as a means of reading both across genre as well as within and beyond historical context. From this perspective, I explore the various facets of Beukes's work in terms of how she complicates genre and spatio-temporalities and, in doing so, concerns herself with moving beyond imposed boundaries or limitations. In particular, I question how Beukes's use of the speculative genre and its associations with cognitive estrangement work to create a distinct contribution to South African speculative works.

These boundaries are shown to be multivalent and interconnected. Within the text, these boundaries are reflected through forms of social regulation, ranging from historical segregation and its effects on the urban environment to forms of technological innovation, bio-political regulation and commodity culture. *Moxyland* in particular draws heavily from technologically connected societies, ranging from the use of common-place devices to digital, online creations which allow users to create their own experiences and surroundings. Furthermore, Beukes challenges notions of humanness and biological hierarchies through *Moxyland*'s technological innovations and *Zoo City*'s animal familiars. Thus, what connects these two novels is an interest in understanding the how and why of human regulation, whether it be through spatial design, neoliberal economic policies or a fear of the unfamiliar. As such, her work also provides some perspective on how to position commentary on the Anthropocene in relation to literary studies.

In understanding the complexities of urban space, I draw on Michel de Certeau's work, extending his notions of walking the city and pedestrian speech acts to a discussion of Manuel Castell's network society and the digital divide in South Africa. This chapter also draws on the theoretical framework established in the introduction. As such, it draws from Darko Suvin's positioning of SF as a literature of cognitive estrangement, and seeks to demonstrate the methods employed by Beukes and her use of genre. Often billed as multi-generic, Beukes's

narratives draw from the lineage of science fiction and speculative fiction, showing an acute awareness of generic conventions and an eagerness to blend multiple influences into her own narratives. Attempts at defining the genre of Beukes's work often sees critics noting an overlap in genre associations, or even, in some cases, inventing their own terminology. For instance, Louise Bethlehem (2015), refers to *Zoo City* as a "*noiresque* fantasy", while Konstantin Sofianos defines the novel as having "a minutely sub-generic allegiance to a *noir*-fantasy template". Paul T. Clarke, on the other hand, considers *Zoo City* to be primarily science fiction. As such, the chapter seeks to demonstrate how she utilises these conventions and to what effect. Having already established the connections between speculative and science fiction as well as how these works often coincide with utopian discourse, this chapter aligns Beukes's novels with a speculative lens. In particular, I seek to understand the value in speculative renderings of city space.

Essentially, the speculative genre serves to accentuate overlooked or tiredly-addressed social issues by creating frightening, fictional spaces which represent possible outcomes of actual, non-fictional spaces, and by utilising this, Beukes is able to provide potential answers to the unpleasant "what if" questions posed by members of society. Her focus on creating narratives that interrogate popular perceptions of these cities, thus, allows for a questioning of the effect that speculative works have in sketching new historiographies. As speculative fiction has potential to change the ways in which we consider history, especially as it shifts in its telling through time, it, therefore, also has the potential to alter how we read the city.

As such, there is a need to map the complex spatio-temporal framework of Beukes's alternative visions of the South African city. Furthermore, this type of estrangement is, in Beukes's words, an attempt to battle "issue fatigue" in readers. In particular, there is a focus on how her imagined future city spaces are able to demonstrate current social anxieties through use of a narrative that is simultaneously recognisable for its landscapes, and yet very defamiliarising in

how these elements are rendered. Furthermore, postcolonial speculative texts have an acute ability to obscure temporality through the intertwining of historicity, contemporary events and mediations on what could come to pass.

This, in turn, works towards a new understanding of the relationship between past, present and future. It is this disorientating quality of speculative works that demonstrates the genre to be a socially potent tool with the ability to disrupt and perform social pedagogy through an act of imagination. In other words, such narratives have the potential to change the way a reader views their own world.

Genre, estrangement and the *novum*

Beukes's commercial and critical reception has largely been focused on her use of genre, or rather, her multi-generic blurring. While broadly classified as speculative fiction, *Moxyland* and *Zoo City* draw heavily on generic conventions that span science fiction, cyberpunk, noir film, magical realism and more. Discussing the work of Beukes, James Smith argues that she has taken a prominent role in "the vanguard of the new science fiction that has been flowing from Africa" (2013, N.p.)[5]. This positioning of Beukes is clearly resounded in the opening pages to *Moxyland* and *Zoo City*, which are devoted to a selection of critical praise. As should be expected from a marketing device, the praise is overwhelming and includes a number of established authors offering their insight into what makes Beukes's novels so engaging. Mostly, this praise is focused on Beukes's ability to blur genre conventions and spatio-

[5] As described on her own website: "Lauren Beukes is an award-winning, internationally best-selling novelist who also writes comics, screenplays, TV shows and journalism. Her books have been translated into 26 languages and have been optioned for film and TV. She's won the Arthur C Clarke Award, the prestigious University of Johannesburg prize, the August Derleth Award for Best Horror, the Strand Critics Choice Award for Best Mystery Novel, the RT Thriller of the Year, the Kitschies Red Tentacle for best novel, the Exclusive Books' Bookseller's Choice Award and been included in best of the year round-ups by NPR, Amazon and the LA Times. Her work has been praised by Stephen King, George RR Martin, James Ellroy and Gillian Flynn among others" (*Laurenbeukes.com*).

temporalities. *Moxyland* is compared to other dystopian science or speculative fiction novels and films, such as *Blade Runner, 1984, Brave New World, A Clockwork Orange, Snow Crash* and *V for Vendetta*, while *Zoo City* draws from the noir detective genre, urban fantasy, magical realism and, as Beukes acknowledges, the narrative also draws from Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy and Penny Miller's *Myths and Legends of Southern Africa*. The praise goes beyond just comparison, however, with one of the pioneers of cyberpunk, William Gibson, stating that "*Moxyland* does lots of things, masterfully that lots of SF never even guesses it *could* be doing," while Charles Stross describes the novel as "The larval form of a new kind of SF munching its way out of the intestines of the wasp-paralysed caterpillar of cyberpunk". *The Mail & Guardian* notes that *Zoo City* is "a world that is impossibly futuristic, at the same time as being irrevocably now," while Bill Willingham calls the setting "an unfamiliar land full of familiars".

While he begins the article by describing Beukes's work as "science fiction", Smith finishes by observing:

> I don't think its African science fiction I've been reading, it is more like the advent of a high-concept, post-colonial genre where the boundaries of reality and the cores and peripheries are not what they were, are never what they seem, and not what we mean. (J. Smith 2013, N.p.)

I argue that the type of narrative that Smith describes as "a high-concept, post-colonial genre", is better grouped under the wider term of "speculative fiction". Using this broader terminology allows us to consider a wider range of genre traditions and the interplay between them. Perhaps then it is not surprising to see these speculative narratives being touted as "genre-defying" on the flyleaf, as if they shun easy classification or definition.

Even academic discussions of Beukes's work are frequently foregrounded by analysis of genre. Overwhelmingly, such analyses concur on Beukes being influenced by dystopian thought[6]. Of course, given the prominence of the city in *Moxyland* and *Zoo City*, this line of thought should be expected. One of the clearest articulations on the genre of *Moxyland* is Cheryl Stobie's "Dystopian dreams from South Africa" (2012), which draws from Moylan's work on the critical dystopia. In her article, Stobie elucidates the clear lineage of critical dystopian fiction in Beukes's novel. In Stobie's assessment, one of the key authorial techniques that establishes a twenty-first century critical dystopian text, is the element of genre blurring or "cross-generic traffic" (2012b, 373). While Beukes draws on seminal dystopian texts by Orwell and Huxley and their familiar themes, she simultaneously subverts and moves beyond the limitations of these texts and their genre conventions through her ability to incorporate multiple generic traditions. As Stobie suggests, Beukes uses the familiar dystopian elements to shape her narrative, but it is through her blending of this genre with elements of cyberpunk, that she is able to provide social commentary that is not purely myopic. Furthermore, it is this attention to detail of her genre awareness that positions Beukes's work most firmly in the category of not just speculative fiction, but an urban speculative work that necessitates an understanding of shifting views of the dystopic.

In recent years, utopian theory has been revitalised by theorists who argue that the genre holds value in its ability to critique current social structures and concerns. In particular, the critical dystopian genre works both as a means to interrogate and critique society, while also differentiating itself from its generic predecessors. In "US Eutopias in the 1980s and 1990s:

[6] See for instance Jennifer Robinson's "Living in dystopia" (2010), Louise Bethlehem's "Lauren Beukes's post-apartheid dystopia" (2014), Jennifer Schmidt's "Ghost girls and sponsorbabes: dystopian performances of white femininity in Lauren Beukes's *Moxyland*" (2014) and Phoenix Alexander's "Spectacles of dystopia: Lauren Beukes and the geopolitics of digital space" (2015).

Self-Fashioning in a World of Multiple Identities" (2001), Lyman Tower Sargent defines "critical dystopia" as:

> a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as worse than contemporary society but … holds out hope that the dystopias can be overcome and replaced. (2001, 222).

A critical dystopian narrative, thus, utilises an imagined setting with the intention that contemporary readers will be able to compare this fictitious society to their own experiences. While a conventional dystopian narrative may dwell on the overwhelming inescapability of these societal constructions, Sargent argues that a critical dystopian narrative pushes a reader to look beyond the grimness, allowing for an element of hope or "social dreaming". For Sargent, these narratives activate "the dreams and the nightmares that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange their lives and which usually envision a radically different society than the one in which the dreamers live" (1994, 3).

This new form of sociability is certainly present in Beukes's novels, both within the plot and through intertextual and metatextual elements. Her novels make extensive use of online worlds, digital elements and a fusion of pop culture, both local and global, and her writing frequently incorporates the stylistic elements of this. In some cases, the dialogue is styled to represent online communication, while *Zoo City*'s chapters are often interspersed with intertextual pieces that connect the animalled phenomenon in South Africa to global reactions towards the aposymbiots. Furthermore, the two novels were even released with their own soundtracks that readers can buy.

These novels also, like the umbrella term of speculative fiction suggests, make extensive use of "cognitive estrangement". According to Jameson, cognitive estrangement can be aligned with the Russian Formalist concept of "making strange", as well as Bertolt Brecht's

Verfremdungseffekt, and can be considered a "generic category specifically devoted to the imagination of alternative social and economic forms" (2005, xiii-iv).

This ability to defamiliarise the familiar is a staple in speculative fiction, and I argue that Beukes is able to achieve this through two specific means. Firstly, through the ways that she displaces time and space, and secondly through combining this defamiliarisation of spatio-temporality with her genre-blurring. This estrangement, or defamiliarisation, can be achieved through the use of the *novum*.

"History and society," as Suvin posits "are not simply the contexts of fiction but its inly interfused factors" (1988, x-xi). In other words, fiction draws from history and the past in order to speculate on the future. This focus on the future, however, remains firmly rooted in how the past makes itself known in the moment of the present. In his discussion of the *novum*, Hugh Charles O'Connell draws attention to interconnectedness of speculative temporalties by noting how "a dominant line of SF criticism argues that SF is not about the future at all, but is instead principally about the present," meaning that "SF seeks to restore historicity to the present by figuring it as the past of some speculative future," and therebry revealing "the limits of the present and reified structures of out imagination that block us from bering able to imagine radicial futurity" (2016, 300).

Thus, an author's moulding of their text's *novum* constitutes several layers: an acknowledgement of the author's empirical environment in terms of historical positioning, an understanding of contemporary anxieties and beliefs, and an imagining of how these viewpoints may manifest and distort over time. In Beukes's novels, she positions the "strange newness" of the *novum* in *Moxyland* through the multiple ways in which corporate-driven economic policies commodify technological development as well as how technology is used to regulate and distract citizens. Beukes's vision of near-future Cape Town, however, is rooted

in the country's past and present historical positioning, leading to the unfamiliar societal developments in the novel having a sense of plausibility; a sense that these exaggerated forms of social regulation may, in fact, come to pass.

In the case of *Zoo City*, Beukes's *novum* is the possibility of magic. As Beukes explains it:

> I wanted to play with the ideas and interrogate the things we take for granted. Magic is a handy way to illuminate the mundane and twist the perspective. It's the same way technology works in science fiction; it's there to serve the story. And hey, everyday science practically *is* magic. (Author's interview, *Zoo City*).

Thus, while the use of animal familiars suggests similarities to the fantasy genre and a sense of the non-real, Beukes frames her use of magical realism as functioning in much the same way that technology is used in *Moxyland*. Furthermore, Beukes steers away from fantasy by showing that, despite magical occurrences, the animalled still suffer from the type of discrimination that has marked South Africa's history.

Furthermore, the *novum* suggests an ethical prerogative. For Suvin, this reader estrangement results in "feedback oscillation", which entails a cognitive process for the reader, moving between their experiences of reality and the author's depiction of an altered reality, allowing the reader to compare these realities from a new perspective (Suvin 1977, 81).

Thus, *Zoo City* uses the *novum* of the animal familiars to first estrange the reader from reading the novel in a strictly contemporary and empirical manner, before slowly providing enough details about the animalled and their discrimination for the reader to realise the allegory. With her creation of alternative realities, Beukes is, thus, afforded the space in fiction to comment on the legacies of apartheid, realities of xenophobia, capitalism, the threat of globalisation, discrimination and the digital divide, and how these issues may be perpetuated and regulated in the future. It is her multi-generic and socially critical approach that best positions these novels as speculative fiction.

This provides the author and reader with a space within which they can confront social issues without the fatigue that comes from facing them in daily life. According to Konstantin Sofianos, the use of speculative fiction has the advantage of the "cognitive estrangement [that] may currently be the prerequisite for accessing the pent-up narrative of the post-apartheid state" (2013, 120). As noted previously, Lauren Beukes herself argues that her writing is a turn away from realism because non-realist genres provide a means of tackling "issue fatigue". This particular assertion forms part of this chapter and the overarching thesis, questioning if the cognitive estrangement present in speculative fiction does indeed offer a means for political commentary in a way that enables the reader to bypass their own experiences and anxieties, and consequently, allows them to inhabit a position other than their own.

Issue Fatigue and cognitive estrangement

This project seeks to question why and how speculative forms have become a useful lens through which to view present struggles. These shifts are particularly noticeable in the way authors are challenging the imagination, with writers like Lauren Beukes arguing that their writing is a turn away from strict realism because alternative genres provide a means of tackling "issue fatigue" (qtd in Smith, 2013) – that position of apathy from which many people view socio-political quandaries which, although still relevant, are things they may feel have simply become ubiquitous with opening up a newspaper. Beukes implies that many South Africans in her target audience are reluctant to engage with social issues, either because they are saturated by these issues in the daily lives or because some prefer to escape their anxieties when reading. This results in authors like Beukes turning towards fiction which projects these social anxieties onto future landscapes – settings which appear similar to South Africa but are speculative about the direction in which we are heading.

In a roundtable interview with Johnathan Hatfull, Beukes joins authors Sarah Lotz and Charlie Human, and artist Joey Hi-Fi, to provide some key insights into South African genre fiction and its potential. When asked about her use of genre, Beukes comments that her understanding of genre can be compared to "a distorting mirror that allows you to see the world more clearly," and that through this process of "fraying reality", readers can circumvent the cognitive fatigue associated with "the big, horrible things that are exhausting in real life" (qtd in Hatfull 2015, N.P.). In other words, Beukes sees her use of genre as something which allows readers to view social issues from a different perspective. Her notion of "issue fatigue" is also invoked as a stumbling block to readers who might feel saturated or overwhelmed by the multivalent levels of historical oppression at work in her fiction as well as the daily lives of many South Africans. Her aim in subverting "real life" is, thus, an attempt to use genre as a defamiliarising lens that allows readers to remove themselves from their empirical environment and gain a "new perspective".

Building on Beukes's argument in the roundtable interview, Sarah Lotz comments that the historical legacy of South Africa has played an important role in shaping the country's literary output. Lotz notes that speculative fiction allows the possibility to "explore the multiple futures/pasts of a country still in flux," by providing some "imaginative distance" (qtd in Hatfull 2015, N.P.). For Lotz then, there is a clear air of uncertainty that marks South Africa's present and future, especially when the implications of our past are so vividly embedded in our daily lives. Thus, by imposing an imaginative distance between reader and content, speculative fiction has the potential to explore the multi-temporality of post-apartheid South Africa. The notion of issue fatigue, therefore, points to an actual crisis and inability to confront the spectral logics of the structural histories surrounding slavery, colonisation and apartheid. In other words, South African fiction is marked by the difficulties of fully comprehending the structural violence that has marked our country's history – and continues to loom hauntingly over both

the present and the future. Considering this, the arguments made by Beukes and Lotz seem to suggest that genre can be used to recast some of these spectral markers through the process of cognitive estrangement, making these issues fresh and engaging for readers.

As suggested in the preceding chapter, the value of Suvin's theory of cognitive estrangement is rooted in an understanding "that by imagining strange worlds we come to see our own conditions of life in a new and potentially revolutionary perspective" (Parrinder 2001, 4). Parrinder argues that "cognitive estrangement necessarily implies a state of partial and imperfect knowledge. It is the result of coming to understand what is just within, and was formerly beyond, our mental horizons" (2001, 4). In this sense, the act of estrangement facilitates the process of cognition, with the distance of the unfamiliar allowing the reader to more easily navigate the "labour" of connecting the fictional world with their own conception of their lived experience.

Literature, therefore, aides an author like Beukes in framing her narrative as a form of protest or resistance to the status quo. Through the process of estrangement, speculative or science fiction offers us a space to reflect on issues that we may otherwise choose to ignore – or, in some cases, have preferred to remain uninformed due to the discomfort that comes from acknowledging that apartheid's legacy of segregation is still in effect. In the case of SF, the spatio-temporal estrangement afforded to readers allows them to distance themselves from the events on the page. When asked about her use her use of estrangement, Beukes suggest that readers may find it difficult to engage with a world which is "often unbearable" and, therefore, it seems unsurprising that one may not wish to engage with what she terms "big issues" (qtd in Dickson 2014, 77). This is where science and speculative fiction aids Beukes's motives in wishing to create what she calls "twisty thought experiments" or "sneaky allegory" (qtd in Dickson 2014, 77). The work of cognitive estrangement, however, should never be considered

removed from the social reality which it signifies, and resolutely remains dependent on an empirical historical context, resisting foreclosure in its interpretation.

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In *Moxyland*, the social structure is described by Beukes as a "corporate apartheid state", where preferences and discriminations are made within the society based on class and corporate power rather than specifically race. *Moxyland*, thus, exhibits the morphing of the real-world South African city into an institutionally repulsive, fictional, futuristic, dystopian space, by means of the speculative. This fictional space serves to present a world which draws parallels between an obviously frightening and undesirable society, and the current world, so as to emphasise the existing characteristics of society which warrant similar concern. Beukes has freedom within the realm of speculative fiction to create such a space, and furthermore, to utilise this space for the purpose of raising awareness for social issues which are under-addressed.

The ultra-capitalist world of *Moxyland* is exhibited in a number of ways, including the use of extreme corporate branding through the character of photographer, Kendra. Kendra's immune system is boosted by means of nanobot technology, resulting in her addiction to the Ghost-brand drink and her skin being literally branded with the Ghost logo. Essentially, Kendra becomes a walking advertisement for the profit of several related corporations, helping to maintain the status quo. Lerato, having been orphaned by AIDS, was sent to a trade school and has risen to the status of corporate elite. Despite enjoying the luxuries of her status, Lerato uses her hacking skills to aide trust fund kid Toby and wannabe revolutionary Tendeka – unaware that her activity is being heavily monitored. Beukes extends her corporate criticism through Lerato and Kendra. Both characters fall victim, one way or another, to the hegemonic corporate demands. Lerato's victimization is more simple. She exists as a member of the criticized corporate population. She has money and wealth, but her freedom is compromised, and her

lifestyle mundane. Subsequently, Lerato aids activism against her corporation from within. Her tracks are followed, and her actions are exposed. The punishment is either death, or further corporate manipulation. This predicament illustrates the vacuum that is the corporate world. Its demands are consuming and laborious, yet no way out yields a better life.

In the opening pages of both novels, Beukes describes the city settings with a mix of familiar details that the reader may recognise. The familiar, however, is quickly skewed by non-realist elements which estrange the reader from how they typically conceive of Johannesburg and Cape Town. The emphasis on the urban landscape also serves as an introduction to the overarching themes of the novels and the ways in which they complicate notions of the utopic. Bethlehem highlights Beukes' intention to utilise the space as a speculative device:

> The second paragraph of *Moxyland* depicts the segregated corporate line, the "underway" that serves the city of Cape Town. The exposition defamiliarizes the known urban setting: its mimesis is explicitly fictive and futuristic). (2014, 526).

Here, Bethlehem works with the concept of defamiliarisation. She points out authorial intention to represent the real world in a fictive and futuristic manner. In this sense, the paragraph in question indeed exemplifies a move away from the familiar, and through the process of cognitive estrangement, works to cast the city of Cape Town in a different light.

The technique of defamiliarisation also has traction within the context of cognitive estrangement, and works well to exemplify the speculative technique of altering society to make it unfamiliar to a reader. Her observation also, however, works on an historical level, to the opposite end. It represents a type of segregation which is foreign to *contemporary* South African society, but possesses a melancholic familiarity within the *historical* context. This reminder of the past is demonstrative of a common dystopian tool: the intent to create a world which represents the fears of society. In the modern South African context, the prospect of a

future apartheid is well within the scope of individual fear. To this end, the dystopian intention to appeal to fears amongst individuals in pursuit of awareness takes effect.

In its literary application, estrangement is something which, thus, requires these two stages: a level of estrangement from the reader's empirical environment and immediate associations, followed by an "epistemological labour" in which the reader attempts to understand the full implications of the author's analogy. As such, this chapter draws its theoretical framework from the narrative technique of cognitive estrangement and its efficacy in producing fictional worlds which, despite the aspects of escapist fantasy, are still heavily rooted in envisioning alternative ways of addressing socio-economic redress.

Cognitive estrangement can, therefore, further be related to the supposed utopian form of the post-apartheid city and the inequity which arises from its true dystopian nature. As the city consists of establishing order through the erection of boundaries, both physical and socio-economic, there is a need to critique these spaces and dispel notions of colonial permanence. Utilising Jameson's assertions about science fiction, the chapters that follow seek to assess the ways in which these authors employ a rhetoric of estrangement or dissonance in order to allow the reader the cognitive separation from their own live experiences to consider how differently marginalised individuals might experience the same physical spaces.

It is this ability of speculative works to position the reader in a different experience that makes for narratives that are, on the hand, compelling, and on the other, positions them as texts which are capable of illuminating the circumstances around the current social position which the reader inhabits. The relationship between reader, text and lived experience is, thus, fundamental in understanding how the genre functions.

The role of the reader and their self-posited identity is, therefore, something which speculative fiction can serve to disrupt. Reading a work of fiction usually entails immersing the reader in an experience beyond their own, but not every text asks for this degree of self-reflection. This perspective of the social functioning and what it asks of a critical reader is further elucidated by Suvin posing that a text which seeks to disrupt the status quo demonstrates:

> traffic not only between norm and practice (which can change the norm) but also, and primarily, norm and its inner articulation (which can clarify what the norm meant, and whether the reader should agree with it). (1988, xiii).

Suvin's positioning, thus, reveals his belief that the genre is one which primarily interests itself in the intersection between history past, society in the present moment, and how these temporalities will continue to manifest their ideologies in the future. Speculative narratives are, therefore, infused with an element of social critique, and consequently, Suvin views fictionalised narratives as texts which are intertwined with their historical positioning.

Such fiction can, therefore, be said to draw heavily on the world and views of the author, whether consciously or not. The element of cognitive estrangement, however, demonstrates an intent to remove emotional attachment with regards to the reader's positioning within society, so as to allow them to inhabit the positioning of another subject. While science fiction often posits this to be new forms of technology, utopian fiction has a tendency to reflect upon new social structures as a technique to estrange the reader. Beukes, however, in her blurring of generic conventions, utilises both new technology and new social orders, displaying an interconnectedness between human innovation and its ability to structure and legitimise oppression and inequality.

In *Moxyland*, Beukes sketches a Cape Town that is immediately recognisable, while also estranging readers from their own experiences through the ways in which the narrative defamiliarises the city settings. Such defamiliarisation is present from the opening pages of the

narrative, the character of Kendra describes her trip on a private corporate train:

> The corporate line shushes through the tunnels on a skin of seawater, overflow from the tide drives put to practical use in the clanking watery bowels of Cape Town – like all the effluent in this city […] I could get used to this, seats unmarked by the pocked craters of cigarette burns, no blaring adboards, no gangsters checking you out. But elevated status is not part of the program. Only allocated for the day, to get me in and out again. Wouldn't want civilians hanging around. (*Moxyland* 1).

This introduction to the Cape Town of 2018 establishes several important factors for the novel. Firstly, it is made clear that neoliberal policies in South Africa have given way to a level of corporate governance which seeks to maintain a particular status quo, and consequently, has established segregation along economic lines. As suggested by the elite corporate train line and its destination of the Waterfront Exec Station, this version of Cape Town utilises city space and transportation to impose barriers and its own rhetoric of segregation and exclusion. For those who have "elevated status", then, traversing the city can be done in comfort – and without pesky interference from perpetual marketing or even interacting with those who are less fortunate. Secondly, as noted in Bethlehem's observation above, *Moxyland* immediately engages in a discourse of defamiliarisation. While the text establishes the location as Cape Town, there are enough clues in the description of a tide-driven underway and corporate security measures to alert the reader to the fact that this city is a projection of Cape Town reimagined. In fact, this Cape Town imagined by Beukes is defined more by its technological infrastructure than the imagery of Cape Town's natural surroundings that readers may expect.

Moreover, "the Rural" is frequently invoked to highlight the discrepancy between a divided South Africa, particularly one in which urban life is privileged or considered to be utopic. While from the context of the novel, the reader realises that those living in the rural are technological disenfranchised and likely will have few prospects for overcoming this state,

there are times that artworks are shown to have a nostalgic, idyllic version of these areas. When Kendra visits Mr Muller to develop her camera film, she notes:

> He's got his wall2wall set on Karoo; pale light over scrub hills complete with a windpump, metal blades turning idly in a breeze you could almost convince yourself you felt. It's an idealised version of the Rural, peaceful, as far removed from the real thing as you can get. (*Moxyland* 73).

Similarly, while playing a game in the virtual world, Toby discovers something interesting:

> It's a mural, giant-size and *kif* skilful, of a Nguni cow in profile, the kind you only ever see now emaciated in the background of the politsoc broadcasts about how fucked up the Rural is" (*Moxyland* 136)

In both cases, such artworks perform a nostalgic function, albeit a form of regressive nostalgia. As Toby and Kendra both note, these representations eschew the reality of those who live beyond the city limits in favour of idealised notions of the pastoral. Toby indicates that the artwork is modified to suit the experience of the player, commenting that the "local flavour" is "a little extra the developers threw in to mod the experience to whatever part of the world you're logging in from" (*Moxyland* 137). Furthermore, Toby reflects that the Nguni portrait is a far cry from an accurate representation of the Rural; for the game developers, the cow represents something recognisably South African, but Toby is immediately aware that this symbol masks the truth of an impoverished rural landscape. Toby, thus, draws a connection between the nostalgic representation in virtual worlds and his own experiences in what he calls "realworld" (*Moxyland* 137).

These disjunctures between sign and signifier are an important aspect in a speculative text. Firstly, due to nostalgic influence utilised in creating visions of the utopic, and secondly, due to the genre's ability to complicate notions of spatio-temporalities. Furthermore, the manner in which Beukes explores the interconnectedness of past, present and future also takes into consideration the distinctions between urban and rural, thereby showing an awareness of the post-apartheid present.

Technological regulations

> *"Moxyland* is about the places where technology and culture intersect, and what that says about people". (Beukes, 2008b:5)

Beyond the use of setting, the protagonists in these novels encounter a number of other forms of social regulation. *Moxyland* in particular is driven by future technological innovations that range from commercially sold nanobots and genetically modified animals to online gaming platforms that allow players to create their own utopic, or dystopic, world. One of the most striking differences between this futuristic Cape Town of 2018 and its real-world counterpart, is the multitude of ways in which cell phones are used. In *Moxyland,* cell phones are used to purchase goods and to allow people access to certain areas based on their social class. On the surface, this is a convenience which streamlines everyday processes and eliminates the need for keys or identification; however, the cell phones also allow the police to easily regulate and discipline to an authoritarian degree.

In detailing the novel's "futuristic" tech, Beukes creates a sense of temporal estrangement. While the technology in *Moxyland* suggests a future time, these innovations are best considered "near future" as Beukes's technology is mostly extrapolation from her empirical context. Additionally, since the novel was published in 2008, there has been significant technological progress that brings the technology of *Moxyland* closer to present day South Africa. More and more, cell phones are becoming vital to how we communicate with others and manage our daily lives. Beyond social media and instant messaging services, a cell phone can give you access to your banking, while apps like Snapscan can be used at paypoints for instant payment.

The proliferation of communication across increasingly digital channels is best understood through Castell's notion of "the network society", which can be understood as society dependent on its electronic or digital information networks for social structure. In other words, a society developed and defined around its technological complexities. According to Castells,

the network society is a social structure characteristic of what is often termed "information society" or "post-industrial society" (2004, 443). Neither of these terms, however, are adequate in capturing the complexities of Castell's argument. Castells argues that it is not purely technology and ease of communication that defines a network society, as a society is also determined by history, social status, cultural, economic and political context.

Moreover, Castells argues that a network society also accentuates the opposition of global and local. While global networks work to organize institutionalized authority, economy, media and technology, local networks are those structures which allow the flow of day-to-day, private life and various forms of personal identification. Castells further notes that the local and global are often considered to be connected though one major communication system: the city. However, as Castells warns, "these two are conflicting logics that tear cities from the inside when try to respond to both, simultaneously" (2004, 444).

Network society is, thus, a notion that considers the relationship between local and global networks and the tensions that present within this divide. The role of developing technology is, therefore, something which continues to push distinctions of the global and the local. In a post-colonial context, however, issues of access highlight a digital divide that threatens to economically segregate citizens. As Castells suggests: "technology does not determine society: it is society" (2005, 3). Essentially, society implicitly determines the structure and uses of technology according to those who use it – further exacerbating issues of access. It is for this reason that Castells considers "the prevalence of electronic communication as a new form of sociability" (2004, 447).

This new form of digital sociability is continually foregrounded throughout Beukes's novels[7]. Her narratives are saturated with technological innovations which allow for both an increased sense of connectedness as well as greatly increase the possibilities for social control. Toby in particular is one of the characters who is most engulfed by new technology. One striking example is the BabyStrange coat that Toby wears early in the novel, which constantly streams whatever nefarious content he chooses across multiple screens embedded in the coat, meaning that Toby is constantly broadcasting his own content for the consumption of others. By taking social media, and technological commitment to the extremes represented by Toby, Beukes's narrative propels familiar perceptions of such propositions to disturbing lengths. In constantly screening content, however, Toby makes his body a canvas of spectacle; one in which he is a curator of content for his viewers and listeners. This spectacle serves Toby well in so far as it manages to deflect attention from himself. Additionally, Toby continuously addresses his audience as "kids"; a trait which carries over into his internal narrative, as if a direct address to the reader.

Much like Orwell's *1984*, *Moxyland* also demonstrates the danger inherent in these new forms of technology being manipulated and used as a form of social control. As Bethlehem points out, the advanced cellular technology in *Moxyland* acts as a "digital passbook" (2015, 528). Reminiscent of the passbooks during apartheid, citizens are restricted from certain buildings and areas of Cape Town due to their social status which is embedded in their "SIM ID" (*Moxyland* 47). Thus, phones are closely linked to identity, and they open access points for both privilege and punishment. Phones are used for financial transactions and access to buildings and the underway train system, operating as a prosthetic that offers the guise of

[7] While the use of technology is a dominant theme in *Moxyland*, *Zoo City* also includes a number of instances where digital sociability evokes intriguing juxtaposition between local and global. For instance, when Zinzi visits a sangoma she is surprised to see that part of his ritual for communicating with the ancestral spirits involves receiving text messages on his iPhone, seemingly suggesting that such technology hosts social networks beyond the comprehension or perception of most humans.

convenience. The social turmoil in the novel pairs closely with the dystopian notion. Its cause in the novel, hierarchical exclusivity on a political and economic scale. The technological movement, it follows, arguably reads as the forefront of the social critique within the novel. Its central purpose being the discussion of the effect of technology on sociability. Cavillaro demonstrates the extent to technological presence in everyday life, and equates human reliance thereupon, to prosthesis insofar as humans feel that they need this technology to function (2000, preface).

The use of cell phones, however, also makes it much easier for the corporate government to discipline criminals and rule-breakers. The police force has access to the system of phones and can use people's phones to administer electric shocks, subduing anyone they perceive as disruptive. When Tendeka is violently subdued by being electrically shocked, with hardly any warning, for public disturbance in a bar, Toby observes that:

> The cop doesn't bother to register a second warning. He goes straight for the defuser. Higher voltage than necessary, but when did the cops ever play nice? Tendeka drops straight away, jerking epileptic … I'm reckoning that's 170 to 180 volts right there. Anything over 200 requires extra paperwork to justify the use of potentially lethal force, but that doesn't mean the cops don't push the limits (*Moxyland* 21).

Furthermore, the typical punishment for any serious anti-corporate offense is a complete "disconnect", varying in length of time based on the severity of the crime. This means that their SIMS are deactivated, limiting their access to buildings, transport and other areas, essentially cutting them off from society and impairing their daily functioning. As eloquently clarified by Toby: "You can't play nice by society's rules? Then you don't get to play at all. No phone. No service. No life" (*Moxyland* 21). As Castells argues, the exclusionary practices within the logic of the network, therefore, "switches off . . . people and territories dubbed as irrelevant from the perspective of dominant interests" (Qtd in Nyíri, 2004, 7).

Therefore, in the world of *Moxyland*, being disconnected is even more disenfranchising than typical criminal prosecution, as disconnection effectively functions as means of casting undesired individuals from the city. The threat of disconnection looms over anti-corporate rebels such as Toby and Tendeka, but reflects utopian ideals for the corporation itself. Much of this utopian vision comes from the structuring and regulation of the city itself – with the corporate sector dominating much of Cape Town's City Bowl and Waterfront area, using private trains and occupying luxurious, catered apartments. In other words, much like contemporary South Africa, the process of gentrification is rampant, displacing citizens from their homes to create idyllic urban playgrounds for the rich.

While *Moxyland* demonstrates how limited access to critical technological systems can lead to disenfranchisement, this exclusion of certain individuals from engaging fully with society is similar to the "digital divide" in South Africa. In "Digital S.A." (2000), Martin Hall argues that the 1990s were a great time of change, both in terms of local politics as well as being the decade that saw the Internet rise as a form of global communication. In positing the opportunities afforded through access to the Internet, Hall asks an important question:

> Does the digital world of the Internet offer a new politics, a "public sphere" of accountability and transformation, new possibilities for culture and prosperity? Or is the new medium remapping old divisions, and widening the gap between rich and poor? (2000, 463).

As Hall suggests, the very concept of access imposes questions about inequality. Instead of restricting people spatially, poorer South Africans have been restricted from accessing particular materials online or gaining certain I.T. skills; a clear disadvantage in a world where success is being increasingly determined by issues of access to technological proficiency. This translation of the racial stratifications of apartheid into one of economic power can be compared to what has transpired in the neo-liberal post-apartheid state (Bethlehem 2013: 527). This is one of the ways in which Beukes comments on a social issue by embedding the problem

of economic division and class privilege into the very fabric of the text-based reality, thus bringing her novel into alignment with the aims of a critical dystopic text.

Essentially, her focus on technology and its interaction with society, allows Beukes to highlight the urban/rural divide present in South Africa. While the protagonists of *Moxyland* are true digital natives and attempt to subvert the corporate stranglehold over technology, their only means of achieving this is dependent on their ability to navigate between and beyond the network society.

