

*This Land is Us: Aspects of the Plaasroman and Hospitality in Five Post-apartheid Karoo
Novels.*

Masters Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates five texts: Damon Galgut's *The Imposter* (2008), Anne Landsman's *The Devil's Chimney* (1998), Eben Venter's *My Beautiful Death* (1998) and *Trencherman* (2008) and Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* (2000).

In addition to being written in the post-apartheid era, these five texts are all set wholly or partially in the Karoo, a semi-desert landscape unique to South Africa. The Karoo is, however, more than just a common setting onto which their individual stories have been transposed. It is part of the literary imagination of each text. Within these texts are a number of fluid interactions between the consciousnesses and the landscapes they portray. Of course, to attempt to examine these interactions as occurring purely between landscape and consciousness would be foolhardy. As such, this project investigates these links by comparing the texts under investigation to the historical literary form of the plaasroman and by scrutinising them through the theoretical concept of hospitality, as outlined by Jacques Derrida.

According to J.M. Coetzee term 'plaasroman' refers to the type of early twentieth-century Afrikaans novel which "concerned itself almost exclusively with the farm and *platteland* (rural society) and with the Afrikaner's painful transition from farmer to townsman" (1988: 63). This project investigates all five texts in relation to a number of the concerns common to the plaasroman, including the idea of the farm as a patriarchal idyll, its valorisation of near-mythical ancestral values and the pushing of black labour to the peripheries of narrative consciousness. These concerns, along with the fact that the plaasroman marks out the farm as a fenced off area surrounded by threatening forces, means that it is an ideal form to include in an investigation involving hospitality

Derrida outlines hospitality, at its most basic level as "the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else's territory" (Derrida 2007: 246). This relationship, however, goes further than a simple binary. Both host and guest give and receive hospitality. From Derrida's meditations on the subject come two forms of hospitality: Conditional and unconditional. The primary distinction between these two kinds of hospitality is a distinction "between a form of subjectivity constituted through a hostile process of inclusion and exclusion and one that comes into being in the self's pre-reflective and traumatic exposure, without inhibition, to otherness" (Marais 2009: 275). Unconditional hospitality is the latter and morally preferable.

In linking the two concepts, this dissertation illustrates the degrees to which each text, through subverting, or conforming to the conventions of the plaasroman, achieves instances of unconditional hospitality.

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Introduction

[T]he stillness is so intense that you can hear the heaving of your own breast. This is the Karoo. To the stranger, oppressive, weird, fantastic, it is to the man who has lived with it a scene for the loss of which no other on earth compensates.

Olive Schreiner (1923: 38).

The Karoo of which Schreiner speaks in the above epigraph, which comes from her work *Thoughts on South Africa* -- is one which she would have viewed more than a century ago. In the years since, numerous writers have attempted both to convey the same sense of awe described by Schreiner, through the form of the novel, and to theoretically investigate how novelists have attempted to portray and represent the Karoo. This depth of writing and study should not, however, preclude any further investigation into texts which make use of the Karoo as a setting. While the five texts under investigation in this project – Eben Venter’s *Trencherman* (2008) and *My Beautiful Death* (1998); Zoë Wicomb’s *David’s Story* (2000); Damon Galgut’s *The Imposter* (2008) and Anne Landsman’s *The Devil’s Chimney* (1998) – might be linked by their being wholly or partially set in the Karoo, it is more than just a common setting onto which their individual stories have been transposed. The Karoo is part of the literary imagination of each text. Within these texts are a number of fluid interactions between the characters’ consciousnesses and the landscapes they portray. Of course, to attempt to examine these interactions as occurring purely between landscape and consciousness would be foolhardy. As such, this project explores these links by comparing the texts under investigation to the historical form of the plaasroman and by scrutinising them through the theoretical concept of hospitality. For the most part, these two pillars are investigated separately. In certain sections of the dissertation, however, they do intersect.

In order to go into more specific detail about the way in which the plaasroman and hospitality are used, and, thereafter, the way in which I have set about writing this project, I will first explain what I mean by each of these terms. The definitions which I provide for the plaasroman and hospitality will also aid in clarifying why I have chosen to use them as the primary conceptual markers for this dissertation. Following the exposition of these definitions, I will outline the primary theoretical texts which this project uses and how it builds upon the bases which they provide. Building on the explanation of my primary theoretical texts, I will elucidate the reasons for choosing the five primary literary texts which I am investigating. Having outlined the definitions of the plaasroman and hospitality, as well

as an explanation of the primary theoretical and literary texts which this project builds upon, I will provide an explanatory structure of the chapters which follow. This structured outline will also assist in showing how each chapter is used to aid an overall understanding of the novels under investigation. Finally, I will lay out the specific aims and goals of this project.

The term 'plaasroman' refers to the type of early twentieth-century Afrikaans novel which "concerned itself almost exclusively with the farm and *platteland* (rural society) and with the Afrikaner's painful transition from farmer to townsman" (Coetzee 1988: 63). The writers of these novels "celebrated the memory of the old rural values or proclaimed their durability or elaborated schemes for their preservation", whilst "they satirized the pettiness, selfishness and lack of family feeling of the *verengelse* (anglicised) urban Afrikaner" (Coetzee 1988: 83). The above values and themes common to the plaasroman arise from the particular historical shifts which were occurring at the end of the nineteenth – and the beginning of the twentieth – century in South Africa. As the depth of South Africa's mineral wealth became increasingly evident, towns began to spring up around the mines, fuelling land speculation and "a shift from wool to food production as the focus of an increasingly commercialised agriculture" (Wenzel 2000: 93). This drastic shift in the mode of agricultural production, along with various other factors, led to increasing urbanisation and the perceived erosion of old rural values venerated in the plaasroman. In the face of this perceived erosion of values, the plaasroman, in its original form, acted as "a kind of social dream work, expressing wishes and maintaining silences that are political in origin" (Barnard 2007: 26).

Alongside the valorisation of the rural values of the past, including a unity of family through lineage, selflessness and the preservation of family land at any cost, the plaasroman enshrines a number of other values. Among these values is the idea that, across the nation, there exists "a network of boundaries crisscrossing the surface of the land, marking off thousands of farms, each a separate kingdom ruled over by a benign patriarch with, beneath him, a pyramid of contented and industrious children, grandchildren and serfs" (Coetzee 1988:7). In order to maintain the mythology of a benign patriarchal kingdom, sustained "through generations of family labour" (Wenzel 2000: 94), the form of the plaasroman required that black labour be pushed to the peripheries of, if not entirely dismissed from, the narrative.

It is these very specific markers of the plaasroman: a valorisation of patriarchy, ancestry and the elision of black labour in relation to landscape, along with the fact that it "has historically defined itself as a fenced-off terrain (usually the farm) surrounded by threatening forces in the main" (de Kock 2001: 267), which mark it out as ideal for

investigation in terms of hospitality. In referring to hospitality, I take it to indicate, at the most basic level, the relationship between host and guest and “the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else’s territory” (Derrida 2007: 246). This relationship, however, goes further than a simple binary. Both host and guest give and receive hospitality. The theory of hospitality which I am using comes from Jacques Derrida and is derived, primarily, from his meditation on the suggestive term “the other”. The extract below, which illustrates the significance of the other to hospitality, comes from Derrida’s work interrogating the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas: The other is not even a concept, since concepts suppose anticipation, a horizon within which alterity is amortized as soon as it is announced precisely because it has to let itself be foreseen. The infinitely-other cannot be bound by a concept, cannot be thought on the basis of a horizon; for a horizon is always a horizon of the same, the elementary unity within which eruptions and surprises are always welcomed by understanding and recognised. (2001: 95)

From the above explanations of the other and infinitely-other, two kinds of hospitality may be extrapolated: conditional hospitality and unconditional hospitality. The primary distinction between these two kinds of hospitality is a distinction “between a form of subjectivity constituted through a hostile process of inclusion and exclusion and one that comes into being in the self’s pre-reflective and traumatic exposure, without inhibition, to otherness” (Marais 2009: 275). Marais elucidates this distinction in his application of hospitality theory to J.M. Coetzee’s *Slow Man*. He goes on to explain that within the framework of conditional hospitality, the “host expects and therefore knows his guest prior to his arrival” (Marais 2009: 275). In the process of naming, the guest immediately becomes other to the host. Moreover, the host imbues the guest with a set “of expectations attendant on the self’s location in a cultural domain” (Marais 2009: 275). In so naming the guest, the host exercises his/her power to engage in an “exclusionary process of self-affirmation that not only shields him from the strangeness of others but also, through placing them at a distance, enables ethical indifference” (Marais 2009: 275). Unconditional hospitality, on the other hand, occurs when that which is different about the guest or stranger is received before they are, or can be, denoted as different. Consequently, the guest is able to enter the consciousness of the host unexpectedly and without prior warning. The guest, therefore, “cannot be known in advance from within a priorly formed system of linguistic conceptuality. In not being able to name, to grasp in language, the stranger, the host loses her sovereignty over and distance from this visitor” (Marais 2009: 275). In a state of unconditional hospitality, then, the self in both host and guest is displaced to the degree that neither can be named as other. In order to

achieve this displacement of self, the changes undertaken in a process of unconditional hospitality must be pre-reflective and involuntary (Marais 2009: 276). In the midst of this process, “ethical indifference becomes impossible” (Marais 2009: 276), as there is no other to be ethically indifferent toward. Nor, indeed, is there a self to be ethically indifferent. Critically, Marais states that the act of unconditional hospitality “is not an action which the host undertakes as an agent” (2009: 276). The fact that ethical indifference becomes impossible in a state of unconditional hospitality means that it is, perhaps inevitably, ethically preferable to other ethical concepts such as tolerance. I posit that unconditional hospitality is the preferable state because, “within the concept of tolerance, there resides an awareness not only of the (threatening) Other as potential challenger to the structures and values of those who believe themselves tolerant, but also of the power wielded by the granter(s) of tolerance” (van Schalkwyk 2008: 86). Tolerance then, allows the host to designate the guest and to participate in the exclusionary process of naming and placing the guest in terms attendant on the host’s location within a specific cultural domain (Marais 2009: 275).

It is the sense of the host being unable to undertake unconditional hospitality as an agent, possessed of consciousness, which this project seeks to explore in relation to the portrayals of landscape in the five texts under investigation. It would, initially, seem more likely that unconditional hospitality would arise in a relationship involving landscape. Intuitively, landscape cannot be an agent in a relationship for it is not possessed of consciousness. I intend to show, however, that the conventional *plaasroman* constructs landscape as a conditionally hospitable host. In the demands which the landscape of the *plaasroman* places on the farmer, namely that his exclusive union with the farm “will entail that in good years the farm will respond to his love by bringing forth bountifully, while in bad years he will have to stand by it, nursing it through its trials” (Coetzee 1988: 86), it takes on the role of the conditionally hospitable host, naming and placing expectation on its human guest. Even when the landscape is not imbued with this mystical agency, though, the relationship between it and those who inhabit it is, conventionally, one of conditional hospitality. This is most particularly so in the manner in which the landscape is portrayed as entering into the consciousness of its inhabitants. The landscape which enters into the consciousness of those conventionally portrayed in the *plaasroman*, white male Afrikaners, is a named one. In the act of naming, the host renders the guest as other whilst, at the same time, framing him/her/it within the realm of the familiar. When such processes are applied to landscape, “space is transformed into place, and geographical territory into a culturally defined landscape” (Darian-Smith et al 1996: 3). Any landscape which does not conform to,

or subverts, such plaasroman-type norms is, therefore, more likely to be an unconditionally hospitable one. Further, any agent who is able to achieve unconditional hospitality with the landscape is more likely, having been unhomed and devolved of self, to achieve the same kind of unconditional hospitality with other humans.

In my investigations of the ways in which the texts under investigation either conform to or subvert the conventions of the plaasroman, I will turn to theorists who have written on the plaasroman in general as well as those who have theorised, on the specific aspects of the plaasroman which I have chosen to investigate. J. M. Coetzee's *White Writing* provides the understanding of the conventions of the plaasroman against which I measure the texts under investigation. Couched in Coetzee's exposition of the conventions of the plaasroman, are explanations of the manner in which the plaasroman form views: patriarchy and gender, familial lineage, human interaction with, and within, the landscape, as well as the treatment of black labour. The conventional treatment of the above four concepts, in the plaasroman, is one of the pillars which this project builds itself upon. Given the scope of *White Writing*, it cannot provide an in-depth analysis of each of these concepts and is instead limited to an overview within its historically driven exposition of the plaasroman. As such, I turn to theorists who have dealt with the thematic issues of gender and patriarchy, lineage, interactions with the landscape and black labour individually. Where possible, I have used theorists who have dealt with these issues within the scope of the plaasroman or of texts which respond to the conventions of the plaasroman. Many of these theorists, themselves, use *White Writing* as the theoretical basis from which they undertake their investigations. They build upon Coetzee's ideas as well as advancing them through critique. Stewart Crehan's work, entitled *Rewriting the Land: Or How (Not) to Own It*, is a prime example of this kind of theoretical work. I turn to Crehan's ideas in a number of instances, particularly those in which I need to describe the implications of a particular manner of writing landscape. Others, however, deal with particular aspects outside of the specific framework of the plaasroman. In the chapter concerning patriarchy and the plaasroman, for instance, I have attempted to mesh the work of theorists who concern themselves with gendered spaces in the public/private divide as well as those who concern themselves with femininities and masculinities.

There is a link to Coetzee in the chapters in which I explore the texts under investigation in terms of hospitality with the landscape and black labour. For whilst the basis of the theory of hospitality which I am using comes from Jacques Derrida, I will be making extensive use of Mike Marais's application of Derridean hospitality to Coetzee's fictional works. One of the primary reasons I have chosen to use Marais's work so extensively is

because it both explains and illustrates Derridean theories of hospitality. Using Marais's work, however, does mean that certain of my explanations around hospitality are written at a remove from direct translations of Derrida's own evocations of hospitality. Direct translations, though, are not without their own problems. The fact that Marais provides literary contexts to which Derridean conceptions of hospitality can be applied means that his work is of far greater value to this project than a number of direct translations of Derrida's own writings on the subject. Bearing all of the above in mind, it would be remiss of me not to note that both Derrida and Marais limit themselves to inter-human relationships between conscious agents in their writings on hospitality. This project attempts to add to Derrida's conceptions of hospitality as well as Marais's applications of these conceptions. The most significant way in which this project attempts to add to the work of Marais and Derrida is by applying the concept of hospitality to human relationships with and inter-human relationships within landscape. Intuitively, it would seem implausible to set landscape up as an agent in a host/guest relationship. In choosing to ignore this intuition and suggesting that the *plaasroman* does posit landscape as an agent in a host/guest relationship and that for a hospitable relationship to occur, named and placed landscape has to be restored to space, I am making an addition to hospitality theory which, to the best of my knowledge, has been explored little, if at all. I carry certain of these ideas into those parts of the project concerning interactions between people within the landscape. More particularly, I build on the historical conceptions of the ways in which black labour has been historically represented both within the *plaasroman* and in later forms of South African literature. The theorists to whom I have turned in forming an understanding of the historical ways in which black labour has been represented are, again, J.M. Coetzee as well as Rita Barnard who surveys South African writing in relation to place and space in *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place*. One of the benefits of using theorists like Coetzee and Barnard is that their framework of ideas concerning interactions between humans and landscape and the issues surrounding landscape, race and labour may be easily applied to Derridean hospitality theory.

Having outlined both the theoretical concepts which this dissertation concerns itself with and the primary theoretical texts from which I have drawn those concepts, it is now worth elucidating the reasons for choosing the five primary texts which I will be investigating in terms of the *plaasroman* and hospitality. One of the very particular reasons for choosing the texts which I have is the fact that their dates of publication cover a large portion of the post-apartheid era, from 1998 to 2008. The diversity in their dates of publication mirrors the

diversity of temporal settings which they have chosen to use in their writing of post-apartheid Karoo landscapes. *David's Story* and *The Devil's Chimney*, for instance, choose to switch between a contemporary narrative present and a distant narrative past. In *David's Story*, the contemporary present is that of the eponymous David and his wife Sally, while the narrative past is that of their Griqua ancestors. By contrast, *The Devil's Chimney* switches between the contemporary present of its alcoholic narrator Connie and her construction of the life of Beatrice Chapman, who Connie constantly refers to as Miss Beatrice, a nineteenth century Englishwoman forced into the exile of Oudtshoorn by her husband's gambling debts. *The Imposter*, in which a recently unemployed Adam decides to take up residence in a small Karoo town in an attempt to resuscitate his once-celebrated poetry and *My Beautiful Death* – which sees its stream-of-conscious narrator Konstant seeking life outside the bounds of his family farm, only to have to come to terms with his own impending death in Australia – by contrast, choose to exclusively use narrative presents which are contemporary to their publications. Finally, *Trencherman* chooses to locate the quest of Marlouw to find and return his nephew Koert from the former site of the family farm in a post-apocalyptic near future, albeit one which resonates strongly with the South Africa contemporary to its date of publication.

There is also a great sense of diversity in the spatial settings of each novel. The Karoo, it should not be forgotten, is very large. This immensity is reflected in the different areas of the Karoo in which each of the texts is wholly, or partially, set. The settings range from isolated reaches of the Northern Cape in *David's Story* to the deep interior of the Eastern Cape in *Trencherman*, the hinterland of the Western Cape in *The Imposter*, the ostrich farms of the Oudtshoorn district in *The Devil's Chimney* and the Eastern Free State in *My Beautiful Death*. It is this self-same sense of diversity among the texts which, I feel, allows me to use two texts by Eben Venter. *Trencherman* and *My Beautiful Death* are different in their spatial and temporal settings, their narrative styles and, indeed, in the manner in which they represent landscape, as well as the interactions of their characters within landscape. Ultimately, however, what the diversity inherent in these texts allows for is an illustration of how heterogeneous their responses to the highlighted conventions of the plaasroman are. Moreover, the diversity of settings, both temporal and spatial, as well as the diversity of narrative technique and characterisation, mean that the common features of relationships which I show to be based in conditional or unconditional hospitality are highlighted more vividly than they might otherwise have been. The manner in which I will work with and through these diversities in terms of investigating the five primary texts with

regard to the plaasroman and hospitality is most effectively demonstrated by an outline of what I am attempting to do in each chapter of the dissertation.

The first chapter of this dissertation concerns itself with the means by which the authors make use of, subvert or reject the patriarchal ideal espoused in the plaasroman form. I include the thematic of concern with patriarchy, partially because of ideas such as that espoused by Zoë Wicomb, who insists that in order for post-apartheid South Africa “to live up to the hopefulness it has engendered, the multifarious histories of South Africa’s diverse populations, including women, must be heeded in the process of nation building” (in Baiada 2008: 33). The concern with conventional patriarchy is not, however, one which exclusively concerns women. This chapter, therefore, will also concern itself with the manner in which masculinities in certain of the texts are presented in relation to landscape and the conventional representations of masculinity in the plaasroman. This chapter thus concerns itself with the manner in which the interactions between, as well as the portrayals of, men and women in relation to landscape – as presented in the five novels under investigation – conform to, reject or subvert the conventions of the plaasroman.

Linking with the ideas of patriarchy explored in the first chapter, my second chapter asks how the authors deal with notions of familial lineage and the proto-mythological status it has with regard to the relationship with the landscape. To some extent, it shows the ephemeral quality of place within space. In the conventions of the plaasroman, the ancestral inhabitants of the family farm are portrayed as handing down and fortifying a strict code of morals and ethics from generation to generation. More than this, they “pin the living down to the ancestral farm. They also call the living to them when it is time to depart and protect the farm against outsiders” (Coetzee 1988: 104). Tied to the obligation of ancestry is the prescriptive notion that landscape should be farmed with piety toward future generations. What this chapter aims to do, therefore, is investigate the manner in which each of the texts conforms to, rejects or subverts the portrayal of past and future lineage, a prescriptive force of morality in the treatment of landscape.

Acting as the bridging point between the theoretical pillars of the plaasroman and hospitality, the third chapter concerns itself with the manner in which the texts represent physical acts of inscription to the landscape. The way in which such acts are inscribed will be analysed through the lens of management of the landscape, which I shall argue has implications for the conscious self. In the conventional mode of the plaasroman, for instance, landscape is represented as an aspect of the self’s identity and as other to the self. Such analysis will be couched in terms of Derridean hospitality theory. Whilst inscriptive acts at a

purely agricultural level are fundamental to my study, I shall also analyse the following physical inscriptions because they influence the way in which history and lineage are understood: acts of domestication through building, and the erection of boundaries and monument. Inextricably linked to the discussion on the inscriptive relation between the self and landscape is the fact that this chapter will also function as a means of bridging the two principal theories of “plaasroman” and “hospitality”. In attempting to bridge these concepts I must, of course, define what I mean by the term hospitality. In finding a workable definition of hospitality I will turn to Jacques Derrida’s conception of the terms ‘conditional hospitality’ and ‘unconditional hospitality’.

Having raised the concept of hospitality in chapter three, the fourth chapter focuses on the interactions between the self and other within the Karoo landscape as presented within the texts. More specifically, it will concern itself with the manner in which the landscape mediates the degrees of hospitality present in the relationships between individuals within the master-servant binary. In order to make this investigation meaningful, I will follow a number of specific steps. Firstly, as I did in the previous chapter, I will establish the historical precedents for the portrayals of such relationships. In order to do so, I will turn to surveys of the South African writing landscape such as those by J.M. Coetzee and Rita Barnard. Following this, I will attempt to convey what I mean when I say that a relationship between people is hospitable or inhospitable. In doing this, I will refer, as in the previous chapter, to Jacques Derrida’s work on hospitality and Mike Marais’s application of his theories onto the works of Coetzee. Having established the historical precedent and the theoretical framework, I will be able to apply this understanding to the texts under examination.

Of course, the above delineation of this dissertation into neat chapter-sized components suggests a level of simple compartmentalisation which does not exist in this project. The specific ideas espoused in each chapter feed off and borrow from those of the others. In considering acts of hospitality between men, women and landscape as well as men and women within landscape, for instance, I use the breakdown of previously explored gender roles as a means of illustrating the degree to which self and other are dissolved in instances of unconditional hospitality. Any part of this dissertation, then, should be considered within the framework of the whole.

This fluid interchange of ideas between chapters should not, however, suggest that my intention with this dissertation is to attempt to find any single, all-encompassing point of convergence in the way in which the post-apartheid Karoo has been written. Rather, my intention is to illustrate how each of the texts, as individual texts, deal with the particular

aspects of the plaasroman and hospitality which I have chosen to focus on. By drawing attention to the heterogeneity of each text – even within the confines of a very specific set of parameters – I am avoiding, to a large degree, the fate of those overly ambitious projects concerning South African literature which “apologise for attempting to do the impossible and then go ahead anyway” (de Kock 2001: 263).

Chapter One: Die Arme Moeder in die Huis (The Poor Mother in the House)

Or

Patriarchy and the Plaasroman

Your father's gone a-hunting

Through the quicksand and the clay

And a woman cannot follow

Although she knows the way

Leonard Cohen

This chapter will concern itself with the means by which the authors make use of, subvert or reject the patriarchal ideal espoused in the 'plaasroman' form. I include the thematic concern with patriarchy, partially because of ideas such as that espoused by Zoë Wicomb, who insists that in order for post-apartheid South Africa "to live up to the hopefulness it has engendered, the multifarious histories of [its] diverse populations, including women, must be heeded in the process of nation building" (Baiada 2008: 33). The concern with conventional patriarchy is not, however, one which exclusively concerns women. This chapter, therefore, will also concern itself with the manner in which masculinities in certain of the texts are presented in relation to landscape and the conventional representations of masculinity in the plaasroman. This chapter will thus concern itself with the manner in which the interactions between, as well as the portrayals of, men and women in relation to landscape – as presented in the five novels under investigation – conform to, reject or subvert the conventions of the plaasroman.

The suggestion made by the lyrics in the epigraph to this chapter is particularly pertinent to its aims. Within it there is the implicit idea that there is a space which women cannot inhabit when that space is claimed as masculine. That many theorists have made and critiqued this claim in relation to agricultural endeavour is of particular use for this project. Critiques of the realist John Locke's political writing, for instance, have noted that he "defines groups of people as non-citizens depending on their capacity to own property and their specific relationship to the head of the household" (Arneil 2001: 30). This would not seem, on the face of it, to exclude women from active citizenship. However, when one

considers that Locke “explicitly limits the proprietary authority of the husband to ‘goods and land’” (Arneil 2001: 34) and that in his view “only the English farmer male head of household has the right to own property” (Arneil 2001: 39). One might see how exclusionary a space the farm is in conventionally patriarchal theory. The implication is that women cannot achieve ownership and thus citizenship unless they are willing to “wrestle power from their husbands as the main obstacle to their freedom” (Arneil 2001: 42). This conventional view undoubtedly informs the patriarchy inherent in the form of the plaasroman. The examination of how the texts which this project concerns itself with critique, subvert or conform to this understanding of the patriarchy inherent in the plaasroman is what follows.

The title of this chapter comes from A.G. Visser’s poem “Oorkruis” (in Brink 2000: 97). Although I have removed the title from its surrounding context, it offers a starting point from which one may begin to explore understandings of certain of the conditions of patriarchy within the mode of the plaasroman. Such understandings include ideas surrounding domesticity and the domestic sphere as a place inhabited by women who exhibit quiet and patient suffering in the face of familial adversity – almost inevitably tied to catastrophe on the farm – and who are subservient nurturers of the traditional Afrikaner moral standards.

In referring to domesticity and the domestic sphere as place, I am drawing attention to the notion that those areas which are deemed ‘domestic’, such as the interior of the house and, more particularly, the kitchen, are at once part of and distinctly separate from the ‘plaas’ or farm. Such an understanding of the domestic may be seen as a form of confinement, a situation in which “one allows a limitation to be placed upon oneself, whether wittingly or unwittingly” (Cloete 1992: 47).

The obvious corollary of this is that the rest of the ‘plaas’ is a place of distinctly masculine activities in which the farmer must display his ability to construct history, to “love the farm, love this one patch of earth above all others” (Coetzee 1988: 86). Within this functionally masculine place¹, there is also an implicit understanding that this is a project repeated across South Africa and that there is, therefore, “a network of boundaries crisscrossing the surface of the land, marking off thousands of farms, each a separate kingdom ruled over by a benign patriarch with, beneath him, a pyramid of contented and industrious children, grandchildren and serfs” (Coetzee 1988: 7).

¹ It may seem strange to refer to a largely outdoor place being “within” anything. The word is deliberately used here to highlight the importance of the fact that, typically, the “plaas” is a space definably delineated and rendered place.

Both of the above situations conform to the conventional western notion that the world is divided into a “political, public, sphere populated by male citizens, and a non-political, private, sphere populated by their non-citizen wives” (Arneil 2001: 30). What this chapter aims to do then, is to understand how each text deals with these gendered places. The manner in which they use and subvert the conventional representations of the domestic and the farm will be examined. Tied in with this will be an examination of how the texts deal with conventional representations of masculinities and femininities within these rendered spaces. In doing so, it will not only consider representations of the places and their inhabitants in binary terms but will also take cognisance of various instances of interactions between masculine and feminine within both the domestic and the ‘plaas’.

