Narrating (Her)Story: South African Women's Life Writing (1854-1948)

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Declaration

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November 2014

Signed: Lizelle Smit

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Abstract

Seeking to explore modes of self-representation in women's life writing and the ways in which these subjects manipulate the autobiographical 'I' to write about gender, the body, race and ethnic related issues, this thesis interrogates the autobiographies of three renegade women whose works were birthed out of the de/colonial South African context between 1854-1948. The chosen texts are: Marina King's *Sunrise to Evening Star: My Seventy Years in South Africa* (1935), Melina Rorke's *Melina Rorke: Her Amazing Experiences in the Stormy Nineties of South-African History* (1938), and two memoirs by Petronella van Heerden, *Kerssnuitsels* (1962) and *Die 16de Koppie* (1965). My analysis is underpinned by relevant life writing and feminist criticism, such as the notion of female autobiographical "embodiment" (239) and the 'I's reliance on "relationality" (248) as discussed in the work of Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (*Reading Autobiography*). I further draw on Judith Butler's concept of "performativity" (*Bodies that Matter* 234) in my analysis in order to suggest that there is a performative aspect to the female 'I' in these texts. The aim of this thesis is to illustrate how these self-representations of women can be read as counter-conventional, speaking out against stereotypical perceptions and conventions of their time and in literatures (fiction and criticism) which cast women as tractable, compliant pertaining to patriarchal oversight, as narrow-minded and apathetic regarding achieving notoriety and prominence beyond their ascribed position in their separate societies. I argue that these works are representative of alternative female subjectivities and are examples of South African women's life writing which lie 'dusty' and forgotten in archives; voices that are worthy of further scholarly research which would draw the stories of women's lives back into the literary consciousness.

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Opsomming

In ‘n poging om metodes van self-uitbeelding te bespreek en die manier waarop die ‘ek’ van vroulike ego-tekste manipuleer om sodoende te skryf oor geslagsrolle, die liggaam, ras en ander etniese kwessies, ondersoek hierdie verhandeling die outbiografieë van drie onkonvensionele vrouens se werk, gebore vanuit die de/koloniale konteks in Suid-Afrika tussen 1854-1948. Die ego-tekste wat in hierdie navorsingstuk ondersoek word, sluit in: Marina King se *Sunrise to Evening Star: My Seventy Years in South Africa* (1935), Melina Rorke se *Melina Rorke: Her Amazing Experiences in the Stormy Nineties of South-African History* (1938), en twee memoirs geskryf deur Petronella van Heerden, *Kerssnuitsels* (1962) en *Die 16de Koppie* (1965). My analise word ondersteun deur relevante kritici van feministiese en outobiografiese velde. Ek bespreek onder andere die idee dat die vroulike ‘ek’ liggaamlik “vergestalt” (239) is in outobiografie, asook die ‘ek’ se afhanklikheid van “relasionaliteit” (248) soos uiteengesit in die werk van Sidonie Smith en Julia Watson (*Reading Autobiography*). Verder stel ek voor, met verwysing na Judith Butler, dat daar ‘n “performative” (*Bodies that Matter* 234) aspek na vore kom in die vroulike ‘ek’ van Suid-Afrikaanse outobiografie. Die doel van hierdie tesis is om uit te lig dat hierdie self-voorstellings van vroue gelees kan word as kontra-konvensioneel; dat die stereotipiese uitbeelding van vroue as skroomhartig, nougeset, gedweë ten opsigte van patriargale oorsig, en willoos om meer te vermag as wat hul onderskeie gemeenskappe vir hul voorskryf, weerspreek word deur hierdie ego-tekste. Die doel is om sodanige outobiografiese vertellings en -uitbeeldings te vergelyk en sodoende uiteenlopende vroulike subjektiwiteite gedurende die periode 1854-1948 te belig. Ek verwys deurlopend na voorbeelde van ander gemarginaliseerde Suid-Afrikaanse vroulike ego-tekse om aan te dui dat daar weliswaar ‘n magdom ‘vergete’ en ‘stof-bedekte’ vrouetekste geskryf is in die afgebakende periode. Ek voor aan dat die ‘stem’ van die vroulike ‘ek’ allermins stagneer het, en dat verdere bestudering waarskynlik nodig is.

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Chapter One
Introduction

This thesis examines de/colonial South African women's life writing from 1854 to 1948. Although this time frame of almost a century might at first seem arbitrary, it encapsulates key historical events such as increased human migration across the South African interior (central to notions of dispossession and possession of land) as well as the discovery of precious stones and minerals, especially diamonds and gold, causing further ethnic and racial confrontation. I provide a comprehensive historical overview (1854-1948) in the last section of this chapter to contextualise the selected period.[1] Briefly, this period in South Africa's colonial history is marked by rivalry between the British settlers and the Boers for dominion and power; a preoccupation with acquiring territory (mostly taken by force from the indigenous peoples or each other); and the oppression of various ethnic groups. Under the governance of the South African Party, legislation was promptly passed to segregate whites and non-whites with the Native Land Act (1913) and ultimately allotted more than 80 percent of South Africa's fertile land to the white minority (McClintock 295). This act illustrates the racial inequality and hostility permeating South Africa's past and present socio-political landscape and consciousness. While the history of the period is predominantly and markedly mapped in writing by white men (fiction and non-fiction), women's voices contribute to the archive even though they were notably marginalised and overshadowed by a patriarchal discourse - a pattern perpetuated in male dominated South African literatures (Driver 454-457). Albeit not on a similar scale as texts written by men, women autobiographers recorded the colonial, imperial and national history with their own individual style, voice and opinions regarding reigning governments, their ideologies and the almost inevitable ensuing political turmoil.

[1] Britain recognised the Orange Free State as a Boer Republic in 1854, shortly after the recognition of the Transvaal Republic in 1852 (Streak 194), but annexed Transvaal 1877 to 1881 - First Independence/Boer War - (De Klerk 63-67) after diamonds (1867) and then gold (1886) were discovered in the two independent Boer colonies (McClintock 368). The Jameson Raid (1895-1896) in Transvaal and all of the above-mentioned events acted as precursors for the Second Boer War (1899-1902), now referred to as the Great South African War or the Anglo-Boer War (Giliomee *Die Afrikaner: 'n Biografie* x), which subsequently led to the formation of the Union of South Africa (1910) and later the Republic of South Africa (1961). The National Party secured their victory in the national election in 1948, thereby marking the realisation of the decolonising efforts of white nationalist before the country became a Republic. I use Great South African War and Anglo-Boer War interchangeably in this thesis.

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Valerie Letcher notes that "a significant number of women in the nineteenth and early twentieth century had written on South Africa, been published, and found an eager audience. [...M]ost of those writers have disappeared from the South African literary consciousness" (121); recognition of "their role in South Africa's literary and historical heritage is overdue" (122). Rephrasing Letcher's statement, I ask: Where are the women's voices and their perspectives in South Africa's literary and historical heritage? This thesis reintroduces three women's autobiographies and aims to expound on elements of women's life and contextual interpretations, their presence and subject position in the turbulent history of South Africa (1854-1948) and, in so doing, to contribute to the archive of (her)story, feminist historiography and women's life writing.

This thesis examines four South African autobiographies written by white women (there are no black women autobiographers from this period)[2] to compare the representation of alternative female subjectivities in South Africa between 1854 and 1948: Marina King's *Sunrise to Evening Star: My Seventy Years in South Africa* (1935), Melina Rorke's *Melina Rorke: Her Amazing Experiences in the Stormy Nineties of South-African History* (1938), and two memoirs by Petronella van Heerden,[3] *Kerssnuitsels* (1962) and *Die 16de Koppie* (1965). I regard the consideration of and reflection on the period 1854-1948 more important than the date of the women's autobiographical publications. Although Van Heerden published in the 1960s, she predominantly reflects on events in her life before 1948, since she retired to farm before that date. I do regard the date of publication of importance, though, and incorporate it in the analysis of her memoirs. Extending my marked period to the 1960s would necessitate a detailed consideration of numerous women's autobiographies published in the 1960s that I intend to incorporate in future research.[4]

[2] Noni Jabavu (Helen Nontando) published *Drawn in Colour* in 1960 and *The Ochre People* in 1963. Since she left South Africa at the age of thirteen (1932), was educated in England, and only returned to South Africa in 1955, it would be problematic to include her memoirs in this thesis, especially since she reflects on her dichotomous British and South African identity. Van Heerden's work differs from Jabavu's as she identifies as South African (or as an Afrikaner).

[3] The quotations from Van Heerden's memoirs are paraphrased in my own translations.

[4] Preliminary titles for future research include Mrs John Hays Hammond's *A Woman's Part in a Revolution* (1897); Joyce Waring's *I'm No Lady* (1956); *The Diary of Iris Vaughan* (1958), and her *These Were My Yesterdays* (1966); Ruth First's *117 Days: An Account of Confinement and Interrogation Under the South African Ninety-Day Detention Law* (1965); Caroline van Heyningen's *Orange Days: Memoir of Eighty Years Ago in the Old Orange Free State* (1965); Noni Jabavu's two memoirs; A.E. Venter's *Those Were the Days* (1972); and M.E.R.'s *My Beskeie Deel* (1972). This list is still incomplete.

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Many life-writing critics, such as Sidonie Smith, Julia Watson, Gita Rajan, Nancy L. Paxton and Suzanne Chester, have argued that autobiography (and/or historiography) is predominantly a masculine genre, favoured by and associated with the Western white male. Western readers traditionally view the 'I' as male, and as a "unique individual rather than a member of a collectivity" (Watson and Smith *De/Colonising the Subject* xvii). It would then be possible to assume that by writing autobiographies, women gain access to an established subject position, the 'I', thereby claiming admittance to a literary genre that engenders a notion of selfhood and agency. It would therefore be the most useful genre to examine when trying to determine women's voices and identity in the delineated or defined period. Given the disenfranchised position of women in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, autobiographies by women can be seen as a "quest" (Gilbert and Gubar 76) for self-definition in societies dominated by men, as this study aims to illustrate. I use the umbrella term life writing instead of autobiography for two reasons: first, autobiography is historically a masculine genre, whereas this thesis examines women's memoirs and therefore the more gender-neutral term life writing is preferable. And second, life writing encompasses a vast scope of texts such as diaries, lyrics, letters, note books, scrap books and even cook books as well as "the visual, and the oral" (McNeill x) traditions which literate women historically habitually employed as a medium for self-expression, if not more so than men.[5]

My initial research interest was in post-apartheid translations (Afrikaans/English and English/Afrikaans), focusing on the farm novel or *plaasroman* genre. An explanation for the shift to the study of women's life writing is therefore pertinent here. An integral part of the previous study called for a consideration of the position and ambit of women as presented in the farm novel – or more specifically men's portrayal and literary imagination of women in fictional writing (1920-1940). My preliminary research for this topic necessarily led me to J.M. Coetzee's seminal work on the genre in *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (1988). He theorises that women were "imprisoned in the farmhouse, confined to the breast function of giving food to men" (9). Coetzee's argument is that Afrikaner writers (male) consciously created a 'walled-in identity' for women in the farm novel: they had a

[5] McNeill asserts that this vast range of different and divergent genres "prevents any one term from adequately describing the myriad and seemingly endless possibilities for self-expression now recognized as 'life writing'" (x). Some new forms recognised as life writing, for example, include "biotext, the biomythography, [and] the fictionalysis" (vii).

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function to serve and would wither and die on completion. One could surmise that this designated role in literature was part of the conscious creation of "an image which presupposes the homogeneity of the volksmoeder" (Cloete 1); the mother-figure of "[self-sacrifice, virtue and integrity]" (Devarenne 633) that served as an example of decorum to young white Afrikaans women. I discuss the link between Victorian morality and *volksmoeder* ideology in my literature review and in Chapter Four.

In 1906 C.J. Langenhoven published a pamphlet entitled "The Female Franchise and the Native Franchise" (Vincent 6), arguing for a division of labour and, as preordained by God, women's role was to nurture, nurse, comfort and support, whilst men were assigned to a sphere where they could develop their physical or intellectual faculties – a typical "biological essentialist argument" (Cloete 3) in gendered labour division. According to Louise Vincent, Marijke du Toit and Liese van der Watt, the ideology of the *volksmoeder* was primarily a patriarchal construction (based on a maternal discourse) for the first two decades of the twentieth century – they were assigned primarily domestic tasks. During the 1920-30s women themselves employed *volksmoeder* ideology in order to gain respectable entry into the political arena. The majority of suffragettes remained mothers and endorsed the stereotype of suitable white Afrikaner women whilst campaigning for and gaining the right to vote (1930), but as Elsie Cloete argues, "there were some which resisted the imposition" (1). Most Afrikaner women were willing to wait for parliament's manoeuvrings to grant them the right to vote in order to exclude the non-white women (Vincent 4). Herman Giliomee argues that with the "rise of nationalist organisations and publications" (55) a shift occurred (as is also evident in the *plaasroman* genre) in the perception of the symbiotic nuclear family to that of a patriarchal family, a "brotherhood of men" (56) upholding their inheritance and the pride of the forefathers. The result was that men became the protectors of women and their morals and "women were seen as the reproducers of the nation and the protectors of tradition and morality" and in essence men had to "shield them" ("Allowed such a state of Freedom" 56) from the horrors and ugliness of public life so they could focus on nurturing their families, thereby echoing Victorian sentiments.

English political activists and writers (such as Olive Schreiner and Pauline Smith) critiqued the position of women in South Africa at the time, but were particularly harsh in their

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portrayal of especially Boer women as idiotic, simple, complacent and submissive.[6] My reading of farm novels by C.M. van den Heever, Schreiner, Smith and L.H. Brinkman as well as Coetzee's critical work posited an inquiry into women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and prompted the following questions: What were Boer women really like? Were they a simulacrum of the women in the *plaasroman*? What were women, regardless of race or ethnicity, really like? What were English women's opinions of Boer women and vice versa? In what way did white Afrikaans and English women maintain or reject de/colonial politics, ideologies and conventional attitudes about gender, race and class? How do women portray themselves in life writing within a patriarchal (imperial/colonial/national) society with entrenched ideologies concerning the role of women, race and morality? Do they participate in perpetuating de/colonial principles, preconceptions and agendas or do they subvert masculine ideals regarding their position as women in their respective societies? Did British, Afrikaner and women of other ethnic identities write differently in South Africa? Is there a palpable difference to men's writing located within their work? In short: how did women write themselves, about themselves and about others? My study of the *plaasroman* genre consequently shifted my interest to women's life writing. An examination of women's life writing from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century might offer at least a partial insight to these questions. I now turn to the four texts chosen for this study to investigate features of women's identity construction, self-representation and the representation of race and class in autobiographical writings from the selected period.

As stated earlier, only some women writers, such as Schreiner and Smith, have received extensive academic attention, but the writings or works of the three women selected for this thesis have mostly disappeared from the South African literary consciousness, as is evident from the limited or lack of scholarly research regarding their writing. Furthermore, as I have indicated, I consider the representation of women in South African fictional literature (1883-1948) as problematic since the theorisation on South African female subjectivity that stems from this research inevitably frames women within a 'walled-in' identity. Therefore, my research endeavours to assemble, from multiple sites of identity formation as narrated by the authors, a uniquely South African female subjectivity which is constructed from women's life

[6] See the characterisation of, for example, Tant Sannie in Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and the Steenkamp sisters in Smith's *The Beadle* (1926).

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writing by comparing their individual styles of writing (how they present their lives, memories, stories of personal achievement and resilience in a sexist and patriarchal framework) and the authors' respective self-presentation, perspectives and treatment of their own and other alternative national and ethnic identities (English, Afrikaner, Boer, indigenous and hybrid identities) in their work. The subjectivity I aim to explore also relies on relevant criticisms of women and women's writing in South Africa. 'How' women speak and essentially imagine themselves in South Africa (1854-1948) necessitates a detailed consideration of their de/colonial subjectivities that does not only "make use of four models of difference: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytical, and cultural" (Showalter "Feminist Criticism" 186) but rather considers all aspects of their identity, as narrated and presented by themselves.

In the following chapters I examine King's and Rorke's autobiographies within a colonial framework and analyse Van Heerden as both a colonising and decolonising subject. Decolonisation "refers literally to the actual political processes set in motion in various geographical locations before and during [the twentieth] century" (Smith and Watson *De/Colonizing the Subject* xiii), and in this study refers to the political discourses and arguments of nascent Afrikaner nationalism reaching its peak with the formation of the Republic in 1961. Since decolonisation involves "the deformation/reformation of identity" (Smith and Watson *De/Colonizing the Subject* xiii), this study will refer to the political shifts made by the white Afrikaner in order to re/define their nationality as a decolonising act. I return to this issue in the historical overview. Smith and Watson explain their use of the term de/colonial written with a "slash" that "symbolizes the exchange between the processes of colonization and decolonization and the issues inherent in the process of neocolonization" (*De/Colonizing the Subject* xix). Like Smith and Watson, I am also interested in the Subjects produced by and in de/colonial "site[s]" (xix) and therefore consistently employ their use of de/colonial in this thesis when referring to Van Heerden. When using 'de/colonise' as an umbrella term for the life writing of King, Rorke and Van Heerden, the '/' indicates 'or'. Thus, colonise *or* decolonise.

In order to avoid confusion with regard to the terminology employed in my discussion, I first clarify and define certain terms and concepts. Philippe Lejeune defines autobiography as the

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"[r]etrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning [her] own existence, where the focus is [her] individual life, in particular the story of [her] personality" (4) and when referring to autobiography in this thesis the reference calls on this particular definition of the genre. Lejeune also indicates the difficulty regarding autobiographical terminology since for him "the *author*, the *narrator* and the *protagonist* must be identical" (emphasis in original 5) to fulfil the "autobiographical pact" (23) between author and reader. Lejeune asserts that autobiographical terminology is at times defined and informed from unrelated fields of study and is thus confusing. I clarify my own use of terminology constructed, compiled and informed by the critical work of multiple life writing critics.[7] When I refer to the author of the text, I designate the person writing the text (autobiographer or 'real person'). The narrator (closely related to the intent of the author) is the voice, aesthetic stylistics and grammar the author employs to literally 'tell her story'. 'Protagonist' indicates the person constructed by the narrative use of 'I' and is assembled from the created Subject, Self and "I"dentity. Although the author, narrator and protagonist are supposed to be identical, in my (and Lejeune's) terminology they perform different functions and I refer to them as such, although they indicate (mostly) the same 'real person'. I do not consistently use author, narrator and protagonist in Chapters Two and Four; it can be distracting, but since I discuss Rorke's misrepresentation in Chapter Three, definitions of these terms are important. The Subject is the person the author inscribes and the fulfilment of the quest for self-definition. The Subject is then the person the author imagines they are or want to be. When discussing the Self, I specifically indicate the imaginative memories as well as other social conventions or discourses informing the authors of themselves – the constructed Self is thus closely related to the Subject, but the Self infers socio-political drivers that subliminally inform the authors' idea of their "many selves" (Brownley and Kimmich xiii). "I"dentity's meaning is twofold: it assigns the metaphorically empty 'I', the indicator authors use to refer to themselves, with a constructed identity attached. By using the 'I' in autobiography, a non-entity, the author is constructing an "I"dentity, colouring the unproductive 'I' and through the narrative act furnishing a personality for the 'I'. If I use the terms Subject, Self and "I"dentity, written with capital letters, I am using the terminology as indicated above. If written in lower case (subject, self and identity), I refer to the general theoretical use of these terms.

[7] Most notably Martine Brownley, Allison Kimmich, Sidonie Smith, Julia Watson, Linda Anderson, James Olney, Philippe Lejeune and Laura Marcus.

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I acknowledge that to construct a white South African female subjectivity from life writing will be riddled with pitfalls. Firstly, trying to determine whether South African women had autonomy, agency and a developed sense of Self and identity merely from examining four autobiographies is problematic since this framework excludes other written autobiographies by female authors, women who did not publish autobiographies and, unavoidably, non-white ethnic identities. Secondly, the respective authors' life writing is divergent with unique discursive thematic concerns and stylistic devices and thus not unitary. Thirdly, as stated earlier, the authors' quest for self-definition employs a traditionally male genre, the autobiography; hence it could be said that in the act of writing an autobiography, the female autobiographers enter a masculine terrain and claim the existing agency of this genre. Thus, it is possible to assume that the type of women who wrote autobiographies is not necessarily representative (in all aspects) of their group. At first it seemed rather coincidental that the three women I selected could all be regarded as New Women, but after reading other women's life writing from the delineated period in South Africa I observed that this seems to be the norm. But to avoid confusion and fault lines, I will examine the narrative strategies the three respective women autobiographies employ to assert (write or imagine) their individuality, agency and autonomy in a hegemonic and patriarchal de/colonial framework in order to determine whether or not there are noticeable similarities and then use both the similarities and differences to construct a female subjectivity.

Situating the Subject: Theoretical Approach and Literature Review

My methodological approach is mainly to conduct a close analysis of the primary texts. To analyse and debate about women's subjectivity in South African life writing, it is necessary to draw on diverging fields of research and relevant criticisms to compile a suitable theoretical framework. This thesis will engage with ideas from the theoretical fields of life writing, women's studies, and postcolonial studies. Each chapter will similarly draw on related theoretical fields. The ensuing chapters are underscored by cultural studies and a feminist historiographer's revision of South Africa's (her)story in order to "uncover a lost tradition" (Showalter "Feminist Criticism" 180). For example, Chapters Two and Three incorporate theory on travel literature and imperialism. In Chapter Four, I conduct a queer reading of Van Heerden's second autobiography in the context of nationalism. These theoretical fields and

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research assembled by other researchers will inform my analyses and provide the theoretical framework within which I will situate this study.

Chapters Two to Four consider each woman's life writing and respective narrative strategies for self-representation. The chronological dates of publication (1935, 1938, 1962, and 1965) coincidentally overlap with the authors' dates of birth from the earliest to the latest (King, Rorke and Van Heerden). I have therefore divided my chapters according to chronological date of birth and date of publication.

Chapter Two discusses the construction of King's autobiographical "I"dentity as a 'scarce and rare commodity' on the colonial periphery. An examination of her performative embodiment is followed by a consideration of her complicity in the Empire's colonising agenda and her ambiguous depiction of the Other. In Chapter Three, Rorke's mis/representation is considered pertaining to her relational depiction of others followed by her almost dramatic and staged representation of her embodied and gendered position in a colonial context. Thereafter I turn to her 'philanthropic' yet biased portrayal of other races and finally, her self-representation through the figure of Florence Nightingale as a hero and nurturer. Van Heerden's negotiation of her Afrikaner and female identity in a Nationalistic patriarchal society will be the focus of Chapter Four. Her first memoir, *Kerssnuitsels,* will be considered as a platform from whence she discusses gender discrimination in South Africa through her authorial choice of anecdotes. The "opacity" (Butler *Giving an Account* 40), silence or 'failed' account of Self (2-40) regarding her lesbianism will be the focus in my discussion of *Die 16de Koppie*. As with the other chapters, I then turn my focus to her problematic representation of the Other in South Africa.

Considering women's de/colonial life writing requires an overview of colonial/postcolonial as well as feminist discourses, because it is a retrospective study concerned with gender politics. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* (1992) discuss the tenuous position of colonial terminology and discourse in Western theorising. They (and Elaine Showalter in "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness") consider the pitfalls of contemporary feminist theorists who would privilege gendered oppression over other subjugations since it "effectively erases the complex and often contradictory positionings of the subject" (xiv). The subject, Smith and Watson

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elaborate, consists of multiple and interrelated sites and locations such as gender, class, nationality, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (xiv); by highlighting gender oppression, they retract from other forms of oppression and "[erase] the subject's heterogeneity as well as its agency" (xiv). Locating the subject in this thesis will thus include the individual writer's construction of her 'multiple sites' of identity. As previously stated, historically, "all 'I's are rational, agentive [and] unitary" in the genre of autobiography, and all "I"s are "Man" (xvii), unique in possession of a developed self. The colonised subject or 'other' in contrast becomes an obscure conglomeration of indistinguishable bodies (xvii): "Thus the politics of this 'I' have been the politics of centripetal consolidation and centrifugal domination" (xvii). Traditionally, a female autobiographer is an "illegitimate" (xx) speaker in a priapic discourse, but writing from within this position she "exposes gaps and incongruities [of the patriarchal coloniser], wrenches their meanings, [and] calls their authority into question" (xx). The marginal position of a Western woman (admittedly complicit in colonising) becomes individualised through the act of writing, it "dissolves [the] unified bodies" (xxi) constructed by the masculine discourses and identification with the autobiographical genre and could even individualise the oppressed Other and herself by disseminating these patriarchal and oppressive discourses. Examining the autobiographers' portrayal of ethnicity could potentially give voice not only to them but also to the demarcated colonised subjects of South Africa.

It is now considered as unfashionable, according to Gillian Whitlock, by postcolonial critics to write about or research settler subjects (41), as I will do in Chapters Two and Three. A challenge that arises whilst studying settler writing is the process of coming to terms with the subject's narration of colonial dispossession and disempowerment, and by discussing colonial dispossession, actively reinforcing the processes that were imposed during colonialism, thereby disempowering the Other once more. When discussing the texts, I am cautious of the active discourses in the texts so as not to perpetuate the implicit oppressions. Whitlock traces the progression of postcolonial theory and argues that whereas the architects of the theory (i.e. Fanon) constructed a "monolithic" (41) "Manichean" (Chester 437) characterisation of opposition, contemporary critics dismiss this concrete categorization in favour of a more inclusive framework which would embrace various complexities and ambivalences that

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constitute "I"dentity,[8] such as race, gender and class. Chester locates the colonial "gendered writing subject" (436) in between the transposable oppositions (437) of the Manichean allegory. Postcolonial theory posits that the coloniser has all the power. Autobiographies written by white women cause a problem. Since a woman is already 'Other' in a patriarchal society, her writing causes a rift in the obsolete characterisations of colonial theory and if she does not maintain convention or subscribe to convention she is doubly othered. This enables critics to read a colonial text without its moral encumbrance as discussed by Whitlock. The two colonial British subjects of this research have a similar effect in that they destabilise the monolithic binaries of colonialism. It suddenly becomes possible to critique colonialism and patriarchy using subjects who are simultaneously complicit as well as othered in the discourse.

Integral to my research is a consideration of the embodied position of female autobiographers. Paxton examines the uneasiness British colonising women felt pertaining to their bodies. She explains that colonial economy assigned them the "labour of reproduction" (392); hence, they were unable to disconnect themselves from their bodies and bodily desires in a similar way British men did. Although Paxton posits these theories regarding colonial India, the same holds true for South African British colonists, as Schreiner argues in *Women and Labour* (1911). Women were less certain of their imperial identity than men. Smith reiterates Judith Butler's inference that the Western white male "identifies himself as disembodied" ("The Other Woman and the Racial Politics" 412). This form of identification necessarily rests on the premise that women's identities are confined to their bodies and bodily functions. Smith suggests that the enforced "embodiedness" (412) of women parallels the imperial view of the African as sexually primitive or as the feminine Other in need of patriarchal oversight. I include an analysis in each of my chapters concerning the autobiographers' supposed embodiedness or body politics in order to determine whether or not they confined and defined themselves according to the function and limits of their bodies. About her invention of the term gynocriticism, Elaine Showalter states that it is the study of women "*as writers*, and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female

[8] This use of "I"dentity is extensive in my analysis of autobiographical writing since it signals the identity constructed for the metaphorically empty "I" the narrator uses and thus "I"dentity calls to the fore the identity-in-making by narration.

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career; and the evolution and laws of a literary tradition" (emphasis in original "Feminist Criticism" 185). It offers a feminist critic the opportunity to consider women, and their writing, as a "distinct group" (185) and not the opposite of man. The body is merely one identity marker of woman, but in women's autobiographies, as I aim to illustrate, it becomes necessary to discuss their embodied position.

Caren Kaplan poses interesting questions concerning the possibility of recovering autobiography as a "feminist writing strategy" (116) in her research "Resisting Autobiography: Out-Law Genres and Transnational Feminist Subjects". She considers the likelihood that Western feminist autobiography, in a similar manner as criticism of Western autobiography, continues postcolonial traditions of "cultural domination". She asks what "kind of postcolonial writing or reading strategies intersect with feminist concerns to create transnational feminist subjects" (116). Whitlock, in *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (2000), disapproves of this approach. She coalesces narratives of women across continents, decades and racial lines and asserts that the "specific, historical and contextual" aspects of women's autobiography dissolve the notion of "transhistorical female experience" (3). Her hypothesis is that it would be possible to situate women's autobiographies, the 'difference' and the "leakage" between their diverging "gendered, national and racial identities" (3). Whitlock, as well as other theorists, resists the notion of a transnational feminist subject. It is therefore important to distinguish even between colonising subjects. I agree with Whitlock and suggest that the South African colonising psyche, as presented in women's autobiography, necessarily requires its own codification.

In *Women and Autobiography* (1999), Martine Watson Brownley and Allison B. Kimmich discuss some of the shortcomings women autobiographers exhibit in their writing. Historically, women autobiographers highlighted their husband's accomplishments (as King does albeit subversively highlighting his failures too). Their own achievements were mentioned but in a diffident tone. They conceded to social norms "that link femininity and self-effacement" (1), strengthening ideologies that made them question their view and position as authors of their own stories. Showalter explains: "[D]enied participation in public life, women were forced to cultivate their feelings and to overvalue romance. Emotions rushed in to fill the vacuum of experience" (Morris 25). Nancy Miller notes that for most

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women, their life story could only end with "marriage or death" (cited in Heilbrun 17). I argue that this is not the case for any of the women I examine. According to Miller, women seem incapable of admitting their desires and ambitions or of claiming notoriety in their self-representative texts (Heilbrun 17). Heilbrun remarks that various female critics propose that women have developed specialised strategies with which to read their own sex's autobiographies since they instinctively 'read' the unnamed underlying pain (23). Until very recently, women were secretive in their writing and hid their most harrowing experiences, or brushed them off as mere factual evidence, thus perpetuating patriarchal subjugation (22-23). Heilbrun argues that with the rise of confessional autobiography and other genres such as 'autobiographical' poetry women have endeavoured to 'name' their struggle and counter conventional female silence (23). Women 'translate' the 'truth' of their experiences, even as cultured disempowered female identities, in a patriarchal society. The articulation of these experiences uncovers the "sites both of her oppression and her empowerment" (Smith "Construing Truth in Lying Mouths" 37). My aim is also to uncover the autobiographers' 'truth'; this truth is mostly suppressed or veiled in anecdotal reticence, or inhibited by a wariness of the public's reaction when expressing/omitting pain and notoriety.

The three women this thesis is concerned with all embarked on various journeys that allow for a reading of their autobiographies as travel narratives. Mary Morris asserts that women's travel narratives are introspective: "[b]ecause of the way women have cultivated their inner lives, a journey often [becomes] a dialogue between the inner and outer, between [their] emotional necessity and the reality of the external world" (30). This dialogue has metaphorical significance and differs from male travel narratives. Mary Louise Pratt posits that many imperial women travel writers exhibited anti-colonialist sentiments and views and were part of an anti-conquest that rejected "colonial appropriation [...] and subjugation" (52). Analysing the metaphorical journey of the psyche as well as the physical journey would provide insight into the formulation of a comprehensive female subjectivity.

King and Rorke are colonising (and settler) subjects, and their imagining and self-representation of this position should therefore be critiqued. Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose in *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (1994) investigate the gendered constructions in the spatial politics situated in difference and mapping. They argue

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that there is an inclination towards constructing monolithic binaries of gender in the academic community in order to locate difference (31). Blunt and Rose suggest an examination of imperial women as marginal within their designated roles, but accounting for their engagement with their own space. They further state that "[n]o feminist today can innocently represent all women" (7). In view of these ideas, it is therefore imperative to study a woman's text as autonomous and yet part of a larger framework. Feminist theorists and historiographers, according to Blunt and Rose, can then examine the text of "individual heroic" (9) woman within the framework of imperial discourse, but in "neglecting the construction of gendered subjectivities" in this framework, they can once again silence colonised women and only 'speak' for colonising women (9). Sara Mills critiques this idealisation of the subversive nature (as hero) of imperial women. She investigates the complicity and biases in their texts (40-42). Keeping both critical perspectives in mind, I thus scrutinised my primary narratives for evidence of both complicity and rejection of the colonial discourse.

There are valid sceptical questions concerning the veracity of life writing. Numerous critics, such as Whitlock, Smith and James Olney, posit the theory that life writing is not merely writing about memory and the self, but also simultaneously the act of creating a 'Self'. Memory is unreliable; therefore some critics hold that the Ego/Imaginary Self superimposes meaning onto these memories (Mandel 49-50). Barrett J. Mandel states that the "autobiographical consciousness" (49), the consciousness that considers 'I'tself, can lie to itself and others, but it can only lie if it knows the truth (although 'truth' is a precarious term), and in the act of writing, writing will inevitably reveal the 'truth' (50-51). Mandel's structuralist argument is that language is rooted in humanity; it creates illusions, and even if the author lies, there is a more than distinct possibility that the reader can ferret out the truth or that the narrative itself will reveal the visceral realities (63). Olney explains this phenomenon according to the very nature of autobiography. Autobiographical writing, for Olney, is a "self-reflexive, a self-critical act" (*Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* 25); as such, it critiques itself. Regardless of the problematics concerning the reliability of autobiographical narrative, there is truth to be found in life writing. The author cannot hide, and in the case of most colonial writers, does not try to hide attitudes concerning the people who surround them. Women tend to focus on their experiences and relationships in life

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writing since they are used to viewing themselves in their culturally and politically designated roles as wife, mother and daughter (Brownley and Kimmich 1). The three women I discuss readily offer their observations concerning politics and society. The supposition of critics such as Whitlock, Brownley and Kimmich that women define themselves in relation to adjacent objects and subjects, referred to as relationality (Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 248), would maintain the assumption that their writing would be riddled with descriptions of those in close proximity and importance.

Pratt investigates the "domestic subject" (3) of the empire, in other words, the position and complicity of the inhabitants of the colonising nation. She discusses the mechanics in creating a domestic imperialist position. Her argument is that this was achieved by narratives of travel writing and discovery or survival literatures (4, 56). Pratt considers the subversive nature of travel writers. They are seemingly part of an "anti-conquest" (37), the unbiased observers of all they experience and view without actively participating in the colonial conquest. Although their narrative purports seemingly objective observations, it ratifies the colonial discourse. The sedulous accretion of territory is implicit in their writing, since they either codify all they see, 'discover' new species, plants or spaces that they 'name', or they codify the 'native' as 'barbarian' and other. In describing and inscribing the landscape and indigenous tribes, they adjudicate the 'natives' site which, in its turn, endorses the presence of the white man. Pratt's salient research focuses on the "contact zones" (7), the space or fringes where different cultures collide. It is usually distinguishable by "coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (8) between a dominant culture and its inherent tenacious need to suppress and conquer the 'unknown' (7). Women's travel writing has a similar anti-conquest mode. Although their writing seems sympathetic to the plight of the native (Mills 32-34), or less geared towards appropriation, it is written from a position, although marginalised, of racial or class superiority. Mills argues that it is necessary to investigate imperial women's writing in an analogous framework to men's writing (35-39). Although there is some difference, women were also part of the systematic purl of colonial expansion. I investigate both the 'difference' located in King's and Rorke's autobiographies and their participation in the colonial discourse.

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The position of female authors and women autobiographers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is tenuous, as will forthwith be discussed. I use theories regarding women writers to illustrate their marginal position in society, since I propose that female autobiographers occupied an analogous position. Women writers were vilified and as a result of transgressions (the act of writing) they were cast in the light of monsters or sickly women. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar famously examine and define themes of hysteria, escapement, capture, madness, infection and debilitation in the literature of the nineteenth century in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979). In an overview of the position of a woman and a woman writer, they inevitably also investigate the dominant position of men. In the patriarchal society of the nineteenth century, a man who could not write was seen as emasculated or a "eunuch" (9). The pen was a phallic symbol of power, dominance and authority (7, 9). Men were creators of the world and literature (3-7). The text of the nineteenth century is saturated with images of 'mad' women who suffer from nerves or 'female' illnesses such as hysteria, anorexia or agoraphobia transcribing women as the lesser sex. According to Gilbert and Gubar, 'Woman' is framed and encapsulated by Man's intellectual ambits:

> As a sort of "sentence" man has spoken, she has herself been "sentenced": fated, jailed, for he has both "indited" her and "indicted" her. As a thought he has "framed," she has been both "framed" (enclosed) in his texts, glyphs, graphics, and "framed up" (found guilty, found wanting) in his cosmologies. (13)

The reputed 'angel of the house' position of women served as a model of respectable femininity. This subject position required them to be complacent, silent and pure. This purity was "self-less" (21), "wholly passive" and metaphysically empty (21). Gilbert and Gubar hypothesise that men's own fear and inability to comprehend women drove them to project that fear onto women who defied their inscriptions. Therefore, they vilified 'sick' women or women who did not meekly submit to their confinements. The image of the mad woman is not only prevalent in masculine literatures, but also located in women's texts. Woman writers themselves feared their 'madness', a seemingly inevitable result of their revolt: "the despair of the monster-woman is also real, undeniable and infectious" (55). These fears become noticeable when one considers the gaps in *what* women are writing (75); they try to hide and conceal certain traits or events that would categorize them as a 'specific' kind of woman.

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There are certain aspects or narrative silences that are indicative of a 'lack' that a feminist critic has to try to unearth and explain (75). Woman is already sentenced and found wanting; she does not desire to be found wanton too in her writing. Whereas for a man the pen was a phallic symbol, it metaphorically added a tail (and tale) for a woman. As stated earlier, women's writing can be viewed as a "quest" (76) for self-definition. The story she narrates is a way in which she creates herself, for both fictional and autobiographical writers. When considering the women's texts in this thesis, I will attempt to locate these gaps and images of madness, or 'doubles' women incorporate into their texts. In a similar vein as other theorists on women's autobiography (such as Heilbrun, Brownley, Kimmich, Smith and Watson), I hypothesise that women autobiographers are aware of their reading public's distrust and wariness concerning women who write and theoretically even more so since their texts are self-representative and non fictional.

For example, King becomes a successful businesswoman since her husband fails in all his endeavours to provide for them. She attempts to hide this fact by including a chapter with letters between her husband and Prince Albert to lend credibility not only to her husband, but also to herself. King is aware of public scrutiny and pre-emptively ratifies the position of her husband. Rorke, when deserted by her husband, 'kills him off' rather than portraying herself as jilted or lacking in the eyes of the public. She introduces the figure of a dangerous (mad) 'native' black beauty, Topsy, to detract from her questionable position as a woman alone on the frontier and to highlight her respectable position. The double she incorporates will be integral to my study of her autobiography. Van Heerden does not discuss her sexual orientation in a dominant patriarchal society incapable of even naming (in law and society) her sexuality. I will, similar to other feminist critics, examine her narrative silence that could be indicative of a 'lack', and try to explain her reticence in discussing it.

Victorian middle-class morality and *volksmoeder* ideology underscore my analysis of the three women's self-representation. Butler asks "whether the 'I' who must appropriate moral norms in a living way is not itself conditioned by norms, norms that establish the viability of the subject" (*Giving an Account of Oneself* 9). As I illustrate, the prevailing morality as ascribed by the three women's respective societies influences the manner in which they write and present themselves. They critique, eschew and subvert expected moral behaviour and

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norms on multiple occasions by employing clever writing strategies, but there is evidence that they are "conditioned by [established] norms" (9) and perpetuate and function within prevailing moral behavioural patterns. As renegade New Women, they endeavour to gain independence and reject ascribed morality; yet, that which they reject informs their subjectivity.

Edward John Hardy, reiterating John Ruskin, states that "[t]he five talents of women are those which enable them: 1. To please people. 2. To feed them in dainty ways. 3. To clothe them. 4. To keep them orderly. 5. To teach them" (16).[9] Victorian women were thus expected to be selfless, tractable and servile. Mary Poovey in *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (1988) asserts that middle-class Victorian women's roles as wives and mothers were "indisputable" (1) and considered as their divinely ordained and "natural role" (1) in the nineteenth century but that "the representation of biological sexuality, the definition of sexual difference, and the social organization of sexual relations are social, not natural, phenomena" (2). Social changes and the ideas that informed and purported amendments to, for example, the law, science and gender relations were fragmented, dispersed across the last five decades of the nineteenth century, and by no means linear in their development (1-15). The birth of the New Woman is analogous with the 'uneven developments' of Victorian England, and the fight for gender equality (in terms of law, education, the right to vote and employment opportunity) encapsulates the idea and characterisation of the New Woman but, as Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis note: "Victorian feminism is not a simple story of a radical break with tradition [...] many New Women wanted to achieve social and political power by reinventing rather than rejecting their domestic role" (9). Likewise, white Afrikaner women appropriated the idea of the *volksmoeder* (the domestic ideal) and revolutionised the concept to allow them respectable entry (as mothers and wives) into political and professional terrains (for example the suffrage movement and working as teachers and nurses). The mother figure of "[self-sacrifice, virtue and integrity]" (Devarenne 633) was employed in Afrikaans rhetoric to advocate for a

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[9] My great-grandmother, Bettie du Toit van der Merwe, owned this book, *The Five Talents of Woman: A Book for Girls and Women* (1888) that my mother gave me as a gift with a mischievous grin. The book, written by Irish (and not English) born John Edward Hardy, a cleric and morality writer, was very informative as a primary text towards helping me understand nineteenth-century morality. But more important: although other critics postulate that Victorian morality siphoned into South Africa, this book to me seems a more tangible example of cultural and moral colonisation.