Often, within dystopian fiction, there are those who resist their situation or the prevailing status quo. Many of the characters in *Moxyland* exhibit some level of resistance or opposition, but the character that seems the most active and militant is Tendeka. Part of Tendeka's political movement is to boycott this system, hoping to "create an alternate economy that doesn't rely on SIM IDs and credit rates" (*Moxyland* 170). This reference to parallel economies is typical of the intentions of a dystopian fiction. Economic scrutiny forms part of what Gill refers to as the "categories of engagement or social critique" (2013:79), which distinguish the speculative function. The market economy has a way of producing high margins of inequality in wealth distribution, and as such, *Moxyland* presents corporate segregation as an indiscrete marker of such economic issues.

Tendeka and his associates engage in "hacktivism", or digital protest activism, including the hacking of corporate signage to reverse its intrusive message. This resembles "reality hacking", or culture jamming, such as when the group known as Tokolos Stencils defaced the giant sunglasses sculpture which was the work of a corporate-sponsored white male artist in the affluent suburb of Sea Point. Tokolos Stencils' aim was to redirect attention to the Marikana massacre and the lack of access of less privileged non-corporate sponsored artists. In this

regard, Tendeka's anti-dystopian protests closely resemble the awareness-raising activities and real-life activism of South African protesters and culture jammers.

Tendeka, however, is highly engaged with the spectacular nature of his pushed revolution – to the point that he blindly trusts and is baited by his online informant, *skyward. This character easily mirrors many types of anti-apartheid activism that took place in the past, although in the intense dystopia of *Moxyland*, his efforts seem almost futile as a catalyst for real change. This is first hinted at when Toby refers to Tendeka as "a Struggle revivalist … such a wannabe, so born fifty years too late" (*Moxyland* 14), before Toby calls him a "Steve Biko-wannabe," preoccupied with "some para-criminal counter-culture activities" (*Moxyland* 17). Although likened to the founder of the South African Black Consciousness Movement, Tendeka's forms of protest are largely limited to the "defacement of corporate property" (*Moxyland* 29). As his partner Ashraf notes, Tendeka's middle-class upbringing means that he is not as disenfranchised as the street youth he claims to be fighting for. Thus, while Tendeka envisions himself as the head of an emerging network society of anti-apartheid activism, his actions are often misguided by what Beukes suggests is "romantic arrogance" or a "Steve Biko wannabe syndrome, where he wants to be the iconic solo hero" (Qtd. in Green 2014, n.p.). In other words, despite Tendeka's desires to achieve social change through a network of activists, driven by visions of his own grandeur and desire to be remembered as a struggle hero, make him an easy target for *skyward's nefarious purposes.

Resistance and transgression: Art, bio-politics and the virtual world

Throughout *Moxyland*, the characters all engage with various forms of resistance and transgression, often via technological means. One of the most intriguing uses of technology in the novel, is Tendeka's exploration of a virtual platform where he is able to create his own ideal world. This virtual platform is also where he meets and communicates with *skyward,

who wins his trust by feeding him information before easily manipulating Tendeka's desire for social change.

In *Moxyland,* this is seen through Tendeka's forays into the virtual world, where he communicates with *skyward. Termed "Pluslife", the implications for this virtual world are clear: create a life for yourself which is better than the real. Here, Tendeka's idealism is rendered most clear in how he chooses to create his own space:

> What's the point of escaping to Plus if the world is too close to the one you just left? […] I spend more time on doing up my place. It's pretty humble, designed to be bio-friendly, all recyclable materials, solar panels on the ceiling, a wind farm in the garden. Not that you need to generate energy in-world, but it's the principle. It's a shining example to throw into contrast the kind of excesses the neighbourhood attracts. (*Moxyland* 39).

When he returns later, however, Tendeka discovers that *skyward has done some serious remodelling of his utopic vision: "My enviro-friendly house and the three houses surrounding it have been replaced with loxion shelters, the tinshacks appallingly incongruous among the mansions and manicured lawns" (*Moxyland* 114). Relating utopia and dystopia in this regard, Pluslife exemplifies futuristic parallels of escapism pertinent to part of the South African condition. Moreover, *skyward's virtual changes are intended to push Tendeka into taking more serious action in the real world. Baiting Tendeka, *skyward appeals to his revolutionary inclinations:

> Call it mass-scale compassion fatigue or selfish genes or the obvious conclusion capitalism has always been headed for, but the reality is people don't give a flying fuck. They've seen all the old strategies before. They're tired and worse, they're boring. And if there's one thing our culture doesn't stand for … it's boredom. You know that. We have to jolt them, surprise them, it has to be spectacular. We're competing with media and advertising and pluslives, all helping people to avoid confronting reality … We need to jar people from their apathy. We need spectacle. (*Moxyland* 118-9).

While *skyward's aim is to manipulate Tendeka into extreme action, Beukes's prose holds some very important "truth" about "issue fatigue": South Africans have long lived in the world

of spectacle to the point of saturation and a desire to avoid confronting reality. His willingness to take action and be remembered as a revolutionary, thus, leads Tendeka into trusting the corporate elites posing as *skyward, and ultimately, results in his gruesome death.

*skyward's call for spectacle is what leads Tendeka to butcher Khani Nkosi's bio-art sound installation. While art features prominently in *Moxyland*, and is often posited as a means of resistance or protest, there are frequent reminders, however, that individual creative expression is harnessed and regulated through corporate incorporation, reducing the artworks to a spectacle of consumption. Nkosi's artwork is described by Kendra as "gruesome, red and meaty, half-collapsed in on itself with spines and ridges and fleshy strings and some kind of built-in speakers, which makes the name even more disturbing: *Woof & Tweet*" (*Moxyland* 156). The piece is "lab-manufactured plastech bio-breed with just enough brainstem hard-wired to respond to input in different ways … but not enough to hurt" (*Moxyland* 157). Part biological, part technological, Nkosi's art draws sound from the surrounding environment, before remixing and distorting the playback. When Tendeka's group burst in wearing masks and carrying pangas, the gallery attendees are bored by what some assume to be performance art. Yelling "Death to corporate art!" Tendeka destroys the artwork, splattering the gallery in blood as *Woof & Tweet* applies the screams from the bystanders. The scene devolves into the spectacle *skyward requested, but the mangled artwork now itself becomes a spectacle – something avidly consumed and documented. Both attractive and repulsive, the onlookers are unable to remove themselves from the spectacle, their sense of interpretation blurred by conflicting responses. This does not seem to have much impact on the mindset of the upper class, and the art piece could be interpreted, as Henriette Roos does, as "a symbol of the diminishing stature of the humans around it" (2010, 51). Here, Beukes is clear in suggesting that art is easily incorporated and co-opted into the realm of the spectacle – and, in turn, speaks to a sense that spectacle is expected by the consumer. Regardless of the resultant impact, both

the creation and destruction of art in *Moxyland* seems to reflect, as it often seems to do in real-life South Africa[8], a desire to alter the circumstances of a perceived dystopia.

Ironically, Kendra's photographs on display increase in value after they are splattered with the bio-art's blood. Of course, corporate culture pushes Kendra to commodify not only her art, but also her biology – her skin being the canvas for the Ghost soft drink brand. In her own words, Kendra is one of "twelve art punks," although the company's creative director, Andile, prefers to describe them as "hot talent. Young, dynamic, creative, on the up, the perfect ambassadors for the brand" (*Moxyland* 5). While Andile does not offer their names to Kendra, he does reveal that the other sponsor babies are involved in alluring creative endeavours, such as DJs, filmmakers and popular recording artists. As such, "Ghost's hipster chosen" (*Moxyland* 5), have been selected for their ability to promote through popular culture and other youth-orientated activities.

The fate of the twins in *Zoo City* is very similar to that of Kendra in *Moxyland*: as a piece of "propriety technology", Kendra is considered to be the property of Ghost, and can, thus, be disposed as a commodity. However, one of the effects of Kendra's nanotech enhancement is an advanced, hyper-resistant immune system. Despite her disposal at the hands of the corporate elite, we discover that she inadvertently passes on her immunity to Toby via sexual transmission, thereby allowing Toby to survive the chemical attack. As suggested previously, the setting of *Moxyland*'s dystopia is typical of the genre of cyberpunk, wherein the characters navigate through an often problematic urban environment. Stobie argues that it is this element of late cyberpunk which infuses the text with a sense of hope, as the multi-generic narrative

[8] The destruction of art as a form of protest has become a pertinent and debatable issue recently in South Africa, with the *Rhodes Must Fall* movement leading to the removal of the Rhodes statue at UCT and destroying paintings in an attempt to disrupt colonial ideologies. Other recent examples include the Trans Collective disrupting an exhibition at UCT's Centre for African Studies, and the defacement of Brett Murray's painting of Jacob Zuma, "The Spear". While the scope of what this means for art, protest activism and social commentary is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to draw attention to how iconoclasm serves a political message – and the very notion that art is capable of reinforcing or disrupting ideological narratives.

"delineates a technological, materialistic alternative society which mirrors and intensifies the structural violence of the present" (Stobie 2012b, 367).

According to Claire Sponsler, cyberpunk is a distinctly postmodern genre, born in the 1980s as a form of exploring the human experience in a media-dominated, late capitalist society marked by the effects of post-industrialisation (1992, 626). The protagonists of this genre tend to be antiheroes sceptical of authority, struggling in a world without meaning, a sense of security or notion of community. As such, the cyberpunk genre is fitting in Beukes's construction of future Cape Town, where corporate interests have become synonymous with the totalitarian government, and the characters given narrative focalisation, find themselves attempting to establish a resistant community – even as such attempts are quickly shown to be futile. On the other hand, though, many cyberpunk narratives have been shown to perpetuate the monomyth of the white, male heterosexual anti-hero. Its ability to perform social critique is, therefore, something which can be limited by its point of view. While Beukes attempts to negate such a possibility through her use of four very different narrative perspectives, I find it necessary to question the efficacy of such a decision – especially when the novel concludes with only the character of Toby "step[ping] out of the door into a whole new bright world, feeling exhausted and exhilarated" (*Moxyland* 289).

Overall, this monomyth of the white, male, heterosexual anti-hero is surprisingly synonymous in the digital world. Hall, for instance, while arguing that, for some, "being digital" demonstrates a utopian ideal with "a world freed from the constraints of time and space, the opportunity for a virtual community," also remarks on the potential of the digital world to create its own forms of social regulation (2000, 462). In other words, we can consider a dystopic undercurrent to cyberspace. As Hall notes, these virtual communities operate through exclusionary access and are "characterised by monolingualism and homogeneity, reversing trends towards multiculturalism" (2000, 468). Thus, for many, the digital world can be seen to

"preserve and accentuate old privileges and prejudices, rather than offering utopian transformation" (2000, 469). Having *Moxyland* conclude with Toby's story is, therefore, somewhat discordant with the rest of the novel's narrative stride.

Responding to an online reviewer who felt that the novel "falls back on a conservative note for its ending, one in which egotism and selfishness win the day and idealism and beauty are consigned to pointless, ugly deaths, and in which the only possible reaction to a grim corporate future is to internalise its sociopathic values," (S. Green 2014, n.p.). Beukes feels the need to re-iterate the ending of the novel as being "bleak as fuck", stating that the conclusion of the novel is intended as "a worst case scenario, a warning of where we could so easily end up – a call to action" (qtd in S. Green 2014, N.P.). While the authorial intention may be admirable, it is not easily discernible how the novel invokes any call to action. As stated above, the only character who seems to escape mostly unscathed is Toby. Does this then suggest that only those without a great sense of social awareness or conviction survive the city?

Despite the climax of the novel, the Cape Town of *Moxyland* seems unchanged. While Beukes goes to great lengths early in the novel to characterise how Cape Town might develop amid major technological innovation, her conclusion is sparse of any suggestion of how continued social inequalities can be combatted. In fact, this conclusion seems to suggest that Cape Town will never escape or develop beyond the divisive forms of spatial and social regulation upon which it was built.

The spatial and social regulation of *Zoo City*

"This city's all about the cheap knock-off"—*Zoo City,* 7

In *Zoo City*, spatial segregation is not so much enforced by legal control of access, but rather results from the discrimination experienced by the aposymbiots. Instead of a device being the method of identification, in *Zoo City* the animals themselves act like a "scarlet letter" (*Zoo City*

50), indicative of the social status of the aposymbiots, as most of them obtained their animals through an act of crime. Consequently, aposymbiots are judged as dangerous and are less likely to be employed or allowed to buy certain real estate. When realtors refuse to offer her accommodation in more affluent areas due to her animalled status, Zinzi comments: "It was inevitable I'd end up in Zoo City" (*Zoo City* 50).

The protagonist of the novel, Zinzi, is one of many people who possess an animal due to their guilt over an act of crime that they have committed. In Zinzi's case, a sloth magically appears soon after her actions lead to the death of her brother. The animalled cannot be physically separated from their creature or both parties will experience the terrible pain associated with the Undertow – a dark, mysterious force which threatens to subsume them. Furthermore, the animals also serve the non-animalled as they make it easy for the public to identify those who have committed crimes. The criminals and their animals are mostly ostracized from society and many have only been able to find living space in dilapidated Hillbrow, referred to colloquially as "Zoo City". In many ways, this does appear to be something of a utopia: the animalled, those considered to be dangerous, live isolated from the rest of the city so that law-abiding citizens can easily avoid criminals whom they may find threatening or whose living circumstances and bodies are considered abject. The animalled, however, possess magical talents, or mashavi, that are beyond typical human abilities. For Zinzi, her ability to trace missing objects leads to her investigating the disappearance of Songweza, a kwaito star signed by notorious music producer, Odysseus Heron. As she investigates, Zinzi unearths Heron's ulterior motives and is drawn deeper into the seedy business dealings of Johannesburg.

The novel demonstrates how not only economic status can be restrictive, but societal status too. The aposymbiots are seen as outsiders, and are treated as such. They are confined to the outskirts, and this confinement is a demonstration of power; but rather than this power coming from a governmental source as with *Moxyland*, the confinement is an instrument of society in

an attempt to hide the undesirable. As with any utopic leaning, this demonstration of power is enforced through a myriad of social regulations.

One of the most striking aspects of the novel is the specificity of Beukes's genre-blurring. Drawing on conventions from urban noir-fantasy, magical realism and some glimpses of an apocalyptic tone, Beukes subverts these influences through a distinctly postcolonial perspective, birthing what she terms a "muti noir". On the one hand, Beukes visualises Johannesburg through the moody urban atmospherics of the noir genre, while displacing certain expectations through her recourse to a more indigenous approach to concepts of the "magical".

It is this approach to mixing genres which really capitulates Beukes's distinct SF footprint. Moreover, understanding her genre-blurring is key to her configuration of Johannesburg and the characterisation of its cityspace in *Zoo City*, and has unsurprisingly been a focal point for many critical responses to her work. Sofianos, for instance, suggests that Beukes's approach to genre "represents an ambitious and exciting attempt to fling open the post-apartheid imagination, and to seek aesthetic means through which to figure the daily bizarreness of life in its cities" (2013, 119). This sense that Beukes's aesthetic poses new possibilities for reading and interpreting post-apartheid urbanities is also echoed by Jessica Dickson who notes that:

> Beukes's innovative mixing of genres, which combine elements of cyberpunk, neo-Noir, fantasy, and magical realism, permit the kind of multivalent possibilities for representing modes of African urbanity that are simultaneously technological, mystical, cosmopolitan, futurist, and persistently haunted by both the occult and the past. (2014, 67).

A bizarre, eclectic mix of genres, thus, seems fitting for representing African urbanity through a lens which encourages a frenzied interplay between modes of the past, future and present – and certainly offers much potential to open debate around the ways in which we theorise the city, provoking new insights and vocabularies for discussing the present.

Johannesburg, Hillbrow

> "Cast as an unwelcome blot on the carefully manicured, bolstered image of Johannesburg…the blighted inner city has remained a symptom and symbol of the unfinished promises of progress and prosperity." -- Martin Murray, *City of Extremes* xii

As in *Moxyland, Zoo City* offers new insight into how readers view a familiar city. In *Zoo City*, Johannesburg is as central a character as Zinzi, who deftly navigates the city space and its multivalent social structures. Much of the novel is set in Hillbrow, a suburb which has become associated with criminality and danger; but, by centralising this locale, Beukes demonstrates Hillbrow to be "a pulsing cosmopolitan centre of movement and activity at the heart Johannesburg's imagination," (Dickson 2014, 67) thus questioning its state of marginality within the city. Like Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001), Beukes shows the neighbourhood of Hillbrow as a transit point for migrants across Africa – and details the inhospitality which greets them.

Unlike *Moxyland* which juxtaposes the city and the Rural, *Zoo City* shows more overlapping and intersecting zones of life. While the Cape Town of *Moxyland* is largely defined by its technological advancements and its infrastructure, in *Zoo City* the city and nature are shown to co-exist within the urban sphere, with necessary accommodations for the animalled being shaped and improvised by their evolving needs. Thus, it may be fitting that the largest human-made forest is shown to be inhabited by many non-human life forms, with the non-human and human alike becoming dependent on their counterpoints.

In her descriptions of Johannesburg, Beukes's narrative reveals a jarringly familiar South Africa characterised by "gritty yellow dust" and "barbed wire fences" (*Zoo City* 256) which, she adds, are "not so much for keeping the world out as keeping the festering middle class paranoia in" (*Zoo City* 84). Fringing the sterility of these middle-class "trim front lawns and rear-facing views onto the golf course" (*Zoo City* 86) is a more abject dystopia: a sprawling

community of refugees, addicts and scam-artists, all distorted in some way by the magical realism that defines Beukes's uncanny twist of a well-known South African city. Furthermore, the use of Hillbrow as the Johannesburg neighbourhood of the animalled also refers to apartheid and to modern issues. During the apartheid era, Hillbrow was known as an area where racial segregation could not be enforced, while in the last few decades Hillbrow has become a destination for immigrants from elsewhere in Africa. More recently, however, Hillbrow's association with immigrants has seen it becoming a central location for xenophobic attacks (Stobie 2012, 374). Beukes's novel, thus, reminds readers that the effects of apartheid are still felt, and that its coming to an end does mean that hatred and fear of certain groups (like criminals, foreigners, or the poor) could not lead to another period of segregation.

In positioning Hillbrow as a central location for the novel, and by extension a revitalising of the inner-city, Beukes focuses on individuals who previously would have been relegated to the townships on the peripheries of the city, and redirects the sense of flow between city and the marginal. Dickson notes that the "recent history of inner-city Johannesburg is one of white evacuation and transient infiltration," and that the overwhelming majority of Hillbrow's current residents were not residing there ten years ago (2014, 70). Originally, Hillbrow's cosmopolitan design arose to suit the needs of the ruling white minority, but the state of emergency and sense of crisis which marked the late 1980s and 1990s saw white inhabitants evacuating the suburb in favour of gated communities, making the inner-city more hospitable to those who had once occupied the peripheries of the city – thereby "effectively reversing apartheid logics of race and space" (Dickson 2014, 69).

While Hillbrow was once considered an upmarket area, Zinzi remarks that Zoo City is largely neglected by the government: "The police are a joke with a punchline you've heard before. Armed response runs Zoo City and the downtown area the same way dogs piss on their territory. They're only interested in protecting their buildings. If a crime happens across the

road, it's as if it doesn't happen at all" (*Zoo City* 38). With socialised segregation that designates certain neighbourhoods as not worth helping, the animalled are neglected by services that are meant to serve all of the city's inhabitants indiscriminately. The strict segregation practices and visual stigma of being animalled both make reference to the days of apartheid, in which the criminals represent black South Africans as an ostracized group. Because of this stigma, Zinzi frequently attempts to hide her sloth so that others will trust her or simply treat her with respect. She says of her first day out of prison with Sloth, "I wasn't used to being seen in public with him yet. I still cared about what other people thought, even when the other people in question had animals of their own" (*Zoo City* 51). Zinzi even refuses to leave her apartment at first just to avoid the judgment of others, which she never truly escapes. The animalled generally cannot hide what they have done, as if their pasts are on display. In cases like Odi Heron, however, pre-existing wealth allows him to avoid discrimination and detection of his animalled status. Heron retreats into his sprawling Westcliff property where he can keep his giant white crocodile out of sight. Ironically, while Zinzi's economic status means she relies on walking to traverse the city, Heron's fears of discovery have led to him retreating from the world. Even Tyrone Jones, who is incarcerated in an American prison, has a greater degree of freedom as his butterfly provides him the magical ability to inhabit the lives of others:

> when I go to sleep every night, I wake up as someone else. For the time I'm asleep, I live the day of someone else on the other side of the world. Man, I've been kids in Africa and India, I was once this old Chinese woman. Mostly I'm poor, but sometimes I get lucky and I'm rich. (*Zoo City* 83).

In sketching this magically-imbued Johannesburg, Beukes aims to provide critical commentary on the ways in which social regulation continue to impose oppressive states. Furthermore, Beukes seeks to balance the spectacular with a more nuanced view of how ordinary citizens live within and beyond imposed societal regulations. Nuttall argues that the city functions as

an archive in terms of reading the configurations of race, class and space in post-apartheid South Africa. Post-apartheid fiction is, therefore, one way of understanding city culture through is spacial formations, and the ways in which its citizens navigate this space (Nuttall 2004, 740). Terming such movements "pedestrian enunciations", Nuttall's argument correlates with De Certeau's "pedestrian speech acts".

In "Walking in the City", De Certeau argues that "the act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statement uttered" (1984, 97). Walking is, thus, to be seen as a means of interacting with spatial topography. In describing pedestrians, De Certeau comments that, through the act of walking, pedestrians experience the city, with their daily movements creating an urban "text" (1984, 93). Similar to Castells's proposition for a network society, DeCerteau suggests that walkers comprise their own network of intersecting lives that compose "a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations" (1984, 93). As De Certeau describes it, the form of the city is determined by the manner in which its citizens traverse and interact with each other and the urban terrain. While cities are planned for specific purposes, in practice it is the network of practitioners that give the space its use. As such, the city can be understood to form a text which is brought to life by the everyday movements of those who inhabit the space.

While Beukes does not shy away from describing the abject living conditions in Zoo City, she also demonstrates an acknowledgement of the ordinary. While the middle class is "too scared" to breach the borders of Zoo City at night, Zinzi claims that "that's precisely when it's most sociable… [as] kids chase each other down the corridors [and] people take their animals out for some fresh air or a friendly sniff of each other's bums" (*Zoo City* 115). For Zinzi, the conflict of interest is presented not, for the most part, in the form of the other criminal

aposymbiots, but rather it is the prejudicial pseudo-utopia of the institutions that are, contrastingly, revered by the middle class.

Beyond the magical elements of the text, Beukes takes time to sketch the ways in which the inhabitants of Hillbrow compose their own text through their daily movements. In the opening chapter, Zinzi describes how she navigates her building with its lack of functioning elevators. Zinzi notes that the stairwell is "mummified in yellow police tape and a charm against evidence-tampering," bringing the familiar sight of police protocol into juxtaposition with the newness of magical elements (*Zoo City* 4). While the closed off stairs inside the building force most residents to navigate via the fire-escape, Zinzi recourses to using makeshift pathways as a shortcut: instead of taking the main stairwell, Zinzi crosses walkways, climbs through windows and jumps to the ground, declaring herself "Queen of the shortcut" (*Zoo City* 275).

Despite Zoo City being marked by dereliction, Zinzi finds a strange comfort in seeing how others have negotiated their own, albeit unconventional, means of traversing the dilapidated building. When first moving in, she recalls thinking that "there was something comforting about the barbed wire and the broken windows, the way all the buildings connected via officially constructed walkways or improvised bridges to form one sprawling ghetto warren" (*Zoo City* 50). In other words, while many may avoid Hillbrow due to its associations with criminality, Zinzi is quick to find herself drawn in by the sense of connection she feels with the other inhabitants. Zinzi's diction is also telling in this example, with her use of the term "warren" echoing animal imagery, while the use of "improvised bridges" recalls De Certeau's idea of pedestrian speech acts, with such movements comprising their own form of urban text.

Furthermore, despite the infrastructure's neglect, the urban landscape is shown to be malleable and ever-changing – as seen in Zinzi's descriptions of Makhaza's Place, a bar which functions as a central gathering point for the inhabitants of the area. Prior to Hillbrow becoming

associated with its current inhabitants, Mak's Place was part of a shopping arcade during the time when "this part of town was cosmopolitan central, with its glitzy hotels and restaurants and outdoor cafés and malls packed to the skylights with premium luxury goods" (*Zoo City* 42). Despite rumours of gentrification and the occasional eviction raid, Mak's Place has managed to retain its location. Throughout the novel, Mak's Place is described as a resilient entertainment venue that, in many ways, speaks to the resilient nature of the clientele. Even in its derelict state, Mak has reappropriated the former department store, which once catered to the economic elite, for customers with a "certain reputation" whose existence has halted the process of gentrification in the area (*Zoo City* 42).

This inevitable arena in which this conservative first world is confronted by the "other"- and vice versa - is what Henriette Roos terms a "contact zone" (2011, 56). This can be best understood as the confrontation required when redefining one's rigid sense of self in the presence of the 'other'; something which speaks to the anxiety of social entropy and the fear of contamination. In attempts to deal with these zones, and the deep anxiety that they instil, Beukes's narrative dismantles the abject so as to diminish the threat that they impose just by being. In writing about the city, Beukes outlines her approach to capturing Johannesburg, noting:

> I'm interested in psychogeography, the layers of history, how places are constructed and for what intentions and how those change, that cities improvise themselves. I try to make it as real as possible—especially when playing with the fantastic, you need to anchor it with real details. I do research trips, walk around and talk to people. It's something I learned from being a journalist. (Qtd in Dickson 2014, 70).

Drawing on her journalistic background, Beukes attempts to understand how the city forms itself – as seen in the notion of contact zones. These contact zones frequently occur in more improvisational domains like Mak's Place. "Public places, as sites of spontaneous social interaction," argues Castells, "are the communicative devices of our society" (2004, 446).

Much like De Certeau and Nuttall's assertions on pedestrian enunciations, Castells suggests that "in the practice of the city, its public spaces, including the social exchangers (or communication nodes) of its transportation networks becomes the communicative devices of city life" (2004, 446). Reading the literary city can be further extended through Simone's theory of "people as infrastructure", and a consideration of how Zinzi finds her own means of traversing the city. As Simone defines the term, people as infrastructure, refers to how "African cities are characterized by incessantly flexible, mobile and provisional intersections of residents that operate without clearly delineated notions of how the city is to be inhabited and used" (2004, 407). Noting that in such cases, the residents in question are particularly flexible in their engagements, Simone suggests that their interactions become complex combinations between urban movements, spaces, objects and people.

The manner in which Zinzi navigates her surroundings with unconventional, or unexpected, movements is particularly evocative of this idea. For instance, early in the novel, Zinzi details her own shortcut through Elysium heights, noting: "I duck into number 615, abandoned ever since the fire tore through here, and scramble down through the hole in the floor that drops into 526, which has been gutted by scrap rats who ripped out the floorboards, the pipes, the fittings" (*Zoo City* 4-5). In these moments, Beukes captures a sense of movement through the city and the "hustle" of characters like Zinzi. Zinzi in particular manages to traverse multiple social spheres, easily navigating spaces which may not be accessible to everyone. As Sofianos suggests, the novel affords its readers the continually recurrent pleasure of spatial trespass and proscribed entry, and so, fundamentally, rehearses a fantasy of power" (2013, 115).

Zinzi demonstrates this notion of "trespass" not only through her navigation of physical objects and boundaries, but also through her ability to move between social boundaries. Although Zinzi is university-educated and once held a job as a journalist, her drug addiction eventually lead to her incarceration and a separation from what she terms "Former Life" (*Zoo City* 2). Now, as

an email scam artist and occasional private investigator, her work is described as "not entirely legal" (*Zoo City* 1). Still, she is able to draw on her connections from her Former Life and uses her skills to adapt to social settings as necessary, altering her dress, voice and posture to gain access not only to various wealthy suburbs, elite cosmopolitan locations, and inner-city areas, but also to the necessary people who might be able to assist her investigations. In her travels, Zinzi easily and freely moves between Hillbrow, gated suburbs in Fourways, the sewers under Braamfontein, the nightlife of Sandton and even the mine dumps in the south of Johannesburg. Per Simone's conceptualisation of infrastructure, such social fluidity demonstrates how individuals are capable of "circulat[ing] across and becom[ing] familiar with a broad range of spatial, residential, economic, and transactional positions … carr[ying] traces of past collaboration" (2004, 408). Zinzi, therefore, becomes a body in flux, transgressing notions of immobility in the city. As Clarke notes, that "in striving to escape her debt [Zinzi] is fundamentally movement- and future-oriented," and it is through this magical mobility and disposition, "[that] Beukes is able to re-map the inhospitable city and construct a relationship with the past that although heavy, equips the city dweller with the tools needed to hustle beyond it" (2015, 18).

Zinzi's travels provide the reader with insight into many areas of the city, revealing interesting dynamics between intersecting zones – even as the city's inhabitants attempt to implement rigid boundaries. For instance, Zinzi's descriptions of what she terms "the rotten heart of leafy suburbia", where:

> The suburbs are overshadowed with oaks and jacarandas and elms. Biggest man-made forest in the world, or so we're told. The grassy verges on the pavement are more manicured than a porn star's topiary, running up to ten-metre-high walls topped with electric fencing. Anything could happen behind those walls and you wouldn't know a thing. Maybe that's the point. (*Zoo City* 67-8).

In contrast to the inner-city, the affluent suburbs are teeming with vegetation; although, the natural elements have been "manicured" and are offset by security and attempts at privacy. Furthermore, this has severely impacted traffic and the possible transit routes. As Zinzi wryly comments:

> Traffic in Joburg is like the democratic process. Every time you think it's going to get moving and take you somewhere, you hit another jam. There used to be shortcuts you could take through the suburbs, but they've closed them off, illegally: gated communities fortified like privatised citadels. Not so much keeping the world out as keeping the festering middle-class paranoia in. (*Zoo City* 84)

In comparison to Zinzi's descriptions of Hillbrow and the sociability between neighbours, the gated communities are "fortified like privatised citadels", encapsulating both material wealth – and the fear of anyone breaching their perimeter.

The social anxieties which Zinzi describes in the suburbs are further represented in a different spatial realm of Johannesburg: the underneath. As a city which owes its existence, wealth and form to the richest concentration of gold in the world, it is unsurprising that what lies beneath Johannesburg should be considered one of its defining characteristics – and a suitable metaphor for an unburied past. While Mbembe and Nuttall argue that "Johannesburg clearly shows that one of the characteristic features of a metropolis is an underneath," and that "the under-ground seems to hold the keys to unlocking the secrets of its modernity," (2008, 22–23), Graham suggests the "common motifs of hidden depths and alien incursion … reveal a great deal about the anxieties and fears that pervade the imagination of post-apartheid, post-transition city dwellers and their attitudes toward modernity and the incursions of newness" (2014, 66). While the presence of the animalled reveals a sense of paranoia revolving around xenophobia, the structural elements of the city evoke their own particular anxieties. As Graham notes, while the caves and storm drains lurking beneath Johannesburg appear to lie the furthest outside the mechanisms of social control that govern other parts of the city," there is also a sense that they

are “the tropes that most effectively lay bare the structures and histories underlying the slick surfaces of the postmodern city” (2014, 72). When Zinzi finds herself lost beneath the city, she remarks:

> The worst is that I don’t know where we are. It’s not like I’m the world authority on Joburg’s storm drains, but I’ve been down here enough times looking for lost things to know the basic lie of the land. This is all unfamiliar. The tunnels are a scramble of pitch-black termite holes, some of them narrowing away to nothing, like whoever was digging them got bored and wandered off. The original gold diggings maybe, when Johannesburg was still just a bunch of hairy prospectors scrabbling in the dirt. (*Zoo City* 187-8).

Although Zinzi has proven herself adept at navigating the city itself, she is unable to orient herself in the bowels of Johannesburg, describing the area as “unfamiliar” and remarking that the layout of the tunnels is reminiscent of termite holes burrowed by an indifferent planner. Zinzi also evokes the structural history of Johannesburg and its origins in the Witwatersrand Gold Rush that started in the late nineteenth-century and prompted the development of the city.

This sense of Johannesburg’s past is continuously evoked throughout the novel. In the opening line to *Zoo City*, Zinzi describes how the “Morning light the sulphur colour of the mine dumps seeps across Johannesburg’s skyline and sears through [her] window” (*Zoo City* 1). Zinzi also recalls the history of the city when she has a meeting at The Rand Club, which she describes as “a relic of Johannesburg’s Wild West days, when it was frequented by Cecil John Rhodes and other colonial slumlords who would sit around divvying up diamond fields and deciding on the fate of empires” (*Zoo City* 33). The self-importance of the colonial era patrons is also mirrored by the contemporary clientele who “have the same aura of clingy colonial nostalgia as the venue, with its chandeliers and gilded railings, caricatures of famous members, mounted buck-heads and faded oil paintings of fox hunts” (*Zoo City* 34). At another point, Zinzi’s investigation brings her even closer to the mines and gives her a moment to contemplate the result of these excavations:

> I drive out south to where the last of the mine dumps are – sulphur-coloured artificial hills, laid waste by the ravages of weather and reprocessing, shored up with scrubby grass and eucalyptus trees. Ugly valleys have been gouged out and trucked away by the ton to sift out the last scraps of gold the mining companies missed the first time round. Maybe it's appropriate that *eGoli*, place of gold, should be self-cannibalising. (*Zoo City* 255).

Driving through the south of Johannesburg, Zinzi's description of the mine dumps seems particularly apt and a suitable way of encapsulating a particular aspect of Johannesburg's character. Here, the land has been excavated to uncover the "the last scraps of gold", and Zinzi wryly characterises eGoli as "self-cannibalising", willing to disembowel itself and its natural landscape in favour of possible economic prosperity.

The animalled and the Anthropocene

The possibility of Johannesburg being a "self-cannibalising" city is also a notion which has further resonance when viewed in light of how the city treats those who are animalled – and seems particularly appropriate when considering South Africa's development in light of the Anthropocene. With human activity constituting a geological force, this epoch has seen a significant turn in terms of considering what type of impact humans have had on the planet. In *Zoo City* Beukes poses some interesting ecological perspectives to consider, and, in turn, begins to ask some intriguing questions about what it means to be human and how we define the qualities of humanness.

Frequently, ecocritical and urban studies position nature and infrastructure as diametrically opposed forces. In Beukes's narrative, however, speculative fictions opens Johannesburg into a realm where "nature and infrastructure coincide, such that 'nature' becomes coextensive with everyday life" (B. Smith 2017, 345). In turn, this opens a space for considering the positioning of African texts within the Anthropocene; that is, *Zoo City* suggests a means of how the concept of the Anthropocene, in its academic proliferation, is accessible to literary forms. Beukes captures this in her novel through two main areas of focus: her evocations of Johannesburg's

history and possible futures, as well as her positioning of the complicated relationship between humans and the natural world. The ecology of Beukes's speculative cityspace is, therefore, captured in how Johannesburg's infrastructure responds to and is moulded by these entanglements of human-animal relationships. As Smith notes, in *Zoo City* "the Anthropocene is defined not only by incorporation of animal life into the space of the city, but by complex forms of human-animal entanglement," (2017, 350) and, thus, the metaphorising meets anthropomorphising notion of the apo-symbiot body elides human-animal relationship, leading to a "speculative multispecies ethnography" (2017, 351). In other words, the novel creates its own city culture definied by more than just the human.

In his article on *Zoo City*, Paul T. Clarke notes that Johannesburg as a city is particularly dependent on human activity as a geological force:

> without their capacity to capture and direct mineral, muscular, metabolic, and imaginative energies, it is unlikely that humans could have been able to become geological forces on the scale necessary to build the city nor by extension set into motion the alterations to the region's atmospheric, geologic, hydrological, and seismic equilibrium that has accompanied the city's growth. (2015, 15).