I will begin this examination with an investigation into Anne Landsman’s *The Devil’s Chimney*. With the drastic juxtaposition of its narrator, Connie, and Beatrice Chapman, the English aristocrat whose story she becomes obsessed with, the text illustrates two femininities which both contrast and reflect upon each other. The spatial setting is the Karoo ostrich farming town of Oudtshoorn. Whilst Miss Beatrice’s and Connie’s narratives are separated by most of the twentieth century, both occur at times of great social change – the former at the peak and fall of the ostrich feather industry and the latter as South Africa is emerging from the shell of apartheid. The manner in which both of these protagonists deal with the changes occurring around them as well as the events of their everyday lives reveal a number of things about their places as women within society. More revelatory however, are their reactions to places which are definably domestic and those which are definably sites of landscaped place, as well as their interactions with males in these spaces. Miss Beatrice is particularly significant in this regard, at least in part because she acts as a foil to Connie’s consciousness. From the descriptions which Connie provides, Miss Beatrice appears to conform to conventional notions of femininity. It is once her husband Henry walks into the veld in a fit of madness, seemingly gone for good, that she “takes off her blouse and puts on a khaki shirt” (31). Miss Beatrice’s taking on the clothing of a man results in numerous changes in her manner and actions, particularly in the ways in which she deals with the landscape and the domestic. Practically, her donning of male clothing allows her much easier access to the veld. It also, however, allows her to enter into the traditionally masculine space of the farm landscape. She is thus able to assert that “*she’s*² the farmer” (36). That is, she can assert ownership in a paradigm in which it is “only agrarian labour or ‘tilling, planting,

² My own emphasis.

subduing' that underpins the right to property in the land" (Areneil 2001: 38). In stressing the importance of Miss Beatrice's decision to wear conventionally masculine clothes, Connie seems to be in collusion with the idea that this change "is the means by which transformation and a different life, a different set of values, characteristics and activities, is acquired and supported" (Suthrell 2004: 16).³

That Miss Beatrice comes to feel a sense of owning self within the landscape is evident in Connie's statement that "she just made Highlands her country" (43), as well as in the changes which she begins to institute in the house on Highlands. It is worth taking note, however, that Miss Beatrice still requires a male instructor in order to fulfil taking ownership over the land. It is her neighbour Mr Jacobs, the self proclaimed "ostrich king", whom she chooses to take up this role. That he and Miss Beatrice become lovers is of interest in this regard, particularly as it is Miss Beatrice who is described as having mastery over Mr Jacobs. The first time they make love, for instance, it is Miss Beatrice who is, initially at least, characterised as "riding him across the Little Karoo" (54). Gradually, Miss Beatrice endeavours to bring more and more of the exterior landscape, over which she feels she has some semblance of control, into the domestic interior of the farm house. The earliest, although somewhat misguided, instance of this which we are given insight into is her attempt to construct a fountain in the middle of the house. It is misguided precisely because it is constructed and is revealed as such through the death which seems to plague its construction. We are told that a "young ostrich had crawled into it and died, and so had some meerkats" (76). Perhaps more significantly, this passage illustrates how fractured the delineating borders between domestic and exterior have become. It does so, for instance, in describing the basin for the fountain as a cemetery "for the animals and birds that strolled in and out of the house" (76). This invasion of the exterior into the interior as a reflection of the changes inherent in Miss Beatrice is further manifested in the one attempt she makes to return to her previous manner of dressing, in her ill-fated visit to Mrs Jacobs, the wife of her neighbour and lover. Inside her corset, she finds a "spider's nest, the size of *hotnot's head*" (57). This, of course, renders the corset unwearable. Without the confinement of the corset Miss Beatrice is no longer able to fit into her green dress. The implication is clear: the natural world and life lived within the natural world do not allow for the given level of ascribed femininity which is required for the wearing of such materials. It must be noted that the figure required for the

³ In her clothing choice, Beatrice both joins and subverts a tradition of women in literature "who went to look for their long- lost husbands or lovers and needed to dress in male attire in order to sail the seas or go to war" (Suthrell 2004: 16).

ascribed femininity of the green dress is one designed for the world of nineteenth century, aristocratic England. That is, it is the kind of femininity which would not have included labour or the valorisation of labour in its construction. The contrast between a genteel, green England and the harsh, brown Karoo thus takes on another level of significance when one considers the reflected comparison between Miss Beatrice's green dress and her Khaki shirt. If Miss Beatrice is to survive the natural world, along with its various manifestations both within the house and throughout the farm, she must forsake precisely such an ascribed femininity. That is, she must escape the femininity of the green dress, a femininity designed for interiors and the cool of England rather than the harsh, dry exterior of the Karoo.

It is, of course, worth remembering that Miss Beatrice is English. It is also worth remembering, however, that her narrative is presented to us by Connie and within Miss Beatrice's narrative lie many of Connie's own desires and wishes. They are, therefore, desires which she feels she cannot – or dare not – claim outright. Connie is at least partially Afrikaans but is, however, removed from 'plaas' life by a number of generations. Indeed, she appears to be afraid of many of the constituent elements of farm life. This fear is illuminated in a particularly revealing passage: "I was afraid once, when I saw a page in a children's book with a picture of a backyard by night, all the animals stalking, the cat on the fence, the dogs' eyes like lamps, and moles and mice awake and busy" (33).

Connie's family appears to be of mixed Anglo-Afrikaner heritage. She appears then, to be the very antithesis of the mode of Afrikaner protagonist found in the conventions of the plaasroman. Too afraid to enter into true communion with the land, she also represents the type of person who would have been denounced and satirised by the early plaasroman writers, for being a "*verengelste* (anglicised) urban Afrikaner" (Coetzee 1988: 83). Whilst the contemporary Oudtshoorn of the novel is hardly the metropolis the original plaasroman writers would have feared, Connie's lifestyle of excessive drinking – largely a consequence of her attempts to block out the tragedy of her lost child – certainly seems out of synch with the celebrated memory of "the old rural values" (Coetzee 1988: 83). Most particularly however, there is the perception that Connie's family are "poor whites" and as such are distinctly separate from the land-owning classes of Afrikaner which the plaasroman eulogises. The manner in which Connie narrates Miss Beatrice's story may, in such a light, be seen as reactionary to the traditional modes of the plaasroman. Miss Beatrice's story not only

represents hope that a woman may have some mastery⁴ over farming in the harsh Karoo landscape but also presents a challenge to the idea of Afrikaner farmers ordained to land ownership by natural right. It questions the central notion of Afrikaner identity in the plaasroman. That is, that “the founding fathers pay for the farm in blood, sweat and tears” (Coetzee 1988: 85). This can be seen in light of the fact that in the narrative which Connie presents, it is Miss Beatrice who hacks out the success of the farm, independent of her husband, Henry. Moreover, the only white male who is granted knowledge over the landscape in the narrative is a prosperous Jew, a member of a people who were seen as one of the many forces preventing the continuation of traditional Afrikaner rural values, and who were frequently attacked as such in the form of the plaasroman. The rebelliousness which Connie presents in her narrative, though, is ultimately fruitless. In a manner which suggests some degree of self-fulfilment, she initially seems to embody the very traits which the writers of the early plaasroman suggest to be the consequence of anglicised urban living. As a poor white of mixed linguistic heritage she is denied the chance of rearing her child conceived out of wedlock, and eventually succumbs to alcoholism. I would suggest, however, that Connie’s narrative is intended to, and very obviously does, show up the logical inconsistencies of the traditional patriarchal values rendered idyllic by the plaasroman. The marriage, for instance, which Connie and Jack are forced into upon learning of her pregnancy, becomes the loveless, twisted embodiment of the failings of the kind of strict code of morality enforced by the Afrikaner patriarchal system and traditionally presented as worthy of valorisation and celebration in the plaasroman.

The fact that Connie mirrors the loss of her own baby with the narrative theft of Miss Beatrice’s child suggests a reading in which concerns over purity, both racial and moral, have seen Connie robbed of the potential for an independent future. The memory of hope for such a future, for a woman unable to make true sense of her hybrid identities and robbed of the child she could most tangibly identify with, is something which Connie appears to feel can only be temporarily held at bay by drinking increasingly stronger forms of alcohol, eventually turning to methylated spirits, as “cold as dying” (75).

The apparent similarities between *The Devil’s Chimney* and *David’s Story* – most particularly the manner in which they manage to weave imagined histories and the literary

⁴ I am fully aware of how gendered a term “mastery” is, particularly within the context of this chapter. Its use, along with others, such as “husbandry”, does jar somewhat. I have, however, yet to find sufficiently applicable, gender-neutral alternatives.

present into a cohesive narrative – might be seen as being overshadowed by their differences. For instance, the Griqua women who are given narrative voice in the Karoo spaces of Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* initially seem to have a relatively stable sense of identity. Yet the insecurities which they share, albeit in different forms from Miss Beatrice and Connie, highlight Wicomb's project of presenting a narrative which serves as a “reinvention of history that brings women to the fore...thereby challenging any authoritative national narrative that might discount them” (Baiada 2008: 34). Wicomb's unnamed narrator, mediating the stories of the protagonist David Dirkse, uses the conventions of patriarchy in the *plaasroman* in a particularly subversive manner to illustrate the frustrations of women in changing South African and Griqua/Coloured circumstances. The instances of female focus in the narrative which I wish to explore most thoroughly are those surrounding the characters of Ouma Sarie and Rachael le Fleur. I choose these two in particular because their narratives place them at critical junctures in Griqua and Coloured history and because theirs are the two narratives most focused in the Karoo.

Ouma Sarie's is the first narrative which the reader encounters in *David's Story*. It is worth taking note that the things which Ouma Sarie remembers fondly as she returns to the hotel where she used to work – the terracotta tiles which “she used to linger over... with her rag of Cobra polish” (6), for instance – are distinctly interior to the hotel. The hotel itself, with its green garden, is seen as an entity separate from the surrounding Karoo “that would not acknowledge its presence” (6-7). Outside of the hotel too, Ouma Sarie appears to be most comfortable in domestic spaces. Few of the memories which she recalls with fondness have anything to do with the exterior Karoo landscape. Instead she notes how the “unmistakably coloured country houses” inevitably have a door which is “divided horizontally, so that in the evenings a person could rest her folded arms on the latched lower half and watch the daylight slipping into dark” (7). She is also described as having been the “enemy-general of games” (7), sending girls from the “freedom of play to the pisspots”(7). The degree to which Ouma Sarie's imagination is rooted in the domestic realm may, however, be best seen in the manner in which she describes the political change occurring in South Africa at the time of the novel's present. Aside from her description of the Boers having kept “Mandela clean and fresh on the island” (8), she “casts an appreciative eye over her own modernisation, the glazed windows and the lovely patterned lino that looks just like the photo of the Logan foyer” (8), and finally thinks to herself that the “bad old days of dung floors are over” (8). Such an expression suggests that Ouma Sarie's narrative serves, to some extent, as a

subversion of notions in which the “needs of the nation are identified with the needs, frustrations and aspirations of men” (Baiada 2008: 34). That is, the narrative of Ouma Sarie illustrates how the processes of history and temporal change occur as much in places of domesticity as they do in the exterior places of demarcated land. Indeed, the positive changes which Ouma Sarie perceives in her own life may be seen as a domestic inversion to the trope – seen frequently in the *plaasroman* – of the land reacting positively to good stewardship.

Wicomb also illustrates the universality of patriarchal mechanisms in South Africa. Whilst certain of the male characters in the novel, like the Griqua leader Andries le Fleur, are excluded from the Afrikaner nationalist ideal of *Volkskap*, despite using Afrikaans and eventually colluding with the proto-apartheid government, the women are expected to play similar roles of *volksmoeder* (literally: mothers of the people), or “‘bearers of the nation’, its boundary and symbolic limit” (Baiada 2008: 34).

Perhaps the best exemplification of this continued expectation of the expected role of women as *volksmoeder*, as well as the “literary intervention into the silencing of women and their stories” (Baiada 2008: 34) in *David's Story* is Rachael Susanna Kok. Despite her appointment as successor to the Griqua chief Adam Kok III, she readily hands over power to her husband Andrew Le Fleur. It is he who repeatedly asserts that “Rachael, as a woman, has no business in the business of politics and nation” (Baiada 2008: 34). Whilst all of this occurs in the area surrounding Kokstad, which Adam Kok I had led the Griqua to, it remains pertinent throughout the journeys into the Karoo which Andrew Le Fleur convinces his followers to undertake in the search for a permanent homeland in the face of white colonial expansion. As these wanderings – along with Le Fleur's pronouncements – become increasingly erratic and directionless, Rachael appears to show what may be seen as a particular level of complicity “in surrendering to the masculinist discourse of nation” (Baiada 2008: 41). Baiada suggests that this is evident in the fact that Rachael “gives in to her ‘wifely’ duties even when she knows, as she frequently does, that her husband is acting foolishly”, particularly in the moments in which she lends him her voice, “in song, to distract others from his most dangerous moments of inanity or harshness” (2008:41). While this may, to a fair extent, be true, it fails to recognise the subtle means by which Rachael is able to undermine her husband's authority, most particularly in the manner in which she filters the media information he receives concerning himself and the Griqua nation. I would also suggest that Baiada does not sufficiently tackle the significance evident in Rachael's final act of rebellion before her death. In order to do so, the context in which it takes place must be

properly understood. Rachael's act of rebellion against her husband comes not merely in the face of Le Fleur misguidedly forcing the Griquas into apartheid complicity. Rather, it is the fact that Le Fleur does so after dragging his remaining Griqua followers to the arid hinterland of the Western Cape, imploring that "if they were to be decent God-loving people...tilling their own soil, they would have to trek, just this last time, for there was no salvation other than in a land base" (90). The final seeds of Rachael's rebellion are sown after Le Fleur convinces an even smaller number of his followers to remain in the desolate settlement of Beeswater where the only shelter is "a scattering of ragged grey tamarisk trees among the river" (91). Le Fleur's final fall into apartheid complicity comes after contracting some of his followers out to the white section of the town as employed labour, making obvious the degree of corruption evident in his already impossible vision of a self-determined Griqua nation tilling and thriving on their own land. Considering that these are the events which precede the final act against which Rachael rebels, I would suggest that it is far more than a simple rejection of the authority she has almost constantly ceded to Le Fleur for the entirety of their married life. In offering this more complex reading, I would posit that some exploration must be made of the way in which Rachael spends her dying days. Following her exit from the church service in which Le Fleur has announced his support of a segregationist Afrikaans government, Rachael takes to sitting "in her chair on the stoep to stare out at the blue of Maskam mountain" (163).

In choosing to spend her final days in silent, staring contemplation Rachael has rejected, along with her husband's apartheid complicity, his notions of belonging to land through toil on it. The landscape which Rachael claims for her time of dying is not one of toil but of contemplation. Further, it is a landscape not to be contemplated as a shared exterior but from within the self-located place of the domestic. In her rebellion and silent, contemplative death Rachael claims a space in history for the domestic, and thus subverts patriarchal notions typical of the *plaasroman* which suggest that history occurs outside of the domestic, on that which is mapped and demarcated and thus rendered identifiable as "the land". Rachael comes to illustrate, therefore, that it is entirely possible for the domestic, rather than the farm, to act as the "sacral place where the soul can expand in freedom" (Coetzee 1988: 175).

Of course, when considering the manner in which the patriarchal conventions of the *plaasroman* might be subverted, it is important that we do not restrict ourselves to considering subversions in representations of femininities or the domestic. Even if one is to accept the

frankly essentialist position that “[a]ll men benefit from sexism” (Flood in Crous 2005: 9), it is worth investigating the manner in which the masculinities present in certain texts have been constructed in relation to the patriarchal conventions of the plaasroman. To do so in a post-apartheid context is particularly relevant, as it allows an interrogation of how heterogeneous the responses of the selected texts to the homogenous conventions of their predecessors are.

The first text which I will be investigating in this regard is Eben Venter’s *My Beautiful Death*. In particular, I will be examining the trajectory of the protagonist, Konstant Wasserman, from the family farm in the Karoo to Johannesburg, a transient stop on his journey to Australia. Despite its transience, the time Konstant spends in Johannesburg, and the sharp contrast it has with his time on the farm, offers a number of avenues of investigation into subversions of the patriarchal conventions of the plaasroman. As has been previously noted, the plaasroman conventionally seeks to preserve and valorise the values it holds the old rural order to have had as well as to act as a warning against “the lure of city pleasures to the children of the patriarchs” (Coetzee 1988: 78). I would like to posit that in the descriptions of Konstant’s time on the farm and in the city, Venter provides an almost direct inversion of the plaasroman idyll of “the peasant proprietor and his sons and daughters recover[ing] their true selves by a return to the earth” and coming to recognise “that true happiness is to be found on the farm where they were born” (Coetzee 1988: 80).

Indeed, the reader is almost immediately presented with Konstant’s discomfort at his return to the family farm and the various chores which require his attention in the area surrounding it. In fact, before it has even been established that Konstant has recently returned to the farm from university, we are presented with his foremost ambition: “TO GET THE HELL out of here and make a life of my own somewhere else” (7). In sending Konstant to the Red Store on his father’s chores, Venter seems determined to highlight the filth and unpleasantness required for farming, sharply contrasting the plaasroman convention of wholesome labour under the benign watch of the patriarch. Konstant particularly notes the salt blocks, designed to make the cattle “guzzle everything in sight, only to get fat and be slaughtered” (11), and the fishmeal to “be transformed into disgusting chicken meat” (12). Further, any possibility of a permanent return to the farm is represented as something which the wider community feel Konstant owes to his father. Tannie Trynie of the Red Store tells Konstant that his father has “worked himself to the bone for you lot. Keeping you at varsity and all” (15). Venter also presents various subversions of the idea of a benign patriarchy in

the early parts of the novel. Konstant, for instance, muses that “it’s you old guys who taught your sons to be as angry as you are” (17). It becomes possible then, to see how Venter has inverted the conventions of wholesome toil, of a return to the family farm under the rule of the father, as a return to one’s true self and of a benign patriarchy, so common to the plaasroman.

The completion of this inversion may be seen in a number of descriptions of Konstant’s time in the city, traditionally seen as a “threat to traditional values [...] with its liquor, gambling, prostitution and foreign ways” (Coetzee 1988: 83). Konstant’s father makes his subscription to this belief plain in his biblically invoked assertion that Johannesburg is a “slum, that whole bloody city. Sodom if you ask me” (22). The first of the plaasroman conventions to be inverted in the formation of Konstant’s masculinity comes in the form of a person rather than an event or process. Deloris Williamson is the first person Konstant makes any connection with in Johannesburg and acts as his guide to the city as well as his guide into the liberating potential of many of the activities which the plaasroman conventionally warns against. It is through Deloris⁵, with “her raunchy fully developed bosom” (30), her marijuana and physical contact that “goes no further than nipple flirting” (33), that Konstant is able to shake off the feelings of shame he has been brought up to feel at any indulgence. Her physical features come to embody liberation for Konstant, for they act as a counterpoint to the righteous self-denial of the farm, allowing him – for instance – to “accept her buttocks for what they are: like her bosom, they too are abundant and generous” (37). Like their nipple flirting, Konstant’s realisation of his own masculinity under the tuition of Deloris can only go so far. It is at a rare party without Deloris that Konstant meets the “doublegender, heart bender” (48) Jude. With Jude’s first kiss Konstant finds that his “bundle of codes of conduct is fraying at the edges” (53). Jude, then, is one of his final releases from the bounds of the behaviour which would have been expected of him at home on the ‘plaas’. That is, his homosexual experience with Jude acts as a very direct “challenge to the specific definitions of what is meant by masculinity and male roles” (Crous 2005: 13) on the farm. What Konstant’s time in the city, set against the little we are shown of his return to the farm, does is invert the conventions of patriarchal masculinity and affirmation of self-identity found in the plaasroman. That is, it seeks to reverse the notion that the “[c]ity and town can [...] be assimilated as places where the limiting horizon and the pressure of human society constrict

⁵ Incidentally, Deloris is Catholic, bringing to mind the perceived threat of “Roman Catholicism (Roomse Gevaar)” which was “likened to the difficulties the Israelites encountered themselves” (Cloete 1992: 43).

the soul and prevent its growth” (Coetzee 1988: 108). Perhaps most successfully, however, the shifts which occur in Konstant through his move to Johannesburg illustrate that masculine identity is not “merely a character type or behavioural norm, but part of ‘the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives’” (Cornell in Crous 2005: 11).

More directly concerned than *My Beautiful Death* with a return to the land, is *Trencherman*, also by Venter. In discussing the manner in which *Trencherman* deals with the patriarchal conventions of the plaasroman, I particularly wish to explore the manner in which Marlouw constructs his masculinity upon his return to “Ouplaas”– the farm of his birth – from Australia. From the outset of the novel we are made aware that Marlouw, unlike his namesake from *The Heart of Darkness*, is ill-equipped and unwilling to undertake the kind of rescue journey which the protagonists of both texts are sent on. He perceives that his sister Heleen’s desire that he go to retrieve her son Koert “is no request: it’s a command. One that will turn my life upside down” (1).

His acquiescence to this command hardly bodes well for a return to a farm which, by convention, would have seen him inherit the mantle of patriarch over both land and family. Instead, he and Heleen have, at Marlouw’s suggestion, given Ouplaas over “to the three families who’d been working the farm for the past thirty, forty years” (10). Marlouw’s surrender of his conventional birthright, along with the physical hindrance of his club foot would, initially, make him seem the very antithesis of the son, jaded by urban experiences, returning to discover his true self.

There is something, however, of the prodigal⁶ son in Marlouw’s attitude towards his return. Considering Marlouw’s own fairly significant means, we must assume that he has reasons for making a return trip to Ouplaas, outside of Heleen’s hold over him and any feelings of avuncular duty toward Koert. I would thus argue that Venter uses the convention of the son returning to the land in a way which very deliberately undermines notions of patriarchal ownership and belonging.

The subverted convention of the prodigal son becomes particularly evident when one compares Marlouw’s experiences to those of his nephew. In commencing this argument, I would like to point to the definitions which Venter provides in one of the book’s epigraphs

⁶ In Afrikaans “Die Verlore Seun”. A literal translation of the Afrikaans, that is, “The Lost Son”, is what I mean by “prodigal” here.

for Trencherman, Trencher, and Trench Foot; linking “a person who cadges free meals, a parasite” to a meat carver and a painful foot condition. Upon Marlouw’s arrival in the Karoo hinterland of the Eastern Cape, it would seem that Koert has assumed the role of the rightful inheritor of the farm, making “the earth bring forth manyfold and the flocks increase” (Coetzee 1988: 85), fairly successfully. From Giel, the man in the dilapidated Aliwal North bar, we learn that knowledge of Koert in the area is centred around the fact that “he’s a laaitie, but man, he’s built an empire for himself in this district” (99).

Once Marlouw arrives on the farm, however, we learn that Koert’s gains have been made without what would be conventionally be termed care for the farm. We see that instead of fixing windmills and irrigation or planning renewable breeding of the sheep he so readily slaughters for sale to the surrounding district, Koert is living an existence in which he need “merely subsist upon what the ancestors built” (Coetzee 1988: 86), whilst allowing the physical structures of the farm to continue in their slow decay. Further, the characterisation of Koert seems to suggest a number of the flaws inherent in the system of patriarchy extolled as idyllic in the *plaasroman*, particularly with regard to the loss of independence in thought and action for those who are required to labour under it. This loss of independent thought is exemplified by the fact that Koert has demanded all the furniture in the farm house – which is, of course, not his – and that the former labourers, to whom the farm now rightly belongs, “lugged it into his quarters” (121). It is further exemplified by Mildred’s explanation that it is Koert who “says when we can slaughter sheep” (130), in spite of the fact that the farm rightly belongs to her family and the families of the other former labourers. The last of these two revelations is particularly noteworthy in the manner in which it juxtaposes the assumed order in Marlouw’s query of how often the former labourers “get sheep to slaughter per month” (130). Contrastingly, Marlouw approaches Ouplaas without any pretence of returning the farm to any useful form of production. Whilst, unlike Koert, he recognises that the various implements and structures on the farm are in dire need of repair, he does not make any pretence of having the capability or inclination to fix them. Instead, he asks the farm’s inhabitants a banal line of questions concerning the farm: “Why the hell didn’t you buy dose a long time ago?” (141), when told that he is to take Pilot into town to buy anti-tick dose, whilst there are already animals dying, and “Where are all your sheep, Pilot?” (149), when noticing their diminished numbers. Within the distant care which Marlouw purports to be exercising in these questions, however, is a veiled sense of how deeply the idea of masculine land entitlement is embedded in his consciousness. He admits as much upon the interruption

of his efforts toward reaching Koert's quarters on his first night at Ouplaas. It is worth noting this particular passage in its entirety, as it illustrates how fundamentally Marlouw's idea of his own masculinity is tied to Ouplaas:

Imagine, right here at the window that was once Pappie's study. What's worst is the isiXhosa in my ear, slopping like pap from a man's mouth. It nearly drives me berserk and makes a sense of ownership well up inside me: that I'm standing with my feet on this werf where the cold is rising from below, that I know this kind of winter's night all too well; that I know this house built on this ground better than anyone else; that I was suckled here with milk, milk that tasted of bossies – that I still have a claim to this ground. How dare they creep up through the night and attack me like this (139-40).

The depth of Marlouw's indignant rage would, initially, seem to contradict what I have previously stated regarding Venter's undermining of patriarchal notions of masculine identity being tied to ownership, particularly inherited ownership, of land. In order to rescue this assertion, attention must be turned to Marlouw's final imagining of Ouplaas. After Marlouw's return to Australia, we are told that images of the Ouplaas come to him often and unbidden. These images are of an uninhabited landscape, "[c]lear and perfectly pure like in the beginning" (314), in which "the direction of the wind did not matter" (315) and in which the "name of the farm was also long forgotten [...] wind blowing through the ruins of the farmstead as if no one had ever lived there" (316). What it is possible to see from this is that Marlouw has given up the notion of the farm existing as a place and imagines it returned to space. In doing so he has given up his claim to it, as well as the masculine expectations which that claim would bring. Further, this has allowed him to find his true self, something which would not have been able to occur had he not returned to Ouplaas.