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measure of equality. Although few white Afrikaner women could be considered as New Women, there were some - like Marie du Toit (Cloete 104-120) and Petronella van Heerden - who summarily rejected *volksmoeder* ideology.

Esther Newton explains that first-generation New Women were born between the 1850s and 1860s (561), while second-generation New Women were "born in the 1870s and 1880s" (562). The first-generation New Women are characterised by their rejection of their mothers' domesticity and their desire to achieve financial and personal independence, separate from family; they refused to become wives and mothers (Newton 561). Richardson and Willis argue that some New Women, like Schreiner, desired independence and equality whilst at the same time having a family and subscribing to some domestic roles (9). This is significant for my argument that King is a first-generation New Woman, although a wife and later a mother. Furthermore, New Women cultivated intimate "romantic friendships" (Newton 561) with other women. The second-generation New Women rejected their predecessors and flagrantly dismissed conventional morality and expectations; they "drank, [...] smoked, [and] rejected traditional feminine clothing, and lived as expatriates" (564), and many were in lesbian couples. Rorke and Van Heerden, as I illustrate, are both second-generation New Women. Rorke gave up her profession as a nurse and became a stage actress, one avenue available to New Women (Ledger 90), and Van Heerden fits Newton's profile in both sexual orientation and behaviour.

I examine the embodied position or body politics of the autobiographers in the following chapters. It is necessary to consider Butler's theories concerning gender and gender performance in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993) as well as performative acts since I argue that, as New Women, the autobiographers are aware (or conscious) of their ascribed gender roles and morality coupled with the performance of their gender. They uniformly 'act' and perform their gender textually, albeit for their audience. I also rely on Butler's theories regarding gender and performativity when I conduct my queer reading of Van Heerden's life writing. Butler discusses the performative act of gender in her chapter "Critically Queer" (223-242). She examines the destabilising effect drag has on the stark normative heterosexual binaries and its construction (mannerism) as hegemonic (231). She continues to theorise that the act of naming, announcing or declaring something (marriage

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ceremony and birth) with language forcibly links it to the cultural, historical and social specific implications of the words. Thus, "[f]eminity is [...] not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm (i.e. It's a girl!), one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment" (232). Historically (and even contemporarily), there is a perceived correlation and expectation between the "outside" (234), what someone wears or should wear according to their sex, and the manner in which they act but should not be misconstrued as an indication of their gender, because there is a performative aspect to gender (234) which could be an unconscious act:

> In no sense can it be concluded that the part of gender that is performed is therefore the "truth" of gender; performance as bounded "act" is distinguished from performativity insofar as the latter consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's "will" or "choice"; further, what is "performed" works to conceal, if not to disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, unperformable. The reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake. (Butler 234)

Tamsyn Spargo states that "[p]erformativity is often misread as performance" (57), as "choosing gender, like selecting from a wardrobe" (58) and not as the repetitive and stylised gestures and mannerisms enacted and associated with a specific gender with "a set of meanings already socially established" (57). Sara Salih explains that the terms performance and performativity at times "slide into one another" (56) in Butler's work and that other theorists make the same mistake for lack of definition and clear distinction in Butler's theorisation. The performance of gender in this section will refer to the 'act' as socially constructed behavioural and physical norms associated with sex and that sex's 'body'; such as clothing, physical appearance, mannerism and certain (gendered) acceptable and unacceptable behavioural acts. Performative acts refer to "authoritative speech" (225), usually uttered as ceremonial rites ('actors' would be priests, judges or doctors), that exercises a "binding power" to an event, subject or object and in effect also produces what they 'name'. The power of this speech act lies in the "discourse that repeats or mimes the discursive gestures of power". Performativity encapsulates the relationship between the subject generated by, and uttering, the authoritative speech in the functioning and balance between power and discourse.

Although Schreiner is not the subject of discussion in this thesis, my argument develops from the archive of work conducted by and of the other to underscore the theoretical framework of

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my investigation. The study of Schreiner's fictional as well as non-fictional work is seminal since there is a mass of academic research regarding her work and the period in which she wrote. Schreiner is arguably South Africa's most noteworthy and researched woman author from the nineteenth century, and according to Showalter, one of the most prominent feminists (and New Woman) of the nineteenth century. Apart from her fiction, Schreiner grapples with women's position as "social or sex parasites" (21) in her non-fiction work such as *Woman and Labour* (1911). Schreiner argues that women allowed themselves to turn into the parasites of society. Her interest, apart from the personal, was birthed by the description of the position of the 'native' women in society. Schreiner was shocked by the fact that the women did not blame one individual man for the severities they had to endure, but that they rather lamented the situation in silence and complacency. It made her realise that women have indeed become meek and allowed men to divide their labour or distribute it to the servant classes. Schreiner's surmise was that modern relationships should be based on sexual passion between man and woman, where there is mutual respect and an equal share of labour (67; 145). She does not express a desire for an uxorious partner, but one that would respect and share the responsibilities of the public and private sphere. She traces and equates the 'improvement and progression' (98) of a society to the attenuating position of women. The richer a society becomes, the more atrophying the demands they place on their women pertaining to labour. Schreiner believed, though, that the Boer woman "retained the full possession of one full half of the labour of her race" (Giliomee "Allowed such a state of freedom" 50) and did not mimic the upper-class societies of Europe, thus they were not parasitic (until the politicisation of *volksmoeder* ideology after the Great South African War).

The rich store of academic work on Schreiner's oeuvre will be helpful in order to illuminate certain concerns in my thesis such as ethnicity, the relationship between Boer and Brit, the portrayal of Boer women in literature (for example Tant Sannie, see footnote 8), and budding feminism in South Africa. Dorothy Driver discusses the reception of Schreiner and her work in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by South African readers. She states that Schreiner disillusioned South African men, and made them uneasy - as Rorke also observes (37-38) - since she had the audacity to become a writer, and a successful one at that. Furthermore, Driver considers the masculine need, as seen in South African literature for men and by men, to cast women in a relational role to nature, whilst men were associated with notions of

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culture, industry and the expanding of a civilization. These binary oppositions are not unique to South African literature. Driver mentions that women authors perpetuate conventional connotations between women and nature as oppositional in their writing. They also depict nature as other (like male authors) or try to manage it, which in effect displaces them from themselves and their 'natural' identity (as ascribed to them by men) and disillusions and angers them. This anger is internalised and not expressed towards men and causes sicknesses such as "hypochondria, insomnia and anxiety" (459). Driver's theory regarding the position of the woman writer in South Africa mirrors Gilbert and Gubar's examination. Schreiner, Smith and other South African woman writers suffered from these illnesses (459). Emily Hobhouse also explains this polemic:

> In these modern days of women's work and women's influence in all public matters the adjective 'hysterical' has nearly if not quite dropped out of use, but in those far-off days Victorian views still predominated, and 'hysterical' figured frequently in the male vocabulary. I had always noticed that when a women [*sic*] held an opinion opposite to the men she had to do with, and they had no arguments with which to confront her, they invariably turned round and dubbed her 'hysterical' (Van Reenen 279).

As mentioned earlier, I examine the work of King, Rorke and Van Heerden for evidence of these illnesses (as authors) as well as their relational association with nature (necessarily embodied), if any exists, and the manner in which it is conveyed through the narrative. I also examine the writing strategies they employ to avoid being dubbed hysterical or mad.

I will consider Rorke's and King's participation in creating, or perpetuating, a British culture on the frontier. 'Nation' is imagined differently by men and women respectively. This is quite possibly a result of the role designated to gender in the construction of a nation. James Snead considers the idea of the English pertaining to their nation. He postulates that

> European nationalism, particularly in the nineteenth century, seemed to depend increasingly for its definition upon *cultural* criteria. Dedication to the idea of culture provided a kind of generalized *coverage*, insuring a group's identity against external or internal threats of usurpation, assimilation or denaturement. [... They located] *difference* – defined as 'national' and 'natural' *superiority* – from another culture. (235)

Woman writers were also a part of this construction of nation within the colonial frontiers. Simon During states that he does not agree with other theorists that nationalism is essentially

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a “nasty ideological formation” (139). It is important to study the perpetuation of an idea or ‘imagined community’ (Anderson) without projecting one’s personal biases. I scrutinize the formulation of a British community, as imagined and represented by women, without necessarily vilifying the community they describe.

The existing research into colonialism/postcolonialism and women’s life writing respectively provides an abundant and sufficient backdrop for this study. Furthermore, limited academic research is available regarding the three women under investigation. There is also nominal research regarding the life writing of women at the onset of white Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa, but relevant titles include Elizabeth van Heyningen’s “The Voices of Women in the South African War” and her recently published book *The Concentration Camps of the Anglo-Boer War* (2013), since she unearths previously unread or dismissed diaries and memoirs written by women during the Anglo-Boer War to give voice to Boer, Brit and black women (silenced in the years after the war by historiographers). Another example is Elsie Cloete’s master’s thesis, *Frontierswomen as Volksmoeders: Textual Invocations in Two Centuries of Writing* (1994), in which she examines the writing of frontierswoman Susanna Smit (diaries) and the feminist text of Marie du Toit (2), both examples of renegade South African women in my delineated period. My research to date has uncovered no scholarly engagement with Marina King’s autobiography. M.J. Daymond examines the *facts* of Rorke’s life and informs the reader in “Freedom, Femininity, Adventure and Romance: The Elements of Self-Presentation in *Melina Rorke, Told by Herself*” that Rorke embellished most of her life in her autobiography. Louise Viljoen investigates the link between Afrikaner nationalism and the ‘silence’ in Van Heerden’s memoirs regarding her lesbianism in “Nationalism, Gender and Sexuality in the Autobiographical Writing of two Afrikaner Women”. Annemarié van Niekerk explores, within the context of a feminist historiography, of Petronella van Heerden’s work in “A Woman Who Made Her Mark in History but Remained Marginalised in the Documents of History: Petronella van Heerden”, while Alba Bouwer wrote a series of articles for the *Sarie Marais* (1960) about van Heerden’s life. Extensive research indicates that there is a vast store of literature written by women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but many of these fictional and non-fictional works have since been neglected. Valerie Letcher has compiled a bibliography of South African women writers that is indicative of the

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copious store of available literatures written by women that has for the most part been grossly ignored. Her bibliography does not include King's textual contribution.

Historical Overview (1854-1948) and Narrating Nationality[10]

Despite the rise of scientific racism in the Enlightenment that continued far into the nineteenth century, casting the "coloured – and especially Negro – races" (Bolt ix) as inferior in the pseudo-scientific fields of craniology, philology and physiognomic studies, the British policies in South Africa towards the so-called 'native' tribes were philanthropic (Streak 194). It was only after the two Boer Republics gained their independance (1852 and 1854) that the philanthropic attitude towards policymaking changed, Michael Streak argues. He continues:

> By 1854 general public opinion and official policy towards the natives of South Africa has changed to such a marked extent that the Afrikaner attitude and dealings with the natives were no longer real points of contention – certainly Englishmen were not prepared to allow philanthropic considerations to dictate official policy. (194)

The philanthropic attitude towards the indigenous people of South Africa before 1854 was partly due to pressure from domestic citizens, in the rise and wake of the abolition of slavery (1833), to 'free' and protect those in the British colonies. The scientific discussion and theorisation in Victorian England regarding race was based on physical, biological, linguistic but also cultural aspects (or the soul) and thereby "race and culture were dangerously linked" (Bolt 9). In discussing the origin of different races there were "two distinct theories – those of polygenesis and monogenesis" (Bolt 9). The monogenesists based their theories on the Bible and believed that all humans came from two original parents and furthermore held the uncomfortable opinion (for the superior Anglo-Saxon) that all races could procreate. Polygenesists argued that humans descended from a "plurality of races" (Bolt 10) and that the children of mixed heritage would muddy the gene pool and genetically weaken superior races. Although scientific racism is not the focus of this study, it clarifies my study of the women autobiographers' depiction of other races as both inferior and barbaric or cast in a philanthropic light.

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[10] I borrow 'Narrating Nationality' from Homi K. Bhabha's *Nation and Narration*.

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Historically, there was an inimical relationship between the two British colonies (Cape and Natal) and the two Boer Republics (Transvaal Republic and Orange Free State) preceding and during the two Boer Wars (also referred to as the Wars for Independence; respectively 1877-1881 and 1899-1902) in South Africa. The literature (fictional and non-fictional) of the period mostly examines this polemic. Anne McClintock indicates that before the discovery of diamonds (1867) and gold (1886) in the Boer Republics, South Africa was considered "a far-flung outpost of scant allure" (232).[11] The British Pyrrhic victory over the Boers caused the British Liberal Party to reconsider their authority in South Africa. The site of white Afrikaner identity after the Anglo Boer War is difficult to locate. South Africa became a Union in 1910 but was still under the dominion of the British Government and although governed by a constitutional monarchy, in practice and law they were a self-governing union (Giliomee *Die Afrikaner* 230-231). Furthermore, the British with a more philanthropic policy regarding the indigenous tribes of South Africa promised "black and brown" (231) future legal autonomy, a promise impossible to deliver due to economic considerations and the return of the Boer colonies to Afrikaner administration.

Before continuing my historical overview, it is necessary to clarify my use of Boer and Afrikaner. Scholarly articles on Afrikaner nationalism by numerous critics use the term Boer and Afrikaner interchangeably. I distinguish between the two for the purposes of this thesis. Boer signifies the socio-political (as well as cultural and historical) reference to white Afrikaans-speaking farmers. In essence thus, Boer refers to the pastoral, farmer or 'natural man'. Afrikaner indicates the *embourgeoid* (I explain this term further on) white Afrikaans-speaking citizens of South Africa, and is associated with the rise of white nationalism in South Africa. It should also be noted that not all Afrikaners (people able to speak Afrikaans or mother tongue speakers) are white, but when I refer to Afrikaners, I specifically indicate white (traditionally, although not homogeneously, nationalist) speakers of Afrikaans. I use Dutch and Boer interchangeably in Chapter Two and Three because King and Rorke use both indicators of a 'group' without distinguishing between them.[12]

[11] The date of the discovery of diamonds is indicated as 1867 by McClintock (368) and as 1869 by Giliomee (*Die Afrikaner* x).

[12] Boer's, or Afrikaans-spreaking whites, were generally descendants of Dutch settler's in the Cape Colony and later Natal and the Orange Free State.

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The policies of the Union (1910) and later the Republic's (1961) apartheid laws situate the Afrikaner in a colonial framework. Yet, they were themselves colonial subjects. Their actions of oppression were a simulacrum of colonialism (almost neo-colonial) and Van Heerden's life writing for example could be analysed against a theoretical framework of colonialism. The Afrikaner subjectivity is simultaneously de/colonial, ironically both emancipatory and oppressive. Margaretta Jolly states that "[t]he decolonization struggles of the twentieth century fuelled nationalist sentiments" (636). It would seem that nationalism, in some cases, is a reactionary result of colonialism. Tracing South African nationalistic politics from 1910 clearly elucidates this process. Benedict Anderson argues that a nation is an imagined community (6). Studying a nation's culture and "imaginative literature" (Brennan 47) illuminates its ambivalent discourses of action and passivity, revolution and complacency as well as warfare and domesticity. Most of these ambivalent discourses are linked to gender. Brennan's supposition is that the novel rises to narrate its nation and its heroes; the "*[v]olksgeist*" (53) is propagated through literature. It is born from a collective desire for "solidarity" (53). Autobiography could then be viewed as the narration of a nation as experienced and imagined by the author. Locating women's voices (English and Afrikaans in this thesis) within this selected period will reflect the strenuous relationship between the British and the Afrikaner and their imagining of their (and others') respective culture and nationality.

According to W.A. de Klerk's *The Puritans in Africa* (1975), a people would react in two ways after suffering collectively from an oppressor, and the same holds true for the Afrikaner:

> To sum up: a subjected, defeated people may react hazardously by resorting to power-seeking militancy, or by 'collaborating'. It may also react creatively by 'being itself', and yet seeking reconciliation. In broad outline this forms the dominant theme in the process of the *embourgeoisement* – the *verburgerliking* – of the Afrikaners. (91)

Afrikaner nationalism increased in strength after the Anglo-Boer War. De Klerk's premise is that Afrikanerdom (or the idea thereof) started with the Great Trek (approximately 1835-1838) and the Wars for Independence.[13] The Afrikaner *trekked* in order to become a sovereign

[13] Afrikanerdom in itself is a contentious term and there is, and was, no consensus about what it actually indicates or signifies. In an interview with Afrikaans novelist Ingrid Winterbach, she explains that she finds the

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nation without the yoke of the British imperialists. This determined search for fertile lands away from the Empire defined and validated their existence as a nation. According to Streak in *The Afrikaner as Viewed by the English* (1974), the British were at first reluctant to grant Afrikaners their independence in the two Boer colonies, but after the expensive Eighth Frontier War (1850) their attitude changed from philanthropic (towards the indigenous groups) to militant; furthermore, fiscal considerations forced them to relinquish control of the 'colonies'. After the British granted the Boer colonies independence (1852 and 1854 resprectively) there was an amicable relationship between the British and Boer settlers, as also indicated by King and Van Heerden. The discovery of gold and diamonds in the then Boer Republics of the Orange Free State and Transvaal (also referred to as the South African Republic) reinvigorated the British interest in South African expansion and appropriation and led to the Wars for Independence. After the Boers' lands were destroyed by Lord Kitchener's Scorched Earth Policy (Anglo-Boer War), their women and children dead from sickness and starvation in the concentration camps, the British annexed 'their' lands and government. This across-the-board spill of blood caused an even stronger ebullition in the Boers' idea concerning nation. The Afrikaner traditionally viewed their nation and identity as primarily a pastoral farming society, hence the name Boers; but with their *embourgeoisement* a new urban and suburban (also educated) class of Afrikaner emerged. Writers, journalists and English politicians of this period referred to Afrikaans farmers as Boers, and urban Afrikaners as Afrikaners. The politics of the Afrikaner (*Natte* and *Sappe*)[14] is divergent (1910-1948) and indicative of De Klerk's theory that nations react either in a militant or conciliatory fashion after harrowing defeat against an oppressor. The South African Party (*Sappe*) were more inclusive (towards English-speaking South Africans) in their policies but the National Party (*Natte*) advocated for governmental policies and legislation to benefit almost solely the Afrikaner and uplift them from the poverty of the Anglo-Boer War and the Great Depression. The notion of Afrikanerdom thus changed with the political climate in South Africa.

At first Afrikanerdom represented the Dutch Settlers' disavowal of British Rule and their Great Trek and the subsequent Wars for Independence. The notion of Afrikanerdom changed after South Africa became a Union and is a conglomeration of the definitions and political

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word Afrikanerdom "offensive" and that it is dangerous and narrow-minded to define the Afrikaner since the 'group' is not homogenous (165).

[14] *Natte* and *Sappe* are slang terms used by South Africans.

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acts of South African political parties and their preoccupation with what De Klerk terms retaining and gaining the "*eie*" (95); with what they considered as uniquely Afrikaans in their cultural and moral traditions. Afrikanerdom is usually associated with processes of decolonisation: to rid themselves of colonial oversight and their oppressors, and to gain the *eie* when defining their nation. D.F. Malan[15] also defines Afrikanerdom and Afrikaner National Unity in his political memoir *Afrikaner Volkseenheid* (1959) by using different criteria. He argues that the Nation should firstly and above all love their Fatherland (*vaderslandsliefde* - patriarchal) because in its essence it is "our house" (46); it creates a sense of unity, solidarity and mutual respect for those who live with you (46). A nation should have its *eie* culture and language (in Malan's argument – Afrikaner language and culture): "an *eie* country becomes the *bakermat* (figuratively the origin or birthplace) of an *eie* volk" (Malan 46). In Malan's metaphor the nation is patriarchal and exists through the Father. If one loves one's country since it is like a household, in the Afrikaner context that would imply that men (as the head of the household) are the key to the Nation. The rhetoric used to define the Afrikaner Nation is thus patriarchal and couples with *volksmoeder* rhetoric and ideology. This gendered construction of the nation is integral to my study of Van Heerden's work (and also to the views expressed by King and Rorke on Boers), since I examine the position of Afrikaner/Boer women in their society.

Anderson defines the nation: "it is an imagined community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). In his book *Imagined Communities*, Anderson explores the relevant historical and contemporary aspects that formulate how people 'imagine', and are willing to even die, for their respective community and nation. He traces it to the eighteenth century, with the rise of enlightenment. With the fall of the "sacred" languages (such as Latin) and cultures during the period characterized by rationality and secularism, other cultures "fragmented, pluralized and territorialized" the language and cultural inheritance (19). This process whereby a nation developed its own 'new sacred' language and culture made it possible to "think" (22) or imagine a nation. Imagining this 'sacred language' also coincides with the study of philology and discriminating against specifically Africans, using language as criterion for establishing racial superiority and difference. Anderson mentions a puzzling

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[15] Prime Minister of South Africa in 1948, head of the National Party, one of the architects of Apartheid and head of the Broederbond.

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phenomenon in history: Creole communities, such as the Afrikaner, developed their idea of nation much sooner than the rest of Europe (50). Anderson posits that "print-language and piracy" (67) made the idea of nation accessible to larger groups as well as youngsters. Language, the inclusion or exclusion thereof, is centripetal for imagining a nation. It was used as a tool to control the natives or Creole populations. The Afrikaner fought for a language of their own in order to define and imagine their community and the Afrikaans language was officially recognised in 1918 (McClintock 369). It provides a code for a national anthem, or in the case of the Afrikaner, *Die Stem*. This community is defined by its policies of segregation and inclusion. The Afrikaners' language served as a tool by which they could exclude the indigenous groups and Indians as well the English South Africans. This is evident in the fractious politics of the *Natte* and *Sappe*. Anderson states that "to insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other, and its affinities with racism, it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love" (141). The importance of Afrikaans as a tool whereby Afrikaners imagined the *eie* emerges in Van Heerden's life writing, but whereas the majority of Afrikaans nationalists employed language as exclusionary and separatist vehicle to achieve superiority (economic and social), Van Heerden utilised language as political tool to advocate change and inclusion. She explains in *Waarom Ek 'n Sosialis Is* (1938) that many people asked her why a staunch nationalist (such as herself) would turn socialist, since "it goes without saying that [she] would stand by [her] volk, [that she had to] employ her language and serve her volk" (1). Her answer was that the rampant poverty "across race [...] and colour" (4) called for economic sacrifice and equality. This notion of language as tool to advocate change is also perceptible in her memoirs, as I discuss in Chapter Four.

Homi K. Bhabha states in the introduction to *Nation and Narration* (1990) that the project of the book is to "explore the Janus-faced ambivalence in language itself in the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of the nation" (3). The book builds on Anderson's theories regarding the nation (1). Ernest Renan argues that the race is generally confused with nation and that the modern nation can no longer be defined by ethnic, linguistic or racial indicators. He argues that language and religion are exclusive and not adequate for defining a nation, since these determinates are limited and exclusive by its very nature. His argument is that "[a] nation has a soul, a spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the

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possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in undivided form" (19). Renan explains that the 'grief' of a nation, and even more so its triumph, defines a nation. It is difficult to negotiate between the different nationalities and narratives prevalent in South African history, since South African nationalities are defined in stark opposition to one another. Historically and even still contemporarily, there is no consensus as to what constitutes a South African nationality since individual ethnic groups define nationality according to their separate cultures. It is even more complex to situate a woman within this framework, seeing as she is already marginal and tries to define herself as part of a 'nation'. It becomes necessary therefore, to examine diverging narratives in order to locate a sense of these various imagined communities. Women's autobiography before the 1970s has been situated in an "interstitional position between history and literature" (McNeill viii), but by examining their 'imagined nations' as depicted in their life writing it is possible to consider their work valuable in an attempt to define the complexities of other and self-narration and also their nations in the epoch of their writing.

A nation is largely built and constructed on the "myths of [that] nation" (Brennan 44). This includes the 'myth of origin', the fables and the portrayal of heroes and their suffering and sacrifice for the birth and sustainability of the nation. Studying a nation's culture and "imaginative literature" (Brennan 47) illuminates its ambivalent discourses of action and passivity, revolution and complacency as well as warfare and domesticity. Afrikaans writers such as M.E.R. and F.A. Venter wrote what one would call origin myths (about the Great Trek) while travel/settler narratives (King and Rorke) written in the colonies inform the domestic British citizen of the imperial nation and 'myth' of that imperial origin.

By examining the life writing of these three women, I confirm women's involvement in the 'making' and 'imagining' of South African (her)story. In the following chapter I investigate the life writing of South-African-born British colonial subject Marina King to illustrate women's involvement in trade and business in the colony before the turn of the nineteenth century. Her observations of the other ethnic South African groups, her complicity in the imperial project, as well as her aesthetic representation of Self and agency claimed through relationality are overdue in academic discussions of South African women's life writing.

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Chapter Two

Exploring an "I"dentity "worth her salt" in Marina King's *Sunrise to Evening Star: My Seventy Years in South Africa*

MRS WOODROFFE AT THE AGE OF TWENTY
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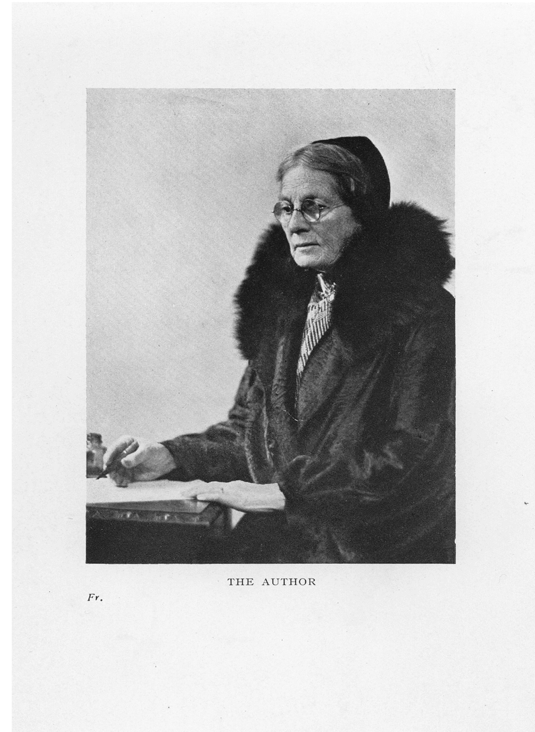
THE AUTHOR
Fr.

Figure 1: Mrs Woodroffe at the Age of Twenty

Figure 2: The Author – Marina King

Marina Nourse Woodroffe King's (1856-)[16] autobiography, *Sunrise to Evening Star: My Seventy Years in South Africa* (1935), traces the story of her life from before her birth on 27 November 1856 (in South Africa) to a time in the 1930s when, at the age of 79, while living in London, she decided to pen her recollection. It is of standard length, consisting of 190 pages, and although the structure follows conventions of traditional life writing, unfolding chronologically from birth to old age, the *bildung* is notably selective in the author's choice of

[16] To date, I have been unable to locate a source (obituary, death certificate or other documentation) which identifies King's date of death.

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event and anecdote.[17] In this chapter I argue that King deliberately constructs her narrative to present herself as a renegade woman: successful businesswoman, daring, brave, adventurous, yet virtuous in the context of Victorian colonial society. I am primarily interested in the narrative and aesthetic strategies King employs to reveal and, in my opinion, disguise notions of the Self. Therefore, my analysis draws on approaches from life writing theory, feminist studies and related criticism (defined and discussed in the introduction to this thesis) which bring insights to an investigation of South African women's identity in self-representations from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. My analysis aims to illustrate why I regard King's narration as an example of an embodied Subject, claiming agency through relational depictions of others. I develop this reading from her emphasis on a key event in her childhood which serves as a guiding motif in shaping her narrative into circular form, proving that in her view, she indeed lived a life "worth her salt" (11).

My own structural approach to this chapter was shaped by key ideas from women's life writing criticism, notably the work of Caroline Heilbrun, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. I briefly refer to these insights on authorial negotiation of the 'I' to explain my outline and methodology and to elaborate in greater detail on scholarly views that underpin my analysis. In *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century* (1993), Smith discusses the use of the 'I' in relation to Virginia Woolf's work. She notes:

> This "I" is, of course, what autobiography is about since autobiography has been the story of the "I", that "bar" that dramatically marks the white page, at least the story of that bar up to some moment before the metaphorical crossing of the bar. But that bar is itself a sign of death-in-life. Casting aridity within its shade, it blocks out creativity like a sunscreen. The bar thus becomes barren, sans imagination and fecundity. And so, for Woolf, the bar that serves metaphorically as site of the universal subject and its normative masculinity, requires barring. It must be crossed, perhaps double-crossed, before it can signal the trace of female subjectivity in an autobiographical text. (2)

King, like Woolf a Victorian subject, traverses this "bar" (2) in multiple ways and her self-representation is notably achieved though relational depictions of others. Her achievements and ambition are highlighted or overshadowed by descriptions of, for example, her first

[17] The first edition of this autobiography, published by Harrap Publishing House in 1935, consisted of 314 pages and included 20 illustrative plates. The autobiography was reprinted by Dassie publishers (no date) without images. The quotations in this thesis are from the Dassie reprint of this book.

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husband's usually failed endeavours (as well as by her strategic usage of 'I' and 'we') and her supposed superior position as a settler or British coloniser (as she considers herself) is imagined by narrating ambiguous anecdotes regarding other races or ethnic groups. In the narrative emerges a marked tension between King's ambition and her resistance to or negotiation of prescribed Victorian morality. The style thus exhibits traits of what one could call the strenuous dichotomous relationship between Self and Other of women's autobiography (in the colonies) in the nineteenth century or, as Heilbrun explains, women's "[i]dentity [in autobiography] is grounded through relation to the chosen other" (19). Keeping these views in mind, I do not conduct a chronological study of King's narration but rather connect specific anecdotes, thematic concerns, stylistics and observations that imbricate to form the premise of four analytical subsections. These subdivisions, each focusing on different sites of identity formulation and her narrative depiction of chosen relational others and the Other, function in tandem to illustrate the multiple writing strategies she employs to define and construct a 'worthy' Self. These sites serve as technique to circumvent disparaging criticism from her reading public (thus narrating to beguile, placate and seduce), the domestic citizen of the British Empire (Pratt 8). The first section examines King's "I"dentity formation, followed by a discussion of the agency she exhibits as a Subject, culminating in a section considering her embodied position (Smith "The Other Woman and the Racial Politics" 412) as an autobiographical subject. The focus then shifts to imperial and colonial considerations to examine the perpetuation of the Empire's discourse and her ambiguous depiction of the Other in the colony. This section will be underscored by the consideration of King as a female settler subject, a frontierswoman (Cloete 42), and by investigating her autobiography as framed in the tradition of a travel narrative.

To contextualise the events I focus on in my examination, I first provide a short summary of the autobiography with guiding commentary. Divided into sixteen chapters, each with three or four short subsections, King systematically but selectively recalls her life. As mentioned, she writes her story as a septuagenarian living in London. This distant perspective (physically and mentally) becomes more prominent in the latter part of the text, since the last four chapters, recounting her travels by car from South Africa to London through 'wild' Africa, are narrated more vividly and with more attention to detail than the preceding part of her narration. It seems that her memory of this more recent adventure is clearer, but her narrative begins with

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her childhood, and here King includes anecdotes told by family and friends that inform the reader of the socio-political climate of the colonial South Africa of her youth. Events recalled in the beginning, and returned to in the end, give the narrative a circular structure and are all essentially linked to one crucial recollection: an insult by King's brother. This insult, that she was not "worth her salt" (11), seems to serve as the primary motivation for her life's quest; one she returns to in the final pages to prove to herself (and her reader) that the characterisation he bestowed on her was indeed false. The anecdote further serves as technique to capture the reader's attention and, in true nineteenth-century adventure style, King proceeds to tell her story of a life lived in 'dark and dangerous' "Africa" (66). To propel the narrative forward, the author juxtaposes the setting of her narrating older 'I', living in dreary London, with the setting of her youth and a longing for the "dry, exhilarating air" (9) of Africa. The autobiography begins: "The leaves of the plane-tree outside my window are very still" (9), a sentence that is repeated in the first line of the envoi, her final stanza or peroration of the narrative echoing the sentiments and nostalgia of the first chapter. The first two paragraphs of Chapter One are repeated verbatim in the envoi. Here, however, King shortens the first sentence of paragraph three and adds an ellipsis: "But it is all so different..." (191). This difference between South Africa and Britain, reinforced by the envoi, is what King endeavours to illustrate in her autobiography. The rest of the narrative from Chapter One onwards unfolds generically, in the tradition of classical life writing (youth to old age). She traces her genealogy, recalls places she lived, events and people who shaped her development, as well as her romantic liaisons, marriages and life as successful businesswoman in South Africa. The *bildung* thus symbolically unfurls from sunrise (childhood) to the evening star (old age).

King's character emerges in the narrative as a daring and pioneering businesswoman who managed several successful hotels on mostly isolated and, at times dangerous, mining fields. According to King, she and her adopted daughter, Lynn, were the first women to drive in a motorcar from Cape to Cairo and then to London. King grew up on Somerset Farm in the Cape Colony with two younger sisters, two brothers and four stepbrothers. Up until Chapter Three King refers to herself and "[her] brothers" (29) and omits the existence of two younger sisters. This seemingly deliberate exclusion of her female siblings and other female persons who might have influenced her femininity indicates that her chosen relational others in her

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self-defining quest were masculine. Her father, Joseph Nourse, was a lieutenant in the British Navy sent on commission to South Africa in 1840 to track and pursue renegade slave traders (12).[18] Her mother, Mrs Norton, was a widow with four sons who married Joseph Nourse and bore him four children. After countless hardships on Somerset Farm, the Nourse family decided to *trek* up-country in search of greener pastures and settled on Greenwich Farm near the Drakensberg Mountains.[19] This *trek,* which ushered in King's life in a seemingly endless flow of migration and resettlement, lasted approximately nine months (29). She chronicles details of the journey, such as the wagons, the dangers of *trekking*, the peculiar superstitions of the "natives" (23) and oddities of the Dutch Boers they encountered. King employs biblical references, titling Chapter Two as "Exodus" (21) and recalling her father's comment "[n]ow we're on our own land" (31).[20] The many biblical references and stories interspersed with other anecdotes function as a writing technique, on a subliminal level, to validate events in her life but also her morality for the reader of the autobiography.

The young protagonist enjoyed life at Greenwich and King details the family's settler or "pioneer" (6) life on the farm. It is here where her mother died. Since Greenwich belonged to her, her sons from her first marriage inherited the land and King and her family were again uprooted and dispersed onto "[d]ivided [p]aths" (44). She was sent to live with the Anderson family and her younger sisters to their "step-brother's in the Cape" (44). She begged her father to allow her rather to live with him and keep house in Maritzburg.[21] Her adolescent years are mostly portrayed as fulfilling and enjoying her domestic role.

The narration of her *bildung* from an adolescent to a young woman coincides with the romantic tale of meeting her first husband, Cheeks[22] (Charlie Woodroffe), at a gathering on the Otto's family farm nearby. He was a retired Navy lieutenant (like her father), approximately twenty years her senior, with a dream of speculating and farming in South Africa (53). They married shortly afterwards and moved to Malvern Farm, her husband's

[18] The abolition of slavery (1833) in the British colonies occurred seven years prior to his commission.
[19] King uses Drakensberg and I prefer to use her words.
[20] This statement implies her father's colonial entitlement to land that can be owned.
[21] King refers to Pietermaritzburg as Maritzburg in her narration. She also spells Farm with a capital letter and I use her spelling and reference in this chapter.
[22] The Prince of Wales gave him the nickname 'Cheeks' because of his complexion. King refers to Woodroffe as Cheeks throughout her narrative (King 53).

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land. The Woodroffes went to London for their honeymoon.[23] Her life on Malvern Farm is mainly recalled in relation their financial predicament due to Cheeks's mismanagement (she does not explicitly blame him) and his lack of knowledge about farming which forced them to sell their land. Woodroffe accepted a position as Wharf Master in Durban, employment that elevated him in King's eyes to an "important person" (94). Woodroffe soon complained about rheumatism and applied for a post in London, but failed. The Woodroffes consequently upped and *trekked* to Heidelberg "goldfields" in Transvaal (98) in an attempt to make their "fortune" (98).[24] It is here, on the Grange minefields, where King opened the first and very successful hotel, utilising the domestic "hard training" (104) she received from her mother.

When a Dutch man, McHattie, opened a rival hotel, Marina and her husband moved to another minefield, Reit Spruit near Standerton, opening, yet again, a successful hotel. Later, however, they returned to Heidelberg, managing an even larger hotel with a hundred rooms (124) which proved quite profitable. King recalls how she sold her hotel, retired with a thousand pounds to her credit, and the couple relocated to manage Thompson Farm near Middelburg (126).

When King's mother-in-law passed away, Woodroffe inherited a large sum of money and the couple moved to London. Here Cheeks's rheumatism worsened to such an extent in the cold weather that they were forced to return to South Africa (135). Her brother purchased Elsenham, a farm of three thousand acres of "virgin soil" (136), for them in East Griqualand (1898) where they lived for three years until Cheeks passed away in 1901, shortly after the celebration of their silver wedding anniversary. At this stage in the narrative, King also summarises what she can recall of the Boer War and offers her opinion, saying: "With two nations living side by side in Africa, and diamonds and gold in the balance, trouble, we knew, was bound to eventuate" (140).[25]

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[23] Although King considers herself a British citizen, this is the first time she sets foot on British soil. South Africa is often referred to by the umbrella term "Africa" (King 66).

[24] Another example of where King's husband 'fails' her. Note also that they made decisions together.

[25] Note again King's use of Africa and not South Africa as well as her omission of the other races and nationalities in South Africa (and Africa in general) who were also involved in the Boer War. King (134) and Rorke (62-66) both met and discuss President Paul Kruger in their autobiographies, presenting him as intelligent and genial, but with the stereotypical critique that he was gruff and uncouth. A study of their alternative representations of Kruger would be of interest but I am unable to examine them in this thesis.

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Four years after Woodroffe's death, while King lived in Kokstad, she married Colonel John King (1905). They lived at Thompson Farm for a brief period but soon relocated to Elsenham (142). The couple adopted a daughter named Lynn whose parents were divorced and gave the child up for adoption (143). John King later became a member of parliament in the first cabinet of the Union of South Africa, formed in 1910 (123-44). Typical of the class-conscious King, she describes the events as follows: "[t]he first Union Parliament was a great event, not only in our lives, but in the history of Africa" (143). John King died in 1922 and Marina was once again widowed (147).

Although the entire text is primarily an account of a female settler subject, it also takes the form of a travel narrative, especially in Chapters Twelve to Sixteen. Here King recalls the details of her journey with Lynn in a motorcar from Cape to Cairo and on to London. She was seventy-four years of age at the time (1930). She proudly proclaims: "I wasn't too old to have one more adventure" (150) and continues to draw comparisons between the childhood journey by ox-wagons when she was younger and the luxury of travelling by car (152). Apart from Lynn, other travel companions included a mechanic, Miller, and a fourteen-year-old "Zulu boy" (151) named Two.

Critical Approach to Analysing Female Colonial Subjectivity in the Victorian Age

In examining King's life writing, it is of paramount importance to expound on elements of colonial South African women's self-presentation to elucidate how these insights contribute to my consideration of South African female subjectivity (1854-1948). The fact that there is no scholarly research available on King's life writing is evidence of the marginalisation of women's life writing from this period in contemporary feminist and postcolonial research. My attempt to reintroduce her work to the literary consciousness and conversation about women's life writing will hopefully prompt further investigation into her (and other) work since my research necessarily only focuses on certain aspects of her text. Below, I outline the theoretical approach underpinning my analysis of King's self-representation in this chapter.