The growth of Johannesburg has, therefore, been especially dependent on the mining industry – something which has shaped the city and still continues to affect its development. Certainly, the making of Johannesburg via racialized, extractive capitalism positions the city's place in the history of the colonial world. When this history is read in conjunction with the Anthorpocene, it opens up possibilities of anthrocpocenic discourse that suggest a reorientation of how colonial discourse still lingers in the South African city. Clarke even goes as far as to suggest *Zoo City* visualises "not only how Anthropocenic changes are destabilizing those racial and species-based bifurcations of life, but in doing so, how the works of science fiction propose new ethical modes of encountering difference" (2015, 15).

While Clarke suggests that the Anthropocene works to destabilize racial categorisations by foregrounding an emphasis on "the human", Kathryn Yusoff warns of "the racial blindness of the Anthropocene as a wilful blindness" (2018, n.p.). In *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2018), Yusoff argues for a greater level of criticism in understanding how black and brown bodies are positioned in the Anthropocene – if this intersectionality is even accounted for within anthopocenic discourse. Largely, Yusoff challenges the concerns of this time period being bolsted by "a sudden concern with the exposures of environmental harm to white liberal communities," and that such concerns arrive "in the wake of histories in which these harms have been knowingly exported to black and brown communities under the rubric of civilization, progress, modernisation, and capitalism" (2018, n.p.). As such, the notion of the Anthropocene, while holding potential for progressing ecocritical concerns, poses troubles in its monolithic, homegenous discourse. Essentially, if the notion of the Anthropecene offers the potential for understanding the relationship between the earth and humankind as a collective, this can only truly be possible through an acknowledgement of how imperial global geographies have shaped the current crisis. Moreover, drawing on Yusoff's argument for fracturing the notion of a singular anthropocenic narrative, we can read Beukes's contradictory explanations of the animalled phenomenon as an ontology constantly at odds with itself; much like the history of the city itself.

If we consider Beukes's novel through such an understanding of the Anthropocene, the questioning of humannessappears to be possible by questioning not just how humans exist in relation to other humans, but how humans exist and function in relation to a broader set of ecological concerns. In this case, one of the most striking aspects is how the animalled and the familiars form part of the infrastructure, moulding it to their evolving needs. One such case is the manner in which Zinzi's apartment has been modified to accommodate for Sloth's needs, where she has erected "loops of rope hanging from the ceiling, the closest [she] can get to

providing authentic Amazon jungle vines" (*Zoo City* 1-2). Needing to modify her environment to suit her familiar, Zinzi makes alterations to her living space and even carries Sloth around the city like a backpack; or, as she describes it "Sloth drives me like a Zinzi motorbike" (*Zoo City* 5). Similarly, the character referred to as Marabou needs to strap her stork to her back after the stork's wings are damaged. The necessity of transporting the animal familiars stems from the fact that the animalled cannot stray too far from their animal because of the negative physical and psychological effects. As Zinzi describes this to the reader: "If I could leave Sloth behind, I would. But the feedback loop of the separation anxiety is crippling. Crack cravings have nothing on being away from your animal" (*Zoo City* 124). Zinzi's comparisons to a drug habit are also an intriguing vantage point from which to view this as a necessary dependency which the animalled need to navigate.

Furthermore, this raises some unique questions about Beukes's speculative intervention. Zinzi and Sloth are co-dependent, forcing Zinzi to always consider how her actions affect her companion. For instance, Zinzi is forced to curb her drinking habit because her intoxication will mystically transfer to Sloth and negatively impact both of them. Sloth, in fact, directly impacts Zinzi's behaviour, disapproving of her duplicitous actions and acting out accordingly. As such, at times, he acts as a form of conscience. In a sense, this means that Zinzi's humanness is refined through a co-operative process that entails negotiation and treating Sloth as an equal constituent of her being. But then, what does this speculation reveal about the relationship between humans and animals? Are humans only willing to consider the ethical implications of their actions when their very life is dependent on the wellbeing of another organism?

Perhaps the answers to such questions are best positioned in relation to the many divergent explanations and corresponding treatment of the animalled both in South Africa and more globally. In most cases, responses to animalled are based on human anxieties and uncertainties – and Beukes's text does not shy away from providing numerous, often contradictory,

explanations for the cause of the animalled phenomenon. For instance, while in prison, Zinzi attends religious services with Neo Adventists, who have base their interpretation on Biblical text, suggesting that the animalled represent a "physical manifestation of … sin," or a form of punishment for which one must repent in order to be "saved" (*Zoo City* 51-2). Zinzi notes that during these sermons the prisoners are told that animals are a form of punishment to be carried "like the guy in *Pilgrim's Progress*[9] lugging around his sack of guilt" (*Zoo City* 51-2). In this interpretation, the animalled are seen as "the lowest of the low", and their co-existence with an animal positions them as unclean, "vermin", and, therefore, possibly as something less than human (*Zoo City* 51-2). Although, as Zinzi comments, the Neo Adventist interpretation is still "marginally less awful than the theory that the animals are *zvidhoma* or witches' familiars, which would qualify us for torture and burning in some rural backwaters" (*Zoo City* 51).

Mostly, this type of reaction is based in human anxiety which stems from the uncertainty of the inexplicable or a fear of sudden change. This anxiety is exacerbated by global media reaction to what has been termed "the Shift". Early in the novel, Zinzi reflects that "It's a fragile state – the world as we know it. All it takes is one Afghan warlord to show up with a Penguin in a bulletproof vest, and everything science and religion thought they knew goes right out the window" (*Zoo City* 21). Here, Zinzi makes reference to the first recorded case of an aposymbiot and noting that the major ontological shift destabilises scientific and religious interpretations of the world, causing global uncertainty and a multitude of reactionary measures. As we are later told:

> Baiyat's role in determining public reaction to what the media called the Shift cannot be over-emphasised. Where some saw a romantic figure, a film school drop-out turned freedom fighter, others saw a symbol of the

[9] John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World, to that Which is to Come* (1678), often cited as the first novel written in English, is a Christian allegorical work that represents the difficulties and temptations faced by the human soul through life on the journey towards Heaven. The central character, Christian, performs this pilgrimage while suffering under a great burden: the knowledge of his sin.

> unknowable. For a time, before the animalled hit the tipping-point, Baiyat became the embodiment of the question of human morality. (*Zoo City* 64).

The body of the animalled, therefore, becomes a prime location for question of human morality – mostly due to being "a symbol of the unknowable". The anxiety surrounding the animalled is further given an apocalyptic undercurrent through the eschatological rhetoric presented in one of the intertextual excerpts of the novel, where an online comment reads:

> Get it together, people, apos aren't human. It's right there in the name. Zoos. Animalled. Aposymbiots. Whatever PC term is flavour of the week. As in not human. As in short for "apocalypse". This is part of the stealth war on good citizens disguised as apo rights. It's in Deuteronomy: Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Utterly abhor and detest it, for it is set apart for destruction. Also Exodus: Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. Do I need to spell it out for you? Familiars. Hell's Undertow. Destruction of the detestable. God is merciful, but only to actual, genuine, REAL LIFE human beings. (*Zoo City* 64-5).

In such examples, the animalled are positioned as less than human – and as an entity which will bring "destruction" down upon those around them. This sense that the animalled may somehow be related to "the end times" is further stressed by one popular explanation for the aposymbiots: toxic reincarnation theory. According to this theory: "Global warming, pollution, toxins, BPA from plastics leaching into the environment has disrupted the spiritual realm" (154). Beukes also shows how these attitudes are extended globally through frequent mentions of how the animalled are treated in other countries. Zinzi tells the reader that in "China they execute zoos on principle," (*Zoo City* 9) while in "the US, Australia, Iran, places like that, they do a full head-to- toe, CAT scans, brain scans, endocrine system analysis, the works" (*Zoo City* 128). Although a number of countries have regulations to monitor their animalled citizens, Zinzi notes that South Africa's Constitution prevents any form of biological regulation; however, this legal protection appears not to extend much beyond this.

The ecology of Beukes's speculative cityscape is, therefore, one which is constantly being shaped by public perceptions and beliefs. While many fear the animalled, Zinzi realises that

counter-culture has popularised a certain appeal to the body of the aposymbiot - and even extends to fetishizing the animalled. This takes place in the form of a pop-culture that aims to exploit the "zoos" by delegitimising their harsh reality through a decontaminated and falsified recounting of "glitz and blood, money on the table, fur in the ring, mobsters with glamour models on their arms watching from the side-lines" (*Zoo City* 135). YOU magazine sensationalises "My Zoo Story Romance" (*Zoo City* 57) featuring a silver-backed jackal while Rapper Slinger, the up and coming pop-artist is featured in his music video "wearing a leopard-print vest and chains, [skulking] between girls with a Hyena padding beside him" (*Zoo City* 43). As a result of Slinger's popularity, in some circles aposymbiots are considered "cool … counter-culture aspirational" (*Zoo City* 113). In both of these examples, the contact zone produces a dehumanising of the unfamiliar "zoos" as they are fragmented, only their more "trendy" and spectacular elements are utilised as a marketing tool for the mundane, safe-guarded and saccharine world of the urban populace.

There is, however, a more horrifying aspect to this commodification of the animalled: the underground *muti* trade. Beukes depicts the horrific and unethical element of this confrontation in the form of a sewer-dwelling clique of homeless car guards who have sold the leg of a porcupine, one of their animal partners, for "good money" (*Zoo City* 182). Before this point in the novel, Beukes has contextualised the compelling bond between the zoos and their animals in the testimony of a prisoner who was separated from his cobra, saying, "the pain is unbearable, you scream, you vomit and you say anything" (*Zoo City* 82). Zinzi describes the porcupine's leg as a "stump [that] has healed badly, the tissue grey, the spiky hairs matted with dried blood and pus" (*Zoo City* 182). This, however, only serves as a precursor for the violent climax of the novel when Zinzi discovers that Heron had planned on sacrificing the twins, in the belief that it would relieve him of his giant, white crocodile. As such, the commercial commodification of animals for muti is exaggerated and explicit in this context, giving us

insight into Zinzi's comment that "Perhaps it's appropriate that Egoli, place of gold, should be self-cannibalising" (*Zoo City* 255), as the poor sell each other out in pursuit of financial stability. Furthermore, the eventual demise of the twins is the epitome of consumer commodification – Heron exploited their talents for his own financial gain and was willing to dispose of them when they were no longer of use.

Odysseus Huron, Zoo City's famous music producer, is called to radically redefine his sense of self when he too is coupled with an animal dependent, "a moerse white crocodile" (*Zoo City* 305). Odi Huron's crocodile familiar becomes an embodied anchor, lodging Huron into his gated enclave in which he "has been hiding for almost a decade" (*Zoo City* 138). As though a mutation of his old form, Huron cannot travel independently without exposing his crocodile which, as a result, lurks in a secret underwater lair. It is this paranoid self-consciousness that Beukes terms the "psychic trauma associated with … shadow-self absorption" (*Zoo City* 157). In other words, Huron's self-deluding refusal to acknowledge and accept the fluidity between his status as "The Once and Future King" (*Zoo City* 138) and a marginalised self.

Conclusion

Through her use of generic blurring and cognitive estrangement, Beukes's work attempts to navigate the complexities of contemporary post-apartheid South Africa city living. Beukes envisions versions of Cape Town and Johannesburg that are, on the one hand recognisable as their contemporary settings, but defamiliarised enough to allow the reader a certain distance from the events based in reality. Moreover, the narratives eschew easy temporal classification and weave together notions of past, present and future South Africa. In particular, speculative and science fiction have an important role to play in imagining the cities of the future, because of their capacity to blur boundaries stylistically and thematically.

In sketching these speculative dystopian visions of familiar cities, Beukes utilises both new technology and new social orders, displaying an interconnectedness between human innovation and its ability to structure and legitimise oppression and inequality. In doing so, she hopes to combat the sense of issue fatigue perceived in the South African republic. As such, the texts explicitly comment on the consumer's desire for spectacle, even while providing a dizzying saturation of narrative spectacle for her reader's consumption.

Moreover, the two novels also suggest an evolution in Beukes's writing and her dystopian outlook on the South African city. While *Moxyland* ends with the singular protagonist setting out on his own anarchist agenda, *Zoo City* ends with Zinzi leaving the city and setting out to find Benoit's family. While Toby has no real form of escape from the system, Zinzi's departure reads more as a suggestion that the way out of a fully commodified and spectacularised world is through the eruption of ecological catastrophe and an enforced sense of one's own physical precarity. Thus, *Zoo City*, even with its focus on bodily commodification displaces its dystopic concerns through a focus on found community, whether through human to human connections, or human to the natural world connections.

These questions of commodification correlate with the critical dystopian view of capitalism as legislated oppression. As Beukes demonstrates in her novels, neoliberal consumerism commodifies art, technology and even magic – and serves to further marginalise and exclude the majority of South Africans. Even in calling her own work "bleak as fuck", Beukes is still pushing for her readers to consider alternative futures. Her novels are, thus, her own form of resistance against future oppressive structures. Furthermore, Beukes's work suggests the possibility of change through the multitude of borders that she dissolves – whether it be generic, temporal-spatial or notions of what constitutes "humanness".

Chapter 3: Speculative Selves in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* and Rachel Zadok's *Sister-Sister*

"What was real yesterday is today's dream, and it works backwards too" (*Sister-Sister)*

"She's bad, Cape Town. She'll take you in, in the beginning, but be careful. She'll destroy you if you're not watching" (*Thirteen Cents*)

Introduction: Rainbow Dreams Deferred

What does it mean to be "born-free"? A term frequently used to describe those born after the formal end of apartheid, "born-free" suggests that, legislatively and ideologically, today's youth are temporally and socially removed from the systemic oppression suffered by previous generations. As Malaika wa Azania notes in *Memoirs of a Born-Free* those born in 1994 "Many would have us believe that what transpired in 1994 was a revolution, but this is far from the truth" (2014, 3). The nation-building rhetoric of born-frees and rainbow nationalism, implies not only an attempt at a clean break from the past, but also presents a peculiar inter-generational tension posed by the confluence of ideologies which make navigating adulthood a particular challenge for today's children.

How then, are today's youth navigating the process of self-identification when confronted with contradictory views of both national history and a sense of the self? The difficulty of adolescents transitioning to a state of "adulthood" and struggling to understand the beliefs and actions of an older generation is hardly a contemporary experience, but there is a uniqueness and specificity to be explored in terms of how the challenges of childhood are rendered in this moment. In terms of generational memory, this is the uneasy transition of children who did not

experience apartheid first-hand, but have inherited their parents' suffering and traumas. For the born-free generation, the timing of their birth is associated with this newness and a sense of change in South Africa, but as Wa Azania foregrounds in her memoir, this is "a problematic definition architected by those who want to keep our people blinded about the real faces of the effects of colonialism and apartheid" (2014, 3).

These concerns are central to the work of K. Sello Duiker, who motivates his novels by saying: "I was writing for people between 23 and 30 years of age – people in my age group, because our generation is confronted with different changes happening around us, and I wanted to communicate something of the pressures and contradictions around us" (qtd. in Mzamane 2005, 28–29). Moreover, the challenges and inequalities that young South Africans face, cannot only be understood in terms of economic disadvantage or race, but requires an intersectional positioning that underscores the complicated relationships that entangle notions of race, gender, age, class, mental health and sexuality. In the texts that form the basis of this chapter, the inequalities experienced by the protagonists require a nuanced reading that looks at the relationships between these notions, and how their intersection leads not only to complex forms of identity but also multivalent forms of discrimination.

This chapter explores the role of post-apartheid city spaces and the difficulties of childhood self-identification in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (1999) and Rachel Zadok's *Sister-Sister* (2013). Both texts make use of child narrators who, dispossessed of a family unit, are forced to eke out an existence on the city streets. The choice of narrator is infused with authorial intention to comment on continued inequality and discrimination in post-apartheid South Africa – something which is clearly seen in the contrast of how these children experience life alone on the streets of Cape Town and Johannesburg. As Duiker suggests: "Street culture says a lot about where we are and homeless people are the lowest common denominator" (qtd. in Lackay 2005, 20). In other words, homeless people become a mirror for society – and much can be

understood about a city from the way in which privilege and poverty intersect. The encounters in which the lives of the privileged intersect with those who are homeless show an unsettling sense of detachment. As Thuli suggests "People don't even like sharing pavements with beggars and street kids" (*Sister-Sister* 183). Azure in particular is aware of how his body is perceived differently by different individuals and the ways they will treat him, leading him to comment that "In everyone I pass I can see a little of myself. I carry a little of everyone I know in me" (*Cents* 102).

In the opening pages of *Sister-Sister* and *Thirteen Cents*, Thuli and Azure offer the reader details that sketch their relationship with the streets of Johannesburg and Cape Town. These descriptions, rooted in the specificity of their real world setting distinguishes the magical realist text from allegory or fantasy. The narratives hum an undertone of separation: the coexistence of rural and urban; rich and poor; logical contradictions which parallel each other — a dystopia on one beam, a utopia on the other. The city stands tall, bustling and flourishing on a social, economic and geographical level, while there is a concurrent underworld of systemic poverty, dilapidation, child abuse, stagnated existence. How then does the speculated freedom of rainbow nationalism and born-frees read against such a stark reality?

I begin this chapter by sketching details about the child protagonists and their upbringing, before beginning my conceptualisation of the bildungsroman, and then unpack the narrative modes which the texts utilise. Finally, by engaging with magical realism, animist materialism and apocalyptic rhetoric, this chapter extends my exploration of speculative fiction by considering how these narrative modes facilitate texts that ask readers to place equivalent value to experiences which, on the one hand, seem distinctly real or, on the other hand, appear to occur magically.

Zadok and Duiker: Voicing the marginal

Thirteen Cents tells the story of Azure, a thirteen-year-old boy who fends for himself on the streets of Cape Town. Prior to the events of the novel, Azure's parents are killed, leading Azure to travel from Mshenguville to Cape Town. Due to his age, Azure realises that he is particularly vulnerable and must, therefore, "understand what it means to be a grown-up if [he is] going to survive" (*Cents* 66). Azure's development throughout the novel places him in light of "attaining" adulthood – a notion which he derides while also seeing its necessity in his survival. This tension between child and adult echoes throughout the novel, revealing unsettling power dynamics as Azure continuously finds himself being victimised. Throughout the novel, Azure demonstrates a fluidity of identity in terms of age, race, gender and sexual orientation. His fluidity, an identity still in formation, represents a clash between the codes of social prescriptors and Azure's own inherent idea of who he could be. After Azure offends Gerald, a local gang leader, Gerald attempts to systematically break down Azure's sense of self history. Azure recounts his abuses in horrific details, but Duiker offers a space of liminality in the sections of the novel that embrace the fantastical. As Azure ascends Table Mountain to escape Cape Town, the events that transpire eschew easy categorisation. The mountain comes alive, Azure meets both historical and mythical figures, ranging from Sarah Baartman to the Mantis god of the San people and even the T-Rex from Stephen Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1995). Eventually Azure witnesses, or perhaps causes, Cape Town to be engulfed in flame before being submerged in the ocean – destruction seemingly becoming the only way to cleanse the city.

As described by Duiker, his work "explores a lot of social geography, from the obscenely rich to the poorest parts of Cape Town," and thus "goes beneath the skin of Cape Town's postcard

beauty[10], exploring what it means to be a young South African today" (qtd. in Mzamane 2005, 29). While *Thirteen Cents* might not commonly be read within the millieu of speculative fiction, the use of magical-seeming elements and the climactic apocalyptic visions position the text as a useful lens through which to discuss the real-life dystopian elements present in how a child's life on the street can be shaped by the city and the other people who inhabit it. In his introduction to *Thirteen Cents,* Shaun Viljoen describes Duiker's work as "marked by the presence of the supernatural, the surreal, the mythical, which layer and disrupt the real and comment on it. Narrative modes … shift continuously between realist, hyperrealist, and surrealist, shunting the protagonist between different realms of consciousness and perception" (1999, vi). As this description suggests, Duiker's novel displays a complex interplay between modes or realms of perception, which at times present Azure's experiences through starkly, distressingly real descriptions, while at other times realism is absconded, distorting notions of the real for both the proagonist and the reader. These shifts in narrative mode help to characterise Azure's inner-conflict and disillusionment with Cape Town, showing how unwelcoming the Mother City is for the homeless and vulnerable. The shifts in marrative mode further complicate readings of the novel, making it difficult to definitively identify a singular notion of genre or understanding.

Sister-Sister follows adolescent twins Sindisiwe and Thulisile as they navigate a world heavily shaped by firmly-held beliefs and superstitions. The sisters have faced discrimination due to the stigmatisation of having shared a womb. Shortly after the twins are born, their grandmother attempts to suffocate an infant Sindi with a clump of soil, believing that the birth of twins "brought bad luck to [their] village" and that Sindi must be "a soulless thing", ultimately

[10] As noted in the introduction to this thesis, Cape Town is frequently positioned as a city known for its natural beauty; however, as Gabeba Baderoon makes clear in *Regarding Muslims* (2014), the evocations of colonial-era paintings were among the first works to position Cape Town's beauty in a manner which belies the history of slavery.

leading the girls' mother to flee to Soweto to raise her daughters (*Sister-Sister* 131). When Sizane's brother, Jabu, brings news that their mother is dying, the girls join them on a trip to Kwazulu-Natal. Here, after meeting their grandmother, Sindi is disturbed to learn the reason why Sizane relocated. Despite Sizane relocating her daughters, the girls find that their status as twins isolates them from their peers in Soweto. Sindi has a severe stutter, perhaps as the result of trauma sustained from her grandmother's attempted suffocation, and is, thus, somewhat reliant on her sister to navigate social situations. Initially Sindi and Thuli's bond allows them to navigate the world as an inseparable unit, as seen in the refrain of "sister-sister, sister-twin, twin-sister". With her sister as a proxy to the world, however, Sindi struggles to establish her individual identity and comes to envy Thuli for the ease with which she seems to navigate life.

The sections of the novel alternate between the narrative perspectives of Sindi and Thuli, jumping between two distinct time periods and eschewing chronology. The novel starts in the later timeline, with Thuli narrating Sindi's experiences living on the streets of Johannesburg. In these sections of the novel, Thuli's narrative perspective is purposefully ambiguous as she seems to be present, watching over Sindi, and, yet, there are clues that something is amiss. Thuli comments that "With every step Sindi takes, another piece of me disappears until she is so far away I hardly remember her," (*Sister-Sister* 27) and refers to herself as Sindi's "disobedient shadow" (*Sister-Sister* 40). Through the sections of the story narrated by Sindi, the reader learns about the events which drove the two sisters apart. The ambiguity of narrative perspective requires the reader to forestall interpreting the events of the novel. It is only towards the end of the novel that the reader discovers that Thuli has died (possibly by Sindi's hand), and that Thuli's spirit is following her sister as Sindi walks the streets of Johannesburg alone. Our introduction to Sindi in the opening pages, thus, occurs after the climactic events of the novel.

As much of the early parts of the novel are narrated by Thuli, the reader initially has very little access to Sindi's inner workings. This narrative perspective, in combination with Sindi's heavy stutter, therefore delays the reveal of certain traumatic events. Similarly, when Thuli is raped by their uncle, our first details come from Sindi's perspective and her misunderstanding of the assault on her sister. The structure of the novel, thus, splinters chronology and understanding in a manner which appears to replicate the psychological effect of trauma. Zadok's structural choices, therefore, keeps the reader at arm's length, denying them context and only allows for a subjective account of events.

Moreover, this structure is also conducive to Zadok's thematic interest in twins, doubling and mirror images. Essentially, the novel contains two stories which form part of a whole. The parts narrated by Sindi show how her early life is dominated by her status as twin and her concerns about whether or not she has a soul, while Thuli's story reveals details about how the people in her community have responded to the AIDS crisis. These two stories, however, are not given equal narrative weight. As the sections narrated by Thuli tend to focus on Sindi's later life on the streets, Thuli's own story is mostly told through occasional interjections and brief glimpses of confusing memories. Structurally and thematically, Thuli's story becomes one of gaps, absences and silence – thereby mirroring the lack of conversation around sexual education and HIV/AIDS. Only in the final section of the novel does Thuli start piecing together the necessary pieces of memories that allow the reader to infer what has happened to her. This particular structure forces the reader to delay their interpretive processes until the very end of the novel. As the same events, experiences and information are re-visited multiple times from different perspectives, the reader is continuously forced to reinterpret what they have previously read. As Thuli says: "Everything's a matter of which way you're looking, and which day you're looking from … What was real yesterday is today's dream, and it works backwards too" (*Sister-*

Sister 38). Thus, Zadok's narrative strategies push the novel toward speculative reconsideration of how we structure stories, memories and a sense of historical contingency.

Writing from the narrative perspective of an adolescent child negotiating the threshold of adulthood, Zadok and Duiker's texts are resonant with the narrative form of the *bildungsroman*. The form typically involves close attention to the psychological and spiritual growth or maturation of the protagonist; something which is commonly "attained" through multiple failures or disappointments and difficult negotiations between self and society. In her analysis of *Thirteen Cents,* Kim argues that "Children, like the homeless and migrants, are often reduced to stereotype, stripped of identity and independence" (Kim 2010, 69). The silencing of children's voices, however, leads to a removal of agency as they navigate a prescribed path to adulthood. As a result, the *bildungsroman* has often been seen as "a literary form featuring youth protagonists, [that] calls for a move away from fluidity and openness as it maps the development of the becoming subject to his/her state of 'being'" (Kim 2010, 68). A state of "being", then, implies a point at which a child's developing self-identity is "fixed". A *tabula rasa* fully carved out. This implies that, at a certain point, the fluidity of adolescence will settle into a defined sense of adulthood. The notion of what "adulthood" constitutes, however, is typically culturally and socially sanctioned – and in many cases, expected, reinforced and normalised through physical and discursive violence. Maria Karafilis suggests that the common interest in the *bildungsroman* is rooted "in how texts negotiate the development/education of their protagonists and how these protagonists negotiate themselves in a larger social context" (1998, 63). The larger social context which informs this development of the protagonists is, therefore, something which has already been sculpted by the beliefs and actions of previous generations. Thus, a developing child may find themselves confronting inter-generational value systems that their elders have already accepted. By virtue of age, however, children are seldom granted a sense of agency that would allow for a questioning of parental beliefs. Becoming an

adult in the eyes of a parent, guardian, or other adult, is, thus, more about accepting and internalising their values, then it is about a child's own wishes, experiences or feelings. In *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, literary historian Franco Moretti suggests that the narrative form of the *bildungsroman* can read as a literalisation of "the conflict between the ideal of self-determination and the equally imperious demands of socialization" (1987, 15). Thus, such novels foreground the tension between self-identification and a societal determination. Read more broadly, *bildungsromans* also juxtapose different conceptions and forms of understanding emerging notions of nationhood.

In the novels discussed in this chapter, the allegorical capacity of the *bildungsroman* also allows for an extension of the texts beyond the narrative focus on the child to include commentary on the sense of "nationhood" post-apartheid, giving weight to the authors' literary representations of Cape Town and Johannesburg as dystopic. Structurally, a *bildungsroman* sees the individual either subscribing to the dominant belief system of the society or an alternation that signals some form of isolation. While a *bildungsroman* typically ends with the protagonist choosing whether or not to subscribe to social conventions, Zadok and Duiker's young protagonists approach their sense of crisis through eschatological rhetoric, giving way to apocalyptic renderings of city space. In understanding the relationship between eschatological rhetoric and processes of self-identification in the novels, it is helpful to frame the narrative accounts of apocalyptic events through the narrative strategy of magical realism, a conceptualisation of which follows in the next section of this chapter.

In my reading of *Thirteen Cents* and *Sister-Sister*, an understanding of magical realism offers a means of interpreting how Azure, Sindi and Thuli's narratives are shaped by the influences around them. Magical realism as a narrative strategy enables an author to render structurally and thematically the types of categories which inform their protagonists' sense of self. As such, magical realist strategies question assumed attitudes about our perceptions of reality and

the world-ordering structures which facilitate how we interpret our experiences, thus pushing the text towards a speculative perspective which disrupts the expectations of the *bildungsroman*.

For the purposes of this study, I find it helpful to follow Grzęda's positioning of magical realism as "a narrative strategy, rather than a genre or a literary trend" as this allows for a reading of magical realism which "can be embraced by authors sporadically and with differing degrees of emphasis" (Grzęda 2013, 159). This also accounts for an awareness of how the author's narrative choices and influences shape the text. Duiker, for instance, is slow to reveal the elements of magical realism at work in *Thirteen Cents.* Although there are several small moments early in the text that hint at Azure's connection with something other worldly, Duiker's engagement with magical realism is only heavily emphasised towards the end of the novel when Azure ascends Table Mountain and leaves the city. Thematically and structurally, this allows Duiker to separate the natural and urban spaces of Cape Town, while also giving insight into how Azure frames his identity while caught between conflicting codes. *Sister-Sister*, on the other hand, embraces magical realism as a narrative strategy to such a degree that the text requires patient reading.

The use of magical realism is also effective in disrupting received notions of identity, space and time. For the narrators of these novels, elements of the supernatural draws attention to how their sense of self is shaped by discourse of those around them – particularly when confronted with contradictory interpretations of their bodies. Magical realism, thus, offers a way of narrativising the experience of feeling othered from a self caught between incompatible ontologies or ways of being. Derek Barker suggests that "The narrative strategy of magical realism is most apt when the subject matter treats the struggle to re-shape an appalling present infused with contradictory ontologies and burdened by the continued effects of a traumatic past" (2008, 2). In such cases, disparate ontologies co-exist in spaces where there is "a

particularly wide gap or incompatibility between ways of being" (Barker 2008, 12). Thus, I read magical realism in these two novels as a narrative strategy which allows the reader access to how the narrators find their sense of identity split between the prescriptors of their body and their inherent sense of who they could be. As such, the narratives show a concern with how South African youth experience adolescence in a country still heavily marked by the social and economic effects of apartheid. In considering how Azure, Sindi and Thuli confront the factors which marginalise and disempower them, I draw the distinction Warnes makes between a faith-based and an irreverent impulse to understand the influences and motivations behind Zadok and Duiker's writing. This approach allows for a nuanced reading of the texts that considers authorial intention, the context of setting, and the role that the narrators play in conceptualising their sense of self.

Magical realism

In "Naturalizing the Supernatural" (2005), Warnes succinctly outlines magical realism as having three qualities: "the magical realist text must display coherently developed codes of the natural and supernatural, the antinomy between these codes must be resolved, and a measure of authorial reticence must be in place in order to ensure that the co-existence and legitimacy of both codes is not threatened" (6). Thus, a magical realist text can be understood as one which "treats the supernatural as if it were a perfectly acceptable and understandable aspect of everyday life," without privileging either the magic or the real (Warnes 2005, 2–3).

Magical realism, as a literary means of suggesting plurality, is also heavily associated with postcolonialism[11]. As Faris suggests: "Magical realism radically modifies and replenishes the dominant mode of realism in the West, challenging its basis of representation from within. That

[11] It's important to note that magical realism extends from a variety of different cultural viewpoints. Often this origin is traced to the Latin American boom of magical realist texts from the 1960s and 70s. As noted above, the reasons for associating magical realism with postcolonial countries typically stems from a discordance with Western realism. For more on the Latin American tradition, see (Aldea 2011). For a broader history of magical realism in Africa, see Brenda Cooper's *Magical Realism in West African Fiction* (1998).

destabilization of a dominant form means that it has served as a particularly effective decolonizing agent" (2004, 1). Brenda Cooper takes a similar position, noting that "magical realism arises out of particular societies – postcolonial, unevenly developed places where old and new, modern and ancient, the scientific and the magical views of the world co-exist" (Cooper 1998, 216). The literary and social value of magical realism lies in its tendency to "shun easy solutions, and in doing so, it counteract the amnesia so often inculcated in transitional South Africa in the name of forgiveness and reconciliation," putting the reader in a position where they need to "confront their received assumptions about the nature of reality" (Grzęda 2013, 170).

One of the first prominent questions that arises in magical realism scholarship is whether or not the term should be read as a genre unto itself. Christopher Warnes poses several useful questions, asking:

> Is magical realism simply a mode of narration that may be sporadically engaged by an author; is it a literary movement with a specific agenda and defined geographical and cultural boundaries; or is it a genre of fiction that can be compared across continents and languages? (Warnes 2009, 1)

As Warnes suggests with these questions, magical realism strains the boundaries between what one may consider a genre, a literary movement or a mode of narration. Much of this critical uncertainty revolves around the assumed signifiers of magical realism and the inherent contradictions in its application. The term itself is appropriately an oxymoron "given that it designates a narrative strategy that stretches or ruptures altogether the boundaries of reality," probing questions of what is natural versus what is supernatural, what is inherent and what is culturally proscribed (Warnes 2009, vi). The contradiction that the term "magical realism" represents allows for a certain opacity that resists easy categorisation. The explanatory value, thus, lies in its contradiction and suggests a suitable basic tenet for a magical realist text: a

"capacity to resolve the tension between two discursive systems usually thought as mutually exclusive" (Warnes 2009, 2).

Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris's volume *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (1995) was the first major English-language text to treat magical realism as an international literary phenomenon. Building on this seminal work, Faris's *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative* (2004) conceptualises a useful list of generic features in magical realism. In this chapter, my understanding of magical realism is further supplemented by Faris' five primary characteristics for a magical realist text:

> First, the text contains an "irreducible element" of magic; second, the descriptions in magical realism detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world; third, the reader may experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events; fourth, the narrative merges different realms; and, finally, magical realism disturbs received ideas about time, space, and identity. (2004, 9).

These first two characteristics provide the contradiction inherent in the name "magical realism". On the one hand, the narrative will strongly evoke a sense of the phenomenal world. Through descriptive and sensory detail, the narrative steers the reader to accept the world as similar to the one which they inhabit. On the other hand, the text narrative will detail events and experiences that act like "a grain of sand in the oyster of realism" (Faris 2004, 8–9). The presence of such events provides the reader with contradictory means of understanding the events of the novel. The idea of "magic" is that which is considered to exist beyond notions of the "real", thereby "flout[ing] philosophical conventions of non-contradiction" (Warnes 2009, 2). Of course, the term "magic" is fraught with its own implications, etymologies and presuppositions, leading to many critics establishing their own discourse to define this capacious magical aspect. Warnes, for instance, finds himself drawn to using the term "supernatural", although this could arguably be said to impose its own distinction between what is "natural" and what occurs beyond this.

In broadening my understanding of how magical realism has been interpreted in African literary studies, I find it useful to draw on Harry Garuba's conceptualisation of animist materialism. In "Explorations in Animist Materialism: Notes reading/writing African literature, culture and society" (2003), Harry Garuba argues for an understanding of assimilating modern forms into traditional practices as "a manifestation of an animist unconscious, which operates through a process that involves … a continual re-enchantment of the world" (2003, 265). In contrast to monotheistic religions, animism allows for objects to be endowed "with a spiritual life both simultaneous and coterminous with their natural properties" (2003, 267). As such, animism allows multiple values to co-exist within physical objects, meaning that signification moves beyond its religious inception. Animist thought, therefore, values speculation beyond the phenomenal interpretation, becoming a continually growing form of social signification. As animist thought becomes "structurally implanted", it moves beyond being just an epiphenomenon, becoming "a producer of effects" and "a driving force in the formation of collective subjectivity" (2003, 269).

This perspective is crucial to understanding theoretical explications of magical realism within collectivist cultures. As Garuba notes, however, what his work describes as animist materialist or the animist unconscious, is often conflated with magical realism to describe a narrative text framed by this approach to reality. For Garuba, though, "magical realism is too narrow a concept to describe the multiplicity of representational practices that animism authorizes" (2003, 272). For the purposes of this thesis, I read between the theoretical positioning of magical realism and animist materialism, and the ways in which these relate to the speculative mode of writing. Specifically, I refer to animist realism to understand the "cultural practice of according a physical, often animate material aspect to what others may consider an abstract idea" (2003, 274), while positioning magical realism as the more deliberate narrative strategy considered by the author. This nuanced position is also particularly useful for distinguishing

between Duiker and Zadok's narratives – with Duiker frequently presenting experiences through a complicated lens that speaks more to the animist unconscious, while Zadok has more intentionally shaped her text through an understanding supported by magical realism.