Whilst not directly concerned with a return to a familial farm – the Karoo house which Adam's brother allows him to inhabit is instead situated on the suburban outskirts of a rural town – there is something of the plaasroman and its patriarchal conventions in Damon Galgut's *The Imposter*. Adam's move, for instance, is necessitated by the troubles he has faced in Johannesburg. The loss of his job is foremost among these but is added to by a general sense of creeping corruption around his house in the city. The view we are given of Adam sitting, "watching it all go to pieces: the gangsters taking over, the squatters moving in, the crime and drugs getting worse and worse until it was too late" (14) could almost be read as a litany of the plaasroman's conventional fears regarding the city. Whilst, as I have stated, Adam is not returning to a place of his own ancestry and heritage, there is a prevailing sense

that the move is intended to act as a form of rehabilitation. That is, an escape from the city and into the country will allow him to recover his true self “by a return to the Earth” (Coetzee 1988: 80). Whilst Adam originally intends to find this redemption in a return to writing poetry – shed of his possessions he considers himself “the real soul of the country” (19) – yet, at first, the “poems didn’t come. Or not yet” (35). The initial rush of enthusiasm and efficiency which Adam feels at having thoroughly cleaned the house – an act of procrastination in and of itself – is tempered by the task of clearing the front lawn of weeds. Aware that it isn’t “easy to subdue the natural world” (24), Adam soon returns to a state of resignation.

At this point, I would like to suggest that just as Adam’s neighbour, Blom, makes him aware of how difficult the task of cleaning up his yard will be (he is described as spending “hours and hours outside each day, hacking and digging and pruning” (24)), he also makes Adam aware of the futility of trying to find redemption or renewal in the tending of the land and the menial labour such an endeavour requires. I suggest that it is Blom who opens Adam up to the futility of attempting to find redemption in a return to the land as it is through Blom’s confession of the crimes which he has committed in the name of apartheid that we come to realise that his quest is the most intense manifestation of Adam’s. Blom’s old life coming back to haunt him in the visit by a mysterious stranger, a visit which spurs on his confession to Adam, shows the futility of trying to find redemption in an old rural order. All Adam’s talk and Blom’s articulated desire of “having a new life, being a new person” (145) is precisely that, talk. In the hard, ugly shapes of Blom’s sculptures and the intrusion of the indelibly urban Baby into Adam’s poems, too, one might see a sense of futility in any attempt to find one’s true self through a retreat into the rural and a masculine, patriarchal management of the landscape. The only possible solution we are given as an alternative to this focus on the landscape is a focus on the human. The only time that Adam writes anything he considers worthwhile, he comes to realise that it is because of a felt presence of femininity “intervening between him and the landscape” (92). Similarly, he and Blom both rely on each other as points of confession, for what they need in the seemingly idyllic rural isolation they have carved out for themselves is “a human listener, someone fallible who understands” (125).

The conclusion which must be arrived at when considering the subversion of conventional patriarchal forms in *The Imposter* then, is one which is applicable to all the texts studied in this chapter: namely, that the constructed masculine role of one who is inextricably

bound to the landscape and is restored through toil upon it whilst consigning femininity to the sphere of the domestic, is a role which perpetuates the fault of those who have sought to make or base their identities on the South African and, more particularly, the Karoo landscape. That is, in constructing their identities of individual patriarchal masculinities and femininities around the land, they have constructed them around that which “which is least likely to respond to love: mountains and deserts, birds and animals and flowers” (Coetzee 1992: 97). In thus rejecting and subverting such conventional plaasroman-type constructions, the selected texts almost universally turn to community as the means by which one can find one’s true self and break free, albeit temporarily in certain cases, from the hegemonic understandings upon which these self-same conventions are founded. It must nonetheless be stated that each of the texts come to these conclusions in a heterogeneous manner, without uniform reliance of the plot devices or the kind of tropes of landscape and characterisation so conventional to the plaasroman.

Chapter Two: Hemel op die Platteland (Heaven on the Platteland)

Or

Ancestry, Landscape and the Plaasroman

Reguleer my, routineer my

Plaas my in 'n boks en merk dit veilig.

Fokofpolisiekar

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the manner in which the texts under investigation deal with the conventional representations of ancestry, lineage and their tie to landscape in the plaasroman. I will use J.M. Coetzee's historically centred explanations of the plaasroman in *White Writing* to show the degree to which ancestors and the landscape of the farm, handed down from generation to generation, become nearly synonymous in the conventional imagining of the plaasroman. I will also show how the expectations of the ancestors and of future, as yet unborn, generations are used as a means of instilling a code of morals and ethics, particularly toward the landscape of the farm. Following this, I will explore the roots of this philosophy of ancestor veneration along with the various implications attendant on it. With these implications in mind, I will be able to investigate the manner in which the texts under investigation conform to, or reject, the convention of interacting with the landscape in a manner of pious veneration toward past and future generations.

Those with an awareness of South African landscape will know that the term Platteland refers to any rural area rather than the Karoo specifically. This chapter, therefore, takes its inspiration from formative processes described in the song from which it takes its name and which provides the above epigraph. Why this should be so, in a chapter which is attempting to investigate the manner in which each of the texts deals with notions of lineage and the landscape, may not be immediately apparent. What I am suggesting in referring to the Fokofpolisiekar song in my epigraph is that in the conventional plaasroman archetype, coming to understand the tie between one's ancestry and the landscape also means coming to an understanding and becoming part of a certain code of morals and ethics handed down from

generation to generation. As Coetzee notes in *White Writing*, “The spirits of the ancestors do more [...] than pin the living down to the ancestral farm. They also call the living to them when it is time to depart and protect the farm against outsiders” (1988: 104).

The roots of the idea of ancestry being tied to, and embodied within, landscape go back nearly as far as the ancestral lines described in many of the stories told in the plaasroman mode. Olive Schreiner, for instance, uses the trope of a continual line of ancestry bringing a family closer to landscape in her c1906 short story “Eighteen-Ninety-Nine”, in which she relates the story of a Voortrekker family settling and making a farm from the wilderness of the Transvaal before their lineage is ended in what is now called the South African War. The burials of the various family patriarchs who die on or near the farm are given heightened significance, as it is felt that with each death “another root was struck into the soil” (in Chapman 2007: 82). That a sense of belonging tied to ancestry could develop so quickly is an idea which is adapted rather naturally to the plaasroman. It is, of course, impossible to celebrate “the memory of the old rural values” as the plaasroman does, without creating an image of the ancestors “as men and women of heroic strength, fortitude and faith, and instituted as the originators of lineages” (Coetzee 1988: 83).

There is, inevitably, a dark side to the kind of notions of lineage which are valorised and celebrated in the conventions of the plaasroman. This darkness occurs when it is accepted as a matter of course that “the founding fathers pay for the farm in blood, sweat and tears, not in money”, and that to leave or “alienate the farm means to forsake the bones of the ancestors” (Coetzee 1988: 85). The ultimate result of such valorisation is that the voices of the ancestors are ignored at one’s own peril and such is the significance attributed to them that even the unintentional “loss of a farm assumes the scale of the fall of an ancient house, the end of a dynasty” (Coetzee 1988: 83). Under such a model, it is impossible to be good unless one acts in the interests of the lineage and of the farm which has propagated it. The end result of this moral pressure, physically manifested in the farm, is a “largely unspoken/unacknowledged fear, rooted in the age- old dread of the ancestors” (van Schalkwyk 2008: 84).⁷

If one were to reduce Venter’s *Trencherman* to any one thematic element in a reading of it, then it would be the confrontation of the self-same ancestor-driven fear described above.

⁷ I should note, at this point, that van Schalkwyk’s study is of the original Afrikaans *Horrelpoot* of which *Trencherman* is the English translation. As such, any references in which he might quote the text are his own translations, not those of Stubbs.

I would add, however, that *Trencherman* does not merely present a confrontation of the fear of the ancestors but also of the type of fear which the ancestors sought to purvey in the formative dissemination of an Afrikaner identity. Among the master-symbols which are used in imprinting the type of Afrikaner identity espoused by the plaasroman are the ideas that “South Africa belongs to the Afrikaner [...] South Africa is an agricultural country and the Afrikaner *volk* are farmers [...] the Afrikaner is threatened” (Cloete 1992: 45). The post-apocalyptic setting of *Trencherman*, in which the country has been ravaged by Aids; all those capable of escaping have and all resources are scarce, is in itself a speculative manifestation of what would occur if resurgent fears of the *swart gevaar* or “Black Danger” came to fruition and the country would no longer be habitable for its former white, land-owning masters. For much of the novel, Venter seems to be presenting such fears as valid and just. There are no scenes of black prosperity; instead the country has been struck down by Aids and corruption. On the road out of a barely functional Bloemfontein airport, Marlouw encounters a crush of humanity, their “hands held out towards [him] like the fronds of giant riverside plants” (57). Upon reaching Ouplaas after a daunting road journey through the Eastern Free State and the hinterland of the Eastern Cape, Marlouw finds that the former farm labourers, who now nominally own the farm, exist in a state of near starvation. They are presented as having allowed Ouplaas to fall into a state of consummate dilapidation, with rapidly falling stock numbers and crumbling infrastructure.

Aside from the significant interference of Koert, it becomes apparent that much of the lack of progress on the farm is as a result of a subliminal fear which the farm labourers continue to have for their former masters. I would suggest that such a reading holds more credence than the type of conventional plaasroman reading which would argue that much of the farm’s failure in the face of widespread adversity is the fault of Koert’s over-dependence on consumerist products such as the Nintendo hand-held gaming device and the golden Nike trainers which he gives Pilot, and liquor, as well as Marlouw’s initial abandonment of Ouplaas to its labourers. Perhaps the strongest evidence for the reading which I am here offering lies in the former labourers inhabiting the old farm house. More especially, the manner in which they have chosen to inhabit it suggests a reverent fear for Marlouw’s ancestors. Most striking in this regard is the reasoning Mildred gives for the toilet door being locked shut: “The children messed in *your*⁸ toilet” (122), and following this up, stating that they now “shit outside in the veld like we did in the old days when we lived in our huts on the

⁸My own emphasis.

koppies” (123). Even if the pragmatic reasons given by Mildred are taken as a given, the toilet now stands as a monument to the cleanliness expected from the house’s former inhabitants – for which they would have relied on the type of labour offered by Mildred. Its function removed from it, the locked toilet and its pristine condition cannot but act as a memorial and reminder of the past and its inhabitants.

Venter’s most direct rejection of the plaasroman, however, lies in the fact that instead of giving Marlouw over to quaking obedience to the will of the ancestors, he forces him into direct confrontation with the fear which they create. After Marlouw realises that he has inherited this fear from his father through “its most honest expression in the dream” (196) concerning the nameless, formless man standing over the patriarch wielding a knife, he becomes more empowered to confront it directly. Moreover, he is given the tools to confront the fear by realising its name, that which lies at the heart of it. The ability to name and conquer this inherited, ancestral fear comes to Marlouw in the form of his father’s voice entering into his own consciousness. The voice explains that it is not death or the thought of being killed violently which lies at the heart of fear but rather, “that we Afrikaners would be wiped out roots and all” (205). Yes, one might argue that Marlouw does appear to acquiesce to the will of his ancestry and the command of his father that he go “and flatten that [the family’s ancestral] graveyard to the ground” (208). To read the command to and the action of destroying the family grave plot, I would suggest, as a literal command from Marlouw’s deceased father is to somewhat over-simplify this scenario’s role in the plot as a whole. A more complex reading requires that the internal dialogue which Marlouw holds with his father be considered in reflection of the events which transpire at the actual graveyard. A more complex reading is required in part because in spite of his intentions, it is not Marlouw who destroys the graves of his ancestors.

Instead, at the injunction of Koert, it is an incensed mob of the local black people who bring about the destruction of the graves. Marlouw notes that while some “hit at the gravestones with difficulty, reluctantly; others smash with intent as they join in the old woman’s hallelujah chorus” (268). It is important to note that, in the face of the deepest Afrikaner fear and despite the power of the myth of ancestral lineage, Marlouw does not feel the urge to resist this destruction of the graves which are, in effect, the most visible physical inscription remaining of his lineage. Indeed, it would seem that in witnessing the manifestation of his ancestral fear, Marlouw is able to rid himself not only of the fear itself but also of the power which his ancestors have, until this point, been able to hold over him.

When one considers the shedding of this ancestral fear in the light of what the voice of Marlouw's father has told him, one might also see that Venter has subverted a conventional role of a farm's ancestral voices, whereby they "call the living to them when it is time to depart" (Coetzee 1988: 104). Such a reading is validated by the emptiness, in terms of human inhabitancy at least, of the place once called Ouplaas, returned to a state of uninhabited space which Marlouw imagines in the text's final chapter. That is, Marlouw is able to give up all pretensions to proprietorship to the extent that he is no longer bound by the convention of the plaasroman whereby his relationship with the farm would be expected "to embody a marriage not so much between himself and the farm as between his lineage (*familie*) and the farm" (Coetzee 1988: 86).

The second of the Venter texts dealt with in this project, *My Beautiful Death*, does not deal as explicitly with "the age old dread of the ancestors" (van Schalkwyk 2008: 84) as *Trencherman* does. There is, however, a noted sense of Konstant having a painful awareness of the burden of ancestry as he makes his first move from the farm to Johannesburg. I will, of course, discuss the relevant instances of this in Konstant's narrative. More particularly, however, I intend to discuss the state of Konstant's consciousness as he lies dying in Australia and the implications which this has for notions of ancestry and lineage.

One of the earliest and most illuminating instances of Konstant's insight into his ancestry occurs as his train to Johannesburg is leaving the rural station of his hometown, with his family standing on the platform. The implication of Konstant's suggestion – directed towards his father – that "the only thing he values about me is my prick. He needs it to keep the family – I mean family tree – going" (26) is that there is a very definite element of dreading the pressure of lineage in his decision to escape from a life on the family farm. Indeed, in Konstant's telling of the incident which highlights, for him, the burden of his father's expectations, there is an implicit revelation of how deeply entrenched the burden of lineage can become. Not only are we told that the hope for progeny from Konstant on the part of his father is partly due to the fact that "at the back of his head there's an outnumbering, an out-whiting of the blacks" (26) but also due to the narcissism of the dream which Konstant's father tells his mother about, unaware that Konstant is listening. After expressing the desire for large numbers of grandchildren, Raster Wasserman states that his true hope lies with Konstant, stating that "the stunner would be Konnie's firstborn. A beautiful brown-eyed boy. And his name? Raster Wasserman, of course" (26). Were this to happen, Konstant's son would share the name of his grandfather, just as Konstant shares the name of his own paternal

grandfather. In such a recycling of names, there is the embedded expectation that the descendant will share the quasi-mythological strength of character imbued on the ancestor. In the above quoted passage there is the suggestion that the anxiety of meeting the standards of ancestors who ensure that “[i]nherited ownership of the farms becomes a sacred trust” (Coetzee 1998: 85) takes on a cyclical, repetitive aspect. We are given no insight into whether Raster Wasserman feels, or has ever felt any of the same ancestral frustrations as Konstant. We are, however, given signs of an unfocussed anger as evidenced by Konstant’s relief at escaping his father’s influence as the train to Johannesburg begins to draw away from the station: “[w]ithout a shirt on my back, at least I’m on my happy track – and free from your sjambok”, as well as his noting that Raster “says what he feels, whenever and however he likes” (25). It is possible, therefore, to see in Raster Wasserman the “substituting for the selfishness of one the selfishness of the lineage” (Coetzee 1988: 106).

By breaking from the farm, and ultimately breaking from the choice to have children and continue his branch of the Wasserman lineage, Konstant is breaking away from a convention of the plaasroman which comes with the understanding that the “manifestation of the lineage in historical time is the farm, an area of nature inscribed with the signs of the lineage” (Coetzee 1988: 109). One could, quite easily, extend such a line of argument to suggest that there exists an outright rejection of these types of plaasroman modes within *My Beautiful Death*. The text’s relationship with the conventions of the plaasroman is, however, a great deal more complex than the reading of the particular instances to which I refer above might suggest. The insights we are given into Konstant’s consciousness as he lies on his deathbed in Australia are particularly evocative when considering the complexity of this relationship. As Konstant lies dying,⁹ he yearns more and more for the family he has worked so hard to escape from. Significantly, amidst the delirium of his illness, in what will be the last conversation he will have with his father, Konstant expresses the wish that “Pa could take me by the hand one more time to the field below the dam wall” (264). Unlike the finality Marlouw is afforded in *Trencherman*, Konstant’s peace comes from imagining the farm in pastoral splendour under the guidance of his father. Even more significantly, Konstant asks his father to pray a blessing on his bones so that “I’ll never roam again but will come to rest at last” (265). One might see this as a reversal of Konstant’s original decision, an affirmation of the notion that every son will eventually return to the land and farm of his birth even if it is, in this case, in death. We must, though, take cognisance of the fact that Konstant envisions

⁹ His death appears to be, but is never explicitly stated as, Aids-related.

his remains as being cremated and that his “ashes will blow far from the Blue Mountains [...] I’ll be everywhere and anywhere anyone wants to see me” (265). Konstant will not become another in a series of buried bones rooting a lineage to the landscape; rather, he will become a part of its very dust and fabric, as his “ashes will sift down onto the koppies for the dassies to nest in, for the dogs to roll in” (265). Undoubtedly, there is a form of universality in his statement concerning the fate of his ashes. There is also, I would suggest, a very deliberate specificity in the manner in which Konstant ends this statement, promising that “[t]hat’s how I’ll return Pa” (265). All of this suggests that while Venter may critique notions of lineage, as conventionally espoused through the mode of the plaasroman, in *My Beautiful Death*, he is also attempting to convey the profound affect which the landscape of one’s birth has on one’s identity and consciousness.

Whilst, as I have previously stated, there is no family lineage linking the protagonist in Damon Galgut’s *The Imposter* to the landscape around the house which he inhabits, there is something to be made of Canning’s attempts to erase his ancestry at the farm he has inherited from his father. That Canning, a former schoolmate of Adam, attempts to erase the memory of his father and turn a profit from the conversion of the farm into a golf estate whilst using Adam as a point of confession on issues concerning his troubled relationship with his deceased father and the childhood of his past is significant, particularly if one compares this relationship to the one which Adam shares with his own neighbour, Blom. I would suggest that the similarities and contrasts evident in these two relationships are evocative of a more universalised uneasiness with both the past and ancestry, so eulogised in the form of the plaasroman.

Unlike the calm surrender which Marlouw undertakes in *Trencherman*, Canning’s goal with Gondwana, the farm which he has inherited from his father, appears to be the wilful destruction of the type of landscape his father had constructed. This destruction of the landscape of his father is, to a large degree, a part of Canning’s wider desire to destroy all remnants of his father’s life. Gondwana’s existence, along with Canning’s attitude toward it, suggests a very particular shattering of one of the central myths of the plaasroman. When one contrasts the fact that Canning’s father dedicated his whole life “towards only one thing – his game park. He saved money and bought different farms and patched them together” (57) with Canning’s own desire that the entire farm be converted into a luxury golf resort, one might see how fragile the notion that an ancestor who chooses “to yield his individuality in a devotion to labour to the past and future of the farm” (Coetzee 1988: 99) should be celebrated

truly is. The ultimate result of this love of the land¹⁰ – which, in what may be a potent deviation from the form of the plaasroman, sees him reversing the process in which the “founding fathers [...] hack [the farm] out of primeval bush” (Coetzee 1988: 85) – is not the idyll of preserved, patriarchal lineage promised by the plaasroman. Instead, because of the love Canning tells us his father neglected to give him, it becomes the cause of one of the primary fears of the plaasroman: the loss of the farm to outsiders, more particularly, outsiders who see the acquisition of the farm only in terms of commercial gain. In selling it to the investors willingly, Canning has broken the tenet that “[i]nherited ownership of the farm [...] becomes a sacred trust: to alienate the farm means to forsake the bones of the ancestors” (Coetzee 1988: 85).

In spite of seeming to desire the complete obliteration of everything his father had achieved on Gondwana, there is a sense that Canning cannot wholly separate himself from his ancestry. Perhaps the most potent symbol of Canning’s inability to separate himself completely from his lineage is the old farmhouse. Canning has abandoned it in favour of sleeping in the game lodge guest units on the farm. He does not, however, destroy it. Instead we are given descriptions of a house in a state of near stasis. Upon visiting it with Baby, Adam notes how “half-liquefied candles stand petrified in saucers [...] as if the *Oubaas*, Canning’s father, has just stepped outside for a moment and will be returning soon” (103-4). The solitary lion which Canning keeps in the drained swimming pool is another instance of this resistance to completely destroying the evidence of his lineage on the farm. Adam’s various descriptions of Canning – most notably that he “will hold forth sentimentally on some topic and then, an instant later the sentiment will turn inside out, becoming abrasive and nasty” (100) – do suggest a certain ambivalence toward his father, even if Canning’s own descriptions do not betray as much.

As I noted in the previous chapter, Adam serves as a point of confession for his Afrikaner neighbour, Blom. The story, however, also evidences Adam as a point of almost constant confession for Canning. Whilst Blom appears to have none of the ancestral baggage which Canning does, there are points of similarity between them. Both, perhaps most notably, appear to be trying to destroy any evidence of their pasts. Canning is attempting to physically destroy his, whilst Blom’s attempt to evade vengeance or persecution for the crimes which he committed in the name of apartheid has resulted in him recreating himself as an affable

¹⁰ I intend to deal with the fact that Canning’s father has bought up formerly agricultural farms in the chapter dealing with hospitality and the landscape.

railway retiree with an interest in welding. Blom's final statement as he leaves Adam's house, following his confession is, ultimately, what separates Canning and him. He tells Adam, regarding the acts of torture and murder which he enacted on anti-apartheid activists, that "[e]verything I did, I did for you. And other people like you" (147). In Blom's claim, I would like to suggest, there is something of Coetzee's idea of 'lineal consciousness' (1988). This idea, conventionally applied to the farmer-figure of the plaasroman, is one where an individual "recognises himself as a mediator between past and future generations" (Wenzel 2000: 94). Blom's statement shows how this desire to preserve the land can be translated, in the consciousness of an agent of the apartheid state, from the farm to the national level. It would not be unfair, I feel, to suggest that Blom's work was part of an attempt to retain control over a perceived Afrikaner present. It is interesting then, that just as his past eventually finds him, so does the inevitable future of corruption charges find Canning – who, for much of the novel, appears reluctant to move beyond his present of treating illicit investors to luxury weekends at Gondwana's lodge and bribing corrupt officials to allow the land redevelopment to go through.

What may be seen in the notions of ancestry and lineage expressed in *The Imposter*, then, is the failure inherent in attempting to create an idyllic present, either for oneself or for future generations. The text shows time as a continual, single entity, not as a past which can be eradicated, a present which can be preserved or a future which can be evaded. In doing so it acts as a critique of the ideas of lineal consciousness so central to the form of the plaasroman.

In considering the role of lineage in *The Devil's Chimney* I will be concentrating less on the notions of ancestry, although I will make note of Connie's perceptions of her ancestors, and more on the aspect of lineage which concerns protecting and tending to the land for future generations. Most particularly, I will be considering the effect which the loss of her child has on Beatrice's capability as a farmer and comparing it to the effect which the loss of Connie's own child has on her psyche and her capability for looking after her body.

As I have noted previously, Connie's husband Jack, at least, regards her family as poor whites. The phenomenon of the poor white, according to the conventions of the plaasroman, is one of the effects of the "urbanisation and agricultural commercialisation" (Wenzel 2000: 93) which it sought to rally against. At the same time, however, those who had left for the cities were satirised as being possessed of "the pettiness, selfishness, and lack

of feeling of the *verengelste* (anglicised) urban Afrikaner” (Coetzee 1988: 83). Given the commonness of such sentiment, one can perceive why there is no sense of the idealised or heroic pioneer in Connie’s descriptions of her ancestors. Indeed, this, along with the English blood mixed into her ancestry, marks her out for exclusion from the type of Afrikaner presented by the plaasroman: one “with roots sunk deep in private land-property, a type that includes all Afrikaners neither in the 1930s nor at any other time in history” (Coetzee 1988: 87-8).

Connie instead chooses to valorise Miss Beatrice and imbue her with the qualities of “heroic strength, fortitude, and faith” (Coetzee 1988: 83) conventionally ascribed to the ancestors of landed Afrikaner lineages. I would suggest that this is partially because Beatrice represents, at least in those sections of the narrative where she takes over the running of the farm, an idealised version of Connie. I would add, however, that in their shared loss of a child there is an element of transference of the notion that the loss of a farm should “assume the scale of the fall of ancient house, the end of a dynasty” (Coetzee 1988: 83) from owned land to their physical selves.

Certainly, one can see in the hope which each holds for her offspring, the fervour associated with propagators of lineages in the plaasroman. This desire appears to be most pronounced in Beatrice, who resolves that her “baby will grow up to be a lion [...] not an English baby, dressed for the rain every day” and that they “will chase meerkats and *dassies* and watch the springbok run across the veld” (134). In this extract one can see a sense of identity-building within Beatrice in which the “land frequently becomes the person, and becomes part of the body’s text; the social and historical self is perceived through the land” (Gunner in Darian-Smith *et al* 1996: 120). It also gives the impression, however, of seeing “wild nature as a place or space in which a transcendent human freedom and oneness can be found” (Crehan 1998: 7). That Beatrice, as she is narrated by Connie, seems to feel that this kind of transcendence-giving nature can be found on Highlands suggests that this part of her written consciousness, at least, is firmly embroiled in the myths of the plaasroman. In attempting to imagine this oneness with the natural world imbued upon her unborn child, Beatrice is expressing the hope for the eradication of her own English ancestry in a child born to be one with the Karoo. This is, perhaps, most evident in her portrayal of England as being entirely opposite to the landscape of Highlands. That is, Highlands is in some way the natural binary to the unnatural, man-manipulated, England. The most significant indicator of Beatrice’s hope for her baby, however, can be seen in her actions once her newly born child

is taken away from her and it is clear that it will not be brought back. In losing Precious, it becomes apparent that Beatrice has lost her reason for living and pursuit of success on Highlands. Without Precious, she has no reason to continue fighting to keep the land that would allow her to “chase meerkats and *dassies* and watch springbok run across the veld” (134). She and Nomsa, the servant who is described as taking Precious from her, retreat into the house at Highlands and are described as having “both lost all the love in their hearts and with Miss Beatrice they say it was most of her mind as well” (267).

Connie’s own loss of her child results in a similar loss of self, as well as a retreat from the landscape, to that of Beatrice. After narrating Beatrice’s hopes for the way in which her child would grow up, Connie states that “I was like that too, when I was expecting, only my dreams had dogs in them. I thought my girl or boy would love the dogs and feed them, little balls of dry dog food spilling out of a tiny hand” (135). Indeed, Connie retains a sense of the possible redemption the child could have held for her. Well into the middle-aged present from which she narrates, Connie continues to have visions of life with the child she has lost. The descriptions of the natural world in this vision are far from the frantic fear she feels in her earlier descriptions of it. Instead she sees herself “walking on the dry earth and I can see everything. The sun is drying up the gin. The child is moving like water in a bucket and I know that it has blue eyes Straight from heaven like my *ouma* used to say” (134). The child, in its capacity as a force of the natural world would, Connie feels, liberate her from the alcoholism which has robbed her of her looks and any real focus and allow her to experience the natural world wholly.

That she mentions her *ouma*, her Afrikaans grandmother, is significant in this regard as it suggests that Connie’s experience of the natural world would be that expected of the good Afrikaner farmer, when “a mystic communion of interpretation takes place” between one and the landscape, “when farmer becomes *vergroeid* (inter-grown, fused) with farm” (Coetzee 1988: 86).