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"Relationality" refers to the emergence of a significant other or others (husband, family, father or friend) the narrator discusses or writes about in a self-representative text in order to transpose the focus from the 'I' in the text to an other or others (Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 248). King's use of relationality, I argue, is a strategy to "cross the bar of the 'I'" (Smith *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body* 2). By not explicitly focusing on the 'I' that blocks "creativity like a sunscreen" and "becomes barren" (Smith 2), she seems to cross the bar of the 'I' by colouring and fitting the 'I' with personality through relational descriptions of others. As discussed in the introductory chapter, Heilbrun investigates restriction in women's autobiography in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She argues that women felt unable to admit in a public arena (thus also autobiography) that they had ambitions, or that they were well equipped with managerial or professional skills. Heilbrun asserts:

> Without such relation, women did not feel enabled to write openly about themselves: even with it, they did not feel entitled to credit for their own accomplishments, spiritual or other. (19)

I hypothesise in this chapter that King masks her various accomplishments by alluding to her husband's involvement in her endeavours so as not to appear too transgressive. This links to Brownley and Kimmich's discussion on the shortcomings in work by women autobiographers who would traditionally focus on their husband's achievements (1). King's writing is not self-effacing (Brownley and Kimmich 1) however; even though she enforces the existing gender ideologies of her society by affirming her husbands' accomplishments above her own – in her narration, the reader glimpses her achievements and successes and realises that her husband 'failed' her.

I discuss what I call King's 'veiled' agency and her subject formation in the second subsection. Smith and Watson argue that critics tend to read autobiographies as proof of autonomous agency (*Reading Autobiography* 54), hoping that the subject has the ability to formulate autonomy. Smith and Watson indicate that by assuming that female autobiographers exhibit agency through writing, critics step into pitfalls: subjectivity cannot be read as singular without taking into account the proper context of the autobiographical subject, her society's entrenched ideologies, the historical moment, and its influence on the development of her individuality. Life writing study is a vast field with a myriad of theories concerned with agency and autobiography, but in this chapter I focus on Smith and Watson's

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discussion of agency. In reference to Althusser's work, they state "that the subject is a subject of ideology – not in the narrow sense of propaganda but in the broad sense of the pervasive cultural formations of the dominant class" (Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 55). The subject is thus subjected to and participates in an invisible set of rules and institutional operations. Such a subject perceives herself as a unique individual, but she is in fact "subjected" (55) and, therefore, has a "false consciousness" (55) of herself. Smith and Watson continue the discussion concerned with agency in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (1998) and state that some feminist historians "offered a way of making space for agency by insisting that subjects, simultaneously implicated in contradictory and conflicting discursive calls, discover or glimpse spaces through which to manoeuvre, spaces through which to resist, spaces for change" (23). In this chapter I argue that one of these spaces the author manoeuvres is through relational depictions of others. As I indicated in the introductory chapter, Smith and Watson discuss in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* (1992) that the subject consists of multiple sites and locations such as gender, class, nationality, ethnicity and sexual orientation (xiv). As an illegitimate speaker in this traditionally masculine discourse, her writing is then a political act where she manipulates the genre, crosses the 'bar', to narrate her Self. I argue that King discovers, despite her 'subjection' to dominant discourses such as her gender role, her race and her position in a patriarchal society that could create a 'false consciousness', spaces where she eschews and manoeuvres these discourses and thus claims agency and destabilises the 'alignment of power' in her relationships in the context of the colony.

In my third subsection, I turn to King's textual representation of the physical body. Historically, when a woman resisted adhering to the patriarchal cultural norms, she was defined as 'mad' or 'hysterical': a figure passim in the literature (and society) of the nineteenth century. Smith states that "nineteenth-century representations of the intellectual woman oftentimes turn on the disalignment of her bodily parts, as if to suggest that the very exercise of the intellect pulls natural phenomena into grotesque postures" (*Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body* 15). The vilification of women writers notoriously turns to the body of the female writer, to denigrate her biological sex and situate her as an unnatural phenomenon. Paxton and Smith both theorise that the female autobiographical subject is decidedly embodied in her writing. This means that the consciousness emerging through the narration is

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linked to the body of the woman in their texts, and as such to the physical body outside the text. The 'I' in men's autobiography, on the other hand, is "[u]nique, unitary, unencumbered, the self escapes all forms of embodiment" (Smith *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body* 6) and

> its predominant mode of epistemological engagement with the world is through the agency of reason; and its powers encompass the authority to theorize, generalize, and thereby appropriate the knowable as well as the ability to transcend the contingencies of 'desire, affectivity, and the body', those constraining particularities of human existence. While emotional life is not denied the self, it remains publicly suspect: Linked as it is to the only partially repressed body, it is subordinated to and by reason. (Smith *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body* 7)

The embodied 'I' of women's narratives utilises subversion in order to present an autonomous self that is not divorced from the body (echoing Driver's theoretical work as discussed in Chapter One). This autonomy is achieved by claiming ownership and authorship of the body, presenting it in writing by accessing the established rational 'I' of autobiography. Smith considers the finite aspects of female embodiedness and suggests that "since female identity inheres in woman's embodiment as procreator and nurturer, the female subject inhabits mostly that colorful margin; or rather, a colorful marginalization of embodiment fills herself and soul" (11). The bifurcation between embodied and disembodied reveals gaps; it is possible to postulate that women's narratives fill these gaps when they construct an embodied but rational 'I'. Smith poses a valid question: "To woman is attributed another kind of selfhood, an essential selfhood, but not the selfhood of the universal human/male subject. And so, what does she know of universal selfhood or selfhood know of her?" (11). By examining King's embodied narrativation through the use of the traditionally rational 'I', I argue that she presents her Subject as feminine, embodied, yet rational, and achieves a selfhood that one can categorise as a female selfhood. By not divorcing her consciousness from the body in her writing, she aesthetically portrays herself as feminine and moral.

I examine King and Rorke (in the following chapter) as settler subjects as well as travel writers. Both writers employ popular modes of writing, settler and travel narratives, as genres to narrate the Self. Keeping in mind Pratt's surmise that some male travel narratives have a seemingly "anti-conquest" (37) as unbiased observer, they still participate in colonial conquest and appropriation of 'territory' through their depiction of the indigenous tribes and codification of the landscape, animals and vegetation. Women's writing on the fringes of

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empire or the contact zones between cultures is generally more sympathetic towards the 'natives'. Although there is difference between men's and women's portrayal of indigenous tribes, women are also part of the colonial project: "Thus, women's travel writing, although often portrayed by critics as somehow outside of the production of specifically imperial knowledges, is still implicitly producing knowledge that impacts upon the colonial presence" (Pratt 35). I argue that King's representation of the Other is ambiguous since she narrates from a perceived position of moral and racial superiority, but to a marked degree (although not consistently) casts indigenous peoples as barbaric, narrow-minded or inferior.

Woven into King's autobiography is an assemblage of her experiences and observations of ethnic and cultural differences that purports discursive narratives ratifying (and at times undermining) a putative English superiority and entitlement. As an endeavour to understand King's incongruous portrayals of other ethnic identities and her reactions regarding their perceived eccentricities and otherness, I examine a range of narrative events. King's engagement with other ethnic identities is confusing and ambiguous. She considers herself a British citizen, a settler subject who grew up in South Africa, thus a colonial British settler. This recalls Judith Raiskin's examination of Olive Schreiner's depiction of South African ethnic identities. Raiskin explains that "[Schreiner's] contradictory representations of Boers, Blacks, and Jews reveal her attraction to figures that might merge that which in colonial discourse are dichotomous identities" (52). She adds that

> The black South African in Schreiner's writing is a complex figure, at once piteously weak and dangerously powerful. As a woman Schreiner identifies with black Africans, but as a white [British subject] whose life in South Africa depends on the system of white rule, she finds the black majority frightening (85).

I argue that at times King, like Schreiner, empathises with other ethnic identities, shows concern or endearment, and exhibits feelings of familiarity and fondness. In contrast to her more sympathetic portrayal, she reveals the discursive coding of British imperialism and superiority, characterised by fear, which pertains to the coloniser. There is also a marked anxiety in her narrative regarding complicity in imperial expansion and appropriation; consequently, I examine her questionable depictions of other races and ethnic groups, along with her imperial position and "nostalgia" (Rosaldo 108) in the fourth analytical section.

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King's autobiographical "I"dentity

To discuss the *bildung* of King's "I"dentity, I refer to the key incident of her brother berating her at the opening of the autobiography; an event which informs the circular nature of the narrative. Chapter One is entitled: "Not worth your salt!" (9). This phrase becomes a central and integral theme in her life story. The author introduces a shaping anecdote from her childhood, and structures a centripetal narrative focussed on the intended meaning of her story. This drives her ambitions and determination to be considered as 'worthy'. King explains that salt was a scarce and expensive commodity during her childhood and recounts how she used to steal small amounts to taste (10). One day she pleaded with her father to allow her to herd the sheep into their *kraal* (sheep pen). The flock fled past her and her brother, Willie, who immediately berated her for her inability to herd sheep, saying: "You're not worth your salt" (11). She elaborates on how this episode fashioned her life and even in her old age she would reprimand or remind herself: "Old woman, be worth your salt" (12). The incident was imprinted on her young mind in relation to yet another story; that of the biblical tale of Lot's wife who was turned into a pillar of salt for her disobedience and disbelief. The young protagonist "now feared that [she] too would be turned into salt unless [she] always did right, an apprehension which remained with [her] for some time" (12). Her character is thus shaped by reprimand and biblical morality.

When King was sent from Somerset Farm to live with her aunt and cousin Ida, she was extremely unhappy because she was prohibited from "[doing] anything" (18). Ida, who was appointed to act as her governess, considered it inappropriate for a girl to be active outdoors. The Victorian ideals of female morality, decorum and "passivity" (Gilbert and Gubar 21) are what Ida attempts to impress on the protagonist, even on the African fringes of the Empire. These very notions chafed at her "[adventurous]" (6) spirit (18). King remarks: "It wasn't easy to be worth my salt" (18) under these circumstances. Her narration indicates that she still, many decades later, disagreed with her cousin's ideas concerning the acceptable behaviour of a child. This tension between morality and ambition is notable throughout her narration. King later asked her aging brother whether he thought she had proved herself worthy when considering her life's achievements: "You said I wasn't worth my salt then, Willie. I've never forgotten that. I hope I'm worth it now" (121). Willie responded by

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touching her arm. King regards this seemingly inconsequential act as an affirmation of his approval. In this sense, an influential incident, informing her Self, was wrought by a man (boy). The voice in her head advising her to prove her worth originated from the critique uttered by a man. She shaped her life, and autobiography, by relating this tale. Even though this determining incident is masculine in nature, King manipulates the anecdote to authorise her autobiographical "I"dentity as an adventurer and businesswoman. She achieves this by evaluating her 'worth' against masculine standards and then calls upon the original male figure (her brother) to ratify this perceived worth, to attest that she is in fact worthy (121). One could argue that she uses the technique because she feels unable to validate her own sense of self in the eye of the reading public of the time and society's criticism of ambitious women (Heilbrun 19). In this subliminal manner, "[not blocking] out creativity" (Smith *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body* 2), she defines and casts herself as a 'scarce' and 'expensive commodity' (like the salt) on the fringes of the Empire. In the next section, I elaborate on the ways in which King manipulates her readers by telling her story in relation to others and how she achieves agency through relationality.

A Woman's Veiled Agency: Narrating the Self through Relationality

I now turn to the idea of King's 'veiled' agency to argue that she achieves autonomy by discussing her candid or opaque observation of others and how these narrations allow the reader to glimpse 'truths' about her character. Although relationality is not the only determinant of agency in the text, it seems as if King is more comfortable with discussing the agentive Self in relation to others. The first anecdote I analyse is when the young protagonist was sent back to Somerset Farm after her disastrous stay with her aunt and Ida. A clergyman trekking in the direction of the farm offered to take her along to her parents (19). At their departure, Ida "insisted on wrapping [King] up for the journey in four thick blankets" (19) despite the fact that the weather was warm. Dressed too warmly, she began to feel sick and belched:

> The clergyman was horrified. He turned a large fastidious nose towards me and spoke through thin, half-closed lips. 'You disgusting child!' But I was not too ill to retort, 'Well, you're not a child of God. You're a horried [*sic*], cruel man!' (19).

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It seems unlikely that the author would be able to recall this dialogue with such striking clarity, yet the recollection once again signifies the socio-cultural climate of her youth. Here she illustrates her own sense of social injustices she experienced as a child. She admits, she could "not forgive" (18) Ida for wrapping her up so warmly. The protagonist realised that the repercussions of heat fatigue were not her fault and being called "disgusting" (19) was unjust and undeserved. A reader confronted with this anecdote sympathises with the child and criticises the clergyman, although one should remember that talking back to adults and especially men of the cloth like that was considered discourteous and a social taboo for Victorian children. King mitigates this taboo by depicting the clergyman as grotesque, with a "large fastidious nose" (19) who spoke through "thin, half-closed lips" (19), thus further justifying her unusual response. Through her relational description of the horrible clergyman and her cousin's alleged pernicious ideas regarding acceptable behaviour in children King represents herself as brave and determined. She does not explicitly comment on her society or cast herself as a social reformer, but subtly conveys these perceptions to her reader. Although there are many examples of relational others in her story, the most notable is perhaps her first husband, Woodroffe.

In the part where she recalls her life with Woodroffe at Malvern Farm, she recalls their dreams of becoming successful farmers. Despite King's best efforts to alleviate their exigencies because of his fiscal irresponsibility, it was ineluctable that Woodroffe's failures would become apparent. King's writing discloses her husband's limitations but she structures the narrative and formulates the sentences in a manner that makes her share in Woodroffe's failures. Chapter Six, which details these failures, is entitled: "*We* sow but reap not" (my emphasis 70).[26] This implicates both King and her husband in a series of disappointments; but the course of the chapter certain events emerge that impugns the shared responsibility and guilt. King's narrative conveys the impression that she is incapable of blaming her husband, directly, for any financial disasters. Victorian women were not encouraged to disapprove of their husbands' managerial skills or, if they did, they had to bear it in silence (Hardy 25-26). King was aware of her husband's shortcomings though, and this knowledge surfaces with clarity in the text, although it is mostly veiled in abstruse anecdotes. Various examples in the narrative indicate her critique of her husband though, although she does not blame him

[26] This is another example of a Biblical reference.

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outright for financial setbacks. One such an example is where she disclaims the collective "we", which should signify the union, by drawing attention to her own accomplishments:

> I did all the work of the dairy myself, skimming the great pans of milk for cream – it was before the days of 'separators' – and making the butter. I had a lot of poultry, too, which I looked after myself. I found I was making money, and was not a little proud of my achievement. (71)

King proceeds to detail 'their' misfortunes for the reader after mentioning her own success: "But *we* were not so successful in *other* ways. My husband possessed a greater theoretical than practical knowledge of farming; he had many schemes which were certain to make us a fortune – on paper" (my emphasis 71). Some of his farming schemes included the cultivation of rice, (although he did not know it had to be ginned,) cayenne pepper, (nobody wanted pepper and the workers hated grinding it,) and onions - which were scarce, but in the end paid better to eat themselves - (71-72). King remembers: "Our lives were not entirely occupied by what my husband called 'enterprising farming'. There were shooting parties and fishing parties, when we picnicked all day by the river" (72). King continues her narration in this style and recalls that Woodroffe successfully managed to build a tree house where they spent many hours entertaining friends when they were not fishing (72).[27] What the reader can garner from King's narration about her life with Woodroffe at Malvern is that, although King does not explicitly blame her husband for their financial failures, she states that she made money while Woodroffe's endeavours proved futile. By juxtaposing her success with her husband's failures, despite using the collective 'we' when discussing his failures, she subtly represents herself as determined and successful. Agency is therefore implied by the tension created between the suggestion that she is morally undermined and the desire to express her ambition.

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[27] The reader assumes from King's representation of Woodroffe's leisure activities that he is either unable or unwilling to toil in his soil or participate in the physical labour. King alludes to the fact that Woodroffe spent many a leisurely hour and enjoyed company and sports, evident of masculine morality in the nineteenth century. In *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940* (1987), the editors J.A. Mangan and James Walvin trace the development of masculine morality from the first half of the nineteenth to mid-nineteenth century and state: "Manliness now came to be gradually divorced, in fact and not in intent, from religion and found itself anchored securely in an obsessive love of games" (4) and hunting. From King's narration of Woodroffe and the information she provides regarding her family it seems that she was aware of a class difference between them. His pursuits are intellectual in nature and not physical (unless it involves sport) even when it concerns agriculture. By contrasting her lower class status as 'successful' and Woodroffe's class as unproductive in the colony, she is critiquing the "[snobbery]" (110) ingrained in her society. It seems as though King is suggesting that class on the periphery of Empire did not determine one's capabilities or destiny but provided all intrepid individuals (like her) equal opportunities.

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It seems obvious that as a married woman King's most common source of relational identification should be Woodroffe, yet her representation of him and his deference for her signify her autonomy. It becomes clear that King did not allow her husband to rule over her. She includes a humoristic Christmas anecdote, set on Malvern Farm, which vividly illustrates the type of relationship she had with 'Cheeks'. The recollection suggests that their relationship was one that did not mimic traditional gender roles: submissive woman and domineering man. In this incident, she recalls how Woodroffe and his male friends became rather raucous after having too much to drink on Christmas day:

> Five minutes later the noise was as bad as ever. Snatches of song filled the house; the noise of my husband's banjo; sudden silences; thumps of bodies hitting the ground, and bellows of laughter. Really angry, I went again to the dining-room. It was empty; they had fled through the French windows to the garden. I returned to my room defeated.
>
> Mrs. Butler was furious. "If you can't manage your husband," she said, "I can manage mine."
>
> The noise began again. She got up, determined to quell it. But when she reached the dining-room only her husband was there; the others had left him to his fate. I stood in the doorway to see what would happen. Butler was clad in his pyjama coat only. His head lay on one chair, his feet on another; his body was suspended, and he dared not move.
>
> Mrs Butler stood and stared at him. Then she said, "I'll teach you, my beauty!" And, despite his protests, she left him in that precarious position.
>
> Early the next morning all the men escaped from their bedroom windows and rode straight off to 'Maritzburg. They dared not face us till they had armed themselves with peace offerings.
>
> As punishment, Mrs Butler and I refused to cook the Christmas dinner; we all drove across the veldt to a hotel at the Lower Umgeni Falls. (82)

King relates this event in a light-hearted tone to veil or disguise her disregard for traditional gender roles. Neither King nor Mrs Butler is subservient to their husbands. They seemingly do not subscribe to the conventional gendered relationships where women would not interfere in the pleasures of the husband. By including Butler's reaction, King suggests that there might have been many women who felt and behaved as they did. In comparison to her contemporaries (from British East Africa, now Kenya) Isak Dinesen (Baroness Karen von Blixen-Finecke) and Beryl Markham, her description of this party is tame and the people

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involved behave with decency and morality.[28] King's amusement is evident in the narration. Mrs Butler is portrayed as a fiery and strict woman who did not tolerate her husband's foolishness. This yarn illustrates, in a subversive manner, through the use of humour, that Victorian women in the colonies were not necessarily powerless. King employs metaphors of warfare: the men "fled" or "escaped" from the women and returned "armed" with "peace offerings" because they feared "punishment". Their "protests" fell on deaf ears and the women "refused" to fulfil their designated role in an attempt to "teach" the men a lesson. In this way, imagery of strife combined with a humorous tone subverts patriarchal discourses. A power shift occurs while King regales her audience with this story – whereas she mostly appears submissive to her husband, he now grovels for her forgiveness. By using these narrative techniques, King negotiates private memory to undermine dominant discourses. She suggestively draws particular attention to her husband's shortcomings and her accomplishments while managing to ratify her position as subject and woman. Woodroffe becomes a support character in her story: subversively depicted as managerially inferior with deference for his "angry" wife despite his position as patriarch and member of the so-called upper classes. She emerges as the hero with agency and autonomy.

Embodiment: Performing in the "Looking-glass"

The logical place from which to launch an investigation of King's embodied position is from the expected and conventional role as "procreator and nurturer" (Smith *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body* 11). Gradually, throughout the narration, the body (of the person outside the text) "become[s] visible" (Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 239) in the text in relation to these roles. Female identity at the time was linked to the fulfilment of these designated functions based on their biological sex. These roles are confirmed in yet another recollection. On the night of her mother's death, unaware of what was about to happen, the young Marina had a rather uncanny dream in which she received instructions from her mother on how to behave: "I'm going away, Marina. If I don't come back I want you to look after your brothers and sisters. [...] When your father comes back tell him how sorry I was not to see him" (41). Half an hour later she was called to her mother's room where the dream's

[28] Dinesen published her memoirs, *Out of Africa* (1937), and Markham related her memories in *West with the Night* (1942).

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instructions were repeated by the dying mother. King explains that she attempted to follow her mother's wishes to the letter except when her distraught father insistently asked what else her mother had imparted to her on her deathbed. She deliberately lied to him to shield him from pain and to provide comfort and nurture, noting: "I said I remembered another thing she had said. She had sent him her love ... It seemed to help him a little to hear that" (43). To fulfil her designated and 'preordained' role as nurturer, she deceives her father (symbolic figure of patriarchy) and learns the art of manipulation to satisfy and alleviate men's emotional desires. While living with the Anderson family after her mother's demise, she convinced her father that she was unhappy and should return to live with him in "Maritzburg" to keep house. When he conceded, she "felt grown-up and most important in the little house [her] father had taken. [She] loved ordering the meals for him and [her] brothers, and mending their clothes; once, with great ambition and little skill, [she] succeeded in making a pair of trousers" (46). As nurturer she necessarily inhabits and controls the domestic space and the young protagonist is entrusted with and confined to the domestic sphere. At a later junction in her life, however, she utilises her domestic skills to manage hotels and run a business.

According to King, she fulfilled the role of caretaking with apparent ease. In the previous section, I chronicled her feats on Malvern Farm and now explore how she underlines her achievements as embodied subject. Her physical labour on the farm brought financial reward. I read this experience in relation to the female body as a "site of labor" (Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 240). King's triumphs are a result of her physical and mental capabilities; her mental acuity is evident in her ability to notice an opportunity for a successful business venture and the skilful management thereof. However, she tactfully underplays these characteristics in her narration, noting her achievements in a subliminal way that nevertheless suggests her attitude of discarding the conception and physical confinement expected of a Victorian lady. Newton explains that the middle-class Victorian woman's body was traditionally expected to be the object of men's desire, the immobile receptor of their gaze and without exhibiting desires of her own (566). These required attributes are not apparent in her self-presentation. She is not shy of physical labour, despite their supposed social standing (I discuss the issue of class below), and uses her body as a vehicle for commerce rather than a "locus" (Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 240) of men's desire. She relates: "I soon found that life on the goldfields was terribly rough and hard [...s]o I rose early and worked

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late, and had no time to dwell upon the gloomy, lonely country. I made quite a lot of money by baking and selling bread and grinding corn mealies in the mill I had brought from Greenwich" (103-104). Her motivation is sustained with the reminder that she "had roughed it before, and [...] could rough it again" (104). The rewards are noted, "[t]he hotel flourished beyond [their] greatest expectations" (109).[29] She grew vegetables, cooked and cleaned for their guests. That their position as hotel proprietors was frowned upon by members of the British upper classes is underplayed in the following anecdote:

> Just before Christmas my husband received a charming letter from the Prince of Wales, saying how sorry he had been to hear of Charlie's breakdown in health, and wishing us success with our hotel. He congratulated us both on being so enterprising; said he wished he could visit us and sample for himself my prowess as a cook. The letter was particularly encouraging because many of our friends had failed to write to us. They probably considered we were letting down the prestige of the British. The dress-for-dinner-in-desert colonial was not unknown in Africa. But we had many other friends who were not snobs. (110)

Her precarious position as working middle-class is ratified by her inclusion of the praise and endorsement bestowed by the Prince of Wales. At the time, there was hardly anyone of higher authority in the patriarchal colonial system she could hail as approving power. Her accomplishments are thus achieved, according to her narration, through her labouring body; an indication that she discards the notion of acceptable physical passivity expected of her. She opts, instead, for financial independence achievable through mobility. Her body becomes the site of her achievement. She does not divorce her Subject from her body, but rather steadfastly marries the two. Furthermore, she does not lament the loss of her status/class (although acutely aware of society's 'snobbery'). She discounts morality and views business and labour as sources of financial security.

A Victorian woman's function as wife and mother (Poovey 1) or "procreator and nurturer" (Smith *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body* 11) was generally considered preordained – a 'sacred' and sole duty. Although King welcomes, and even capitalises on, this supposed role of nurturer, she never had any children. Why this inability to "reproduce" (Paxton 392) is never explained further signifies convention; Victorian women were not allowed to discuss

[29] She attributes her success to the "hard training [her] mother had given [her] in [her] girlhood" (104). She uses girlhood instead of childhood, unconsciously linking the girl child and domesticity in her narrative.

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the private female body in public. However, she did not remain childless. Once retired, at about the age of fifty, and then married to John King, the couple adopted Lynn. Lynn's father was Colonel John Robert Campbell Heathcote, but King does not mention the child's mother's name, a rather circumspect narrative omission. This omission and the fact that she notes the father's title signify King's subliminal endorsement of patriarchal society.[30] Although King never mentions the reasons for her barrenness, she suddenly and rather casually reveals, in Chapter Twelve, the longing she had for a child:

> Yet, in spite of everything, I lacked complete contentment – even though I did not realize a lack until contentment came to me, almost by chance. Literally and figuratively, I held out my arms to the chance: I adopted my daughter Lynn. She was only a baby then, a bundle of shawls around a pink and white face and golden hair; but for me, and for my husband too, she brought a lasting joy. (143)

The fact that she could not conceive is suggested in the disclaimer that she was "[content]" (143). I read the superficial treatment of this condition as a method to disguise underlying pain where King chooses not to discuss contentious and taboo 'women's issues' (Heilbrun 22-23). Her assertion though that she "held [her] arms [out to] chance" (143) indicates her willingness and desire to become a mother, especially since she relates that every memory of her daughter is "precious" (143). The narrative suggests that King was the primary breadwinner as well as nurturer in her first marriage. I speculate that Lynn's adoption, while King was already middle-aged, could indicate her desire to remain a nurturer: after marrying John King, who by King's account was a successful farmer and politician, she no longer had to 'take care of' anyone (like Woodroffe) and adopted a daughter to alleviate her "[loneliness]" (142). King was able to achieve great feats in her life, (dependent on physical activity) because she was 'unburdened' by not conceiving children and not subscribing to "motherhood as institution" (Stott 159), but still managed to become a mother without carrying the child within her body. This possibly enabled her to succeed in other, historically masculine arenas (Stott 159-164). According to Rebecca Stott,

[30] King writes that Colonel Heathcote was the "only son of Mr and the Lady Eva Heathcote (sister of the late Marquis of Breadalbane)" (143) and that the "separation of [Lynn's] parents gave [them] the opportunity" (143) to adopt Lynn. That Lynn's mother remains nameless begs certain questions regarding the social (mother) and legal (marriage) status of the birth parents, especially since King provides the thorough titled ancestry of Heathcote. It might also be possible that since King became her mother she refuses to name Lynn's biological mother, as a possessive maternal act.

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> One of the most powerful means of attack on the New Woman in the [period 1880-1890] was that of the charge of unnatural woman, unnatural because of her supposed rejection of motherhood and marriage (158).

King did not reject motherhood or marriage, but the colonial economy she contributed to was financial and not biological and was made more possible to achieve since she was childless as a young woman. She eventually fulfils the role of mother, but does not frame motherhood and procreation as the acme of her female identity, but rather as a belated and unexpected "chance" (143). In her text, the physical body is not a cultural marker of motherhood, but an embodiment of pecuniary opportunity.

Continuing the discussion of the visibility of the physical body in King's narration, I argue that although she seemingly disregarded Victorian ideals of propriety and decorum by becoming a businesswoman, she did not discount or dismiss Victorian notions of beauty all together, especially in her younger years. As older author, she paradoxically subtly critiques or enforces these ideals. Victorian attitudes regarding the physical body as scientific indicator of psychological, racial and class traits (Lorimer 14) require consideration here, because King was certainly aware of these distinctions, as her narration testifies. An example is the youthful protagonist's yearning for a longer nose. A straight nose was considered aristocratic and desirable, as King points out:

> The only thing I can recall about [cousin Ida] is that she cried a great deal, and had a beautiful long straight nose, down which the tears ran slowly from her eyes until they dropped off the tip. I watched them fascinated. Often in my room before the looking-glass I tried to make the tears trickle down my own nose in the same way. I never could; mine was too plebeian. (18)

This is a peculiar memory and a way to "recall" (18) an event from "girlhood" (104), yet it clearly influenced her sense of self. An awareness of Victorian custom to use physiognomy as prominent class marker emerges here since she mentions her "plebeian" (18) nose. In line with her subtle critique of Victorian class (for example cousin Ida's instruction) and morality, King, although conscious of class distinction and ascribed morality, as elderly author subtly infers that class is not the determinate factor of "[worthiness]" (9). As King's first instructor in Victorian morality, Ida with her aristocratic features is depicted as weak – albeit through sentimental parameters – with female envy. Peering into the murky "looking-glass" (18) of

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memory, King dismisses the notion that "plebeian" physiognomy decides "worth" (9). She consequently does not shy away from framing herself as lower class.

In other parts of the narration, King enforces and adheres to notions of beauty without critique of convention when she describes her own physical appearance. She recalls the story of how she wished to attend a ball in Maritzburg when she was keeping house for her father (51). Her father usually refused her pleas to attend soirees, "[b]ut this time he said that [she] might go if [she] wore only a simple frock which was *suitable* to [her] age – [she] was just seventeen" (my emphasis 51). She continues, "My father did not always approve of my dresses. I used to spend a lot of my time making clothing. My mirror told me I was pretty, and I liked to follow the fashions gleaned from the few illustrated papers which came my way" (51). She stitched an 'improper' and "daring" (51) gown but wore a coat when she left the house to hide it from her father. Self-observation, the reflective gaze in the "mirror" (51) suggests she regarded herself as attractive and made clothes to enhance this beauty. Her narrative implies that she wished to be considered beautiful. She notes, without "vanity" (51), that she "knew that [her] shoulders [hair, and] arms were good" (51). In a sense, she endorses Victorian notions of beauty and textually mirrors these sentiments. It is possible though that this adherence to the gaze as verification of desirability is not exclusively a result of social internalisation but a writing strategy geared towards appropriating acceptance. Women autobiographers mostly do not write about being plain and ordinary looking (Heilbrun 21), but if considered beautiful (like King and Rorke) they will indicate as much as a validation of Self – linking the textual consciousness and the body.

The tension between expressing morality and ambition is also noticeable in her descriptions of how she uses of her body. King became aware of her gendered body, with its power to influence and manipulate, as well as the limitations placed on it, at a young age. Her parents started whispering in corners and did not include their children when they were planning to move from Somerset Farm (21). The children were ignored, but scolded when they made noise. They became anxious and only relaxed once their parents included them in their plans to relocate up-country (21). King enervated her body by refusing food when she heard about the proposed *trek*. She did not want to leave without her dog, Boss: "I remember I started a determined hunger-strike until I was assured that Boss could follow the wagons" (22).

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Anxiety and physical atrophy or anorexia are characteristic of nineteenth-century woman writers. Women claimed power or manipulated the outcome of decisions by controlling their bodies, in this case visibly attenuating the physique. King's body similarly becomes a site of resistance, not illness, in this instance. The connection between King's narration of Self and her physical body does not seem coincidental, especially since "mainstream Victorian society expressed the mind-matter dichotomy by glorifying the connection between women and bodiliness" (Fletcher 298). Whereas Renaissance women could only achieve spiritual and moral superiority by joining the church and thereby renounce the body's procreative (sexual) function, middle-class Victorian women's spiritual, moral and divine role extended specifically to their position as wife and mother (Fletcher 297). Despite this emphasis on procreation, however, the body was still expected to be a non-sexual site (without desire). King, confined by society to the function and limits of her body, has only this body as vehicle (as child and mature woman) to "strike" (22) against convention.

Another example of where her awareness of her body surfaces in the text is when she embarks on the incredible journey from Cape Town to London in the motorcar. At this stage, she was seventy-four years old and apparently suffered from a weak heart. The journey was physically taxing and an incredible feat; in her view, her "trek of treks" (189). While preparing for the journey, she "was advised to invest in shirts and trousers; but somehow [she] could not see [her]self in trousers" (153). She would be entering the 'unknown' reaches of the Empire, but could not imagine herself wearing trousers. Her feminine appearance and performance were important to her regardless of the fact that she would travel beyond the boundaries of what was considered as 'civilized society' (e.g. the African interior). I read King's references to her physical body outside the text as both a performative act and as an indication of internalising convention. Her desire to appeal to audiences' approval regarding her morality is performative in nature. She acts, through words, the physical body in the text for her audience. Although aspects of Victorian social conventions appear to be internalised and reiterated without critique, there are various instances where she skilfully evaluates and presents her disapproval of the Victorian class system, most notably the confinement placed upon a woman's body and gender roles. Smith and Watson explain that "the body is a site of autobiographical knowledge because memory itself is embodied. And life narrative is a site of embodied knowledge (a textual surface on which a person's experience is inscribed) because

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autobiographical narrators are embodied subjects" (*Reading Autobiography* 49). King's body, her 'site of autobiographical knowledge', the host to her memories, is key in her life narrative. She skilfully uses her body as a site of resistance and acceptance in her narrative to transgress and achieve great feats, but she also makes use of the body to indicate her adherence to assigned morality. Furthermore, in a society "glorifying the connection between women and bodiliness" (298), using a genre where women are embodied subjects, she employs the physical body outside the text and as such the textual body as a writing strategy to 'cross the bar' of the 'I' and narrates her subjectivity in one of the few mediums available to her.

The Colonial 'I', the Other and Imperial Nostalgia

In the preface to *Sunrise to Evening Star: My Seventy Years in South Africa*, F.M. Allenby introduces King's autobiography as a tale that recounts the expansion and building of the Empire: "This book tells, in simple and eloquent language, the story of a brave woman's life – the life of a woman standing high among those whose example has acted as an inspiration to the builders of our Empire" (5). The text is thus propagated as an "[inspirational]" (5) woman's tale that ingeminates anecdotes concerned with imperial expansion. Allenby calls King a "brave" (5) woman, a hero of the Empire, asserting her position as a noteworthy female writer of travel narratives in a predominantly male genre. Marie Botha-Hawkin adds to Allenby's description a short introductory note to the book and describes South Africa as "that land of romance, adventure, and promise" (6); a space which King captures with "a straightforward, vivid, and honest picture of pioneer life [...], beset with manifold difficulties, faced and overcome with undaunted courage and resource" (6). The narrative is therefore framed and enforced by the preface and introduction as an adventure tale by a courageous, resourceful and 'heroic' woman who lived in a faraway romanticised colony. These paratextual contributions promote the expansion and political agenda of the British Empire.

Africa and fantastical tales about the continent and its peoples fascinated King since her childhood. European adventure tales further influenced her sense of adventure and shaped her female identity. The significance of these tales becomes palpable when she recalls the stories told by her parents, especially in the early chapters of the text. Some of her earliest memories comprise tales that perpetuate the narrative of Empire: "no tame fairy-tales would satisfy us;

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over and over again we demanded the real adventure stories of Africa, which were far more exciting than those in any books" (12). As a woman, informed by the fantastical 'real' tales (necessarily characterised by British colonial subjugation and strife) of her childhood, her desire to become an adventurer and experience 'untamed' Africa overshadows female Victorian morality and correctness. King and her brothers were "avid with natural curiosity for any details of [the] horrors" (13) told in accounts about slavery. She remembers descriptions of slaves "manacled together in pairs", "shipped [...] like cattle", and other "stories" (13), which both fascinated and terrified them. Imperial fascination with the strange, dangerous and exotic qualities of the colonies emerges here (Pratt 3). The horrors endured by the indigenous peoples in other countries became bedtime entertainment for children of the Empire. King and her brother pleaded with their father to relate sensationalist 'real' accounts that were apparently more exciting than the tales found in books. By including these details in her text about her own life in Africa, King presumably wrote with the Africa and fantastical tales about the continent and its peoples with the "domestic subject" (Pratt 3) of the British Empire in mind. The aim is to convey her 'sensational' colonial experiences, including descriptions of the 'strange' people she encountered. As a white female settler subject and autobiographer, her writing calls for a postcolonial inquiry. I argue in this section that her narration of the colonised becomes complicit in the formulation and political agenda of the Empire. By writing and relating her childhood memories and own experiences whilst travelling, she adds to the archive of knowledge desired by subjects of the Empire (Pratt 3), thereby enforcing preconceived colonial and imperial codifications of the "black [inferior]" (Lorimer 141) indigenous tribes which rely on arguments presented by scientific studies and propagated by Victorian society.

The "production of knowledge" (Mills 35) within the colonial context is evident in the following 'story' King tells about the Zulu king Faku and his struggle to keep ownership of his land. Her father, who was in British service at the time of this event, told them the following as a bedtime story. It involved a dispute concerning the claim to a piece of land. Faku placed himself under the protection of the British after the Dutch successfully raided a rivalling Zulu King who stole their cattle. King remarks that although Faku must have been pleased with the downfall of his enemy, his "conscience [might have been] uneasy" (13). With this statement she consciously implies that Faku might have been guilty of an unnamed

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crime that would have forced him to seek protection. Faku was asked to define the boundaries of his property but "claimed far more than was his right" (13) and this led to a clash between the Boers and British because the Boers disputed the size of Faku's territory. No evidence is provided, however, except the word of the author, recalled as told by her father, that Faku claimed more than was his right. This anecdote perpetuates colonial ideologies and assumptions that the indigenous South African people were naturally sly, devious, and opportunistic as well as liars (Klopper 3-17). King proceeds by noting that the British were acting "in good faith" and that the Boers "were justly indignant" (13) due to this seemingly unwarranted annexation. The intrinsic problems embedded in this story are multiple. If one considers the narrative structure, a number of possibilities arise. One could assume the author is simply narrating her father's version of the story. Simultaneously, one could infer that the British discovered Faku's deception after their clash with the Boers, or that the British knew about Faku's deception and decided to annex the land from the Boers as opportunity presented itself. Another possibility exists: the land Faku claimed as his own was in fact the exact amount of land he did own. The important evidence that arises from this anecdote, however, is the un/conscious dissemination of a colonial agenda. The tale signifies that ownership and appropriation of territory is central to South African politics and history (Pratt 7). The knowledge King produces through her narration is that the squabble between various ethnic groups and their scramble for territory and ownership were fundamentally disputed and politically charged. It is also noteworthy that bedtime stories formulated frameworks of Empire and patriarchy. By publicising and writing these stories as an authority on the subject, King becomes complicit in the appropriation (albeit textual) and formulation of the British Empire.

I am interested in analysing the tales she opts to include to explore what these suggest about her identity construction. One tale in particular suggests that settler children in the colonies were especially conscious of racial difference. King describes a game they used to play as children when they visited each other on the farms:

> While the men hunted, we used to have fearsome mock battles between Zulus and whites. The girls had to be white women and were usually massacred wholesale by masculine Zulus. I hated being a white woman; the Zulus had much more fun! (34)

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The children 'mimic' what they view as their society. What and how they mimic is informative. The little white boys insist on acting the part of the Zulus, arguably viewed the more masculine and exoticised group in the context of the Natal colony. The girls are cast into the roles of white settler women who are annihilated by the Zulu forces. King explicitly mentions that this division caused her to "[hate]" (34), and probably enabled an understanding of her 'powerless' position in society. King creates a binary distinction between the active Zulu, threatened white male and the passive white women. Benedict Anderson, quoting Homi Bhabha, explains that "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (115). The children repeat what they perceive as colonial reality, but this repetition is grounded in the difference between races and sexes. The white girls have to 'play' the role of the victim and are placed in the subordinate position, articulating the discriminatory gender roles of colonial patriarchy. Linda Anderson explains that "[c]olonial rule, of course, was premised on notions of racial and cultural 'purity' and on preserving the 'difference' between the colonizers and colonized" (114). White women, as the embodiment of purity and chastity, the keepers of colonial morality, necessarily had to fulfil these requirements to maintain this difference. King, even as a child, rejected these notions and did not preserve the colonisers 'purity'. She admits she would rather have 'played' the role of the Zulu, since they had more 'fun', which to her indicates freedom from gender restrictions. Mills explains that white women functioned on a symbolic level in the imperial context (38), they "served as a moral justificatory power for the empire" (38) and yet, their physical presence was represented in a derogatory fashion, possibly because they served as a reminder of the vulnerability of the Empire. By placing Zulu men in a superior position to white women, according to the rules of the game, she disrupts/resists colonial classifications of racial difference and power/cultural positioning. Although the Zulu is still represented as aggressor and threat, according to King's narrative this position is more desirable on the frontier than being a white woman. She does not specifically empathise with the colonised Zulu, but uses them to juxtapose woman's position in the colony. Therefore, the Zulu becomes a writing strategy by which she subtly critiques gender relations of her (British colonial) society.