Beyond this perhaps conflicting terminology, it is pertinent to draw attention to the frequency with which academic attempts at defining magical realism appear to rest on the understanding that a magical realist strategy deliberately utilises conflicting codes in the text. In "Magical Realism as Postcolonial Discourse" (1995), Stephen Slemon elucidates why magical realism has been, and continues to be, associated with postcolonial literatures. In his reading, Slemon speaks to magical realist using the language of narrative to foreground a conflict between oppositional systems. That type of "sustained opposition" between "two opposing discursive systems … forestalls the possibility of interpretive closure through any act of naturalizing the text to an established system of representation" (Slemon 1995, 409–10). Such a conceptualisation, of course, still speaks to Garuba's assertion of animist materialism's capacity to hold contrasting views simultaneously.

In allowing this type of "sustained opposition", a magical realist narrative strategy works to subvert modernist sensibilities and, therefore, allows the reader to question and "observe what modernity has revealed" (Aljohani 2016, 75). Moreover, the postcolonial context seems inextricable from the understanding of how magical realism "becomes the language for self-identification paradoxically because it is as alienating to the postcolonial subject as the post colony is" (Aljohani 2016, 76). Thus, magical realism shows a concern with decolonization through its ability to reveal the internal effects of ideologies and offer a critique of how language is used to establish, or remove, the tools for self-identification.

Moreover, in post-apartheid South Africa, magical realism offers a means of confronting the false perceptions that have shaped ideologies about the differences in human bodies since the

advent of colonialism in Africa. Similarly, the very premise of apartheid was legislated through perceptions and distinctions between human bodies, race, and gender. As suggested by Slemon's assertion that the language of magical realism places opposing discursive systems into opposition, magical realism in post-apartheid South Africa can be considered as a narrative means of addressing the reworking of identity taking place amongst competing ideologies[12]. For the born-free generation of South Africans, there is a conflict between the supposed constitutionalised equality and the racial legacies of apartheid which continue to permeate society. In *Thirteen Cents* and *Sister-Sister* these contradictions are manifested in the class dynamics of the city spaces of Cape Town and Johannesburg. For these young protagonists, then, the language associated with magical realism helps place competing ideologies alongside each other. Thus, in reworking notions of memory, history, and narrative, magical realism shows an interest in questioning the preconceptions which shape postcolonial identity – especially for those who have been marginalised by the hegemonic values and discourse of colonialism.

In "Magical Realism: A Narrative of Celebration or Disillusionment? South African Literature in the Transition Period" (2013), Paulina Grzęda argues that magical realism's ability to transgress boundaries made the narrative strategy especially suitable for re-negotiating our understanding of historical accounts and the ways in which apartheid allocated and imposed categories of identity. Magical realism, therefore, "proves specifically well-attuned to thematise the collision of any incompatible categories, be it the rational and the magical, the core and the periphery, the pre- and the post-capitalist, fact and fiction, as well as the past and the present" (Grzęda 2013, 158). Grzęda argues that:

[12] For a deeper discussion of African ontologies and cosmologies, as well as how these function in identity construction beyond Western belief systems, see Kathryn Yusoff's *A Billion Black Anthropocenes* (2018), Christopher Warnes's *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel* (2009), and Christopher Okonkwo's "A Critical divination" (2004).

> magical realism straddles two narrative traditions, thus eroding generic boundaries, as well as in its perceptive demonstration of the inconclusive nature of truth, magical realism facilitates the deconstruction of any received discourses, including the oppressive ones, and in doing so, could help enable the restoration of the richness of South African inner life. (Grzęda 166).

As magical realism "erodes" the boundaries of genre and questions the ways in which discourse can be deconstructed, it poses questions about how language has been used in identity construction. The ability of magical realism to allow multiple interpretations, thus, places the reader in a position where the logic of cause and effect is destabilised. As Faris frames it: "a magical event highlights the extraordinary nature of reality. In the course of highlighting such issues, irreducible magic frequently disrupts the ordinary logic of cause and effect" (2004, 10). Thus, by calling into question "reality", magical realism allows the reader to gain access to an alternative subjectivity or way of perceiving.

Moreover, magical realism offers a means to understand how individuals are able to shape their sense of self in spite of contradictory received assumptions. As Warnes argues, the opacity with which magical realism has been treated as a global narrative term, means that it "is so often automatically seen to deconstruct notions of subjectivity, history, nationhood, reality, without any sense of how it can also construct these notions; a general inability to relate magical realism to its specific cultural contexts" (2009, 7). As critical work on magical realism often operates within a global framework, there is a need to contextualize magical realist texts within the specific cultural context that informs the author or reader's frame of reference.

To understand the link between belief and action, I draw on the Warnes' distinction between irreverent and discursive magical realism strategies. Warnes's work is particularly useful for understanding the ways in which magical realist texts confront the notion of causality. In *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence* (2009), Warnes suggests that the way in which the text interacts between "magical" and "real" elements can be

understood when framed by two particular rhetorical impulses: faith or irreverence. Warnes argues that magical realist texts will, by necessity, need to confront the causality inherent in the novel form. Warnes traces the influences of Victorian intellectualism noting that anthropologists like Edward Tylor worked to develop "an approach that was predominantly psychological, and which tended towards a unifying theory of culture that did not have to accommodate difficult questions about difference" (2009, 8-9). During this time, science, religion and magic were all understood as "rational" attempts to order and make sense of the world; a means of explaining causality. The observation of cause and effect, thus, became imperative in an attempt to prove the rationality of science. This, suggests Warnes, led to a view of "logical mentality", which "is characterised by a law of causality that seeks to identify and eliminate contradictions, and is conceptual, empirical and scientifically rational in nature" (2009, 9). Due to is associations with the early modern period and colonialism, however, causal logic tends to be viewed with skepticism by postcolonial writers. In general, this speaks to a particular tension that magical realism straddles: using realism in order to subvert its expectations means that magical realism will undoubtedly find itself tied to the terms of causality (Warnes 11). Thus, even though narrative works to question the contingency of "the real", the novel form itself requires an author to account for the interpretative practices and expectations of the casual paradigm for readers.

In faith-based magical realism, the reader is required to suspend their rational, empirically-derived judgements or assumptions in order to accept an alternative structure, mechanism or practice that alters how they perceive their reality (Warnes, 2005, 12). As suggested by the term "faith", this form of narrative implies that belief plays an important role in accepting that which cannot be empirically-observed (Warnes, 2005, 12). Faith-based magical realism often draws on a supernatural presence or event to enable readers to conceive of an alternative

rendering of reality – one which is typically associated with a belief system or world view which has not been derived from Western beliefs (Warnes, 2005, 14).

While faith-based magical realism requires the reader to suspend their own belief systems in order to gain access to how other world views perceive similar events or experiences, irreverent magical realism typically uses elements of the supernatural as a means to defamiliarise discourse. While faith-based magical realism frequently translates discourse into being, the irreverent impulse tends to treat discourse as discourse. In focusing on the performative aspects of language, irreverent magical realism leverages a critique of Western belief structures and claims of "truth" by demonstrating that such beliefs are culturally and historically contingent. In other words, this magical realism aims to reveal that casual-based notions of truth are more rooted in consensually-derived language – and, thus, are compounded more by discourse than an objective perspective of "the real" (Warnes, 2005, 13). This approach to magical realism is, therefore, more concerned with disrupting ideological assumptions and examining the relationship between discourse and the ways in which it perpetuates privilege and oppression. In other words, the irreverent approach examines how discourse is able to assume the status of "truth".

The distinction between these approaches is not, however, clear-cut and it is possible for a text to incorporate elements of both. Reading *Thirteen Cents* as irreverent magical realism, I pay close attention to Azure's use of language and his awareness of how others use discourse to marginalize and oppress him, as well as how Azure manages to use language to construct his own understanding of self. In *Sister-Sister* Zadok uses magical realism to explore how discourse translates itself into being, making the lens of faith-based magical realist strategies a useful approach for understanding how myth, legend and superstition can take on the status of "the real".

***Thirteen Cents*: The myth of adulthood**

> My name is Azure. *Ah-zoo-ray*. That's how you said it. My mother gave me that name. It's the only thing I have left from her (*Cents* 1)

Before analysing the speculative elements of the novel, it is crucial to understand how the narrator, Azure, has worked to establish his own sense of identity – and the contradictory ideologies which unsettle his ability to self-identify. In the opening line to K. Sello Duiker's debut novel, *Thirteen Cents*, Azure is given the chance to introduce himself and highlight the value of his name – the only connection he still has to his mother. Written in first-person narration from Azure's perspective, Duiker's narrative gives the reader direct access to Azure's thoughts, allowing for an understanding of how he perceives himself and those around him. Throughout the novel, Azure strives towards adulthood. Having come back from school to find his parents "in a pool of blood" (*Cents* 6), Azure is prematurely pushed into economic and emotional self-reliance, acknowledging that "no one was going to take care of [him]" (*Cents* 6). In the opening pages of the novel, Azure describes his living circumstances:

> I live alone. The streets of Sea Point are my home. But I'm almost a man, I'm nearly thirteen years old. That means I know where to find food that hasn't seen too many ants and flies in Camps Bay or Clifton. That is if there aren't any policemen patrolling the streets. They don't like us much. Or if I fancy some fruit then I go to the station where the coloured fruit-sellers work. I don't like them much because they are always yelling at us to move away. Most of them throw away fruit instead of giving it to us. (*Cents* 5).

Azure makes the streets of Sea Point his home, and sleeps in a sheltered spot under the public swimming pools "because it's the safest place to be at night" (*Cents* 5). He shares this spot with a nine-year-old boy named Bafana who ran away from his home in Langa. Unlike Azure, though, Bafana "has a home to go back to in Langa but he chooses to roam the streets" (*Cents* 2). Despite occasionally taking on a more responsible, adult role in his relationship with Bafana, Azure leaves Bafana to his own exploits, only casually objecting to Bafana sniffing glue, commenting that "If he wants to do grown-up things then I must leave him" (*Cents* 12).

In his self-description, Azure positions himself at the brink of adulthood. Tellingly though, he states that he is "*almost* a man" as he's "*nearly* thirteen years old". From the opening of the novel, Azure makes a connection between the age of thirteen and "achieving" adulthood. Despite his age being a focal point of the novel, however, we later learn that Azure is unable to recall the date of his own birthday. For Azure, being an adult means self-sufficiency. Despite being able to survive on his own, Azure seems aware that he will only be treated as an adult if he outwardly presents as such. He tells the reader:

> That's how it works here. You must always act like a grown-up. You must speak like them. That means when you speak to a grown-up in town you must look at them in the eyes and use a loud voice because if you speak softly they will swear at you. You must also be clean because grown-ups are always clean. (*Cents* 3).

In order to not be outwardly dismissed by the adults he encounters, Azure realises that he needs to present himself as such. His body, his actions and his speech are all elements which function in this performance, leading Azure to assert that "Grown-ups are the same everywhere. They always want to control you" (*Cents* 21). Here, Azure's terming of "grown-ups" is shown to extend to the exploitative adult figures he encounters. This is also framed in gendered terms, with Azure's grappling to emulate his perceptions of masculinity. At one point he says "I hate sadness because it means tears are not far off. And I can't have that. Men don't cry," (*Cents* 23) before reasoning that he needs to repress his feelings because "Grown-ups aren't messy. They are always neat. They are neat because they don't cry" (*Cents* 24).

This demonstrates an acute awareness on Azure's part for what adults expect from him. It even translates into his diction, as he notes that the words "please" and "thank you" are "like magic" when speaking to adults and more likely to translate into him receiving money (*Cents* 3). This is particularly striking when Azure describes selling his body to wealthy, white men, saying "I'm forced to smile. That's what they expect. Grown-ups, I know their games" (*Cents* 8). Already, Azure establishes a relationship between how he presents himself to others and how

this will mould their perceptions and actions towards him. This leads him to realise that "There's nothing for *mahala* with grown-ups. You always have to do something in return" (*Cents* 6). For Azure, the relationships that he forms in Cape Town are based around this notion of transaction. Azure, however, is aware of their "games" and the fact that "grown-ups want control" (*Cents* 21). His age is, thus, one of the ways in which adults exert power and influence over him – a power that they continue to hold over him as long as he is considered a child. As Azure states "adults tell you nothing" (140)

Queering Cape Town

Although Azure sometimes attempts to earn money by parking cars, the older boys in the area usually chase him away, leaving Azure to resort to sex work in order to survive. Although he engages in sex work in order to survive, Azure's sexual identity is, however, shown to still be fluid and in the process of forming. At several intervals in the novel, Azure expresses possible heterosexual urges, saying things like, "I have to concentrate hard to become excited. I think of Toni Braxton and Mary J Blige. They usually do the trick for me" (*Cents* 14), but towards the end of the novel, Azure himself confesses to being unsure if he is actually attracted to women.

The fluidity of his sexuality means that there is a blurring of 'opposites' in this regard. In *Masculinities in African Literary and Cultural Texts* (2010), Timothy Johns reads Azure's reliance on sex work through what he terms "the economics of homosexuality" (2010, 250). In his chapter, Johns tackles assertions that "homosex is not black culture" through a study of how colonial imposition and Christian missionary values worked towards establishing discriminary homophobic rhetoric in Africa. In his reading of *Thirteen Cents,* Johns asserts that the novel "depicts how a banal economic rationale can lie behind forms of sexual experience … [and that] market forces can have more to do with determination of sexual orientation than the free

choice or 'authentic' cultural practice, especially for the most vulnerable" (2010, 252). Azure, thus, falls into a category of person, by virtue of his age, sex and economic status that suits the market of the Sea Point prostitution ring. In other words, the market decides his pursuits. Azure's dependency on wealthy, older, white men is particularly disturbing and demonstrates yet another instance of the black body being commodified for the pleasure or benefit of the economic elite.

The novel, thus, makes visible a type of trade that exists beneath the gaze, a part of the economy no one outwardly acknowledges because it defies moral sensibility and the idyllic picture of Cape Town portrayed by tourist boards and postcards. Over the last two decades, Cape Town has become known, for some, as the gay capital of Africa. In the introduction to *Queering Cape Town* (2017), Zethu Matebeni challenges this perception – pointing out that the apparent freedom for sexual and gendered identities in Cape Town usually exist only in relation to whiteness. As Matebeni remarks, Cape Town can only be viewed as a gay capital for "those who can enjoy all the privileges associated with the category gay" (2017, 1). In other words, despite the speculated freedom afforded by South Africa's constitution, gay culture in Cape Town is very much synonymous with a particular type of body: white and male. For such gay men, then, their experiences of being gay in Cape Town involves "the luxury of not having to negotiate all forms of class, and oppressions associated with gender, sex and racial injustices post/apartheid identification" (Matebeni 2017, 2). Thus, the idea of the Rainbow Nation catering to queer futurities becomes questionable, with identity formation in Cape Town still being predicated upon the same racial restrictions of the apartheid-era.

In *Queer Visibilities: Space, Identity and Interaction in Cape Town* (2009) Andrew Tucker provides a useful term for understanding this complexity: "divergent visibilities". Defined as "a geographical concept that examines how queer groups are able to overcome the heteronormativity of particular urban spaces", Tucker uses the notion of visibility to speak to

the differing experiences of queer bodies in Cape Town, specifically in terms of how "apartheid's racial classifications impacted on different communities in different ways" (2009, 3). Thus, notions of openness to queer bodies in Cape Town are still predicated on other forms of social and regulative power upon which contemporary South Africa has been constructed.

As Matebeni frames it, the bodies that unsettle the white able-bodied (homo)normativity of the city," are those that become "deemed non-normative and not desirable," forcing them to "exist on the margins of the city" (2017, 2). While the overwhelming whiteness of gay culture in Cape Town is associated with the freedoms of the born-free generation, there are far more queer identities whose existence is still considered divergent from this narrative. For gender non-conforming people, black lesbians, trans people, poor gay men of colour and sex workers, their bodies are those who "disappear in the idealised tourist version of the city" (Matebeni 2017, 2). As such, the utopic vision of Cape Town as a gay capital is shown to be very much contingent on race, gender and class. This understanding of queer bodies in Cape Town is, thus, crucial to considering the speculative futures of the city – and also translates into Azure's eventual apocalyptic desires for Cape Town to be destroyed.

In addition to age, sexual orientation and gender identity, Azure's vulnerability is further exacerbated due to the racial ambiguity present in the combination of his black skin and blue eyes. His eyes are a central feature of the novel, and a source of great strife for Azure. Obscuring the racial classifications which defined the apartheid era, Azure's physical appearance is frequently highlighted in the novel as something which makes him a target for abuse – something which Azure is painfully aware of. As Azure comments: "I can never look at myself too long in the mirror as my blue eyes remind me of the confusing messages they send out to people. I wear my blue eyes with fear because fear is deeper than shame" (*Cents* 19). Azure's eye colour marks a deviation from what is deemed normal in terms of his race. The fact that his eyes are blue is, thus, a contribution to the transcendence of racial

classification. As Shaun Viljoen comments, Azure's body is "a provocative unsettling of black and white, the categorical terms of engagement that marked human relations and writing under apartheid" (1999, vi). In regards to this racial binary, Kim states, "Cape Town is a city where power is racially determined, and as a boy with blue eyes and dark skin, Azure fits in nowhere" (Kim 2009, 2). His unusual appearance reflects a lack of categorization, which inspires others to commit acts of violence against him. Azure says of his earlier childhood, "When I was at school children used to beat me up because I had blue eyes. They hated me for it" (*Cents* 5). His physical appearance is so unusual that many people show signs of hatred towards him, as he naturally resists the racial categorization that is so influential in Cape Town. Azure's unusual appearance is also perceived as an act of transgression against these social boundaries, for which he is repeatedly punished.

The contrast between his skin and his eyes is, however, shown to be contingent on the perspective of the individual. While Vincent tells Azure that some people hate him because "he is not black enough," (*Cents* 38) other adults, particularly white adults, find his eyes alluring. Early on, Azure describes one of his sex work clients as being "drawn by my eyes" (*Cents* 8) while another is puzzled and bluntly asks Azure if his eyes are "real" (*Cents* 84). When buying clothes at a second-hand store, the clerk greets Azure by saying "Funky eyes", to which Azure simply responds by "smiling at her whiteness" (*Cents* 99).

Azure's blue eyes also evoke comparisons to Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970). In Morrison's novel, a young, black girl desires blue eyes and their associations with whiteness stemming from racist ideologies that inform which physical features are considered attractive. In Duiker's intertextual engagement with Morrison's work, Azure's blue eyes are shown to be a source of fear for the protagonist. As Azure tells the reader: "I can never look too long in the mirror as my blue eyes remind me of the confusing messages they send out to people. I wear my blue eyes with fear because fear is deeper than shame" (*Cents* 19). The sense of fear that

his eyes evoke is most clearly rendered when Azure offends Gerald, the local leader of the 28s gang. While smoking marijuana, Azure accidentally mistakes Gerald for his friend Sealy. As Gerald is coloured and Sealy is black, Gerald takes offense at being at being associated with blackness – giving an indication of how Gerald's identity is still bound by the racial categories of apartheid, demonstrating the lasting psychological effects of societal constructs.

Although Azure runs off before Gerald is able to restrain him, he soon realises that he cannot hide from someone like Gerald who has eyes throughout the city. Azure, thus, turns to his friend Vincent for advice on how to handle the situation. As Vincent explains to Azure, Gerald "hates black people. You insulted him … He thinks he's white because he's got straight hair and light skin," and asserts that Gerald would "love to have your blue eyes" (*Cents* 34). Gerald's desire to be associated with the values of whiteness, thus, finds opposition in Azure's racial ambiguity. Here, Vincent's role in Azure's life becomes clear as he attempts to find the language to convey to Azure what he needs to do in order to survive Cape Town. Vincent begins by explaining that Azure's appearance leads others to believe that he does not conform to the role expected of him as a black person. Vincent stresses the importance of physical appearance, telling Azure that "if people see you and they don't know you right, the first thing they look at is how you look," before connecting this assertion to the repeated abuse Azure has endured: "That's why people have beat you up all your life. They think you're not black enough" (*Cents* 35). Vincent, thus, reminds Azure that people will judge him by his outward appearance and, therefore, his blue eyes will always stand in contradiction to his black skin. Vincent advises Azure "to be the blackest person … like more black than all of us. You must watch what you wear. Like those shoes. Things like that give you away" (*Cents* 25). Azure's confusion over how to present his body leads to a succinct exchange between Azure and Vincent:

> Azure: Grown-ups are fucked up
> Vincent: No, Cape Town is fucked up. Really.
> Azure: You're right, it's Cape Town, not the people.
> Vincent: And the people. Don't forget about the people. They're also fucked up. (*Cents* 37).

Here, Azure and Vincent question why Cape Town and its social geography exist. Although Azure suggests that "grown-ups are fucked up", Vincent reminds him that it is both the city and those who inhabit that pose such a threat. Although an incredibly broad category, "the people" suggests a greater awareness in the role that individuals have played in shaping the city from initial colonial trading post to apartheid era segregation and beyond. As such, the people who comprise the city of Cape Town have played a part in the city's history of slavery, racial and sexual discrimination.

Vincent's role in Azure's life becomes more clear throughout the novel. Later, Azure clarifies why he trusts and listens to Vincent, saying:

> I think of Vincent as my eyes. He's older than me. He's seen more, done more. I don't think anything scares him anymore. Everything seems to make sense to him. Vincent, he's a grown-up but not like the others. He doesn't bullshit. He just says it like it is […] All the things he tells me, they help me. They help me become like him, a man, a grown-up. (*Cents* 91-2).

As Vincent is older than Azure, Azure comes to rely on the older boy to help him understand how "to become like him, a man, a grown-up". Vincent is also considered important to Azure as he is the only living connection he has to his old life.

Furthermore, Vincent is the only "adult" who attempts to help Azure understand his victimisation. He tells Azure "I used to copy from you in school; now just copy everything I said and you'll be fine" (*Cents* 98). In another encounter, Vincent attempts to help Azure understand the danger that Gerald represents by referring to the movie *Jurassic Park* (1995). As he explains: "T-rex was king of the dinosaurs. He was like a lion. He killed them all. Everything. In this movie, right, they try to control T-rex but they can't. They put him in a cage

but he manages to escape. In the end T-rex eats people, the guys who captured him" (*Cents* 60). Framing Gerald as T-rex helps Azure to understand the threat posed by a predator – even one who might be "caged". In drawing this comparison between Steven Spielberg's carnivorous dinosaur and Azure's abuser, Gerald invokes a particular sci-fi temporality that speaks to the speculative mode – and further draws a contrast between western pop culture and its influence in Africa.

Azure's encounters with people like Vincent further speak to slight potential for an alternative future. In "Transitional encounter: practices of queer futurity in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*" (2016), Andrea Spain makes the argument that queer futurity may be possible through imagining forms of belonging and community. For Azure, such possibilities are hinted at in the few occasions where chance encounters with individuals who do not abuse him, and, in fact, seem to welcome his presence. Despite these few occasions, as Spain notes, "the question of how to secure anything resembling a flourishing life remains unanswered" (2016, 417).

Stripped mythologies and contorted genealogies

When Azure returns to apologise to Gerald, Gerald has his gang members viciously assault Azure. Azure is beaten up so badly that he is taken to Somerset Hospital by Gerald's 'henchmen' to receive stitches and a cast for his fractured ankle. For several days, Azure is held captive in a locked room and then on an exposed rooftop. When he feels cold or hungry, he motivates himself by saying "You're getting stronger. You're getting stronger," and adamantly insists "I must repeat this to myself" (*Cents* 49). As Azure is abused more and more, he imagines that everything bad that happens to him is making him stronger.

Azure deals with his captivity by playing with the light switch. The light becomes a symbol of power for him to grab onto in his otherwise powerless state. He states that "When the light goes off the mirror seems to suck in the light. I'm getting stronger, I tell myself" (*Cents* 46). This

fantasy of power that Azure has, becomes stronger to the point where he can then reverse the flow of power: “Destroy, destroy, the music plays in my head. I lie on my back and stare at the light till I see half-circles of fire. Then I turn off the lights and destroy the room with half-circles of fire. A volcano rages in my head as I do this (*Cents* 46). Azure’s internal monologue begins to shift at this point in the narrative, as he introduces the refrain of “destroy, destroy” and fantasizes about inverting the power structures which keep him dependent on other. This also becomes a useful survival mechanism for Azure as he first draws power from the light bulb. He comments: “I start to feed off the light and begin to slowly forget my hunger. Grown-ups, this is how they teach me to be strong. I take in their light and destroy them with fire” (*Cents* 47). Here, “grown-ups” becomes a reference point for anyone who uses their position or privilege to leverage oppression over others.

Azure’s inner voice also gives insight into how Azure mitigates traumatic circumstances by inverting the flow of power – similar to how he frames his control of the light switch. Azure also relies on reframing abusive encounters through his own rhetoric. When Allen and several other men sexually abuse him, Azure states “I do as I’m told … soon they all take turns with my mouth” (*Cents* 53). During this assault, Azure tells himself “They are giving you their salt … Eat it, be strong” (*Cents* 54). Azure begins to imagine his own transactions, where he sees himself as taking in these things which belong to his abusers (the light of their room and their semen) and transforming them into his own power, which he then imagines returning to his oppressors in the form of their destruction.

After days of physical abuse, Richard returns Azure to Gerald, who begins to chip away at Azure’s sense of self. Gerald’s rhetoric begins by denigrating Azure’s name, commenting that “mother was very stupid because how is anyone … how am I supposed to remember that name? (*Cents* 55). Stripping Azure of this last connection to his mother, Gerald renames Azure “Blue”. Gerald also takes Azure’s old clothes and gives him a new t-shirt with a lion print in front,

ensuring that Azure will now be dependent on him for survival. Gerald further frames this in economic terms, by telling Azure: "This is your new home. I own you now. Who do you think paid for your hospital bills? … Who fed you these last couple days?" (*Cents* 57). Professing ownership over Azure, Gerald continues to restrict Azure's sense of agency and self through dictating how Azure is allowed to present himself. He bans Azure from wearing the colour orange, saying "Only the sun and I can wear it. Understand, Blue?" (*Cents* 68).

In these exchanges with Gerald, Azure is frequently asked "Do you know who you are?" In such comments, Gerald further probes into Azure's sense of self by rewriting the boy's history. For instance, Gerald tells him:

> I brought you here. I stole you from your parents. I killed them … I killed your parents because they were going to hurt you … You didn't love your mother. You feared that she would say no to anything you did. You did everything to please her. Your father hated you for that. He was going to kill you. (*Cents* 69).

Reworking Azure's memories of the past, Gerald attempts to convince him that his parents hated him – and that Gerald saved Azure by killing his parents. Gerald, thus, dismantles the structures upon which Azure has defined himself. He furthermore inserts himself into Azure's past suggesting that an infant Azure called for Gerald when he accidentally burnt down his parents' shack. He tells Azure: "You gave me a sign. You wanted me to see you when the time came. You asked for me. Do you remember?" (*Cents* 70) Thus, Azure's history and memories are recontextualised through Gerald's contradictory information. In suggesting that Azure's parents never loved him, Gerald attempts to offer Azure a different lineage and, by extension, a different life – so long as he is willing to allow Gerald sovereignty over his body and his sense of self.

Apocalyptic visions of Cape Town

Azure's feelings of disillusionment with his life in Cape Town grow throughout the novel, culminating in his wish to see the city destroyed – and his desire to see Cape Town engulfed in flames seemingly positions Azure as the harbinger of the apocalypse. Understanding Azure's internal workings is fundamental to interpreting the ways in which Cape Town's eventual apocalyptic end can be read. Having spent most of the novel confined to the city, Azure begins his first trip up the mountain.

Without shoes, the path up the mountain is not easy for Azure, but he motivates himself through his desire for destruction. He comments:

> Destroy, destroy, my feet burn as I walk on the hot tar road and pavement … The road gets steeper as I get up. I pass a quiet neighbourhood where the only sound you'll hear is the sound of dogs barking behind closed gates. I walk past a cricket field where white schoolboys practice in the nets. I walk past them with furious energy … Destroy them, I hear my feet say as sharp stones punish my feet. I walk and keep shaking out my ankle every once in a while. I'm strong, I tell myself. (*Cents* 103).

Azure's idea to destroy Cape Town becomes an all-consuming thought and, even though his body is suffering from neglect, his hatred and feeling of power drive him to continue. Similar to when he is physically assaulted by Richard and the others, Azure wills himself to be strong and is energised by thoughts of fire. Azure's rage is further empowered by the people who he notices enjoying the nature with no concerns or fears and finds himself resenting their freedom of movement. Later, he comments that: "White people are everywhere. They think they own this mountain … They point at things like they fear nothing. Look at this, look at that, I hear them say. Let's go here, let's go there. And they walk like they own the road" (*Cents* 124). As he tells himself that he is "going to destroy them, all of them," Azure finds himself empowered by a "mad, animal energy" (*Cents* 104). "Destroy, destroy" becomes another refrain for Azure, as he begins to will Gerald's death (*Cents* 107).

The further Azure ascends up the mountain and away from the city, the more empowered he begins to feel. He comments:

> When I look back I can see the city. The mountain stands high above it. It stands there like a giant that is about to move and crush everything in its way. I stare at the sun again and feel its wild energy. Feed me. Feed me, I plead with my eyes. My muscles get tighter. The veins running down my arms stand out. I begin the final stage. (*Cents* 104).

From Azure's vantage point, the city becomes smaller and seems to exert less power – especially when compared to the size of the mountain. From the height of the mountain, the city seems much less powerful. Azure also wills the sun to nourish him. Drawing on the natural world to empower him, he prepares for what he terms "the final stage" – the cleansing of Cape Town by fire.

Azure remains on the mountain for four days. During this time, the narrative slips between dreams, visions and hallucinations. Every night, Azure experiences vivid dreams. In his dreams, Azure is able to walk the city without adults controlling him. The people that he sees are unable to speak, their lips sewn shut with wire. In this dream space, Azure finds agency – and after having discursive violence restrict his body and movements, he is able to silence his oppressors.

Furthermore, Azure's dreams allow him to examine his own history and sense of self. While Gerald attempted to strip Azure of his connections, Azure's dreams offer him another vision of his genealogy through the combination of historical, mythical and contemporary figures he meets in his dreams. As Warnes suggests, irreverent magical realism's focus on the defamiliarisation of discourse means that the "supernatural elements, or dreams, of this brand of magical realism do not typically emerge as a coherent feature of any particular world view" (16).

In these dreams, the most prominent figure that Azure meets is that of Sarah Baartman, a Khoikhoi woman from the 1700s. In the volume, *Representation and Black Womanhood: The Legacy of Sarah Baartman* (2001), editor Natasha Gordon-Chipembere explains how the Baartman narrative has influenced Black identity and the conversation around the commodification of the black body. Gordon-Chipembere asserts that the narratives surrounding Baartman have assumed a mythical status, resulting in the figure of Baartman becoming a symbol that represents the exploitation and suffering of black women (2001, 1). After her death in 1815, Baartman was studied by anatomists, zoologists and physiologist. Her body was dissected and her brain and genitals were pickled and put onto display at *Musee de l'Homme* in Paris France until 1974. Her remains were finally returned to South Africa in 2002 after eight years of Nelson Mandela and others working with the French Government. In her contribution to Gordon-Chipembere's volume, Gadeba Baderoon notes that the scientific reports published on Baartman's anatomy "became the basis of a now discredited science of race that placed European men at its apex and black women at its nadir and asserted the racial inferiority and sexual deviancy of black people" (2011, 65). Baderoon's work draws attention to the conflicting ways in which Baartmaan's life has been read in academic discourse. While nineteenth century discourse exploited Baartman's body in order to "cement a derogatory view of black female sexuality," the scholarship of the last thirty years has worked to re-envision Baartman's legacy as "a largely recuperative project, aimed at recovering her memory in service of broadly anti-racist and anti-sexist projects" (2011, 66). A general neglect of African feminist writing on Baartman, however, has resulted in a dehistoricised public image of Baartman that "in effect disarticulate[s] her from African history and turn[s] her into a floating global symbol of the Black female body" (Baderoon 2011, 66). As such, Baderoon suggests a

need to read Baartman "within the lingering self-denial and shame generated by the memory of slavery among the descendants of enslaved people in South Africa" (2011, 67)[13].

Duiker's use of Baartman, therefore, needs to be considered both in relation to her visibility and in terms of how she allows Azure to reflect on the ways in which his body is framed in self-denial and shame[14]. Appearing in Azure's dreams, a young woman named Sarah takes on a motherly role towards Azure, offering him some comfort, but also serving to remind him, and the reader, of how colonial ideologies have worked to marginalise and enslave bodies through racial, gendered and sexualised discrimination. Placing Baartman in contrast with Duiker's protagonist, thus, serves as a counterpoint for the ways in which Azure's body and sense of self have been shaped by similar racialized commodification and sexualised shame. When Azure asks Sarah why she seems so sad, she responds by telling him "People. It's always people. They cut me up into little pieces and spread me everywhere" (*Cents* 129). Much like the earlier conversation between Azure and Vincent, where they attempt to discern whether it is Cape Town or "the people" who are "fucked up" (*Cents* 37), Azure's conversations with Sarah allow the novel to speculate on a much broader history of slavery in the Cape and the ways in which historical oppression continue to evolve and propagate within the post-apartheid city space. Furthermore, Sarah's assertion that people "cut me up into little pieces and spread me everywhere," draws not just on her commodification, but serves as a reminder that thousands of Europe's former colonial subjects have suffered similar treatment in the same of "scientific advancement".

[13] For a broader contextualisation of slavery within South Africa, and particularly with regards to the Muslim community in the Cape, see Baderoon's *Regarding Muslims: From Slavery to Post-Apartheid* (2014). For a more detailed reflection on the image, figure and memory of Sarah Baartman in South African literary and cultural studies, see Pumla Dineo Gqola's *What is Slavery to Me?* (2010).

[14] For more detail on racialised shame in South Africa, see Zoë Wicomb's "Shame and identity: the case of the coloured in South Africa" (2011).

In Azure's dreams, Sarah is married to T-rex, whom she claims is actually Azure's father. Earlier in the novel, Vincent tells Azure about the same dinosaur predator, whom Vincent compares to Gerald. When Azure asks Sarah if T-rex is the last of the predators, she responds by claiming that "No, you are, he's getting old … you are going to be big just like him" (*Cents* 122). Here, Sarah implies that if Azure follows the path that Gerald has put him on, Azure will eventually end up becoming just like the adults who use their position to exploit the vulnerable. As such, the novel pushes towards a comment on the speculated nature of children becoming as morally corrupt as the adults who shape their environment.

This process is also shown to have already begun to take hold in Azure, as represented by his body morphing into something different. Azure notices that he now has scales and a tail. Azure's transformation into a T-rex also evokes comparisons to the animalled Beukes's *Zoo City*. Here, it is possible to read Azure's metamorphosis as an extension of the alienation and discrimination he has experienced in Cape Town. While *Zoo City*'s animalled possess an animal that seems to be an extension of themselves and their personal attributes, here Azure's transformation appears to be a psychological shift marking itself on his physical self. This type of metamorphizing of the self will be covered in more detail in the chapter that follows, where I explore the alien transformation of *District 9*'s protagonist.

For Azure, his body becoming that of the T-Rex also suggests that his attempts at survival have already lead to him beginning the transformation into a figure like Gerald. This is most clearly shown in how Azure treats the one person who comes closest to falling under his sovereignty: Bafana. In the opening pages of the novel, Azure sketches his relationship with Bafana by establishing specific rules. When Bafana resists Azure's instructions to bathe in the ocean, Azure tells him "Don't give me shit. You know my rules. If you want to stay with me you have to wash. Now fuck off" (*Cents* 6). When Bafana disobeys Azure's rules, such as when he sniffs glue or takes drugs, Azure beats the younger boy. Although these actions are ostensibly

performed as a means of care for Bafana, Azure is surprisingly violent in his approach. He notes that "I once beat [Bafana] so badly he had to go to Groote Schuur to get stitched" (*Cents* 3) – something which mirrors Azure's later hospital trip after Gerald's men beat him for insulting their leader. Later, after being inducted in Gerald's gang, Azure meets up with Bafana again. He notices that Bafana is looking thin and frail, while Azure is dressed in the new clothes that Gerald has given him. Condescendingly, Azure says "Bafana, you must look after yourself. You see how I'm dressed? I don't live here anymore" (*Cents* 77). Making a connection between his new clothes and Bafana's deteriorating appearance, Azure purports to living a better lifestyle, and abandons Bafana to his drug addiction.