For Beatrice and Connie then, the loss of a child assumes the proportion of insurmountable tragedy. That they take on the loss as the end of a dynasty shows that they echo the conventions of the *plaasroman*. Beatrice, in the manner in which she ceases to make any attempt at controlling the farm, is most particularly typical in this regard, whilst Connie’s devastation may be seen in the fear she holds for the natural world every time she is forced to enter it, and in the neglect of her own body. The importance of treating the landscape in such

a way as to be acting in the interests of the future generation, as well as the hope placed on the future of the lineage for redemption are also typical of the plaasroman. As I have noted previously, however, the fact that the natural world is portrayed outside of the life and activities of the farm by both women separates them somewhat from the plaasroman's conventional portrayal of the natural world.

Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* is, of the five texts under investigation, perhaps the most concerned with lineages and ancestry in their conventional form. In the sweeping family tree of Griqua chieftainship covered by the novel there is, undoubtedly, a sense of dynasty along with the inherent myths and anachronisms. In part, this dynastic mythology can be put down to what the narrator, in her preface, tells us the eponymous David tries to achieve in his story. That is, "in his eagerness to historicise, to link things – his own life with the life of Baartman and the Griqua chief – he made a mess of the dates and lost a century" (2). Within the ancestral mythologies which David constructs there is, clearly, a sense of him attempting to "achieve the transition from individual consciousness [...] to lineal consciousness" (Coetzee 1988: 101). Unlike the conventional plaasroman, however, *David's Story* does not portray such a transition as "the end of the discontent of individual consciousness, thus bringing the novel to its proper end" (Coetzee 1988: 101). Instead, I would suggest, one might find numerous incidents which question the Afrikaner valorisation of ancestry as well as the portrayed ideal of a "cultural supremacy that was articulated through the medium of the Afrikaans language" (Baines 2009: 10). These critiques of ancestry and culture are to be found, most particularly, in the descriptions of Andries le Fleur and his actions as leader of the Griqua people.

The first account we are given of le Fleur's ancestry – it is important to remember the chronological gaps which David allows into his narrative at this point – is that of the widow, Madame la Fleur, "a Huguenot of stout spirit who had kept her religious beliefs secret" (36). Upon her and her son Eduard's arrival at the Cape after fleeing persecution in France, we are told, they are forced into an assimilation which means having "to merge with the Dutch, speak their language, and worship with the brutes so helplessly deprived of the civilising influence of European women" (37). The importance of this passage lies in its serving as a reminder of the mixed origins of white Afrikaners and juxtaposition with the later obsession with Afrikaner purity. This reminder of the hybrid mixture from which white Afrikanerdom emerged reflects something which is of particular concern to the rest of the novel: The transformation from Griqua to Coloured identity over time. I would suggest that this

transformation is shown, through the lineage of the text, as a function of apartheid. I would add that the Griqua chief Andries le Fleur is shown as having a significant degree of complicity in this transformation. In order to understand what I mean by suggesting a complicity on le Fleur's part, it is important to understand that the "category *Coloured* was meant to pick out the descendants of unions between people (usually men) of European (co-called Caucasian) descent and people (usually women) of indigenous African [...] or Asian birth" (Coetzee 2002: 309). In practice, however, "it captured many others besides [...]: people of 'pure' Khoi – or indeed of 'pure' 'African' descent [...]; people who through endogamy had retained a 'purely' Asian, Islamic identity; Europeans who for one reason or another had dropped the net of whiteness" (Coetzee 2002: 309).

Initially, Andries le Fleur is the only character among the Griqua who is portrayed as being of mixed racial lineage, unreliably described as "the grandson of a queasy young Huguenot, Eduard le Fleur" and, in a more detailed manner, as being of "a mixture of Malayan-Madagascan slave, French Missionary, and Khoisan hunter blood" (39). Interestingly, for a man who marries into and assumes the role of Griqua leadership, Andries's lineage remains imbued with a sense of being distinctly separate from that self-same nation. For instance, whilst sending him out to search for a pair of errant mules, Andries's father notes that the beasts are "more trouble than they're worth, obstinate like these wretched Griquas" (42).¹¹ This sense of separation from – whilst remaining within – the Griqua nation seemingly allows le Fleur to use whichever side of his ancestry he chooses. He sways, for instance, between seeing his "Khoi ancestors who wandered at will to and from the castle because they would not be enslaved" (42) in a near-heroic light and invoking the blood of his European ancestors for his vision "of the Eur-Africans, those through whose veins the blood of European settlers visibly flows" (161), living a separate existence from South Africa's black and white inhabitants. For instance, whilst surveying the new Griqua settlement of Kokstad, he valorises his recent ancestors as a people "who scaled the mighty Drakensberg and, fired with freedom, built the roads and tamed and tilled this fertile land" (42). In doing so, he recalls the plaasroman convention of the myth of natural right, in which "the founding fathers pay for the farm in blood, sweat, and tears" (Coetzee 1988: 85). In a departure from the conventions of the plaasroman, however, le Fleur does not seek to protect

¹¹ This is eerily similar to the response which we are told David Dirkse's father has upon learning that David has been working for the ANC liberation movement: "It's people like you who give us coloureds a bad name," he says, "What do you think I worked so hard for, getting us out of the gutter, wiping out all that Griqua nonsense, just so a windbroek like you can tumble the family right back into the morass?" (21).

the land the Griqua forebears have fought so hard for. Forsaking the notion that “the loss of the farm will constitute an offence against natural justice, a tragic occurrence” (Coetzee 1988: 85), le Fleur resolves that “the Griqua bones scattered across the barren wastes of the Free State, the Eastern Cape, and even far flung Namaqualand had to be gathered” (46). In doing so, he resigns himself and his wife, Rachel Susanna Kok, to a life of trekking.

Ultimately, le Fleur and his followers settle at Beeswater, little more than a desolate wasteland in the desert, in what seems to be an attempt at a form of self-realisation typical of the plaasroman. That is, it is a self-realisation which is “tied to land ownership and to a particular kind of spiritual experience available only to landowners” (Coetzee 1988:87). Initially, le Fleur seems intent on ensuring this will be achieved through hard, if somewhat redundant, and sober labours. In his proclaimed vision of the racial exclusion of his people mentioned above, however, there is a sense in which he is denying the ancestry of his people. This would seem to be the particular cost of their indigenous African ancestors as le Fleur focuses on a European heritage which, as I have previously stated, throughout the text is only ascribed to him with any certainty. That this desire for a separate existence, rather naively, aligns with the rapidly segregationist policies of the South African government ensures that the Griqua, or at least those who have chosen to follow him, will come to lose all sense of identity as an independent group of people and as a nation. Instead, they become subsumed into the racial category of coloured; a category which requires surrendering to the notion that one “is neither black nor white, to be defined in negative terms, as, in effect, a person without qualities” (Coetzee 2002: 308). Soon after the death of le Fleur, the people move away from Beeswater to the new coloured location or township of Kliprand which is nearer to the white settlement in which the majority of them labour, preferring to face “the Saturday night collisions with sin in the location than the backward tea-meetings in the church hall” (124). That is, they become part of a community “created by the common fate of being forced to behave, in the face of authority, as ‘Coloured’” (Coetzee 2002: 309). It is in this ultimate abandonment of a multifarious Griqua lineage then, that Andries le Fleur comes closest to acting as an embodiment of what can occur in instances in which a sense of communion with the ancestors and lineages, a concept of critical import to the plaasroman, is abandoned.

Within the five texts presented for investigation, one can undoubtedly see five distinct representations of how to deal with notions of ancestry and lineage as they are conventionally presented in the plaasroman. Whilst *Trencherman* and *My Beautiful Death* show that there is a liberation of both self and landscape which can occur when the expectations of ancestry are

abandoned, there is a sense in *My Beautiful Death* that ancestral land can have a kind of benevolence. The text illustrates this sense of a benevolent landscape, attached to a family heritage most particularly as Konstant's thoughts return to his family farm whilst he lies on his deathbed. *The Imposter*, in its juxtaposition of Canning and Blom and their relationships with Adam, creates a sense of the inescapability of ancestry as a manifestation and the immutability of progress, thus illustrating the absurdity of the process of working for the good of future generations within one's own motives. Contrastingly, *The Devil's Chimney* shows how, without a future generation to work toward, any project of tending the land and self can cease to have importance and can result in a retreat from the landscape and the desolation and destruction of self. *David's Story*, and more particularly the actions of the self-proclaimed Griqua chief Andries le Fleur, see the consequences of the abandonment of an ancestry who have previously been valorised, as the abandonment of a stable group identity. The last of these is undoubtedly the closest to sharing the concerns of the plaasroman with regard to ancestry. *David's Story* does not fail in its own subversion, however, supplanting the heroic ancestors of white Afrikaner farmers with the mixed ancestry of a people who would eventually be labelled as coloured but who share the language and many of the cultural and religious habits of those white Afrikaners.

Chapter Three: “The veld never grows quite the same on land that has once been ploughed”

Or

The Plaasroman, Hospitality and Landscape

As die donker my kom haal

En die here my nie soek nie [...]

Begrawe my hart op Klein Tambotieboom

En strooi my as oor die Bosveld horison.

Die Heuwels Fantasties

This chapter concerns itself with the manner in which the texts represent physical acts of inscription onto the landscape. The way in which such acts are inscribed will be analysed through the landscape’s management, which I shall argue has implications for the conscious self. In the conventional mode of the plaasroman, for instance, landscape is represented as an aspect of the self’s identity and as other to the self. Such analysis will be couched in Derridean hospitality theory. Whilst inscriptive acts at a purely agricultural level are fundamental to my study, I shall also analyse the following physical inscriptions because they influence the way in which history and lineage are understood: acts of domestication through building, and the erection of boundaries and monument. Inextricably linked to the discussion on the inscriptive relation between the self and landscape is the fact that this chapter will also function as a means of bridging the two principal theories of ‘plaasroman’ and ‘hospitality’. In attempting to bridge these concepts I must, of course, define what I mean by the term hospitality. In finding a workable definition of hospitality I will turn to Jacques Derrida’s conception of the terms ‘conditional hospitality’ and ‘unconditional hospitality’.

Foremost in defining hospitality is what Barry Stocker, in his editorial of Derrida’s paper on the subject, calls the investigation of “the etymology of ‘host’”, which “refers both to the guest who receives hospitality and the host who gives hospitality” (2007: 237). In addition, I will consider the various means by which critics have applied this concept to South African literature, and, more particularly, South African literature which takes the rural

and the farm as its subject. Most notable of these are some of Mike Marais's readings of the subject with regard to the writings of J.M. Coetzee. The mere application of such theories to the five texts under investigation here would, however, fail to entirely fulfil the aims of this chapter. That is, a straightforward application of theory would mean that I would not be able to completely cement a link between the kind of human inscription onto the landscape prescribed by the *plaasroman* and Derridean hospitality. In this chapter, therefore, I will focus solely on instances which concern themselves with the inscription of self on the landscape within each of the texts and investigate the ways in which each of these instances represents conditional or unconditional hospitality.

In reconciling what Derrida means by hospitality, and what it means to act in a hospitable manner, we must also reconcile the fact that “absolute hospitality would be an impossible and self-destructive state¹² in which the host is not host anymore, is not master or proprietor anymore” (Derrida 2007: 238). While absolute hospitality is not the primary focus of this chapter, I will occasionally turn to it in my readings of the texts. Such occasions act as a demonstration that it is the failure of language, rather than of concept, which results in the impossibility of representing absolute hospitality. Instead, I will draw attention to the two modes of hospitality and hosting which Derrida is most concerned with, namely conditional and unconditional, within the strict bounds of the chosen texts. Having defined and outlined the ethical implications of these two modes, I will then apply them to a perspective of the manner in which landscape is conventionally portrayed in the *plaasroman* as well as in conventional representations of Afrikaner consciousness within the *plaasroman*. Finally, I will use the ideas of Derridean hospitality to provide a perspective of the *plaasroman* from which I will be able to investigate how successfully, relatively; the relationships between various selves and landscape in the texts represent unconditional hospitality.

It may, initially, seem implausible to set landscape up as an agent in a host/guest relationship, as one would between two human beings. There is very little direct theoretical basis for doing so, at least in part because the landscape is seldom seen as having the consciousness required for agency. Certainly there is little impression that Derrida means anything other than conscious beings in his suggestion that hospitality means “the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else's territory” (2007: 246). In positing that “no one originally has any greater right than anyone else to occupy any

¹² This term is, of course, slightly ironic given that it supposes the self capable of destroying the self in a situation in which there is no agency.

particular portion of the earth” (2007: 246), he would seem to be even less inclined to view landscape as capable of being an agent in a host/guest relationship. By positing that all humans have equal rights to occupy any portion of the earth, Derrida is suggesting that inhabiting a particular piece of land is an act of will by a particular inhabitant rather than a conscious or unconscious welcoming or rejection. I must reiterate that I will not be dealing with the impossible condition of absolute unconditional hospitality, but the kind of imagined unconditional hospitality which can only be represented in text. At this point it is worthwhile delving into an explanation of the distinction between conditional and unconditional hospitality and what implications each term has for the role of host, who receives, and guest, who is received, as well as self and other. The distinction, ultimately, is between a form of hospitality predicated on a conscious awareness of otherness and one which is characterised by the open and unconscious receiving of otherness. In order to understand this distinction further I am, partially out of the need for an explanation which places itself at a remove from direct translations of Derrida, turning to Mike Marais’s work on hospitality as applied to certain of the works of J.M. Coetzee. Marais states that at the heart of the difference between conditional and unconditional hospitality is the distinction “between a form of subjectivity constituted through a hostile process of inclusion and exclusion and one that comes into being in the self’s pre-reflective and traumatic exposure, without inhibition, to otherness” (2009: 275). The conditional host, then, becomes involved “in an elaborate process of self consolidation, of fortifying the home against the danger of difference” (Marais 2009: 275). Contrastingly, the unconditional host does not, indeed cannot, expect or name the guest and as such “the host loses her sovereignty over and distance from this visitor” (Marais 2009: 275).

It is my suggestion that the conventional *plaasroman* posits landscape as a conditional host which rewards labour and punishes laziness and corruption. The corollary of this is, of course, that the *plaasroman*’s portrayal of landscape entering into Afrikaner consciousness is also bound to the conditional. In making this claim, I am thinking particularly of Coetzee’s idea of the kind of stewardship which the land requires. For, even when the farmer has created, on the farm, a patriarchal idyll which consecrates both past and future, he must be aware that his exclusive union with the farm “will entail that in good years the farm will respond to his love by bringing forth bountifully, while in bad years he will have to stand by it, nursing it through its trials” (Coetzee 1988: 86). In such representations one might see how conditional the portrayed hospitality of the land is in the conventional mode of the

plaasroman. Whilst there might be relative arguments surrounding whether or not the type of land represented in this way has the capability to name the Afrikaner as its guest, it certainly displays other of the characteristics typical of the conditionally hospitable host. In the demands which the plaasroman places on the farmer, especially given the stringent demands of good stewardship which I have outlined previously, it is portrayed as exercising the power to “choose, select, filter, and thereby exclude” and thus display “ethical indifference” (Marais 2009: 275). Similarly, the process by which the landscape is allowed into the conventional Afrikaner consciousness, as presented in the plaasroman, is conditional. This process of inscription is most particularly evident in the process of naming. The act of naming is important in the host becoming a conditional host. In the act of naming, the host renders the guest as other whilst, at the same time, framing him/her/it within the realm of the familiar. When such processes are applied to landscape, “space is transformed into place, and geographical territory into a culturally defined landscape” (Darian-Smith et al 1996: 3). Any landscape which does not conform to, or subverts, such plaasroman-type norms is, therefore, more likely to be an unconditionally hospitable one. A text which subverts the above-outlined conventions is also, therefore, more likely to represent points at which the boundaries between self and landscape are transcended. Having outlined the dual forms of conditional hospitality present in the conventional plaasroman form, it now remains necessary to investigate whether or not it is possible to see instances of unconditional hospitality within the texts under investigation..

The final chapter of *Trencherman* provides an ideal start for an analysis of the type of conditional and unconditional hospitality dealt with in this chapter. Certainly, the landscape which Marlouw describes in this chapter is far from the kind idealised in the plaasroman. Indeed, in places, the text presents an outright rejection of the conventional conditions of the plaasroman. The space he imagines is one in which “no human footprint or voice ever again existed on that piece of land. The name of the farm was also forgotten. Imagine: wind blowing through the farm as if no one had ever lived there” (315-6). Without doubt, this is a redemptive vision in the face of the apocalyptic scenes of disease and destruction presented earlier in the text. This does not, however, mean that the scene presented is necessarily a hospitable one. In attempting to understand the relative degree of hospitality, I will begin by elucidating how the landscape is treated in Marlouw’s consciousness. Critical to an understanding of the kind of hospitality with which the landscape is treated in Marlouw’s consciousness is the fact that Marlouw imagines the farm as nameless. In doing so, he

removes from it all the expectations and conditions inherent in the name Ouplaas. Without name, the farm, which he imagines slowly returning to a natural state, ceases to be a place tied to his formative identity. That is, Marlouw consciously attempts to free himself from the process in which the landscape “becomes the person, and becomes part of the body’s text; the social and historical self is perceived through the land” (Gunner in Darian-Smith et al 1996: 120). In doing so, Marlouw disengages from the particular aspect of his self which is tied to the farm. The land which was once Ouplaas is, itself, imagined as being free from the restrictive “context of perpetuated old regime patterns” (van Schalkwyk 2008: 90). Indeed, one might posit that what Marlouw presents in his imagining is the hope that “a space that has become place can revert back to space”¹³ (Krog in Brown 2006: xvi). In this reversion from place back to space is also a reversion from a named place in which there can only be conditional hospitality, to a space in which unconditional hospitality is a possibility.

Marlouw’s rejection of landscape as an agent of identity formation is more critical to a hospitable imagining of that self-same landscape than one might initially suppose. In order to understand why this could be so, it is important to remind ourselves that Marlouw is breaking a lineal tradition in which the love of the land is based on the idea that the family ancestors had carved the farms “out of the wilds, out of primal, inchoate matter” (Coetzee 1988: 83). Whilst it may seem that Marlouw is merely attempting to reverse this situation in his imagining, what he is in fact doing is rejecting this process of carving imagined pastoral idylls out of primal wilderness as an aspect of his identity. Marlouw’s imagining is the final rejection of lineal male ownership in the text. Returning the land to an imagined Edenic state is then, for Marlouw, an attempt to turn back the processes by which “phallic desire for possession brings Oedipal guilt into the Garden” (Crehan 1998: 11). Such a return would also result in a situation in which “to possess the land, to turn it into male property, is to destroy it not only ecologically but psychologically” (Crehan 1998: 11).

In rejecting the lineal inheritance of land Marlouw also rejects the form of conditional hospitality imposed on the land by lineal inheritance as a process, for the handing down of farms, and sections of farms, from generation to generation requires that boundaries and borders be superimposed upon the landscape. Anything which crosses these borders can be categorized as other to those who have set them. Such borderers are fortifications against

¹³ The context which I have provided here should make clear the fact that I am going slightly beyond the “generally accepted understanding of ‘space’ as the more inclusive and abstract term and of ‘place’ as the more particular and qualitative term” (Barnard 2007: 9).

the danger of difference; those within are always anticipating the crossing of their boundaries by those deemed other to that which is enclosed within the demarcated boundaries. Instead, Marlow imagines the landscape in seemingly unquantifiable and borderless measures: “it is as wide as the vulture flies, as far as the veld stretches” (314), he tells us. He also, perhaps unintentionally, exposes the folly inherent in demarcating the farm into measurable boundaries. As much is demonstrated in Marlow’s description of the wind blowing through what were once the borders of Ouplaas, now an empty landscape, shed of its former name and all of the physical inscriptions tied to that name. His description of the wind fits Derrida’s idea of a hospitable guest almost exactly, for in his imagined terms it is:

Purifying. And more persistent than ever, yet who could say, who was there to compare and to measure the wind? That’s the thing. It suddenly sprang up from the west, as a man might leap from his bed in terror. The west wind. (314-5)

The wind is a hospitable guest precisely because it cannot configure its host, anymore than its host can configure it within a set of pre-determined, culturally attendant expectations. The wind has no attendant expectations of the landscape and the landscape cannot name the wind before it has arrived.

Even within the framework of a relative form of hospitality, though, Marlow’s imagining – by dint of it being an act of his own consciousness – seems inhospitable. Such an argument, however, fails to take heed of the opening sentence of this final chapter: “Images of Ouplaas came to me often” (314). This phrasing suggests that while he continues to name the landscape as Ouplaas – and is unable to unname the landscape completely – the images come uninvited, and that Marlow does not consciously predicate these images. That is, he cannot name and embellish these images with the pre-determined expectations of the host to the anticipated other before they cross the threshold of his consciousness. Taken as such, one might see how Marlow becomes an unconditional host to conceptions of the landscape upon which Ouplaas once stood.

In order to understand what allows Marlow to enter into the position of unconditional host I will cite the example, as I did in the previous chapter, of the destruction of the family’s ancestral graveyard. The graveyard is the most telling symbol of his family’s inscription of itself onto the landscape. For Marlow’s family, the graveyard represents their ancestors’ unity with the landscape insofar as the very bones of the ancestors become fused with it. It is this inscription of ancestry and self, rooted in consciousness, onto the landscape

in a manner which is wholly conventional to the *plaasroman* which results in the understanding that the hospitality of the landscape is conditional. Without such inscription, there can be no plausible reason for accepting a notion like good stewardship, so conventional to the *plaasroman*, which calls for “the fullest utilization of one’s energies and talents, and the bounty of the farm, for ends that transcend material gain” (Coetzee 1988: 86). In saying this, I am reiterating how critical the idea of farming toward a mythological past and future lineage is to the notion of a landscape which requires and demands good stewardship and which, therefore is conditionally hospitable. There are two incidents related to the destruction of the Louw graves which are significant in the novel’s liberating rejection of these conditions.

Whilst Koert and Marlouw’s ecstasy at the destruction of the graves is of import, of greater significance is the news which awaits their return to Ouplaas. As they pull to a stop, Headman rushes out to tell them that the “windmill is broken. The last one that was still working is broken now” (277). For although the graves represent the expectations of the ancestors, the windmills are the far more visible reminder of the means by which Marlouw’s ancestors established themselves on the land. That is, so long as the windmills work, they stand as a potent symbol of what is possible to achieve, through the family’s inscription of itself onto the land. Without working windmills, the ancestors’ expectations, made ever-present by the graveyard, are unsatisfied. The destruction of graves and the final windmill signals the end of ancestral expectation, yet it also signals the end of the other condition of good stewardship: That is, the idea of farming with equal piety toward *nageslagte*, or future generations. The end of this piety signals the end of the self’s consciousness that it is on the land as a named and expected guest of the ancestors, as well as signalling that it is the host who names and places expectations on the future generations. Ultimately then, the destruction of the graves and windmills mean that Marlouw is no longer in the position of conditional host and guest and a fundamental aspect of the inscription of identity onto landscape is removed. The end of obligation to past and future generations is also signalled by the second of the two incidents previously mentioned, namely that Esmie Phumizele is pregnant with Koert’s child. None of Marlouw’s plans to hurriedly leave Ouplaas and return to Australia change in the face of this news. That Marlouw is able to leave her to face the pregnancy alone, following the death of Koert, suggests that he is freed from the condition of piety toward the future generation. In leaving, however, he is also freeing the child from the expectations of ancestry, further reducing any evidence of its existence. Instead, he is able to

note that the “fourteenth generation will be born on this land, will live, prattle away and die” (306).

As I have previously stated, this form of hospitality is imperfect. I would state, however, that the incidents which I have highlighted in the above investigation of *Trencherman* give a strong indication of those conditions which might be necessary for the achievement of a state of unconditional hospitality. By this I mean that the above incidents present the possibility of a represented landscape which enters into and is entered by the conscious pre-reflectively and outside of a culturally centred process of exclusion and self affirmation (Marais 2009: 275). At the very least, *Trencherman’s* apocalyptic setting demonstrates the destructiveness of the conditional forms of hospitality conventional to the plaasroman, as well as the ways in which the situations from which such conditions arise might be reversed.

Trencherman, then, uses Marlouw’s shifting consciousness in relation to the landscape to illustrate the possibility of a form of unconditional hospitality between the self and the landscape. Critically, in regard to the aims of this chapter, it makes this possibility contingent on the abandonment of naming the landscape as well as the plaasroman conventions of inscribing it with the fused identities of self, ancestors and future generations.

In light of what has just been written concerning the landscape and hospitality in *Trencherman*, the vision which Konstant has for his ashes in *My Beautiful Death* might, initially, seem somewhat contrary to the idea of unconditional hospitality. As he lies dying in Australia, Konstant makes it clear to his father that he does not wish for his bones to be returned to and buried on the family farm, intuiting instead that he will be cremated and his ashes scattered. In establishing why such a desire might be construed as an example of conditional hospitality and why it would be wrong to do so, I will turn to the particular minutiae of the images which Konstant presents as he envisions what will happen to his ashes. Konstant’s particular vision of what will happen to his ashes, following his death, differs significantly from the absorption of self into landscape and landscape into self, as conventionally portrayed in the plaasroman. My analysis of these differences, along with other subversions of the conventions of the plaasroman, will demonstrate how Konstant moves beyond the self and toward unconditional hospitality as he edges closer and closer toward death. I will also address any possible concerns surrounding the sincerity of what

Konstant envisions on his deathbed, lest that be seen as a means of discrediting the unconditional hospitality present in his imaginings.

Lying emaciated, Konstant tells his father – who is on the other end of the phone line, back in South Africa – that the “pile of bones from Ma’s womb won’t be returning like this” (265). Instead, he imagines he will:

never roam again to any foreign land, but will come to rest at last. My ashes will blow far from the Blue Mountains, Pa will see. I’ll be everywhere, anywhere anyone wants to see me. My ashes will sift down onto the koppies for the dassies to nest in, for the dogs to roll in. That’s how I’ll return, Pa. (265)

A possible reading would see these images as a moral, if imaginative, validation of the idea of a son – corrupted by the anglicised vices of the city and foreigners – returning to the pastoral values of the land. Such a reading would see Konstant as complicit in the conditional hospitality of a landscape inscribed with ancestry as is characteristic of the conventional plaasroman. While the fact that Konstant allows his father to prefigure and wait for his elemental return to the farm demonstrates a form of conditional hospitality, it is mostly irrelevant to this chapter. I suggest this, as Konstant’s message is one addressed to his father, as subject, and not to the landscape and it therefore does not allow for his consciousness to believe in an anticipation of his return by an ancestral landscape imbued with sentience. That is, Konstant’s message is not one addressed to a landscape which will reward him for hard labour and toil or for acting in a manner of piety toward the ancestors and future generations.