In yet another narrative moment, King illustrates her "imperial nostalgia" (Rosaldo 108) at the collapse of the historical 'native cultures'. The Zulu king, Cetewayo, received a friend of

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Woodroffe and King named Sir Theophilus Shepstone, and was splendidly dressed with his wives in tow. King relates that they danced spectacularly and the event was glorious. This tale is narrated with the typical "[fetishized]" (McClintock 183) description of body and dress, reliant on difference. King then states in a self-reflexive manner:

> I saw the same dances performed forty-five years later in honour of the present Prince of Wales. There were barely a hundred dancers then, poor dancers at that. Solomon, the king, was dressed in a blue serge suit, incongruously trimmed with leopard-skin. There was a crowd of Kaffirs looking on, dressed chiefly in towels or shirts. Western civilization can sometimes appear a sad degeneration. (75)

In King's reflection, she bewails what she considers as the demise of 'native cultures'. As Renato Rosaldo explains, imperial nostalgia "revolves around a paradox: a person kills somebody and then mourns his or her victim [or] someone deliberately alters a form of life and then regrets that things have not remained as they were prior to his or her intervention" (108). She realises that the disintegration of ethnic cultures is a result of imperial expansion and that it could be considered a victory, since they successfully 'tamed' the barbarian (Rosaldo 108). Her narration further indicates her recognition that an integral part of ethnic culture is lost in the processes of Western civilising and that this is a woeful state. The paradox implicit in imperial nostalgia is apparent in King's reflections. She considers Western influence disruptive to ethnic cultures and therefore illegitimate in the colony, but similarly prefers that the Zulu remains 'native' and 'uncultured' by Western standards, not assimilating Western cultural ideas. In Chapter One King's narrative mentions some noticeable differences between London life and South Africa. She specifically notes the absence of native servants: "There are no black boys to milk the cows in the barns, but a hurried dairyman, immaculate in linen coat, carrying scaled bottles which rattle in their wire tray. [...] There is no fat Malay woman in check apron and wooden clogs kneading her dough on the great kitchen table, but pastry ready mixed in a packet from the stores" (9-10). It is interesting that she draws attention to the absence of imported servants in London. It is part of her recollection of 'home' and childhood. The binary King constructs in this relation is England as the land of industry and South Africa as the country of labour. She also remembers that her mother instructed her to "supervise" (33), as part of her housework, the "native servant girls" (33) on Greenwich Farm. Although King and her mother were also conscripted in physical labour,

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their ‘office’ required them to supervise the domestic labourers, endorsing their elevated rank as white women on the frontier. King’s depiction of other races and ethnicities is informed by her elevated albeit constricting position as a white woman. This position simultaneously causes her to either appear sympathetic with or denigrate the Other.

The narrative describes the settler conditions of the mid-nineteenth century whilst King relates her parents’ experiences. These stories subscribe to the race classification systems of the Enlightenment period but most notably exhibit evidence of the “scientific racialism” (Klopper 4) of the nineteenth century. A shift occurs in the theorisation pertaining to different races from “humanist universalism” to “cultural racism” (4). The classification of race is prominent in King’s narration although she does not explicitly name the categories of humans. Such an example is the influential anecdote included in King’s narration of a story casting barbarians and the noble savage:

> In those days up-country the Kaffirs used to raid British and Boer farmers alike. My mother used to tell me the story of the little Hottentot maid who rushed into the sitting-room one day when they were having tea, excited and voluble. The Kaffirs were surrounding their farm; they must fly at once. (16)

Their mother and father escaped with their children but: “the Hottentot girl was lost.... Did she escape from the burning farm? Was she, like the cattle, driven away to an unknown destiny? Her fate remained a mystery, and often haunted me” (16). King provides a description of this particular noble savage who, although she saved King’s family, remains nameless in the text and in King’s memory. The fate of the Hottentot girl ‘haunts’ King, but her memory and narration do not furnish her with name or subjectivity. She sympathises and worries about the fate of the girl but the Hottentot girl, although it is not explicitly stated, is turned into a colonial archetype, the brave noble savage (Deane 209).

King also reiterates colonial stereotypes permeating the South African society of her youth and adulthood. She narrates:

> Bushmen are notoriously lazy. They grow a few mealies in swampy ground, but do no other work; when I was a child they used to hamstring cattle and steal from gardens. The farmers had to join forces to drive them back to the mountains, shooting as many as possible, and only thus ensuring peace for a while. Soon after we arrived at Greenwich some bushmen raided the farm. Fortunately there were few of them; we had no difficulty in driving them off,

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> and actually we took one prisoner. My father tried to train him as a servant. He seemed willing enough, but was too stupid to learn anything. Subsequently, I remember, he died of pneumonia. (33)

King's comments convey typical nineteenth-century sentiments, notions that Bushmen were incurably lazy, sly and devious (Klopper 11). She does not challenge these popular and accepted notions but reiterates them as fact. Her father, who proudly impressed upon his children the horrors of slavery, took a Bushman with the aim to 'domesticate' him. The man is animalised in King's narration. She casually recalls that settlers tried to 'shoot as many as possible', as if these humans were vermin to be 'driven off' their property. King fails to see the elements of slavery and abuse in this kind of treatment and abuses the man by calling him stupid. Historical archives bear witness to the many attempts by settlers to 'train' or 'domesticate' Bushmen as if they were wild animals. Dirk Klopper asserts that most British travel writers closely aligned Bushmen with "nature" (7) and described them as animalistic, "wild" and barbarous beasts. King's recollection underscores these discriminating attitudes, making her complicit in perpetuating and disseminating colonial codifications.

In yet another account, she tells of a suspicion of an attempt of murder that signifies white settler fear of indigenous groups. The story involves her dog, Grip, who refused to eat any food prepared by one of the new servants. Grip growled every time the boy would approach King. On a particular day, the dog attacked the boy, who "took to his heels and never returned. A week later a white man was poisoned by his native servant – and the servant was this boy [...] [She] gave Grip an extra bone that day" (95). Here King draws attention to the tenuous racial and ethnic relationships in South Africa at the time. What emerges is that indigenous peoples felt threatened by the white settlers claiming their land and duly retaliated. Her narrative nonetheless contains many examples of references to indigenous customs and appearance. She seemingly admires the diversity of cultures and at times expresses regret at gradual tribal degeneration. Fear and admiration are married in typical colonialist sentiments.

Given their lives in Natal, King's admiration of and angst concerning the Zulu people are captured in greater detail. There are times when she fondly recalls specific figures, such as Jantze:

> In the afternoon, instead, I worked in the garden with an old servant we had, called Jantze, who was a wonderful character, and for years now had been a

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> favourite of ours. He was a Zulu – big, strong, and handsome, with a kindly beaming face; and, like all Zulus, he was, of course, always spotlessly clean. Years later, when he had gone as Cracroft's batman in the Zulu war, he was to save my brother's life – he was utterly faithful and trustworthy, and everybody respected him. (40)

Of interest here, as I will discuss later, is the way King, with an air of superiority, differentiates between Jantze, who is described as always clean, and the Dutch, who are remembered as a dirty and dusty group. The praise of Jantze's physique and character signals a level of fetishism with the black body (Levine 189). Her esteem for the Zulu man, however, is counterbalanced when she discusses how they should be governed:

> We also saw a good deal of Sir Theophilus Shepstone. He was a great friend of my father's, and his daughter was a great friend of mine. He was in charge of native affairs in Natal, and understood the Zulus far better than anyone else. He knew how they should have been ruled, and had the Government in England listened to his advice there would never, I think, have been a Zulu war. (74)

The assessment is purely speculative. King provides no adequate proof that the Zulu war could have been avoided. In King's view, the Zulu people needed to be ruled. She therefore does not question the assumed imperial right to rule. Her critique extends only to other races, and does not include a detailed consideration of her colonising position.[31] This attitude is reflective of views that regarded the British as the natural leader of the occupied territory.

King's narrative also indicates the "so-called race problem" in South Africa referred to as the "tension" (Klopper 11) between Brit and Boer. As Dirk Klopper explains, at the time the Boer people were considered a different race, not merely a different ethnic group, by the British classificatory system (11). King interchangeably refers to the Dutch or Boers in derogative terms, traditionally cast in the role of friendly simpleton, knowledgeable farmer, opportunistic settler or a character readymade for comic commentary and reprimand in many imperial narratives. A key example of her representation of the Boer can be seen in the following passage:

> While we were still in the Cape District we came to a good many farms, usually owned by Dutchmen. Kind and hospitable, they were always ready to welcome us, and if we lacked any small necessities would gladly supply our

[31] Although she does not critique the British inherent right to rule, this does not imply that King is unaware of gender discrimination in her society.

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> wants. Once we met an English boy whose parents had died; a Dutch farmer had taken him to live in his house. And once, more memorable, we saw a Boer farmer approaching us on horseback. He wore a big felt hat, coat, socks, and *veldtshoen*, but his shirt tail flapped against his saddle; he had no trousers on! The sight of his bare thighs and whiskered, bearded face was irresistibly comic. He stopped when he reached the convoy, and I saw that his trousers, both legs tied at the ends, were slung across his horse, and that they bulged mysteriously. He asked if we would buy some ostrich eggs; and then, like a conjurer, produced the eggs from the trousers. He had found an ostrich nest, and had simply taken off his trousers in order to carry the eggs safely. (25)

The Boer is represented as a simpleminded, kind but uncouth barbarian. King relates this tale as a comic event, which it in fact is, but simultaneously denies the Boer full subjectivity. The Boer farmer is narrated as a caricature rather than an entrepreneur. The attention is drawn to his "comic" appearance. The Dutchman in this passage is depicted as opportunistic, altruistic and artless but the narrative denies him identity and agency beyond this since it does not draw attention to or reflect on the implications of what it mentions. The Boer was innovative when he removed his trousers in order to transport the ostrich eggs. Entrepreneurship eclipses morality for this particular Boer farmer. Despite the English's disapproval of them, the Boers nevertheless provided them with provisions and would adopt their orphaned children.

King describes the Dutch farmers in the Cape Colony as friendly and inviting in the opening chapters of her autobiography, but continues to depict the Transvaal Dutch as decidedly unfriendly. These descriptions are from King's trek to the Heidelberg minefields. She then proceeds to incorporate one of the numerous peculiarities of the Dutch she observes, in this case, their preoccupation with the dead, death and their forebears:[32]

> The Transvaal was fairly well populated, but the Dutch farmers were by no means friendly. Indeed, they actively showed their dislike of the English when we stopped at their farms to ask for any stores we needed. At one house we managed to obtain some eggs and dried fruits. The farmer kept them in coffins, which later would be used to bury his father and mother, an aged couple who were sitting on a bench before the house. Afterwards he would make more coffins, in preparation for his own or his wife's decease. (103)

This is not an isolated description of Dutch eccentricities in King's autobiography. She narrates various perceived peculiar habits; in this case, the farmer's inevitably fated view on death. It is possible to argue that by focusing on the peculiarities of other ethnic groups King

[32] Rorke and Brinkman both write about this 'odd' cultural habit of the Dutch.

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exhibits an imperial consciousness and a perceived sense of superiority. This simultaneously ratifies British superiority for the domestic reader of the autobiography. The extract indicates that racial tension in the nineteenth century was widespread between the English and the Boers.

King includes an anecdote describing the Dutch who would trek, some for a whole week, to attend the *Nachtmaal* (Holy Communion),[33] where they would also buy and sell provisions. King remembers this specific story when she moved to 'Maritzburg to live with her father, who at that time was trying to reform the land Colonization Scheme. She narrates:

> [There were] Dutch of every age and description. They were never in a hurry to make a purchase, whether a roll of cloth or a case of sulphur matches. The stalwart *mvrows* would sit in the shops for hours, gossiping, exchanging news, and, if the opportunity occurred, hiding any small articles within their reach beneath voluminous skirts. The store-owners used to employ special men to watch them; and, on a principle which probably worked out fairly in the end, they managed to cheat the Dutch of as much as the Dutch pilfered from them. (emphasis in original 46-47)

Another inclusion of 'strange' Dutch religious or cultural habits indicates King's awareness of her reading public, especially since this description is not unique to King's narration (see footnote 17). The Boer is presented as an archetype. It is ironic that King, who employs religious text (intertextual reference) to legitimise her Subject, portrays the devotion of the Dutch as a comic or trading event. King never mentions her religious affiliations or personal religious struggles; she merely intertextually refers to the Bible, probably keeping in mind and writing for her reading audience.

From the period when Woodroffe and King were situated in Heidelberg, King includes tales about the miners and their encounters with the Dutch. This tale also reveals evidence of Dutch ingenuity and innovation. The anecdote is narrated as another comic oddity:

> Some of the Dutch gave dances in their kitchens, to which many of the two hundred diggers used to go. There were one-, two-, or three-bottle dances. The first was not a grand affair, with only a bottle of Cape brandy, coffee and bread for refreshment; a concertina and violin for orchestra. A two-bottle dance

[33] English fictional writers of the early twentieth century, such as L.H. Brinkman and Pauline Smith, both include detailed descriptions of Dutch Communion. It is possible that the English considered this tradition quirky or strange and thus included it for their reading public.

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> meant there would be two bottles of brandy and a whole roasted sheep; while for a three-bottle dance the girls wore sashes and became refined. Chickens, roast pork, or buck were served with the liquor, on a table that was unencumbered by knives of forks. (105)

Most Afrikaners did not join the stampede to the goldfields and diamond mines. They preferred to stay on the farms since historically they were attached to their farms. The farm dances they hosted became a commodity they traded with the diggers. Once again, King's description is derogatory and describes the Dutch as lacking in refined 'culture'. The tables are "unencumbered" (105) by cutlery, signalling for King uncouth culture. She further relates that the young Dutch girls had to change their frocks mid dance since there was too much dust from the clay floors and they "perspired without concern" (105). Morbidly curious, King narrates that she peeks into the changing room and a fat Dutch woman notices her: "She smiled, and beckoned me to go in. 'Quick! They've seen us!' I cried out to the others. We turned and fled" (106). The Dutch woman was friendly and inviting, but King and her companions recoiled and "fled" (106). Her narration, yet again, indicates King's denigrating opinion (racism) regarding the Dutch. Their habits, to her, make for comic relief and she spies on them like a naughty child.

King's ambivalent attitude towards race and other ethnic groups seems pervasive in nineteenth-century women's life writing, as I also illustrate in the following chapters. She juxtaposes the Other with herself to highlight her racial and moral superiority but simultaneously uses the Other to critique gender (and her) position in society. The emerging tension in the narrative between her self-representation as a renegade, brave and adventurous yet distinctly colonial woman and a desire to remain moral in the eyes of the reader, is not unique to King's portrayal of Self. As I illustrate in the following chapters, this appears to be a common feature in South African women's life writing. King traverses the bar of the traditionally rational and masculine 'I' of autobiography, and narrates her female subjectivity as self-assured, driven, successful, critical and acutely aware of social convention by using the body as transgression of patriarchal and societal expectation and by casting herself through aesthetic modes as a scarce and valuable Subject worth her salt. Similar to other first-generation New Women, she does not divorce social and economic power from her domestic role. In the following chapters I examine the writing strategies and modes of representation

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that Rorke and then Van Heerden employ to claim female subjectivity through subverting, crossing and traversing the ‘I’ of the autobiographical genre.

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Chapter Three

Solving the Mystery: – Mis/representation, Embellishment and Omission in *Melina Rorke: Her Amazing Experiences in the Stormy Nineties of South-African History – Told by Herself*

Figure 3: As the Author Appeared in 1902, after Receiving her Decoration from Edward VII

After discussing the narrative strategies for self-presentation in Marina King's autobiography in the previous chapter, I now turn to Melina da Fonseca Rorke's (1875-)[34] life writing. Rorke, described by critics and reviewers as "an adventuress" (Daymond 1), a traveller or a "strumpet pioneer" (George 30 September 1955), a romantic (Brown 501) and a "plucky [...] woman" (E.W.S. 404), lived in Rhodesia and South Africa during the late nineteenth century. In her autobiography she comes across as a defiant woman who represents herself as a

[34] Rorke's date of birth is in contention. As Daymond indicates, her marriage certificate states that she was nineteen when she married Frederick Rorke, which would set her date of birth in 1870. At the time of submission of this thesis, I also have been unable to determine the exact date of Rorke's death.

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legitimate subject concerned with the expansion of the British Empire in Africa. At times, she expresses sympathetic sentiments towards other races which, however, are undermined by colonialist endeavours.[35] Rorke's autobiography presents the reader with various justifiable concerns regarding the veracity of the content since her account is rife with historical inaccuracy pertaining to her version of her life and experiences (Daymond 1). What is 'real' or 'true' comes to the fore as primary concern since the knowledge that Rorke has broken the "referential pact" (Lejeune 22) – to tell the reader the absolute truth about events and the Subject central to these experiences and memory – prompts the academic reader to consider the text with sharpened scepticism. As I will illustrate, her narrative skilfully interlaces famous historical figures into the text and subtly (inter)changes characters in order to ratify her account. In a letter to E.G. Marais, a mysterious correspondent George notes: "I have no doubt that the book is an important authentic document – but there is a mystery" (30 September 1955).[36] What I deduce from the comment and the content of the letter is that the mystery he refers to implies the aesthetic fabrication of Rorke's Subject and experiences. In this chapter, therefore, I employ the term 'mystery' in the title as a guiding theme for the discourse of Rorke's representation of Self. There are numerous instances in the narrative where Rorke attempts to manipulate the reader; in fact, one can argue that the entire narrative is manipulative, a dramatised construction, since it consciously presents a falsified version of Self as true. Rorke's self-representation is filled with ambiguous tension such as: sympathy for other races undermined by explicit colonial British sentiments; an unreliable historical account of Self; and the presence of the female body as both a site of transgressing and enforcing Victorian conventions attributed to that female body. This chapter endeavours to locate the self-representative spaces Rorke's life writing assembles and subsequently to consider the Subject she presents to her reading public. Concerning Rorke's autobiography and its Subject, it is imperative to examine the manner in which she intertwines or changes certain characters and facts to authorise her narrative and thus create an interesting Self.

I argue that the veracity of the story becomes less important than the historical and personal facts she chooses to change and the questions these alterations generate. Rorke's unreliable account and deviations from factual 'truth' are chronicled by Margaret Daymond, one of the

[35] The vastly different reviews are indicative of her contentious representation of Self.
[36] George's surname is not mentioned in a letter addressed to E.G. Marais, son of South African poet and author Eugène N. Marais.

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few critics to engage with Rorke's text; consequently, instead of merely focussing on and reiterating these alterations as indicated by Margaret Daymond, I will examine four sites of Rorke's representation and negotiation of her 'I' to determine the narrated Subject's goal. Why does she choose to fictionalise the Self and what does she achieve by narrating and imagining an illusory Subject? The first analytical subsection is concerned with Rorke's negotiation between the 'I' and the relational others presented in the text to illustrate her strained relationships with both men and women in her narrative. I then turn to the contentious presentation of her body, which, much like King's body, becomes a site of both transgressive and conventional femalehood. My examination of Rorke's ambiguous depiction of the Other in the colonies will be coupled with an examination of the reliability of her retrospective narrative concerning the depiction of the Other. The final section considers the author's achievement as "The Florence Nightingale of the Boer War" (196) and the implicit militant and domestic connotations of this figure. These subsections are geared towards answering the question: "How do changing [and altered] notions of [Rorke's] 'I'-ness or personhood affect [her] self-narrative?" (Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 238) Her imagined and consciously constructed subjectivity through manipulating and distorting the autobiographical 'I', will thus be the focus of this chapter.

In summary then, the autobiography is divided into twenty-two chapters and covers approximately ten to fifteen years (exact dates are unclear) of Rorke's life to relate, as the title indicates, "the stormy nineties of South-African history" (3)[37] and her "amazing" (3) experiences thereof. Rorke, the second youngest of five siblings, tells the reader she has two older brothers named William and Travers Sebastian (Bassy) and a younger brother, Alfred, as well as an older sister, Helena. Her father, Travers da Fonseca, was a "British Consul to Portuguese East Africa" (6) before he moved to the Kimberley's minefields.[38] The narrative consists of four distinct phases. In the first section (Chapters One to Six) Rorke reflects on the circumstances which led to her adolescent marriage to Irish rugby player Frederick Rorke, his death, the birth of their son Edgar, and her subsequent confinement in her father's house in

[37] The first publication of Rorke's autobiography, as Daymond indicates in footnotes, was by Greystone as *The Story of Melina Rorke R.R.C.* (1938) and shortly afterwards by Harrap Publishers under the title *Melina Rorke: Her Amazing Experiences in the Stormy Nineties of South Africa's Story, Told by Herself* (1939). Dassie reprinted the autobiography in the "1950s" (2), although the publication year is not included. My quotations are from the Dassie reprint. In 1971 Books of Rhodesia also reprinted the autobiography as *Melina Rorke, Told by Herself.*

[38] Her mother remains nameless throughout the narration but is a decided presence in Rorke's recollection.

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Kimberley. The romanticised tale of the protagonist's scandalous elopement at the age of fourteen with Frederick Rorke recounts her escape over the Cape Town Wynberg Convent's walls, in the depths of night, into the arms of her eager lover (13-14). After a mere few months of marriage, travelling around South Africa with the Irish rugby team, Frederick is fatally injured during a rugby match in Kimberley and subsequently dies, leaving behind a young pregnant wife (20). The reader is told how the heavily pregnant protagonist and her sister Helena, along "with a white nursemaid for Helena's little girl, and a retinue of native servants to minister to our wants" (21), embark on a protracted journey from Kimberley to Port Alfred. Both sisters are described as traumatised: Helena is still recovering from the birth of her daughter and the young protagonist battles to come to terms with her husband's sudden demise. In Port Alfred the protagonist gives birth to her son Edgar under the supervision of an inebriated doctor and with the assistance of an "old Kaffir woman" (28).[39] The narrator further recalls that until this point in the narrative she was disowned by her father after her elopement and prohibited from entering his house in Kimberley. She is then graciously allowed back into the house after her return from Port Alfred under strict orders to "redeem" (32) herself with "her good behaviour" (32) and "that he would never have to see or hear [her] baby" (31). Edgar is therefore confined to a secluded part of the house in Kimberley under the care of a black nanny, Manenko. During this period, the widowed protagonist, now "stripped" (32) of her "carefully acquired grown-up identity" (32) finds herself reduced to "a disobedient little girl" (32) playing the "*rôle*" (35) of "onlooker" (35). She nevertheless learns from important guests such as Cecil John Rhodes, Barney Barnato, Olive Schreiner, Dr Jameson and Mr Beit (of the De Beers Company) about "the history that was being made" (35) outside the confines of her father's house. The narrator remembers that this is how she became interested in the mining industry and requested her older brother William to educate her on the politics of the Kimberley diamond fields (41). For two years, Rorke resides with her parents in Kimberley until her older brother Bassy returns from University abroad and decides to venture into the African interior, a region referred to as Mashonaland that would later form

[39] The doctor is similarly not identified by name, probably, from what I garner from additional readings, because this incident is a fabrication.

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part of the region called Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Bassy takes Rorke and Edgar along with him (54).[40]

In the next phase of the narrative, Chapters Six to Thirteen, Rorke describes the stages and events of their exciting and dangerous travels north. She recalls the train journey with Bassy and Edgar from Kimberley to Johannesburg (56), where Bassy employs "thirty-six boys to accompany" (57) them, purchases three ox-wagons, and acquires eighteen oxen for each wagon (57). They *trek* to Pretoria where they stay at Paul Kruger's house with his family for a few nights. Chapters Seven to Nine further unfold as a travel narrative, chronicling the hardships of *trekking* with 'sensationalist' descriptions of the 'barbarous habits' of indigenous tribes, narrating the oddities of the Boers they encounter en route, as well as documenting Rorke's fabulous and daring hunting stories. The group finally arrives in Fort Victoria (then Mashonaland) just as the Matabele War breaks out (87). According to the narrator, every able-bodied man is summoned by Dr Starr Jameson (Administrator in Salisbury) to attack the Matabele in Bulawayo after they, under the chieftainship of Lobengula, have invaded Victoria and murdered their Mashona slaves who deserted and worked for the settlers. While the war is raging, the white women and children are confined to Fort Victoria. Finding this entrapment, described as "a perfect Bedlam", unbearable (87), the protagonist decides to "get away from the shrill, angry voices of mothers, the shrieks of squabbling children – and, above all, [she] wanted to realize her own secret ambition to be the first white woman to enter the new town of Bulawayo" (96).

From Chapter Eleven onwards, Rorke shapes her narrative to emphasise her growing independence in a predominantly male sphere and how her "secret ambition" (96) is gradually realised despite certain obstacles. Along with Bassy and Edgar, Melina now sets off to travel approximately two hundred miles through the treacherous bushveld to the newly established town of Bulawayo, (meaning "Place of Slaughter", 96). The narrator remembers how on this journey she felt her heart wrench for two reasons: there was "nothing to remind a traveller that he was trespassing on ground once sacred to one of the mightiest of African kings" (96),

[40] Rorke fails to mention which University Bassy graduated from or in which country he completed his degree. Rorke consistently refers to the country and region as Rhodesia in her narrative. It would have been referred to as Mashonaland and Matabeleland by Europeans at the time of their travels, and later Southern Rhodesia, but she simply refers to this 'colony' as Rhodesia. I use Rorke's vague reference 'Rhodesia' when I refer to the then 'region-in-the-process-of-becoming-a-British-colony' she narrates.

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which suggests a level of "imperial nostalgia" (Rosaldo 107);[41] and she learns, to her disappointment, that her ambition to be the first white woman in Bulawayo will remain unrealised since a certain Mrs Colenbrandt has beat her to the punch. Rorke informs the reader that her family (she, Edgar and Bassy) at first lived together in built replicas of three African huts (98) before the completion of her own private bungalow (103). One of these huts served as a dining and living room and it is in this domestic space that the protagonist constantly plays the role of hostess to the horde of young men wooing her, but whom she coyly keeps at bay. As further evidence of her female virtuosity and moral integrity, Rorke tells how Major Billy Saddler, "an old man – at least thirty" (101), becomes a fast friend and companion. While in charge of this domestic domain, the protagonist is approached by Dr Jameson, who appeals to her to "[train]" (105) Topsy, a daughter of chief Lobengula. Begrudgingly, the protagonist accepts the task that later turns out to be at the peril of her own life since Topsy attempts to kill her. During this time, the protagonist's younger brother, Alfred, also decided to immigrate to Rhodesia to farm (112-113); an event which would lead to another near-death experience for the 'adventurous' narrator and her family in the latter part of the autobiography. In Chapter Thirteen, the narrator relays events related to the cause of the Anglo-Boer War. She vividly recalls the planning and execution of the famed Jameson Raid (1895-1896)[42] in which many Rhodesian male settlers participated. The reader learns that both Billy and Bassy, who assisted in the Raid, were imprisoned by Paul Kruger and his cabinet, but released after a short incarceration (119), after which Bassy returned to Kimberley and Billy to Bulawayo.

Rorke's recollection then takes a turn in the third section, Chapters Thirteen to Eighteen, to capture events which prompt her return to South Africa and shape her identity in the latter part of the autobiography. When a telegram arrives, informing Rorke that her sister Helena has died, she rushes back to Kimberley to assist and comfort her mother. During this period Bassy meets and marries a beautiful girl, Emily, and Melina refuses Captain Lister Brown's advances who, smitten by this rejection, shoots himself (126). On her return to Bulawayo (with Emily), the protagonist learns that Alfred has betrothed himself to a girl named

[41] I discussed this term in the previous chapter. I use the term here, although I do not elaborate on Rorke's imperial nostalgia, to indicate the similarities between Rorke's and King's experience of Imperialism.
[42] The memoirs (which include diary entries) of Mrs John Hays Hammond's (Natalie Harris) *A Woman's Part in a Revolution* (1897) is another example of a woman's life writing concerned with this raid.

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Florence. Rorke recalls how the three women (she, Emily and Florence) and Edgar visited Albert's farm just as the Mashona and Matabele uprising started. Their narrow escape from the plundered farm in the dark of night (assisted by Bingo, Manenko's son who accompanied Bassy, Melina and Edgar on their *trek* from Kimberley and who remained in their employ), while "the Matabele were screaming and dancing in the hills" (160), is relayed in a highly animated tone to evoke tension in the reader as well as awe at the bravery of the group. When they finally reach Bulawayo, the inhabitants have turned the town into a laager.

In the concluding chapters of her *bildung*, Rorke relates her decision to study nursing in England (162) although she wanted to become an "actress" (161), a compromise she makes so as not to "break" (161) her parents' hearts. She explains how she sent Edgar to Wynberg School in Cape Town, travelled to England and enrolled at Endell Street Hospital in London. While studying nursing during the day, she took up acting classes at night (162); an endeavour which, as I will illustrate, undoubtedly shaped the theatrical and dramatic style of her narrative. While she is studying in London, Emily gives birth to her and Bassy's two daughters, but after Bassy passes away (Rorke still in London), Emily informs Rorke's mother that she will remarry and no longer wants her two daughters. The bachelor brother William, the oldest Rorke's sibling, adopts the two daughters. Rorke further recalls that for her Bulawayo was home and she returned in due course to open a very successful and large "nursing-home" (168) in the district. Clearly influenced by circumstances of the Anglo-Boer War that gave rise to the fame of women such as Emily Hobhouse, Rorke continues to account her own role in assisting the wounded. She notes that she was first situated in Lobatsi and later moved to Mafeking's Victoria Hospital. When the war ended, she was invited to accompany and assist wounded British shipped back to England, which involved "three [protracted] trips" (192). This role as nurse gave rise to her fame as "The Florence Nightingale of the Boer War" (196) for which she received the Order of the Royal Red Cross (196), lauded for her valour and commitment to the British wounded troops in the Anglo-Boer War. Towards the end of the narrative, the protagonist returns to Bulawayo to sell her house and furniture as well as the newly established nursing home because she realises she no longer wants to nurse but yearns to be an actress. In true dramatic style, bringing to a closure the 'adventure' of her life, Rorke tells of her decision to accept Saddler's hand in marriage, following her belated realisation that she "at last really loved" (195) him. This plan, however,

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is thwarted by fate when, on the day of receiving her award, she is told that Saddler has died of either a stroke or a heart attack. She ends her narrative on this tragic note; the development of the Self notably framed between the death of her two suitors, but leaving just enough suspense to allow speculation about the rest of her life. The *bildung* closes with her mother's consoling words: "You are still so young—so much of your life is still ahead of you…" (199).

Solving the Mystery: Reliability, Memory and the 'False' Self on the Fringes of Empire

Since Rorke has to sanction her life and its anecdotes in an established patriarchal and colonial framework, she necessarily has to foreground the role of the men in her life and in her narrative, but she seemingly reinvents these roles and figures to shape her sensational account of self. In the article "Freedom, Feminity, Adventure and Romance: The Elements of Self-Presentation in *Melina Rorke, Told By Herself*", Daymond compares the historical facts of Rorke's life with her fabrications in the autobiography and notes: "She proves resourceful; she replaces the husband, with whom she actually made the journey to Bulawayo, with a brother; thus it is that she has her elder brother, Bassy (Sebastian), announce that after his college studies" (6) he will not settle down but pursue a spirited adventure into the interior, accompanied by the protagonist and Edgar on the grand journey. Changing this important historical fact in her story provides Rorke the leeway and podium from which to create a Self that is simultaneously acceptable to her and her Victorian reading audience. Daymond further verifies that most of Rorke's version of her life is embellished in her autobiography, explaining that the author married Frederick Rorke at the age of nineteen, (not fourteen as she claims), with her parents' consent and accompanied him to Bulawayo where he eventually deserted her and moved to Australia (the grounds on which she later obtained a divorce). With this in mind, it is interesting to examine her alterations since these reinventions provide insight into the tenets of British imperial and colonial ideologies in the colonies and Rorke's opinions of related ideologies, marriage and gender conventions. Susan Barrett in "Daughters of the Empire to the Rescue: Female Adventure Novels in Southern Africa and Australia" agrees with Daymond and states that "Rorke does appear to have wanted to create a socially respectable heroine" (160) and that this is partly achieved by exchanging Frederick with

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Bassy in her account of her travels north.[43] In the *Journal of the Royal African Society* (1939), E.W.S. reviews in "Shorter Notices" a few South African publications. He states that Rorke is "frankness itself" (404) when retelling her "amazing" (403) "adventures" (404) and incites admiration in the reader for the "plucky young woman" (404) she constructs. This evaluation indicates that in 1938 when her autobiography was published the reader, unaware of her alterations, reviewed and received this text as true and considered Rorke as spirited, admirable and frank. One could deduce that parts of Rorke's fictional adjustments were deliberately geared towards inciting these opinions in her readers. M.D. Brown considers Rorke's style as "gripping" (501), written in the "romantic vein" (501), that "keeps the narrative interesting from the point of view of those who would glory in the triumph of the exploitation of the weak by the strong" (501). Brown's review, "The Story of Melina Rorke by Melina Rorke" (1939), appeared in *The Journal of Negro History* and indicates that the contemporary critical reader, conscious of racial relationships in the colonies, did not view Rorke's representation of other races as sympathetic but rather as exploitative. According to the newspaper article "Won Honors on Battlefield" (1910), published in the *Washington Post*, Rorke was born in England, moved with her family to South Africa at "the age of 10" (26 June 1910) and married at the age of fifteen.[44] Nancy L. Paxton, in her work "Disembodied Subjects: English Women's Autobiography under the Raj", describes Emily Eden's (another nineteenth century traveller and writer) immunity from certain imperial conventions since she accompanied her brother, and not a husband, to India. She states that the women she examines "escaped some of the constraints of this conventional gender role, in part, by claiming the right to narrate their own life stories rather than allow their men to write the stories for them" (393). Neither King nor Rorke allows their men to navigate their stories and in neither of their narratives are their men the heroes of their tales. Rorke specifically frames herself as central heroic figure.

As indicated in the introduction of this thesis, there are various veritable concerns pertaining to the reliability of life writing since memory itself is unreliable and, therefore,

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[43] Wendy Woodward, in *The Animal Gaze: Animal Subjectivities in Southern African Narratives* (2008), also briefly mentions Rorke's life writing, but her critical focus is on the animals' emotion and subjectivity as presented in Rorke's writing (102-103). I therefore do not examine her contribution in this chapter.

[44] This is yet another example of discrepancy in Rorke's narration. According to her autobiography, her father was a British consul to Portuguese East Africa who moved to Kimberley. She in fact states that she married at the age of fourteen. This also contradicts Daymond's claim that she was eighteen when she married Frederick Rorke.

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subconsciously could be reshaped and become a different 'truth' in the author's mind. Smith and Watson consider the notion of 'truth' in women's autobiography. They note:

> More recently, Stanley Fish has observed that autobiographers cannot lie because anything they say, however mendacious, is the truth about themselves, whether they know it or not [...]. Any utterance in an autobiographical text, even if inaccurate or distorted, is a characterization of its writer. (*Reading Autobiography* 15)

As previously indicated, Gillian Whitlock, James Olney and Sidonie Smith posit the theory that life writing is not merely writing about memory and the self, but is simultaneously the act of creating a Self. Although the narrator/protagonist, thus also the created identity, is presented as the same person who wrote the text (*Melina Rorke – Told by Herself*) in the title of the autobiography, she is, by so doing, also subscribing to the "autobiographical pact" (Lejeune 13). Rorke breaks the "referential pact" (Lejeune 22) since she does not "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" (22). I argue that Rorke's 'Self' is not a lie, or untrue (albeit a historically inaccurate Self), but a mystery, taking into consideration that 'lies' relay valid information regarding the autobiographer. Although the represented Self is mendacious and fractures the referential pact, I agree with Smith and Watson that whatever is perceived as distorted is in fact a characterisation of Rorke's perceived Subject (in this case how she wants to be perceived). This mysterious self-representation and creation of her Subject, I aim to indicate, is a conscious and not unconscious act; she wilfully does not disclose the "whole truth" (Lejeune 22). This chapter is also geared towards addressing the mystery of Rorke's skilfully moulded subjectivity. I further argue that she wilfully, and for a very specific purpose, revises the 'true' version of her life-story, her "self-reflexive, [...] self-critical act" (Olney *Autobiography* 25) to come across as defiant. She intentionally entwines memories and caprices to relate this tailored pattern. Memory, Olney argues, could be considered as the imagination of a past, the imagination of a Self, the imagination of a person. In *Memory & Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing* (1998) Olney reflects on Mary Warnock's theories regarding memory:

> [She] speaks of "the sense in which memory and imagination overlap and cannot be wholly distinguished. Both consist in thinking of things in their absence" [...]. By "things" Warnock no doubt means objects, events, persons, and the like, but could we not say the same of the self or the *I* – that memory consists in thinking of the *I* in its absence ... and in its presence? Might not the *I*

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> be constituted in and by the act of thinking about itself? And how much difference is there, in this case, between absence and presence? (emphasis in original 231)

In view of the above, as stated, I argue that Rorke's misrepresentation is not a consequence of failed memory, but conscious fabrication: where her "memory and imagination overlap" (Olney 231) in thinking and writing about her life, by deviating from factual 'truth' and by consciously re/constructing a coherent subject, Rorke exhibits agency.[45] Her autobiography might be considered as more self-reflexive even than King's, since she imagines a life like her own but constructs an alternative Subject. I next examine Rorke's relational description of others in the text to draw attention to the narrative strategies she employs to generate a legitimate and elevated Subject. Her "I"dentity is most notably constructed by relational depiction of others and therefore I dedicate extensive attention to this section of the chapter.

Relationality: A Begrudging Legitimisation of Men and an Elevating Mirror by which to 'See' the Self and Other Women.

"Relationality" (Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 248) in this chapter refers to the author/narrator's discussion of significant others in the narrative to shift the focus from the 'I' and negotiate the Self in relation to visible others in the text. In this section I discuss Rorke's relational depiction of others to endorse her Subject. A close reading of the first two chapters of Rorke's autobiography reveals three significant narrative strategies. Firstly, she subliminally casts human consciousness as Man, and as such endorses colonial patriarchy. Secondly, her address exhibits colonial awareness and she infers the trope of the conquering white male. Lastly, she presents her husband as a hero in contradiction to his abandonment of her, freeing herself from public scrutiny and judgement.

The introductory paragraph of Rorke's narration does not begin with a first-person perspective but contains a distant third-person contemplation that designates a male narrator and invokes the historic masculine 'I' of autobiography. She begins:

[45] I heed Smith and Watson's warning that the mere act of narrating the Self is not adequate proof of an autobiographer's agency (*Reading Autobiography* 54).

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> Frequently *a person* who has climbed to a *vantage-point* of years can look back over the *panorama* of *his* past and point unerringly to a day, a word, or an act which has changed the entire course of *his* life. More rarely a person may be conscious at the crucial moment that *he* has reached a cross-road, and have the opportunity of weighing the alternatives. In such an event every word and action takes on a deep significance which etches it indelibly upon *his* memory, so that ever afterwards that day remains more vivid that the shifting hours of the present. (my emphasis 5)

Here the narrator considers the human condition and memory as site; inferentially 'human' is presented as masculine in the style of the narrative with 'his past' and 'his life'. The nature of the self-reflection underscores the colonial trope of the white male elevated, surveying from a "vantage-point" (5) a conquered space (panorama) with a self-reflective, passive eye, in true male travel narrative tradition (Pratt 36-66). Rorke relates this from a height; her "eye 'commands' what falls within its gaze" (Pratt 59), but in this instance, she commands and shapes her memories and what she remembers. By using a male pronoun as referential, the onset of narration subliminally conjectures a male Subject and subjectivity, endorses the colonial trope of the conquering white male, colonial patriarchy, and indicates that she considers 'I' or 'person' masculine. It is an arresting beginning, since the account only shifts in the second paragraph to the young protagonist's female 'I'. Consequently the shape the female 'I' takes through the narrator's portrayal of others will be discussed.