In another dream, Sarah appears again and suggests to Azure that he is "the sun's child" (*Cents* 29). Azure's association with sun, fire and destruction appears to correlate with what happens in Cape Town while he is on the mountain. When he descends back into the city, he discovers that the shacks under the bridge have been destroyed and Gerald mysteriously murdered. Sealy tells Azure that "People have been spreading rumours all over Cape Town that the devil got him," but Azure responds with his own belief, saying "I burned him" (*Cents* 135). Despite Gerald's death, however, little seems to actually change as Sealy simply assumes Gerald's position of power, claiming that he "saved" Azure (*Cents* 136). Sealy's rhetoric is similar to Gerald's as he attempts to twist Azure under his control.

The cyclical nature of oppressors, and Azure's realisation that he has become embroiled in such ideology of survival, leads to his desire to see the entire of Cape Town destroyed as a means to eradicate this "evil" entity. Eventually, Azure ascends the mountain a second time and, as the novel closes, a second apocalypse hits the city of Cape Town. Azure also envisions the apocalypse as the end of his world because of the trauma he has endured. We see that the beginning of the apocalyptic scene is triggered by the thought of his parents, as their deaths signify the beginning of all of his traumas: "My mother is dead. My father is dead. That ugly

thought comes to me again" (*Cents* 161). According to Goodman, the idea of the apocalypse is also "the destruction of history, and the unveiling of its purpose" (2013, n.p.). At the point when Azure has the "ugly thought" it reveals aspects of his memory from this initial trauma, and that event as being the singular moment which has led to his oppression in Cape Town. Thus, both to deal with the anxiety of this thought, and to wipe it away, he appears to actually bring forth the destruction of Cape Town. While previously Azure connected the apocalyptic events with imagery of fire, this time Cape Town is hit by both water and fire. First, a huge tidal wave hits the beach, submerging the roads and houses. Then a ball of fire shoots from the sun and Azure "hear[s] the agonising screaming of people being burned. The sky rains with fire" (*Cents* 163). The mountain shakes as the city is washed away and hit with a "hellish explosion from the sky," and Azure asserts that "nothing seems to escape" (*Cents* 163).

In other words, it is at the very moment that the horror of the initial trauma is unveiled, that he seeks to destroy this history and site of oppresion, being the city and all its inhabitants. For all of Azure's comments about the evil nature of the city, destruction appears to be the only future that Duiker presents for the city of Cape Town. Read in terms of what this speculates for South Africa's youth, Duiker's novel offers very little sense of hope or indication that the city can be a space for all. While Cape Town is often painted as a majestic tourist attraction and an alluring city for gay culture, such open possibilities are shown to only be accessible to the few whose bodies are easily read within normative narratives – narratives which owe their power to social regulations which arose during colonialism and were legislatively cemented during apartheid. Thus, for all of the speculated future visions for South Africa captured in the attempts of newer narratives like the "Rainbow Nation" and the "born-free" generation, Duiker's novel clearly presents how limited social progress has been in Cape Town.

Sister-Sister

> "Every life has a legend. Before the soul comes down to earth, God seals a story inside it. To know your purpose, you need to unravel the mystery of that legend. He says it's a sad thing that most people only think about that mystery once they've walked to the end of the road". (*Sister-Sister* 16).

In interviews, Rachel Zadok proclaims her "fascination with belief systems and how they affect cultures and the individual" (M&G) and suggests that her novel is "a story of growing up in a country where belief plays a huge role in society. More globally, a story about how clinging to the righteousness of our beliefs can be damaging" (Qtd in Meyer). This interest in belief systems finds magical realism as a useful narrative strategy to explore the inner workings of a child and how their developing sense of self accounts for contradictory influences. Zadok's writing style allows for a confluence of belief structures from both a colonial inheritance and indigenous lineage, making it apt to consider the text as a faith-based magical realism.

In *Sister-Sister,* twins Sindi and Thuli find themselves caught between this confluence of belief structures, and consequently, struggle to develop a coherent sense of self. In particular, Zadok claims that her intention was to comment on the difficulties children are facing in such a climate. Zadok comments: "There is so much mythology around twins in Africa. I wanted to explore superstition and the impact that it has had on the fight against HIV/AIDS, my concerns around what was going on with SA at the time around HIV education and superstitions about AIDS, with Mbeki's administration" (Ryman 2017). The novel, thus, examines multiple cultural understandings about HIV/AIDS and the myths in Africa that are used to explain the occurrence of multiple births. As Zadok says: "I wanted to say something about the national sorrow of having this happening to our children" (Ryman). Zadok's concern stems from Mbeki's tenure as president and the mishandling of the HIV crisis, but rather than set her novel

during the 1990s or present day, she extrapolates the sense of crisis through the displacement of time.

In positioning her novel as a possible future for South Africa, Zadok engages the speculative mode. Moonsamy notes that "much fiction during the apartheid era uses the future – as opposed to the past – to condemn and critique the historical present" (Moonsamy 2014, 69). As seen in *Sister-Sister,* the displacement of time, allows Zadok to critique present day crises by casting her speculative lens to the possible near-future repercussions. The novel begins by sketching a post-apocalyptic setting of a near future Johannesburg that is suffering from ecological catastrophe. The time is not the distant future, as shows like Generations and Isidingo are still in circulation, but diesel has been outlawed and all cars are expected to run on electricity. The uneasy displacement of time evokes the speculative fiction genre, which allows it to draw on other elements, such as magical realism, but still pose current questions of poverty, disease and social inequality and how these will likely continue to plague our country.

Thus, while Duiker's trajectory seems to suggest an imminent apocalyptic arrival, Zadok's novel begins in what Omelsky would term "the moment after". In "After the End Times: Postcrisis African Science Fiction", Matthew Omelsky posits that we are living in "a moment of dual crisis – the crisis of global ecological systems and the ever-impending collapse of capital," while also lamenting "our ability to imagine the moment *after* this dual crisis – after the end times" (2014, 33). Our focus on the human is central to this shift in geological time, making these concerns those of the Anthropocene and the dissolution of the perceived human-nature divide. The near future Johannesburg is almost purely dystopian in its renderings of space, with Zadok also casting a speculative lens on the climate change in a South Africa where parts of the country are suffering extreme drought while Durban faces rising sea levels. A sense of crisis has gripped the nation and everyone has their own understanding of what might have caused such devastation.

Sister-Sister is set across three specific landscapes: the streets of Johannesburg, Soweto, and briefly rural KwaZulu-Natal. These three landscapes and their physical descriptions are juxtaposed by Sindi and Thuli's descriptions, revealing more about space through how they personally experience these differences. The novel is dystopian in its renderings of space, with Zadok demonstrating what Nerine Dorman describes as "an oppressive setting in the township – a decaying environment where people's relationships are twisted by circumstance," which is juxtaposed with "the ring road encircling Joburg [that] becomes a symbol of the grinding futility of life" (2015, n.p.). In interviews, Zadok comments that she wished to make the setting of her novel appear as close to reality as possible, before introducing plausible future outcomes. Zadok explains: "I wanted to disconcert the reader by making the setting both familiar and strange. I think dystopias are unsettling because they look at the now and examine where we could end up if measures aren't taken to step off the road we're on" (qtd. in Phohleli n.d.). For Zadok then, the narrative plays on presenting a South Africa that, while certainly familiar in rendering, offers enough "strange" elements to suspend the reader's sense of understanding. As such, Zadok's use of language appears to draw heavily on magical realism, while her sense of possible futures for South Africa pushes the novel toward the speculative mode.

The streets of Johannesburg

As the novel opens, Thuli provides a detailed sketch of this Johannesburg for the reader:

> I stand at the edge of an overpass as another bleak dawn spills over the city stretched out below. Office blocks rise into the leaden sky like a jawful of giant's teeth. The wind swoops through, picking a fight with the caged trees lining the pavements, stripping the branches. Leaves dance down the street with plastic bags, paper wrappers and tin cans, a rumble-tumble of discarded things. Only the sunshine sway of a Shoprite packet stops me disappearing into all that grey. (*Sister-Sister* 13).

In the early morning hours, the city lies still and empty from Thuli's viewpoint. The sunrise, however, is not treated as the promise of a new day. The sense of futility that comes to be

associated with walking the road is immediately established by Thuli's description of this being "another bleak dawn". Empty of people, the city's buildings and roads are overwhelmingly dull, lifeless and "grey". Across from the highway, Thuli eventually spots something colourful: "the salmon-pink boundary wall of townhouse complex [which] jars against the barren embankment like a bright mirage" (*Sister-Sister* 14). The description of the townhouse evokes a familiar sense of contemporary Johannesburg:

> The complex is like lots of places on the south side of the city. Loops of barbed wire gleam down at me from the top of the eight-foot stop-nonsense, but there are no guards or cameras. Security with more bark than bite … I stand at the gate and stare through the bars at the houses beyond. An intercom, ten buttons equals ten houses, controls who gets in. The houses are all the same, five on the left mirrored by five on the right. (*Sister-Sister* 18).

While Sindi spent the night sleeping in an old wrecked car under the overpass, the modest housing complex seems an extreme contrast. Thuli even finds herself wondering "if the people that live there were ever like me; if I might've turned out like them, given a half-chance," (*Sister-Sister* 18) and finds herself imagining if she and Sindi could have ever lived in such a place, lamenting the "the life we could've had" (*Sister-Sister* 20). The massive billboards mounted above the highway also give Thuli "windows into the lives we'll never have; staring-staring at the ragged city sky and the cardboard-and-corrugated shacks where only children live because everyone else has died" (*Sister-Sister* 40). These descriptions, rooted in the specificity of their real world setting distinguishes the magical realist text from allegory or fantasy.

Thuli's sense of loss, of a life never lived, is also compounded through the stark descriptions of the climate:

> It hardly rains any more. The cirrus clouds that wrinkle this faded sky are mean and meaningless. They leave the city to suffocate under the dust that creeps into everywhere, powdering our cheeks until we look like ghosts. With each passing season, circling this road, I feel how it sucks at our

> juice. We are being slow-baked, hardened like tar … There is nothing this earth wants from us, and we have nothing left to give. (*Sister-Sister* 40).

As we slowly learn, petrol cars have been banned to reduce environmental damage, but the climate continues to worsen. The space of the city is covered in dust and exudes a sense of grinding futility as the twins continue to circle Ring Road, with Thuli commenting that she can "feel how [the city] sucks at our juices," leaving her to feel empty, dried out and like "we have nothing left to give".

Furthermore, the highway serves as a barrier between the townhouses and an informal settlement. Thuli notes:

> I watch the shadows move between the shacks: shades of men drinking and women cooking, the shades of children playing and dogs sniffing. Everything's humming along. The smoke drifts, opening up their lives for me to see; then it wraps them up and hides them away again. The smell of shack life – of burnt wood, of samp sticking to the bottom of pots, of meat shrinking in a gravy of water and cabbage, of people's shit and dogs' shit and rot and rubbish – drifts across the lanes, ignoring the concrete barrier that separates cars going west from cars going east. (*Sister-Sister* 42).

Within close proximity to the townhouses, the township space is only separated from the suburban area by the highway and its "concrete barrier". Thuli describes the highway as "circling the city like a concrete snake, wait[ing] for us," (*Sister-Sister* 13) which "arcs against the horizon like a grey rainbow" (*Sister-Sister* 48). As Sindi spends her days pacing up and down the N1, Thuli reflects on how her feelings towards the highway have changed since she was a child, noting that "We used to believe that the highway went somewhere, that over the horizon was escape, places we'd never been and thought we wanted to go," as well as commenting "I like to know that things stop, because sometimes it feels like we never will" (*Sister-Sister* 14). Feeling that her and Sindi's suffering is without end, Thuli begins to reflect on her life, attempting to understand her own story by contemplating it in terms of having a beginning and an end:

> Sitting side by side, we watch the traffic. Sometimes I forget why we walk this road, and I tell myself it's because we're looking for the beginning. Not of the concrete highway – it's not called the Ring Road for nothing – but for the beginning of the rush hour. Each day, we're at a different place when the cars slow down and sit, bumper-to-bumper, inching-inching. But I've never seen it, that first vehicle that blocks the lane and becomes the head of a multi-coloured car snake, five lanes wide, unwinding along the highway forever. (*Sister-Sister* 19).

Feeling that the road and her story will never end, Thuli connects this circularity to Ring Road. She also asserts that "we're looking for the beginning" of the rush hour – but also, perhaps, the beginning of the story that has lead the twins to this time and place. The emphasis on understanding one's own history is further stressed when Sindi encounters an evangelical preacher, whom Thuli simply calls "Loon Man". Loon Man, or Joshua Piepper, attempts to lead Sindi to his church – and as his name suggests, the scenario is reminiscent of the Pied Piper who leads children away from their families. In this case, Piepper is later revealed to be seeking young girls who are "pure" and able to "birth a Pure Child for God" (*Sister-Sister* 36). His rhetoric, however, prompts Sindi to begin excavating her past by questioning him about where "home" is. He tells her:

> Everyone comes from somewhere. There's a beginning to every legend, some place we call home. Don't matter if it's a palace or a shack … There's very few that's born to the street. Even the street kids, they've got family out there. Whether they care or not, that's a different story. Point is, you've got to start somewhere to end up here. (*Sister-Sister* 34).

Telling Sindi that "There's a beginning to every legend, some place we call home," Piepper evokes memories of Sindi's past and the reasons she ended up on the street. As this section is narrated by Thuli, there is little introspection available from Sindi's perspective. Although Thuli offers the reader some clues about their past, Sindi remains silent. While this could be because of her stutter, there is also a sense that Sindi does not wish, or is unable, to articulate her past traumas.

Furthermore, Piepper's rhetoric about the "beginning to every legend" shows Zadok's interest in how legends, myths and superstitions play an important role in shaping an individual's sense of self. In order to understand Sindi and Thuli's stories it is, therefore, necessary to consider how and why their stories have led them to this point by examining earlier events in their lives and how they have interpreted these in their sense of self. Furthermore, we need to understand the role that specific rural and urban settings have played in determining these events.

Mythical births

> "Some people are empty. Like twins, they're really one person, their shadow just came loose. I'm the shadow. Inside me, there's nothing". (*Sister-Sister* 195-6).

In *Twins in African and Diaspora Cultures* (2011) Philip M. Peek suggests that anomaly of a twin birth is sometimes perceived as a challenge to social or biological order and, therefore, twins are frequently associated with other perceived anomalies that may occur in the same environment. Peek argues that "Whether as cause or effect, clearly twins are ambiguous and thereby gain attention – if not fear and awe – due to their potentiality" (Peek 2011, 21). The phenomenon of twins has been read in a wide variety of ways across Africa, with some cultures revering and celebrating the birth of twins. Frequently, however, such a birth is treated as anomalous and considered the result of violating social taboos[15].

In *Sister-Sister*, identical twins Sindi and Thuli find that their shared birth isolates them from their community. This isolation is especially difficult for Sindi who has a severe stutter and is, thus, somewhat dependent on her sister in social situations. Thuli notes that "For long, Sindi spoke to no one but me. Then we went to school and the teacher forced her. Even so, it was only me she spoke to straight. To anyone else, she had to spit out words like gum chewed so long it stuck to her teeth" (*Sister-Sister* 17). From Sindi's perspective, this early bond is framed

[15] In Nigeria, such taboos are clearly rendered through the myth of the *ibeji*. For more in-depth readings of the cultural perceptions of twins in Africa, see Mafe 2012; Okonkwo 2004; Ouma 2014; Sasser 2014.

slightly differently, as she feels that she has "spent her entire life on the edges, struggling to spit out words while Thuli tried to push her into things," and therefore "Sindi had long ago accepted that she'd never have a best friend that wasn't her sister. She pretended it didn't bother her" (*Sister-Sister* 74). Like Azure, Sindi finds that her sense of identity is overly-defined by the circumstances of her birth, thus seeming to circumscribe any possibility of a different future.

Before the reader is even introduced to the twins, the prologue suggests that their grandmother had foreseen their birth in a dream. The prologue opens by describing:

> The woman dreams she approaches KwaNogqaza Falls, just as she did on the night of her initiation ceremony, twenty-five years before. She reaches the pool at the bottom of the waterfall and sinks to her knees to pray, but the sandy bank collapses and she slips into the water. The Inkanyamba swirls around her, dragging her down to the river bed. (*Sister-Sister* 9).

First, the Inkanyamba instructs her to dig into the sand, where she finds two smooth stones. Then, the "serpent-god takes her into his mouth and spits her out at the surface" onto a beach far away from the forest. Pebbles in hand, she walks until she finds an ominous sign:

> She comes across a dead gull, lying just above the tidemark. Two white chicks sit on the bird, picking maggots from its feathers. As she watches, the water subsides until there is a single blue on the horizon. Where there was ocean, there is only sand. The dune grasses shrivel. The trees in the coastal forest sicken, dropping leaves until they are nothing more than splintered grey trunk and branch. The world dies as the chicks grow fat on their dinner of maggots. (*Sister-Sister* 9).

The woman sees two chicks being nourished by the decomposing body of their mother, while in the distance "world dies". The chicks "grow fat on their dinner of maggots," unaware of the death of their parent, as the world around withers away to dirt. As the woman witnesses devastation and decay, she is still clutching the two stones:

> There is a searing pain in her hand. She opens her palm and looks at the pebbles, perfect white ovals, identical save for a scab that discolours the purity of one. She picks at the scab with her nail. Blood wells from the

> pebble and a sound like that of a mewling baby fills the air. The stone shudders and rolls away from her prying finer towards its twin. They merge, becoming one … but before she can glean meaning it splits in two and her palm begins to bleed. (*Sister-Sister* 9-10).

The two white stones are described as identical – except for a small discolouration which detracts from the "purity" of the one. As soon as she scratches the pebble, the woman hears the sound of a baby and the two stones become one. Before the woman can interpret the meaning of two becoming one, the stones split again and she is left with blood on her hands. Suddenly, the woman is shook awake by her daughter, Sizane, saying "It's time, Mama … The baby is coming" (*Sister-Sister* 10). As the reader later learns, Sizane delivers twins. Her mother then makes the connection between this anomalous birth and the likely prophetic nature of the dream – especially after the twins' father is unexpectedly killed on his way to see his children.

The birth of the twins is further connected to drastic shifts in the country at large. While their grandmother is sure that the twins have brought disease, drought and death to their village, the arrival of the twins also coincides with South Africa's ban on petroleum. As Thuli tells the reader:

> Our story began on the dawn of a fresh new era. That's what the headline of the newspaper article said, the one Mama kept folded into the cover of her ID book: The Dawn of a Fresh New Era. It was D-Day, the last day of the petrol-car amnesty, when everyone was meant to change to electric. We only learned that in history class when we were ten, though. Until then, I thought *we* were the dawn they meant, and I told anyone who teased us that we were so special our birth made headlines. (*Sister-Sister* 17).

While their grandmother interpreted the birth of twins as the death of their village, young Thuli connects their birth to the headline from the day they were born. The optimism of the headline is striking, promising "a Fresh New Era". Up until the age of ten, however, Thuli believed that she and Sindi's birth was special enough to make headlines – a story that she could draw on whenever classmates would tease the girls for looking identical. In a broader postcolonial

context, a new era and sense of nationhood is also evoked in magical realist novels such as Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981).

Unsurprisingly, such associations with postcolonial concerns of national and individual identity suggest magical realism's interest in negotiating between incongruous states of being. In *Sister-Sister* this is evoked both through the anomaly of twins as well as connection between naming and identity. Like with Azure, Sindi and Thuli highlight the importance of their names to the reader. Similar to the stories associated with their birth, the names are also shown to have multiple interpretations. Initially, the names seemed incongruous to the girls: Thulisile means "quiet one" and Sindisiwe means "saved". As Thuli notes: "Mama named us the wrong way around, what with me being a big-mouth and Sindisiwe a stutterer" (*Sister-Sister* 18). Sizane's brother, Jabu, is more derisive in his assessment of the names, saying "Thulisile means 'quiet one' but she talks, talks, talks, and the other one has no tongue" (*Sister-Sister* 86). Sizane responds by asserting that she only named the twins after their grandmother had failed in her attempt to suffocate Sindi. As Sindi struggled to breathe, her twin sister made no cries of distress, leading to her being named Thulisile. Sindi, however, overhears Jabu and Sizane talking and for the first time learns the reason why she was given her name – and perhaps even why she developed her stutter. Later, Sindi's name takes on a different layer of signification when Nandi interprets the meaning of "saved" to mean that Sindi must be the "good twin" who God wants her to save from Thuli. This interplay with the twins' names, especially with Nandi's contradictory readings, thus, confounds Sindi's understanding of her relationship with her sister.

Going Home

Furthermore, Jabu's arrival in Soweto serves to make Sindi feel even more disconnected from her sense of self. Since arriving in Soweto with her infant daughters, Sizane has shared very

few details with the girls about where they were born and why she initially left. The arrival of a never-before-mentioned uncle also makes Sindi question her concept of home. As she tells the reader, "Most of her life had been lived within a five-kilometre radius of that house; it was the nucleus of her world" (*Sister-Sister* 101). At this point in her life, Sindi admits how relatively small her world has been. Jabu imploring Sizane to visit her dying mother, thus, offers Sindi access to consider what it is that she calls "home":

> Sindi watched her Uncle pass their faded suitcase to the driver squatting on top of the minibus and thought about *home*. Once in a while, a taxi would come and load up boxes and cases and shabby bags while a family stood in front of their shut-up house, dressed in their best. When you saw them, you knew. They were going home. Home was a place visited only once or twice a year, over Easter and Christmas. It could be anywhere: Limpopo, Buffalo City, Mpumalanga; anywhere but the house you lived in here. Everybody Sindi knew came from someplace else. Everybody except them. (*Sister-Sister* 100-1).

In this extract, Sindi reflects on the idea of home. Over the years, she has watched her neighbours prepare for the pilgrimage home. She notes that home "could be anywhere … but the house you lived in here" and suggests a sense of absence that she has felt knowing that everyone else "came from someplace else. Everybody except them". Finally making such a journey herself is alien to Sindi. After paying at a tollbooth, Sindi feels like "they'd crossed some kind of border. She'd never left the city before … How dark it is beyond the city, she'd thought, how dark" (*Sister-Sister* 105).

Entering a different province, Sindi is surprised to see how different the landscape is. In particular, the effects of environmental catastrophe are much more clearly present in KwaZulu Natal. Several of Durban's beaches have been submerged by the ocean as in Sindi's descriptions of "the drowned part of the city, where buildings rose from the water like the tail-spikes of a prehistoric sea monster" (*Sister-Sister* 142). This part of the city has been largely abandoned by the government, but a number of homeless people have made it their home. As Jabu explains to Sindi: "it's not safe. The water undermines the foundations and one day they'll

collapse. The government wants to demolish them all, but crazy people have squatted the higher floors and refuse to move. If you listen carefully, you'll hear the concrete groan" (*Sister-Sister* 143). The derelict and forgotten buildings characterise this future Durban, but further inland the rural landscapes of KwaZulu Natal are shown to have suffered even worse catastrophe.

Getting of the taxi at the Mid Illovo Spar, they begin walking to the family kraal. Having grown up on the outskirts of the city, Sindi finds herself feeling incredibly isolated from this supposed sense of home and, by extension, her own history. Instead, Sindi can only picture their destination "like the drawing of a Zulu kraal in their history textbook" (*Sister-Sister* 104). As they walk, the effects of the ten years of drought become clearly visible. They encounter several animal skeletons and rusty, abandoned tractors. Sindi soon realises that "the kraal was nothing like she'd imagined. There were no chickens, no tethered goat, no life at all. It was a dead place" (*Sister-Sister* 111). Sizane is especially disturbed by how deathly quiet the landscape is, and asks her brother where all the people went. Jabu simply replies: "Some people moved to the city to look for work, but most are just gone" (*Sister-Sister* 108).

Furthermore, as predicted by Sizane and Jabu's mother, the drought devastated the area and the community responded by attempting to burn her house and accusing her of being a witch. Jabu maintains that their mother was right and that they have been cursed. With the drought, came the devastation of the sugar cane crops, leading to the farmers abandoning the area and the closure of the only nearby medical clinic. As Jabu repeats "we are cursed and everyone is gone … seeing your neighbours waste away until there is nothing left makes a man desperate. This thing, it eats you from the inside, it makes even good people do bad things" (*Sister-Sister* 109). While Sindi is unaware of what "this thing" means, Sizane understands that Jabu is referring to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Jabu suggests that, with the closure of the clinic, people began "say[ing] we must return to the old ways if we are to save ourselves" (*Sister-Sister* 110).

Sizane is irate when she realises the implication: “They say the only way is to sleep with a virgin … Is that what they say, Jabu? That old lie? Nobody says that any more, people know better. Please, Jabu, tell me they don’t say that here” (*Sister-Sister* 110). The discourse surrounding the transmission of HIV is, thus, shown to be culturally dependent and even contingent on the sense of crisis that has been rendered on both body and land. As Jabu suggests, the circumstances surrounding them have led people to desperate actions in order to save themselves.

The sense of crisis is, furthermore, considered a “curse”. For many in the village, the curse is associated with the timing of the twins’ birth. As Jabu’s wife, Thembi, asserts “Twins are no accident” (*Sister-Sister* 120). Sindi’s sense that she is not welcome is further compounded when she finally meets her grandmother, who is damning in her condemnation of Sindi, telling the young girl: “Your birth brought nothing but bad luck to our people … Since you were born, we have had illness and drought without end. Now you come to peck over my bones like the vultures pecked your father’s eyes” (*Sister-Sister* 128). During this encounter, Sindi’s grandmother tells her about the prophetic dream that proceeded the birth of the twins. In this tale, Sindi’s grandmother revisits her dream from the prologue, admitting that she initially struggled to interpret the meaning of the images. At first, she attempts to stop her troubling dreams by making sacrifices to her ancestors, as her sangoma training would have prompted, but the ancestors “could not be so easily appeased”. In the next dream, she sees a mother bird murdering her first-born in order to feed the second chick. This dream is followed by Durban being submerged, further convincing her that the dreams are connected to what is happening to the landscape around her. Such dreamscapes further offer speculative futures, and the possibility of reshaping the history to come.

This is further compounded by Sizane giving birth to twins. As their grandmother confesses to Sindi: “The night you were born, I dreamed of the birds again. This time the chicks picked up

maggots from their dead mother's feathers while the world shrivelled up … It was only after she'd birthed her twin daughters, you and your sister, that I realised what the *amathongo* were telling me" (*Sister-Sister* 130). Although convinced that her ancestors were sending her a message, she attempts to find another interpretation through prayer, but concedes that after praying all night "I could not hear the voice of Jesus. The god of my Christian mother would not help me" (*Sister-Sister* 130). At the crux of this statement lies one of the major conflicts in the novel: the tension between different belief structures. While later in the novel Sindi finds herself in a similar position, here we see how her grandmother has also been raised in a household structured by more than one belief system. While the alternation between her ancestors and the Christian god may seem to suggest that Zadok is drawing hierarchies between frameworks, an understanding of animist materialism allows for differing interpretative frameworks to co-exist.

As Garuba notes, a clash of cultures may seem present between traditional ways of life and modernity, the animistic trajectory of thought allows us to understand an interpretative framework which does not succumb to binaristic outcomes. Rather, "animist logic subverts this binarism and destabilizes the hierarchy of science over magic and the secularist narrative of modernity by reabsorbing historical time into the matrices of myth and magic" (Garuba 2003, 270). As such, what could be presented as a clash between systems can be better framed as a continuum of understanding, allowing for the existence of multiplicities within the identity construction of the individual. What the animist trajectory of thought allows for then, is the elision of the binaristic thought of monotheistic religions. While her grandmother is able to fold her interpretative frameworks into such a continuum, Sindi's experiences later in the novel differ vastly.

This is not to say, however, that Sindi's grandmother is not scorned by her village for her actions. At first, the community reviles her for attempting to kill her own granddaughter, calling

her “a witch”, but the village’s response changes after the twin’s father is killed the same day the twins were born. Sindi’s grandmother tells her that the birth of twins brought bad luck, illness and misfortune to their village, before directly blaming this occurrence for the death of Sindi’s father.

Blamed for her father’s death and positioned as the harbinger of the village’s “bad luck”, Sindi’s sense of self is directly affected by her grandmother’s story. Her hidden past unveiled, Sindi begins to internalise this logic and question her birth. Her past is also directly contrasted with her possible future, or lack thereof, when her grandmother scoffs at the name “Sindi” and the possibility that she was “saved”. In front of Sindi, she tells Jabu: “Does Sizane think if she gives a soulless thing a name, that thing will be welcomed in heaven by Jesus and saved? … This thing that is wrong with me, that is wrong with you, that is wrong with this whole village of ghosts started the day these twins were born” (*Sister-Sister* 132).

As a result, Sindi begins to resent the circumstances of her birth, believing that she was “jinxed before she was born. Why else had she travelled down the birth canal a full twenty-three minutes too late? Her delayed birth had given Thuli everything, while Sindi lacked a proper voice and an entry to heaven” (*Sister-Sister* 133). Sindi’s jealousy is exacerbated by the ease with which the family accepts Thuli, causing her to shun her sister out of a sense of betrayal.

The Long Dry and eschatological rhetoric

When they arrive back home, the distance between the twins allows Sindi to befriend Nandi, who belongs to the New Believers Church. Nandi tells Sindi about her prophetic dreams, offering Sindi a chance to reclaim her soul and rewrite the fate that she has been dealt. While Sizane’s mother was sure of her own means of interpreting which of the twins had a soul, Nandi later comes to a different conclusion. Sindi reads Nandi’s diary and discovers some startling insight into why Nandi wanted to befriend her in the first place. In an early entry, Nandi writes:

“I saw a light around one of them. One of them was light one of them was dark like a black hole. I think it is a message from GOD but I don’t know what it means” (*Sister-Sister* 160). At first, Nandi becomes convinced that God is trying to communicate something about the twins. In a later entry, Nandi writes:

> Sindiswe means saved. She is the. GOD wants her. I told Nombise at skool that I figured out which twin was the light one. But she laughs and says I am crazy since my family joined the New Church. I told her she was going to HELL!!! She says the black preatcher is the devil. I wish she would stop calling him black preatcher, his not even black!! (*Sister-Sister* 159).

In this diary entry, Nandi writes with a definitive tone, suggesting surety in her convictions. With her perceived etymology of the twins’ names, she ascertains herself that the “light” twin is the one that “God wants” her to save. A second thing that the diary entries help to suggest is that Nandi’s belief structures are under duress. Despite the acceptance and community that she feels with the New Church, Nandi’s supposed friends belittle her, calling her “crazy” for her beliefs.

The role of Nandi’s belief is further exacerbated as a period known as “the Long Dry” begins and the church sermons begin focussing on "the end of days". This apocalyptic notion is, historically, interwoven with Christian interpretative frameworks. As Koselleck notes in *Futures Past*, “the history of Christianity is a history of expectations, or more exactly, the constant anticipation of the End of the World” (1985, 6). This anticipation of the end of the world is particularly exacerbated during times of political and social uncertainty, leading to such rhetoric becoming a main feature of interpreting the present and expected future. Nandi, as a New Believer, internalises this rhetoric, and begins to experience visions and warnings.

First, "Nandi received an apocalyptic message that the sun was going to explode" (*Sister-Sister* 239). Shortly thereafter, she informs Sindi that the Angel Gabriel visited her in a dream with an important message: Thuli is "actually a demon who had infected Mama's womb ... And

stolen Sindi's soul" (*Sister-Sister* 240). Nandi is convinced that God has revealed these details to her so that she can save Sindi's soul because "God wants it" (*Sister-Sister* 238). Connecting these two visions, is Nandi's desperation to save Sindi's soul with the general mood of desperation espoused in the eschatological rhetoric of the church. For her part, Sindi is conflicted about Nandi's beliefs, but also desperate to have a friend who is not her sister. Nandi's world view also offers Sindi a different vision of her future; one in which she possesses a soul and Thuli is the harbinger of the apocalypse. Given that for much of her life Sindi has been unfavourably compared to her twin, this inversion offers Sindi a different narrative for her life. In contrast to Azure, who willingly embraces the destruction of Cape Town, Sindi is drawn to the possibility of transposing her perceived burden and role in life to her twin.

Previously, Nandi has been incredibly intent on "saving" Sindi to prove the veracity of her beliefs. At this point in the novel, however, she tells Sindi that she needs to be "free … from the influence of sinners" in order to remain pure and become a "Mother for the New Mankind", and claims that they cannot be friends unless Sindi sorts out her "problems" (*Sister-Sister* 263). While Nandi has predominantly been interpreting events through a Christian framework, her desperation to save Sindi eventually results in her sending Sindi to see Gogo Nkosi, a sangoma who might be able to help Sindi retrieve her soul. This tension, expressed by Nandi and Sindi, between traditional ways of life and modernity, argues Garuba is a recurrent theme in accounts between seemingly contradictory interpretative frameworks, demonstrating "the clash of cultures and the agony of the man or woman caught in the throes of opposing conceptions of the world and social life" (2003, 270). Although earlier in the narrative we see Sindi's grandmother demonstrating an ability to hold traditional beliefs in equivalence with modern Christianity, Nandi seems more conflicted – and although she sends Sindi to Gogo Nkosi, Nandi does not go with her.

Although Gogo Nkosi is willing to assist Sindi, she warns her about "The power of belief. What you believe becomes true. This dark thing you ask will have a price, child, a very high price" (*Sister-Sister* 266). Gogo Nkosi further explains that she cannot anticipate what the consequences will be if Sindi attempts to take the soul from Thuli, saying that:

> There are souls that wander this earth, unable to move on to the kingdom in the sky. Lost Souls. Perhaps your sister will become one of them and remain here on earth. Perhaps this will kill you both. I do not know the price. That is why I cannot understand why you are so willing to pay it. (*SS* 274).

Despite these warnings, the reader later learns that Sindi proceeds with Gogo Nkosi's instructions and performs the ritual, which results in Thuli's death, Sizane's depression and alcoholism, and eventually, Sindi elects to leave home and set out on her own.

While it would be simple to read Sindi's experiences merely as a clash between belief systems, if we follow the animist trajectory of thought, a more nuanced understanding emerges, helping to clarify previous narrative events. Animist logic, suggests Garuba, subverts the binarism between the two interpretive frameworks, and as such, "destabilizes the hierarchy of science over magic and the secularist narrative of modernity by reabsorbing historical time into the matrices of myth and magic" (2003, 270). In other words, Zadok's attempts at a narrative structure which may initially confuse readers, is better understood as its own form of subversion, and a means of asking the reader to hold multiple interpretative frameworks when reading the novel. As such, the novel can be said to open up what Garuba refers to as "a different time outside of the usual linear, positivist time encoded with notions of progress and increasing secularization" (2003, 271). Such a liminal space, where myth and magic conflate with historical time is precisely where the final section of the novel takes place.

The Legend of Thulisile Nxumalo

The final section of the novel revisits certain key events from Thuli's perspective. Appropriately titled "The Legend of Thulisile Nxumalo," this section intermixes memories from Thuli's past with her arrival in the afterlife. At first, Thuli seems to think she is on Ring Road but "there's no cars in either direction … no reflected orange glow from the city's streetlights" (*Sister-Sister* 277). Although the landscape resembles Thuli's descriptions from the beginning of the novel, this version of Ring Road is more empty and lifeless than before. As Thuli describes the place:

> I walk. Light passes, dark passes … I've stopped thinking in terms of night and day, dusk and dawn, of twilight, of hours … I walk under overpasses with no on-ramps or off-ramps … I am not on the Ring Road, I figured that out the first time it got light, but there is nothing to tell me where I am. The billboards blur when I try to read them […] As the sky begins to dim again, I stop. I sit down in the middle of the road and stare at the blank grey strip of it, not moving, not blinking, until my body begins to harden and I too become concrete. (*Sister-Sister* 284).