In suggesting this, it is worth linking the image of the wind as an unconditional guest in *Trencherman* to the image of Konstant’s ashes. Just as the wind pays no attention to the once constructed borders of Ouplaas, so Konstant does not imagine that his ashes will be restricted to the confines and boundaries of his family farm. He does not, therefore, imagine his ashes being bound to the exclusionary place of the farm. Instead, he envisions them as existing within a space which contains the farm but does not acknowledge the inevitable demarcations of anything other to the farm as place. In this regard, his statement that he will “be everywhere, anywhere anyone wants to see” (265) him is of particular importance. Whilst he acknowledges a yearning for the farm, the bond he suggests he will have with it after death is not one of wilful inscription, nor is it one of wilful acquiescence to expectations and obligations of past and future generations so prevalent in the plaasroman. This lack of reverence and piety towards a lineage stretching at once into the past and future frees Konstant from the expectations of the Christian name he shares with his grandfather, as well

as his father's expectations for him as the oldest son and inheritor of the farm. His desire that his ashes be nested in by the dassies and rolled in by the dogs is far from the conscious desire to continue a lineage and legacy. Within this desire is also the implicit, but unstated, idea that his ashes will not be able to name and configure expectations of, for instance, the dogs and dassies. Furthermore, his imagining of himself is one in which he ceases to be other to the landscape. It must be stressed that this imagining differs somewhat from the plaasroman's conventional absorption of self into the landscape and of the landscape into self. It is different, primarily because it does not include a projection of the values of self onto the landscape and as such does not allow for a portrayal of the landscape as other to the self in consciousness. Konstant, therefore, has become aware of, and celebrates the fact that, in death, he will no longer be in any position to render the landscape as other and, more particularly, he will not be able to do so for the construction of his identity as self.

Whilst the images of Konstant's ashes floating and settling over the landscape represent an almost entirely unconditional form of hospitality with the landscape, it would seem that Konstant is unable to completely escape the expectations concomitant with the conditional hospitality of ancestral land. Indeed, immediately previous to the imagery with which the above discussion concerns itself, Konstant states his desire to be next to his father again, to "stand with Pa on the land and see how Pa bends down and scoops up some soil in Pa's hand and looks down at the rich black soil in Pa's beautiful hand" (264-5). Such a description serves as evidence that, in this desire to return to the family farm, Konstant sees his father's love as something innately bound to the landscape. That Konstant views his father's love in such a way is also demonstrated in the almost nonsensical questions which Konstant asks his father concerning the soil and his desire to be able to experience the landscape with his father once again. He asks whether Pa will "hold me then so that I can also smell it? So that I can smell the dust?" (265). A further instance of ancestral obligation can be seen in Konstant's final vision as he descends into delirium just before his death. As he breathes out, we are told that he can "see him, it's Oupa Konstant smells like white bread" (270). To see Konstant's final vision as an instance of deep-seated ancestral obligation, however, is to over-simplify it somewhat. Instead, this final scene should be viewed in the light of Konstant's own imaginings of the unity which he feels he will have with the landscape after his death and how this ties to his relationship with his ancestors. The fact that Oupa Konstant is described with his "hands so beautiful white what wind brings blow big wind, hey, oupa around my heart..." (270) is important in this regard. Just as Konstant is

able to imagine an unconditionally hospitable relationship with the landscape as he nears death, so he is able to imagine, perhaps even experience, an unconditionally hospitable relationship with his ancestors. These are the self-same ancestors whose burden of expectation, particularly in relation to the landscape, he had left the farm to escape from. It is only *after* he imagines an unconditional relationship with the landscape, removed of ancestral obligation and expectation, that he is able to experience the same kind of hospitable feeling toward his ancestors. In a landscape without ancestral expectation Konstant cannot render his ancestors as other. Instead, as he feels his oupa wrap around his heart, Konstant shifts from the experience of “a self who actively and consciously comprehends the experiences of others in terms of a priorly formed conceptual system” (Marais 2009: 276) to that in which the uninhibited openness to otherness results in the dissolution of distinction between self and other.

Whilst *My Beautiful Death* avoids the speculative hospitality of *Trencherman*, it makes a vital point concerning absolute unconditional hospitality. That is, unlike the relative hospitality in *Trencherman*, *My Beautiful Death* is able to come to terms with the idea that truly unconditional hospitality only arises without inscription, and a lack of inscription is only possible in the absence of consciousness. The land in both texts is innately hospitable, but Konstant’s thoughts as he edges ever closer to death show how the point of mortality is the point at which true, unconditional hospitality, in its most Derridean sense, is reached. Any arguments doubting the sincerity of Konstant’s deathbed narration or viewing them as the demented products of his illness are easily countered by the fact that he has no reason to be insincere. That is, in the face of death “it becomes absurd for him to continue in a self-deceived mode of existence” (Coetzee 1992: 262). Furthermore, even if the delirium of Konstant’s illness were the cause of the deathbed musings, which I have shown as illustrating a move toward unconditional hospitality – and the cause of a form of self-deception, then it is worth considering the notion that “the truth is what it is” (Coetzee 1992: 263) results in a situation where “whatever the will behind the confession might be [...] the truth transcends the will behind it” (Coetzee 1992: 263). Even in the extremely unlikely event that Konstant exercises self-deception in his deathbed utterances, one may still see the truth of the unconditional hospitality, tied to the moment of death, which he is moving toward.

The approach which *The Devil’s Chimney* takes in addressing hospitality and the landscape is somewhat different from the two Eben Venter texts discussed above. Instead of the solutions of the overt abandonment of ancestral expectations and the transcendence of

conditional hospitality through approaching death proffered in *Trencherman* and *My Beautiful Death* respectively, *The Devil's Chimney* seems to put forward sexual union as an unconditionally hospitable state. In exploring the way in which sexual union is offered as a means of achieving unconditional hospitality toward the landscape, I will focus primarily on the incidents of congress between Miss Beatrice and Mr Jacobs.

In the descriptions of sexual union between Miss Beatrice and Mr Jacobs, there is a sense of 'ek-stasis', or loss of self, in which both Ms Beatrice and Mr Jacobs engage in the process of "forfeiting oneself through offering oneself to the unexpected visitor" (Marais 2009: 280). Whilst this seems to, first, occur between them, as each becomes an unconditional host, second and of greater import is the manner in which they are described as experiencing an out-of-body surrendering of their selves to the landscape. In the following first incident, which occurs on the floor of Miss Beatrice's house, there is a sense of progression toward complete and unconditional hospitality. The descriptions evolve rapidly, from "Miss Beatrice riding [Mr Jacobs] across the Little Karoo as if she was chasing ten thousand lost ostriches" to a more unified *they*, "chasing and chasing" the ostriches until they eventually find them "high up near the stars, on top of a lost *koppie* that was made out of her rib and his rib woven together" (54). Whilst an element of subjectivity remains in this description, one cannot ignore the abandonment of an individual self within it. Miss Beatrice and Mr Jacobs move out of their bodies to become the single entity of the *koppie*, and in doing so cease to see themselves in relation to the landscape. For them, the landscape ceases to be other and so it becomes impossible for them to impose conditionality on it. Of further import when discussing this scene is its dissolution of the Biblical creation myth. Such dissolution has two components.

First there is the distortion of man being formed from earth. The sense of the *koppie* being formed from and as singular to Miss Beatrice and Mr Jacobs is significant in terms of the cessation of otherness which I have spoken about above. If there is no distinction between Miss Beatrice, Mr Jacobs and the landscape then they cannot inscribe it with their own identities. They cannot name it, nor can they be distinctly named (hu)man and earth, one created out of the other. The second component of Biblical dissolution comes from the ribs being of both man and woman. It is not, however, a mere reimagining of Eve's creation from Adam's rib. Rather, I would suggest, the weaving together of the ribs represents a demonstration of the absence of other by subverting the notion of gender as essential to the

construction of self and an identity of self. The subversions presented here present multiple dissolutions of identity and the abandonment of self.

There is, perhaps, an even greater instance of this out-of-body abandonment of self between Ms Beatrice and Mr Jacobs. On a ride around Ms Beatrice's farm, Highlands, they uncover a passage which Mr Jacobs had found previously and marked with a red handkerchief. As they begin to dig to find the passage, we are told that sometimes "their fingers would meet underground, and it was more than just fingers. It was frantic and searching, looking for light, looking for dark, looking for some kind of peace" (70). It is important to note at this point, that prior to any definitive sexual contact, the plural "they" has become the singular "it", signalling the abandonment of individual self. Of further significance is the fact that the point at which Ms Beatrice and Mr Jacobs become "it" occurs in direct contact with the landscape. "It" is also not positioned as anything which can be named and is described in a manner which precludes it from being labelled as other to the landscape. Ms Beatrice, Mr Jacobs and the landscape, therefore, cease to be represented as singular, separate entities. This means that, in representation at least, the use of the word "it" is indicative of the beginning of a process of unconditional hospitality.

The idea of Ms Beatrice and Mr Jacobs entering into a state in which they cease to be other to each other and the landscape is given even further credence as they climb into a rock passage, leading to a cave. The passage becomes inextricably linked with their love-making. As they follow it, together all the while, they are described as having "floated in the darkness and breath, drifting" (71). One might see an imperfection in these descriptions of a surrendered self in the portrayal of Ms Beatrice's realisation that Mr Jacobs becomes other to her once again in this instance. There remains, however, a sense of a dissolute self in this passage as Mr Jacobs and Ms Beatrice move within the landscape whilst simultaneously becoming unified with it and each other. The idea of a surrendered self is reasserted, once again, in the images which follow the one described above. We are told that Mr Jacobs and Ms Beatrice find themselves in "a river, an underground river, flowing from her into him, and they swam with it, until it swelled over and flooded them" (71). In both of these passages, one might also again see the subversion of gender identity to which I alluded earlier. The portrayal of Mr Jacobs as the receiving cave into which Ms Beatrice floats and of Ms Beatrice as the originator of the liquid flowing from her into him are particularly important in this regard. One might see a further dimension of the abandoned distinctions between self

and other in the reciprocity of the movements between Mr Jacobs, Ms Beatrice and the landscape.

These depictions of a dissolving self illustrate that the text views unconditional hospitality as a state which is not arrived at spontaneously but which occurs through the process of a self gradually dissolving. In much the same way as Konstant moves toward a state of unconditional hospitality as he moves toward death in *My Beautiful Death*, so Miss Beatrice moves toward a state of unconditional hospitality with the landscape as she moves toward and reaches orgasm. Such a reading is vindicated by the imagery used to describe the point of orgasm, which is initially described only in Miss Beatrice's experience. As she reaches orgasm, we are told: "There were sparks in front of her eyes and suddenly there was a light, yellow flame, and the aching inside her broke loose" (71). At this point, the orgasm is entirely the experience of Miss Beatrice and everything other to the orgasm is other to her. Immediately following this, however, we are informed that the aching:

Shot up from her legs and to her mouth and became mist. The mist fell on them and they bent their heads, their ears cupped against each other. They held each other and rocked. As they rocked, the water rose a little, then fell, until the lapping was quiet, but not gone. (71)

The intent of such imagery undoubtedly suggests a transcendence of the boundaries between the self and the landscape as other at the moment of orgasm. Importantly, in regard to this transcendence, the moment of orgasm is not described in terms of inscription onto the landscape. Rather, the linking of the mist which emerges from Ms Beatrice's mouth with the lapping water which they find themselves in suggests the very cessation of the conscious self, capable of rendering the landscape other, which is required for unconditional hospitality. It is a state in which in "not being able to name, to grasp in language, the stranger, the host loses her sovereignty over and distance from this visitor" (Marais 2009: 275). In this scene, in which mist and water play such a critical role, the reciprocation of movement between the lovers and the landscape becomes so intense as to completely blur the distinction between them. Most visibly, we cannot be entirely sure that the quiet, persistent lapping refers to the water in the cave, to the movements of Miss Beatrice and Mr Jacobs or to all of these elements as single entity. Without this certainty, we cannot maintain that there is any form of distinction and naming, indeed, of self and other. This representation, therefore, is a representation of unconditional hospitality.

Whilst I acknowledge that this might be seen as an imperfect representation of unconditional hospitality, I would suggest that this is a flaw of language, relating most specifically to the discord between sign and signifier and the banal conventions of the plural pronoun, rather than the concept itself. That is, whilst it may be impossible to accurately describe what the passage is attempting to describe, the potency of the idea it is trying to convey renders the flaws of language somewhat irrelevant to the concerns of this particular argument as well as that of the chapter as a whole.

The sense that both orgasm scenes may be seen, conceptually, as instances of unconditional hospitality is validated somewhat by the scene which immediately follows the latter one. After Mr Jacobs tells Miss Beatrice that they are in a cave which is part of the Cango complex, we are informed that the “words dropped onto Miss Beatrice’s lap like pellets. She didn’t answer. She didn’t want this to be a place where anyone had been” (72). In Miss Beatrice objecting to Mr Jacobs’s naming of the cave, she is objecting to the rendering of a space, in which unconditional hospitality is possible, as a place. Once a space is named as place, it is inscribed with and by the self and therefore lacks the ability to be unconditionally hospitable. In any attempt to do so consciously, space is inscribed as other to the self, thereby allowing it into one’s consciousness, conditionally. That is, once space is inscribed, it is reduced to a nameable other. That the cave has been so intimately linked with the unconditional hospitality of Miss Beatrice and Mr Jacobs’s shared orgasm, is also indicative of the fact that Mr Jacobs’s naming of the cave does not just transform the cave from space into place but that it has the same effect on the orgasm.

The Devil’s Chimney succeeds in allowing for a conception of unconditional hospitality toward the landscape. Any failure the novel might incur in illustrating absolute unconditional hospitality is the fault of the literary language which must be used in attempting to describe such a conception. As such, no issue can be taken with the novel representing the point of orgasm as an instant in which consciousness may be transcended and in which the landscape ceases to be other and may therefore be treated with unconditional hospitality.

The Imposter offers, in place of the kind of outright presentation of unconditional hospitality found in *The Devil’s Chimney*, an example of how an attempt to reverse the processes of inscription onto the landscape might result in a particularly problematic form of conditional hospitality. An acute example of this conditional hospitality is evident in the ideas surrounding the creation of the farm ‘Gondwana’, which was the life’s work of Canning’s

father. Gondwana, or at least Canning's father's vision for it, is predicated on the setting up of exclusionary borders and the inscription of his singular desire to impose an imagined, pristine wilderness onto the landscape he builds it on. The text also provides a counter to the conditional hospitality of the exclusion and inscription of Gondwana in Adam's own reflections on his writing. Adam, in the moment of his writing, becomes both unconditional host and guest to the landscape. His reflections illustrate that he does not recognise this in the moment but is only capable of doing so in the act of reading the poems after they have been written. From this I will argue that, in dealing with the descriptions of this particular section of the text, its acknowledgement of unconditional hospitality as a pre-reflective experience ensures that it provides a particularly useful understanding of the phenomenon.

The name 'Gondwana' suggests that Canning's father had a vision for an Edenic incarnation of the landscape. The choice of the name of the ancient super-continent is also suggestive of a time before physical otherness onto which identity could be inscribed. The name Gondwana evokes a return to the pre-historic, to a time before humans and, by extension, a time before the kind of human consciousness which allows for the inscription of self onto a landscape. In the shallowest of readings, Canning's father's vision for Gondwana would seem similar to the vision which Marlouw has for Ouplaas in the final chapter of *Trencherman*. While Marlouw's restorative vision of landscape comes to him in spite of himself, however, Canning's father's restorative ideal is an exclusionary one imposed by the self onto the landscape, as is evidenced by the various descriptions of Gondwana. The first of these descriptions occurs in the narration of Adam's introduction to Gondwana. The narrator informs us that the "place is very strange. It is like an old colonial dream of refinement and exclusion, which should have vanished when the dreamer woke up" (51). It is important to note that the place is described as exclusionary. In this there is already the suggestion that its creation seems intricately bound with the urgent labelling of anything strange to it as other. The very fact of this labelling, demarcation and bordering marks Gondwana out as a conditionally hospitable place rather than an unconditionally hospitable space. Perhaps more significant in this regard, though, is the description of the process by which Canning's father sculpted Gondwana into a kind of theme park; a state already being eroded by the time of Adam's arrival. The information concerning this process, mediated by Canning, is only given in short bursts. The short descriptions which Canning provides are enough for the reader to learn that Gondwana was his "father's big dream. His whole life he worked away toward only one thing – his game park. He saved money and bought different farms together" (57).

Furthermore, we are told that Canning's father desired isolation in his building of Gondwana, that "he wanted to live alone in the middle of a huge wilderness with no people around. Animals, plants, the mountains, the sky – he had this fantasy of himself alone here in nature" (101). One can see, contained in such imagery, a validation of the initial impression which we are given of Gondwana. That is, its existence has been formed from a process of exclusion. That which has been allowed onto Gondwana is only that which Canning's father allowed onto Gondwana. Everything else, human or animal is kept out of the borders of the farm. As such, Canning's father's acceptance of the landscape into his consciousness would have been conditional on its existence as a place defined by exclusionary boundaries, which would have affirmed and reflected his constructed self. That is, he engages in an "elaborate process of self consolidation, of fortifying the home against the danger of difference" (Marais 2009: 275).

A further condition of this kind of hospitality toward the landscape emerges in Canning's statement concerning the manner in which his father set about realising his vision for Gondwana. He states that his father "did research, he found out what animals and plants used to be here, before people moved through and destroyed it all. He was trying to stock it with those same species, as far as he could" (101). Whilst such a vision may be restorative, it is also an inscription, on the part of Canning's father, onto the landscape. That is, because it is Canning's father's vision he cannot but inscribe himself onto the landscape. Most fundamentally, it is an attempted erasure of history. This particular kind of seemingly restorative inscription suggests a kind of hospitality which is conditional on the landscape responding to the acts of inscription performed upon it by Canning's father. The entire construction of Gondwana is, therefore, an "exclusionary process of self-affirmation" (Marais 2009: 275). These acts of inscription, whilst physically different from those conventionally found in the plaasroman, have at their heart the same kind of fundamental zeal as the plaasroman. In the actions of Canning's father are to be found the ideals of piety toward the landscape and the maximisation of its potential through the quasi-mythological individual labour and toil of the patriarchal head of the farm.

Among the contrasts and comparisons which the text offers to such a form of conditional hospitality, the manner in which the landscape enters into Adam's consciousness is worth noting. Of particular interest is the manner in which he becomes aware of this as he surveys the poetry which he has written during his time in the Karoo. Initially he denies that the landscape has entered his consciousness in such a manner, instead believing that he has

inscribed the landscape on his own terms. “[W]hen he reads the poems again, he does understand” (92), however, that there is another presence, mediating his writings on the landscape. That is, he becomes aware that:

[u]ntil now, he’s been trying to write poems about the wilderness, a world empty of people, while all the time he’s needed a human being to focus on. And here at last she is, intervening between him and the landscape – not an identifiable person, but an emblematic female figure, seen against the backdrop of a primal, primitive garden. (92)

Significantly, Adam only becomes aware of the presence of this “emblematic female figure” (92) after the poems have been written. The irony of Adam’s realising that he has been unable to write the empty landscape he had been imagining stands in almost direct counterpoint to the irony present in the self-inscribed, exclusionary wilderness which Canning’s father attempts to create in Gondwana. Adam’s subjectivity toward the landscape, in the midst of his writing, is one which came into being “in the self’s pre-reflective and traumatic exposure, without inhibition, to otherness” (Marais 2009: 275). As such, his becoming aware of “the emblematic female figure” intervening between him and the landscape also signals an awareness of the fact that he has been robbed of the power to engage “in an exclusionary process of self-affirmation that [...] shields him from the strangeness of others” (Marais 2009: 275). The obvious implication of this is that Adam, in the act of writing, becomes unconditional host and guest to the landscape. The female presence, therefore, denies him the possibility of inscribing himself onto the empty wilderness he had pre-conceived in his writing. That is, she returns the landscape to a state whereby its entry into Adam’s consciousness “cannot be known in advance from within a priorly formed system of linguistic conceptuality” (Marais 2009: 275). Adam’s reflective acknowledgement of his inability to inscribe himself onto the landscape only serves to highlight the pre-reflective, and concordantly, unconditionally hospitable state which he must have experienced in the midst of his writing.

The sharpness with which this unconditionally hospitable state contrasts with Canning’s father’s conditionally hospitable vision for Gondwana is highlighted by the fact that the female figure, intervening in Adam’s consciousness is “seen against the backdrop of a primal, primitive garden” (92). This type of primitive and primal garden state is exactly that which Canning’s father was trying, and failed, to create in Gondwana through a process of conscious lineation of boundaries and wilful exclusion. The implication of such a direct

contrast, with regard to unconditional hospitality, is fairly obvious; if an Edenic relationship with the landscape is to be achieved, it cannot be through a conscious process of inscription and exclusion of the kind enacted by Canning's father. It is only through pre-reflective opening of the consciousness to the landscape, unnamed and unnameable, that a hospitable relationship with it might be achieved. Adam achieves this pre-reflective, unconditional hospitality, but is only able to realise it after it has occurred. This suggests, as is the case with a number of the other texts, that the state in which Adam relates to the landscape unconditionally is one which occurs in a state beyond the conscious.

There are, undoubtedly, links to be found between the kind of imagined Eden which Canning's father attempts to create with Gondwana and the pastoral paradise which Andries le Fleur imagines in his vision for the settlement of Beeswater in *David's Story*. There is, within each of them, the desire to inscribe the landscape according to their individual wills as well to exclude anything which they deem other from entering onto the landscape which they have demarcated as theirs. While both present states of highly conditional hospitality with the landscape, the forms of conditionality which each use are extremely distinct.

In illustrating what makes the representations of conditional hospitality so distinct in *David's Story* I will analyse a few very specific instances of conditional hospitality. First, I will look at the descriptions of Ouma Sarie's limited interaction with the Karoo outside the Logan Hotel in the opening chapter. Following this, I will turn to the conceptions of the Karoo as Andries le Fleur leads his people to Beeswater with the promise of sovereignty and freedom. I will posit that, in the descriptions of the landscape in these instances, is to be found a particularly evident form of conditional hospitality. Tied to this will be an examination of the manner in which the descriptions of the hopes for Beeswater initially seem to reflect the kind of conditional hospitality usually bound in the conventions of the plaasroman. Following this I will consider the more complex readings of hospitality and landscape evident in the descriptions of Beeswater as a place and the events which surround it. More especially, I will interrogate the manner in which the landscape is named, pre-defined and burdened with conscious expectation.

As I have previously noted, Ouma Sarie identifies herself far more readily with the Logan Hotel than she does with the Karoo which surrounds it. This identification is also, in a number of ways, an identification with the hotel's ability to fortify itself against the surrounding Karoo. In this regard, the reasons for Ouma Sarie's disappointment upon her

return to the hotel are important. Whilst, for instance, she appears impressed with the general cleanliness, she disapproves of the general sense of stasis among the furniture as it contrasts so sharply with the fact that she “had imagined the place airy and modern, brightly painted” (6) and easy to keep clean. More pertinently, the interior is sharply contrasted with the descriptions we are given of Ouma Sarie hurrying “through the green gardens [...] and through the brush until the garden petered out into the [K]aroo that would not acknowledge its presence” (6-7). The garden, therefore, in petering out into the Karoo cannot wholly exclude it. That is, within the hotel, it is possible for Ouma Sarie to render the landscape as other, to only allow it entrance into her consciousness conditionally. This conditionality, in its desire to achieve periods of complete conscious exclusion rather than conditional acts of physical inscription, differs somewhat from the conventions of the *plaasroman*. This is particularly so as Ouma Sarie does not seek to inscribe the landscape with the expectations of her ancestry and descendants, nor does she seek to work the landscape for the validation of both herself and these past and future generations. As such, Ouma Sarie’s relationship with the Karoo landscape which surrounds the Logan Hotel is an example of how conditional hospitality toward the landscape is not necessarily contingent on an ability to inscribe onto it one’s identity.

Somewhat closer to the aims of the *plaasroman*, with regard to the landscape, are the aims of Andries le Fleur in the settlement of Beeswater. Upon hearing his wife’s disappointment at the absence of diamonds on the land, le Fleur placates her by requesting that they not get involved in white “squabbles over riches; we are here to till the land and watch our food grow through our own efforts” (92). Such a notion is concomitant with a number of the ideals of the *plaasroman*. In coming to Beeswater, le Fleur undoubtedly sees his followers as the progenitors of a new lineage. They are expected to set out this hereditary base through labour, to pay for it “in blood, sweat, and tears, not in money” (Coetzee 1988: 85). Le Fleur’s insistence on the value of labour also represents a belief in the idea that the natural right to ownership of the land is established through good stewardship – a process which requires “the fullest utilisation of one’s energies and talents, and the bounty of the farm, for ends that transcend material gain” (Coetzee 1988: 86). The usurpation of these specific ideals of the *plaasroman* is somewhat ironic, given that they are only able to claim the land because it will not yield the easy mineral or agricultural wealth and would have thus been claimed by white prospectors or farmers. To use the landscape for such purposes and to imagine that it is one’s natural right to do so is, as I demonstrated in the opening paragraphs

of this chapter, to engage with it conditionally. While Wicomb's novel contains within it various of the conventions of the plaasroman, certain events, along with the nature of Beeswater as a place, mean that a far more complex reading is required.

Perhaps most significant in this regard is the manner in which le Fleur's subjects begin to move away from the way he chooses to inscribe the landscape with a kind of conditional hospitality rooted in his own whims and desires. The most pertinent of the incidents which reflect these shifting whims are to be found in Antjie's ruminations prior to, and upon, enacting her duties as a Rain Sister. Upon our introduction to Antjie, we are already made aware of the way in which her ideas concerning the landscape differ from those of her chief, le Fleur. Even in her dutiful acquiescence to his commands concerning toil and labour, she recognises that in Beeswater there are to be found no traces of the "Old Ones, the Griqua ancestors who once roamed these plains and whose spirit the Chief said they would capture here as a new nation" (97). Through Antjie, the Griqua ancestors are presented as having a relationship with the landscape in which they allow their selves to be open "to the stranger through being invaded, possessed and dispossessed of self" (Marais 2009: 276). More plaintively, Antjie is conscious of how the toil and labour which le Fleur demands from his subjects differs from the interactions which the Old Ones are represented as having had with the landscape. That is, she is aware that the "Old Ones had left the world as they had found it, their waste drawn back into the soil, their footprints buried" (97). This description of the ancestors, therefore, suggests a cognisance – on the part of Antjie – of their unconditional form of hospitality toward the landscape. There is no suggestion, in Antjie's knowledge of the ancestors, of a prescribed inscription of consciousness on the landscape.