The narrator proceeds to recall the day she met her husband in 1889; described as a "vivid" (5) memory with "deep significance" (5) which, as explained, is fictionalised. According to the retelling of the event, she met Frederick after a rugby match in Cape Town. Furthermore, she remembers that all the "belles" (8) were jealous of the attentions he paid to her while she consciously played a "grown-up *rôle*" (8), acting "*blasé*" (8) and indifferent. Her performance was successful since it captured his attention. Furthermore, she notes that he made her feel "exactly like the heroine in one of the novels [they] used to read, carefully concealed between the pages of a text-book, and with all the dramatic ability of which [she] was capable [she] endeavoured to act [her] part" (8). By mentioning romantic fiction, Rorke's negotiates her own fictional identity in the "romantic vein" (Brown 501) and casts herself as the heroine mimicked on the characters captured in Victorian novels. The metaphors of acting and references to fictionalisation suggest that the young protagonist (*and* author) is aware that she is acting a part (and shaping a character): a part that would attract and entrap a suitor or

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husband. Allusions to acting and storytelling extend throughout the narrative; for example, in Chapter Five, the narrator confesses that she indeed "was determined as ever to be an actress", "had discovered a talent for mimicry" and "told stories" (53). Apart from these explicit descriptions, the rest of the narrative implies that Rorke is also consciously aware of 'acting' parts, conforming to social roles, and constructing a character in the pages of her writing.

As far as her depiction of masculine identities is concerned, she presents Frederick as a virile, 'manly' and handsome hero who consequently dies a sad but glorious heroic death on the sport field in Kimberley (20). That this invention is part of Rorke's dramatic reconstruction of her life is clarified in George's letter written to Marais. He explains that his research revealed that there was indeed a visiting rugby team from England. The team had travelled the country as Rorke describes in her recollection of her husband's death, but there "was no Irishman Frederick Rorke on [the] team", although one of the players indeed died on the tour, but "not at Kimberley" (30 September 1955). Manliness in the nineteenth century was anchored "in an obsessive love of games" (Mangan and Walvin 4) and sport became to a certain degree the new 'battlefield' on which to prove and act manliness. The fact that Rorke chooses a hero's death for her husband, (albeit on the sports rather than the battlefield) and embellishes the fact that he abandoned her indicates she writes with her audience in mind.

Endowing her narrative with controversial and taboo topics, such as elopement, tragic death, and a teenage pregnancy, Rorke skilfully brings an atmosphere of sensationalism to her self-depiction. It was scandalous for a sexually and physically immature, fourteen-year-old girl to elope in the nineteenth century. The representation of the Subject in the narration is as a wayward girl. To establish the identity of her younger self, which foreshadows qualities later emphasised in the mature protagonist, the narrator tells her reader that she was sent to the convent in Wynberg to "check [her] wanderlust and correct [her] tomboy activities" (7). The institution apparently succeeded in "[conquering] so many rebellious spirits" (5). To add a level of suspense, deception and scandal, Rorke explains that Frederick was unaware of the protagonist's real age and that she was not yet in puberty; a reality he only realises once she starts menstruating and they are already married. The transition from childhood to womanhood is described as painful, associated with "agonizing cramps" (16) and naïvely interpreted as a "strange malady" (16). Barrett, incidentally, states that there is no mention "of

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the difficulties [...] of the problems of coping with menstruation" (163) in Rorke's narrative. I disagree with Barrett since Rorke states that the experience of first menses was "frightening" (16) and the "[appalling aftermath]" (16) convinced her that she was dying. For this deception and silence about her pre-puberty, Frederick calls her an "imp", a "minx" and regards her as "bashful" (16). He is quite shocked, but not angry and expresses his understanding of her father's fury at their behaviour. She also recalls he called her "darling and sweetheart", endearing terms regarded as "positively indecent" (16) at the time. Her self-representation is decidedly constructed to be sensationalist, but also reflective of maturity and daring beyond her years. The descriptive language of her narration constantly foregrounds her shocking and indecent behaviour to enforce her Subject as "positively indecent" (16) in colonial society.

Before expanding on my analysis of Rorke's depiction of women in her text it is necessary to linger a while longer on masculine identities to consider Rorke's fictional/factual positioning of herself as widow/abandoned woman and the complexities of negotiating this identity in relation to men. To justify her journey inland to Rhodesia, Rorke is in need of a masculine presence to protect her physically as well as provide a safeguard for her moral integrity. After Bassy includes Rorke in his scheme to trek upcountry with the promise of experiencing "the hunting, the exploring, the strange native tribes" (55), Rorke states that her "her cup of joy was brimming over" (55). She was going to "[wander] into the almost unknown heart of Africa" (55).[46] Daymond explains that "travelling as a wife could bring adventure but not autonomy; thus it is that Melina Rorke, once she has claimed the advantages of marriage, chooses to disencumber herself of a husband [in her narrative] as rapidly and decisively as possible" (5). As a widow accompanying her brother into the "unknown" (Rorke 55), she is accorded certain liberties and freedoms not extended to married women or unattached ladies and could thus bring autonomy in the form a "hunter" (55), traveller and settler. It appears in Rorke's autobiography as if autonomy was only possible in the presence of a man, since she always has a male relational other. Daymond mentions that "[t]he records of many nineteenth-century women travellers suggest that spinsterhood was not, in fact, an impossible conjunction with adventure and that some single Victorian women did find a considerable measure of freedom through travel in foreign lands; but Rorke's position was slightly different from that of these women" (4). She was not a spinster but an abandoned woman and

[46] The 'heart of Africa' evokes an association with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

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as such she chose to present herself as a young widow.[47] Daymond speculates that Rorke invented the character Billy Saddler, the major who steadfastly loves her throughout the narrative and acts as a companion. He is the older gentleman suitor Rorke has in Bulawayo but, according to Daymond, historical records indicate that no such person ever lived in Bulawayo (8). Saddler is an interesting and necessary invention in the construction of Rorke's tale. His character provides her with a male companion to various events. He is also a patient suitor and never pressures her to marry. This fictional character is functional since the author confesses that she "was going to keep [her] personality intact" (Rorke 128) and avoid the "complete revulsion" (128) with which she regarded romantic love. Saddler is always at hand to escort her to soirees, thereby ensuring the protagonist's moral integrity.

Furthermore, Rorke ensures her moral integrity in her association with Saddler. She incorporates an anecdote in the narrative to inform the reader that she has a friend, Alice, known since their years at the convent, who has an intimate relationship with and understanding of Saddler. Rorke thus feels unencumbered by moral conventions when she is accompanied by Saddler because she considers him an engaged man (105). After she is informed of her mistaken assumptions and Saddler declares his undying love to her, she realises that she is not "in love with him" (114) but values his friendship. She states that "with feminine perversity [she] shifted the blame to his shoulders" (115), indicating Saddler's responsibility for the misunderstanding, but chooses to accomplish this by slighting her gender and herself. This recollection exhibits Rorke's bizarre ambiguous attitudes towards men: she seems desirous of their attention but begrudges the fact that she has to represent herself in relation to them in order to write her life. Her embellishments and wilful revision could be viewed as a subversive act indicative of recalcitrance. She states that she "felt a dull pain" (119) when Billy told her that Bassy had fallen in love with Emily. Even when it concerns her brother, she exhibits jealousy, desiring her sibling's attention for herself. Perhaps unwittingly, the author implies here that should Bassy marry, she no longer would have a mouldable relational other. Daymond states that "Rorke too had to take defiant risks which were based on a penetrating insight into the ways of the world, especially in matters of gender" (1). The possibility exists that Rorke realises that she has to exhibit certain qualities

[47] A.E. Venter, like Rorke abandoned by her husband, explains: "If one is widowed, one is showered with sympathies – not so a divorcee. Even children (instigated by adults) ran away from me calling: 'Here comes the witch'" (114).

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that are considered feminine by her society and reading public (for example she is always adequately accompanied) to make statements that could be construed as wayward (such as the fact that she considers marriage a yoke). If her moral integrity remains intact, her extreme statements would be less intrusive and considerably less subversive to her reading public. They might then read her Subject as a "plucky young woman" (E.W.S. 404) and not as a "pioneering strumpet" (George 30 September 1955).

In Chapters Eleven to Thirteen, once Rorke, Edgar and Bassy reach and settle in Bulawayo, it emerges that Rorke evidently exerts thought and time to endow her autobiography with credibility, once again relying on the company of men to validate her identity. The narrator painstakingly chronicles her precarious situation as a single woman in Bulawayo and claims her desire for freedom and independence from men, viewing their advances as a threat. Reflecting on these claims in light of the knowledge that she had a husband in Bulawayo, it begs certain questions regarding the author's 'moral integrity' and discursive approach:

> In spite of all the newcomers I was still the only eligible white woman in the town, and the result was that my little house was under perpetual siege, though nothing was farther from my plans than becoming a wife again. I enjoyed the friendship and the attentions of the men who sought me out, but love-making was taboo, and the moment I realized that a man had serious designs on my independence I hurriedly made my position clear. If that didn't discourage him I took pains thereafter to avoid being alone with him. Most of my suitors, even after I had rejected their proposals, decided that so long as I remained single there was still hope, and though they glowered suspiciously at each addition to the circle, for the most part they were quite manageable. Two things helped me at that time – first the fact that I was under the aegis, so to speak, of Dr Jim, whom every one adored, and second, the fact that I never received a man alone in my house. There were never less than two present, and usually there were a dozen or more; and I always dismissed them at an early hour. (104-105)

Rorke, like King, uses metaphors of war when she discusses gender relations. I discuss the connection between militancy and domesticity in detail in the last section of this chapter. Here the reader can see that her independence is "under perpetual siege" (104); a position she constantly has to navigate in Bulawayo, especially when her liberty is under threat. The metaphorical language indicates her awareness of gender roles and their designations (Daymond 1). She freely admits that she enjoys the attention and flattery of men, but maintains moral standards by never receiving suitors alone. The comment "[t]here were never less than two […] usually there were a dozen or more" (105), subliminally draws attention to

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her fame and desirability. The author utilizes a public voice when she wants to validate her domestic success, claiming "their outspoken admiration of my simple household arrangements [was] very flattering" (99). This appropriation portrays her as capable and feminine despite challenging circumstances. By mentioning Dr Jameson, for example, the narrator provides a figure of respectability "whom every one adored" to validate her own fame and legitimacy, emphasising their endearing relationship by using the moniker Dr Jim. Rorke also monopolizes her brother's opinions of her to attest her self-worth: "Bassy had told [Emily] all about [her] pluck, [her] resourcefulnes..." ([*sic*] 125). Previously in the narrative, where she recalls her confinement in her father's house, she explains that she became "more impatient of [her] anomalous position and [...] enforced inactivity" (49) and wished she could "scramble over the wall to freedom" (49). Her critique of her gendered position as enforced inactivity and curtailed freedom is undermined by her insistence on men's approval. Even though Rorke begrudgingly has to entangle men into her life story in order to authenticate the narrative and provide moral integrity for her protagonist, she also subversively employs them for her own purpose. Life-writing critic Laura Marcus states, "women autobiographers subvert the 'autobiographical pact' by including problematic or ambiguous signals which trouble rather that confirm the distinction between autobiography and fiction, or by making the 'proper name' ambiguous" (280). Rorke's ambiguous signals indicate, not merely concerned with her "I"dentity, a sharp mind capable of utilizing and noticing the gaps and space in a dominant discourse and construing men's representation. She does indeed subvert (although not break) the autobiographical pact (Lejeune 23) since her protagonist and narrator is not identical to the 'proper name' of the historical author, but the mystery surrounding her protagonist's portrayal in this case is concerned with her gendered narrative. In the narrative, instead of freeing herself entirely from sycophants and male attention, she chooses to endorse her femininity with their presence as a "belle – with more engagements and more suitors than I could conveniently handle" (57).

Other women in Rorke's narrative function mostly as a mirror by which Rorke draws comparisons between her rebellious character and women who subscribe to gender conventions of the time. Her portrayal of them "conform[s] to the usual stereotypes" (Barrett 163). It is noteworthy that she does not have many friendships with women or dedicate much space to them. It seems that she integrates women into her narrative to draw contrasts.

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Depictions of two specific women exhibit certain tendencies to elevate herself above mediocrity by drawing attention to their shortcomings. This way of writing prompts the speculation that she either felt superior to other women or sought validation of the Self by effacing other females. I briefly examine a few key female figures and the author's portrayal of her troubled relationship with them, especially Emily, Bassy's fiancée; arguably one of Rorke's textual 'doubles' (as I discuss in the following section), and then Topsy (the black woman trainee).

When Rorke recalls her first meeting with Frederick whilst at Wynberg Convent School, she also remembers her friend Magdalen's silly behaviour that caused Melina to act "*blasé*" (8) in front of Frederick. The narrator explains that "[i]f Magdalen hadn't been so visibly awed by the honour of meeting the handsome young Irishmen", she would not have re/acted as such. Magdalen and the other "Cape Town belles" with their "giggling efforts" (8) are further portrayed as acting in contrast to the protagonist's indifferent behaviour. The narrator suggests that Frederick approached her because of her singularity. By recalling the other teenage girls' apparent silly conduct in front of Frederick, Rorke accentuates her own mature and individual feminine qualities. When Helena, her older sister, accompanies the pregnant protagonist to Port Alfred, Rorke depicts Helena as helpless and weak. On one occasion, for instance, the train breaks down and Helena begins to sob. The narrator recalls: "Her helplessness surprised me, for until that moment, being so much younger than she, I had depended upon her for plans and decisions, but I realized now that if anything was going to be done I should have to do it" (23). Helena is also unable to assist the doctor when he performs post-natal surgery on Melina. She is described as going "white round her mouth" (29). Framing her story in this way, Helena's weakness implicitly highlights Rorke's fortitude.

The reader can garner from Rorke's narrative that she dearly loved her mother, but her examination of her mother's life reveals that she also feared to become her mother (who remains nameless in the narrative), a characteristic of New Women who "[rejected their mothers'] motherhood" (Stott 164). She remembers that her mother "defied [her] father" (21) for the first time "in her married life" (21) to hurry to the young protagonist when Frederick died. Previously prohibited from contacting her disowned daughter, Mrs da Fonseca is praised for "the careful tact which she had exerted in inducing" (34) the father "to let [Melina] live at

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home" (34) again. Rorke lays claims to her mother's understanding nature, but also to her silent victimhood for "the torment she had endured at the thought of my having to face the world alone with a baby" (34). The narrator presents the mother as the stereotypical Victorian housewife; caring for her husband, catering for his friends, running committees he sanctioned (status symbols); and she conducted all these chores "with a smooth and gracious efficiency" (34). The mother is central to her narrative and the protagonist appears to admire and love her, but she does not describe her mother's subscription to her father's wishes as desirable and laments her position in her father's house. The only apparently real female friend Rorke made in her life is Margaret Bradshaw; a women depicted as not "really young, nor was she pretty – she was too thin and worn for that; but she gave the illusion of beauty" (52). Her personality is explained as "delightful" and her home as "charming". The term "worn" immediately suggests that Margaret presents no threat to the protagonist. She is portrayed as ordinary and conventional; married to a poor miner, which awards the protagonist a superior social position despite recognising that Margaret "was as lonely as I" (52).

Another structural strategy Rorke employs to convey her ideas regarding femininity, female experience and female identity is to incorporate tales of consuming love and its woe. One of the most significant is Bassy's relationship with Emily. Bassy became besotted with Emily, a girl "whose beauty had taken Kimberley by storm" (119) when he met her after his release from the Boer's incarceration following the Jameson Raid. The protagonist seemingly attests Emily's beauty yet uncharacteristically decides to treat her like an equal, justifying her reaction with "[i]f she were as weary of adulation as she ought to be she'd be glad to be treated like a human being instead of a goddess, and if she weren't, then the change would be good for her" (125). The narrator further explains, regardless of her feelings and opinions (which emerge as apathetic vis-à-vis Emily), she would none the less endeavour to help Bassy because "[he] was so hopelessly bewitched by Emily's beauty that [she] doubted whether anything could ever free him from the spell – except, perhaps, too close proximity to it" (126). Bassy buys a house for Emily in Bulawayo, and the narrator claims that although "at first" Emily was "popular" with the settlers, they soon realised that "the only thing in the world that she loved was her own beauty" (165). The narrator explains that the settlers retracted their admiration once they grasped that Emily required "constant homage" (164) and "didn't really [care] for people" (164). Furthermore, according to the narrator, Emily abandons the two

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children she “hadn’t wanted” (164) after Bassy’s death, and remarries. Through the relational descriptions of women such as Emily, her mother, her sister and Helena, Rorke becomes the ideal female in her narrative, but simultaneously presents the Subject as the feminine ideal: a good mother, intelligent, modest, attractive, self-assured, brave and capable.

An interesting figure in the autobiography is the “black beauty” (105) Rorke names “Topsy” (105). The narrator admits that she begrudgingly shouldered the responsibility of supervising the training of the little black beauty with the “superb figure and features surprisingly clear-cut” (105), since she was one of the daughters of Lobengula and Dr Jameson asked her to undertake this assignment as a special favour. She showers Topsy with little gifts and old dresses and delights in the woman’s glee at receiving these, dressing Topsy herself. This is a skilful inversion of becoming the other woman’s lady in waiting. Rorke explains that Topsy becomes insolent and lazy as a result of her cosseting; she adjusts her approach and puts an end to the steady stream of gifts (107). Topsy tries to kill her because Rorke “thwarted her vanity and her greed” (109) but Rorke’s protector, Bingo, saves her. Bingo, the faithful black male companion, dislikes and distrusts Topsy and thwarts her attempt. Topsy is portrayed as an ‘unnatural’ Matabele because, unlike the other woman in her culture, she despises babies and never wants one of her own. Like Emily, Topsy is portrayed as ‘unnatural’ for their “repugnance” (165) of motherhood. The narrator says: “I decided that the same strange blood which was responsible for her fine features was doubtless responsible for the alien sensitiveness” (106), such as her unwillingness to become a mother. Smith suggests that the enforced “embodiedness” (“The Other Women and the Racial Politics” 412) of women, historically, parallel the imperial view of the African as sexually primitive or as the feminine Other in need of patriarchal oversight. The indigenous servant presents a threat to the Empire: in an attempt to manage its fears the Empire endeavours to ‘tame’ its servants. Rorke renames her servant, a woman who already has a name, with a suggestive name and tries to domesticate, placate or even buy her by giving her gifts. According Rorke’s telling, Topsy does not react in a manner acceptable to the protagonist and she tries to manage her and curb the perceived insolence. Topsy is reduced to a “stark naked” (110) savage in the anecdote. She discards all the paraphernalia (becomes naked) of the Empire as soon as she defies patriarchal oversight. Christine Bolt observes that “the most famous black beauty is not a human, but a horse” (131). Rorke immigrated (as speculated by Daymond and indicated by

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the article in the *Washington Post*) to America and her autobiography was first published in this country. Keeping in mind Bolt's comment, the popularity of Anne Sewell's novel *Black Beauty* (1877) amongst Anglo-American readers and Rorke's immigration to America, I come to the following conclusion: Rorke frames and names the human 'black beauty', Topsy, "possibly calculating [the] ready appeal for American readers" (Daymond 11), as dangerous, unnatural, lascivious and "treacherous by nature" (Barret 163). Topsy presents a threat to Rorke since she is beautiful and other white men desire her, so Rorke (possibly jealous) casts her as "strange" (106) and savage. In her portrayal of Emily and Topsy the narrator infers the Victorian "[c]olour symbolism" (Bolt 131): Emily, described as demure, the light "pay[s] her homage, [...] throw[s] a halo round her golden head" (125) and Topsy as dark, seductive and evil. Paradoxically, neither 'colour', according to the protagonist, is adequately feminine. In the following section I examine the issue of female embodiment and how Rorke incorporates tropes of the forbidden body to resist patriarchal discourses: she inconsistently aligns with both nature and culture through depictions of the body.

The Body as "War Zone": Inscribing Femininity on the Textual 'Forbidden' Body

Embodiment refers to the presence and visibility of the autobiographer's (author's) body, outside of the text, inscribed onto the narrative (Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 239-240). The consciousness or "I"dentity is linked to the body in and outside of the script. As is evident from the onset, Rorke represents herself as decidedly feminine and embodied. She recalls that she looked frazzled and dishevelled when she covertly sneaked out for a romantic liaison with Frederick in a tea shop, "[r]emembering suddenly that [she] ought to look cool and confident, like the heroines [she] read about who never apparently had to contend with such earthly problems as flushed faces and perspiring noses and foreheads, [she] stopped to fan [her]self with [her] hat and catch [her] breath" (10). "[E]arthly problems" here emphasises corporeality and the female body's abject functions marring her appearance of femininity. She includes these apparent exasperating bodily functions though, but still casts herself in the role of a hero; thus her heroism is not detached from her body. Further in the narrative, the narrator proceeds to underscore distinct feminine attributes associated with the female body by controversially including reference to taboo topics, such as: menstruation,

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pregnancy complications, and rather vivid descriptions of giving birth, breastfeeding and postnatal conditions. Her experience of childbirth is described as "tumbling down into an abyss of pain" (28) and after presenting with post-natal complications she mentions that "[she] felt as though all [her] insides were dropping out" (29). By including descriptions of forbidden subjects related to women's bodies, the subjectivity of the universal 'I' is undermined. By presenting herself as embodied and focusing on her gendered body, Rorke facilitates a platform of resistance. This is achieved by seemingly submitting to her gendered role as wife, mother and daughter, but she creates a feminine subjectivity by incorporating the forbidden body. Smith explains that British women discovered mobility – despite their embodiment – on the periphery of the empire:

> Chafing at the confinements of female embodiment, they discovered that residency on the colonial 'frontier' provided them an arena of resistance. At the margins of the empire, far from the European centre's hold, they could as white women break through the borderland of female embodiment and achieve a mobility of autobiographical script unavailable to them in the 'home' country ("The Other Woman and the Racial Politics of Gender" 413).

The margins of the empire were wrought with numerous dangers of a physical nature and the threatened body could not afford immobility; suddenly the will for survival superseded social conventions. It became acceptable to be mobile and engendered the possibility for adventure, agency and a subjectivity imagined and written beyond the limits of the universal 'I'. Rorke recalls, "[j]ust as parental warnings about poisonous snakes, wild animals, and dangerous natives had failed to keep me within the confines [of the convent], so, later, the dangers of the native uprising, the bullets and bloodshed of the Boer War, failed to keep me away from the war zone" (7). Despite Rorke's embodied position, the colonial periphery provides her with sites for resistance and mobility and she rebels, for example, by writing about her taboo female body. Although enforcing her embodied position, she achieves autonomy and resistance by accepting this position – she relates the taboos in great detail to speculatively shock men (and women) – and aligns her body with nature, depicting it as 'natural' (Driver 458-459). Therefore, Rorke subscribes to patriarchal male mythology (as portrayed in male literature and echoed by many female writers) of the time but she simultaneously aligns with men and culture through her references to and involvement in pioneer explorations, hunting, business and war efforts (through the mobile body). In contrast to other female writers, she

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accepts the alignment between women and nature but employs it as a structural strategy geared towards imagining a unique and autonomous "I"dentity. The empire controls and patrols its borders but Rorke controls her textual body and inscribes it like a "war zone" (7), exhibiting agency; conquering the autobiographical 'I' and paradoxically aligning with 'man and nature'.

The contentious representation of Rorke's body (and embodiedness), as both a site of resistance and site of patriarchal subscription, is to some extent indicative of the irresolution British women felt regarding their bodies (Paxton 392). Daymond states that in order "[t]o present herself rich in femininity, [Rorke] needs the status of marriage" (4) to be a worthy wife and mother. Conversely, once this status is achieved, she textually discards her husband as soon as she accrues another ideal of femininity, pregnancy – and then motherhood.[48] She has to be physically validated by a man though to ensure her femininity, (thus the need for a husband). Women, being essentially embodied, had to be beautiful, thus becoming objectifiable, to be considered 'real' women. Corporeal confirmation can only be achieved by man though. It appears as though some female autobiographers (of the selected period – like Rorke and King) endeavour to establish subjectivity beyond corporeal limitation only after physical approval and male affirmation of their attraction. Rorke informs the reader that Frederick's approval made her feel sanguine and she no longer had to remember to play her role, but it became 'natural' once he signalled his acceptance:

> [M]y head was completely turned by the flattering compliments he paid me. Nobody had ever told me before that I was beautiful; that my red hair was a bronze aureole, and my eyes twin sapphire lakes! I no longer had to remember to play my *rôle*, for Frederick had not only made me feel grown up, but beautiful, witty, and fascinating. (11)

Rorke is aware of designated gender roles and frequently refers to them. Her phrasing indicates that this role is mimicked, a mimesis of expectation. This relation of her acted role suggests that if a man values a woman's performance and physicality, the performance becomes ingrained and 'natural'. Her embodiment is confirmed by a man, and assimilated by herself: the woman. As the extract indicates, Rorke is consciously aware of the assimilation

[48] Caroline van Heyningen (whose work I aim to include in future research) in *Orange Days: Memoirs of Eighty Years Ago in the Old Orange Free State* (1965) similarly discards her husband textually. The only mention of a husband is when she states: "I got married and went to live in the Transvaal" (96). She publishes under her maiden name, Van Heyningen and not her title gained in marriage, Mrs. Hill.

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and consequent internalisation of her performance and possibly realises she can appropriate certain conventions in order to destabilise the prescribed performances.

As an actress playing roles such as "Lady Frampton in 'The Stronger Sex'" ("Won Honors on the Battlefield" 26 June 1910),[49] she must have been acutely aware of the performative action of gender roles, and aware of the conversations surrounding First Wave Feminism or the New Woman. It is probable that she integrates the prohibited subjects regarding the body in her narrative as an act of dissidence. Not only is her embodied Subject nonconformist, her style of writing is sly and manipulative and she actively critiques her society regarding gender inequalities by incorporating examples from her life. Lesley Hall explains that many "New Women [such as Rorke] at the end of the nineteenth century were leading activist and outward-looking lives, openly challenging many of the most cherished conventions of [...] society" (224). The irony with Rorke is that although she is aware of the performative aspect of gender, and like a true actress 'acts' this in the text, she desires male affirmation of her 'body' and femininity whilst simultaneously using the body to resist the priapic 'I' by incorporating the forbidden.

A narrative technique Rorke integrates to manipulate her audience is the effervescent "frankness" (E.W.S. 404) she employs to relate serious matters. With this 'frankness' she critiques her society and usually shifts the blame to others or institutional conventions. Her confessional tone (as though she is forced to explain her situation) also engenders valid observations about society without causing offence since the reader sympathises with her plight. This covert approach enables her to make remarks about her society and culture: she also mocks herself in order to convey certain impressions. An example is her description of married life and her ignorance regarding the female body:

> I knew nothing whatsoever about married life, or about even the simplest, most rudimentary facts of life. [...] In those days it never occurred to a mother to talk frankly to her daughter. Parents, schools, books, every law of polite society, conspired to preserve the innocence of the young girls – and by innocence they meant ignorance. It was an age of the utmost convention. [...] (15) I had never had an ache or a pain in my life, and the agonizing cramps which gripped me,

[49] Written by John Valentine, it is a play about a wife "taming her husband" (Wearing 372); the opposite role designation of William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*.

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> together with their appalling aftermath, frightened me so much that I was sure I was dying of some strange malady. (16)

The experience of menstruation is described as abject. The “appalling aftermath” (16) is merely a natural bodily process, yet she portrays it as horrific, something that terrifies her. In a society where women are othered by the dominant discourse and defined in corporeal terminology, she shocks the reading audience by explicitly writing about her corporeal confinement and its visceral realities. The shock and sympathy the reader feels for the ‘poor ignorant girl’ overshadows the underlying accusations aimed at her society for keeping young girls uninformed. It is also possible that she is trying to explain the alienating effect a young girl experiences when her body morphs into something she considers as grotesque. It is paradoxical that Rorke depicts the female body as monstrous since she writes herself as embodied. Alignment with nature seems to indicate that the ‘natural’ (thus also nature) is in fact cruel and frightening, and causes pain. Her association with culture, such as entering the economic sphere through opening a successful nursing home, is dissimilar to the ‘natural’ since no pain accompanies this endeavour. Cleverly, Rorke indicates that alignment to culture (male spheres) is less traumatic for women to contribute to than their ‘natural’ roles.

Rorke also narrates the experience of pregnancy as atrocious. She feels alienated from her body: the changes wrought by pregnancy destabilise her perceived Self – and might even be an indication that she feels that women cannot escape their embodiedness. She relates that she is not naturally maternal but juxtaposes this statement again with self-mocking self-representation:

> There were two reasons for my growing impatience, neither of which, I am ashamed to say, was innately maternal: I wanted to see whether the incredibly wee dresses and petticoats I had been making with minute, Convent-taught stitches would fit a living child; and even more desperately I wanted to be slim and light-footed again. The weight of the baby was almost too heavy a burden for my slight, immature body, and my swollen legs and strained hollow face made me shrink from the shy overtures of our Dutch neighbours. (26)

Her altered body causes her shame; indicating her perception of Self is informed by old biblical values such as the female body as ‘dirty’, ‘unholy’ and ‘repugnant’ during pregnancy and menstruation. She hides from the gaze of others in a society where women validated themselves by the gaze of society and men. Rorke is seemingly aware of her embodiment but

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abrades against these limitations by presenting the body as well as the experience of being a woman as embarrassing, almost repulsive. This engenders a form of resistance though, since meticulous description of the body was considered transgressive. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar explain that women sometimes presented their heroines, or their doubles, as the feminine grotesque, such as the mad Bertha locked in the attic in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.[50] This ambiguously stems from a fear as woman writer to be considered monstrous:

> The 'killing' of oneself into an art object – the pruning and preening, the mirror madness, and concern with odors and aging, with hair which is invariably too curly or too lank, with bodies too thin or too thick – all this testifies to the efforts women have expended not just trying to be angels but trying *not* to become female monsters. (Gilber and Gubar 34)

As examined in the previous section, Rorke constantly validates her beauty and resourcefulness by employing the language used by men. Her fear of being viewed as misshapen is evident in the text and, for example, she slyly weaves into the narrative that she had a "slim", "slight, immature body" (26) whilst detailing the abject contortion pregnancy wrought on her 'beautiful' young body. What is further of importance to her is that Emily and Topsy, as discussed in the previous section, almost function as 'doubles' for Rorke's fear of becoming a mother. The protagonist admits to possessing no "[maternal instincts]" (26) but her portrayal of Emily and Topsy as bad mothers mirror her fear of being one herself. Rorke further negotiates this fear of becoming gruesome by formulating a femininity constructed by the gaze and words of men. Despite her fear, she uses the body as a platform for cultural resistance whilst simultaneously criticising convention endorsed by mothers and grandmothers. Furthermore, she admits to feeling alienated by her body and of not possessing maternal instincts, while her husband has to inform her that her 'ailment' is menstruation since her mother did not instruct her in such matters. The litigious representation of the body becomes to a certain degree a signpost of Rorke's inverted gaze and consequent social critiques.

Perhaps an illustration of her rebellion as woman and writer is best seen in the event where she recalls the process of giving birth. Rorke literally opens the narrative door to the private chamber of the mother in labour and allows the reader to witness that which is traditionally

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[50] 'Mad' Bertha then functions as Jane Eyre's double and subliminally as Charlotte Brontë's 'fear' of being considered monstrous (Gilbert and Gubar 78-79).

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silenced or hidden: she gives eye to the 'I'. Firstly, she introduces the male, inebriated doctor (who remains nameless) who is, according to her narrative, clearly unsuitable to perform his task. Furthermore, she incorporates anecdotes about the body that could possibly alienate and shock her reading public, such as the fact that the milk she produced was too bountiful and she had to suckle puppies for relief. Once she goes into labour, there is no alternative but to call for the drunken doctor to assist in the birth. She relates that the intoxicated doctor "tugged and pulled to wrench my baby into the world" (28) and that Dr Jameson, after inspecting the damage once she was safely back in Kimberley, was livid because "[i]t took eight operations to repair the damage, and it was months before I was able to leave the nursing-home" (31).[51] Delivering Edgar is described as traumatic. Rorke draws attention to the fact that 'a man' (drunk doctor) destroyed her body. Not only is she "a good healthy animal" (29) in the doctor's opinion, but she chooses to breastfeed puppies because of excess milk:

> The old Kaffir woman was more practical. She took great pride in my bountifulness, and suggested timidly that perhaps there was another mother in town who couldn't take care of her baby – perhaps I could nurse that one too, and get relief. [...I]n despair I asked the old woman if she couldn't find some more babies – even Kaffirs, I whispered in my torment [...]. A little while later she came back with four squirming, squealing mongrel puppies, and I will never forget the heavenly ease they gave me (29-30).

She relates this anecdote with her characteristic humour and even "[winks]" (30) at the black nurse after she has fed the puppies. Once again she aligns with nature – even feeding a different mammal out of choice – but skilfully shifts the blame to the black woman as perpetrator since she brings the puppies despite Rorke's request for other children. Rorke's depiction of her body is indefinite: she is both an object of desire in the male gaze and presents herself as misshapen where it concerns the physical processes of a woman's body. I propose that Rorke purposefully presents her body in such a manner in order to comment on society's ideological practices and taboos pertaining to the body. She portrays her body as an alien object for patriarchal evaluation; there is definite tension regarding her desire to transgress and 'break free over the convent walls' and her desire for masculine approval. Her body or embodied position is not the only contentious presentation in her autobiography since

[51] This is an example of where she contradicts herself since she narrates that after her return from Port Alfred she was confined to her father's house for about two years, and not admitted to a nursing home.

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she scripts other races with apparent sympathy but that endeavour is undermined by colonial racial sentiments.

"Not 'I'" is the Other

As is the case in colonial literature, racialised identities in Rorke's narrative similarly prove problematic. In this section I focus on Rorke's discursive practices and narrative strategies to portray the Other and illustrate that her sympathetic attitude expressed towards other races is undermined by describing ethnic groups in South Africa and (then) Rhodesia with typical colonial sentiments and derogatory language, just "sensational enough to demand attention" (Lorimer 20). I firstly discuss her stereotypical depiction of the African man, and then woman.

While confined to her father's house in Kimberley, Rorke becomes interested in the diamond industry. Barret states that "[Melina] finds nothing interesting about the diamond industry in Kimberley" (161). This is a confusing statement to make since the narrator explicitly states her "interest" (41) in the industry in her narrative (40-45). The narrator claims that there were "two camps" (40) amongst the miners: the big companies such as the De Beers Company and independent miners with smaller stakes. The larger companies "[controlled the output]" (40) of the diamonds so as not to flood the markets and thus lessen the desirability and scarcity of the product (40). What Rorke fails to mention, although she details the horrors the black workers endured, is that there was a third camp: one for the poor and subjected black mine workers. In this space, human bodies were shackled and treated not only like commodities but also like animals[52] to prohibit them from absconding with the stones. Her brother William, who held an important post in De Beers but also had many friends who were "independent diamond miners" (40), offered to accompany her to the mines and the shantytown around Kimberley to demonstrate the dehumanising conditions she was unaware of. Rorke describes the indigenous workers as "hideous with their weird native chants" (42-43), barbaric and animalistic, and the poor independent miners, mostly white immigrants, as people living in sloth and dirt. She relates that the black labourers "[looked] happy and well fed" (43) despite

[52] I use this comparison with the utmost caution, recalling Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali's poem "Men in Chains" where shackled mine workers ("wrists handcuffed,/ankles manacled/with steel rings") - also a metaphor for the cruelty of apartheid - are compared to "cattle at the abattoirs" (15-17), *Seasons Come to Pass.*

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the fact that they were "virtually prisoners" (43). If they were granted leave to visit their families,

> they were expertly searched by guards, who ran fingers through their woolly hair, pressed their flat nostrils, felt inside their mouths, under their tongues, in their ears, stretch apart his fingers, and 'jigger' (jump), so that any diamonds concealed by muscular contraction would drop on the floor. [...] During this detention period the man's hands were encased in leather gloves, like boxing gloves. These gloves, which were locked on his wrists, had a recording watch which automatically registered every time the man went to the toilet. (43-44)

Furthermore, Rorke relates that the workers are shackled like slaves (43). Her depiction of others the workers, especially of their physiognomy ("woolly hair" and "flat nostrils"), is racist but captures the dehumanising practices of colonial society and the ills of modernity with its disregard for the value of human life in favour of capital. For the contemporary reader, these depictions are shocking, but she conveys this information as if she were a traveller compiling a scientific inventory in accordance with colonial stereotypes (Bolt 134). From her description of the black labourers it seems as though she is implying that they are too simple-minded to be 'unhappy' (43) because of their incarceration and abuse.

Throughout the narrative Rorke discloses, although questionable in light of her textual embellishment, candid observations regarding British colonial society and culture. She has no qualms about exposing moral ambivalences, gender discrimination, or offering her opinion of certain political events and personages, such as her observation that "men were frankly alarmed at the idea of a young woman who wrote books and who might use their persons or their expressions for copy [as Schreiner did [...] with Rhodes] in *Trooper Peter Halkett of Mashonaland*" (37-38). Although she is brazen in her approach, she still propagates dominant racial discourses. Colonial indoctrination further surfaces in Rorke's descriptions of black and white female identities, indigenous customs and colonial perspectives about miscegenation. The following extract exhibits the above-mentioned traits. Here Rorke discusses the nurse her mother hired to care for Edgar:

> [Mother] had obtained a middle-aged, billowy Kaffir woman, Manenko, who had been well trained in a European family, and could be trusted to carry out all the mysterious rites connected with the raising of a white baby. Most Kaffir women were impossible servants, refusing to be weaned from their revolting native habits, and yet at the same time only too ready to discard the strict

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> morality of kraal tradition, so that every white man, whether married or single, became the immediate object of their amorous advances. A town like Kimberley, where the percentage of white women was so disproportionately low, was the mecca of every native girl within trekking distance. The subject, of course, was never openly discussed; but white wives and mothers were careful never to employ Kaffir women. With bland faces and knowing eyes they ignored the presence of black women in the houses of bachelors, or even of men whose wives were away from Kimberley, but when a white man so far forgot himself as to marry a Kaffir girl the public rose in its wrath and blotted him out of the social picture. (32-33)

The observation is arresting, both for the insights it brings to Rorke's regard of black women and society's (especially women's) hypocritical attitude to inter-racial relationships. I first examine her treatment of cultural customs. Rorke notes there are "mysterious rites" associated with raising a white baby, but fails to specify, thereby leaving the comment open to interpretation. The word "wean" might imply that the black nurses breastfed the white babies, but Rorke chooses not to state this explicitly. The native women, in this passage, have to be "weaned" from their "revolting native habits", which also remain unnamed, but this perpetuates colonial discriminatory language: a child is weaned from his nurse's breast, and a native woman has to be weaned from her "revolting" childish habits and culture in order to care for white children. The black woman is accorded the subjectivity of a 'baby'. The impression she creates is that all 'native' women desert the "strict morality" of their tradition when they trudge to the cities. She suggests that white men were 'perpetrators' of miscegenation and yet she blames this occurrence on the lack of available white females and the immorality of the young black girls. "[M]ecca" indicates that interracial relationships were in abundance and yet she calls it the 'black girls' mecca. The white men, according to the narrator, were "blotted" from society if they dared to love, and not sexually 'use' their black servants. The alterity in Rorke's narration is indicative of a Self informed by the framework of colonialism, in which the basis was a distinction between Self and others. The Othering in Rorke's text is part of her quest to create a Self. Rorke is clearly uncomfortable with narrating her society's implicit alterity, but narrates it nonetheless. As Laura Marcus explains, drawing on the work of Nancy Miller, autobiographical discourse is closely related to the anxiety about speaking for or about others as well as the representation of the Self informed by its cultural context:

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> [This is] what Nancy Miller calls the incantatory recital of the 'speaking as a's' and the imperialisms of 'speaking for's'. The 'speaking as a's' stem also, however, from an identity-politics which, while it challenges 'bourgeois self-representation', produces, in Miller's view, an equally problematic concept of representativity. She is troubled by the demand that we should speak in the name of the group or groups we are said to represent in terms of class, gender, colour, and so on. Autobiographical discourse is thus closely linked to (or arises from) an anxiety about 'speaking for others' as well as the problems of representativity – an 'identity politics', in this view, may also subordinate the individual. (Marcus 282)

The identity politics in Rorke's autobiography demonstrates the difficult negotiations of imperial subjects to define themselves in such a heterogeneous landscape. The multitude of different cultures, languages and practices causes self-reflexive identification. Rorke, as a representative of British colonial society, distinguishes the group by focusing on difference rather than commonality. This Self is thus defined in terms of an inferior Other, a common occurrence in nineteenth century identity construction of the coloniser as superior (Bolt 111-112).

I now turn to the author's endeavour to portray a sympathetic Subject but argue that the discourse of discrimination and other pro-British sentiments as manifested in her narrative as a whole (and illustrated in the discussion below), counters this authorial intent. Early in her narrative, as a matter of framing and contextualising her story, Rorke's political consciousness is revealed, as also seen above, when she expresses a uniquely objective and succinct opinion pertaining to imperial expansion and the ensuing battles in the 'scramble for Africa',[53] depicted in the following excerpt:

> Although in the opinion of the masses it was the discovery of the diamonds and gold which gave sudden importance to Africa, the European countries had long been aware of the fact that only the great, dark continent of Africa, with its limitless jungles and deserts, its rivers and mountains, was there room for the expansion of their empires. England, France, Holland, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Spain, had sent out their explorers and their settlers to penetrate farther and farther into the black man's country, negotiating, buying, stealing, the lands they coveted.