Thuli realises that this is not the Ring Road she is familiar with, but there are no other discernible features that she recognises. Even time is displaced and Thuli concedes that she no longer thinks in such terms. Instead, like the descriptions she offers of Sindi at the beginning of the novel, Thuli keeps walking. She eventually finds Saviour Joe's spaza shop, telling him "I keep dreaming I'm on this road … I can't get off it and there's no cars or people or anything else. Just me. I walk and walk and walk, but I never get anywhere" (*Sister-Sister* 296-7). Joe simply responds by telling her "Nothing is real, Thuli … You are not here and you are not there. You have walked too long in the now, never looking to your past even though you have no future. You are the dream, we are nothing but memories" (297). Joe's words harken back to what Joshua Piepper tells Sindi about needing to consider her past in order to understand her present and shape her future. Thuli, however, has "walked too long in the present" and is nothing but a "dream" haunting the memory of the living.

The imagery expressed in walking and the symbolism of Ring Road can be understood through Zadok's appropriation of the Yoruban myth of the *abiku,* or "spirit child" who continues to die and come back to life in order to torment their mother (Mobolade 1973, 62). Throughout the novel, Sindi and Thuli are offered many contradictory beliefs about themselves. The *abiku* myth, however, is one that offers her a very different perspective through which to understand their experiences. Zadok highlights her interest in this mythology by quoting Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* in the novel's epigraph: "The road swallows people and sometimes at night you can hear them calling for help, begging to be freed from inside its stomach".

Both Duiker and Zadok show an awareness of magical realism's lineage in their allusions to Okri's work. While Duiker's appropriation of the abiku myth is less overt in *Thirteen Cents,* he has noted in interviews that reading Okri's novel was "important in shaping my identity as a writer" (qtd. in Mzamane 27). Osita Ezeliora has already drawn comparisons between Duiker's novel and Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* – namely the positioning of a youthful narrator who relays fantastical events alongside elements of the "real" contextual setting. According to Ezeliora, in both Okri's Azaro and Duiker's Azure "we are confronted with the narratives of two peculiar African kids whose common inheritance of poverty and whose unique sensitivity to the social realities of their universe compel them to seek alternative salvation in dreams, hallucinations, visions and revisions of the hidden mysteries of their environment" (167). Even Duiker's naming of his protagonist hints at these connections to Azaro, whose name hints at the biblical figure of Lazarus, who Jesus raised from the dead. Moreover, as Ato Quayson has suggested, "the abiku child is also meant to stand for the fractious postcolonial history of his native Nigeria". The political nature of Okri's text often works allegorically, using its protagonist as a symbol for a country negotiating its sense of national identity in the wake of colonialism. Although the text engages heavily with magical

realist strategies, it remains rooted in questions of "the real" while questioning the nature of history, narrative and belief. As Hart comments:

> What is curious, though, about Okri's text is the fact that – even while it fuses the magical with the real, and the animal with the human, the spiritual with the material, and the natural with the supernatural – it never loses its political relevance. For Azaro's story is not only about the life of a young child who has spiritual sight; it also functions as an allegory of the trauma of Nigerian nationhood. (2005, 10).

The use of the young narrator, therefore, comes to stand as an allegory for a country still negotiating its own identity. Okri's own reworking of the abiku myth and how it influences Azaro's development, thus, "operates as a metaphor of political disempowerment" (Quayson 2002, 32). Translated to the context of South Africa, we can read the abiku child as an allegory for struggles of young South Africans attempting to define themselves from a position of disempowerment. As abikus are considered to be "a dire curse on any home they enter; a perennial source of sorrow" (Mobolade 1973, 63), it is possible to read the characters of Azure and Sindi through their own feelings of being cursed. While Azure feels like Cape Town has been the curse upon him, Sindi has spent much of her life being explicitly told that her birth cursed her family and their village.

In *Sister-Sister,* Zadok positions Okri's novel as a useful intertext. Notably, Zadok suggests that Okri was more of an influence, and that she does not "want to carry on a dialogue with his work" (qtd. in N. Meyer 2013, n.p.). Beyond the acknowledgment of the epigraph, the influence of Okri and his importance in shaping Zadok's understanding of narrative and storytelling is highlighted through the aptly-named character of Ben. Ben works for Saviour Joe, the owner of Saviour's Pit Stop and the landlord who rents Sizane her home in Soweto. Although a relatively minor character in the story, Ben becomes one of the few adults that Sindi and Thuli trust and the stories that he tells the twins are sprinkled throughout the novel. Ben is described as "soft, like a baby angel," and Sizane guesses that "he must have wanted to be a head doctor

because he never did anything but listen to other people's problems" (*Sister-Sister* 16). Early on, Thuli tells us that "Ben knew things because he was from Nigeria, which is high up in Africa and therefore closer to heaven" (*Sister-Sister* 16). Ben appears to encourage such reasoning, often telling the girls "I've got God's ear, little sisters" (*Sister-Sister* 16).

Furthermore, Ben introduces the girls to the concept of the abiku. Thuli recalls Ben telling her "the story of a spirit boy – an abiku, Ben call him – who kept dying and coming back, and how his restlessness drove his parents mad" (*Sister-Sister* 289). Ben's story starts to take its own shape in Thuli's dreams where she finds herself walking a road with no end. This story is juxtaposed with Thuli's own imminent death. Interspersed between descriptions of the spirit world, Thuli gives the reader a few glimpses into her life during the time that Sindi befriends Nandi and shuns her sister. Although the novel has given us clues that while Sindi was concerned with her soul, something devastating has happened to Thuli: Jabu raped Thuli while they were in Durban in an attempt to rid himself of HIV. From Sindi's perspective, the sexual assault happens behind closed doors and is misinterpreted as being Thuli's fault. While Sindi is distracted by Nandi's friendship, Thuli is occasionally described as becoming more frail and sickly, but Sindi's narrative perspective makes it tricky for the reader to discern what the cause is. After Thuli brings home a letter from the school nurse, Sindi believes that her sister has been sexually active and likely fallen pregnant. This is further exacerbated by Sizane temporally kicking Thuli out of the house and accusing her of being sexually promiscuous – unaware that her own brother is the cause.

In this last section of the novel, however, we see these events from Thuli's perspective. When she visits the nurse, Thuli is shamed because she is unaware of menstruation. The nurse tells her "Your mother should've spoken to you by now … Nobody wants to talk about sex or menstruation or pregnancy", and Thuli is forced to concede that "Mama doesn't like to talk about stuff like that" (*Sister-Sister* 280). Although Sizane was scathing in condemning Jabu's

views on HIV, she has been unable to discuss such "taboo" topics with her own daughters. As a result, Sindi never learns why her sister was ill and continues to blame herself for Thuli's death. The novel, however, never makes clear exactly what Sindi's role is in Thuli's death. Although Thuli dies following Sindi's soul-stealing ritual, it is also possible that this correlation and not necessarily causation. As such, Zadok's text is more focused on understanding how Sindi interprets her sister's death – and how her life is shaped by this traumatic experience.

Conclusion

In *Thirteen Cents* and *Sister-Sister* we are introduced to young narrators whose sense of self is ruptured. Caught between a confluence of belief structures and contradictory interpretations of their own bodies, Azure, Sindi and Thuli's narratives of self-identification allow them some degree of agency in shaping their sense of self. In shaping their sense of self, these children find themselves still experiencing extreme discrimination, especially when moving through urban spaces. In their focus on the streets of Johannesburg and Cape Town, these novels show a keen awareness of what experiences children in post-apartheid South Africa are likely to encounter – as well as the psychological effects of feeling othered from the self. Weaving through history, myth, legend, past, present and future, the novels push the reader to consider how their own sense of self has been constructed and stress the necessity of continuously re-examining how South Africa itself has been caught between fraught ontologies.

As I have suggested in the introduction, the value in these texts lies in their ability to be read through multiple paradigms. The *bildungsroman* gives the texts a recognisable structuring of a text; allows the reader to relate to the universal theme of "coming of age", but also allows for the reader to develop a more intimate understanding of the narrator and their shifting world view, while the use of eschatological rhetoric captures a bewildering sense of disillusionment. Despite the overwhelming forces in their lives, these children are able to sketch a sense of self

through their ability to articulate how they experience a confluence of belief structures – something which the strategy of magical realism helps capture. The use of magical realism accommodates a sense of multivocality in terms of world views, thus allowing the reader to see both the real and that which lies beyond it. In allowing the co-existence of the real and the fantastic, we can understand these narrative accounts better through analysis of the characters and their experiences, showing the contingency of the "real" even while dismissing causal logic. Thus, the elements which may be dismissed as magical or unreal actually enable a clearer understanding of the character's inner workings. That is, the protagonists and their growing awareness of the societal structures and expectations is expressed through their own interpretation – their own act of self-reading and becoming aware of what boundaries have are placed upon them in terms of race, gender, age, class, sexual orientation and other physically-determined categories.

This particular combination of generic concerns and literary techniques or narrative strategies, I argue, is what allows these texts to question rigid belief structures and allow the texts to disrupt historicity by continuously interweaving notions of past, present and future throughout the narratives, simultaneously opening up a space which exists beyond binaristic interpretative frameworks. The use of multiple genre conventions, therefore, allows the narratives to balance the harsh realism of children living on the streets with a fantastical, speculative streak of events that, through their unfamiliarity and juxtaposition of the seen and the unseen, deliberately unsettles the reader and defamiliarises the city spaces of Johannesburg and Cape Town as held in the popular imaginary.

Chapter 4: Ecological and Economic Crisis in Henrietta Rose-Innes' *Nineveh* and Neilll Blomkamp's *District 9*

In this chapter, I consider the ways in which Neilll Blomkamp's *District 9* and Henrietta Rose-Innes's *Nineveh* utilise multiple genre conventions to craft imaginings of Johannesburg and Cape Town, as foregrounded through concerns of the invasive Other eroding spatial and social boundaries. As suggested in my discussion of *Zoo City*, this fear of invasion is notable in many ways, but has particular relevance in light of the xenophobic violence which has escalated in South Africa since 2008. In literature, the anxiety surrounding xenophobia often manifests in the imagery of alien vegetation or pest infestation. These "pests" may or may not pose a real threat to the established social order, but the perceived threat is usually strong enough that people will take extreme measures to distance themselves; a means usually created through the erection of walls and borders, both literal and figurative. As such, the texts present Cape Town and Johannesburg as cities defined by historical, contemporary and even future segregation.

Drawing on the imagery of invasive bodies, *District 9* and *Nineveh* are heavily invested in teasing out the complexities of social division, ecological and economic crisis in post-apartheid Johannesburg and Cape Town. The two narratives are, thus, concerned with infestation and a desire to police bodies which are considered undesirable. The central concern is in regulating these "non-human" bodies and the space which they occupy. Although Rose-Innes and Blomkamp mostly focus on the interactions between their protagonist and the non-human, the specific references to South Africa's historical and contemporary forms of segregation work to extend the allegory and critique social policing of human bodies. While *District 9* focuses on the arrival of extra-terrestrial beings in Johannesburg and the means taken to segregate the aliens from the human population, *Nineveh* delves into the hidden world of insect life and the

human desire to place distance between self and the "unclean" non-human life that threatens to invade living space. In both cases, this allegory is extended from simply a concern with distinctly non-human life forms to question the manner in which the right to exist in the city is contested along racial and class exclusion.

The protagonists of *Nineveh* and *District 9,* Katya Grubbs and Wikus van de Merwe, have some obvious similarities: both have an occupation that requires them to control and monitor urban boundaries and are tasked with the removal of non-human "pests". Both Katya and Wikus have occupations which require them to police certain social boundaries through the process of relocation. The very existence of their professions highlights the artificial nature of the boundaries which they enforce. While relocation explicitly deals with the physical boundaries presented in city life, these narratives explore how built structures are employed in an attempt of social regulation. Through their interactions with the non-human body, Rose-Innes and Blomkamp's protagonists find themselves questioning their sense of "humanness", finding that they have more in common with the "pests" than initially expected. As the narratives progress, Katya and Wikus begin to grow disillusioned with their occupation, and this process is largely shown to occur through their ability to empathise with the non-human. Moreover, this occurs through their own unfixing of their selfhood and "humanness". The interaction with the outsider forces them to inhabit a subjectivity which is not their own, thereby destabilising categories of "humanness" that force them to question their identity and motives, and eventually resulting in the protagonists being unable to return home.

Reading *District 9* and *Nineveh* as speculative fiction, I explore the various genre conventions and associations which the texts evoke in their imaginings of Johannesburg and Cape Town. Blomkamp relies heavily on popular sci-fi film conventions and the spectacle of alien invasion, replete with the abjection of human contamination, showing Johannesburg as a city of crime and violence, struggling to navigate rapid social changes. Given that *District 9* is a film, much

of Wikus's story is rendered visually. Blomkamp does not shy away from the grotesque and violent images one might associate with extra-terrestrial invasion, and the anxiety surrounding Wikus's physical transformation is viscerally rendered through the abject visuals of a human body disintegrating and becoming "other". Most of the film takes place against the backdrop of the township, which is represented in terms of the slum, showing Johannesburg as an urban centre bordered by a dystopian counterpart that constantly threatens to spill over and invade. Since its release, *District 9* has garnered a wealth of praise and criticism. On the one hand, the film signals new potential in South African science fiction and film; while, on the other hand, the film resorts to negative stereotyping and occasional tone deafness with regards to racial unease. Rose-Innes's novel, on the other hand, draws from an animist materialist approach to slowly peel back the layers of Cape Town and position the city as one encroaching its borders across a resilient natural environment. *Nineveh* situates itself as a novel concerned with both the growing urban world of Cape Town, exploring the role that the natural world encompasses within the city and its outskirts, and the ways in which these intersect and clash. The speculative aspect of these narratives, thus, works to interrogate the complexities of intersecting identities against the backdrop of recognisable post-apartheid South African cities that appear to facilitate the hierarchisation of bodies deemed "other". Science fiction and speculative fiction are considered genres which "move readers to imagine alternative ways of being alive," (Thomas 2013, 2) and, therefore, demonstrate an interest in reconceptualising the ways in which human beings view other living entities, whether human or non-human.

What separates these narratives, however, is the manner in which the two protagonists engage with the "other". Wikus works in the department of Alien Affairs for Multi-National United (MNU) – a corporation responsible for governing non-humans. They are also noted for being the world's second largest weapons manufacturer and have a vested interest in obtaining the alien weaponry. Wikus's new project entails heading up MNU's relocation program for the

aliens, moving them from encroaching on Tembisa to a concentration camp 200km outside of Johannesburg. At first, Wikus takes a form of pride in his work, not regarding the alien life forms as much more than pests. His bureaucratic nature is especially evident in his interactions with the aliens that are to be relocated – and he even takes glee in performing "abortions" on the alien eggs that he finds. When Wikus is accidentally exposed to an alien fluid, however, the film frames this in terms of biological infection and transformation; his "becoming" alien is not voluntary and is frequently shown to be a violent process, marked by sci-fi horror tropes and social exclusion. Despite the body horror, Wikus's transformation is necessary for him to begin empathising with Christopher Johnson, an alien who promises that he can "fix" Wikus and return his body to its "human" form.

Katya, on the other hand, begins the novel already questioning her role as pest control, and gradually finds herself associating with those who have already been forced from the urban centre of Cape Town. With the help of her nephew, Katya Grubbs runs Painless Pest Relocation (PPR), which, as the name suggests, aims to relocate pests from the suburbs of Cape Town without causing any harm to the organisms. Katya's compassion for what she describes as "the unloved. The unlovely," (*Nineveh* 20) appears to be as a result from her childhood, the details of which are slowly revealed throughout the course of the novel. While Katya is explicitly referring to a perceived invasion of the insect variety, as the novel progresses it becomes clear that fears of invasion are much further reaching. The events of the narrative are set into motion when Katya is offered a job to remove the pests which are preventing Nineveh, a luxury estate built on reclaimed wetlands somewhere between Noordhoek and Khayelitsha, from opening its doors to human inhabitants. Unbeknownst to Katya, her father was previously hired to complete the job, and much like the other unremovable pests in the novel, has started inhabiting one of the units in Nineveh. Through her conversations with her father, Katya finds herself

unable to complete the job, ending the novel by relocating Len to her former home and electing to live a nomadic existence by turning her work van into a constantly moving home

Both narratives play within the apocalyptic milieu, though this is eschewed with varying degrees of success. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the notion of the apocalypse signifies a drastic paradigm shift, reflecting present anxieties as the "end times". By invoking the apocalypse, the texts question our understanding of spatio-temporality and the ways in which space and time can be read. While drawing from South Africa's colonial and apartheid past to visualise the cities and their familiar forms of social regulation, Blomkamp and Rose-Innes also turn their gaze towards the future, considering the possible future ways in which social divisions will continue to be exacerbated in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Thus, the element of temporal estrangement works to sketch the national sense of anxiety which marks the rapid change of post-apartheid South Africa, allowing Rose-Innes and Blomkamp to posit the use of boundaries as an attempt to provide stability and security in a country increasingly subject to entropy and uncertainty. In trying to understand how the spatio-temporality of Johannesburg and Cape Town are imagined in these narratives, I trace the journeys of Katya and Wikus as they traverse the urban landscape and grapple with their own sense of complicity in the unjust power structures that shape the post-apartheid city.

Aliens in Joburg

In *Aliens and Others: Science Fiction, Feminism and Postmodernism*, Jenny Wolmark argues that "[s]cience fiction provides a rich source of generic metaphors for the depiction of otherness, and the 'alien' is one of the most familiar: it enables difference to be constructed in terms of binary oppositions which reinforce relations of dominance and subordination" (1994, 2). As it appears in science fiction, the body of the alien stands in stark contrast to the appearance of the human protagonist. For the human protagonists who encounter the alien

body, this physical otherness places the human and non-human into two distinct, seemingly impermeable, categories. The alien body is, therefore, a threat to the socially constructed notion of humanness; something which the human must defeat or dominate in order to retain their "human" status.

Humanness can, thus, be considered as a contested identity which is destabilised through science fiction's *novum* of the alien. Urban planner Leonie Sandercock suggests that such figures, and the otherness that they represent, pose a perceived threat to inhabitants of the city (2005, 221). According to Sandercock, the figure of the stranger or alien appears to undermine and challenge the known social order, leading to fears of annihilation, the dissolution of perceived physical and social boundaries, and essentially stand as a threat to established forms of identity. Whether rendered as an alien, a migrant or a stranger, the arrival of an othered body, therefore, is perceived not only as a threat to an individual's identity, but as a being which seeks to dismantle "the known social order". Thus, the boundaries that are threatened are both of a broader social structure, as well as the distinction between self and other. *District 9*'s use of the alien body in representing otherness is, therefore, not only relevant to South Africa's legacy of apartheid, but is also applicable when considering historical and contemporary treatment of the poor, migrants and refugees (Stobie 2012a, 132).

The othered body can also be understood through another science fiction staple: the zombie. In "Alien-Nation: Zombies, Immigrants, and Millennial Capitalism" (2002), Jean and John Comaroff make note of the preoccupation with zombies in rural South Africa, arguing that this fear of the living dead has been extended to an association with immigrants entering the labour force. Similar to the trope of the alien, the zombie suggests a humanoid invasion, a taking over of land and resources. Although originally associated with Haitian magical practices of reanimation, zombies in Western popular culture frequently draw on science fictional explanations such as disease carriers, radiation and mutated genes (Comaroff and Comaroff

2002, 21). In cases like George Romero's seminal *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), the zombie in film is associated with consumerist dependencies. The consumption of flesh, thus, evokes a figure whose existence is dependent on taking from others. In connecting immigrants with public associations of the living dead, the Comaroffs argue that, like zombies, such individuals are considered "nightmare citizens" whose "rootlessness threaten[s] to siphon off the remaining, rapidly diminishing prosperity of the indigenous population" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2002, 21).

The arrival of immigrants is, thus, considered invasive due to the threat that they pose to the livelihood of South Africans who are already competing for employment. This phenomenon is not new, and "zombies have ghostly forebears who have arisen in periods of social disruptions, periods characterized by sharp shifts in control over the fabrication and circulation of value, periods that also serve to illustrate the here-and-now" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2002, 18). Zombies are, therefore, likely to manifest during times of social disruption as a representation of the commodification of labour. As the Comaroffs suggest: "zombie tales dramatize the strangeness of what had become real; in this instance, the problematic relation of work to the production of social being secured in time and place" (2002, 23-4).

It is through this depiction of otherness, that *District 9* establishes its narrative conflict – and, in presenting alien bodies in Johannesburg, the film extends the analogy of dominance and subordination to comment on a country with a long history of bodily discrimination. While the film intends to comment on South Africa's history of colonisation and apartheid segregation through the inclusion of a non-human body, the result is invariably skewered by the narrative perspective. As the story is framed by the experiences of Wikus, the apartheid allegory becomes one clouded by the protagonist's whiteness. Lucy Valerie Graham, for instance, argues that the film continues the tradition of presenting Western viewers with otherness by using a white male character as the focaliser and main point of audience identification (2010,

162). Thus, *District 9*'s narrative asks audiences to develop sympathy primarily through engagement with Wikus's story – reinforcing the notion that such identification would only be possible with this particular representation of a protagonist.

Although the film focuses extensively on the imagery of the slum, the entry point for the audience is through the white male protagonist and his experiences. Graham's implication being that the film is intended more for a "Western" audience who would struggle to relate and empathise with a "hero" who is not white. Despite Wikus later beginning to empathise with the aliens, the overreliance on his perspective results in the film becoming more of an allegory of white paranoia and perceived loss of privilege in post-apartheid South Africa. Michael Valdez Moses argues that, even though the film attempts to be progressive it buys too much into a narrative reminiscent of "a lament on behalf of South African whites for the world lost with the end of apartheid," and the anxieties which surround this transition of power and resources (2010, 160). In other words, much of the narrative draws from Wikus's harrowing perspective and what he stands to lose by becoming less than human – and it is this particularly narrative focus that Valdez Moses argues literalizes the future envisioned by many white Afrikaners that, with the end of apartheid, they "will be reduced to a condition identical to that of the continent's impoverished, exploited, and politically oppressed black masses" (2010, 160).

Of course, some argue that the use of this particular protagonist allows the film to satirise the "racial gaze". Andries du Toit argues that in *District* 9 "the metaphors and tropes of science fiction are being used to engage rather more deeply and disconcertingly with the nature of racism itself" (2009, n.p.). For Du Toit, Wikus's position as protagonist "allows the movie to have a huge amount of satirical fun with the stupidity and ignorance of his outlook and what he represents" (2009, n.p.). In such a reading, then, the purpose behind Wikus is to lay clear some sense of absurdity in how racial biases underpin the actions and logic of a common, white South African.

These fears of invasion and loss permeate the narrative and, consequently, lead to an imagining of an alternative, future Johannesburg which is pushing back against the dystopic elements of the township and the body of the non-human. Unfortunately, the film glosses over what the repercussions of aliens arriving during apartheid would entail, rather skipping forward to a time when the aliens have almost entirely been segregated from humans. As such, there is no commentary on how the arrival of extra-terrestrials would intersect with the broader apartheid struggle over human rights. Furthermore, the film revels in depicting District 9 as the ultimate slum populated only by the extra-terrestrials and Nigerian war lords[16]. The imagistic proximity of these two figures only serves to highlight the unwelcome alienness of these bodies in South Africa. This connection between the Nigerians and the extra-terrestrials only serves to exacerbate the anxiety surrounding invasive rhetoric. Furthermore, while the audience is later encouraged to empathise with the extra-terrestrials through Christopher Johnson and his son, the Nigerian characters remain unredeemably "alien". This is reinforced throughout the film in many grotesque images: an exotic voodoo queen, Nigerians exploiting the aliens for the weaponry, ingesting alien body parts and even a scene in which the Nigerians attempt to eat Wikus.

The film was inspired by its setting and is intended to be a meditation on living in contemporary Johannesburg as well as its possible futures. The title is derived from Cape Town's inner-city suburb, District 6, which was rezoned as a "whites only" area by the apartheid government. The Group Areas Act, 41 of 1950 resulted in 60,000 residents being forcibly relocated to the Cape Flats. Afterwards, all buildings, except religious institutions, were demolished under the pretext of "slum clearance". This history is repackaged into Blomkamp's vision of Johannesburg – a vision which he maintains to be distinctly characterised by the city itself.

[16] The depiction of Nigerians in the film resulted in a fair bit of criticism from the Nigerian government and some diplomatic tension between the countries. For a more detailed analysis of the how Nigerians are portrayed in the movie, see (Okorafor 2009a).

Blomkamp claims that "the film doesn't exist without Joburg … I actually think Johannesburg represents the future. My version of what I think the world is going to become looks like Johannesburg." (Qtd in Mueller 2009, n.p.)

From Blomkamp's perspective, this is a story of Johannesburg and how the city "represents the future". For Blomkamp, science fiction offers a way of speculating on the future – particularly his notion that the city of Johannesburg represents a possible future. While the global positioning of Africa within science fiction presents a sense of possibility for how we envision the cities of the future, Blomkamp's remarks show a strange disjuncture between past, present and future. Reimaging the trope of the alien, thus, allows Blomkamp to speculate on the divisive nature of a city with which he has "a love-hate relationship". Unfortunately, his rendering of the alien body and governmental attempts at socially regulating the extra-terrestrial, are strongly evocative of the apartheid regime. Does this then seem to suggest that Blomkamp's view of the future is one in which the past will continue to be repeated?

Blomkamp, however, seems to suggest that the topics of segregation and racism are secondary concerns in his narrative simply because "you can't get around that" when filming a movie in South Africa (Qtd in Mueller 2009, n.p.). For Blomkamp, the film is his version of what the world will look like in the future. Blomkamp's version of the future is, therefore, one heavily invested in dystopic and apocalyptic renderings of city space. As Gerald Gaylard argues, Johannesburg as a city is highly stratified, but Blomkamp decided to feature mostly just impoverished areas, demonstrating "Blomkamp's use of the city serves the purposes of his apocalyptic vision … brown, dusty, sun-bleached, polluted" (Valdez Moses et al. 2010, 168).

Gaylard's assertions are noticeable in Figure 1. This aerial shot of District 9 exemplifies the deterioration of living conditions in Chiawelo, Soweto, where the film was shot.

Figure 1: An aerial shot of District 9 (filmed in Chiawelo, Soweto)

As one of the opening shots of the film, this sketches a vision of the derelict conditions of the township, showing an extreme disjuncture in Johannesburg's class system. Giving a long, panning shot across the township, the film casts a wide lens across the space of Chiawelo giving a sense of scope to the township.

The film begins with a form of mockumentary that informs the audience of how the aliens arrived in South Africa in 1982, before detailing the perceived danger of the aliens and the current plans to relocate them. Initially, the most surprising aspect is the fact that the alien ship arrives in Africa. As the narrator of the mockumentary comments: "To everyone's surprise, the ship didn't come to a stop over Manhattan or Washington or Chicago, but instead it costed to a halt directly over the city of Johannesburg" (*District 9*). Contrary to most sci-fi films, the ship does not arrive in one of the major, recognisable U.S. cities of the "First World", but instead coasts to a stop over Johannesburg during a time when South Africa was under sanctions. The anticlimactic arrival is further demonstrated by the fact that "The doors didn't open for 3 months. It just hovered there. Nobody could get in" (*District 9*). After this, a decision is made to simply cut into the ship. As a sociologist in the film comments: "We were on the verge of

first contact. The whole world was watching. Expecting, I don't know... ...music from heaven and bright shining lights" (*District 9*). Again, public perception is left expecting something momentous from this first encounter with alien life forms; an encounter that would, perhaps, position South Africa as the first country to establish communication with extra-terrestrial beings. What they discover, however, is a ship of malnourished aliens desperately in need of assistance. Not posing the usual violent, invasive threat to humanity as typically shown in Sci-fi films, the aliens are forced into a refugee camp; or really, a militarised slum.

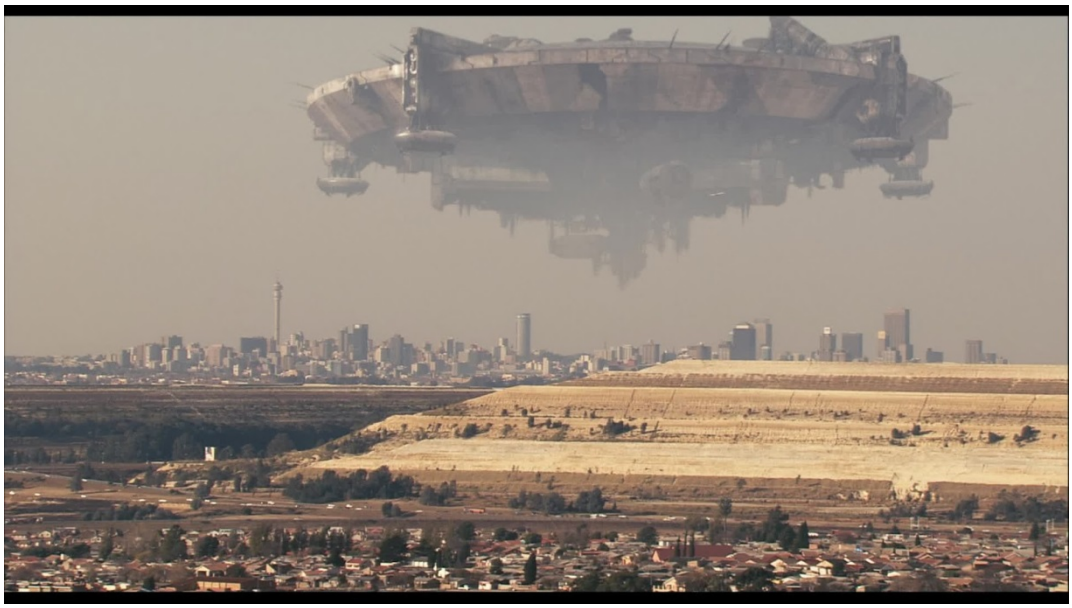

Figure 2: The alien ship arrives in Johannesburg (1 June 1982)

Figure 2 shows how the ship is depicted when it first arrives. A derelict alien spacecraft is shown to hover over the edges of the city of Johannesburg. The shot exemplifies the divided perception of Joburg, with the recognisable city skyline rising in the background, and the iconic minedumps established along the city's periphery. This extreme spatial separation and general lack of social cohesion marks Blomkamp's imagining of Johannesburg in the film – from Wikus's safe, all-white suburbia to the abject renderings of township life, while the glimpse of

the mines serves as a reminder that, long before the arrival of extra-terrestrials, Johannesburg was a major site of another form of invasion: colonial acquisition.

Certainly, one failing of the film arises from Blomkamp's depiction of township and city space as distinctly divided. Works such as Nigel Mandy's *A City Divided: Johannesburg and Soweto* (1984), have positioned the township as a space which is simultaneously part of Johannesburg as well as its own separate location. This tradition of urban inquiry, however, tends to focus on apartheid era segregation and its resulting racial polarisation. Nuttall and Mbembe argue that viewing Johannesburg "only in these terms also points to an important failure in most studies of the city – the failure to speak of the city on terms that warrant comparison with other cities in the world," and, thus, studies such as these tend to "envision the city not as an aesthetic project but as a space of division" (Nuttall and Mbembe 2008, 12–13). Consequently, urban studies have neglected "the imbrication of city and township and, in spite of unequal social relations, to township dwellers' practices and imaginations of city-ness or the place of the township in making of the many city's many identities" (*Ibid*). In its representations of Johannesburg, *District 9* demonstrates a willingness to cast Johannesburg as a developed, orderly city, with the township portrayed as a "chaotic racial ghetto" seldom encountered, or even considered, by white people (Nel 2012, 558).

Even Blomkamp himself characterises his experiences of filming in a township through this lens, commenting that it was "really gruelling," due to an "abrasive" environment. (Qtd in T. Robinson 2009, n.p.).In these remarks, the township is framed from Blomkamp's perspective as "caustic and unbelievably disgusting" (Qtd in T. Robinson 2009, n.p.). As suggested earlier, this environment is what informs Blomkamp's vision of the future. These questionable statements in particular seem to contradict the City of Johannesburg's overall investments in normative class dynamics for the city, portraying the city as a space overcome by the invasive townships. His own fears were also bolstered by the abject conditions of township life which

the crew appear to have found surprising. Blomkamp's fears are framed as a concern about the crew's transport making them a "target" for crime based on the fact that, in his summation, "Carjacking is the number-one thing" about living in Johannesburg (Qtd in T. Robinson 2009, n.p.).

Such ethically-charged comments also raise the issue of white filmmakers and their depictions of the township. One of the more notable examples of a white director filming in Johannesburg's townships is Gavin Hood's *Tsotsi* (2005), based on Athol Fugard's 1980 novel of the same name. In "Diseased Dystopias" (2008), Rebecca Hodes reads Hood's film and its emphasis on HIV/AIDS as a depiction of a "diseased dystopia". While the film includes a handful of scenes of a picturesque Johannesburg skyline at sunset, Hood is far more focused on showing urban decay, depicting the township as "a seething slum that extends as far as the eye can see," portraying the city more as "a nightmarish underworld, an urban dystopia in the truest sense" (Hodes 2008, 8). While Hood's film is a redemption story, it is hard to reconcile the inherent representational quandaries posed by white filmmakers and their depictions of townships, imposing on such impoverished areas for their own profit.

Despite his fears and criticisms of the environment, Blomkamp readily comments on how warmly his film crew was received and welcomed – even suggesting that the township helped bolster his creativity. This "creativity", however, is channelled into severe depictions of chaos and disorder engulfing the township as locals struggle to exist with their new non-human neighbours. District 9 is not established near the economic centre of Johannesburg, but is built into the existing township.

Figure 3: A militarised slum

Figure 3 shows the measures taken in an attempt to contain the aliens and prevent them from invading the city. A sociologist being interviewed tells the audience that "what was a temporary holding zone soon became fenced, became militarized. And before we knew it, it was a slum" (*District 9*). The slum of District 9, however, is shown to mostly be a danger to those who live in close proximity and are forced to compete with the aliens for living space. As a result, it is mostly black South Africans who are shown to be involved in violent conflicts with the aliens.

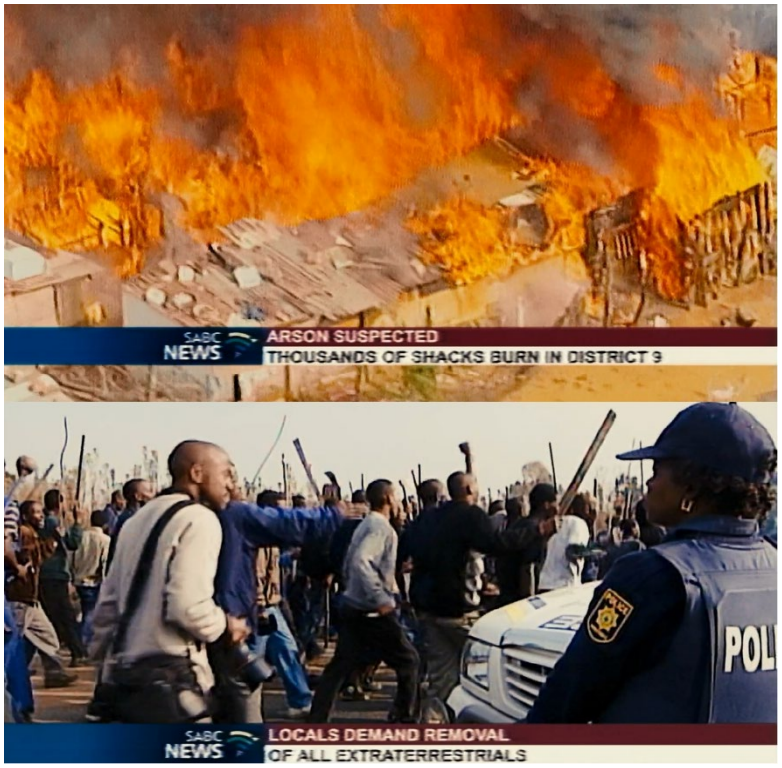

Figure 4: News clips showing the escalating violence

Making use of several news clips, the film shows the rising levels of violence along the peripheries of District 9. One newscaster tells the audience that "Residents in Tembisa rioted for the third consecutive night in an attempt to remove all the aliens from their township" (*District 9*), while a resident comments: "They must just go. I don't know where, just go. If they was from another country we might understand. But they are not even from this planet" (*District 9*). Concerns of xenophobia aside, the aliens are seen as irredeemably foreign and their existence is forcing the government to increase expenditure on non-humans at the expense of already marginalised South Africans. One woman being interviewed bemoans that the government is "spending so much money to keep them here. When they could be spending it on other things, but... ...at least they're keeping them separate from us" (*District 9*). The fear imposed by the existence of aliens, thus, creates a clear sense of othering that results in the desire to be kept segregated from the bodies that evoke this anxiety of self and other.