The idea of the Rain Sisters – "Antjie and four other women who had been shaped by God into perfect vessels for collecting and carrying back radical moisture from the rain-soaked Cape peninsula with which to temper the radical heat of Namaqualand" (153) – is one of the final, and more desperate, attempts by le Fleur to inscribe his own ideas surrounding tradition onto the Griqua people and the landscape. His belief that the rain water from the Cape would end the drought is one which places success as a condition not only onto the Rain Sisters but also onto the landscape. For le Fleur then, the landscape becomes something which requires sacrifice and thus becomes godlike, demanding constantly shifting and changeable rituals which he would otherwise call pagan. In the moments before coming up with the idea of the rain sisters, for instance, Le Fleur calls Antjie's husband, Gert, "a raw pagan at heart" (152) for suggesting it would "take some powerful medicine men to bring [...]"

rain this year” (152). Antjie, functioning similarly to a guest invited into a home abounding with unbreakable but mysterious rules and regulations, is all too aware of the serious implications of being a Rain Sister. Indeed, we are told that “Antjie would have given anything to get out of the vague and heavy responsibilities of Rain Sister, which she could not quite fathom” (156).

Antjie, therefore, allows us to gain a perspective on the manner in which Andries le Fleur’s actions of hospitality contrast markedly with the ancestors he purports to honour. In their non-inscriptive absorption into the landscape, the Grigriqua ancestors mark a state of unconditional hospitality toward the landscape. This is markedly different from le Fleur’s hospitality toward the landscape, which is one entirely of inscription and self-imposed vision. Le Fleur’s inscription and exclusion-driven hospitality is demonstrated as such both in the plaasroman-like vision he initially has for Beeswater as well as the complex of rituals which he uses to maintain his inscribed vision for the landscape, of which the ritual of Rain Sisters is the most prominent.

Whilst *David’s Story* undoubtedly calls upon the conventions of the plaasroman as much as, if not more than, the other texts under investigation, it is unique among them in not having any representations of unconditional hospitality between its characters and the landscape. Even then, each of the texts represents unconditional hospitality with the landscape in a unique manner. Perhaps the only uniform statement which can be made is that each seems to accept that such a state cannot be achieved consciously. For instance, Marlouw’s visions of the place he formerly called Ouplaas are described as coming to him rather than as an inscriptive act of his imagination. Similarly, Konstant is only able to achieve hospitable imaginings of the landscape as he approaches death. Adam in *The Imposter* and Ms Beatrice in *The Devil’s Chimney*, meanwhile, are only able to achieve fleeting moments of unconditional hospitality toward the landscape in writing and at the point of orgasm, respectively.

Each of the above scenarios is problematic in its own way. Each, however, also offers an important insight into conceptions of a form of hospitality seldom dealt with theoretically. What is important in uniting each of the texts with regard to this form of hospitality is one specific way in which chooses *not* to write the landscapes within them. It is evident then, that none of the texts under examination, in a direct subversion of the mode of the plaasroman, renders the landscape as a conscious host capable of punishing and rewarding those who

inhabit it. None of the texts, therefore, portrays the landscape as a conditional host. That the landscape is not portrayed as a conditional host is important, not because such a portrayal suggests that the landscape may easily find unconditional hospitality in the consciousness of the host. Indeed, as I have shown above, unconditional hospitality appears to be fleeting whilst the host is alive and in its pre-reflexivity cannot be recognised whilst it is occurring. Rather, such depictions are significant because they allow for the possibility of a hospitable relationship with the landscape. That is, if the guest cannot name and place expectation on the host, which is landscape, as other, then it becomes possible, however remotely, that the host might be able to enter into a state of “pre-reflective and traumatic exposure, without inhibition, to otherness” (Marais 2009: 275). If the represented self is the guest, therefore, it cannot inscribe an unconditionally hospitable landscape onto its consciousness and cannot inscribe its consciousness and identity onto landscape.

Chapter Four: The Black Corpse in the Garden

Or

Hospitality and Black Labour

America, the negro countries, the Spice Islands, the Cape, etc. were looked upon at the time of their discovery as ownerless territories; for the native inhabitants counted as nothing.

Jacques Derrida (2007: 247)

This chapter will focus on the interactions between the self and other within the Karoo landscape as presented within the text. More specifically, it will concern itself with the manner in which the landscape mediates the degrees of hospitality present in the relationships between individuals within the master-servant binary. In order to make this investigation meaningful, I will do a number of things. Firstly, as I did in the previous chapter, I will establish the historical precedents for the portrayals of such relationships. In order to do so, I will turn to surveys of the South African writing landscape such as those by J.M. Coetzee and Rita Barnard. Following this, I will attempt to convey what I mean when I say that a relationship between people is hospitable or inhospitable. In doing this, I will refer, as in the previous chapter, to Jacques Derrida's work on hospitality and Mike Marais's application of his theories onto the works of Coetzee. Having established the historical precedent and the theoretical framework I will be able to apply this understanding to the texts under examination.

This chapter takes its figurative title from J.M. Coetzee's analysis of Nadine Gordimer's novel *The Conservationist* in *White Writing*. Coetzee sees the text as the one which lays to rest the myth of the white South African pastoral tradition "when [...] the dark side of farm life, its buried half, the black corpse in the garden, is at last brought to light" (1988: 81). That is, it exposes the silence around the issue of black labour in the South African pastoral tradition. Whilst I have previously outlined several of the pastoral traditions present in the plaasroman, the question of labour in this tradition requires some attention. More specifically, the manner in which black labour has been written in relation to the landscape must be considered. From the outline of this background, it will be possible to see how the texts under investigation have dealt with these conventions in the post-apartheid context.

The earliest conceptions of black labour within the landscape come after the heady period of English stories of colonial expansion and exploration, in which “wild animals, Boers,¹⁴ and blacks are depicted as the marvellous and dreaded stuff of strangeness objectified in the amber of the reasoned English tongue” (de Kock 2001: 265). In attempting to illustrate the evolution of portrayals of black labour, it is important to understand the innate conflict between a landscape which is imagined, on the one hand, as being crisscrossed by a series of boundaries “marking off thousands of farms, each a separate kingdom ruled over by a benign patriarch with, beneath him, a pyramid of contented and industrious children, grandchildren and serfs” (Coetzee 1988: 6) and on the other as “a vast, empty silent space” (Coetzee 1988: 6). When either of these imaginings is used as a means of validating white pastoral retreat it brings about a state in which the question of black labour becomes particularly problematic. In the first instance, the image of the benign patriarch living a life of simple and honest toil is somewhat tarnished if it becomes obvious that he is actually dependent on black labour. In the second instance, the imagining itself becomes problematic if it suggests white colonisers have dispossessed the workers of their land. That is, anyone attempting to defend such a position must be prepared to answer the question of how the farm can become “the pastoral retreat for the black man [for it is he/she who is engaged in the prescribed pastoral toil] when it *was* his pastoral home a generation or two ago” (Coetzee 1988: 5). As such, “the black man becomes a shadowy presence flitting across the stage now and then to hold a horse or serve a meal” (Coetzee 1988: 5). Conventionally then, these constraints made “silence about the black man the easiest of an uneasy set of options” (Coetzee 1988: 5). This ingrained silence is, to some degree, the premise of Coetzee’s 1987 Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech, in which he portrays it as:

a failure of love. To be blunt: [white South Africans’] love is not enough today and has not been enough since they arrived on the continent; furthermore, their talk, their excessive talk, about how they love the land has been consistently directed toward *the land*, that is, toward that which is least likely to respond to love: mountains and deserts and animals and flowers. (1992: 97)

This convention of silence has a number of implications for this project as a whole. It is, however, worth noting that the assumed norm from which the South African pastoral has traditionally turned – one in which labour is black – is, in itself, one which emanates from a particular set of expectations “attendant on [...] location in a cultural domain” (Marais 2009:

¹⁴ I will, however, return to this idea of Afrikaner or Boer as other in my analysis of the primary texts.

275). That is, implicit in the conventions of the white, South African, pastoral tradition is “the denial of the fact that black South Africans also have a pastoral tradition – that they too have a sense of place and an attachment to ancestral land” (Barnard 2007: 73). Contrary to the contemporary white view in which the majority of blacks were never likely to attain “the white man’s level of civilisation” (Clare 2010: 299), numerous black farmers were profiting greatly from their own capabilities within this pastoral tradition. Indeed, amidst the rapid urban growth of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century “black farmers had been quicker than white farmers to respond to the commercial demand for grain” (Wenzel 2000: 93), sparking – at least in part – the various Acts which saw the majority of the black population placed on reserves and, ultimately, re-classed as non-citizens. From the introduction of the 1913 Land Act, until its repeal nearly eighty years later, black Africans could only live in South Africa “as wage earning labourers” (Clare 2010: 302). The very fact of black labour – about which the white pastoral is so reticent – is, then, a placing of condition on the inhabitancy of land by black South Africans.

Given the apparent inevitability of conditionality, the conclusions of my previous chapter seem problematic. It would seem impossible for the landscape to be treated with unconditional hospitality by an individual, or group of individuals, if all who inhabit it are not also treated with unconditional hospitality. Given the history of inhabitancy and the South African landscape such a position has the potential to be seen as contentious. This contentiousness arises from the fact that a position of all-encompassing unconditional hospitality does not allow for the possibility of ‘rightful inhabitants’ in the landscape. Under a Derridean model, however, this problem is countered by the idea that “all men are entitled to present themselves in the society of others by virtue of their right to communal possession of the earth’s surface” (2007: 246).¹⁵ I would further argue that if the idea of a universal unconditional hospitality is applied to a text’s temporal present then questions of the past cease to be of quite as much importance. Nonetheless, it is far from adequate to simply say that unconditional hospitality between the landscape and those who inhabit it must simply ‘occur’. Unconditional hospitality is, after all, a process which must come “into being in the self’s pre-reflective and traumatic exposure, without inhibition, to otherness” (Marais 2009: 275). Such an uninhibited, pre-reflective exposure to otherness requires a collective surrender of the self. The reason this is so critical for universal unconditional hospitality with and within landscape is that it requires the surrender of the power to name, for naming

¹⁵ This is, it must be an acknowledged, a rather anthropocentric form of argument.

“symbolises not just man’s power over nature or the power of one group over another, but the power of one group or class over a subordinate group or class within the same social formation” (Crehan 1998: 4).

Before I turn to the manner in which the books deal with relationships within the landscape and ideas surrounding language, I would like to further examine some of the ideas around what it means for a relationship between two conscious beings to be hospitable. In doing so, I wish to draw particular attention to the etymology of the word ‘host’. There is the sense of the host as one who receives a guest but also the sense of one who fosters a parasite. At this point, it is worth considering that among the meanings of parasite is that of “an obsequious sycophant who lives at another’s expense” as well as an antiquarian sense of one “who secured welcome at the table of the rich by fawning and flattery” or who is “admitted to the post-sacrificial feast” (PSD). The parasitic sense of what it means to be a host is, I feel, much closer to what is required of the host for there to be a true state of unconditional hospitality. There cannot be a clearer evocation of the relationship between parasite and parasitic host than one in which the latter “only gives herself to the stranger through being invaded, possessed and dispossessed of self by her” (Marais 2009: 276). The unconditional guest, like the invading parasite, may only be acted upon by the host once they are identified and consolidated within the grasps of language. Derrida presents a further disambiguation of the term when he speaks about the host as referring “both to the guest who receives hospitality and the host who gives hospitality” (Stocker in Derrida 2007: 237). The only possible way for this to occur is through simultaneous and unmarked invasion so that both become guest-host or host-guest. The notion of racial difference presents as palpable a barrier to this process as any form of self-identification. That is to say, in order for the texts to portray unconditional hospitality between various selves within the landscape, they must effectively allow for the simultaneous transcendence of consciousness within these varying selves. How successfully they achieve this is what follows.

Notions of parasites, hosts and unconditional hospitality, as mentioned above, have an especially interesting array of applications in Eben Venter’s *Trencherman*. Perhaps the most significant of these applications is to be found in a definition relating to the novel’s title. The provided definition states that a trencherman is “a feeder, an eater (of a specific kind), a person who cadges free meals, a parasite.”¹⁶ Given this, along with the other provided Middle English definition of a trencher as “a cutting instrument, a knife; a person who carves meat”,

¹⁶ The sense in which the word is used here has its closest application in the antiquarian, class-driven definition of parasite provided in the previous paragraph.

there is much to be considered along a very specific line of hospitable interaction. I am here referring to those interactions which occur in scenes involving food. More specifically, I will examine the relationship between Marlouw and the former farm labourers¹⁷ in such scenes, as well as that of Koert's climactic death, along with the fall of his meat empire.

It is, initially, difficult to see how Marlouw could possibly function as a parasitic guest. Certainly, we are told that his arrival at Ouplaas is not unexpected. Upon his arrival at Ouplaas, Pilot is able to identify Marlouw immediately and tell him that "We know you will be coming, we wait for you every day. Along this road" (111). Marlouw, then, is identified and named; his arrival is prefaced and expected. I would argue, however, that the Marlouw pre-configured by the expectations of the former labourers is one which only loosely resembles the one which arrives at Ouplaas. In order to reveal the parasitic element in Marlouw, I will turn to several of the scenes in which the eating of food plays a significant role. These scenes will similarly reveal the parasitic nature of the former labourers toward Marlouw. They will, however, also reveal how the expectations on the part of each party do not allow for these patristic relationships to be unconditionally hospitable.

The earliest encounter between Marlouw and the former labourers which involves food occurs on Marlouw's first night back on Ouplaas. The descriptions of the food and its consumption are worth noting, if only for how revelatory they are of the expectations which Marlouw feels the former labourers have toward him. He tells us:

Supper is ready. A three legged pot of mealie meal is placed near the fire; a saucepan of tomato and onion sauce is brought from the kitchen. Mildred and Sindiswa dish up. Two little girls hand out the tin plates one by one. Bright-eyed, they concentrate on their task – they know they're dead if they spill a single scrap.

There's a meatiness to the sauce, the pap just stiff enough to roll in a little ball between your fingers. Esmie and the children watch to see if I can do it the way they do. (130)

The watchfulness described here, along with the revelation that the saucepan from which the meal is served is one that Marlouw's family had served their Sunday dinners from (130), is particularly evocative. There is a sense that the saucepan is an allegory for the way in which the former labourers have defined Marlouw: something which is at once alien and familiar and which might be used for the general purposes of slightly uplifted survival. In the light of this very clear sense of demarcated expectation, Marlouw's sense of the meal as a kind of

¹⁷ Rightly, they are the farm's new owners. For reasons explored, to some degree, in previous chapters, they never enter Marlouw's consciousness as such.

divine communion seems, at the very least, misplaced. Going to sleep that night, he notes that everyone “will lay down their heads and pull up their bedding. Everyone’s got pap and tomatoes in their bellies, me too. Thus I become one with the people of Ouplaas” (136).

This sense of a dissolved self within a communal entity is rapidly dissolved as the people of Ouplaas begin to voice their expectations for Marlouw. Marlouw’s relaying of the next morning’s events serves to highlight the fact that he is seen as the wealthy, providing other to the receiving poverty of the former labourers:

“Dose” is the first word I hear when I walk out into the frost, teeth chattering. Pilot is dancing about. “We have to dose,” he waves his arms; “the sheep are all dying. It is the paralysis tick, our meat is dying and everyone’s sleeping. Dose.” He kicks a chicken to hell and gone. Today he’s wearing brightly polished boots. “Dose!” “Why the hell didn’t you buy dose a long time ago?” I shout at him across the werf, playing baas.

“No money! We told Koert. Every day I say to Esmie: tell Koert to give us money, the sheep are all going to die, we have got fuck all meat for winter, we are all going to die here Ouplaas. Koert says nothing, fuck off, he says. You give us money,” Pilot demands of me. (141)

Any remaining sense which Marlouw may have about being one with the people of Ouplaas after the above incident is quickly dispelled by the scenes at breakfast that morning. When he notices dogs, the descendants of the family dogs he grew up with, trying to extract morsels from a plate already scraped clean, he tries to scrape some of his own pap for them. Mildred grabs his wrists and stops him from doing so, telling him to “eat that pap yourself. This pap is for the *people* on Ouplaas. Eat your food and say thank you God” (141). Following this, she launches into an indictment of Marlouw and his family, indicating that there was “[m]ore food for your dogs than for us and our children on the farm, your dogs ate more meat than we did, you think I didn’t notice?” (141). It is interesting to note how readily Marlouw’s thoughts return to familiar terms of self and other following this indictment. “*Their* newfound authority has to be balanced with old grievances,” he thinks. “We neglected *them*; *they* neglect their animals. Their sheep are dying in droves in the veld” (141).¹⁸

Following this, it becomes readily evident that Marlouw will not play the role of the returning son, come to provide for the former labourers. He only reluctantly, for instance, takes Pilot into town to buy the dose necessary to keep the farm’s sheep alive. This meal is also final evidence of the fact that the former labourers are not the successful farmers, suddenly imbued with wealth, whom Marlouw would have constructed in his imagination

¹⁸ Italics are my own emphasis.

when he and his sister transferred Ouplaas into their hands. The relationship between the former labourers and Marlouw, then, mirrors their meals to a large degree. It takes the form of a barely sustained stasis, in which none can thrive. Rather than the host-guest, guest-host scenario which I earlier referred to as necessary for unconditional hospitality, the former labourers and Marlouw merely seem to tolerate each other. That is, for almost the duration of the time in which they are in proximity with each other they retain their sense of self, and remain bound in an “elaborate process of self consolidation, of fortifying the home against the danger of difference” (Marais 2009: 275). To fully understand the moment when this changes, we must first understand the relationship which Koert has with the people of Ouplaas.

The relationship which Koert has with the farm and the former labourers is somewhat different from that of Marlouw. Indeed, I would suggest that, despite the violence inherent in it, the relationship would, at first glance, seem to come far closer to being one of unconditional hospitality. This may be particularly seen if one considers Koert’s actions in conjunction with the climactic description of the final feast in the text. Koert’s actions are, for a number of definitions of the word, parasitic. Foremost among these is the fact that Koert initially gains his position on the farm through a process of parasitic “fawning and flattery”. His materialistic gifts of sneakers, portable games consoles and alcohol seem to shatter any defences which the former labourers might have against him. They allow him to enter as a guest against whom the host has no means of naming and fortifying its home. It is this lack of defence which allows Koert to become increasingly like the parasitic ticks infesting the sheep on Ouplaas.

That Koert’s empire has been carved out of meat is significant in this regard. More specifically, it is significant that he has no legal claim to the fruits from which this empire is carved. Whilst van Schalkwyk is correct in his assessment that “red meat has been a luxury item in South Africa and a symbol of (apartheid) wealth and privilege” and that in *Trencherman* “the stereotypical white Afrikaans meat eater has grown out of all proportions” (2009: 93), he does not quite explore the full implications of the scenario. The fact remains that Koert’s obesity comes from the toil of others. Like the tick-infested sheep, the people of Ouplaas are withering and dying, the process controlled by something outside of themselves. Koert is not merely a bloated parody of the farm ‘baas’, he is a visible demonstration of the parasitic nature of his endeavours. As Mildred tells Marlouw: “Koert says when we can slaughter sheep [...] Sometimes he says we must slaughter for everyone. Even on Sundays, when everyone’s dressed for church” (130). When it is later explained that it is Esmie who

dictates such orders on Koert's behalf, the image of him as parasite becomes irrevocably magnified. He becomes the invisible voice who robs the former labourers of agency and, ultimately, deprives them of life which is rightfully theirs.

Given that Koert, as a visible character, only enters the narrative at a fairly advanced stage, there is little evidence to suggest that the kind of parasitic behaviour displayed by Koert is reciprocated in any way by the former labourers. Indeed, Koert's conspicuous absence as a physical presence marks him as other to the rest of the inhabitants of Ouplaas. This would seem, immediately, to ensure the impossibility of a hospitable relationship between Koert and the rest of the inhabitants of Ouplaas. Unlike Marlouw, he does not even share in the communion of the meal times on the farm. The very fact of this absence makes the one instance of his presence at a gathering on the farm all the more worthwhile of consideration. This scene is also of interest in providing a more complete understanding of Marlouw.

Following the destruction of the Louw family graveyard, a crowd begins to filter into Ouplaas. As the crowd begins to demand the presence of Koert, Marlouw describes himself as becoming excited and jumping up and down with the rhythm of the crowd. He notices "a hand beckoning, enticing me towards the circle of dancers. I'm the cripple who can't dance, who up till now has made sure he stays close to Mildred. I dance" (295). In the midst of his dancing, Marlouw considers the time he has spent on Ouplaas and who he has become:

All those nights next to November and the others – the bodies – that's what I smell like now, and I don't resist it. When last did I have a bath? My underpants are brown like the veld. I have become one with everyone on Ouplaas. My people. I am one of them. Mildred offers me more wine; I choke on its glorious sweetness. I dance, I dance. Flare my nostrils to breathe; my sweat smells like frog slime, like cow dung. Like soil. Human. (295)

What makes this statement of oneness with the people of Ouplaas different from the one which Marlouw makes on his first night at the farm, is that it comes as a realisation rather than a statement of readily assumed belonging. Most significantly, the obvious changes attendant in Marlouw's consciousness as well as the above-noted physical changes suggest that he has surrendered and abandoned the "exclusionary process of self-affirmation that not only shields him from the strangeness of others but also, through placing them at a distance, enables ethical indifference" (Marais 2009: 275). Perhaps it might be crude to couch it in such terms but I would suggest that the Marlouw who arrives on Ouplaas is one who feels some proprietary claim to the farm. Contrastingly, the Marlouw we see above is one who,

without agency, has been unhomed and who has given himself “to the stranger through being invaded, possessed and dispossessed of self” (Marais 2009: 276). Marlouw’s recognition, therefore, is recognition of a process in which his time as a guest of the people of Ouplaas has resulted in his consciousness becoming host to them. He has, therefore become the unconditional host-guest. It is important that he does not realise this in the midst of the process, for unconditional hospitality must be pre-reflective. Since “the arrival of the stranger or other is unannounced and wholly unexpected” (Marais 2009: 275), it may only be recognised after it has occurred. This recognition, of course, returns Marlouw to a state in which he is other to the people of Ouplaas. I would suggest, however, that it is this recognition of unconscious, unconditional hospitality which allows for the images of an Ouplaas stripped of name and people to come to Marlouw in the text’s epilogue.

The end which awaits Koert, upon the final relinquishing of his parasitic invisibility, is somewhat different from that of Marlouw. As he emerges and crawls toward the fire, Ouma Zuka – until now exiled into the veld – steps forward and utters the words which allow Koert to be identified by the people of Ouplaas. “He’s the *mzungu*.¹⁹ He’s not one of us,” she says, “This *mzungu* is vermin that’s come to live on your werf, meant for humans only. He’s hungry, the hunger in his belly is driving him mad, and he needs meat, night and day” (299). Once identified and named he ceases to hold power over the people of Ouplaas. They are able to view him from a distance, enabling ethical indifference (Marais 2009: 275). As Ouma Zuka continues her tirade, the crowd closes around Koert. One of the balaclava-wearing men, who formerly guarded Koert’s quarters, steps forward with a long knife, which he slips “into Koert’s middle, right where the body folds in two, and jerks him upwards” (301). The first balaclava-wearing knife wielder is quickly replaced by a second, third and fourth. They pass the knife “from one hand to another as if they’d practised for this: each drives the knife cleanly and accurately into the flesh of the master” (302). Finally, the identifiable men of Ouplaas “come forward for their turn” (302):

Headman shrieks like a banshee. When he gets his chance he chooses the weakest spot, where the neck joins the back, and as he pulls the knife out he immediately lets go of it. He’s pissed himself. Then he’s also there, the golden Nikes dancing in the flames, the only knifeman whose deed shocked me [...] Pilot quivers like a rodent, just manages to drive in the tip of the knife. He has chosen the upper leg. When he sees the first trickle of blood from the wound, he retreats. (302)

¹⁹ *Mzungu* is a derisive term for a white person with the same meaning as the isiZulu *mlungu*.

It would, I feel, be foolhardy to try and read too much into Headman and Pilot's fear and reluctance. It is sufficient to say that even within their actions, there is a recognition of the need to expel Koert. This expulsion, as I have stated above, is only able to occur because Ouma Zuka is able to name Koert as other.

One might rightly ask what implications this has for my hypothesis concerning parasitic behaviour and unconditional hospitality. It is worth remembering, however, that for hospitality to be truly unconditional, the host must invade the guest as much as the guest invades the host. For this to occur, the act of invasion cannot be done willingly. Koert's act of invasion – and it is, undoubtedly, an act of invasion – is a willed one. Contrastingly, Marlouw – consciously other to the former labourers in the early sections of the novel – gradually allows himself to be invaded by, and to invade, the people of Ouplaas. He does so to the extent that he is able, for the briefest of moments, to become not just as of them but to be of them. That his recognition of this unconditional hospitality inevitably breaks the moment does not, in this instance, matter as much as the fact that the experience occurs in the first place.

Whilst the sense of invasion present in *Trencherman* is not nearly as explicitly stated in Anne Landsman's *The Devil's Chimney* there are, nonetheless, similarities. It is, initially, difficult to see what these similarities might be. *The Devil's Chimney* is, after all, set partially in a time of highly concentrated white settlement in the Karoo whilst *Trencherman* is set entirely in a time of imagined wholesale white evacuation. There is, however, an exploration of catastrophe within both. The catastrophe in *The Devil's Chimney* – that is, the collapse of the ostrich feather market – may only seem incidental to the plot of the novel. The onset of poverty in Oudtshoorn which results from it is, however, one of the primary links between Connie and Miss Beatrice Chapman, whose story she narrates. Whilst Miss Beatrice's labourers feature much more personally in the novel than Connie's there are instances where they seem to be rendered just as, if not more, strange. I will, therefore, be investigating the relationship which Miss Beatrice has with Nomsa and September, the two labourers who are given most mention in the novel, as well as Connie's perceptions of her own domestic worker. Firstly, though, I would like to speak about what is revealed in the text's prologue, which concerns the disappearance of a domestic worker in the Cango Caves complex.

Connie's first act as a narrator is to describe how she feels the disappearance of Pauline Cupido, a Coloured²⁰ domestic worker, in 1955 – forty years prior to the present from

²⁰ I will retain the text's use of the capital 'C' here.

which Connie narrates – has affected her. After explaining that the area of the caves where Pauline disappeared has been closed up, Connie begins to transfer blame for the ills in her own life onto the event of the disappearance. “Everything was fine before it happened”, she states:

How could you complain about a job with the South African Tourist Board, with a four bedroom house thrown in and a swimming pool in the yard? I keep thinking that if I find Pauline everything will go back to the way it was before. No more bad dreams at night, no more *skollies* under the bed with knives, no more fights with my husband, Jack. (1-2)

Connie, therefore, assigns Pauline as other by dint not only of her race but also as a cause of her own problems. At one point, for instance, she suggests that Pauline disappeared “on purpose, to scare me. She’s probably laughing at me right now, like Jack” (1). I would suggest, however, that Connie is not entirely able to engage in the exclusionary process of self-affirmation which, as Marais points out, enables ethical indifference (2009: 275). This is at least partially because so many of the details concerning Pauline come from Connie’s own imagination. Among the few facts which Connie can relate about Pauline are those which are concerned with the remembrance that she didn’t appear excited about going into the caves and that she “wasn’t a Bantu like the girl who works for me. She was a Coloured” (3). Indeed, Connie reverts quite frequently, almost in comfort, to Pauline’s Coloured assignation. This seems to occur most particularly at those times when she has been imagining what Pauline’s responses and actions at the time of the incident might have been. This is in evidence from the opening paragraph of the prologue. As she introduces the scenario Connie admits that at that point she had “started to think about would be like if I just disappeared suddenly like that, or died. Of course it’s not the same thing if you’re non-White” (1). Even when she is dismissing Jack’s notion that the Coloured tour guide took Pauline as a gift for the Devil as part of a pact he had made, she remains bound to the term as an assignation of difference. This is particularly evident when she describes how Oom Piet had showed her “a picture of his grandchildren once. One of them is very clever and got a scholarship to study in America even though he is a Coloured” (8).