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[53] The Scramble for Africa refers to European countries' colonising efforts in different regions in Africa. During the Berlin conference in 1884-1885 they divided Africa on the map into roughly fifty different regions and countries, without taking into account in which regions certain indigenous groups lived, and demarcated certain regions the colonisers could still 'colonise' and who were allowed to enter. Pratt states that for the Europeans the Scramble for Africa was "the fall from the sun-drenched prospect into the heart of darkness" (66).

> Under such conditions it was inevitable that bloodshed and war must follow; native wars which concerned the average white inhabitant very little, native uprisings which concerned him vitally, and eventually the bitter war between the English and the Boers for the supremacy of South Africa. (6-7)

Rorke's cavalier admittance to the greed and plunder of the English is surprising. Her sympathies, in the introduction of her autobiography, seem to lie with the indigenous tribes and the loss of their territories by force and theft; yet, it is quite possible that this is a belated added awareness in her retrospective narration. It should also be noted that she omits the involvement of other indigenous groups in the Anglo-Boer War. I discuss Rorke's pro-Boer attitude further in the following paragraph. Furthermore, she condemns Rhodes' expansionist dreams throughout her narrative. She states that he desired "[c]omplete control of Matabeleland, [...] a vital step in his dream of an African empire" (56) and that he tried to force them to attack in order to "[p]rovide [him] with an excuse to subjugate the natives and take away their land" (56). This condemnation of imperial expansion is starkly juxtaposed with perpetuating racist slurs and codifications when describing the culture and physique of the "[native]" (7). She seems unaware that by continuing these characterisations she becomes complicit in "negotiating, buying [or] stealing" territory and autonomy. It is no surprise then that Brown states that "here [in the autobiography] the natives do not figure except as some commodity or impediment found in the community, or as primitives who should be noticed only because of certain characteristics in which they differ widely from the Europeans" (501). Another example of her desire to appear moral and caring towards the Other is her narration of the maltreatment the "poor things" (132) had to endure from malevolent masters. According to the narrator, she kept a barrel of saltwater next to her little house in Bulawayo because the white masters ferociously hit their workers. She states: "I realized that in a country where the blacks outnumbered the whites many hundreds to one it was necessary to be strict with them, and eternally vigilant" (132). The protagonist's disapproval of this violence is hindered by a fear of the Other. The other "things" (132) present a threat in their masses, thereby exhibiting her colonial fear. In her description of life in Bulawayo, Rorke explains that the indigenous servants were not allowed to walk on the pavement, buy liquor or be on the street after nine. These restrictions bear similarity to apartheid laws in South Africa and other British colonies. Although she keeps a barrel of saltwater *outside* her house for the wounds of the "things", she does not clean their wounds nor does she confront the white

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perpetrators of this violence since the whites "were outnumbered" and needed to be "strict" and "vigilant" (132). Whilst trying to appear sympathetic, she justifies the violence. As I have indicated, her retrospective narrative and fabrications might have influenced her portrayal of other ethnic groups, and as such, I now examine her description of Boers and her opinions regarding the Anglo-Boer War.

In the narrative Rorke discloses unexpected pro-Boer sentiments. She portrays them as unsophisticated and uncouth but expresses a deep regard and respect for them as a group. While Bassy, Billy, Dr Jameson and the other British settlers in Rhodesia are planning the Jameson Raid, Rorke expresses the following opinion:

> [I]t seemed dreadfully unfair that those kindly, simple farmers should be driven out of their own lands. [...] And the more he talked the more stubbornly my sympathies settled with the Boers. It was their country; they had had to seek it out because the English had treated them so badly in the south – and now the English were preparing to drive them out of the Transvaal too. Why should the English and Americans govern a Boer country, anyway? (116)[54]

Here Rorke claims that the country belongs to the Boer, yet this statement still expresses a colonial attitude if one considers that the land historically and technically belonged to other indigenous ethnic groups; she considers 'ownership' of territory a 'white' endeavour. It is curious and unexpected for a British colonial woman to express the opinion that British maltreatment forced the Boers to trek and claim their own country. According to the narrator, she did witness the genocide of the Matabeles in Rhodesia and the Boers in South Africa and when retrospectively reflecting on these incidents it might have influenced her narration at the time she penned her recollections. Her respect for the Boers might also have increased after their valorous actions in the war or after the severe critique the British received for their treatment of women and children in the concentration camps at the hands of Lord Kitchener, who ironically was her good "[friend]" ("Won Honors on the Battlefield" 26 June 1910). Rorke describes the Boers as brave, dogged and persistent in their actions and their belief and specifically mentions that the Boers considered the Transvaal and Orange Free State as their countries – which the British would annex in their endeavour to expand:

[54] Note her reference to the "Americans". Since the first publication of her autobiography was in America, it seems as though she simply inserts references that might appeal to an American audience.

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> I knew those big stubborn men; their doggedness in pursuing a single course of action at whatever cost; their love of independence; their warped religious beliefs; their primitive love of their country, of the very earth beneath their feet. I knew something too of their strength and their guile; their intimate knowledge of the veldt and the mountains; their ability to ride for days on end, to subsist on a few strings of biltong and a handful of mealie flour. (176)

She boasts about the fact that she did not underestimate the Boers. Even though she sympathises with the Boers she still considers them as an inferior race as becomes apparent when one considers her reference to their 'strange' and eccentric habits which, like King, she chronicles as part of a travel narrative.

Rorke pays particular attention to her initial trek from Kimberley to Bulawayo. As a result she includes her and Bassy's interludes on the Dutch farms on their way to Pretoria and regales her audience with descriptions of the queer Dutch habits as well as their stay at Paul Kruger's house. Her consistent opinion is that the Boers are charitable but simple. She focuses on their friendliness and eccentric traditions and in one of her anecdotes she relates that she slept in the main bedroom that the farmer and his wife vacated for her use and noticed the coffins above the bed (59-62). The Boers prepared for the death of the oldest in the family who were mostly buried in family graveyards on farms. Their honest and religious solemnity makes her feel guilty when she remembers the champagne parties she and Bassie attended in Johannesburg. She includes ethnographic details, the culture and customs of the other such as the above-mentioned custom as well traditions such as the *opsitkers*. This was the tradition of wooing amongst the young Afrikaners. The girl would select a candle for the evening's visit from her suitor: the longer the candle, the better she liked the suitor because he could stay for longer, until the candle burnt out (61-62). Like King, Rorke also includes her version of the Boers' love of the "Nacth Mal" (65) or communion. She pities the young Boers who marry at Nacht Mal because "Boers didn't recognize divorce" (65) and life on a farm seems colourless to Rorke. The protagonist's distaste of the institution of marriage resurfaces when she relates the Boers' opinions regarding marriage. Rorke did in fact obtain a divorce following the desertion of her husband and her pity for women who do not believe in divorce reflects her vexation about marriage. Although the narrator makes no mention of her religious denomination or affiliation, she painstakingly relates the practice of it, especially by the Boers and Paul Kruger (63-65), but casts it as constricting. Her elevated opinion of the Boers is

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interesting though, since she nursed the British in the Anglo-Boer War and won renown for her bravery. I examine her role in the Anglo-Boer War in the next section.

"The Florence Nightingale of the Boer War" and the Actress on Broadway

In the final section of this chapter, I explore Rorke's depiction of herself as "The Florence Nightingale of the Boer War" (196), a figure intersecting "militancy" (Poovey 198) and "domesticity" (Poovey 198), anchored by both 'nature' and 'culture' (Driver 454-472). Mary Poovey explains that the British public idealised Nightingale as a "saving angel" (167), and "humble nurse" (167), the domestic "self-denying caretaker" (168) but paradoxically also cast her in militant terms as a "politician or a soldier" (168). Poovey argues that the intersection of the two images implies that "the military narrative was always at least compatible with – if not implicit in – the domestic narrative" (169). As discussed in the second analytical section above, Rorke aligns herself with both nature and culture and by claiming a likeness to the idealised figure of Florence Nightingale, she skilfully merges the two spheres.

In the introductory chapter Rorke frames herself as a 'war' hero and states that "bullets from the warfield could not keep [her] away" (7) from wounded soldiers in need of medical attention. Women, in the historical practice of autobiography, did not usually boast about their achievements and would rather focus on the efforts of their husbands, but Rorke does not subscribe to this convention and artfully weaves her accomplishments into the narrative, albeit with veiled hubris or false modesty. She is presented with the Order of the Royal Red Cross for her efforts in tending the English soldiers during the course of the Anglo-Boer War (26 June 1910). Working women in the 19th century were discriminated against since holding a profession denoted a lower class, but the profession of a nurse could be viewed as more acceptable since it entailed a manner of nurturing associated with the feminine (Poovey 166). Rorke struggles to relate her work and experiences as a nurse, probably resulting from a fear of public scrutiny, and narrates her work with diffidence. She draws the reader's attention to her various accomplishments in the field of nursing with an attempt to appear reticent. For example, Colonel Baden-Powell requests Rorke to accompany the wounded soldiers back to England and she states: "It was such an unheard-of-thing for a woman to do – to the best of my knowledge even now, I am the only woman who has ever been entrusted with such a

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mission – that I could only blink at him" (192). Again she frames herself as hero, in this case entrusted with a "mission" (192) like a man, not failing to mention that she is the only woman to date honoured in this manner. Furthermore, she neglects to mention the work Emily Hobhouse did for the Boer women and children in the concentration camps. She also tries to keep her tone nonchalant when she discusses her award: "I was on my way to England to receive a decoration for *something or other* – maybe wet feet and a sense of humour" (my emphasis 194). She specifically mentions the award by name earlier in the narrative but here, in order to mask her pride and triumph she refers to it in the offhanded fashion mentioned above. In this narrative portrayal, she is the self-denying domestic nurse. The narrator adroitly frames the autobiography with her as hero and thus, having imparted this image earlier, towards the closing of her narration she shies away into false modesty, epitomising the fractious image of Florence Nightingale and women's uncomfortable oscillation between 'nature' and 'culture'.

The Red-Cross flag that survived the siege of Mafeking is presented to Rorke as a gift for her efforts in tending the soldiers during this skirmish. This flag she presents to Queen Alexandra as a patriotic gesture. Although Rorke's deeds during the war are indeed noteworthy, she feels the need to embellish even simple facts, as will be discussed in due course. She is presented with a testimonial of her achievements by the Rhodesian Regiment she nursed and says:

> I was almost too overcome to reply, but as I held up the testimonial I saw that the space where the officers of the Rhodesia Regiment should have signed was blank – there was not a man of the original regiment left alive! That blank space was more eloquent to me than anything else on the testimonial, beautiful as it was, and the flood of memories it brought forth helped me to forget my shyness at all this honour. I couldn't talk about myself, but I could talk about the men who had sacrificed their lives, their eyes, their limbs; and my little speech was received first with silence – which is the great tribute – and then with roars of approval and applause. Only, I don't remember a single word I said. (198)

According to Daymond, the reason these "beautiful" men who "sacrificed" their lives in such a valiant manner did not sign the testimonial was not because they were all dead, but there was no one left in the camp to sign it (1-13). The veracity of Rorke's presumed "shyness" (198) is in question: the narrator tries to portray the protagonist as modest but hubris intervenes (the author's) for "all this honour". Her "little speech" which she apparently cannot

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"remember", although before this instance she indicates no lapses in her memory, is met with "roars of approval". She manipulates gruesome events in order to endorse her own position as hero and, to some extent, the only 'surviving' hero of her narrative. Barret Mandel states:

> Writing an autobiography ratifies the form one has given to one's life. The ongoing activity of writing discloses the being's ratification of the ego's illusion of the past, thereby solidifying it. The acceptance of the illusion of the past, occurring in the present where meaning is possible, is what makes an autobiography capable of telling the truth. (64)

The 'truth' of Rorke's narration is poignant: she struggles to create a Self, both 'militant' and 'domestic', within the patriarchal discourses of her colonial society. She "ratifies the form" (Mandel 64) she has given to her 'imagined' life as hero in the autobiography and her version of the truth is herself as hero. Chafing against gender restrictions, she employs aesthetic strategies to subliminally cast herself as hero without stating the term.

The closing of Rorke's life story is the relation of her triumphant return from England, to Bulawayo, after presenting the flag of the Royal Cross to Queen Alexandra. At this point in the narrative she realises that she is finally ready to accept Saddler's proposal of marriage. Rorke is only able, after her triumphant deeds, to conclude the saga with Saddler's death since Saddler has served his purpose as companion. She justifies her position: "I really had loved him from the first. It was my own blindness, my stubborn independence, that had kept me from accepting the fact. But we would make up for all the lost time. We'd be married quietly in the city I felt was mine, and would settle down like any other married couple to a long and happy life" (195). This conclusion to Rorke's narration subscribes to the conventional woman's autobiography whose tale can only end with marriage or death; Rorke chooses death for Saddler. The autobiography concludes with her mother's words after she is informed of Saddler's death: "Melina, child, don't look like that. You are still so young – so much of your life is ahead of you...." (199). Rorke chooses an open-ended conclusion to her narration. The events of the autobiography cease years before the autobiography was first published and thus the ending engenders a notion of possibility. She sagaciously chooses to end the narration with her biggest achievement. Daymond's supposition is that Rorke simply discards Billy Saddler's character in a manner that would be acceptable and would maintain her moral integrity (8). Yet again, she blames her "stubborn [female] independence" (195) and "blindness" (195) for the fact that she did not realise her feelings, "from the first" (195), for

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Saddler. Her so-called "feminine perversity" (155) is aimed at herself and not her male companion. Saddler's death coincides with her victory: she is finally able to "settle down" (195), rein in her wanderlust and accept her role as woman after proving her mettle on the battlefield. The ambivalent image of Nightingale as both militant (culture) and domestic (nature) congeals in the Rorke's narrative discourse. Since she really became an actress later in her life, it is another narrative ploy to end her narration with a death. She is deliberately (and figuratively) killing off another man to endorse her position as independent woman. Opting for a life on stage, in the public space, rather than the role of married woman, confined to the domestic space, she dramatically declares: "[the] city I felt was mine" (195). As actress she can look down on the audience (readers) she captivates in the same vein as the conquering surveyor observes his colonised space at the onset of the narrative.

Rorke's sensationalist and dramatic construction of Self differs from King's. Both authors struggle to present an adventurous but moral Subject, signalling their awareness of public scrutiny. With skill for the drama and invention, Rorke presents herself as romantic hero, coloniser, nurse, the feminine ideal of a superior race, and a plucky brave young woman who overcomes various dangers and setbacks. Her negotiation of the autobiographical 'I', in accordance with King, is markedly realised through relational depictions of others in the text. Their portrayal of the Other both exhibit their internalised colonial opinion of British superiority and the inferiority of other South African ethnicities. In the following chapter I discuss the life writing of Afrikaans-speaking decolonial subject Petronella van Heerden, to examine the ways in which she traverses the 'bar' of the 'I' and the writing techniques she incorporates with which to critique gender and racial discrimination in South Africa. In addition, I conduct a queer reading of her life writing in order to investigate the difficult intersection between the body, gender and sexuality indicative in her writing.

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Chapter Four

Petronella van Heerden's Quest for Self-Definition: Negotiating Identity in a De/Colonial and Ideologically-Charged Afrikaner Discourse.

Figure 4: Young Petronella

Figure 5: Photo of Van Heerden as doctor in Harrismith (around 1920)

In this chapter I turn to yet another life writing construction of identity: the memoirs of Afrikaans-speaking de/colonial subject Petronella van Heerden's *Kerssnuitsels* (1962) and *Die 16e Koppie* (1965). These memoirs serve as further examples of women's struggles for equality "in a divided colonial culture" (Showalter "Introduction" ix) and in subsequent periods following South African decolonisation. I continue my feminist and postcolonial reading of these texts, but as I will illustrate, the very nature of Van Heerden's self-representation calls for a queer reading and an examination of what Judith Butler describes as the ethical difficulties or "failure" of "giving an account of oneself" (*Giving an Account of Oneself* 2-40). For Butler, the "perspective *as mine*" of "[t]he narrative authority of 'I' must

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give way to the perspective and temporality of a set of norms that contest the singularity of my story" (emphasis in original 36-37). The account of self, according to Butler then, is always eschewed by "the uniqueness of the other" (34) and therefore no account of self is possible without an audience or a "you" (11).[55] In my analysis I elaborate in greater detail on Van Heerden's portrayal of the other. Structurally, this chapter is divided into three main analytical sections: the subject's depiction of the development and realisation of her feminist consciousness; the "opacity" (Butler *Giving an Account* 40) of her narration of the Self that guides my queer reading; and the ways in which her narration reveals her humanist socialist (at times paradoxical) call for equal rights to all: women, races and ethnic groups. I argue that Van Heerden's quest for self-definition (in the post-Great South African War context of a 'scarred' nation inventing itself) is hampered by the dominant ideologies of the political and cultural arena at the time of her publications, especially since "Afrikaner nationalism [became] synonymous with white male interest, white male aspirations and white male politics" (McClintock 369). During this time (especially after 1961 onwards), Prime Minister Hendrik French Verwoerd and his cabinet's apartheid policies coalesced with conservative cultural and religious decolonial formulations of the Nation.[56] As political scientist W.A. de Klerk claims, "[t]he key to the Afrikaners is Calvinism" (xiv) and the strict doctrines enforced by the state and church can be said to have inhibited Van Heerden's self-defining quest in her autobiographies since she might have been ostracised (or imprisoned), in my opinion, if she imparted her more radical political opinions or openly discussed her sexuality as "mannish lesbianism" (Newton 558). However, she traverses these ideologies in her narratives by relating some events regarding First Wave Feminism as experienced during her youth and her publications also coincided with the rise of Second Wave Feminism in South Africa (Du Pisani 224-25).

Anna Petronella Van Heerden was born in Bethlehem, the then Orange Free State, on the 16th of April 1887 and died in 1975.[57] Van Heerden can be considered as part of a group of renegade women described by Newton as the quintessential second generation New Women (born between 1870 and 1880) because she too "drank, [...] smoked, [and] rejected traditional

[55] In the genre of autobiography this 'you' would be the reading public; the 'I' accounts for the 'self'.
[56] See Chapter One, third section.
[57] Date established by Van Heerden's confirmation certificate as a member of the Dutch Reformed Church (17 April 1908).

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feminine clothing, and lived as [an expatriate]" (564). She was the first Afrikaans-speaking woman who qualified as a medical doctor and the first to write a medical dissertation in Afrikaans (she later specialised in Gynaecology). The Van Heerden family was part of the *embourgeoid* educated Afrikaner middle-class.[58] Her parents were Francois Willem van Heerden and Josephine Ryneva Beck Horak. She had an older brother by three years, Alexander Charles (Alec) and a younger brother by nine years, Frankie; she was the only daughter. What one can garner from Van Heerden's life writing is that her mother, a housewife, was an archetype of female domesticity, ascribing to conventional gender roles assigned to women during the Victorian Age and early twentieth century; essentially, a *volksmoeder*.[59] A well-read and educated man, her father served as magistrate in various rural towns.[60] As a member of the Free State government, Francois van Heerden lobbied on the side of the Boer Republics, and the family had to flee or move from town to town during the Great South African War to escape British persecution and to avoid detection. Apart from her two autobiographies, *Kerssnuitsels* (1962) and *Die 16e Koppie* (1965), Van Heerden published two articles under the title "Waarom ek 'n Sosialis is" (1938), a book, *Fascisme – Italië! Duitsland! Suid-Afrika?* (1938) and compiled the *Geslagsregister van die Familie Van Heerden, 1701-1968* (1969).[61] The titles of the autobiographies at first mislead the reader since one would expect the contents to deal with domestic concerns, such as making candles or entertaining guests with a *koppie boeretroos* (a cup of homebrewed coffee or *boer* comfort). In effect Van Heerden 'titles' and presents her life writing as gender specific (feminine and domestic), subscribing to predominating conventions; the deceptive titles (considering the content) arguably signal her awareness of her audience and society. *Kerssnuitsels* (1962), published as a youth memoir ("jeugherinneringe", see anonymous

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[58] See the historical overview in Chapter One.

[59] Elsie Cloete asserts that Afrikaner women's morality and ascribed position "echoes a particularly Victorian sentiment" (38) in the early twentieth century.

[60] As Afrikaans literary critic Louise Viljoen notes in her article "Nationalism, Gender and Sexuality in the Autobiographical Writing of Two Afrikaner Women", Van Heerden adored her father and she regarded him as "the pivot of her young life" (189) while her relationship with the mother was seemingly strained. For the purposes of this chapter and my analysis, I primarily discuss her relationship with her mother in terms of the gendered discourse her mother epitomises and tries to enforce on the protagonist as depicted in the texts. Although an analysis of her relationship with the father would greatly contribute to a reading of her work, the limitations of this thesis do not allow space for investigation, but I aim to include such an examination in future research.

[61] *Candle Snuffings* (Annemarié Van Niekerk's translation) as a title, Viljoen argues, seems to indicate that the text is being treated dismissively by the author and is to some extent "disposable" (188). A translation of the other titles in order as mentioned above: *The 16th Cup,* "Why I am a Socialist", *Fascism – Italy! Germany! South Africa?* and *The Family Register of the Family van Heerden* (*1701-1968*).

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introduction), deals primarily with her reflections on her childhood, aptly subtitled: Part 1: "Young Child", Part 2 "War" and Part 3 "Afterwards". In *Die 16e Koppie* (1965) she reminisces about her experiences as a young medical student in the Netherlands as well as her life as the first Afrikaans-speaking female doctor in South Africa. Although both texts reflect on her life before 1948 (the year the National Party came to power), the autobiographies were written when she was in her 70s and published when she was respectively 75 and 78 years of age.[62] These facts bring interesting dimensions to a reading, given the complexities of narrative representations on issues such as memory, truth and reliable narration in a life writing analysis (Viljoen 188). Although the focus is on childhood experiences in *Kerssnuitsels*, Van Heerden succeeds to convey her gradual awakening to the discriminating binaries imposed on women of her cultural and historical context in late nineteenth century and early twentieth-century South Africa. At the heart of this awakening lies the issue of equal rights for education. It is debateable to what extent the older narrator's life experiences and retrospective gaze shape this gender-focused theme of her narratives, yet the unadorned (at times naïve) style succeeds in conveying a level of authenticity. Although I examine both texts in subsequent subsections, my analysis primarily focuses on *Kerssnuitsels* in the first to highlight Van Heerden's resistance against gender norms. I then turn my focus to *Die 16e Koppie* to conduct a queer reading since this is her only autobiography in which I, in agreement with Viljoen (192), can glimpse evidence—events or vague references—of her sexual orientation.

Briefly, in *Kerssnuitsels* Van Heerden recalls that her parents did not consider it important for a girl to complete a high school diploma. Her brother, Alec, on the other hand, who incidentally did not wish to study, was encouraged to do so. This incident indicates the gender ideologies underpinning Afrikaner society at the time – women did not need education. Their 'natural' role, or assigned "labour of reproduction" (Paxton 392), was to serve as wives and mothers (Poovey, *Uneven Developments* 1). As part of the patriarchal Afrikaner nationalist society they functioned on a symbolic level as motivation of (and justification for) the ideologies propelling this masculine discourse (Cloete 42-46). The narrator manages to

[62] Some of the letters written to Van Heerden are dated post-1948, yet I refer to these to shed light on some of the chapter's concerns. *Die 16e Koppie* concludes with her retirement from medicine to farm before 1948. I also use autobiography and memoir interchangeably (like Annemarié Van Niekerk) in this chapter since these texts can be regarded as either or both.

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convey the young protagonist's determination since towards the end of the memoir, Van Heerden clarifies that despite familial and social opposition and expectation of failure, she completed matric through a correspondence course. Furthermore, she explains how she decided to become a doctor and therefore would have to attend University (147), a decision her parents rejected which, in turn, propelled Van Heerden into a rebellious strike: refusing food or conversation. After six months of strike, her parents "gave up the fight" (147)[63] and allowed her to attend Victoria College (now Stellenbosch University, 148). Two years later she insisted on going abroad to study medicine in Amsterdam. Funding, however, proved a monstrous hurdle and again she met with gender discrimination; whereas men could apply and receive bursaries without repayment clauses, she would have to repay the bursary she received (at 6% interest) following the completion of her studies (152). However, Van Heerden was not deterred by the discouraging bursary policies and embarked on board a ship, first to England and then the Netherlands. As a final act of defiance against an oppressive and constricting society, she threw all her letters of introduction (given by acquaintances to reach contacts in Europe) overboard, convinced that she would manage without the assistance of friends at home or strangers abroad. She concludes the narrative, stating: "I'm moving into a new life and its *mine*" (my emphasis 156). Her action can be viewed as representative of Van Heerden's headstrong character or, as Viljoen argues, an act in which she claims "agency for herself" (190). In this memoir the narrative culminates in this final sentence and assertion, concluding Van Heerden's *bildung* of her childhood and adolescence and how she was shaped into an unconventional young woman.

Van Heerden continues her memoir chronologically in *Die 16e Koppie,* beginning where *Kerssnuitsels* ends. She recalls her life as a student in Amsterdam and the influential people and experiences that further shaped her in a European context. About one third into her narrative, she returns to South Africa, establishes a successful medical practice in Harrismith in the Orange Free State, but consequently decides to return to the Netherlands to specialise in Gynaecology while she would have to complete her practical in London. Her interest in the development of the Afrikaans language is discussed in her memoirs and by writing the first Afrikaans medical dissertation, she contributes to the lexicon and academic jargon of

[63] Quotations from the texts are paraphrased in my own translation (unless indicated otherwise). I also paraphrase quotations from N.P. van Wyk Louw, Etienne van Heerden, Alba Bouwer, Audrey Blignaut, Karel Bremer, D.F. Malan and W.E.G. Louw.

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Afrikaans. In the final section of the text, she returns to South Africa and here she explains how she became politically active in the South African women's suffrage movement (126) as well as in the South African Medical Corps during the Second World War.[64] Back in South Africa in 1923-24 she set up a practice in Cape Town. It is here where she became involved in National Party politics, but she soon came to realise that she disagreed with the party's discriminating and parochial mandate. In her fifties she retired and bought a farm in the Free State where she was still farming at the time of publication (and until her death). By taking up farming, Van Heerden proved yet again that a woman could succeed in what was considered a man's profession. In the post-Great South African War context of South Africa, as accounted in the memoirs, Van Heerden claims three masculine terrains to assert herself: medicine, farming and politics (and to a lesser degree archaeology, 134-138) As is the case in King's and Rorke's work, the presentation of Self in this autobiography is yet again that of a successful pioneer. After the establishment of autonomy in the first autobiography, Van Heerden furthermore presents her Subject as a politically active woman in a traditionally masculine profession: undeterred by gender constrictions, unwilling to be conditioned, and counter-conventional.

Feminist Criticism: Reading Van Heerden's Self-Representative 'Opacity'[65]

To develop my analysis of the narratives and to contribute to the methodological approach that underpins my argument, I include a discussion of private and public life writing related to Van Heerden's life (letters from correspondents and her political publications). As I explained in the chapters on Rorke and King, Van Heerden's work too has received little academic attention and those criticisms that do engage insightfully with her work are predominantly by female scholars such as Annemarié van Niekerk and Louise Viljoen.[66] Award-winning author and acclaimed academic Etienne van Heerden (who is related to Petronella) spoke about her

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[64] Since Afrikaans spelling and grammar were not yet "standardised" (118) she consulted with the Afrikaans literary students in Amsterdam regarding the spelling she used in her dissertation but did not "let herself be convinced" (118) if she disagreed. She also joined the South African Military because she would be part of the Medical Corps on par with the male doctors but was subsequently affiliated with the Women's Auxiliary Army Service along with the nurses. After furious protest and letters of complaint she resigned from Military Service (156-157).

[65] I borrow 'Feminist Criticism' from Elaine Showalter's "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" and the term 'opacity' from Butler's *Giving an Account of Oneself*.

[66] There are other sources available on Van Heerden, but not relevant to my discussion.

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"Geloofsbriewe" in his *Bedankingswoord* (2009) when he received the University of Johannesburg prize for Literature; it seems that his character Tante Geert in the novel *Kikoejoe* (1998) draws on characteristics of the real Petronella van Heerden.[67] Her work also receives a cursory mention in overviews or anthologies of South African literary figures (such as by J.C. Kannemeyer). I aim to contribute to the limited archive of research on Van Heerden's work, to highlight women's involvement in South African (de/colonial) politics and to explore her manipulation of the autobiography genre to impart what she considered as important to the Afrikaner youth. My reading further illustrates how she had to employ certain writing strategies, which at times accounts for the 'opacity' in the life writing, to negotiate her identity and perceptions within hegemonic and patriarchal Afrikaner discourse. Viljoen, in "Nationalism, Gender and Sexuality in the Autobiographical Writing of Two Afrikaner Women" (2008), proposes that Van Heerden's inability to discuss her lesbianism is directly linked to Afrikaner nationalism's inability to name or acknowledge the existence of lesbianism. I will draw on certain arguments of Van Niekerk's research in "A Woman Who Made Her Mark in History but Remained Marginalised in the Documents of History: Petronella van Heerden" (1998), such as her investigation of Van Heerden's disappearance from the Afrikaans literary consciousness as well as the importance of reintroducing marginal texts (in this case Van Heerden's life writing), to form a coherent framework of South Africa's socio-historical past and the position of its women. It is interesting to note that although Van Heerden's contribution to literature is remarkable - she was a pioneer for women's rights and vociferous about inequality - she has mostly disappeared from South African literary awareness. As Van Niekerk notes, J.C. Kannemeyer merely mentions her literary contribution in passing in *Die Afrikaanse Literatuur 1652-1987* (263). Kannemeyer's influential compilation of Afrikaans literature is highly regarded by Afrikaans critics, yet his exclusion of Van Heerden's memoirs indicates a patriarchal agenda or marginalisation of women's literary work. Van Heerden's contribution was overlooked by literary scholars in the years immediately following publication, although the autobiographies received positive reviews and praise from peers and friends (evidenced in letters of congratulations held in the University of Stellenbosch archive). Van Niekerk explains the importance of unearthing women's writings in her examination of Sheila R Johansson's research: "as a minority group,

[67] The scope of this thesis does not allow for a comparative analysis of fiction and life writing; such an approach might be explored in future.

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women cannot afford to lack a consciousness of a collective identity or a shared awareness of the past, because without this, a social group suffers from a kind of collective amnesia which makes it vulnerable to the impositions of dubious stereotypes, as well as limiting prejudices" (349). Van Niekerk's arguments further underscore my inclusion of Van Heerden as subject in this thesis with the aim of not only recalling her as literary figure, but also of debunking persisting myths and stereotypes of white Afrikaner women (1854-1948) as uneducated, narrow-minded, racist, and tractable (veiled in *volksmoeder* mythology). Examples of representations of stereotypical Afrikaner women can be found in fiction, for example, Pauline Smith's depiction of the female characters Mintje and Toontjie in *The Little Karoo* (1925) or L.H. Brinkman's Tant Let in *The Breath of the Karroo* (1916).

Whilst discussing the opacity (that which remains opaque) in Van Heerden's life writing in relation to her representation of sexuality and the writing strategies she seemingly has to employ to convey her perception of gender and racial inequality in South Africa, I rely on Butler's theorisation of the inability of an 'I' to give a full account of Self as formulated in her *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005). Smith and Watson's assertion in *De/Colonising the Subject* (1992) further informs my reading. They argue that to focus on merely one aspect of an autobiographer's identity would in effect invalidate the complexity and heterogeneity of the Subject (xiv) in the text. Therefore, I examine various sites of Identity formation by 'reading' the narrator's construction and presentation of Self.

As my analysis will illustrate, Van Heerden's life writing validates a queer reading. Although she does not mention her sexual orientation explicitly in her memoirs, the so-called "unspeakable" (Watson 141), her lesbianism, is suggested both in her autobiographies, through her textual slippages, and in private correspondence with friends such as Alba Bouwer and Audrey Blignaut. Viljoen also mentions her orientation in her critical investigation (191). But before I extrapolate on the theoretical premise for this chapter, I draw attention to a few legalities pertaining to same-sex relationships in a South African context relevant to the period in which Van Heerden lived and wrote. In 1968 the Law Reform Movement protested a proposed amendment to the Immorality Act (the Law that prohibited intercourse between Europeans and non-Europeans) that would forbid homosexuality and would result in imprisonment for up to three years if convicted of lascivious behaviour

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(Croucher 317). This law was nonetheless passed in 1969, under clause 20A, but specifically stated that it was illegal for "*men* at a party" to "stimulate sexual passion" (my emphasis Trembley et al. 155). Homosexuality in this instance refers to man-on-man intercourse and neglects to mention women; again exemplary of Afrikaner nationalism's failure to legally acknowledge lesbianism and female sexual desire. This exclusion from "the matrix of power relations" (*Gender Trouble* 29) recalls Butler's discussion of Michel Foucault's work on sexuality and the law. She notes:

> For Foucault, the substantive grammar of sex imposes an artificial binary relation between the sexes, as well as an artificial internal coherence within each term of that binary. The binary regulation of sexuality suppresses the subversive multiplicity of a sexuality that disrupts heterosexual, reproductive and medicojuridical hegemonies. (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 19)

Furthermore, also in 1969, the South African Medical Services established a psychiatric unit dedicated to correctional therapy (shock therapy) for homosexuals (now referring to men *and* women). Thus, in the South African medico-military system homosexuality was considered a 'disease' (Cock 40). A medico-(military)-juridical consideration is important to my analysis since both Foucault and Butler draw on these regulatory systems to develop their theories. Apart from these given facts and a comment by Emily Hobhouse that same-sex relationships between women in the early 1900s "appeared [...] very strange & somewhat unusual in S. African life" (cited in Viljoen 192-193), I have been unable to locate critical discussions on South African lesbianism in the period preceding 1969.[68] I will elaborate on social views in my queer reading in the second section of this chapter. The South African juridical system's 'neglect' of subjects such as Van Heerden, which excluded lesbians as unidentified persons "'before' […] 'outside' […] or 'after'" (Butler *Gender Trouble* 28) the law or labelled this orientation as 'diseased' by the (military) medical (*her*) sphere, begs the question: How did she negotiate her sexual identity if she would have been regarded as 'illegal' and 'diseased'

[68] Henriette Gunkel in *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa* (2010) and Sarah Nuttall in *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid* (2009) both discuss lesbianism and the intersection between culture, politics and sexuality in South Africa. Their discussions mostly focus on lesbian identity in a post-apartheid context, however. A large body of work exists on lesbianism in South Africa, but yet again, the period reflected upon is post-apartheid. Same-sex marriages were legalised in South Africa in 1996 and "prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation" (Croucher 315). I consider this lack of academic discussion regarding lesbianism before and during apartheid as part of the complexity of 'naming' (I say this with caution since what is 'named' is usually named by male dominated power systems (Butler *Gender Trouble* 28-29) or acknowledging female sexuality and desire in South African society.

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by ‘regulatory power systems’, one of which is the discipline/field in which she practised a career?

A brief definition of key terminology used in this thesis is required. I have compiled the definition from Butler, who in turn was influenced by Foucault’s theoretical work: sex refers to the biological sex of a person - and the power (disempowered) dynamics implicit in being a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’; gender refers to the supposed perceptions, codes of conduct, morality and expectation a specific society has regarding biological sex and the acceptable or unacceptable ways in which individuals ‘perform’ their gender. Sexual desire (sexuality) or sexual preference refers to individuals’ proclivities concerning objects of their desire – same-sex attraction, bisexual tendencies or heterosexual preferences: what or who a person is physically attracted to. In “Foucault and Queer Theory” (2007), Tamsyn Spargo traces the genealogy of queer theory. She examines Foucault’s repressive hypothesis and the chronological subsequent derivatives of his repressive hypothesis which culminated in the coined term ‘queer theory’; following the discursive expansion of this theory into various fields – as evident in its application in fields of law and so-called hard sciences – explaining that this is the nature of theory that challenges stark binaries. The repressive hypothesis, in simple terms, refers to the paradox implicit in a society where sexuality is repressed, kept ‘silent’. The secrecy surrouding sexuality is simultanesouly clamoured by investigations and obsessions by researches, educaters and medical professionals to investigate and diagnose aspects of sexuality. Although sexuality in such a society is strictly hushed in conversation, the repression thereof gives rise to discouses surrounding sexuality and becomes garrulous. Spargo also mentions subsidiary theories created by the misconstrued understanding of the theory of performativity by Butler – where theorists tacitly read gender as a ‘performance’ by choice and not a performance subtly enforced by societal repetition and reiteration of perceived ideas regarding mannerisms attributed to a specific gender. For the purposes of this chapter, queer theory refers, as it is also regarded in its principle form, to the study of “a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire” (Spargo 9) and the Foucauldian premise of the power relations that call these discourses into being and then permeate and solidify the power implicit in these “relations” (Spargo 9) in society. According to Foucault, no autonomous subject exists outside of discourse since the power of the discourse is internalised and does not function from outside

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(Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 56). In the case of Van Heerden, since lesbianism in South Africa did not exist on the level of discourse, she had no discourse to internalise. I argue therefore that two options were available to her: victimhood or mimicking a masculine identity, thereby reinforcing the heterosexual matrix (I discuss this term further on). By mimicking masculinity, she also internalises and then acts (or enforces) masculine discourse, as I illustrate briefly in the first subsection below and extensively in the second.

In *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) Judith/Jack Halberstam examines the spaces of women's action/passivity in a chapter titled "Shadow Feminism: Queer Negativity and Radical Passivity" (123-146), and postulates, in reference to Gayatri Spivak's article "Can the Subaltern Speak?", that feminist academics have cast themselves in the light of the 'saviour' for subaltern subjects and presume to speak for them. Halberstam proposes "that feminists refuse the choices as offered—freedom in liberal terms or death—in order to think about a shadow archive of resistance, one that does not speak in the language of action and momentum but instead articulates itself in terms of evacuation, refusal, passivity, unbecoming, unbeing" (129). Van Heerden is not a subaltern subject; where her opaque silences are examined, I propose that she is not unable to speak for herself; but that the presumed national and specifically cultural "matrix of power relations" (Butler *Gender Trouble* 29) forms the basis for her silences. Her silence will be examined as a space for mutinous and affirmative "evacuation, refusal, passivity, unbecoming and unbeing" (129). I will not presume to 'speak' for her, but will rather locate her refusal to speak in the space of resistance against a hegemonic discourse.

I furthermore rely on Butler's work on gender performance and performativity as outlined in the the introductory chapter. I use her term "heterosexual matrix" (Butler *Gender Trouble* 35) as referring, in my own simplistic formulation, to the visual 'reading' of sex, assuming a gender; where a viewer assumes sexuality by gazing at an individual. For example, if an individual looks like a man and 'appears' to be masculine, he must therefore be heterosexual; but if he 'looks' (or acts) like a 'dandy' or more 'feminine', the viewer assumes that he is homosexual. The heterosexual matrix is enforced by its reliance of heterosexuality as normative and natural, and mostly constructed by the male heterosexual gaze that attaches meaning to what is viewed through the discourses (with its implicit power) that support their

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dominant subject positioning. Butler, discussing the work of Lacan, for example indicates that lesbians in this matrix have a "desexualized status" (49) not as a result of their "refusal of sexuality *per se* only because sexuality is presumed to be heterosexual, and the observer, here constructed as the heterosexual male, is clearly being refused" (emphasis in original 49). This matrix, in effect, also establishes and relies on the role of man and woman as indicated by biological sex. For example, if a woman does not 'act' her femininity but 'acts' masculinity, she is attributed with a desexualised status, but people will not treat her as 'man'. If a man acts like a 'man', others treat him as a 'man', usually in accordance with the privileges afforded 'man' in his society. In the following section I examine Van Heerden's discussion of her awakening to gender discrimination in her society. I argue that her narration of these memories is a textual legacy she leaves behind for the Afrikaner youth.

"NAUGHTY girl" and "Mr Right"

Kerssnuitsels follows the structure of a chronological autobiography. As mentioned, it is narrated in three parts, "Young Child" (15), "War" (75) and "Afterwards" (129), resembling the form of a *bildungsroman*, tracing the systematic growth and awareness of the protagonist's consciousness. This section of the chapter primarily investigates the protagonist's disillusionment regarding gender inequality in South Africa but includes various other sites of identity formation, so as not to "[erase] her heterogeneity as well as [her] agency" (Smith and Watson *De/Colonising the Subject* xiv) by merely highlighting gender oppression and ignoring other sites of her identity. My reading here is informed by what I will call the author's intent with this autobiography, which is primarily to comment on gender discrimination in late nineteenth/early twentieth-century South Africa. In the foreword the narrator states that she "goes back to a history that started almost three quarters of a century ago" (5). The retrospective nature of the narration, the unadorned use of language, the tone, voice and stylistic features of her sentences come across as stilted.[69] Van Heerden validates the stylistic features and her use of language by explaining in the foreword that she was born and raised before Afrikaans became an official language with a unique set of grammatical, spelling and syntactical rules. She maps the systematic and semantic changes of Afrikaans linguistics to conclude: "The responsibility for all the mistakes I make according to the new

[69] Mindful that she was a scientist, I view her narrative style as 'scientific' rather than aesthetic.