In "The repugnant appeal of the abject: cityscape and cinematic corporality in *District 9*", Adéle Nel draws on Kristeva's theory of abjection, suggesting that the anxiety associated with the alien or stranger signifies a "rupture of the boundary between the inside and the outside of the clean and orderly body evokes critical questions about real and symbolic identity" (2012, 547). This boundary is continuously evoked throughout the film – especially in terms of contrasting bodies that are competing for the same space. Here, we see a tension between what is deemed "the clean and proper body" and the abject body of the Other, which is portrayed as "non-human, unhygienic, uncivilised, contagious and contaminating" (Nel 2012, 559). For humans, then, the fear of the alien body seems to arise for the way in which it threatens to erode the boundary between human and animal. The abject body of the Other is, therefore, one which is competing for physical space with the disenfranchised South Africans, while also threatening the tenuous boundary between human and animal.

Such comparisons, of course, also evoke the central tension of *Zoo City,* where those who are animalled seem to pose an existential threat to the non-animalled, also drawing on the imagery of the abject, diseased, and impoverished. While *District 9* presents this concern as a rupture of self, *Zoo City* could be said to portray the existence of the animalled as an extension of the self. What connects the two narratives then, is an interest in the ways in which notions of humanness are contested[17].

With the arrival of the aliens in *District 9*, the boundary between human-animal is destabilised. Similarly, the quite literal rupture of the human body becoming alien stresses the dissolution of what was previously consider an uncrossable boundary. As Nel suggests though, it is the very "act of breaking, erecting and shifting borders [that] enables a re-imagination of the

[17] For a more detailed exploration of the two texts and their focus on the human-animal relationship, see Elzette Steenkamp's doctoral research, *Identity, Belonging and Ecological Crisis in South African Speculative Fiction* (2011).

established cultural, political and social spaces" (2012, 558). The alien body and the anxiety it fosters, therefore, offers the narrative of *District 9* a means for reimagining the borders which segregate the cultural, political and social spheres of Johannesburg. As suggested by Blomkamp's comments about the film being his version of future Johannesburg, this potential for reimagining boundaries is mostly lost through a focus on sustaining segregation in a city consumed by dystopic realities.

This view of a dystopic, segregated future Johannesburg is further bolstered by the bureaucratic agencies which regulate the alien body. Under the governing of Multi-National United (MNU), South Africa's non-humans have been subject to extreme segregationist policies – not unlike the historical subjugation of those designated "non-white" during apartheid. Among the additional material for the film, is an outline for MNU's regulations of "human/non-human interactions conduct, relations, and dealings"[18]. The regulations are reminiscent of apartheid-era laws, forbidding the non-humans from owning property, using public transport or leaving their encampment ("Any trespassing outside District 9 is grounds for on-site extermination or indefinite detention"). Additionally, sexual relations between human and non-human are outlawed and, generally, the aliens are not permitted to exist in public space – as seen in regulations such as "Non-humans must use public restrooms specifically designated for non-human use". In addition to the state-sanctioned segregationist policies, the aliens are also compared to invertebrate life forms through being referred to as "prawns". This derogatory term, one of the film's interviewees tells us, "obviously implies something that is a bottom feeder, that scavenges the leftovers". The use of the term "prawn" is also reminiscent of the Parktown prawn – a notoriously hard to kill cockroach that populates the suburbs of Johannesburg. Thus, referring to the aliens as "prawns" associates them with a form of insect life that is considered a pest, a nuisance, something to be squashed under a shoe. As such, the

[18] The full list of regulations is available at: http://district9.wikia.com/wiki/Multi-National_United

film expresses “the horrors of becoming the Other and naturalizes binary notions of the racial Other as a depraved reprobate, physically disgusting, and economically impoverished” (Christopher 2013, 42).

For Wikus, then, being contaminated by the alien fluid leads to him becoming less than human. Wikus’s identity is, thus, compromised by this “rupture” that occurs not only in his physical body, but in how quickly others cease to treat him as human and refer to him as “the specimen”.

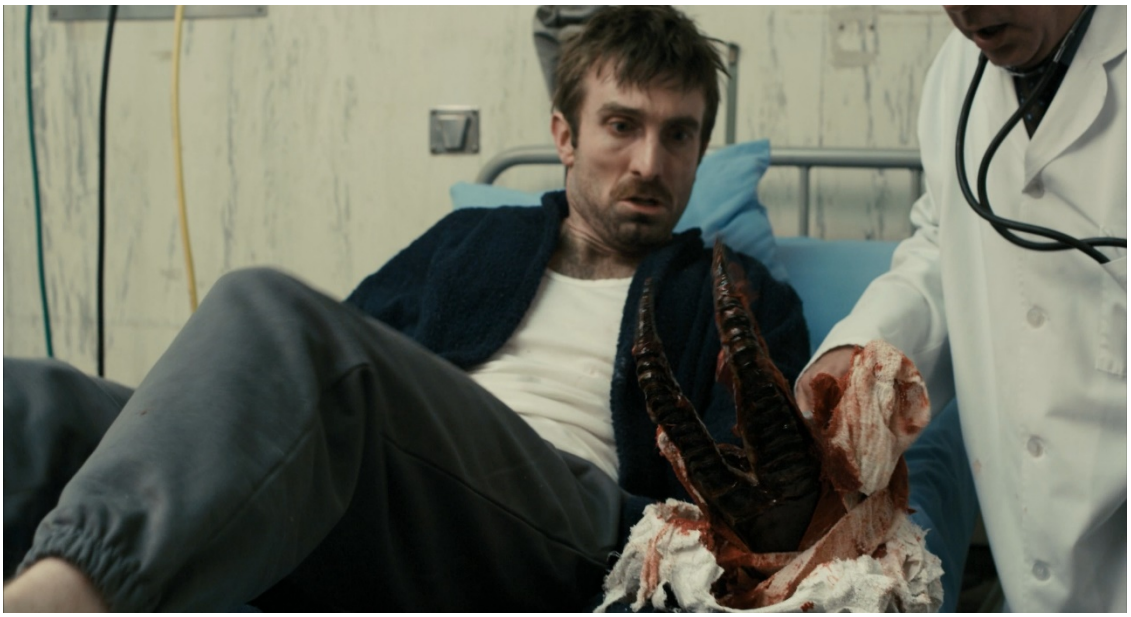

Figure 5: Wikus's hand morphs into an alien claw

Initially, Wikus begins excreting black fluid and losing fingernails, before his entire left hand morphs into an alien claw, leading to MNU using his body for experiments. As the audience is told, Wikus’s “body represents hundreds of millions, maybe billions of dollars’ worth of biotechnology” (*District 9*) as his changing DNA now enables him to operate the bio-powered alien machinery. In testing the weapon, Wikus is forced to shoot first a pig and then, to his horror, is made to kill one of the aliens. After he manages to escape, Wikus becomes a fugitive, leading to fear-mongering news pieces. In one TV segment, we are told:

> A patient has escaped from the isolation ward and is loose in the city. Wikus Van De Merwe was recently apprehended after prolonged sexual

> activity with aliens in District 9 ... causing bodily disfigurement. It's highly contagious and the police warns people to stay at least 20 meters away from this man. (*District 9*).

The TV segment portrays Wikus's situation as a result of sexual activity with the aliens and evokes body horror in suggesting that he is contagious, thus, ensuring that no humans are willing to aid him in his escape. Unsurprisingly then, Wikus is unable to safely exist in the space of the city and, as the narrator tells us, Wikus "end[s] up hiding in the one place he knew no one would ever come looking for him": District 9. In establishing this hierarchy of human/non-human, however, the film "reproduces an ideology of racial binaries and naturalizes a pervasive system of class and racial distinctions in which miscegenation becomes (and remains) the primary threat to the bourgeois domestic myth" (Christopher 2013, 40). In mixing with the alien, Wikus becomes viewed as a threat and a traitor to his species and is forced out of his suburban life, unable to see his wife again. Even Wikus's colleagues are shown to turn on him, with one commenting that "there are rules, we're all living by rules in this world", and another saying "I don't think he can be forgiven for what he did, cause it's like a betrayal" (*District 9*). Wikus's betrayal is not only present in his slippage between human/non-human, but also through his actions in the climax of the movie. With MNU descending on District 9, Wikus aids the alien Christopher Johnson in escaping Earth, with Wikus killing numerous human MNU military to facilitate this escape. Johnson is forced to leave Wikus behind in District 9, promising to return in three years' time to restore Wikus's DNA to human status. The movie ends with Wikus's body fully transformed into that of the alien as he is left waiting for the possible return of Johnson.

This conclusion, however, seems to forgo the possibility of human/non-human empathy and understanding. Although Wikus may perhaps have developed some compassion for alien life, his actions have been painted as those of a human traitor and South Africans at large are left in a state of uncertainty and anxiety as they watch the alien spacecraft leaving Earth. As the

narrator tells us, “Everybody wants to know what's going to happen next” (*District 9*). South Africans have no idea what repercussions this event will hold and “whether or not [Johnson] will come back and declare a war on us”. Blomkamp’s future vision of Joburg is, thus, one left in a suspended state, once again awaiting the possible apocalyptic destruction that was first stoked when the aliens appeared in 1982. While the audience who watches Wikus’s transformation might be able to overcome the abject renderings of the othered body and feel compassion for the aliens, the whole process of ruptured identity is still played out through body horror and post-apartheid anxieties of invasion. Moreover, the Johannesburg of the film is shown to react in trepidation of future invasions and the potential of boundary crossing is left in stasis; a sense that change in social order is inherently violent, undesirable and, possibly, an unlikely outcome.

Pests in Cape Town

While *District 9* utilises the extra-terrestrial body to explore issues of “humanness”, *Nineveh* focuses instead on the forms of life that inhabit the edges of Cape Town. When asked about her writing, Rose-Innes says her intent is to “create a version of reality that is transformed by redeeming or illuminating strangeness” (For Books’ Sake 2012, n.p.). Such an intent forms the backbone of *Nineveh* as a novel which poses the possibility of alternate ways of being in the city. In “illuminating strangeness”, Rose-Innes takes a microscopic view of insects and their existence in order to reflect on Cape Town’s desire to police borders from undesirable bodies. In terms of speculative fiction, the novel eschews the apocalyptic mode, that of sudden catastrophe, in favour of allowing the natural world to slowly show its presence creeping in. Compared to the other novels analysed in this study, *Nineveh* seldom ventures into fantastical renderings of common urban and rural topography. Instead, the novel leans towards a magical realist approach, breathing a sense of life into how Rose-Innes visualises the entropic nature of the built environment and allowing for Katya to demonstrate compassion for non-human life

forms without the need for a violent, biological transformation that forms part of Wikus's journey.

Beyond her exploration of the non-human, Rose-Innes's text is also concerned with a wide selection of Cape Town and its surrounding areas. During the course of the novel, the reader encounters a wide variety of living spaces: from Katya's small home along the Liesbeek river, to her sister's upmarket Claremont suburban home and the sprawling wealth and lawns of Constantia, to the informal settlements just beyond the city limits – and most notably, the eponymous housing development capitalising on the Noordhoek wetlands. The housing estate that gives the novel its name is a blatant example of neoliberal affluence claiming space from the more natural world as well as divesting the area from the informal settlements along its periphery. As the housing estate begins to be reclaimed by the environment, Katya finds herself caught between completing her task and questioning her own role as urban enforcer. Katya's internal process is one which takes into account the numerous forms of segregation still playing out in Cape Town, and in rendering these on the page, Rose-Innes makes "a unique contribution to the broader project of imagining, planning and sustaining a more equitable Cape Town" (Kruger 2015)

Through Katya's self-awareness, Rose-Innes suggests that Cape Town is much more than the tourist paradise of the City Bowl and Table Mountain. Beyond the popular imaginings of the Mother City, there are many other ways of inhabiting Cape Town. Early in the novel, we learn that Katya has "lived and worked in Cape Town her whole life, but there are still places in this city she's never been" (*Nineveh* 23). Moreover, this hints at a sense of insulation provided by Katya's privilege and whiteness – a concern which permeates the narrative repeatedly and is highlighted in each encounter Katya has with other beings, whether human or not. Through Katya's movements across the city and her interactions with humans and non-humans alike,

the novel examines issues of urban topographies and who has access to which parts of the landscape.

Unlike *District 9*'s overt duality of city and slum, *Nineveh* is a text that explores Cape Town as a city that comprises many overlapping, interconnected parts. Ken Barris characterises this as a "seam" where country and city interact and "provide space for imaginative re-invention" (2014, 60). Loren Kruger's reading of the novel similarly asserts the necessity of discussing the intersecting spheres of Cape Town's urban and natural environment, stating that:

> the character of urban life can be fully understood only in juxtaposition with the parts of the city's topography that appear to escape urban development such as the sheer cliffs of Table Mountain or the precarious 'informal' living conditions of many migrants that seem to negate the urbane picture of the welcoming Mother City. (Kruger 2015).

These juxtapositions of urban and the natural, play out in *Nineveh* with Rose-Innes demonstrating an interest in exploring multiple imaginations and experiences of inhabiting Cape Town, most notably when Katya finds a photographic book which juxtaposes past and present images of the city. In Katya's description, the book aims to be a retrospective, comparing how different areas of the city have changed, from Camps Bay to District 6. This visual history of Cape Town captures iconic views of the city as it once was and as it presently stands. These photographs suggest that distinct change has occurred over the years, but Katya asserts that "neither the old nor the new seems obviously preferable" and that, by comparison the natural surroundings of Cape Town seem to have sustained fewer discernible changes. Most striking of all is Katya's comment that "In none of the pictures does the city seem to be sitting easy with itself" (*Nineveh* 96).

Overall, Katya finds it to be a "disorienting experience, looking at this book. Each person snapping the shutter had been trying to fix the city as it was, but there is no fixing such a restless thing as a discontented city" (*Nineveh* 96). Labelling the city as "discontented", Katya realises

that every photograph is merely an individual's attempt to "fix the city as it was"; these snapshots are simply a single vision trying to depict a "restless", ever-changing city. As Katya wistfully remarks: "So little of the original Cape Town remains … How silly to imagine anything built now will stand for years to come" (*Nineveh* 96-7). Understanding the city to be a space which is ever-changing and subject to entropy, Katya is thus shown to be reluctant to allow buildings and infrastructure to determine her future. As with her reference to District 6, Katya shows an awareness that boundaries will shift with time, and that being displaced is a common experience for many South Africans who are relegated to the edges of the city. Thus, in order to characterise the city of Cape Town, one needs to consider both the urban developments of the city centre and the aspects of the natural world alongside the informal and migratory spaces. The Cape Town described in the novel, can thus be viewed as "a polychromatic city far less accommodating than we are often led to believe" (Amid 2011, n.p.).

In his discussion of *Nineveh*, Shane Graham argues that Rose-Innes' work is reflective of "post-millennial anxiety found in urban South Africa," which he attributes to the rapid pace of change in the country and the rising fear of crime (2014, 64). This form of anxiety sometimes takes "the form of nostalgia for a social order many perceive as endangered or already broken" (Graham 2014, 64). Nostalgia, as shown above in the photo book, can take a marked interest in how we plan, mould and reorder our built environment. In this context, a literary work like *Nineveh* demonstrates the state of entropy in South Africa through two particular images: invasion and subterranean levels (*Ibid*). For Graham, anxiety governs the mood of South Africa in two particular ways. Firstly, Graham isolates "a dread of invasion, contamination, infestation, and other encroachments of the new, alien, and other" (*Ibid*). The second interest that Graham isolates "involves subterranean spaces – basements, mines, tunnels – and a distrust of the solidity of built environments" (*Ibid*). Katya, in particular, demonstrates these qualities, as shown in her reaction to the construction site opposite her house which has slowly replaced

a small play-park. As she arrives home, Katya's "heart gives a lurch to see the road so altered. It looks unbalanced, as if the whole street tilts away from her house and down toward the gap on the other side" (*Nineveh* 25). Katya's dismay is partly because "the park has absorbed an astounding number of creepy-crawlies and minor menaces without ill effect," (*Nineveh 25*) including several vagrants in need of a home, and partly due to the fact that, as she concedes, Katya is "troubled by change" (*Nineveh* 27). The process of change disturbs Katya. First, she witnesses men with chainsaws taking apart an old tree, "hauling the pieces away like joints of meat," before "uniformed guards also remove the park's human dwellers" (*Nineveh* 27). The forced removal of the homeless from the park unsettles Katya, and she begins to start having doubts about her own relocation business. Moreover, there is an intriguing difference in the form of invasion which Katya and Wikus encounter: while *District 9* positions the invader as coming from the sky, *Nineveh* considers the role of the natural world invading the built environment from below.

Furthermore, Katya's distrust of change is shown to be a result of her nomadic childhood which brought its own unpredictability, leading Katya to comment that she and Len "never did stand on steady ground" (*Nineveh* 30). The unpredictability of having Len as a father is hinted at a number of times before he appears in the novel. Katya notes that Len would often steal tools or equipment from employers, simply because he "had a habit – or perhaps a principle – of walking away from a job with more than he brought in" (*Nineveh* 48). Katya remembers that, over the years, Len grew:

> ever more whisky-soaked, their travels more haphazardly and accident-plagued. At some point she'd started to be repelled by the stink of killing that clung to them both. She wanted to be clean. And she wanted to be still: to have one place she belonged to, that belonged to her. (*Nineveh* 48).

Katya's desire to belong somewhere, as well as her need for the stability that comes from a sense of home, is, therefore, derived from years of living in a state of constant flux. Considering

the number of times that Katya has moved or been without a home herself, usually due to Len, it is understandable why change signals uncertainty. Consequently, Katya found herself longing for the stability that she believes a fixed address would offer:

> [She] always imagined that once you got to settle down, once you had that stack of bricks and mortar, it was solid. She hadn't realised how restless bricks and mortar are; how much effort it takes to keep them from falling down, from wandering off or spilling out in the wrong direction. (*Nineveh* 30-1).

Built structures, therefore, signify durability and the maintenance of the status quo. Change, however, is always an inevitability. Katya's feelings towards the construction opposite her home are, thus, a manifestation of the anxiety which arises from the uncertainty. Observing this, Katya remarks: "Something new will be rising up here soon. This is what happens when you don't pay attention … Things change; the pieces move around. She doesn't like it. She's troubled by change" (*Nineveh* 27). In trying to discern the uncomfortable feeling that engrosses her when witnessing this, Katya realises that her feelings are rooted in "All the wear and tear, the rot and disintegration, the distressing entropy of built things" (*Nineveh* 30).

This element of urban change is highlighted throughout the novel as both something troubling as well as an unavoidable reality of impermanence. Moreover, this impermanence is shown to be a necessary aspect of change – as well as an act of power. As Ken Barris argues, the city is intended to be an icon of stability and duration, highly dependent on physical structure to visually signify order and power dynamics (2014, 66). The city, thus, can be considered as an attempt at fixing borders through urban development. These borders, however, are always shifting; a shifting that in contemporary Cape Town leads to the displacement of the marginalised and disenfranchised.

Apocalyptic pestilence and the suburbs

Similar to *District 9*, Rose-Innes's novel interrogates otherness through a focus on the non-human body. In this case, Rose-Innes eschews the apocalyptic mode through her decision to explore insect life rather than imagining a new invasive alien species. The category of "apocalypse", argues Rob Goodman, actually invites a form of "dystopian narcissism: the conviction that our own anxieties are uniquely awful; that the crises of our age will be the ones that finally do civilization in; that we are privileged to witness the beginning of the end" (2013, 2). Drawing on typology, Goodman notes that this type of thinking, of the present holding more value than the past or future, has invested Western literature with the "possibility that seemingly trivial events might represent or prefigure the divine invested struggles of ordinary men and women with new dignity" (2013, 3). Drawing on the literal meaning of apocalypse as "the uncovering", Goodman argues that this type of thinking is intended to treat historical investigation as a means for "bringing order and import out of randomness," and therefore, the "destruction of history, and the unveiling of its purpose, happens at one stroke," giving humankind purpose, as these apocalyptic moments appear to promise grand revelations regarding the meaning of our existence (*Ibid*). These attempts at creating and maintaining structures, are the very notions that Rose-Innes' work seems to critique.

The title of her novel hints at Rose-Innes' "underlying idea in *Nineveh* … that change is inevitable, irresistible, and not necessarily undesirable" (Davidson 2012). She argues that her novel is:

> not an apocalyptic book in that chaos is not an end point, but perhaps the start of a new cycle, a different order. The imagery of ancient, abandoned cities suggests that systems – cities, civilizations, families – are eternally falling apart and being replaced by something else, and that we should not fear that process but embrace it. (*Ibid*).

As suggested by her title, *Nineveh* draws from historical references; particularly that of ancient cities and their undoing. Rose-Innes notes that "Nineveh was one of the very first great cities, famously destroyed, so as a title it has great resonance for a novel about cities in flux and how they rise and fall and rise again" (Qtd in *ForBooks'Sake*, 2012: n.p.). An ancient Assyrian city, Nineveh is often considered one of the greatest cities in antiquity. In 612BC, however, the city was sacked by its own former subjects. As such, the naming of the housing complex in Rose-Innes' novel invokes an ancient history of architecture and the tendency of cities in flux to "rise and fall and rise again". This element of "the distressing entropy of built things," (*Nineveh* 30) is continuously highlighted in the novel, which draws on South Africa's colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid engineering of urban spaces.

In drawing on imagery of fallen cities, Rose-Innes posits a sense of the apocalyptic not as a sudden catastrophe, but as a form of cumulative change. This sense of change is further evoked through her allegory of insects as harbingers of change. When asked about her use of insects in the novel, Rose-Innes comments that although humans "have a very deep-seated fear of parasites," we should remember their important, often unseen, role in our ecosystem – particularly because they "are powerful in number" (Qtd in Davidson 2012, n.p.) For this reason, Rose-Innes notes that "insects are a good metaphor for insidious, cumulative change," as they are "the small but numerous agents of chaos in the cracks and foundations of our solid-seeming reality, and they can eventually bring down a city (Qtd in Davidson 2012, n.p.).

In using this metaphor, Rose-Innes notes that insects are "reviled and lowly creatures," (Qtd in Davidson 2012, n.p.) who represent the undesirables that the suburban security measures attempt to keep at bay. Furthermore, Rose-Innes suggests that not only are insects vital to supporting Cape Town's ecosystem, but that they function as a metaphor for the sense of change. Thus, these "agents of chaos" represent a threat to "our sold-seeming reality" simply through their ability to erode and circumvent the seemingly fixed nature of boundaries that

comprise the city. In her words, “a horde of tiny beings infiltrating a housing estate is quite a good metaphor for insidious changes to our environment: the small things that occupy the unseen cracks in the world and then one day break it apart” (Qtd in *ForBooks’Sake*, 2012: n.p.). The use of insects infiltrating a new housing development intended for the wealthy also shows the level of anxiety noted by Graham – a state of fear that results in building walls and boundaries in the hopes that they will deter every kind of undesirable presence.

As with the aliens in *District 9*, Rose-Innes’s use of insects draws for the human anxiety around invasion as a desire to circumvent change. Katya notes, “people will pay to have them killed, poisoned, destroyed ... They’re objectionable only because they’ve wandered from their proper zones” (*Nineveh* 19). In her own words, her job is in “helping these small sojourners in a strange land. Putting the wild back in the wild, keeping the tame tame. Policing borders” (*Nineveh 19*). While most people seek to have the “pests” eradicated, Katya, however, feels differently:

> Her philosophy is to respect any creature that gets by in the city: ducking and diving, snatching at morsels, day by day negotiating new truces with the humans among whom they live. Survivors, squatters and invaders. Tough buggers. They have their place. (*Nineveh 19).*

Her compassion for other beings is, thus, what prompts Katya’s relocation methods. This stands in stark contrast to when a young Katya would help her father, Len, with his extermination business. As the novel progresses, we learn more about the childhood Katya experienced at Len’s hands. Len’s drinking and abrasive personality is made clear in these passages, with the constant threat of sudden violence being cited as the reason why older sister Alma left home. This family tension serves as the emotional counterpoint in the novel, as Katya struggles to find her own place in the world. When the novel opens, the sisters are shown to have a terse relationship, both having made their own attempts to leave absent Len in the past. While Katya runs PPR, a company antithetical to the one her father once ran, Alma has moved to upmarket

Claremont and, save from Katya, has expunged her past from her present clinically-sterile life behind high walls.

Len's influence is even more wide-spread than this, though, with Katya's distaste for the smell of death and Len's methods, leading to her starting a company that relocates pests rather than killing them. Painless Pest Relocation allows Katya an opportunity to determine her own feelings of respect for the pests. Possibly due to her turbulent upbringing, then, Katya develops an attachment to the pests, finding more in common with them than characters like Alma or the Brands, who appear forceful in their attempts to ward off the undesirable from their properties. The policing of borders that Katya's job entails recalls the attempts of the city to purge the undesirable elements from its surface. While the novel focuses on the use of insects, Katya does draw attention to the homeless people she comes into contact with in her own neighbourhood, as well as the people who reside in the informal settlement on the outskirts of Nineveh. The issue of displaced human beings operates on the periphery of the novel, but Katya does occasionally acknowledge that the use of barriers in South Africa has a long legacy in colonisation – as seen in Katya's mention of Jan van Riebeek's "famous hedge, meant to keep the Khoisan out of the old Dutch settlement" (*Nineveh* 22). This colonial border has subsequently been eroded, but the spatial landscape of Cape Town has continued to find other forms of cordoning the city and restricting access.

Among the urban environments that Katya encounters, the suburb stands out as a space of sterility. When visiting her sister in Claremont, Katya notes that the houses in Alma's road are described as "modern, single-storey with generous front and back gardens, all beautifully maintained. There is not a shameful façade in the row" (*Nineveh* 135). Katya even notes that "Alma's is particularly trim, the wall newly painted" (*Nineveh 135*). Compared to Katya's modest home, "the barriers are rather more deliberate: high wall, electric fence, no bell – it's been removed so that beggars don't disturb the family" (*Nineveh 135*). In attempting to scrub

their unstable childhood from her memory, Alma has become pedantic in maintaining a high-walled home which keep outsiders at bay. Similarly, the Brand family home in Constantia is shown to be at a disjuncture from its natural surrounds. The novel opens with Katya at work, collecting and relocating unwanted life from this pristinely kept garden. Describing the property with "the perfect lawn [that] slopes down to the grand white house below, between clipped flowerbeds flecked with pink and blue," which is nestled below scenic views of the Constantiaberg (*Nineveh* 9). For all the attempts to maintain order in this ornate garden, in the centre stands:

> an abomination. This single tree sleeved with a rind of invertebrate matter, with plump, spiked bodies the colour of burnt sugar. It's possible to imagine that the whole tree has been eaten away, replaced by a crude facsimile made of caterpillar flesh. (*Nineveh* 9).

This degradation, despite being a natural process, evokes a real sense of fear in Katya's client who refuses to come within 100 metres of the tree. Mrs Brand's anxiety about this invasion of her property is strongly linked to her desire of appearance. Katya observes while working to cleanse the environment of these invaders, that the property also has numerous waiters and servers scurrying around furiously.

As soon as the guests begin to arrive, Mrs Brand balks at the idea of Katya and Toby moving past the party-goers with boxes of caterpillars. Katya quickly realises that Mrs Brand is "ashamed of her caterpillar problem. The creatures have swarmed overnight, disgusting her; she cannot allow them to perform their congregation in sight of her fastidious guests" (*Nineveh* 13).

Mrs Brand's attempts at preserving her home's immaculate image sets the stage for the novel's events. Firstly, this evokes the definition of utopia as a walled garden, a perfect world free from undesirable elements – a clinically sterile environment which, nevertheless, relies on the natural world's beauty, albeit a controlled facsimile of nature. Secondly, as Katya leaves Mrs

Brand to her party, she is approached by Mr Brand. After giving him her business card, Katya learns that Mr Brand had previously hired Katya's father to divest Nineveh of its infestation. According to Mr Brand, Len "ripped [him] off spectacularly … Took [his] money, fucked around, fucked off" (*Nineveh* 17). Katya's only response is to distance herself Len, who she admits not to have seen for years, by stating that she is "humane. Painless. Different" (*Nineveh* 17). Mr Brand, with many lecherous glances up and down Katya's body, indicates that he may have work for Katya at his housing development after Len failed to complete the job. The circular nature of Katya and Len's relationship is further stressed by Katya depositing several caterpillars back into the Brands' garden. As she explains to Toby, this is a "bit of insurance" to assure that the Brands will require her services again (*Nineveh* 18). While Katya may do this as a result of her uncomfortable encounter with Mr Brand, she has to concede to Toby that she learnt this trick from Len – an indication that her past still affects her present actions.

Encountering Nineveh

Moving from the sterility ensconced in the Brands' Constantia home, Katya prepares for her journey to the Nineveh security complex. At first, Katya struggles to find her way, realizing that "Nineveh is so very new that it doesn't yet exist – not in the Cape Town street directory, and not on the maps in [her] head" (*Nineveh* 51). Having come to pride herself on her ability to navigate Cape Town, Katya is dismayed to discover that she cannot instinctively orientate herself, and when "she tries to follow the route in her mind, she drifts in limbo: somewhere out past Noordhoek, between the new houses and the beach. Wetlands. Or so she thought" (*Nineveh* 52). Earlier, Mr Brand's assistant, Zintle, mentions that the area has been reclaimed from the Wetlands – although, subsequently, "half the reclaimed area collapsed into the bloody swamp," (*Nineveh* 39) leading Katya to contemplate "how much of the wetlands they had to drain, how many thousands of vertebrae and invertebrate souls were displaced" (*Nineveh* 60). Katya's disorientation in locating Nineveh also leads to her to suspect that it might exist "in a parallel

universe," or some "slightly future Cape Town" (*Nineveh* 52). She feels disconcerted about its sudden existence due to her presumed familiarity with Cape Town. Nineveh is something foreign to her, something misplaced, newly-erected and artificial.

The artifice of the housing complex of Nineveh is further demonstrated by virtue of its ornate gates, complete with "a grinning lion … either side, done in hard-wearing ceramic. Some kind of Mesopotamian fantasy" (*Nineveh* 52). As majestic and commanding a creature as the lion is, these lifeless statues are unable to keep unwanted natural elements out, evoking the novel's epigraph taken from the book of Zephaniah: "This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none besides me: how is she become a desolation, a place for the beasts to lie down in!" (2:14-15). Rose-Innes comments on her appropriation of the verse, stating that the verse recalls "how Nineveh's ruins are inhabited by wild animals – which has obvious echoes in the novel," and that, in the *Bible*, "this is meant as a vision of utter desolation, and God's punishment for pride, but I choose to see it as a more hopeful image of the re-appropriation of city space by unexpected inhabitants" (Qtd in For Books' Sake 2012, n.p.). Re-envisioning this destruction not as a form of omnipotent punishment, Rose-Innes demonstrates that order necessarily must crumble as a means of reconstituting the present. This belief in natural cycles is indicative of Rose-Innes not succumbing to the popularity of apocalyptic fiction. Rather, she chooses to peel back the layers of apparent urban permanence to reveal the dystopic elements lurking just beneath the surface. The notion of the depth beneath the surface of the urban environment is frequently highlighted in the novel, such as when Katya summons a "sense of *downness* – of space under the surface" in the city (*Nineveh* 31). Later, this interest in the underneath is shown to be a major part of Nineveh's downfall when Katya discovers a "cavity beneath the structure … another, lower storey, an underneath that did not exist before" (*Nineveh* 109). As it transpires, there are means of circumventing Nineveh's high walls and security measures that allow inhabitants of the informal settlement just beyond the

wall to steal building materials from the housing complex. At first, Katya discovers an entry point beneath the boardwalk, and later, she realises that beneath the unit in Nineveh which she has been occupying, is a much larger passage between the built world and the world beyond.

When Katya enters the unit below her Unit 2, she discovers "a strange duplicate … existing in some degraded alternative world … an in-between place, where things overlap, where the vlei steps inside and the indoor world escapes into the veld" (*Nineveh* 163). As Katya realises, Len has been squatting in Unit 1, taking advantage of this ability to come and go undetected and profiting off of Mr Brand's ignorance. Moreover, Katya sees a certain value in how this tunnel allows for an unseen passage between the world of Nineveh's artifice and the natural world just beyond the walls. Feeling that this is just "the middle world," Katya realises that below this must be an "even danker world" – a crawlspace for beetles, who use it as a "portal" (*Nineveh* 164). This crawlspace, Katya realises is how Len has been stealing building materials. Moreover, this discovery is "the kind of breaching of boundaries that someone like Mr Brand could not be expected to imagine, or anticipate, or guard against" (*Nineveh* 164). For someone like Mr Brand, physical structures are stable and unbreachable.

With this discovery, Nineveh, which Katya has previously described in fairly sterile terms, is revealed to be strangely alive – albeit it a form of life that is not easily noticeable unless one is looking. This part of Cape Town, teeming with non-human life also stands in stark contrast to the "cleanliness" associated with the housing complex. Discovering this entirely foreign world, Katya reflects that "Nineveh is breathing, flexing in a complex new rhythm that is alien to her" (*Nineveh* 173). As lifeless as the buildings may seem at first glance, the world beneath is entirely living, breathing ecosystem operating with a vocabulary of "whispers" and "clicks", which Katya strains to hear.

Up to this point, much of Nineveh has been discussed as "an ice fortress" (*Nineveh* 108) or in terms of the "sterility" (*Nineveh* 118) that its urban development has foisted upon the landscape. Below the surface of the floor, though, Katya finds life-pulsing mud, beetles streaming out from a portal which shows "the kind of breaching of boundaries that someone like Mr Brand could not be expected to imagine, or anticipate, or guard against" (*Nineveh* 164). With his perspective skewed by a belief in the stability of physical structures, Mr Brand has remained entirely unaware of this cavity beneath Nineveh. As Katya reflects: "having a belief in the fixed nature of things, in walls and floors … gives you a certain disadvantage. Mr Brand, for all his solid confidence … cannot see past the evidence of the concrete world … it would not occur to him that walls are breachable" (*Nineveh* 188). Being inflexible in his outlook on the world leaves Mr Brand unable to consider that something he built could contain "an in-between place" (*Nineveh* 188), a zone of intersecting forms of life.

As the novel ends, Katya rehouses Len in her old apartment, taking another act of relocation of a pest. Despite this, Katya feels that "people like them – like her and Len – they're not homey. They don't have homes, they don't really fit in them" (*Nineveh* 206). The brief moments she had had of living in the safety of Nineveh, were merely "a dream, as grandiose and doomed as Mr Brand's vision" (*Nineveh* 206). Instead, Katya elects a more nomadic path, living in her van and spending the night in several different parts of Cape Town. As the novel closes, Katya parks her van at Signal Hill and looks out at the cityscape, spotting the Castle of Good Hope, "the bare patch that used to be District 6," and off into the distance, she can see where "the suburbs begin, and beyond that the railway yards and warehouses" (*Nineveh* 206). As she reminisces about the people she has interacted with during the last few weeks, she imagines "Each of them in a subtly different Cape Town, waving to each other, meeting occasionally in the places where such cities overlap. Zones where the world is taking form; where things get mixed up and wander from their positions. Ninevehs" (*Nineveh* 206-7).