In a number of other ways, however, it is evident that the Pauline of Connie’s imagination is an extension of Connie’s self. More particularly, she seems to be the embodiment of Connie’s desire for freedom from her marriage and from her job. This is most evident in the final analysis of what she thinks happened to Pauline:

I think Pauline didn't go on the tour at all. I think she walked back down the parking lot and got a lift with some Coloured people to the main road. She started walking along the Outeniqua Pass like those Coloured men and women you see walking for miles and miles in the middle of nowhere. Sometimes they have a bicycle but usually they walk. Sometimes when I take the dogs out, I see her in the distance with those long thin legs. She turns around and I wave at her but she doesn't wave back. She just keeps walking. (10)

In assigning Pauline as Coloured, therefore, Connie is able to fortify herself “against the danger of difference” (Marais 2009: 275). The danger against which Connie is fortifying herself, however, is not an external one presented by Pauline. Whilst Connie assigns Pauline as the locus of blame for all that has gone wrong in her life, she is “possessed and dispossessed of self” (Marais 2009: 275). She cannot place conditional hospitality onto this interior feeling and thus displaces it onto an external other.

Given this, it is perhaps unsurprising that Connie's opening description of Nomsa – Miss Beatrice's maid – is couched in terms of the familiarity of labour and the strangeness of custom. Immediately after learning that she was employed by Miss Beatrice, we are told that “Nomsa was a witch or a witch doctor or whatever it is they call those women who throw bones and make small fires” (16). Despite the fact that Nomsa and her husband, September, the head ostrich handler, would seem to be essential to the running of the farm, their roles remain largely incidental until the disappearance of Miss Beatrice's husband, Mr Henry.

With Mr Henry gone, it becomes impossible for Miss Beatrice to keep up the facade of the pastoral idyll she and her husband had previously attempted to portray to the society around them. Nonetheless, Connie narrates Beatrice's fear in terms of fear of the labourers, or *Volkies*,²¹ as they are called throughout much of the text. In naming them as small people, they are named as less than people. Instead, they become, in the eyes of those who name them as such, creatures who require patriarchal care and attention. This is certainly consistent with the images we are given of Miss Beatrice as she wanders through the shelters of the labourers. We are told that she:

Floats on, getting lighter and whiter, whiter and thinner, until she's a column of smoke herself. The *volkies* look up from their fires and nod as she smiles at them as if she is the Mother of God [...] She is almost ready to lead them into the farmhouse like the Pied Piper, but they're settling in for the night. (33)

The next day, we are told that “Miss Beatrice sat down at the table where the servants eat, and ate *mieliepap* and bread like the *kaffirs*. No knife, no fork, no spoon, just shovelling the

²¹ This term is derived from Afrikaans and means, literally: Small People.

pap with bread and swallowing it in big chunks” (34-5). Whatever Miss Beatrice’s actions, there is, nonetheless, a tension between Miss Beatrice and Nomsa and September. We are told that they “were careful, the way you are around a dog that’s not right. They moved slowly, not showing their fear as Miss Beatrice talked and talked” (35). Miss Beatrice is, at this point, still strange and still other to Nomsa and September. I would suggest that this sense of strangeness and otherness continues even after Connie describes Nomsa as having given Miss Beatrice *muti* after the death of her dogs. “I think on the inside she went black, like a *kaffir* and that’s when the *volgies* all moved in there and made their fires” (43). There is, however, a sense in which the host/guest lines are, by this point, becoming blurred in a similar process to the one which Marlouw undergoes in *Trencherman*. We are, for instance, told that Miss Beatrice was only going “into town to buy supplies and she always was with September or Nomsa and people had to look at her twice to see if she was White because by now her skin was very brown” (43).

It is only after Mr Jacobs, the neighbour with whom she has been having an affair, takes his family on holiday that Miss Beatrice truly and unconsciously allows herself to be invaded by, and to invade Nomsa and September. Following a dream, which features Nomsa and September, Miss Beatrice goes to their hut the next morning. Upon entering, she kneels down and, speaking to both of them says, “I want you to love me [...] I am sorry” (87) and later that Nomsa will know how to do this because “[y]ou know everything [...] You hear what’s inside my head” (87). What follows is a frenetic scene in which sexual energy and inferences take the place of any explicitly sexual descriptions. This lack of the explicit, if anything, allows for a greater subversion of the conscious self and a more vivid expression of the surrender of that self to other. For instance, we are told, after some previous activity, that at one point:

September was behind her, Nomsa in front. The floor made her dirty and there were black streaks all over her face. Dust fell into her hair. *Ai*, Nomsa was singing and suddenly there were birds all over them, feathers and wings and claws. The pumpkins on the roof started jumping. There was wind inside the house, and more things fell down [...] September pushed backwards, and Miss Beatrice went with him. His eyes were shut and she could see the stumps of his teeth. Then she saw nothing. Not even black. (88)

Within the brief instants described within this scene, I would suggest that there is evidence to suggest that Miss Beatrice, Nomsa and September all surrender their sense of self to the degree that they become a singular whole. It is precisely the realisation of this which results

in Miss Beatrice both longing to feel it again and the impossibility of it happening again. This realisation is described in terms of Miss Beatrice trying to push herself into September and wanting “him to finish because the darkness of the dream was fading. She could see again and wanted to go home” (89). In seeing again, Nomsa and September once again become visible to her. Once visible, they return to a state in which they are named and other. As Miss Beatrice begins to show signs of pregnancy soon after it is, however, an event which causes them to become inextricably bound. Certainly, the pregnancy subverts the conventions of the master-servant relationship. Nomsa and September, for instance, seem to eventually care only for the well-being of the future child. After Miss Beatrice throws the *muti* that Nomsa has handed to her against the wall (angered at the news that Mr Jacobs has left his farm), Nomsa is described having “stared into Miss Beatrice’s face and said, You will kill us. If that baby dies all the milk in the world goes sour” (173).

In contrast, Connie seems largely unaware of who is working for her at any point in her narration. In the prologue, for instance, she tells us that her maid is a Bantu. Later, when she compares her own situation to that of Miss Beatrice and Nomsa, she says:

My maids never last. They come from all over. Meringspoort, even Blanco and Pacaltsdorp. There’s always something. A man or some babies, or they steal Jack’s shirts. Or they drink and the bottles are empty and Jack thinks it’s me. There is always a new face in the house but now I don’t notice anymore. They all look the same and I call them Lizzie. (42-3)

By rendering all of her domestic workers the same in name and action, Connie expects and therefore ‘knows’ all of her maids prior to their arrival (Marais 2009: 275). She fortifies herself from precisely the kind of experiences which result in the shattered master-servant dynamic of Miss Beatrice and Nomsa and September. Connie’s maids cannot but fall into the “there’s always something” pattern of behaviour. Such behaviour is attendant on Connie’s expectations of them. She therefore becomes the host whom the guest cannot surprise.

In the instances which I have laid out here then, we have three varying forms of hospitality. The manner in which the domestic worker Pauline Cupido enters into Connie’s consciousness has, within it, elements of the unconditional. The manner in which Connie chooses to name her as the cause of her ill-fortunes, however, is deeply rooted in the behaviour of the conditional host. She displays such conditional behaviour, but at a manifold level, when she considers her relationships with her own domestic workers. This conditionality only serves to contrast the instant of truly unconditional hospitality between

Miss Beatrice, September and Nomsa. In that moment, they are all host-guest and guest-host, parasitically invading each other without prior conception and knowledge.

Damon Galgut's *The Imposter* presents a somewhat different subversion of the master-servant dynamic from both *Trencherman* and *The Devil's Chimney*. For one thing, the protagonist, Adam, has no servants of his own. Indeed, in some ways, he becomes something of a servant to his mysterious former schoolmate, Canning. For another, the only servants who can be said to enter into his consciousness are a couple who are employed by Canning and who were employed by Canning's father. The relationship between Adam and the labourers is, nonetheless, one worth examining. More particularly, it is worthwhile noting the manner in which it develops in contrast to Canning's own perceptions of them. Another aspect worth considering, with regard to the subjects covered by this chapter, is the detail, however small, revealed to us about Canning's childhood friendship with the son of black workers of Gondwana.

The first time Adam encounters either of the couple is the morning after the first night he has spent on Gondwana. After waking up, he has walked along a path by himself and found a point at which the river on the land drops "into a wide, calm pool" (67). After swimming naked in the pool, he perches on a rock, feeling like the "first man, alone on the very first morning" (68). Whilst revelling in this Edenic or, perhaps more appropriately, Adamic splendour, he senses that he is being watched. When he first sees the watcher he feels that:

the forest itself is staring at him – *into* him – with a dark face, lined and worn and old, marinated in ancient contempt. Adam is the intruder, alien and unwanted; the single element in the scene that doesn't fit. All his pagan hymns to the landscape depart, unwritten. (68)

When he sees that the black face has a dirty yellow hat perching on top of it and he realises that "he saw it yesterday, on the head of that old black guy" (68). However steeped in crude stereotypes Adam's initial thoughts on the encounter might be, there is something that may be taken from the near wordless interaction. Whilst it cannot be doubted that Adam heaps a set of expectations on the (at this point) stranger, all of which are attendant on his own "location in a cultural domain" (Marais 2009: 275), there is also an element of him being deeply unsettled. That is, in shattering Adam's primal reverie, the stranger dislocates Adam's sense of self. For the a briefest of moments, before he recognises the apparent stranger or can

act in any way towards him, Adam becomes “*hostis*, that is, a stranger unto [him]self” (Marais 2009: 275).

Adam’s next encounter with either of the couple comes a few days later, when Adam is back up at Gondwana for the weekend. He, Canning and a man called Sipho Moloi, who is an investor in Canning’s planned golf resort, are the only people sitting in the restaurant of the lodge at Gondwana. They are being served by the two elderly workers who, it is revealed, are named Ezekiel and Grace. Adam appears to largely take the role of passive observer as Canning interacts with, and speaks about, them. He does, however, ask Canning about them, noting the unusualness of their being black and living in that part of the Karoo. Canning picks up on his curiosity and explains their presence:

“They were my father’s most devoted servants, actually. They followed him around from farm to farm, all over the country. They started out in the Orange Free State, went all the way up North, almost to the Limpopo and ended up here. I remember them from when I was a small boy. Ezekiel must’ve been a young man then, in his early twenties.” (82)

Adam then considers the disparate historical circumstances which separate Ezekiel and Sipho Moloi.²² In the midst of this consideration, Adam becomes aware that it is he who is “left with an acute awareness of the life that Canning’s thoughtless cross-questioning has evoked: the blind economic dependence, the drifting around from one place to another in the wake of the *Oubaas*, the intermediate destiny ahead” (83). All of this serves to demonstrate the degree to which Ezekiel had infiltrated into Adam’s consciousness following their first encounter. Despite the fact that he can now name him, Adam is unable to view Ezekiel in an ethically indifferent manner. In this, Adam is sharply contrasted with Canning, who seems to view Ezekiel and Grace only as commodities for labour. Indeed, Canning seems to view them as having largely outlived their usefulness. After explaining that, unlike his father, he cannot speak isiXhosa or isiZulu Canning states that he doesn’t “know what to do about Ezekiel and Grace [...] They’re pretty useless these days. Not much future there. I’ll have to make a plan there” (83).

In the end, the responsibility of making a plan is removed from Canning. Instead, it is Baby who dismisses them after Grace walks in on Adam and Baby in the aftermath of one of their sexual encounters. Adam’s perception of Grace during this incident appears to change

²² The very fact that Sipho Moloi is constantly referred to with a surname, whilst Ezekiel is only ever referred to by his surname is illustrative of this.

drastically. The clarity and understanding which Adam seemed to display in Gondwana's dining room is replaced with an almost parodied image in which it is suggested that:

The old lady's fear has a bumbling, cartoonish quality. She is wearing bright red lipstick crayoned onto her mouth and outsized tennis shoes on her feet. Adam sees these details, he knows they're evidence of his poverty, but his hysteria finds them funny. When the door slams on her at last, he starts to giggle uncontrollably. He remembers her name. Her name is Grace. (172)

A literal interpretation of this incident would seem to suggest that it defies the axioms of Derridean hospitality. I suggest such a reading as a possibility because, in the most literal sense, Adam is surprised by Grace. She arrives unannounced, yet at the moment of her arrival there seems to be no moment of pre-conceptual, pre-linguistic conception. More significantly, the little loss of memory which Adam has, appears to do nothing for rendering him incapable of ethical indifference. The above passage is evidence of this, as is one of the observations preceding it, namely that she "is so ubiquitous, so everyday and familiar that they hadn't even considered her. Until now" (171).

This particular revelation, however, ignores a critical juncture between Adam's recognition of her and the comic image which brings him to a fit of giggles as she flees the scene. The narrator tells us that:

She has also stopped, quite still, in amazement, at the centre of the irrevocable moment. He has a curious, dissociated image through her eyes: the madam and the master's friend, undressed on the bed, electrified, afraid. Their vulnerability is rude and primal. (171)

What is particularly critical about this scene is that it is Adam who is described as being dislocated, as seeing himself and Baby through the – at this point still nameless – eyes of Grace. The surprise of her entrance causes Adam, for a moment, to be invaded by her "otherness and, in the process, dispossessed of self" (Marais 2009: 276). It is this described instant which allows Grace to be seen as an uninvited guest, the unexpected other who cannot be treated with ethical indifference. Adam is open to her; his vulnerability means that he can only receive her. It is as soon as Adam recognises her, remembers her name that he begins to see her in the bumbling, comic light described in the previous paragraph. I do not dispute that, as a description of unconditional hospitality, this scene is imperfect. The manner in which Adam sees himself through Grace's eyes is, after all, as "the master's friend" and, therefore, other. I would argue, however, that this is a constraint of writing rather than

principle. That is, the explicitly stated vulnerability along with the dislocation of Adam's experiencing self results, if only for the briefest of moments, in an instance of unconditional hospitality.

The degrees to which Adam treats Ezekiel and Grace with unconditional hospitality when he is surprised by them and when they are unnamed may, perhaps, be best understood when contrasted with the manner in which he treats them in their final encounter. In the days following Grace's discovery of Adam and Baby, she and Ezekiel turn up at Adam's door in town. It emerges that they have been dismissed from Gondwana by Baby. Upon seeing them, Adam realises that he "has thought of them – though in truth he hasn't thought of them – as gone, erased, disappeared. But now they have found their way to his door" (180-1). Initially they would appear to have surprised him again. Whilst they stand on the threshold of the house, however, they also appear to stand on the threshold of Adam's consciousness. He is therefore able to fortify himself "against the danger of difference" (Marais 2009: 275). Indeed, when they do enter the house it is their strangeness which is emphasised. We are told that, once inside, they "stand in the middle of the lounge, awkward and out of place, until he gestures them to sit. Even then they perch on the very edge of the sofa, as if they want to leave no impression on the room" (181). They are, therefore, the very antithesis of the guest who invades, unsettles and unhomes the host (Marais 2009: 276).

The manner in which Adam deals with the situation of Ezekiel and Grace's dismissal after allowing them into the house bears such an analysis. Initially, it would seem that the opportunity to fortify himself against the strangeness of Ezekiel and Grace has not dissipated the imaginative sympathy he feels towards them. After realising how alone they have been left by following Canning's father from farm to farm, we are told that Adam's "heart is wrung: he is a part of this, part of what has happened to them" (181). The course of action which he takes in response to this, however, is not one which suggests the kind of mutually parasitic host-guest relationship necessary for unconditional hospitality. Instead, he seeks to assuage his consciousness by returning them to the remove of employment at Gondwana. That is, despite how deeply implicated he is in their situation, he no longer wishes them to be his problem. Indeed, on the drive to Gondwana, Grace and Ezekiel become less than human. They are described as "sitting beside and behind him like a cargo of silent accusation" (182). Implicating Adam even further in this objectification is the fact that "it occurs to him that this may be, after all, a more fitting end to the story: to restore these two old people to their rightful place, before he himself disappears into the background" (182). Even when it becomes clear that they will not be re-employed on Gondwana, Adam's ideal solutions still

tend toward distancing himself from Ezekiel and Grace. Immediately after feeling gratified at being able to serve Ezekiel and Grace as guests in his house Adam:

wishes he had money. With money, a great deal would be possible. He could pay for them to sleep at the hotel; he could give them a proper meal at a restaurant. Better yet, he could give them a big cash donation and send them on their way, his conscience eased. With money, he could put a gap between him and them; he could wash his hands of them completely. (186)

Adam, therefore, only becomes ethically indifferent to Ezekiel and Grace once he is ethically implicated in their situation. This initial paradox is resolved somewhat by the conditions he is able to place on his hospitality toward them as a result of the circumstances under which they arrive at his door. Unlike in the previous encounters, Ezekiel and Grace cannot surprise him. They cannot dislocate Adam from his sense of self as they do when he first sees Ezekiel walking through the bush near the pool on Gondwana, or when Grace walks in on Adam and Baby in the rondawel.

This distance which Adam seems to want to place between himself and Ezekiel and Grace allows for some illumination on Canning's relationship with them. Slightly more complex, however, is the childhood relationship – which we are only given Canning's account of – between Canning and their son, Lindile.

The existence of this childhood relationship is revealed to Adam shortly after the meal with Sipho Moloi. Canning drives Adam to a small cave in which there is some bushman art, portraying a hunt in which there are "people with bows and arrows, pursuing animals" (85). This is not, however, the piece of cave art which Canning wishes to show Adam. Instead, he draws his attention to another engraving: "a set of intertwined names cut into the rock. *Kenneth/Lindile*" (85). The little we glean about Canning's relationship comes from the explanation he gives Adam after showing him the engraving. It is from this encounter that we learn that Lindile is Grace and Ezekiel's son. We also learn that they had done the cave engraving together. Canning tells Adam that they did the engraving "[l]ong ago, when we were very young. Before we grew up and realised how complicated the world was" (85). It is interesting to note that throughout this exchange, there is very little denotation of difference. The "we" Canning uses seems almost to be singular. The construction of difference seems to have been a later, received behaviour on the part of Canning. Crucial to the idea of a later denotation of difference are two quotes from Canning which bracket his sentimental remembrances. The first of these comes when Canning is explaining who Lindile was to him, and he proceeds to say that Lindile "was a little black boy" (85). The second comes after

Adam enquires what has become of Lindile. Canning's explanation seems particularly designed to free him from any ethical responsibility to Lindile. He seems not to know precisely where Lindile is and goes on to say:

He's around. But we're not friends any more. Like I said, the world got complicated. My father paid for him to study in Cape Town but he got all political and turned angry. So my father stopped paying and he disappeared. I haven't seen him in years. (85)

Ultimately, though, just suggesting that Canning's assignation of difference and ethical indifference toward Lindile might be the product of later conditioning is not enough to suggest that the descriptions of his childhood with Lindile are an invocation of unconditional hospitality.

In all of Canning's relationships, the possibility remains, as Adam notes, that the subjects of those relationships are not real persons, "so much as a symbol from long ago" (86). Adam seems symbolic of Canning's scholastic ideal; Grace and Ezekiel of all the misapplied dreams of his father's dreams for Gondwana; and Lindile of a mythologised, blissful childhood. As a result of his almost constant designation of people as stranger or other, no one can ever surprise Canning. Canning then, is an example of a host who "engages in an exclusionary process of self-affirmation that not only shields him from the strangeness of others but also, through placing them at a distance, enables ethical indifference" (Marais 2009: 275). Contrastingly, as I have shown, Adam is capable of instances of unconditional hospitality which render ethical indifference impossible. It is, however, important to remember that these are merely instances and that at the moment when he does recognise Grace and Ezekiel before letting them cross his threshold, he displays the kind of highly conditional hospitality which results in him only wanting to be rid of them.

If the relationships in *The Imposter* most easily read in terms of hospitality occur on the fringes of conventional, direct employer/employee relationships, then those in Eben Venter's *My Beautiful Death*, whilst similarly on the fringe, are far more fleeting in their descriptions. Most worthy of consideration is, of course, the opening scene with Konstant in the farm supply store. It is certainly the scene in which black labour is made most clearly visible. Even less directly concerned with the conventional master/servant relationship is the scene at the train station in which Konstant's family comes to bid him farewell. For similar reasons to the farm supply store, however, it is worth considering in terms of hospitality.

None of this, however, is to suggest that Konstant's descriptions and remembrances of the farm throughout the book should not be considered and read in terms of hospitality.

The first impression which Konstant gives of the "Black men [who] push loaded trolleys through a haze of lucerne vapour and a fog of fine flour" (7), is one of pre-assigned difference and almost complete ethical indifference. After wondering if any of them will remember him, after the years he spent away on national service and at university, Konstant thinks:

What were their names again? I was never all that interested when I was small. They were no more than faces: the old ones wrinkled, the young ones still smooth and black. Nothing more than overgrown boys, the lot of them, Oupa Konstant used to say. Even though they remained nameless, they never looked the same to me [...] The thing is: whiteys don't really bother about darkies' names. The trolley men should have their names pinned on their overalls, but most of them work topless. So where would the name tags go? (9-10)

The literal namelessness of the store labourers does not translate into the figurative namelessness of the unexpected guest who opens up the host to their difference or otherness (Marais 2009: 276). That is, Konstant cannot be surprised by the labourers or, more correctly, they cannot be undetermined strangers to him (Derrida 2007: 250). They have been predetermined as black and as labourers. It is this assignation which allows him to observe them so dispassionately and to make light of the fact that their working topless would mean that they would not be able to wear name badges. The implications of this designation are made even clearer when Konstant begins to actually interact with the labourers and they become named individuals.

The first of the workers Konstant deals with is the foreman whom Konstant initially calls Oom Piet Broeksak, before correcting himself: "No, Oom Piet Pockets, how could I ever forget the Oom's name? Oom's lame hand is always tucked away in oom's left pocket, the little albino hand that no one's ever seen" (11-12). Straight after this, however, Konstant reverts back to calling the man Oom Piet Broeksak. To an even greater degree then, Oom Piet is designated by Konstant. This designation allows Konstant to construct his own vision of Oom Piet:

Year in and year out shuffling along between bags of crushed mielies. Oom Piet, the foreman, hand in pocket, eyes downcast, on the lookout for the enemy: man those rats wreak havoc with my stock. Hope the Red Store bosses give oom a gold watch for oom's loyal service. (12)

The one piece of Oom Piet which remains entirely strange to Konstant – his lame hand – only serves to emphasise the degree to which the above is Konstant’s construct of him. That Konstant refers to Oom Piet’s right hand as “oom’s only hand” (12) is illustrative of how strange the lame hand is to Konstant. He cannot name the hand, only its invisibility. Thus, its absence rather than its presence becomes one of the markers by which Konstant defines Oom Piet. Hidden, unnameable, Oom Piet’s hand remains free from Konstant’s scrutinising ethical indifference.

The second of the Red Store labourers encountered by Konstant is one whom he calls Youngboy. Given Konstant’s twisting of Oom Piet’s name, we cannot be certain whether this is a genuine name or just a generic description. Either way, the name seems particularly apt, especially when one considers the contrast in the behaviours of Youngboy and Oom Piet. Whereas Oom Piet seems shy and habitually subservient, telling Youngboy to “take the kleinbaas’s order” (12), Youngboy seems far less concerned with the conventions of the master/servant relationship. After walking alongside Konstant to the office, Youngboy “rests his elbow comfortably on a bale of empty hessian sacks and waves the green receipt at the white woman behind the window” (13). Seeing this, Konstant thinks to himself that the “days of arse licking are over” (14). This thought is seemingly vindicated by the interaction which follows. Konstant notices how “Youngboy sets his sights right past me on Tannie Trynie behind the glass partition, he’s not interested in me at all, Mies, he shouts, playing dumb, that ureum, he’s finished, one bag there only. Is that how we taught him to talk?” (14). After Tannie Trynie accuses Youngboy, and the labourers in general, of missing the bags that should be in stock, of “seeing things in halves again”, Youngboy, “still leaning on his elbow against the hessian bags, ignores her” (14).

Whilst Youngboy cannot be said to surprise Konstant entirely, it would not be amiss to say that his reaction to Tannie Trynie does fracture Konstant’s construct of the nameless Red Store labourer somewhat. This fracturing element of surprise means that Konstant cannot dismiss Youngboy with the same attitude of ethical indifference which he holds towards Oom Piet. Particular evidence of this can be found in his disgust at the look Tannie Trynie gives him as she turns away from Youngboy: “I recognise the collusive look”, he thinks, “oh, fellow citizen of the race, you have to agree that *they* are simply beyond redemption. They’re born idle, and they’ll die idle, every one of them” (14). Undoubtedly, Konstant’s revulsion does not hold in it the pre-reflective, wholly immersive, loss of self which marks unconditional hospitality. There is, however, a sense that in the moment in which Konstant

rejects Tannie Trynie's conspiring look, he is doing more than rendering her ideals and ethics as other to his own. He is rejecting an aspect of the identity of white employer, which views its labour with almost complete ethical indifference. It is important, though, to reiterate that Konstant's rejection of this expected identity only contains an element of the loss of self concomitant with unconditional hospitality, for there is no sense in which he is invaded by Youngboy, or in which they are invaded by each other. That is, the interaction between Konstant and Youngboy as well as the interaction between Konstant and Oom Piet have no sense of the parties involved having the mutually parasitic host-guest relationship which I have so frequently turned to in this chapter.

The idea that, despite his rejection of the role of the conventional white employer, Konstant's sense of self remains unseated by his interactions with black labour is given further credence by the scene on the train platform as Konstant prepares to depart for Johannesburg. Whilst there is no direct incidence of interactions with black labour within the conventional master/servant paradigm, the actions and warnings of Konstant's father, as well as the concerns of his mother, are particularly evocative of how strongly it is possible to adhere to those conventions in a number of circumstances:

So this is first class, then? My mother wants to know. They say the pillowcases and sheets in second class are filthy – black curlies wherever you look and lie. Even Pa insisted that I buy first class: No. Definitely not. Decent folk don't go second class these days. (21)

In the minds of Konstant's parents, to be decent is clearly to be white and to have the economic means to afford a first class train ticket at the very least. To travel second class is a demarcation of otherness. The logical extension of such thinking is that to be black and to be on any economic level below that deemed acceptable by Konstant's family – as any labourers on the family farm undoubtedly are – is to not be decent. That Konstant is not entirely exempt from this type of thinking is evidenced by his immediate thoughts after his parents have voiced their concerns. These thoughts are towards his separation from them rather than any extension of his consciousness to the people in second class whom his parents have deemed indecent.