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rules and regulations, then rests on my shoulders" (7). In this way, Van Heerden pre-emptively addresses possible criticism from her readers and notes that as an author, she necessarily feels obliged to retain the spoken language, voice and oral tradition of her youth. By doing so, she aims to convey an authentic portrayal of events and her memories (5-6).[70] She situates herself through this assertion in her historical context and that moment (of her youth) in time (Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 238). Butler argues that "the 'I' has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation – or set of relations – to a set of norms" (*Giving an Account* 8). Van Heerden successfully positions the *bildung* of her autobiographical 'I' in the socio-cultural context of her youth, its formation in relation "to a set of norms".

Kerssnuitsels begins with Van Heerden contemplating her confusion as a young child about why certain immediate social and familial structures had such power to shape a child and consequently one's sense of self. She explains that by looking back at youth, the mind has to confront a gamut of adults and other children to understand how their influences congeal to shape one's "form" (9) where the "self is the only reality" (10). In this regard, she continues, "[i]t's regrettable that the grownups have so much authority" (10). With this reflection, the narrator foreshadows certain thematic concerns of the text, emphasised by an anecdote included in the introduction: if one climbs a tree the grownups will come and "say you are NAUGHTY" (9). The word 'naughty' resurfaces throughout the narrative; significantly so in relation to key moments which shaped the subject's sense of "I"dentity and her rebellious nature. For example, whilst visiting her mother's family in Durbanville, Van Heerden's Aunt Anne's parrot mimics from the corner: "You naughty girl" (29). This indicates the frequency with which the parrot (and female children) must have heard this phrase. This recollection heralds the subject's gradual awakening to manifestations of a 'naughty' girl as enforced by adults who upheld the status quo of discriminating gender norms but also to how she came to realise the ways in which she could manipulate this labelling as a form of empowerment against gender inequalities. The 'naughty girl' trope (anecdote) is but one of the narrative strategies Van Heerden employs to create a framework in which she voices personal concerns and skilfully critiques hegemonic ideologies. Writing retrospectively, the narrator deliberately

[70] Van Heerden's interest and involvement in the Afrikaans language should make an interesting research topic. Although I initially intended to explore this issue, thesis limitations curtailed such an investigation.

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utilises past events and situates these historically and critically to elucidate socio-political concerns; she not only analyses the ills of society but also her own life and sense of self. As Butler postulates, the 'I' necessarily becomes a "social theorist" (*Giving an Account* 8) in the act of giving an account since it requires reflection on "the conditions of its own emergence" (8). As the narrative unfolds, one finds more and more evidence that Van Heerden uses her life writings as a platform from which to address not only issues pertaining to gender discrimination, but also other socio-political quandaries of the time, such as the exclusionary policies of the National Party and ethnocentric tension in South Africa. I turn now to an analysis of Van Heerden's employment of childhood experiences as dais from which she critiques gender inequality in conjunction with other sites of identity formation.

As the reader infers, Van Heerden was an especially spirited, boisterous, enquiring and rambunctious youth. She was often labelled a "naughty and wild child" (67). The realisation that this derogatory label was due to her sex provoked her to wilfully disobey. She adamantly refused to do anything her brother was not also required to do – whether housework chores or specifically gender-based behavioural conduct. Van Heerden colourfully describes these discriminating occurrences as "all sorts of nauseating things" (67) she had to do but her brother Alec "escape[d] unscathed" (67). Her dislike of these practices is conveyed by her arresting imagery and comparative descriptions. For example, she remembers: "If he climbs on the roof, no rooster crows, but if I do it, heaven falls down. He can go and swim whenever he pleases, but I have to ask first and regularly my mother says no. He can say if he wants to learn the piano, but I *have to*" (emphasis in original 67). She also relates that she was indignant when she was not only required to darn her own socks but Alec's as well. In protest she walked around with gaping holes in her socks until someone else, to prevent familial disgrace, repaired the socks (67). Van Heerden makes it clear that her considered wilful obstinacy caused a rift between her and her family: "I was a pariah and completely alienated from my family" (67). Viljoen also notes that "[Van Heerden's] older brother is afforded certain privileges, because he is a boy and is therefore resented by his sister" (189). Her brother's 'privileged' position seemingly cements her disillusionment with her gendered position in the family and society.

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Another example of the protagonist's growing awareness of gender discrepancy is relayed in relation to events surrounding the Great South African War. Impoverished after this war, the Van Heerden family was forced to move back to the family farm, Brandkraal, in the Little Karoo. There Van Heerden was deployed to harvest corn along with the men and she recalls a particular incident. Cutting the corn with a sickle is hard physical labour. When the group returned to the *opstal* (farm house) one evening, the men ordered her to bring them coffee. She "walked out by the kitchen door and into the poplar bush" (96) and said to herself that "[t]hey could wait another week before [she] would bring them coffee. By all rights they should bring [*her*] coffee since [she] worked just as hard" (emphasis in original 96). Despite her age, the young girl, incredibly, was affronted by the subtext of their supposition that she had to bring them coffee because of her sex. Considering the men's gendered expectation, although she worked just as hard as 'any man' that day, made her livid. She did not bluntly refuse to do their bidding, since it would be considered even more inappropriate of her to question men's supposed authority and inherent right to be served. Although she does not appear to critically analyse this event or even consider it retrospectively after its inclusion, she concludes the recollection, noting: "I was very angry" (96). This experience incensed her and possibly made her question even further the patriarchal power structure of her society. As a young girl she did not actively object to society's gender discrimination (but rather opted for running away from the 'troubles'); her mutiny manifested in withdrawal and silence.[71] In narrating this event at a later stage in her life, it seems that Van Heerden is deliberately active in voicing her rebellion against gender discrimination (in the past and present historical contexts). The anecdote is an example of where her recalcitrant response against normative gender discrepancies presents in the form of silence.[72] Van Heerden, already alienated from her family by resisting her ascribed position, internalises her anger towards society (Driver 459). She suffers from acute anxiety (Driver 459) because in her view, "everything that [she does], is wrong" (67); even if she "did nothing" (67), she was still labelled "a wild child" (67). An alternative explanation for her silent rebellion is that she is a young girl who, for doing "nothing" wrong, is chastised and therefore open rebellion does not seem like an option. The socio-cultural historical period also provided no evident podium from where she

[71] Note that King, Rorke and Van Heerden all narrate their silent mutiny as young girls.

[72] This act – running away - recalls Sandra Gilbert & Susan Gubar's theories of narrative silences, indicative of a 'lack' (75), in women's writing, as discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis (also see Caroline Heilbrun).

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could voice her objections. Before and after the turn of the century, women as *volksmoeders* were expected to be silent nurturers. Yet, I read her memoirs as evidence of a deliberate act to break these culturally enforced silences. Her writings gradually reveal that Van Heerden blames her mother for the gender injustices she endured as a child. The mother emerges as a perpetuator of patriarchal gender spheres, as I illustrate below.

When Van Heerden was three, the family moved from Bethlehem to Philippolis (1890). I discuss three anecdotes set in this town to illustrate her growing irritation with "grownups [that] have so much authority" (10) and her induction into developments in the world of medicine. Van Heerden's vivid recollection of life in Philippolis provides ample material for speculation about her choice of profession and a development of my gender analysis. These seemingly trivial anecdotes shed light on the development and interests of the young protagonist. Petronella's first introduction to the wonders of medicine came in the form of Driesie Lubbe. Driesie suffered from diphtheria and was intubated by the local doctor. The sheer spectacle of this invention mightily impressed the children (31), who helped 'clean' the tube by sucking out the deposit. Around the same time her brother Alec broke his leg and had to walk around with metal stints. Van Heerden recounts that "some of [them] tried to break a leg by falling out of trees" (31) because they were envious of Alec's metallic rings. She does not explicitly state that these events prompted her adult pursuit of a medical career but I read these inclusions as indicative of an awakening interest in the field of medicine. According to Elizabeth van Heyningen, based on her investigation of English-speaking South African and Boer women's diaries written during the Anglo-Boer War, a shift occurred around this time in the Afrikaners' perception of the medical profession. Before the war women tended to the sick, especially their children (Van Heyningen "The Voices of Women in the South African War" 36), and came to resent the British doctors "bitterly" (36) for "hospitalising" (36) their children in the concentration camps. Women went as far as hiding their sick children during camp inspection to prevent this perceived violation of their motherly duties. Nevertheless, the modernisation of medicine with its emphasis on hygiene, such as the circulation of air, a change of clothes, more scientific treatment, and the 'germ theory' (Van Heyningen *Concentration Camps* 208-233), was introduced to the Boers who still practised medicine by "identifying the reason for the imbalance and […] restoring the proper balance" (Van

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Heyningen *Concentration Camps* 209) in the body with *boererate* (Boer remedies).[73] In the concentration camps, however, the British started training young *boeremeisies* (girls) as nurses. They were called "probationers" (Van Heyningen *Concentration Camps* 221) and thus opened the field of medicine as a profession for Afrikaner women. Van Heerden's anecdotes reveal two aspects of medicine in pre-war South Africa: mothers did in fact consult with doctors before the war and then some doctors already practised advanced and new methods of medical treatment.[74] This casual reference (no more than two short paragraphs) to these practices could signal the lasting impression professional medical practices had on Van Heerden's young mind, which might have influenced her decision later in her life to pursue the medical profession. Alternatively, it is possible that the animosity Boer[75] women harboured against the doctors in the concentration camps, the legendary status of their rebellion, as well as the skills learned by the 'probationers' formed part of the post-war conversation that might have influenced Van Heerden's choice of career.

Two additional anecdotes set in Philippolis illustrate Van Heerden's development as an obstinate character, or way-ward girl. Firstly, her childhood inflexibility is captured where she explains how she refused to ever sing again because her parents laughed at her off-tone performance. This refusal was maintained at school, where "[a]fter a few smacks Miss Emily" (32), her teacher at the time, threw in the towel and also accepted her muteness. As in the case of the corn harvesting incident, the female child again employs silence and adamant refusal as a means to an end because adults would not listen to her. In the second incident, Van Heerden tells about a class trip to the *veld* with Miss Emily. The children picked wild flowers and those who collected the most were praised (32), but Van Heerden was incensed by what she saw as a mindless crime to destroy nature. This is an interesting and unusual reaction for a young girl, since it seems counter-intuitive not to strive to impress authority figures and to take offence for the sake of preserving nature. The recollection prompts the reader to consider Van Heerden as individualistic. Her reminiscences and the narration frame the protagonist as sensitive, obstinate, bull-headed, inquisitive, enquiring, and exceptionally critical, especially

[73] For further information on this topic see Elizabeth van Heyningen's *The Concentration Camps of the Anglo-Boer War: A Social History* (2013).
[74] As Van Heyningen indicates, local doctors (if possible Dutch speaking) were recruited for medical service in these camps (226). What becomes evident from Van Heerden's narration here, as part of the *embourgeoid* middle-class, her parents also relied on doctors, instead of *boererate*, and there were in fact educated Dutch doctors before the war.
[75] I explain my use of Boer and Afrikaner in the introductory chapter of this thesis.

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of authority figures. A girl with such a disposition, living in the patriarchal South African context of the time, would have encountered numerous obstacles and rebukes, as the narration illustrates. As a child she might have felt powerless and silenced, but as an adult narrating these events, Van Heerden's authorial voice empowers her and exposes the injustices she faced in her youth. In narrating these events from a retrospective position, she can finally voice her critique of authority and the socio-historical power structures of past and present.

The author recalls two separate incidents (consecutively narrated) that yet again convinced her that "grown-ups" (45) were untrustworthy. She explains that she discovered at an early age that others not only endorse what she perceived as maltreatment; they actively participate in the ritual performance of convention. When she was seven, the Van Heerden family moved to Fauresmith from Philippolis (37).[76] In Fauresmith a teacher confiscated Van Heerden's pocket knife which she used to clean her nails. The teacher explained that it was inappropriate for a girl to use a knife; she should rather use a twig. "Thirty seconds" (44) after this incident, the children were lined up for inspection: if their nails were dirty, they would be punished. Van Heerden indeed was punished and she remembers: "The injustice shocked me" (44). It is understandable that a child would experience a sense of unfairness at such paradoxical behaviour. The second anecdote recalls how she was afraid of the dark, damp pantry at night. As a precaution, she always put a candle and matches ready before dusk to avoid entering the pantry in the dark to retrieve the items (44-45). One evening, her brother took her candle to pester her in the presence of their mother. Despite her protestation against this bullying, her mother's only response was one of indifference, telling her to fetch another candle from the pantry. This kind of apathy from her mother incensed Van Heerden, who viewed the injustice as a sign: "And ever since then I knew that grown-ups could not be reckoned on" (45). In both instances where authority figures were involved, Van Heerden did not complain about unfair treatment, again remaining silent about the injustice. Moreover, authority figures like her mother, who witnessed the 'injustices' (from Van Heerden's point of view), failed to protect her. We are told that her brother was treated like a 'man' and her mother would often take his side against her or simply avoid disciplining him for victimisation or harassment. This is also an example, according to Butler, of the reinforcement of the "heterosexual matrix" (Butler,

[76] There are no specific dates to mark events in Van Heerden's autobiography, which can be confusing, but since she relates that the Jameson Raid occurred shortly after this event, I estimate the date to be around 1895.

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Gender Trouble 47); the mother 'views' the boy as a man and adjusts her behaviour according to societal norms. In the author's retrospective gaze, this event signifies incidents where her mother 'failed' her and she harshly proclaims that "[she] never forgave her" (45). What emerges here is that the 'I' blames the mother, and not the father, for perceived gender injustices (a point I return to below). The anecdotes further reveal that Van Heerden's childhood experiences had an imperative influence on her adult propensities on the subject of gender since she was discriminated against for being a girl, and the adults (authority) endorsed and perpetuated the discrimination. Van Heerden's childhood realisations – an integral part of her *bildung* – that adults participated in the ritualistic performance of convention (supported and sanctioned hegemonic discourse and social inequalities) caused her to question, not only adults, but systems of authority and power. Systems of authority in a national context are discussed by Homi K. Bhabha, who describes these as the "Janus-faced discourse[s] of the nation" (3) which involves to a certain extent "the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in undivided form" (Renan 19), but the nation's 'strength' depends of the "undivided" perpetuation (and belief) of its heritage as well as the morality and traditions that underpin the imagined community (Anderson 6-7). In the "divided colonial culture" (Showalter "Introduction" ix) of South Africa before the Anglo-Boer War, while the emergence of a strong faction of supporters for equality and First Wave Feminism was in its beginning phases, Van Heerden's surprisingly feminist critique of authority figures and systems allows room for speculation about the sources that informed her attitude. Her anxiety and disillusionment are significantly conveyed through the anger expressed at her mother.

Kerssnuitsels further centres on the protagonist's determined quest for education. The narrator coalesces thematic treatment of gender discrimination against women during the late Victorian Age with their right to education. As a magistrate, Van Heerden's father accepted commissions to work in several different towns. When they moved from Fauresmith to Jacobsdal, Van Heerden's father would regale his family at night by reading English classics such as *Oliver Twist* (62). It was in his office at Jacobsdal that she discovered what was considered as a treasure trove: books and what their content revealed to her (63). In her mind she could not fathom any reasonable explanation why her father would hide these books from her, since "he knew how much she loved to read" (63). She later discovered it was the town's

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public library and not her father's property. Her "indignation" (63) towards her father is important since this is the first instance where she realises that her educational pursuit is a private desire, not shared or encouraged publically or, in this instance, by a man. As a child, Van Heerden read all the books she could get hold of and assimilated the English language in this manner (62-63). The introduction to this store of information propelled Van Heerden's life-long obsession with education and female emancipation, as well as her involvement to improve and promote the Afrikaans language so that *Boerekinders* (Boer children 62) would have their own literature; a dearth she experienced as a child. Since *Kerssnuitsels* is termed a Youth Memoir in the introductory note to the text (and thus her contribution to literature for *boerekinders*), it is possible to hypothesise that through her narration and self-presentation, the author attempts to impart certain impressions regarding equal rights for women and the importance of education to young female readers (and possibly boys), should they read the book. The reliability of this hypothesis emerges when one considers the protagonist's own struggle for education.

Towards the end of the narrative, Van Heerden recounts her mother's objection to her return to the Hugeunot Seminary in Wellington to complete her standard six (135) and, thereafter the rest of her high school diploma. Her retort, as Van Heerden later imparted to Bouwer, was: "You are too stupid and naughty [...] and for what does a girl now have to study?" (13 April 1960).[77] This comment incensed Van Heerden, who decided to prove to her family the extent of her intellectual prowess. Narration here sheds light on her emotions and decisions. Initially elated at the thought or prospect of not having to return to school, she then rebelled against this suggestion because of her mother's rebuke to her inquiries. She insisted that her parents acquire the text books and continued to pass standard six. When the telegram arrived with her results, her mother cynically retaliated, "[a]g, this is such a flicker of hope" (136). Van Heerden remembers how she wanted to "shake her senseless" (136) and decided there and then that "[she] will make Matric, [...] go to college and then [...] to Europe to become a doctor" (136). The mother's admonishment could be read as an indication of her own

[77] Incidentally, she was also very unhappy at the Huguenot Seminary since they enforced Calvinistic morality and labelled everything as 'sinful' and other faiths as heathenism (133-134). After a visiting a nunnery (since she was unhappy at the Seminary), Van Heerden was chastised and called sinful because she kept a rosary (for comfort) and it is suggested that she denounced religion afterwards. She boldly declares: "their God and their religion can go and roll *himself* up for my part" (my emphasis 134) and that she would no longer pray or listen to the prayers of others (134).

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suppressed hope or desires, especially since she later also started to question gender discrimination (145), but Van Heerden's determination to undermine maternal scoffing suggests (displaced) anger directed towards the mother; a deliberate attempt to avoid becoming what the older woman represents – a prototypical *volksmoeder*. This anger is never directed towards the father, whom she seems to adore. Her mother, not her father, ordered her books for Matric and she completed her exams in one year (136), studying diligently for hours on end. Both parents thought that this would be the end of her obstinacy, but Van Heerden's recollections convey a sense of her resolve and anger. Once she had informed her parents of her desire to study and become a doctor, they replied that it was an "improper thing for a girl" (143) to aspire to and asked her if "she was crazy" (143). Van Heerden elaborates:

> [T]he longer I festered about it, the more irritated I became with the ever present "a girl this a girl that", and became more determined not to go through life with a halter around my neck. And my mother would even add onto that that the right man would pitch up, and I could burst with anger. Mr. Right, they would call him. [...] I have to make a plan. I'll make myself impossible to live with so that they'll be grateful to get rid of me. I didn't talk anymore and only ate dry rice. If my mother put other food on my plate, I just let it stand there. [...] Finally, my parents threw in the towel: I may go to Stellenbosch. (143, 147)

In this excerpt she voices her anger and revulsion at the supposition that she 'has to marry the right man' and stridently decides to challenge societal norms. Her youthful mutiny, mostly presented in the form of refusing food or conversation, later morphs into voiced opinions. Physical atrophy here seems to be a manipulation mechanism rather than a disease (as is the case with anorexia or bulimia): since she is not allowed to speak, she uses her body to rebel. She thus revolts in terms of "refusal [and] passivity" (Halberstam 129). Furthermore, she views the ritualistic gender performance expected of and ascribed to "a girl" (143) as a "halter around" (143) her neck. By planning to make it "impossible" (147) to live with her and refusing compliance to norms such as marrying "Mr. Right", she suggests that marrying is equal to 'marring' ambition and desire; a symbolic form of 'haltering'. Relating these events at a later stage in her life, she narrates these memories in a consciously constructed way, elucidating on gender inequalities and the perpetuation of a heterosexual discourse in the context of her youth. By telling (her)story she gives public voice to the concerns that remained central to gender behaviour in the sixties in South Africa (the publication decade of

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her books), a time when Second Wave Feminism debates also penetrated the boundaries of the apartheid state. My interpretation here strengthens the hypothesis that in her work Van Heerden skilfully conveys a feminist agenda to younger readers. The strategies she employs in her memoirs provide her with a platform from whence she can address the above-mentioned issues as a "social theorist" (Butler *Giving an Account* 8). Her mother's subscription to gender norms, assigning women to the domestic space, and her "relation to morality" (Butler *Giving an Account* 10), although incensing her as a child, formulated her subsequent refusal to adhere to these norms, to negotiate her own morality and to eventually become involved in Women's Rights Movements. To use Halberstam's formulation from another context, Van Heerden also "refuse[s] to think back through the mother; [she] actively and passively lose[s] the mother, abuse[s] the mother, love[s], hate[s], and destroy[s] the mother, and in the process [she] produce[s] a theoretical and imaginative space that is 'not woman' or that can be occupied only by unbecoming woman" (125). For Van Heerden, thinking and imagining through the mother would ultimately construct a space of gender constraints she disavowed, and by becoming an activist, she refuses to think of Mr. Right or Mother's 'a girl this and a girl that' and represents her own becoming. In effect, Van Heerden assimilates or 'dons', what could be called, masculine modes of acting and thinking, and hence perpetuates the patriarchal agenda, as I will argue in the next section of this chapter.

To clarify and support her youthful perceptions and awakening, Van Heerden's second memoir illustrates how these convictions panned out and were realised later in her life, as I now illustrate in reference to events in the second memoir. Her introduction to *Die 16de Koppie* (1965) captures the type of brazen-voiced opinions permeating her autobiographies.[78] She clarifies that the theoretical, historical and literary depiction/role of women in South Africa had a masculine construction, but was also perpetuated and enforced by women:

> During my youth, a women's place was in the house, but I did not break my head over it until Emily Hobhouse [...] lent me John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*. My first reaction was: But he doesn't know Boer women! I think about the women in the Boer War who climbed in under their husbands with a sambok if they deserted their commando and did not allow them to enter the house. (7)

[78] The date of publication coincides with Second Wave Feminism, probably strengthening her concern in these texts since she was a suffragette and a Women's Rights activist.

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Incidentally, this excerpt starkly contrasts with her critique of her mother in the first memoir, where she frames her mother as submissive and tractable. It is possible that other women and post-Great South African War conversations gave the author these impressions of Boer women, but it seems more a case of conveying a perception of communal resistance rather than individual compliance. She writes this autobiography in retrospection and elaborates on the gradual development of her awareness as a young woman concerned with the harrowing affairs of women's lives: what they endured and perpetuated. By remaining in the domestic sphere (supportive and subservient) during the war, and chastising their husbands with samboks, the Boer women perpetuated and enforced the constructed role of the female gender, as they later imposed the image of themselves as *volksmoeders*, but by chastising their husbands with samboks - a violent act - they demonstrated qualities conventionally associated with masculine behaviour. Paradoxically, they submitted - with force - to their domestic roles. This recalls to a degree the image of Florence Nightingale (as discussed in the previous chapter) as a figure idealised as both militant and domestic, again illustrating that "the military narrative was always at least compatible with – if not implicit in – the domestic narrative" (Poovey 169). The blend of the domestic sphere with militancy is also evident in the *volksmoeder* ideology. Afrikaner women employed and manipulated the image of the *volksmoeder* to enter and gain political economy and the right to vote, while remaining wives and mothers in the domestic realms. Below, I merely highlight certain events in *Die 16de Koppie* as well as secondary sources to examine her activist involvement in Women's Rights in later life. The aim is to underscore the lasting affect her youthful realisation of gender discrimination had on her development.

Van Heerden was an avid follower of renowned gender equality advocates – both Olive Schreiner and Emily Hobhouse, for example, are mentioned in *Die 16de Koppie* – and organisations such as the Fabian society. Dan Jacobson notes in the introduction to *The Story of an African Farm* that Schreiner "read intensely in the works of John Stuart Mill, the philosopher, autobiographer, and author of *The Subjection of Women*, a work which had a profound influence on her" (12). Van Heerden similarly states:

> When I took [*Aristotle's Ethics*] back, she (Emily Hobhouse) gave me *The Subjection of Women* by John Stuart Mill, and did I enjoy it! I became vocal at home again and repeatedly told my parents about the injustices women had to

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> endure. Eventually my mother also became heated on the subject. I was already a suffragette. (*Kerssnuitsels* 145)

Her engagement with this seminal text had an analogous influence on her and she became involved in the Women's Suffrage movement before the First World War, one of the instances where she acted as an activist for women's rights. During the time she spent as a medical student in the Netherlands, she also joined the "Women's Student Club" (30). Van Niekerk mentions:

> This [membership] prepared Van Heerden for her later involvement in the women's suffrage movement in South Africa. At the Women's Nationalist Party Congress in Malmesbury in 1925, Van Heerden gave a touching address pleading for women's suffrage in South Africa. According to Maria Elizabeth Rothmann (M.E.R.), the well-known Afrikaans author, Van Heerden's plea at this congress changed the minds of many Afrikaans women who were themselves still prejudiced against the vote for women. (354)

Unlike the majority of white Afrikaner women, Van Heerden felt the political injustice acutely and became an activist for Women's Rights. In this regard, she was remarkable in her intractable refusal to accept her 'fate' dictated by a patriarchal society. She mentions though, in her description of this congress at Malmesbury, that the women's "knowledge of the country's politics" (*Die 16e Koppie* 125) astounded and impressed her and that none of them "spoke nonsense" (*Die 16e Koppie* 126). From these statements it appears Van Heerden harboured her own prejudices against white Afrikaner women since she also states that she was astonished when the congress "unanimously" (*Die 16e Koppie* 126) accepted her proposed motion for women's right to vote. Furthermore, it seems she did not hold the average or 'normal' woman in high regard, a point I return to in the next section. In the same manner in which she confidently strode onto a stage in front of, according to her, an ambivalent audience, by writing these memoirs, she metaphorically speaking steps onto a soapbox and again delivers a moving plea to her audience. This appeal to the audience she desired to reach through her textual speech was unfortunately not as lasting as her passionate entreaty in Malmesbury, considering the ways in which these memoirs have slipped from public and scholarly memory. Nevertheless, in view of my comment above that she seemed not to have held the 'average' woman in high regard, I now focus on the queer silences in her narratives and textual slippages that divulge her sexual orientation. I argue, these slippages give agency to her "alternative sexuality" (Butler *Gender Trouble* 28).

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"You're not a man", but "where are your pants then?"

A discussion of Van Heerden's sexuality, body politics and her performance of gender (Butler's term), calls for deconstruction of her life writing for evidence of how she manages to convey or act her lesbianism since she does not always publicly address certain private aspects of her life. In this section I primarily focus on *Die 16de Koppie* and how 'opacity' pertaining to her lesbianism is conveyed. Butler, in examining and reworking some of Nietzsche's theories, states that it is only in "face of a 'you' who asks me to give an account" that an "I begin[s] [the story of the self]" (*Giving an Account* 11). Fred le Roux, editor of the *Sarie Marais* magazine in 1959, pleaded with Van Heerden in a letter to relate her life stories to Alba Bouwer, a journalist for the magazine at the time, so that "an immeasurable treasure of human interest stories" (11 November 1959) would not be lost along with the involvement of women in the development of medicine in South Africa. Bouwer eventually wrote a series of articles for the *Sarie Marais*. This request to account for herself further prompted Van Heerden to capture her life in the two autobiographies. Viljoen argues that Van Heerden's silence on the subject, in part, might be linked to the "inability of nationalism to name lesbianism" (193) and that she 'dared' not speak or publically 'name' her sexual orientation. As I mentioned, lesbians were not given the same (il)legal status as homosexual men under South African law and therefore had no (il)legal sexual subjectivity and no clear discourse to internalise . The opacity in her self-narration then might be due to the inability of the 'you' to comprehend or name sexuality. In view of Butler's arguments therefore, according to Nietzsche punishment is "the making of a memory" and a "system of justice" (Butler *Giving an Account* 10), be it the state, church, or a society that requires us to account for our actions and their effect, thereby forcing an account of 'cause and effect' from an 'I'. If the "systems of justice" did not require, nor wanted, an account (in order to punish) from lesbians, how then do they 'make the memory' of their sexuality? I argue that in South Africa's nationalist Afrikaner society, where lesbianism could not be mentioned and women were perceived as, and required to be, *volksmoeders*, Van Heerden stood at danger of being branded and persecuted as 'deviant' or 'wayward'. Foucault states: "If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of deliberate transgression" (6). One understands why this threat would in part prohibit her from discussing her sexual orientation and undermined her struggle for self-

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expression. Authorial intent, as I propose, informs her decision not to discuss her "mannish lesbianism" (Newton 558); yet, she acts and lets slip suggestions to her sexuality in the text. I emphasise, although I empathise with her inability to speak publically about her desire, I am critical of Van Heerden's reinforcement of gender binaries. Below, I discuss the public's negotiation of Van Heerden's sexual identity; examine her textual slippages regarding the women she lived with; move on to the performance of her gender, through embodiment – thus the visibility of the body in the text; and conclude with a section discussing the uniqueness of Van Heerden's life writing in comparison to other women's publications in South Africa.

In a review of *Kerssnuitsels*, W.E.G Louw makes the following statement: "'The person behind the book?' Oh come now, after *we have all been made frightened about it*, I have risen above it long ago! Of course one only has these words in front of you – or, in this case, in your ear – but it is a living person this who speaks to you through it" (my emphasis n.d.). Louw's comment suggests there is something unmentionable, even 'frightening' about the author of the book or its content which cannot be revealed in the public domain of a review. He nevertheless formulates his comment in such a way, "[he has] risen above it long ago!", to appease those readers who are well aware of what he implies. I surmise that Louw is referring to Van Heerden's sexual orientation or physical appearance since there is no other obvious taboo regarding her life or the content of the narrative. It seems, as I will indicate, that those who knew her (and some others) were aware of Van Heerden's sexual orientation but, like Louw, acknowledged this fact without specifically mentioning it: 'that-which-must-not-be-named'. Louw's tentative allusion to Van Heerden's sexuality, the fact that he has to assuage their fears by saying "[o]h come now", illustrates the "inability of nationalism to name lesbianism" (Viljoen 193).

I now examine instances in *Die 16de Koppie* where Van Heerden mentions (or omits to mention) women she lived with as well as the nature of their relationships. The writing strategy she employs thus disguises her relationship with these women. She mentions (her lovers) Gladys and Freddie, but does not explicitly expound on the intimacies. Gladys, as suggested in Van Heerden's memoirs, was the first woman to permanently live with her (81-115), and was followed by Irene Heseltine (Freddie 115-159). The way the author narrates her associations with these two (and other) women suggests her romantic relationships with them.

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I first analyse the text and then turn to secondary readings that confirm what is hinted at, albeit sparingly, in the autobiography. Gladys is suddenly introduced mid-way through the text without proper contextualisation. Van Heerden recalls: "Once I went to Durban for a medical congress. Gladys came along [...]." (89). It gradually becomes apparent that Gladys is more than a friend or housekeeper when one pays close attention to other instances where Gladys surfaces as a casual feature in an anecdote. We learn that Gladys accompanied her when she was summoned to an accouchement (108) and would even help administering the anaesthetics (109). In another incident, Van Heerden received a duck as a gift. She became very fond of it. Gladys unfortunately had it slaughtered and served it for dinner – the narrator emphasises that "to this day" (110), she never forgave her for the indiscretion. What is relevant and textually evident, is that Gladys lived with the author and cannot be excluded from parts of the narration. When Van Heerden planned to returned to London, to become a clinical assistant from where she would move to the Netherlands to complete her gynaecology dissertation, she explains that: "Gladys felt like studying to be a lawyer and *we* decided to go" (my emphasis 111). This reciprocal consideration suggests an intimate relationship between the women. That they were lovers and not merely friends becomes clear when one considers other life writings and scholarly research. In her discussion of the nature of the relationship between Gladys and Van Heerden, Viljoen refers to the correspondence between Tibbie Steyn (published in her biography) and Emily Hobhouse (192). Tibbie Steyn was Gladys's mother and the wife of M.T. Steyn, president of the Orange Free State during the Great South African War. Gladys was also principal of a girls school in Bloemfontein before she left her post and became Van Heerden's housekeeper (192). In the letter to Hobhouse, Steyn laments the fact that her daughter is "in a way lost" (192) and that she wonders why God allowed "Nell to cross Gladdies path" (Viljoen 192). She explains that she has reconciled herself with Gladys, who was "a sweet girl" (Viljoen 192), living with Van Heerden because she "seems happy" (Viljoen 192) Hobhouse replied:

> I understand now, also from what you say, that you feel regretful over Gladys' attachment to Nell v. Heerden. It always appeared to me very strange & somewhat unusual in S. African life. But you know in Europe it is an everyday matter this coupling up of young women who have struck out for themselves & do not marry. They find thus the companionship they need & one usually I notice, takes the more masculine, the other the more feminine role. Thus they secure nearly (not quite) the best of both types of life – having complete

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> independence coupled with companionship which prevents the sinking into the old time "Old-maidenism". Nell is to all intents & purposes a man, or what is called a "bachelor-woman". (Cited in Viljoen 192-193)

Hobhouse's 'reading' of their relationship is enlightening since it "sheds some light" (Viljoen 192) on the ways in which Van Heerden's South African (and European) contemporaries would have 'viewed' a same-sex relationship. Since she looked like a man (masculine), acted like a man (independent and 'bachelor-woman'), she became for "all intents & purposes a man" in the eyes of society (and embodies this assignation in her own identity). This is an example of where the heterosexual matrix is enforced and sexuality is 'read' as either masculine or feminine. A critical reader, however, can detect signs in the textual slippages that suggest Van Heerden's lesbianism, also evident in her references to Freddie.

In England, Van Heerden befriended Freddie, whose given name was Irene Heseltine (115). She mentions that she would have met up with Gladys in Innsbruck but later refers to the fact that she and Freddie accidentally bumped into Gladys "and her friend" (116) in Cortina. What is suggested is that Gladys took a new lover, and Van Heerden and Freddie became lovers. Later, on her return to South Africa, Freddie accompanied Van Heerden while Gladys remained in Europe. That Freddie and Van Heerden moved in together is confirmed in Van Heerden's account that she travelled to Harrismith to retrieve her possessions while Freddie remained in Cape Town to search for a suitable house for the two of them (122). Another hint is contained in the comment that she was discouraged from opening a practice in Cape Town because the "people were too conservative" (122). Van Heerden regularly refers to Freddie in the final section of the memoir, confirming on the penultimate page that Freddie went to the "farm" (158) to live with her as her life partner.[79] To support this analysis of Van Heerden's sexual relationship with Freddie, I refer to a review and letters written to Van Heerden by some of her friends. Alba Bouwer and other correspondents (M.E.R., Audrey Blignaut, Dr Karel Bremer) either address their letters to Nell and Freddie, or they send their regards to Freddie:

> Dearest Nan and most beloved Freddie. (Bouwer 2 Novemver 1959)
> We miss you here. Greetings to Freddie. And for you lots of love, Audrey (Blignaut 21 April 1969)

[79] Van Niekerk also mentions that Freddie was named in Van Heerden's will: legal evidence of an intimate relationship (358).

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> Tell Freddie I miss her a lot and she has to come for a visit (Bremer n.d.)

Van Heerden's friends acknowledge and seem supportive of Freddie as a person and her relationship with Van Heerden. Of further interest is the issue of naming and what it suggests about the gender identities of Van Heerden and Irene Heseltine. Freddie adopted a masculine moniker; Irene became Freddie, and Petronella is called Nell or Nan. Both assume 'male' monikers, thus 'terming' themselves masculine in language and address. The performative act of 'naming' themselves as masculine, in Butler's term, therefore assigns both to a male sphere. I now consider Van Heerden's performance of her body in her text.

How does Van Heerden allow the reader a glimpse into her performance of masculine identity? Firstly, Van Heerden started wearing riding pants (for horse-riding) in Harrismith (the location of her first practice), before she acquired a motor vehicle to conduct house consultations on outlying farms in the district.[80] She preferred men's clothing, attire not considered "suitable female dress" (Wintle 67) by 'viewers' of her socio-historical context. She explains:

> I've had riding pants made and never again wore a dress in Harrismith. There was a bit of grumbling at first, but the people quickly became used to it. When one day I returned after a long absence, I encountered a man who previously had much to say about my pants-wearing. When he greeted, he said: "Oh no man, well, you look so funny. Where are your pants then?" (Van Heerden 80)

Her unconventional attire caused a few humorous as well as unfortunate incidents. In one anecdote, a patient (a farmer) elaborates in detail to her about his bladder problems. When he realises that she was a woman, he indignantly asks: "Mister, man, why didn't you tell me that you're not a man?" (81). What one can deduce from this incident is that her appearance was convincingly 'masculine' and her performance of a masculine gender is therefore informative. She validates her choice of wearing men's clothing by offering an explanation that it was for practical reasons - convenient to practice her profession. She asserts though that she "never again wore a dress in Harrismith" (80), which possibly indicates that the conscious choice was about more than mere convenience. In *Kerssnuitsels*, Van Heerden introduces the narrative by

[80] Sarah Wintle argues that New Women were especially interested in 'taming horses', riding bikes and 'mastering cars' since these modes of transport were generally associated with the masculine and linked to the independence transport provided women (as well as the allure to transgress gender boundaries), but there was widespread angst amongst the New Women about "suitable female dress" (67) for locomotive transport.

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relating that her first memory, at the age of three, was of a "dark room" (15) in which her mother was busy dressing her in a typical outfit for girls and "pushed" (15) her feet into shoes. She states that she was "[outraged and] bellowed" (Viljoen's translation 15). Viljoen states that in this passage "the mother is associated with the restrictive girls' clothing that the daughter will reject in later life" (189). Her first memory of being dressed in girls' attire is "ominous and confining" (Viljoen 189) and outrages her. Her recollection of this memory indicates two important facts: she detested women's clothing and its association in gender discourse from her *first memory*, and the inclusion of this memory to introduce the narrative designates her authorial intent to critique gender restrictions and relations of her society. It is feasible to hypothesise that she subscribed and associated more with certain masculine performative acts than their feminine counterparts. Having already entered into what could be considered as a masculine terrain (medicine), Van Heerden associates herself furthermore by what she distinguished and identified as subversive, empowering and indicative of her gender (personal). She literally 'wore the pants' regarding her profession and conduct. By performing masculinity, she enforces the heterosexual matrix, appropriating gender norms she seemingly critiques. As indicated in the previous section, she perceived most women as without authoritative voice (diametrically opposed to the 'worship' of her father). In a society where there is no lesbian discourse to internalise and perpetuate, her only options then are: mimicking masculinity or becoming a victim (as she perceived 'normal' women). If she does not want to be 'feminine' and thus voiceless (as she perceived some women to be), she has to discard the dress (a symbol of femininity) and perform masculinity by donning the pants. In this way she performs "this cross-gender figure [who] became the public symbol of the new social/sexual category 'lesbian'" (Newton 560) of the early twentieth century. Newton notes that certain "feminist historians deplore the emergence" (560) of the mannish lesbian (or butch lesbian) because they enforced specific binaries of the heterosexual matrix rather than eschew or challenge its construction.