Although Katya seems to have removed herself from the city, the ending of the novel is one which suggests that boundaries are breachable, change is inevitable, and that humans and non-humans, despite contested living space, are entangled in a shared habitation of the city of Cape Town.

Conclusion

As speculative narratives, *District 9* and *Nineveh* are useful in considering the ways we bring the city to life through acts of imagination and representation. *District 9,* however, offers up visions of a dystopic Johannesburg, divided into the city and the slum. The film shows little interest in tackling the real ramifications of xenophobic violence, rather electing to represent the township as a slum, a spectacle, for audiences to consume. Although Christopher Johnson leaves Earth and may return, the majority of the aliens are still relocated and cordoned off in a new district. Like Wikus, South Africans at large are left in an uncertain position, with the threat of invasion still looming. *Nineveh*, on the other hand, succeeds in eschewing the apocalyptic, life-changing event in favour of the notion of insidious, cumulative change. Furthermore, this change is shown not to be undesirable, but rather inevitable. Cape Town will continue to develop and segregate, but on the individual level we are all capable of considering how our actions will shape the city to come.

Chapter 5: Speculating on the Anthropocene in Karen Jayes's *For the Mercy of Water*

> "we are busy … fighting a war over our bodies. We are fighting a war over every piece of life in all of us. It is down to this last thing, and it will consume us. We will consume us" (*Mercy* 110).

Over the last few years, Cape Town has been marked by unprecedented drought and heavy water restrictions. As David Olivier of *The Sunday Times* notes, "[n]ever in recorded history has Cape Town encountered a drought of such severity for three consecutive years" (Olivier 2017). Described by some media as "sound[ing] like science fiction," (Farber 2017) the drought has forced not just the city of Cape Town, but the whole of South Africa to reconsider the impact of human consumption on the natural world.

The anxieties surrounding Cape Town's "Day Zero" are impossible to ignore when reading a novel like Karen Jayes's *For the Mercy of Water*. Although the novel's setting is never named, critics have been quick to "find traces of South Africa in Jayes's unidentified cityscape" (Steenkamp 2013b). In the novel, this unnamed country has experienced severe drought, leading to water privatisation and, ultimately, a war over natural resources. After news of rain in a small town, the novel's protagonist, an unnamed writer, travels to the town following the "promise of a story" (*Mercy* 8). Here, she uncovers unsettling accounts of the methods employed by the water company to secure possible water sources. Most notably, the writer comes face to face with the violence that company men exact on women in rural areas, highlighting one of the novel's central concerns: the intersection of gender, race and class identities as played out against a dichotomy of corporate city interests against the lives of those in rural areas.

In light of Cape Town's drought, it is difficult not to notice the similarities between the city in Jayes's novel and what is being experienced in contemporary Cape Town. As such, the speculative element at work in the novel allows for an extrapolation of what Cape Town could become – and, in some ways, highlights the discriminatory policies that have always regulated issues of access in South Africa. The novel is structured in three parts, starting with the protagonist, an unnamed writer, arriving in the town where she hears Mother's story and experiences the threat of the company first hand. In the middle sections of the novel, the writer returns home and begins searching for Eve, the lone surviving girl cared for by Mother. Finally, the last section of the novel involves the journey to return Eve to the care of Mother.

In my examination of the novel, I consider how Jayes's narrative opens the possibility of reading speculative fiction alongside the Anthropocene through the connections of body, memory, temporality and landscape. These connections also highlight some of the dominant themes covered in this thesis, showing how *Mercy* also deals with complex intersections of race, gender and class as complicated by the hydro-apocalypse and the capitalisation of water. I begin this chapter by considering the speculative extrapolations of Jayes's novel and how best to position this within the broader concerns of genre. From here, I consider how the novel's setting evokes comparisons to the drought in Cape Town, before looking at the role of narrative and storytelling within such events. In doing so, I draw on theories of the Anthropocene and consider how this new geological era prompts a reading of Jayes's speculative Cape Town. Moreover, I argue that this novel functions as an entry point to investigating the limits of the city, making it a useful locus for thinking through the era of post-apartheid.

Speculative fiction and the Anthropocene

Given that reading genre is an overall concern in this thesis, it is necessary to consider the degree to which Jayes has been influenced by genre associations, and in turn, the relationship

between such genre formulations and the version of Cape Town that the reader encounters in *Mercy*. In this section I explore how Jayes's own experiences as a journalist have shaped her approach to fiction, before positioning the relationship between Jayes's understanding of speculative fiction within an understanding of the Anthropocene and its literary potential.

When asked about the genre of her work, Jayes responds evasively by saying that she needs to "pull an Atwood" (Qtd in Steenkamp 2013a, n.p.). In referencing Atwood's reluctance of genre classifiers, Jayes's comments about her work bearing striking correlation to how Atwood has positioned her own novels. For instance, when asked if *The Handmaid's Tale* should be considered science fiction, Atwood has countered with suggestions that her novel is more speculative fiction because "nothing happens [in the novel] that the human race has not already done at some point in the past, or that it is not already doing now, perhaps in other countries" (Atwood 2005, 102). Thus, for Atwood, self-labelling her work as speculative fiction is an act of drawing attention to the fact that her literary extrapolations are just that – extrapolations of "projected trends … already in motion" (Atwood 2005, 102). As such, she considers speculative dystopic fiction as "dire warnings" and "dark shadows cast by the present into the future" (Atwood 2005, 103).

In this sense, Jayes's novel can also be considered as drawing on the lineage of speculative and dystopic fiction, questioning how current and historical experiences could continue to shape the future direction of South Africa. Similarly to Atwood, Jayes appropriately steers away from such associations, noting that her novel is "more speculative, but not even speculative at all" (Qtd in Steenkamp 2013a, n.p.). Mostly, Jayes notes that, although the novel falls in line with what is considered speculative fiction, conflict over water and issues of access are already being

experienced in many parts of the world[19] – including in South Africa. For Jayes, then, the elements of speculation, although based in real events, give rise to "a believable new reality," which allows the writer to raise "questions about the way we are now" and, ultimately, challenge the existing paradigm (qtd in Steenkamp 2013a).

Of course, such comments raise questions about the ability of fiction to tackle the issue of climate change. In *The Great Derangment* (2016), Amitav Ghosh notes that "climate change casts a much smaller shadow within the landscape of literary fiction than it does in the public arena" (2016, 7). Moreover, as Ghosh argues, when fiction does tackle this subject it not taken seriously by literary journals, meaning that "the mere mention of the subject is often enough to regulate a novel or a short story to the genre of science fiction … as though in the literary imagination climare change were somehow akin to extraterrestrials or interplanterary travel" (2016, 7). Is is not suprising, then, for Jayes to describe her novel in ways that attempt to circumvent the label of "science fiction" and embrace the fully real implications of global catastrophe in her writing.

In the case of *For the Mercy of Water*, Jayes roots her novel in lived experience by bringing her journalistic background to the fore, drawing attention to a seldom discussed global crisis: the war over water. Despite the allegorical elements of her work, Jayes is clear in highlighting the real world parallels that her novel evokes. As Jayes explains "whoever controls the water, controls life" (Qtd in Ellipsis 2012). Considering the commodification of human life through water regulation, then, is what gives Jayes the room to speculate on how current events can be extrapolated within the context of Cape Town.

[19] In interviews, Jayes frequently draws attention to the ubiquity with which water wars have become a global problem. Among her examples of where water crises are already in motion, Jayes notes that in Yemen "whole villages have been cleared and bands of people literally roam the desert landscape in search of water," while in Afghanistan and India, "cooldrink and bottled water companies mine the water table to such an extent that villagers have no more water" (Qtd in Steenkamp 2013a, n.p.).

As part of her narrative extrapolation, Jayes also draws on her personal experiences in Palestine to inform how water governance is a powerful tool. Jayes notes that "Palestinians call water the most powerful tool of the occupation," and that "Israel is taking four times as much water as the Palestinians from a single, vital shared aquifier in the West Bank" (Jayes 2012). The Israeli West Bank barrier or wall, which Jayes describes as a "8m-high, 800km-long wall concrete monstrosity topped by barbed wire, watchtowers and floodlights," which has become a "powerful symbol and weapon of the occupation … stretches far into Palestinian land … and annexes valuable water wells and pipelines for Israeli use" (Jayes 2012). In addition to the wall, "a co-ordinated system of rerouting, a discriminatory permit system and destruction by settlers," have all played a role in removing Palestinian water supplies to provide for Israeli homes and farmlands. As a result, Israelis are able to "use 240 cubic metres of water a person each year," while "Palestinians use only 75 cubic metres, 10 to 15 litres a person each day, below humanitarian disaster levels" (Jayes 2012). These water regulations have led to Palestinians having to purchase their water from Mekorot, the Israeli national water company (Jayes 2012). When water is scarce, Merkorot turns off the water for Palestinians and only provides water for Israelis. Jayes's experiences in Palestine are, thus, a major influence on the novel. By rooting her extrapolation in real-world precedent, Jayes sketches a narrative which, although speculative, shows how South Africa may be shaped by a continued water crisis.

Thus, although the novel is speculative, these elements are very much an extrapolation of events which are already occurring. Noting that the "battle for water is portrayed as an unsexy, vaguely environmental, but not political," Jayes draws attention to the lack of media attention as well as the failings of understanding the intersection between an environmental and political issue – the "colonisation and corporatisation" of a natural resource upon which all humans are dependent (Qtd in Ellipsis 2012). As already explored in this thesis, corporatisation is one form of spatial regulation and governance which has emerged strongly in South Africa. Most

notably, in *Moxyland* it was shown how the shadowy corporate realm infiltrated emergent technology, and adapted it for regulatory purposes. Similarly then, in *Mercy* new forms of regulation emerge in the intersection of governance and corporatisation.

Beyond these speculative interests of what Cape Town's landscape may become, *Mercy* also shows an interest in exploring how the exploitation of natural resources intersects with the exploitation of specific bodies. As Emma Dunn astutely proposes in her article on the novel, Jayes "takes issue with South Africa's turn toward water privatization by implicitly associating corporate dominance over water supply with male violence over the female body," and in doing so, connects water privatisation with rape in order to suggest that "efforts in water distribution negate the supposedly feminine realm of the body/nature in favour of the purportedly masculine realm of the mind/culture, they simultaneously perpetuate an ideology that condones and contributes to violence against women" (Dunn 2016, 88). These contrasts and associations are replete across the novel, with the language used by the company drawing on a patriarchal, colonial-era logic. Thus, while Jayes stresses the connections between women and the natural realm, she contrasts this with masculinisation of the corporate realm and its discourse of domination in the name of logic and progress. Establishing these gender-based hierarchies early in the novel, Jayes makes it clear how the dominant ideologies contribute to the ease with which female bodies and water are controlled and abused.

Furthermore, Jayes's novel also draws on the conventions of trauma narratives, which, in turn, shapes the narrative structure and language of the novel. As Jayes suggests: "Narrating a trauma, and the language we choose to use, becomes a gift that we are given to reason with events like these, and which each person uses differently" (qtd. in Ellipsis 2012). Jayes notes her desire to "draw a parallel between the mining of water, what I see as a kind of defilement of the earth, and the very concept of life, with the defilement of a young girl's body. It is a strong and long-held feminist metaphor, but something that I believe demands revisiting" (qtd.

in Ellipsis 2012). Jayes's novel, therefore, highlights the inextricable relationship between body, land and memory – a relationship which can be further understood through the context of the Anthropocene.

In the age of the Anthropocene, the means of conceiving of the human subject has undergone major transformation. In explaining the origin of the term, historian, postcolonial theory and seminal anthropocenic scholar, Dipesh Chakrabarty notes that, due to our increasing number and excessive use of fossil fuel, humans have become a major geological agent. For this reason, we should "recognize the beginning of a new geological era, one in which humans act as a main determinant of the environment of the planet" (Chakrabarty 2009, 208). Thus, this new age is framed as time when the human collective has become a significant agent in determining Earth's climate – something previously only attributed to large-scale geophysical forces (Chakrabarty 2012). Understanding the role that humans play in exacerbating climate change has, thus, become an important consideration when discussing how we understand humans as a species. For the purposes of this chapter, the concept of the Anthropocene is explored as a means of understanding the connections between human bodies and the landscapes which they inhabit. In particular, how this can be related to human actions at the level of the species which have a devastating effect on the environment. Considering the Anthropocene through literary representation allows me to frame storytelling and narrative as its own act of deliberate memory. As such, the novel helps to position narrative as means of retaining memories in which the human body and the natural world are co-entwined as part of a collective history of the earth during the times of the Anthropocene.

The notion of the Anthropocene was first proposed by the Nobel-winning chemist Paul J. Crutzen and his collaborator, a marine science specialist, Eugene F. Stoermer. In a short statement published in 2000, they noted that "Considering... [the] major and still growing impacts of human activities on earth and atmosphere, and at all, including global, scales, it

seems to us more than appropriate to emphasize the central role of mankind in geology and ecology by proposing to use the term 'anthropocene' for the current geological epoch" (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000, 17). In its origin, the term, thus, emphasises the role that humans play in exacerbating climate change.

Furthermore, this ecological crisis stimulates "moods of anxiety and concerns about the finitude of humanity," (Chakrabarty 2009, 196) and, unsurprisingly, leads to questions about how we conceptualise human temporality. As Chakrabarty argues in the "The Climate of History: Four Theses", the state of a current crisis can result in our sense of the present being disconnected from the past, without which notions of the future falling beyond the "grasp of historical sensibility" (Chakrabarty 2009, 197).

Envisioning the future, thus, is predicated on our ability to contextualise our present with our past – a logic rooted in linearity. In other words, "the crisis of climate change should produce anxieties precisely around futures that we cannot visualize" (Chakrabarty 2009, 210). This inaccessibility to the construction of temporality is, therefore, exacerbated by anxiety or perceived crisis. When the present is experienced as dystopic, it becomes increasingly difficult to visualise a more ethical future. Chakrabarty's assertion that the human difficulty to visualise the future also poses interesting possibilities for the role of literature. While the effects of the Anthropocene may be not be easily accessible to the vantage point of the individual human, by engaging in speculative narratives, literature may have the capacity to pose such possible future visions.

In *For the Mercy of Water*, this temporal sidestepping is hinted at by the unnamed narrator when she leaves the city. Out in the desolate valley, away from the structure of the city, the narrator finds herself temporally adrift, commenting that "The present was fuller than its past or future. It defied its own time. Cautious, abiding, forgiving, it chose to sit and watch and

wait" (*Mercy* 23). Here, the notion of present time is personified as "fuller" than what has come before – or what might still come to pass. In other words, the notion of the future, of a time beyond this state, is absent.

Drawing on theory of the Anthropocene, my reading of Jayes's novel examines how the events of the novel flit between temporalities, contrasting time and setting, reflecting on the ways that Jayes positions the relationships between the land and the humans who are dependent on it, thereby creating a deliberate act of memory.

A place that embodies an end

The novel starts with the unnamed writer making her way to "a place that embodied what we in the city called an end" (*Mercy* 8). She notes that "most of us in the city had thought the valley and town were deserted before the small news report of the woman had appeared" (*Mercy* 5). The elderly woman, referred to in the text as Mother, had been caring for several young girls in the mostly abandoned town before the rains brought the company and their measures to secure the water.

Although the entire country is experiencing drought, the narrative clearly distinguishes between the experiences of those who live in the city and those living in more rural areas. Based on initial reports of Mother's story, the writer recognises "a flare of wisdom in her words, which for those of us who live a life of privilege and safety in the cities, had been lost under the layers of what we owned and what we were convinced we had to protect" (*Mercy* 8). In terms of the Anthropocene, such comments highlight Chakrabarty's assertion that "climate change may well end up accentuating all the inequities of the capitalist world order if the interests of the poor and vulnerable are neglected" (Chakrabarty 2009, 212). The intersection of climate change and capitalism, thus, serves to highlight South Africa's continued inequities.

In the light of Cape Town's drought, it has become clear that in times of crisis, the poor are disproportionately affected[20].

In Jayes's novel, inequity is similarly shown to be exacerbated by the privatisation of water services. When the writer arrives in the small town to find Mother, she first encounters aid workers, some doctors and a journalist, all of whom have set up camp to investigate Mother's claims. Here, the journalist spells out how the continued drought has affected those living in poor, rural areas: when the poor are no longer able to pay for the water, the company guards shut off the pipes, placing the pump areas and dams under heavy armed guard. Within the town, the company inserts stoppers into the taps, so that water drips through two tiny holes, and takes several hours to fill a bucket.

More distressingly, those who are unable to afford water have systematically been prevented from access and, as a result, have been subjected to extreme violence when attempting to procure water for their families. The journalist also explains that, due to desperation, "people entered into awful bargains," implying that sex work has become common, with people trading their bodies as their only commodity (*Mercy* 55). In other instances, "the men and the boys and the women who had lived off the land or eked out a living inside the small economies of these towns, left in search of work so they could pay for this water (*Mercy* 55). The migration of the workforce from these small towns, in turn, has led to the collapse of small economies and made these rural areas unsustainable.

Moreover, the journalist indicates that Cape Town's neoliberal climate has seen the intersection between natural resources and capitalism become muddied by political perceptions and a lack of media coverage. As the journalist frames it, "the government has sold the very thing that keeps us alive, into a business and a security concern run primarily by international

[20] See: (Roeland 2018; C.-L. Smith 2018; Zietsman 2018)

stakeholders, who are their benefactors" (*Mercy* 54). The work of the company, thus, favours a global financial concern over the basic human need, commodifying a natural resource – and, in turn, the ability of humans to survive. Furthermore, the company has managed to silence most media accounts of the situation, leaving only news reports that support their position with declarations that the town inhabitants are vandalising company property. As told by the journalist, these accounts include narratives about the town inhabitants such as "the violence is 'deeply rooted in their history', that they are riding on a 'tradition of non-payment' and of 'entitlement that's just unworkable in today's economy'" (*Mercy* 54). As suggested above in Jayes's comments about Palestine, water becomes a powerful tool of such corporate and political occupations – and the silenced narratives of the oppressed evoke further comparisons to imperial and colonial rhetoric.

For the unnamed writer, however, accounts of the company's actions and the effects on rural communities have been heavily censored. As the writer notes, "in the city … it doesn't seem that bad" (*Mercy* 56). The journalist counters this position of privilege by noting that:

> The cities get the water first. You get your warnings to conserve it, but on the whole, people there simply continue to consume it. They sip whiskey and wine and cooldrinks that take gallons of water to produce. They continue to urinate and empty their bowels into glistening porcelain bowls and shower for two hours and run their dishwashers twice a day. They keep on refilling their topaz swimming pools after their children splash the water all over the bricks. (*Mercy* 56).

This description of life in the city greatly contrasts what is being experienced in smaller towns. Those in the city ignore conservation warnings and are able to continue their lives as normal – insulated from how dire the effects of water shortage can be. Similarly, reports from Cape Town's looming Day Zero point to the majority of city dwellers ignoring water restrictions. In 2018, it was reported that 60% of Capetonians were exceeding the 87 litres per person per day restriction (C.-L. Smith 2018), with the worst offenders being those in the city's residential areas – especially those still watering gardens and filling swimming pools (Chambers 2017).

The experiences of city dwellers, thus, also evokes Chakrabarty's assertions about how the Anthropocene works at the very limits of historical understanding, meaning that individual humans may "experience specific effects of the crisis but not the whole phenomenon" (Chakrabarty 2009, 221). In other words, although those in the city are aware of the water crisis and do experience some of its effects, they are ultimately removed from a full understanding of the situation and cannot comprehend how the state of crisis effects humanity as a species co-dependent on the natural world.

The implication of water services as parastatal institutions is also further compounded in terms of how the crisis is viewed by the government. Although little has been done to mitigate the catastrophe effecting the country, "they feel all right because the politicians and company men go to the water conferences … They drink the bottled water at these conferences. And between sips from these bottles, they say things like 'Water is a very interesting challenge facing our world today'" (*Mercy* 56). While politicians and company employees are doing very little to solve the water crisis, their use of media is overwhelming, using historians and anthropologists to "present the people who are attacking the water systems as fratricidal" (*Mercy* 54).

Moreover, most people prefer to live in wilful ignorance of the situation and, due to their own need for water, "don't want to know about the ways the water is taken" (*Mercy* 57). As the journalist notes, "People are tired of this war. It doesn't sell any more. I suppose in that, the company has won" (*Mercy* 53). Even the writer is painted with the brush of complicity. The doctor, sent by the company to care for Mother, makes this clear when the writer challenges him, telling her "You drink the water from the company and you bath in it and you flush your toilet with it … You're a part of this. And your life of cleanliness and your satisfied thirst comes down to this" (*Mercy* 67).

Here, the issues of morality, complacency and complicity become blurred. As Chakrabarty argues, an inability to view ourselves as geological agents results in an inability to "mak[e] sense of the current crisis that affects us all" (2009, 221). As much as the writer may wish to shed light on the crisis, the doctor reminds her that by using the company water she is still supporting the system that disenfranchises many others. Especially for those employed by the company, then, these actions are seen as a necessity to survival. As the doctor opines, "There is nothing better than this … We are humans. We are thirsty. We do what we have to do to drink" (*Mercy* 68). In other words, driven by a basic survival instinct, Jayes appears to postulate that it is impossible to truly comprehend the scale and magnitude of a crisis – and how it affects so many others. For those like the doctor, the company's actions are about "ensur[ing] that the country survives, that we survive," and that this is necessary to protect the future as "There are other countries who want the water now, our water, and we need to secure it in order to gain leverage with them. The water war has started here and it will spill over and into the whole world" (*Mercy* 68). Finally, the doctor's viewpoint offers an important consideration that isn't covered further in the novel – the idea that this water crisis has spilled into full on war and will spread throughout the world as water continues to become more and more scare. This war is, however, as one of the company guards tells the writer, "a war over our bodies, a war over every piece of life in us all" (*Mercy* 18).

The war over bodies

> Now this war over water we can't win … Everybody will lose […] It is now about the manner in which we are losing (*Mercy* 15)

In a war over natural resources, it becomes clear that there are no victors. As suggested by the above quote, such a war is less about success and more about "the manner in which we are losing". While Jayes's narrative explores this through close attention to the human body, we

can also consider the role that Anthropocenic theory plays in highlighting these concerns in a broader sphere as well as the role that literature plays in communicating this.

One area of the Anthropocene that has been less explored is how these concerns translate to literary production (Clarke 2015). If the Anthropocene crystallises anxieties about ecological crisis and human finitude, how then can these be portrayed in fiction? In *Ecocriticism on the Edge: the Anthropocene as Threshold Concept* (2015), Timothy Clark notes that the notion of Anthropocene as a new period in history has been met with resistance and misunderstanding simply because its effects are so massively distributed across time and space, that it defies human understanding. For this reason, literary theorists have struggled to delineate how exactly the Anthropocene can be translated to narrative, when such concerns "resist representation at the kinds of scale on which most thinking, culture, art and politics operate" (Clark 2015, x). One means of overcoming this complication in representation, is to approach narrativising the Anthropocene through modes accessible to human comprehension in order to promote both "an unprecedented level of self-reflection" and an "increased and shared self-recognition" (Clark 2015, 16). In other words, one of the criteria for anthropocenic narrative should be the foregrounding of human self-awareness in terms of both individual actions, and a shared perspective of the actions of all humans more broadly.

Lewis and Maslin offer a similar perspective, arguing that the Anthropocene demonstrates that human beings can no longer simply be viewed as passive observers, and should rather be viewed as an active force shaping the future of Earth. Moreover, the power that humans possess is unlike other natural forces, in that this power is reflexive (Lewis and Maslin 2015, 178). In their summation, Lewis and Maslin propose that the Anthropocene offers a different vantage point for humans – one in which they are not passive observers to effects of human actions on the Earth. Moreover, humans are capable of responding to ecological crisis – and the more that

we consider our role and effects, the greater the chance that we can influence philosophical, social, economic and political thought.

For Jayes, the role of memory, storytelling and healing play a pivotal role for the characters trying to understand human actions. Moreover, Jayes's exploration of temporality through narrative shows the difficulty in visualising the future when a sense of the present is threatened. This is largely communicated through the character of Mother in the novel, who uses narrative as a potent tool for explaining her world view. As a character, the very presence of Mother signals an interest in the intersection of gender and ecological crisis. From an ecofeminist perspective, we can consider the importance of such a character demonstrating how environmentalism and feminism both arise out of opposition to patriarchal constructions of modernity. Throughout the course of the novel, Mother expresses herself through continuous references to the natural world, and is frequently positioned as a counterpoint to the company men. This parallel is also especially made clear through the novel's foregrounding of storytelling and narrative. On the one hand, there are the official narratives produced by the company, which are directly placed into contrast with the events that are narrated by Mother. The juxtaposition of Mother and the male-dominated company, thus suggests that Jayes's speculative future consists of small, radical feminist political communities as the future of revolution in the context of this hydro-apocalypse. While a novel like *Moxyland* foregrounds revolution and resistance as enormous, public spectacle, *Mercy* approaches the notion of resistance as cultivating a space that is self-nourishing and sustaining for those individuals who need it most.

The novel begins with the writer feeling compelled to find the old woman caring for several young girls in a town previously believed to be deserted – until the arrival of rain, and with it, the company. Early in the narrative, the writer comments: "I wanted to hear more of what the old woman had to say ... She held a strong story – that much I knew. I knew about stories. I

knew about them solidly in the way that some know about love, or the way we would like to die" (*Mercy* 8). For the writer, stories hold potential and are almost tangible in their effect. The value of storytelling is also contrasted with journalistic writing. As the journalist tells the writer, "We've got a lot of journalists, but not a lot of storytellers" (*Mercy* 108). As already discussed, the company has been silencing journalists and their accounts of the water war. Being under threat, journalists tow the company line and "When this happens to a journalist, when they lose a story to a more palatable truth – a vital part of the soul of the writer dies. A flame goes out. It's a terrible silencing" (*Mercy* 108). For the writer, however, the promise of Mother's story holds something greater "as if she understood the magic inside each sentence … that challenged the original language … She had spoken as if connected to something greater, something eternal" (*Mercy* 8). Here, the writer's supposition hints towards a belief that Mother's story may allow for a type of understanding that lies beyond the limited human perception of temporality.

This perspective is also shared by the journalist, who tells the writer that Mother believes that her stories were physically and psychologically restorative for the young girls. In such stories, Mother's aim appears to be making sense of the war over water, and to help the girls recover from the abuse suffered at the hands of the company guards. As the journalist notes, Mother "believed that in a story, a girl could find the answers on how to begin again, and to harness comfort" (*Mercy* 57). Stories are, therefore, intended as an act of healing on the part of Mother, and form a crucial part in her teaching the girls how to construct their own narratives about their lives, their bodies, and, potentially, some inclination towards self-agency. In his summation, the journalist suggests the Mother has employed storytelling as a form of making sense of one's life and, thereby, allowing some form of healing – especially from the violence enacted by the company guards. As such, it appears possible that the use of story is a means of beginning again without being co-opted into the cycle of violence.

However, not everyone in the novel believes in the value of storytelling. The doctor sent to care for Mother is most vehement in denying this, trusting only what he is physically capable of seeing and comprehending. He claims that "There are no girls … The woman is speaking in metaphor. She's making up a story to explain her existence, alone in this place. I have seen lots of these cases. They are all the same" (*Mercy* 68). For the doctor, then, Mother's claims about caring for the missing girls are her own form of coping mechanism to combat her feelings of isolation. The doctor pushes this thinking even further, claiming that Mother's accounts are simply a form of "conspiring against the company," and "creating mythologies that they hope will carry through history and infuse their people with rebellion" (*Mercy* 68). Thus, much like the company as an entity, the doctor sees any form of dissent as conspiracy – and even an attempt at establishing an alternate "mythology" about the company's actions. The use of the term "mythology" being a means of dismissing Mother's accounts as mere fiction.

By the conclusion of the novel, however, the reader is provided with enough evidence to understand Mother's stories. Once the writer has found Eve and made plans to return her to Mother, the writer is able to communicate the pain and connection she shares with these women – even if her experiences are vastly different. In particular, the writer realises that, as told by Mother, everyone is implicated in the water war "for no other reason than that we are human" (*Mercy* 292). Here, the writer comes to the conclusion that the water war is not only due to human actions, but that these actions have been taken simply because we are human. Moreover, the writer broadly comments on the nature of suffering. By reflecting that "we suffer together," the writer also notes the connection that humans have with each other and the earth, stating that "We are made like the earth, complete as one thing, and yet made of all of us" (*Mercy* 292).

In these ecocritical reflections, the writer begins to truly consider the relationship between the land and humans. Furthermore, this gesture towards a collective human-nature history gives insight into how we can weave anthropocenic concerns through literature. Chakrabarty notes

part of the difficulty of the crisis of climate change is due to the fact that, often, humans "experience specific effects of the crisis but not the whole phenomenon," meaning that this limitation makes it tricky to fully comprehend the current crisis and its future ramifications" (2009, 221). This limitation in perspective is then, perhaps, where narratives with anthropocenic concerns have a role to play.

While *Mercy* may not overly push this agenda, the character of the writer ends the novel by offering some sense of hope within this hydro-apocalyptic future. This is achieved by her acknowledging the interconnectedness of humans – something especially pertinent in terms of how we approach pain. She notes that "This is how we are made: to be hurt, and then to share it" (*Mercy* 292). As such, she draws from the philosophy espoused by Mother, suggesting that, since humans "are linked, all of us, in a single faultless circle," that we are able to gain comfort from out connections to each other and the earth, simply "for no other reason than that human pain, when shared, becomes lighter" (*Mercy* 292).

As such, *For the Mercy of Water* concludes its speculations on the possible future anxieties being experienced both in Cape Town and more globally, by reflecting on the shared nature of humanity. When read alongside the other texts included in this research project, *Mercy* suggests a viewpoint that speaks to the limits of the city itself. While *Ninveveh* and *Zoo City* highlight perspectives that incorporate the natural world into the city, in *Mercy* the city is shown to be dusty, empty and devoid of anything but the human. This gestures towards the concept of the city reaching its limits. As a self-sufficient human-made entity, the city becomes just an enclave, a form of refulating and stifiling both natural and human influences. While in *Moxyland*, the city of Cape Town is considered as its own governing body with its citizens having almost no knowledge of the wastelands beyond, *Mercy* reveals a city that has become much of a wasteland itself. Although city-dwellers still have little insight of the world beyond its limits, Jayes sketches a rural world that, while plagued by the corporate interference, offers

a deeper possibility for developing community. As suggested by my ruminations of reading the Anthropocene in speculative fiction, such narratives have the potential to shape human understanding in terms of how we view our shared position on the planet as well as "in the vast plural spaces of the future" (*Mercy* 336). In terms of what shape this future may take, the novel gestures towards a sense of decentering the city as the defining locus of post-apartheid South African identity. Seemingly, the novel's hydrocrisis asks readers to view the country in its entirety when probing issues of inequality and shared humanness within the functionings of a capitalist-driven system that continues to exacerbate the divisions that plague South Africa today.

Conclusion: Rainbows dystopia and post-apartheid future(s)

At the outset of this thesis, I began by positing that a decline in rainbow nationalism has sketched a dystopic overview of our cities. This mood of disenchantment has, however, also served as an impetus for emerging literary voices, as well as asking how this may have influenced conceptions of the commonly referred to "new" South African identity. But, after twenty-four years of democracy, such a term has become both outdated, and rather problematic with its suggestion that time-periods are apparently easily divisible. When this category is applied, South Africa is only allowed two relatively innocuous sounding states of being: the old and the new. An individual's conception of time, however, is not as easily separated into this type of official, demarcated chronology. In other words, the way in which an individual recalls the past cannot be expected to conform to a binary of experience. The history of South Africa has been permeated by the ubiquitous experience of loss, and these dispossessing memories are present either side of this "new" divide.

In my chapter on Lauren Beukes's *Moxyland* and *Zoo City*, I showed how Beukes draws on South Africa's long history of segregation, both colonial and apartheid, but casts these concerns through the lens of possible future means of segregating humans. In sketching her versions of Cape Town and Johannesburg, Beukes draws on a number of sci-fi tropes to extrapolate present anxieties and complicate our understanding of these past and future shaping of these cities. While Beukes does utilise cognitive estrangement to render these cities as simultaneously familiar and somewhat foreign continuously evokes South African history and parallels to suggest that, if left unacknowledged, our colonial legacy will likely continue to determine and regulate our future. In her complex genre and spatio-temporalities Beukes demonstrates how society and infrastructure are moulded by human entanglements.

When reading K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* and Rachel Zadok's *Sister-Sister*, I extended my lens of speculative fiction to consider how animist materialist logic can be employed to explore how young South Africans might navigate complex and contradictory interpretive frameworks in their attempts at self-identification. Looking at how the protagonists in these novels negotiate the experience of growing up disenfranchised in the rainbow nation, I extrapolated the associations of speculative fiction to demonstrate how a combination of genre concerns and literary techniques allow such texts to disrupt notions of historical time by continuously interweaving concepts of past, present and future through the narratives. As such, we see how speculative possibilities emerge within narratives that destabilise the visions of Johannesburg and Cape Town held within popular imagination.

In my last two chapters, I explored the role of speculative fiction in examining the relationship between humans, animals and the earth. As seen in *Nineveh* and *District* 9, among the major future concerns in South African cities is how we interact and co-exist within the same spaces as those deemed alien. While Katya Grubbs willingly engages with the ecosystem around her, listening to the world beneath the surface and hearing a vocabulary usually drowned out by urban cacophony, *District* 9 shows a failure to imagine beyond the "non-event" of the ending of apartheid, with the same concerns of difference and spatial regulation continually perpetuating. As speculative narratives, *District 9* and *Nineveh* are useful in considering the ways we bring the city to life through acts of imagination and representation. Finally, in my reading of *For the Mercy of Water*, I traced how these concerns about the future can be read within a framework that translates the interests of the Anthropocene into speculative narratives. As suggested by my reading the Anthropocene in speculative fiction, such narratives have the potential to shape human understanding in terms of how we view our position on the same planet.

Ultimately, the studied texts show an interest in reconsidering how we conceive of time, memory, history and narrative. While some texts like *Moxyland, Sister-Sister* and *For the Mercy of Water* cast presentist concerns through the displacement of time, showing possible future dystopian concerns, texts like *Zoo City*, *Nineveh* and *District 9* offer insight into possible, alternative ways in which our city spaces might shift in terms of anthropocentric concerns. The relationship between past, present and future becomes deliberately blurred through speculation, suggesting a need to reconsider how we frame our national rhetoric. Eschewing singular visions or understandings of Cape Town and Johannesburg, these texts question what it is like to engage with city spaces in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Moreover, by complicating how we narrativise a sense of the nation's collective history, the studied texts raise pertinent issues about a longer history of segregation and discrimination which proceeded apartheid. In other words, the elements of socio-political critique inherent in speculative fiction have resonance in South Africa as a post-colonial country, suggesting the limitations of studying South African fiction as merely post-apartheid. As crucial as it has been to deconstruct the rhetoric upon which apartheid was established, there is an even greater need to explore beyond just the effects of the apartheid regime. In this wider context, apartheid is better viewed as a recent, legislated system that attempted to further propagate the social concerns of colonialism.

Speculative fiction provides a way of writing about the city in a manner that moves beyond post-apartheid and considers the broader post-colonial concerns, re-establishing the complex relationships between South Africa and its positioning in Africa. In fact, speculative fictions shows a distinct interest in brining a greater conceptual coherence and connection between how we conceptualise South Africa within the context of the post-apartheid as well as the postcolonial.

In particular, speculative and science fiction have an important role to play in imagining the cities of the future, because of their capacity to blur boundaries stylistically and thematically. Authors drawing on speculative fiction conventions are able to use their narratives as distorting mirrors that reflect on how these cities are experienced. While future research on the identity of South Africa beyond simply "post-apartheid" is necessary, this thesis has shown that by looking at the temporality and the intricacies of future, past and present provide possibilities of existing within cities that eschew singular visions or understandings of what it means to exist in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

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