Perhaps the most significant illustration of the fact that Konstant's consciousness has not played unconditional, ethical host to black labour in any form comes with his yearning for the family farm as he lies dying. The hospitable relationship which I described Konstant as having with the landscape in the previous chapter is, nonetheless, one which does not appear

to figure black labour as having a part in the landscape. It is a landscape in which black labour has had no part in helping to till the “rich black soil” (264) he so wants to see sifting through his father’s hand. I acknowledge that such a reading may, perhaps, seem a little extreme. I wish to make it clear, however, that none of this is intended as cheapening of the high sentiment which Konstant expresses on his deathbed. I am merely noting the continued absence of black labour from Konstant’s imaginings of the family farm.

In spite of the relationship which Konstant comes to have with the landscape and his seeming rejection of the separatist ethics of his parents and the general Karoo farming community, he still conforms, in a number of significant ways, to the conventional failure to acknowledge the role of labour. Even in the one instance in which he is forced to acknowledge it in the Red Store, his preconceived notions mean that he cannot be surprised by any of the labourers. He cannot, therefore, pre-reflectively accept them into his consciousness. Instead of unearthing “the black corpse in the garden” (Coetzee 1988: 81) he allows it to remain buried. However separate the issue of black labour remains from *My Beautiful Death*, it is worthwhile – particularly considering the manner in which it subverts a number of the other traditions of the South African pastoral – to note its very conventional absence in the text.

Whilst black labour remains the largely “shadowy presence flitting across the stage now and then” (Coetzee 1988: 5) in *My Beautiful Death*, it becomes one of the defining strands running across *David’s Story*, albeit in a far more complicated manner than the term “Black Labour” would suggest. In discussing these complications, I will turn, once again, to Ouma Sarie’s reminiscences of her time at the Logan Hotel and the manner in which the Griqua settlers at Beeswater are forced into working in the nearby white town. I will also, however, be turning to those aspects of Sally Dirkse’s (Sally is the wife of the eponymous David) life as an ANC agent working within a white-owned corporation. Among the complications I wish to discuss, is the obvious issue of including the Griqua people in the term Black Labour. From this arises the further complication of understanding hospitality toward black labour by those who consider themselves above the doing the works conventionally assigned to black workers yet who become steadily enshrined in those conventions throughout the text. It is my belief, however, that these very complications make such a reading of *David’s Story* worthwhile.

For the purposes of this chapter it worth taking consideration of the various stories told by the text in chronological order rather than in the intertwined manner in which they are presented. As I have mentioned in previous chapters, when the Griqua people arrive at

Beeswater, led by Andries le Fleur, it is with the intention of becoming an independent, self-sustaining agricultural community. There is, at this point, no intention of becoming servants to white masters. Indeed, their trek to Beeswater from East Griqualand is initially undertaken to avoid such a fate. Upon their arrival, le Fleur tells his people not to be bitter at the absence of diamonds on the land. "We are here to till the land and to watch our food grow through our own efforts" (92), he tells them. This utopian vision, however, is soon displaced by the regime of hard labour which le Fleur places the Griqua people under:

Having secured contracts from the Boers in the dorp, he sent them out to dig a canal, set the vine on the banks of the river, and build large houses with cool verandahs and lawns until the dorp gleamed like an oasis, white and lurid green in the parched valley. (93)

It is particularly worth noting the description of the products of Griqua labour in the white town when compared to those achieved in Beeswater, where some of the population permanently stayed to "till the fields, dig at the quarries, and build small raw-brick houses, wobbly-lined Griqua houses with postage stamp windows" (93). It becomes immediately apparent then, that the pastoral ideal espoused by le Fleur will not match that of the Boers, nor will it be one founded on self-sustaining, independent labour. The implications of this are obvious, it would seem, to all except le Fleur himself. The very fact of the Griqua having to labour means that they cannot achieve the same kind of pastoral idyll as the Boers in the neighbouring town. The kind of pastoral idyll envisioned by le Fleur is contingent on the type of labour which they are providing for the Boers in the dorp. Further, the use of the Griqua as labour by the white inhabitants means that they are named as labour, and the contracts agreed to by le Fleur designate them as such before they have crossed the dorp's threshold. Consequently, the Boers have placed certain expectations on the Griqua and are, therefore, shielded from their strangeness (Marais 2009: 275). There is, nonetheless, reluctance in the preaching of le Fleur to acknowledge that he has placed his people in the position where they are designated as labour used to prop up the illusion of the white pastoral idyll. When, for example, the women have gathered ochre with which to paint the inside walls of the houses in Beeswater, he demands the painting be done without decoration: "that was what savage natives did and we are no cousins to Xhosas; we are a pure Griqua people with our own traditions and of cleanliness and plainness and hard work" (94), he states. In this, it is possible to see a conditional hospitality matching that employed by the Boers as they bring the Griqua into their dorp to work. Interestingly, as the soon-to-be Rain Sister Antjie Klaasen

notes, all of this would seem to be contrary to the ideals of the Griqua ancestors her chief continually and reverentially refers to. She notes that in Beeswater, “there are no traces of the Old Ones, the Grigriqua ancestors who once roamed these plains”, for the “Old Ones had left the world as they had found it, their waste drawn back into the earth, their footprints buried” (97). In this view, at least, the very act of settlement appears to be an act of allowing oneself to be defined and to define oneself according to a series of ordained social norms. That is, the very act of settlement, and of naming and outlining that settlement results, inevitably, in hospitality which is conditional not only to the landscape but to all who enter onto that piece of settled and delineated landscape.

The degree to which this highly conditional, ethically indifferent form of hospitality may be practised by both parties in the host-guest relationship becomes apparent in the more detailed dealings which Andries le Fleur comes to have with the white South African government, as well as his wife Rachael’s reactions to them. Of particular note in this regard is the letter of congratulations he sends to General Louis Botha upon his election as the Prime Minister of South Africa. In this letter, so reviled by Rachael, le Fleur seems at last to acquiesce to the idea of a white government defining, at the very least, geographically what it means to be Griqua. It is, ultimately, a letter of surrender to the will of Botha, for in it le Fleur states:

I have done with politics and trust the government entirely to see us justly treated. How necessary it is for our welfare, for the advancement of coloured people that you be called to office now. I have given up the quest for restitution. A homeland for the Griqua is all I ask and am sure we can rely on your benevolence. (160)

Even the very unlikely granting of such a homeland, no matter how autonomous, would result in the continuation of a scenario in which unconditional hospitality with the whites of South Africa would be impossible. This is because le Fleur’s plea for a homeland requires it to be granted by the white government. As such, the homeland would be defined by the self-same white government. To return to the motif of the parasite, as I have intermittently throughout this chapter, such a homeland would be the equivalent of a beneficent parasite – which has already entered into the host on the host’s terms – allowing the host to quarantine it in an area of the host’s choosing. At the same time, however, le Fleur’s expression of such a wish, to be allowed the right to include and exclude, according to his terms precludes the possibility of the Griqua being pre-reflectively surprised by the strangeness of an unnamed other as much as the Griqua labour contracts and the laws of the white South African government preclude

the possibility of white South Africans being surprised by anyone defined and designated as other.

The result of the ethical indifference brought about by this type of legislated and wholly internal conditional hospitality may be seen in the case of Ouma Sarie in the scene in which she revisits the Logan Hotel. I am, for the purposes of this chapter, focussing specifically on her reminiscences of working at the hotel in the apartheid era. Within the reminiscences, one of the most indicting instances of the kind of conditional hospitality referred to above comes from a seemingly innocuous memory. Sarie remembers how: “In the smart black dress with white apron and cap – the Logan Hotel always looked well after its staff – she would halloo up to the house where young girls sat with their legs spread around their game of ten-stones-in-the-hole” (7).

The uniform, in and of itself, is a designator. It marks the wearer as labourer. When one couples the marker of uniform with the location of the labourers’ housing, which is described as being “out of sight of the hotel” and “the steek-my-weg²³ location of unmistakably coloured country houses” (7), one can see how conditional the hospitality Ouma Sarie experienced upon crossing the threshold of the hotel would have been. Before she has crossed this threshold she has been named as labour and as such, the proprietors of the hotel have exercised their power to selectively filter (Marais 2009: 275) the activities which she may engage in whilst she is inside. Furthermore, by locating the houses of the labourers out of sight from the hotel they are physically inscribing the labourers as other to the hotel. In doing so, the literal distance at which they have placed the settlement is also a metaphorical distancing which shields them from the difference of the labourers, enabling ethical indifference (Marais 2009: 275). The white proprietors of the hotel, then, have exercised their power to name the conditions under which their labourers may enter into the hotel, through marking them as other with uniform and by placing their accommodation in a location which is distinctly separate to the hotel itself. With the entrenching of these distinctions, there is no possibility for the mutually parasitic, pre-reflective invasion of self by other in both host and guest.

Born Saartjie Mantjies, Sally Dirkse displays a constantly shifting identity. As the narrator explains, she “turned Sarah at high school, and thereafter, boldly, since recruitment by the ANC, the more distinctly English-sounding Sally, clocked into her first clerical job at Garlicks with the required English accent and sleek hair flicked up at precisely chin level”

²³ Wicomb’s own translation of this phrase is: “Literally, hide me or tuck me away” (218).

(9). Of particular note in this passage is the fact that Sally is described as having been in possession of “the required English accent”. Sally’s change of accent, therefore, is an understanding, on her part, that in order to cross the white threshold of employment at Garlicks, she must render herself familiar, or at least more familiar to her prospective employers. In doing so, Sally has accepted the conditionality of entrance into the employment at Garlicks. In order to progress beyond the barely visible labour of her mother, Ouma Sarie, Sally must take on certain aspects of whiteness. For the sake of having fewer exclusions placed against her than her mother did at the Logan hotel, Sally is forced to consciously take on aspects of other. The actions of this process, however, also indicate that she has designated the English accent as necessary for employment at Garlicks. That is, she has named a particular aspect of her employers – their predilection for English accents – before her arrival. As I have phrased it here, I do not feel it is particularly difficult to see how this taking on aspects of the other by the self is different from the complete mutual invasion of self by other found in instances of unconditional hospitality.

The instances I have highlighted above all point, particularly in their treatment of labour, to whites in South Africa – at various points in the historical narrative of David’s story – viewing the Griqua in much the same way as a host would have viewed a medieval parasite. The conditions of hospitality with which they are allowed to enter into white domains – le Fleur’s labour contracts and his fawning letter to Prime Minister Botha, Ouma Sarie’s appreciation of her uniform and Sally’s taking on of increasingly white names and an English accent – are all far more suggestive of the type of parasite “who secured welcome at the table of the rich by fawning and flattery” or who is “admitted to the post-sacrificial fest” (PSD), than they are of the parasite who completely invades and dispossesses the host and who is, in turn, completely invaded and dispossessed *by* the host.

This chapter then, is illustrative of the fleetingness of unconditional hospitality towards black labour in certain of the texts, as well as its complete absence in other of the texts. Eben Venter’s *Trencherman*, as well as lending itself most obviously to the variously defined parasite motif which I have made use of, vividly illustrates the fleetingness of unconditional hospitality. This is most particularly illustrated in the briefness with which Marlouw feels that he does not only belong on Ouplaas but is of its people, shortly before their execution of Koert. *The Devil’s Chimney* contrasts the indifference of Connie toward her own labourers, with the way in which Miss Beatrice is unsettled, her self dislocated (however briefly), through her sexual experience with September and Nomsa. Indeed, in their sexual encounter, it is possible to see how September, Nomsa and Miss Beatrice are all, for

that briefest of moments, unconditional host-guests and guest-hosts. In Damon Galgut's *The Imposter*, the vulnerability which allows Adam's self to be unseated by Grace and Ezekiel comes from instances of genuine surprise at moments when Adam is at his most vulnerable. The first of these instances occurs whilst Adam is sunning himself, nude, in a rock pool on Gondwana and he is momentarily unable to name Ezekiel. The second occurs when Grace walks in on Adam and Baby in one of the guest rondawels on Gondwana after they have been engaging in sexual congress and Adam is briefly unable to name and place Grace. In each of these incidents, he is unable to defend himself from their strangeness and he is, therefore, momentarily dislocated from his sense of self. When they appear on his doorstep, largely as a result of the second instance of unseating, however, he is aware of who they are before they enter and he is thus able to treat them with the same ethical indifference as Canning had, whilst Grace and Ezekiel were in his employ. The other Eben Venter text under consideration, *My Beautiful Death*, seems to treat black labour with a highly conditional form of hospitality. Indeed, throughout much of the text, it plays no part at all, reflecting the conventions of the white South African pastoral idyll. In those instances where it does receive mention, black labour is starkly named as such. Moreover, it is interesting to note that in spite of the disagreements which Konstant might have with his family, he shares with them a desire to shield himself against their difference, to lay upon them a culturally defined set of expectations which "precludes the possibility of being surprised by [their] strangeness" (Marais 2009: 275). If *My Beautiful Death* illustrates how ingrained conditional hospitality, so prevalent in the white pastoral idyll, can become, then *David's Story* illustrates how that conditionality can result in the mutual defence against difference by self and other, as well as the guest's ceding to the manner in which he/she has been named by the host and the attendant expectations placed upon him/her by the highly conditional process of naming, filtering and exclusion.

Conclusion:

This is the end beautiful friend. This is the end, my only friend, the end.

The Doors.

This dissertation has investigated five post-apartheid texts – Eben Venter’s *Trencherman* (2008) and *My Beautiful Death* (1998); Zoë Wicomb’s *David’s Story* (2000); Damon Galgut’s *The Imposter* (2008) and Anne Landsman’s *The Devil’s Chimney* (1998) – which are all set either wholly, or partially, in the Karoo. More specifically, it has sought to investigate the link between the Karoo landscape and the imaginative consciousness of each text. The two pillars in terms of which these links have been investigated are the historical form of the plaasroman and the theoretical concept of hospitality as an ethic. Although there have been sections where they intersected, for the most part, they have been investigated separately.

The depth of writing on the Karoo, dating back to the earliest settlers, has not, I feel, detracted from the significance of this project. The link between text and the landscape it portrays is, after all, fluid. While commonalities undoubtedly exist between the texts this dissertation has shown, perhaps more than anything else, that it is worthwhile investigating the unique manner in which each text represents the Karoo landscape.

The term ‘plaasroman’ refers to the type of early twentieth-century Afrikaans novel which “concerned itself almost exclusively with the farm and *platteland* (rural society) and with the Afrikaner’s painful transition from farmer to townsman” (Coetzee 1988: 63). The writers of these novels “celebrated the memory of the old rural values or proclaimed their durability or elaborated schemes for their preservation”, whilst “they satirized the pettiness, selfishness and lack of family feeling of the *verengelste* (anglicised) urban Afrikaner” (Coetzee 1988: 83). The above values and themes common to the plaasroman arise from the particular historical shifts which were occurring at the end of the nineteenth – and the beginning of the twentieth – century in South Africa. As the depth of South Africa’s mineral wealth became increasingly evident, towns began to spring up around the mines, fuelling land speculation and “a shift from wool to food production as the focus of an increasingly commercialised agriculture” (Wenzel 2000: 93). This drastic shift in the mode of agricultural production, along with various other factors, led to increasing urbanisation and the perceived erosion of old rural values venerated in the plaasroman. In the face of this perceived erosion

of values, the plaasroman, in its original form, acted as “a kind of social dream work, expressing wishes and maintaining silences that are political in origin” (Barnard 2007: 26).

The specific theory of hospitality which I am using comes from Jacques Derrida and is derived, primarily, from his meditation on the suggestive term “the other”. The extract below, which illustrates the significance of the other to hospitality, comes from Derrida’s interrogation into the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas:

The other is not even a concept, since concepts suppose anticipation, a horizon within which alterity is amortized as soon as it is announced precisely because it has to let itself be foreseen. The infinitely-other cannot be bound by a concept, cannot be thought on the basis of a horizon; for a horizon is always a horizon of the same, the elementary unity within which eruptions and surprises are always welcomed by understanding and recognised. (2001: 95)

From the above explanations of the other and infinitely-other, two kinds of hospitality may be extrapolated: conditional hospitality and unconditional hospitality. The primary distinction between these two kinds of hospitality is a distinction “between a form of subjectivity constituted through a hostile process of inclusion and exclusion and one that comes into being in the self’s pre-reflective and traumatic exposure, without inhibition, to otherness” (Marais 2009: 275). Marais elucidates this distinction in his application of hospitality theory to J. M. Coetzee’s *Slow Man*.

He goes on to explain that within the framework of conditional hospitality, the “host expects and therefore knows his guest prior to his arrival” (Marais 2009: 275). In the process of naming, the guest immediately becomes other to the host. Moreover, the host imbues the guest with a set “of expectations attendant on the self’s location in a cultural domain” (Marais 2009: 275). In so naming the guest, the host exercises his/her power to engage in an “exclusionary process of self-affirmation that not only shields him from the strangeness of others but also, through placing them at a distance, enables ethical indifference” (Marais 2009: 275).

Unconditional hospitality, on the other hand, occurs when that which is different about the guest or stranger is received before they are, or can be, denoted as different. Consequently, the guest is able to enter the consciousness of the host unexpectedly and without prior warning. The guest, therefore, “cannot be known in advance from within a priorly formed system of linguistic conceptuality. In not being able to name, to grasp in

language, the stranger, the host loses her sovereignty over and distance from this visitor” (Marais 2009: 275).

In a state of unconditional hospitality, then, the self in both host and guest is displaced to the degree that neither can be named as other. In order to achieve this displacement of self, the changes undertaken in a process of unconditional hospitality must be pre-reflective and involuntary (2009: 276). In the midst of this process, “ethical indifference becomes impossible” (2009: 276), as there is no other to be ethically indifferent toward. Nor, indeed, is there a self to be ethically indifferent. Critically, Marais states that the act of unconditional hospitality “is not an action which the host undertakes as an agent” (2009: 276).

The fact that ethical indifference becomes impossible in a state of unconditional hospitality means that it is, perhaps inevitably, ethically preferable to other ethical concepts such as tolerance. I posit that unconditional hospitality is the preferable state because, “within the concept of tolerance, there resides an awareness not only of the (threatening) Other as potential challenger to the structures and values of those who believe themselves tolerant, but also of the power wielded by the granter(s) of tolerance” (van Schalkwyk 2008: 86). Tolerance then, allows the host to designate the guest and to participate in the exclusionary process of naming and placing the guest in terms attendant on the host’s location within a specific cultural domain (Marais 2009: 275).

The conventions of the *plaasroman* in terms of which the texts have been investigated are those of patriarchy and familial lineage. In order to provide a point of linkage between the *plaasroman* and hospitality I have also investigated the manner in which the texts under investigation represent physical acts of inscription onto the landscape. Finally, I have investigated the way in which the texts represent the degrees of hospitality present in the master-servant relationships within them.

In the texts’ responses to the patriarchal conventions of the *plaasroman*, I have demonstrated that the masculine role they construct – of one who is inextricably bound to the landscape and whose soul is restored through toil upon it whilst consigning femininity to the sphere of the domestic – perpetuates the fault of those who have sought to make or base the identities on the South African and, more particularly, the Karoo landscape.

That is, in constructing their identities of individual patriarchal masculinities and femininities around the land, they have constructed them around that which “which is least

likely to respond to love: mountains and deserts, birds and animals and flowers” (Coetzee 1992: 97).

In thus rejecting and subverting such conventional plaasroman-type constructions, the selected texts almost universally turn to community as the means by which one can find one’s true self and break free, albeit temporarily in certain cases, from the hegemonic understandings upon which these self-same conventions are founded.

Having built upon the foundation of the ways in which each text deals with the patriarchal conventions of the plaasroman, I have demonstrated the distinct ways in which each text deals with notions of ancestry and lineage as they are conventionally presented in the plaasroman. While *Trencherman* and *My Beautiful Death* show that there is a liberation of both self and landscape which can occur when the expectations of ancestry are abandoned, there is a sense in *My Beautiful Death* that ancestral land can have a kind of benevolence. The text illustrates this sense most particularly as Konstant’s thoughts return to his family farm whilst he lies on his deathbed. *The Imposter*, in its juxtaposition of the characters Canning and Blom and their relationships with Adam, creates a sense of the inescapability of ancestry as a manifestation of landscape and the immutability of progress, thus illustrating the absurdity of the process of working for the good of future generations within the blinkers of one’s own motives.

Contrastingly, *The Devil’s Chimney* shows how, without a future generation to work toward, any project of tending the land and self can cease to have importance and can result in a retreat from the landscape and the desolation and destruction of self. *David’s Story*, and more particularly the actions of the Griqua chief Andries le Fleur, illustrate that among the consequences of the abandonment of an ancestry which has previously been valorised, is the abandonment of a stable group identity. The concern expressed by *David’s Story* is undoubtedly the closest to sharing the concerns of the plaasroman with regard to ancestry. *David’s Story* does not fail in its own subversion of the concerns of the plaasroman, however, as it supplants the heroic ancestors of white Afrikaner farmers with the mixed ancestry of a people who would eventually be labelled as coloured but who share the language and many of the cultural and religious habits of those white Afrikaners.

Following the establishment of the means by which each of the texts deals with conventional representations of ancestry and lineage, I then demonstrated how they represent unconditional hospitality with the landscape in a unique manner. I have not, however, ignored

any commonality in the unique representations made by the texts. The main instance of commonality lies in the fact that each text seems to accept that a state of unconditional hospitality cannot be achieved consciously. In *Trencherman*, for instance, Marlouw's visions of the place formerly called Ouplaas are described as coming to him rather than as an inscriptive act of his imagination. Similarly, Konstant is only able to achieve hospitable imaginings of the landscape as he approaches death. Adam in *The Imposter* and Misss Beatrice in *The Devil's Chimney*, meanwhile, are only able to achieve fleeting moments of unconditional hospitality with the landscape in writing and at the point of orgasm respectively.

This project acknowledges that each of the above scenarios is problematic in its own way. I demonstrate that each, however, also offers an important insight into conceptions of a form of hospitality seldom dealt with theoretically. What is important in uniting each of the texts with regard to this form of hospitality is one specific way in which each chooses *not* to write the landscapes within them. It is evident then, that none of the texts under examination, in a direct subversion of the mode of the plaasroman, renders the landscape as a conscious host capable of punishing and rewarding those who inhabit it. None of the texts, therefore, portrays the landscape as a conditional host. That the landscape is not portrayed as a conditional host is important, but not because such a portrayal suggests that the landscape may easily find unconditional hospitality in the consciousness of the host. Indeed, as I have shown above, unconditional hospitality appears to be fleeting whilst the host is alive and in its pre-reflexivity cannot be recognised whilst it is occurring. Rather, such depictions are significant because they allow for the possibility of a hospitable relationship with the landscape. That is, if the guest cannot name and place expectation on the host, which is landscape, as other, then it becomes possible, however remotely, that the host might be able to enter into a state of "pre-reflective and traumatic exposure, without inhibition, to otherness" (Marais 2009: 275). If the represented self is the guest, therefore, it cannot inscribe an unconditionally hospitable landscape onto its consciousness and cannot inscribe its consciousness and identity onto landscape.

In discussing the ways in which each of the texts under investigation deals with hospitality and black labour within landscape, I demonstrate the fleetingness of unconditional hospitality towards black labour in certain of the texts, as well as its complete absence in other of the texts. Eben Venter's *Trencherman*, as well as lending itself most obviously to the variously defined parasite motif which I have made use of, vividly illustrates the evanescence

of unconditional hospitality. This is most particularly illustrated in the briefness with which Marlowe feels that he does not only belong on Ouplaas but is of its people, shortly before their execution of Koert. *The Devil's Chimney* contrasts the indifference of Connie toward her own labourers, with the way in which Miss Beatrice is unsettled, and her self becomes dislocated (however briefly) through her sexual experience with September and Nomsa. Indeed, in their sexual encounter, it is possible to see how September, Nomsa and Miss Beatrice are all, for that briefest of moments, unconditional host-guests and guest-hosts. In Damon Galgut's *The Imposter*, the vulnerability which allows Adam's self to be unseated by Grace and Ezekiel comes from instances of genuine surprise at moments when Adam is at his most vulnerable. The first of these instances occurs whilst Adam is sunning himself, nude, in a rock pool on Gondwana and he is momentarily unable to name Ezekiel. The second occurs when Grace walks in on Adam and Baby in one of the guest rondawels on Gondwana after they have been engaging in sexual congress and Adam is briefly unable to name and place Grace. In each of these incidents, he is unable to defend himself from their strangeness and he is, therefore, momentarily dislocated from his sense of self. When they appear on his doorstep, largely as a result of the second instance of unseating, however, he is aware of who they are before they enter and he is thus able to treat them with the same ethical indifference as Canning did, while Grace and Ezekiel were in his employ.

The other Eben Venter text under consideration, *My Beautiful Death*, seems to treat black labour with a highly conditional form of hospitality. Indeed, throughout much of the text, it plays no part at all, reflecting the conventions of the white South African pastoral idyll. In those instances where it does receive mention, black labour is starkly named as such. Moreover, it is interesting to note that in spite of the disagreements which Konstant might have with his family, he shares with them a desire to shield himself against their difference, to lay upon them a culturally defined set of expectations which "precludes the possibility of being surprised by [their] strangeness" (Marais 2009: 275). If *My Beautiful Death* illustrates how ingrained conditional hospitality, so prevalent in the white pastoral idyll, can become, then *David's Story* illustrates how that conditionality can result in the mutual defence against difference by self and other, as well as the guest's ceding to the manner in which he/she has been named by the host and the attendant expectations placed upon him/her by the highly conditional process of naming, filtering and exclusion.

This project then, has demonstrated, at the very least, that the conventions of the plaasroman, in terms of its patriarchal representations of both femininities and masculinities as well as ancestral lineage, are inadequate for representations of landscape in post-apartheid

South Africa. It has also demonstrated that the representations of landscape conventionally used by the plaasroman demonstrate a form of conditional hospitality which is ethically unsustainable. It has shown, through specific reference to incidents within the five texts, that achieving a form of ethically sound unconditional hospitality requires a number of things. In order for unconditional hospitality to occur, the distinction between self and other must be blurred to the extent that neither self nor other can be said to exist any longer. This is a process which cannot occur consciously.

The instances which I have chosen to investigate within the texts show that this very unconscious, pre-reflective nature of unconditional hospitality is fleeting and that it is a state which ceases to be once it is recognised. This is true in relationships with the landscape and in relationships within the landscape. In acknowledging the heterogeneous representations made by each text, however, the project has also shown that there is no single means by which unconditional hospitality might be achieved. Indeed, the instances in which unconditional hospitality is represented range from cognitive rebirth and sexual congress to the last moments before death. Significantly, the Karoo landscape of each text is present in the representations of unconditional hospitality, ceasing to be owned, ceasing to have ownership within it, and ceasing to be named.

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