Moving on from the exterior or attire to the subject's physical body, Van Niekerk explains in her research that Van Heerden had a double mastectomy and hysterectomy. These surgical procedures were performed as "a precaution against cancer" although she was "in a perfectly healthy condition" (355). However, Van Heerden makes no mention of these operations in her autobiographies. Mindful of the fact that cancer and related surgery (as well as conditions

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such as pregnancy outside wedlock) were taboo topics, at the time of publication (not to mention during the narrative contexts) she arguably chooses not to disclose these facts. However, Van Heerden discusses other taboo topics, such as the female patient who conceived a child out of wedlock and pleaded with Van Heerden to perform an abortion (93).[81] I read the deliberate act – preventative surgery - as an embodiment of a rebellion against the confines of the biological sex, symbolically described by Van Heerden as a "halter around [her] neck" (*Kerssnuitsels* 143). Viewed in relation to her comments about "Mr Right" (143), this act signifies, in my opinion, what Butler describes as a "counterstrategy to the reproductive construction of genitality" or an act to "contest the construction of female subjectivity marked by women's supposedly distinctive reproductive function" (*Gender Trouble* 26). In this way she refuses biological confinement to the "labour of reproduction" (Paxton 392) associated with *volksmoeders* like her mother. Newton explains that traditionally, according to Victorian conventions, women were expected to be desireless beings (Newton 566). Experiencing and especially exhibiting physical desire was considered wayward (Newton 566). Women were the silent 'sexless' receptors of masculine desire. Van Heerden's desire for Gladys and Freddie is 'slipped' through suggestion into her memoirs. Another example would be the "joy" (82) she expresses when she discovers Milly Rattray in her house in the middle of the night (82).[82] The medical profession, towards the latter part of the nineteenth century, "gave scientific sanction" (Newton 566) to homosexuality as a pathology and lesbians (or in medical terms the "masculine female invert") were explained in terms of a masculine soul trapped in a female body that "phallicized her and endowe[ed] her with active lust" (Newton 566). The masculine tendencies of some lesbians were viewed as a symptom of a trapped 'masculine soul', in essence neither woman nor man but a "third sex"

[81] Van Heerden explains that she refused but that another doctor performed the abortion (93). She relates another story to illustrate that "motherhood [was] not implicit but conditioned" (93). A young female patient had a baby out of wedlock and kept screaming that they should "kill it" (94) when the baby was born prematurely. The infant died the following day. According to Van Heerden, the girl later married and was a loving and tender mother. These two incidents, however, show that she was willing to discuss taboo topics when these related to her professional and not personal life.

[82] Van Heerden narrates that Milly was there "before Gladys came" (81). Milly and Van Heerden went to the kitchen, at twelve at night, to make food. It seems unlikely that a woman she does not mention even once before in the autobiography would be at her house in the middle of the night for no specific reason or any clarification. That there is a woman living with Van Heerden is not strange in itself but it hints towards something more since she does not clarify or introduce the character, which is unlike the rest of the autobiography. It seems somehow inappropriate to speculate about their relationship, but the obvious gaps regarding her relationships with these women in her narration leave room for speculation. Jean van der Poel, whom the narrator mentions towards the closing stages of *Die 16de Koppie*, remains equally 'undefined' and there are no "hints as to the nature of their relationship" (Viljoen 193).

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(568). As a doctor, Van Heerden must have been aware of these arguments regarding sexual pathology and what she perceived (or performed) as her gender. From what I can glean from her self-representation and other sources, she unquestionably viewed herself as a woman - not of a "third sex", albeit with masculine mannerisms and proclivities - who desired other women.

I propose that her silence (in public space) about matters pertaining to the body and desire are not silences, but issues she skilfully signposts in seemingly mundane anecdotes and slippages. What we learn about her through these hints is that she 'speaks' through her physical body about the 'Self' and her performance of a masculine gender. Etienne van Heerden remembers Petronella Van Heerden in his acceptance speech and imparts the following memory and comment:

> It is also general knowledge that tant Nan did not hold men in high regard and never entered the matrimonial state. I remember her visits to our farmhouse well: she'd sit there with turned up flanneltrousers with her ankle on her knee, just like my father. (2009)

Butler asserts there is "a part of bodily experience as well" (*Giving an Account* 39) in giving an account of self that is not necessarily narratable. As Viljoen attests "[Van Heerden's] lesbianism is 'shown' rather than 'told'" (Viljoen 192). Van Heerden's narratives are empowering and give agency to the "unspeakable" (Watson 141) in her very "refusal" (Halberstam 129) to speak explicitly about her desire. Newton argues in her discussion of New Women and their sexuality in a male dominated society where there was only "male discourses [...] about female sexuality" (573) that "[to] become avowedly sexual, the New Woman had to enter the male world, either as a heterosexual on male terms (a flapper) or as – or with – a lesbian in a male body drag (a butch)" (573). From Newton's argument it seems as though there was no clear option for women who did not fit into normative sexual distinctions and therefore one can argue that Van Heerden, entering into a male world and male dominated professions as an independent woman, had no other option (or saw no other since there was no clear discourse to internalise) but to appropriate what was available. She mimics masculinity and by performing this masculinity she can claim the "[joys]" (82) of her desire.

Authorial intent is important in this discussion since Van Heerden has to decide what qualifies as "human interest stories" (Le Roux 11 November 1959) to the "you" (the Afrikaner public)

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she is accounting to. Lesbianism, in a nationalist discourse that seems unable to name the phenomenon since it would destabilise its monolithic and patriarchal construction, would be counter-productive, especially since she is trying to impart something of interest to "*Boerekinders*" (*Kerssnuitsels* 62). Her version of 'mother' as '*volksmoeder*' seems to assume the form of a written legacy – imparting important knowledge and memories to the Afrikaner youth. What is noteworthy, though, is that her friends acknowledged the existence of Freddie and seemingly loved her. Privately, Freddie (and Gladys) and Van Heerden's sexual relationship is acknowledged, although publically is remains unnamed.

A queer reading of van Heerden's *Die 16de Koppie*, enables one to speculate about certain narrative choices she made. Foucault states:

> If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom. (6)

Van Heerden's silences pertaining to sexuality largely articulate her society's repressions and not her own. In the context of literature written by Afrikaans women at that time, Van Heerden's autobiography is rather daring. M.E.R. states, almost apologetically, in her autobiography *My Beskeie Deel* (1972) that Afrikaner women were late to the stage regarding Women's Rights because they were fixated on what they perceived as a more pressing issue: *die armblanke vraagstuk* (poor white question 17).[83] Van Heerden, however, became actively involved in South African Women's Rights Movements and particularly critiques the position of women in the patriarchal Afrikaner society. Such actions contradict the opinion that "[t]his campaign is usually associated with the English-speaking women of the country. Cherryl Walker, for example, asserts that 'its leaders were not rural or Afrikaner, but characteristically middle-class, urban, and English-speaking'" (Vincent 1). Caroline van Heyningen in her memoir *Orange Days: Memoir of Eighty Years Ago in the Old Orange Free State* (1965) however, is more concerned with the bourgeoning of South Africa's national 'identity', and its history (the war) and rather scathing about the "native" (100-104) of South Africa. In comparison to these two autobiographies Van Heerden's work is audacious and unique.

[83] This autobiography will be included in my future research into South African women's autobiography.

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Fictional (and other) women writers at that time mostly wrote recipes (for *Sarie Marais* and *Huisgenoot*), children's books (Alba Bouwer), novels disseminating historical-cultural national myths (M.E.R.) or diary-like essays (Dot Serfontein and Audrey Blignaut). For Van Heerden, discussing her sexuality or body politics in an oppressive and repressed society (regarding sex and gender) would have shocked and affronted her reading public. After claiming three masculine terrains (medicine, farming and politics) in her autobiographies it would have been considered wayward and indecent to discuss her sexuality. Such a revelation undoubtedly would have caused 'gender trouble'. Nevertheless, she suggestively (and ironically) locates her writing within a domestic space with the deceiving titles of her autobiographies. She most likely chose acceptable titles (for women) in order to validate her work and engender the marketability of a 'queer' (strange) female text. This opacity in her life-writing, 'her failed account of self' (Butler *Giving an Account* 42), is arguably a result of authorial intent, her desire to impart 'specific information' to the youth of the Afrikaner *volk*,[84] and that *volk's* inability to acknowledge lesbianism. I now turn to Van Heerden's ambiguous representation of race in the heterogeneous landscape of South Africa and her narration of her Afrikaner Nationalist identity.

"You should have more respect"

In *Kerssnuitsels*, Van Heerden frames certain ethical and political issues that permeate South African literature and its early twentieth-century political and cultural consciousness: the question of colour and other forms of ethnic superiority endorsed by colonial and Nationalist politics. According to Smith and Watson, the female autobiographer, an "illegitimate" speaker in the traditional priapic discourse of this genre, could provide subjectivity to other ethnicities (*De/Colonising the Subject* xx) by writing about the Other, since she herself presents her life from a marginal position through the questionable masculine 'I' of autobiography. Van Heerden explains that her coloured nanny was incensed when she called her "aia" (25), a term white children were supposed to use for elderly non-white female servants. According to the nanny, she could call the "*blek keffer*" (*black kaffir* 25) in the street 'aia', and not her. The

[84] I use words (politically loaded in the then Afrikaans apartheid rhetoric) such as *volk*, *volksiel* and *volkseenheid* in this chapter with caution resulting from the political undertone; even so, Van Heerden was, up until approximately 1938, a Nationalist and as such she uses this terminology.

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nanny's statement confused Van Heerden: "We were never allowed to casually call the domestic workers by their name; we had to say *outa* or *aia*" (25). The white people thought it was appropriate to call coloureds *outa* or *aia*, but the coloured woman was offended by this misnomer. She thought only a black person deserved this derogatory moniker. The language used, such as the deprecating ethnic terminology with which to describe races in the South African colony, is problematic in Van Heerden's life writing, as it is, for example, in Schreiner's fictional writing. Schreiner, (like Van Heerden) was a humanist, socialist and feminist but similar to Van Heerden struggled in a "divided colonial culture" (Showalter "Introduction" ix) to give voice to the demarcated masses and offer agency beyond race. Showalter argues that Schreiner's "compassion for the oppressed is voiced, but is directed chiefly against the oppressors of women, children, animals, and individuals" ("Introduction" xvii). Taking my cue from Showalter, I suggest that Van Heerden in her representation of the Other in her life-writing struggles to represent their oppression through language (although she tries) whilst able to successfully convey the oppression of white women and children (even nature). She does communicate, in a toned-down manner, the "incongruities [of the patriarchal colonizer's framing of the other and] calls [...] their authority into question" (Smith and Watson *Decolonizing the Subject* xx). As indicated in the introductory chapter, she advocates equality "across race [...] and colour" ("Waarom ek 'n Sosialis is" 4). Ethnicity and its decided presence in South Africa become visible in Van Heerden's life writing. It elucidates the rivalry (and collaboration) between the English and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, their subjugation of other races and the Afrikaners' formulation of their 'nation' and national identity. Post-Great South African War, the defeated Afrikaner nation reacted by trying to collaborate with their oppressors to achieve dominance, albeit through militant and discriminatory means. Van Heerden also campaigned on behalf of the non-white races and the Jews in South Africa. As Benedict Anderson explains, love for the 'nation' is almost always accompanied by fear of the Other (141). Van Heerden admired or was a patriotic Afrikaner and Nationalist but her hatred of the other was directed at the British and not at other races in South Africa.

The author recalls in *Kerssnuitsels* that the Van Heerden family had to flee from the Orange Free State during the Great South African War. She recalls the relationship she and her brother had with labourers on the farm Brandkraal in the Great Karoo. In these descriptions

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she uses terms such as *volk*, a disparaging term Afrikaners used for farm workers of other ethnic groups. The relationship between the farmer (white) and the labourer (mostly non-white) with its implicit power imbalances the narrator refers to here was "as she knew it in the Free State" (93), indicating that the ethnic relationships were alike throughout South Africa. She mentions that the children called her "nonna" (93), that they played with '*dolosse*' and made clay oxen and strapped them to make-believe wagons (93). She might have played with the worker's children, but they still had to call her *nonna* (young lady of the house), an illustration of the racial power dynamics of early twentieth-century South Africa. The narrator relates an incident where she throws a ball of clay at Outa Pokkel, an elderly black labourer who taught her how to make a bow and arrow from bamboo and reed. Her grandmother witnessed the incident, struck her with a *kierie* (walking stick) and berated her as follows: "Why did you throw Outa Pokkel? You should have more respect" (93). The grandmother's chastisement implies that Van Heerden should either have more respect for her elders or more respect for other races. The incident clearly lingered for Van Heerden since she decided to include it in her autobiography as a valuable "human interest [story]" (Le Roux 11 November 1959). Van Heerden does not voice or discuss her feelings regarding the incident but it adds to the didactic intention of her text, implying that whites should "have more respect" (93) for other races in South Africa.

Even as a child, Van Heerden was aware that she was regarded as superior since she had a white skin. One could argue that, by including memories of these incidents, the author is trying to critique the disturbing racial inequality of South Africa's history, pervading at the time of publication. These experiences as a child might have informed her political opinions since she advocated for a socialist system (including all races) in an article she wrote, "Why I Am a Socialist" (1938). She promoted the idea of a democratic South Africa where everyone could vote, not only the white women who had recently (1930) won the right to vote, but non-whites as well (Van Niekerk 357). Van Heerden, along with other women activists, opposed the law to remove black people from the voter's roll and they wrote a letter to *Die Burger* (22 February 1936), pleading:

> As women who love South Africa, we feel that it would not be wise to lose the loyalty and trust of the blacks who outnumber us. We doubt if South Africa would be a happy place for our children if this privilege, valued so highly by

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> the black people, were to be taken away from them. (Van Niekerk's translation 357)

Not only did Van Heerden crusade on behalf of women and their right to vote, she did the same for all South African citizens, as she regarded them, who were powerless in the face of their white oppressors. She does explain in *Die 16e Koppie* though that she considered the white women's right to vote as more important than "Coloured [women's]" (non-white women 127) and would later "fight" (127) for their enfranchisement. By publishing her book *Fascisme – Italië! Duitsland! Suid-Afrika?* (1938) and writing letters to *Die Burger,* she voiced her political position in public. In a letter to Van Heerden by N.P. van Wyk Louw, he inquires:

> And then I want to know (and now it is my socialist conscience talking) and then I want to know and see if you are promoting the true spirit of humanity. Our sort of people can in fact help to free our poor Afrikanertjies from preconceptions and bigotry, free our ways of thinking, etc. (24 July 1953)

The "spirit of humanity" Van Heerden advocated was as a socialist: political and social equality for all citizens regardless of race or gender. Her political essays and book express these opinions with more clarity and in more nuanced terms than her memoirs, in which these political beliefs remain opaque. She would in all probability not have found a publisher for her memoirs if they reflected explicitly on racial discrimination, and in trying to impart what she considered as important memories to the Afrikaans youth, her authorial choice of relevance avoids overt references to political debates about race.

Ethnicity was and remains part of the South African consciousness. Van Heerden relates in *Kerssnuitsels* that her family would regale the children with stories, around the fire, centred on the "Kafferoorloë" (Frontier Wars between white farmers and indigenous tribes 94).[85] These stories included themes of "murder and arson, hunting and trek and searching for livestock in the snow" (94). The following scene is also set around the fire:

> While we sat like this in front of the fire, the *meid* (*domestic worker*) would come in. She has a wooden bowl with copper fittings one would only find in a museum, soap, dish-cloth and towel. The bowel was filled with warm water

[85] These (nine) Frontier Wars were waged between the settlers (English and Dutch) and the indigenous tribes of the Xhosas, Khoikhois, Swazis and Zulus on the frontier or borders of the Eastern Cape and Natal Colonies of South Africa. See for example (albeit a biased rendition of events) P. van Biljon's *Grensbakens tussen Blank en Swart in Suid-Afrika* (1947).

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> and everybody's feet are washed, first the adults and then the children's. The English mocked us about this habit of the *dirty Boers*. Not one of my people would climb into their clean bed with dirty feet. (My emphasis 95)

This extract frames the ethnic and racial polemic of South Africa around the turn of the previous century. The "so-called race problem" (Klopper 11) of South Africa, referring mostly to the racial tension between Afrikaners and the British (the British viewed the Boers as a separate white race), as well as the Boers' perception of the other is highlighted. As is evident, a view persisted amongst the Afrikaner that the English imagined themselves superior to others and would treat them with scorn. The Afrikaner assumed they were in fact superior (to the *meid* for example) and campaigned for legislation to cement their dominant position. The non-white ethnic groups rallied for their right to full citizenship but were suppressed by the white groups. The positions of the individual groups are clearly defined by the extract. Around the fire, the maid brings the water (servant and master), the Afrikaner clean their feet and are acutely aware of the fact that the English find this peculiar and view them in a deprecating light.

The hatred some Afrikaners harboured towards the English post-Anglo Boer War is evident in Van Heerden's writing. In *Kerssnuitsels* she recalls that she once ran away from school because she did not want to learn English history. The headmaster wanted her to write lines as punishment, so she ran out of his office. Her mother laughed when she heard this and Van Heerden notes, "for the first and only time in my life my mother took my side against a teacher: she said I did not have to learn English history" (99). She also includes an anecdote in *Die 16de Koppie* that further illustrates her dislike of the English. She had to return to South Africa after her studies in the Netherlands and had to apply for a passport after South Africa became a Union (1910) under a Constitutional Monarchy of the British Empire. She disrupted the entire Department of Internal Affairs because she refused to be labelled as a British citizen, since she was a "boer" (72). The British officials told her that there was no such a nationality as a Boer. She told them to insert "British by conquest" (72) as her nationality. After fierce argumentation, they compromised and filled in "British by annexation" (72) as her nationality. She proudly relates that she kept the passport even after it expired. She furthermore explains that the South Africans she met overseas during the First

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World War, were all "pro-German" (61); according to Van Heerden they were in essence not pro-Germans, they were purely "anti-British" (61).

To turn to the issue of language, previously mentioned as central to Van Heerden's educational development: language is closely associated with cultural identity and the imagining of a nation (Anderson 22). Van Heerden grew up before and during the Anglo-Boer War, before Afrikaans was an official language. As examined earlier, she informs the reader that the children could all speak both languages fluently (*Kerssnuitsels* 5). They used words interchangeably and there was no animosity between the mother tongue speakers of the languages. The hostility only developed, according to Van Heerden's (and also King's) presentation, after the war and the resulting language struggle which culminated in the Afrikaner's struggle for the right to self-determination. Audrey Blignaut makes a similar observation in a letter congratulating Van Heerden on the publication of *Kerssnuitsels*: "You relate numerous things therein that have not been narrated before, for example the complete absence of racial awareness before the Anglo-Boer War, about the educational situation in the Free State at the start of the century, and the clothing conventions [...]" (23 November 1962). It should be noted that the "absence of racial awareness" (Blignaut) probably refers to white racial awareness and animosity.

As discussed in Chapter One, the Afrikaans language developed as a tool by which the Afrikaner narrated (and imagined) their nation and formation of nationality (Anderson 1-22). Van Heerden participated in the processes of Afrikaner decolonisation (resulting in neo-colonial governmental legislation and construction); a combination of legalising Afrikaans, the fight for self-determination from the British and forming a party geared to uplift the Afrikaner. She advocated against the SAP's and NP's coalition party (United Party) specifically as a result of their action in Nazi Germany (Van Niekerk 356) and remained an avid supporter of the "gesuiwerde" (*cleansed* Van Niekerk 356) National Party until 1936, after a disillusioning conversation with D.F. Malan and the Party's exclusion of Jewish (and Black) people since they "[could] not be assimilated" (*Die 16de Koppie* 145-146). D.F. Malan echoes this sentiment in his political memoir *Afrikaner Volkseenheid* (1959) by stating that "National Unity must, in other words, exist above and in spite of otherwise justified political differences" (54) and include "all whites" (54). In a speech Van Heerden wrote to present at

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the *skeurings* (dissolvement) congress[86] in Bloemfontein, she says: "I believe in internationalism, I believe in the brotherhood of humanity and the ideal that all the nations of the earth could live in love and peace alongside each other, if all those nations that contributes to the internationalism, is in the deepest sense of the word their own nation" (1933). She further stresses the fact that a nation should have a unique *volksiel* (Afrikaner rhetoric of the time) and its own unique mother tongue. Van Heerden's perceptible *bildung* with reference to her political views sheds light on her character. She admits that she was pro-Nazi as a young woman (as a result of an intense hatred for the British) but breaks from the NNP (*gesuiwerdes*/cleansed) for the exact same reason. Her sense of Afrikaner nationalism (at the end of her life) encompasses the right to employ one's mother tongue, contributing to the growth of one's *volk*[87] if it coalesces with acceptance of other *volkere* (Van Heerden 1933). Van Heerden employed her mother tongue to critique Afrikaner nationalism and advocate for equality. Van Niekerk hypothesises that Van Heerden's work is largely ignored "[p]erhaps [because] she challenged too many entrenched ideologies in the political, social and public arenas" (371) of South Africa. Van Heerden had no hesitation in changing her mind (as is evident from changing her political opinions), challenging her own assumptions or questioning the hegemonic powers. Not only was she a remarkable woman in her own time, but her public defending of the powerless, her noticeable *bildung* and challenge of power structures are evidence of her strong, unyielding sense of right and wrong – an identity that grows and changes and a Self that is formulated from a critical analysis of social and cultural inequalities.

Van Heerden's female 'I' and the "I"dentity attached and created through narrating her Subject are decidedly agentive. She does not rely on relationality to achieve agency and does not navigate her 'I' through imaginative, sensational or 'interesting' stories reliant on the 'difference' in a colonial landscape. Although she does not rely on relationality, she employs relational others as reference in order to elucidate her critiques and disillusionment with her society. Her subjectivity is established by her daring, blatant and transgressive critique of her society, most notably the gender inequality pervasive in South African (her)story. Van

[86] This refers to the incident where the National Party and South African Party formed a coalition (1934) under the new name United Party. Many staunch Nationalists were against this coalition and under the leadership of Malan they formed the (cleansed) Reunited National Party (*Herenigde Nasionale Party*) in 1934 (Malan 152-169).

[87] I use these terms as she employs them herself in the speech she wrote.

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Heerden is not self-effacing in her narration and has no reticence vis-à-vis her achievements, in contrast to King and Rorke. Her memoirs and 'I' specifically focus on these achievements and her individuality. The style of her narrative, however, is not as artistic as King's and Rorke's self-representation. In the concluding chapter I compare and contrast the three renegade New Women's 'I' in order to discuss aspects of South African female subjectivity and summarise the arguments in the body of the thesis.

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Chapter Five

Conclusion

'I' Speak for Myself: South African Female Subjectivity (1854-1948)

The aim of this thesis has been to analyse a selection of de/colonial South African women's life writing covering the period 1854 to 1948 and to accentuate the complexity of South African female subjectivity in the demarcated timeframe. I saw this project as important because work by women writers such as King, Rorke and Van Heerden have slipped from the literary consciousness.[88] What has become apparent after exploring the four autobiographies is that my own research has indeed simply scratched the surface in the archive of those silenced female voices. In this concluding chapter I summarise my key arguments and discuss a number of complex concerns that emerged regarding the autobiographers' negotiation between Self and the socio-political and cultural climate of their society. While I followed a rigid structural approach, focusing on specific discursive strategies in my discussion of each text (the 'I', historical representation, voice, tone, body and depiction of race), I developed my analysis by drawing on germane theoretical and critical views which illuminated each author's individual thematic concerns, stylistic approaches and personal agenda(s). In the process, significant differences between these three women's texts became apparent, which I summarise as succinctly as possible in this chapter.

In the introduction of this thesis I explained that my interest in this topic resulted from a desire to examine female subjectivity as presented and narrated by women, instead of relying on fictional representation of them. This focus was stimulated by my initial research topic which prompted questions about the stereotypical representation of women in South African fiction. Furthermore, I outlined the theoretical premises for my investigation. In Chapter Two, my analysis focused on King's autobiography, arguably the most 'dusty' text I discussed. In this chapter I primarily commented on her aesthetic construction of "I"dentity in conjunction with other sites of identity formation such as agency achieved through relationality, her embodied subjectivity and her negotiation of the 'I' in relation to other racial and ethnic

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[88] Stellenbosch University Library, for example, has a section (in the Africana collection) devoted to life writing of the marked period. The large number of texts bares sad witness to these neglected and 'forgotten voices'.

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identities. Chapter Three similarly examined Rorke's self-presentation of agency, embodiment and her navigation between 'I' and the Other. This chapter also considered the veracity of her life writing and how she manipulates or fictionalises her narrative to present a heroic portrayal of herself as a South African Florence Nightingale. The influence of a predominantly Afrikaans-speaking cultural context framed my discussion of Van Heerden's work, specifically her negotiation of gender relations in a patriarchal society, how she textually 'slips' her performance of masculinity and lastly her problematic representation of ethnicity.

This final chapter considers whether the 'I' of three white women's autobiographies provides sufficient evidence to ascertain South African female subjectivity (1854-1948). The research produced various insights which I discuss in consideration of the nature of the female 'I' as presented and employed by the three women autobiographers. Below, I expound on elements of similarity and difference in the portrayal and establishment of their female subjectivities. In the process, I clarify why I included photographic images in Chapters Two to Four and conclude with a few remarks on the possibilities for future research.

In life writing theory, as indicated by theorists such as Smith, Watson, Heilbrun, Brownley and Kimmich, the 'I' marking the page is the determinant and crucial part of the 'genre'. Without the 'I' claiming a life in the text representative of that 'I' outside the text, there is no life writing. I, in conversation with these theorists, explored the use of the 'I' in South African women's life writing and now list a few observations regarding the South African female 'I'. The 'I' on the page itself seems insignificant, unassuming, and bifurcates into two identical halves. But this sign, what it *achieves* by establishing female "I"dentity and subjectivity, becomes manifest in discussions of identity. Through the employment of 'I', these women imagine, reimagine, narrate, and claim the subjectivity made accessible through its use. Not only does the 'I' provide a podium from whence they can account for themselves and present their Subject; it also becomes a tool of manipulation, a technique ready-made for seduction and sensationalism, for conveying ideals and knowledge, a sign by which they assign agency and subjectivity to the body and person (their memories and experiences) outside the pages of their Self-text. The most notable aspect of these women's 'I' is its awareness of being watched, read and evaluated. Therefore, as my analysis has illustrated, they paradoxically

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imply, omit, challenge, embellish, shock, subvert, speak out, avoid or shift the focus to others in order to placate and divert the audience. Their 'I's are not homogenous, but the complexity of divergent "I"dentities achieved by King, Rorke and Van Heerden attest to a multifaceted South African female subjectivity (1854-1948). Although an examination of these three white women's accounts of Self is inadequate for establishing South African female subjectivity, my research nevertheless indicates that women's identity in the delineated period was heterogeneous. Furthermore, the investigation illustrates that women were not necessarily simple-minded, submissive, enclosed by convention, biddable, compliant, confined to and by the limits of their bodies, and/or mouldable by men and society, as literature (historical accounts, fiction and non-fiction) on and of the period tends to portray them. As I have argued and maintain here, the clarity of the written female 'I' (1854-1948) did not etiolate with time; its senescence and consequent neglect calls for additional critical investigations.

The use of 'I' is a given feature of autobiography; a means to write the Self, present a worthy Subject, claim agency, and thereby establish a unique subjectivity. The difference between the narratives, however, lies in tone and intent. As I have illustrated in Chapters Two to Four, these three women also rely on relational depiction of others in the text to formulate and colour their 'I'. Although the authors' individual achievements (Brownley and Kimmich 1) are respectively veiled (King), narrated in a casual manner to hide pride of the achievement (Rorke), or communicated in ways which explicitly or implicitly celebrate their individual accomplishments (all three authors), the narratives are grounded in and develop from the socio-political and cultural milieu of colonial or decolonised South Africa. Their achievements are conveyed in a variety of tones and thematic emphases. King ultimately lauded the fact that she was the first woman to travel from Cape to Cairo in a car. This is narrated in an assertive tone. A level of modesty is maintained when she discusses her business feats and, as I have illustrated, she positions her sense of Self in relation to her husband without explicitly disparaging his failures and shortcomings. Like King, Rorke also emphasises her achievements as pioneering female traveller, one who confronted the dangers of settler life in Matabele- and Mashonaland. Her entire narrative is shrouded in the metaphorical actress's cloak, layered with fabrication, even donning the imagined persona of herself as the "Florence Nightingale of the Boer War" (196). Rorke's use of relationality is wrought by ambivalence and intent since she employs others to ratify and elevate her Subject.

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Van Heerden's 'I' brought alternative insights to the project. Van Heerden's 'I' is more 'I'-centred in her self-narration, but she nonetheless also negotiates and evaluates this 'I', especially in terms of her growing awareness of gender discrepancy in her youth, in relation to especially her mother and brother. Her work celebrates her achievements as the first Afrikaans-speaking female doctor in South Africa who also wrote her medical dissertation in Afrikaans. Unlike King and Rorke, she expands on her personal successes to reflect on her role in a larger project of emancipation as participant in the South African suffrage movement and as an advocate for a socialist and democratic change in South Africa to eradicate social inequality. Emerging from her gender orientation, however, her account, which is mostly frank about gender inequalities, remains primarily 'silent' about her own sexuality: a freedom denied by socio-cultural and socio-political regulatory systems. I discussed how this subject either rejected or internalised gender conventions based on heteronormative values.

In each chapter I explored the ambiguous representation of race and ethnicity in each woman's writings. I established that they all write from the position of racial, cultural and moral superiority. King and Rorke both participate in the colonial project and classification of the Other as inferior. Although they are not consistently disparaging in their portrayal of the Other, their depictions underscore their colonial and imperial sentiments and convictions. Van Heerden, despite campaigning for racial and gender equality in South Africa, includes similar racialised descriptions of others in her work. The question remains: What does their portrayal of ethnicity and race reveal about their subjectivity? Their subjectivity relies on, and is informed and influenced by the discourses prevalent in what they perceive as their nationality or cultural group. They thus define and narrate themselves in accordance with their association and in so doing propagate the "*[v]olksgeist*" (Brennan 53) of their group. This 'group' in these cases are the British South African colonial subjects (King and Rorke) and white Afrikaners (Van Heerden). Their texts are self-representative and therefore they cast and narrate themselves as the heroes of their group (Brennan 47-53). As writing of these two groups indicates, a de/colonial subject of a group defines herself in relation to (by mostly focussing on difference) other races and ethnicities: in essence, what 'I' am not. They make sense of Self by examining the Other. In this respect, Judith Butler's observation seems applicable:

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> Moreover, the very terms by which we give an account, by which we make ourselves intelligible to ourselves and to others, are not of our making. They are social in character, and they establish social norms, a domain of unfreedom and substitutability within which our "singular" stories are told (*Giving an Account* 21)

The "making" of their accounts relies on "social norms" that inform the sense of self and of others. Their subjectivity is thus reliant on these norms, especially group and racially orientated, and clarifies their ambiguous portrayals of the Other.

To navigate these texts, I employed theoretical terms such as embodiment (Smith and Watson *Reading Autobiography* 239) and performance and performativity (Butler *Bodies that Matter* 234) in this thesis to examine gender discourses and the women's negotiation thereof in their work. The presence of the body, their embodied 'I', is consistent in the three women's portrayals of Self. Their bodies were the definitive determinant of their gender, and the gendered discourses with their implicit limitations, of their separate societies. As such, what the body means and culturally denotes outside the pages of their life writing, becomes visible in the negotiation of gender discourses in the text. Furthermore, they do not divorce the body and their consciousness in their self-narrative and thus their 'I' seems always embodied. The body becomes both the site of resistance and adherence to conventionality and morality in King's narrative. Rorke similarly and paradoxically subscribes to and rejects morality and the gendered expectations of her society through her portrayal of the body, but she also deploys the body as writing technique to critique her society and to shock her reading public. This is partly achieved through the performative aspect evident in the text and the ways in which the authors manipulate the textual body to appear or act in accordance with ascribed morality and convention. The body in Van Heerden's narrative transgresses at various intervals. The most notable social infringement (medical intervention), however, is not discussed in the two autobiographies but her exterior physical performance of masculinity (men's attire) suggests that she discards the enforced and ascribed 'femininity' attributed to the female body in Afrikaner society. It should first be noted that "the exposure" of their bodies "takes place in [...] written address" that does not "capture the body" (Butler *Giving an Account* 38). Nonetheless, they expose their bodies and endeavours for scrutiny in the portrayals. I suggest that the "[intelligibility]" (Butler *Giving an Account* 21) or discourse their separate societies allowed them was defined by their very bodies, and as such, the body becomes the means by

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which they can provide a narrative of themselves and make sense of themselves. Paradoxically, their employment of the body for manipulation and resistance in their narration (refusing food and conversation, becoming mobile, discussing its biological functions) suggests that they subvert and eschew the norms of their societies in order to gain subjectivity beyond the limitations of their body and what that body means in their society.

The religious (Christian Calvinist) milieu of colonial/decolonial South Africa also surfaces in different ways in the three authors' work, as I have indicated throughout my analysis. Biblical references are included to either reflect personal belief systems on par with colonial or national sentiments and discourses (which require a certain kind of moral behaviour from their subjects) or are directly refuted because of prescriptivism, as is the case with Van Heerden. King's and Rorke's colonial 'I' subliminally endorses their morality and signals compliance to the reader by referencing the Bible, but this also enables them to subversively transgress while seeming acquiescent in accordance with ascribed religious morality.

Lastly, as I have indicated throughout this thesis, these women autobiographers were acutely aware of their reading public and how they might be 'read' by that public. Their 'life' is conveyed through 'writing' in the autobiographical genre, and they signal their awareness of public scrutiny. I propose that this awareness of other gazes in their society and their perception of them is not merely limited to the pages of their self-writing, but in fact they mediate and adjust their behaviour, in 'real' life, just as carefully as they negotiate their 'I' in the text. Taking this supposition into account, it would indicate that South African female subjectivity involved constant, never-ending and perpetual mediation and reflection that was acted upon after careful outer and then inner consideration. Who they are, what they do, what they say, what they think, how they then act, was established by a constant negotiation between Self and the discourse implicit in society.

My argument shows that certain thematic and subjective concerns and portrayals thereof imbricate in the three women's self-narratives. Implicit in these similarities of course are also the different narrative modes of self-representation, such as tone, voice and the subjective "I"dentity established through the use of 'I'. I briefly revisit the different narrative techniques and modes of self-presentation employed by each woman, as discussed in Chapters Two to Four.

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King's *bildung* in her narrative stems from a desire to be considered as "worthy" (9). She uses this as a writing technique to present throughout the narrative that she indeed lived a life of worth, and that it was worth capturing this life in her autobiography. Her ambition emerges with clarity, but causes tension in her story-telling since she also presents herself as subscribing to Victorian morality. This tension is caused by societal expectation and a desire to simultaneously adhere to and reject her prescribed role as woman. This tension is also noticeable in that she fulfils and even appears to love her domestic role, but by subverting the principles underlying domesticity through the employment of domestic skills to manage successful businesses, she exhibits fear of "[snobbery]" (110) and societal judgement. Therefore, she arguably feels that she has to endorse her position as renegade woman and achieves this with reference to the "Prince of Wales" (110). King also claims agency as intrepid and pioneering traveller. Her incredible journey from Cape to Cairo to London arguably functions as metaphor in her text for a life journey "worth" (9) noticing. King's subjectivity is influenced and informed by the British colonial society, but through her disavowal of biological restrictions achieved through the resistance of her body and her entry into economic spheres, she claims a subject position as counter-conventional, critical and intelligent. This subjectivity is distinctly female in her presentation of self, yet non-conformist to her society's ideals regarding women.

In my view, Rorke's narrative is reminiscent of hybrid texts, described in contemporary scholarship as "'autobiographical fiction'" of "'creative non-fiction'" (Krog cited in Viljoen "The Mother as Pre-Text: (Auto)biograpical Writing in Antjie Krog's A Change of Tonque" 135), which introduces the possibility of another avenue for further research within a broader time frame. Rorke's autobiography could even be regarded as the first example produced of this 'genre' by South African female writers. The essence of autobiographical fiction is that it denies generic categorisation: its fluid and imaginative presentation of Self is not reliant on factual 'truth'. This 'genre' also defies categorisation because although it merges and fluctuates between autobiographical and fictional presentations of Self, it yet remains in a liminal or hybrid undefined space between genres (McNeill 1-18). This 'undefinable' genre, the "generic sliding and overlap" (McNeill 1), is representative of Rorke's subjectivity since the line between fabrication and fact remains obscured. Her subjectivity, although influenced by and then acted to her society, is arguably more representative of Self than the other two

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female autobiographers since she represents her Subject in the manner she wants to be viewed. Hereby, she exposes her fears, anxieties and desires. Rorke textually acts her desired subjectivity to her audience. What appears in her self-narration is that she wants to be perceived as transgressive, sensational, intelligent, sober, beautiful and desirable. Factually, what can be established is that she was indeed brave, as is evident from her participation on the "war zone" (7), determined, since she did realise her ideal to become an actress, and critical of her society. Rorke flagrantly disregards her society's reliance on morality and truth by fabricating her life story and 'acting' on it. She does not establish her subjectivity by convention and expectation but manipulates and shocks in order to gain a selfhood that is acceptable to her. She answers the question: "Who are you?" (Butler *Giving an Account* 30) with one of the "many selves" (Brownley and Kimmich xiii) she inhabits and can dramatically relate to her audience.

As I illustrated in Chapter Four, the subjectivity Van Heerden exhibits in her life writing is critical of her society; a subject with passionate humanist-socialist beliefs for equality afforded to all other subjects. Her "[failed account of self]" (Butler *Giving an Account* 79) regarding her sexuality is partly due to a lack of lesbian discourse to internalise and mimic and the audience's inability to acknowledge the possibility of such a discourse. Her 'I' does not narrate an integral aspect of her identity, but she lets 'slip' that she desired other women. Van Heerden's subjectivity is portrayed and established as wilful, obstinate, critical, challenging, but with a willingness to be self-critical and change her opinion accordingly.

I now return to the question: How representative are three renegade New Women's life writing of South African female subjectivity? Firstly, one has to consider how representative they are of their groups. A reading of other autobiographies written by women in the delineated period reveals that most of the women who wrote autobiographies during 1854 to 1948 can be regarded as New Women. This apparent coincidence begs an interesting question: Did South African New Women specifically employ the genre of autobiography as a quest for self-definition and a mode through which they could explain their 'I' to the audience, or were there more counter-conventional and critical women in the outlined period than I originally assumed? Further research is required to successfully answer this question, but nonetheless, it presents exciting possibilities. The three women autobiographers this thesis

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investigated were white, educated, from middle-class families and ambitious. As such, do they represent women in their distinct groups who do not fit this description? Regardless of the limitations of merely investigating three white women's self-representation in life writing, what can be proposed is that every female 'I' is unique and achieves autonomy in individual and imaginative ways.

Chapters Two to Four contain photographs of each subject. I deliberately did not comment on these visuals in the body of my work. The 'silence' was intentional. My study was concerned with life writing, but by including the images I signified that these women are and were not merely an 'I' on the page: they lived and still live on in the pages of their self-presentation and therefore their corporeality, in my view, should be yoked back into the literary gaze as well. The female autobiographer is an embodied subject and her body is the host of and for her memories and experience. This body is not simply an abstract reference in their autobiographies. Its presence and its cultural and personal significance are portrayed in their self-presentation. There were photographic illustrations of the subjects and families within, or on the cover page of, their (initially published) self-representative texts. In subsequent reprints (for example the Dassie publication I used) the photographs were omitted. The visuals represent the physical carrier of their experience. I have included the selected photographs to emphasise the female autobiographer's position as an embodied subject and to provide a visual of the body written into the text. As mentioned, these texts (and their writers) are and were marginalised by convention and scholarship. In my critical analysis of their written self-representation I attempted to expand on the notion of voice by including different forms of self-writing by and about the authors outside the primary texts (letters, articles, etc., where available). However, I still felt discomfited by the exclusive focus on the written word. In my view, this focus inadvertently made me an accomplice in the marginalisation process. By recalling at least one image of each woman, the images arguably add to this project's attempt to give forgotten subjects a voice.

I have included both extended excerpts and plot (story) summaries of and from these women's narratives. This approach, in my opinion, provides the reader with sufficient material to 'hear' their stories and not merely my reading thereof. It was never my intention to

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suggest what I perceived in analysis is accurate or the only possible interpretation; instead, I sought to trace the ways in which "I"dentity is navigated in the chosen texts.

When considering the scope of this thesis, I suggest that one of the limitations is that it only deals with three subjects. I have indicated throughout works by authors that could be included in a larger project which would aim at repositioning these works in the South African life writing archive through a feminist postcolonial reading. Such a reading would widen a conversation on perceptions of ethnicity, race, body, gender and female subjectivity, as depicted by women. Another avenue for researchers would be to expand on the time frame or select a different frame altogether. I chose the time frame because I found it fruitful in terms of the texts studied and the parameters set out in Chapter One.

I struggled with the following issues in the course of my investigation. Primary sources proved difficult to locate and consequently I extended my search and discovered valuable information provided by Cambridge University through interlibrary loan. However, I waited for a protracted period for this material. My search for additional information also led me to other libraries across South Africa, especially on the topic of Rorke and King. To unearth relevant archival materials which were not properly filed and noted proved difficult, but the JS Gericke library (Stellenbosch) provided useful material on Van Heerden. Furthermore, I struggled to locate comprehensive and articulated research on lesbianism in South Africa before 1994 and therefore compiled from other sources what I thought was relevant to my queer reading of Van Heerden's work. To determine my theoretical approach also proved difficult due to the lack of scholarship on South African female subjectivity in the period 1854-1948. I aspire to carry out future research on women's life writing and, with this thesis, hope to encourage other scholars to explore this fertile ground for academic writing on forgotten texts.

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