Struggle Handshakes and UDF Rasta Colours: White Imaginings and the Appropriation of the Struggle in South African Post-Apartheid Youth Literature

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Summary

Post-apartheid South African Young Adult (YA) fiction, like other literary genres, has the power to frame historical discourses of the apartheid era in significant ways. In the case of much post-apartheid YA fiction, this has tended to both reproduce black stereotypes and allow for a particular reconstruction of that historical period (Sibanda 2012). In this article, through a discussion of two post-apartheid YA novels, *The World Beneath* (Warman 2013) and *Cape Town* (Hammond 2012), I explore the ways in which these novels have either appropriated the black voice or silenced that voice altogether. The paper also focuses on how these novels engage in a rehistoricisation of white complicity in apartheid policies through the reconfiguration of the role of whiteness in the struggle while simultaneously constructing a non-racialised anti-apartheid communalism to substantiate the revision of apartheid history through a white lens. The third aspect of the paper deals with ways in which apartheid history in these novels is either misrepresented or factually incorrect, thus providing the implied reader with a distorted or factually erroneous history of the country and the resistance movement.

Opsomming

Post-apartheid Suid-Afrikaanse jeugliteratuur het, soos ander literêre genres, die vermoë om historiese diskoerse van die apartheid era op belangwekkende wyses binne sekere kaders te plaas. Die maniere waarop wit post-apartheid skrywers van Suid-Afrikaanse jeugliteratuur die apartheid era uitbeeld, het gelei tot die uitbreiding van swart stereotipes én ’n herskrywing van daardie historiese tydperk (Sibanda 2012). Deur ’n ontleding van twee post-apartheid jeugromans, *The World Beneath* (Warman 2013) en *Cape Town* (Hammond 2012), word daar in hierdie artikel ingegaan op hoe hierdie romans die swart stem en geskiedenis approprieer – of selfs stilmaak. Verder word verken hoe die romans gebruik is in die herskrywing van die geskiedenis van wit aandadigheid in apartheidbeleid deur die tekste se hersamestelling van die rol van witwees in die stryd teen apartheid, terwyl hulle terselfdertyd ’n nie-rassige apartheidsamehorigheid konstrueer om die herskrywing van apartheidgeskiedenis deur middel van ’n wit lens te regverdig. Die derde afdeling van die artikel is gemoeid met die maniere waarop die geskiedenis van apartheid in hierdie romans óf verteken word, óf feitelik verkeerd aangebied word, waardeur die leser voorsien word van ’n verdraaide en feitelik foutiewe geskiedenis van die land en die weerstandsbeweging.

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Introduction

South Africa's socio-political environment has undergone significant changes in the last three decades, particularly in relation to issues of race. However, writers of youth novels continue to be predominantly white. This results in the representation of the South African social and political landscape in young adult (YA) fiction being disproportionately determined by these white writers. Natasha Distiller and Melissa Steyn (2004: 1) point out that "[t]he power to define is the power to create", irrespective of whether that process entails the apperception and explication of the characters within a text or the identification and exploration of significant historical moments. The South African context is such that definitional power has been held by the white minority population and so, accordingly, the power to write history. As Marx and Engels famously argue,

> [t]he ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.

Therefore, with the dominant force within the society having the power to construct, define and depict the other, it also has the means to appropriate the other's voice and history. This poses particular risks for historiographic practices in South Africa. Even as narrative appropriation is a means of oppression, it is most efficacious in conjunction with the rewriting and distorting of the history of the conquered (Peterson 2006: 165-166). In line with this reasoning Njabulo Ndebele (in Mokadi 2003: 48) states that "those who have not domesticated the information gathering process at an intellectual level are doomed to receive information, even about themselves, second hand".

In an effort to (re)construct a youth literature that is informed by non- or multi-racial ideologies indicative of the changes within the political dispensation, South African authors have inadvertently created an enabling environment for what Leon De Kock (2004: 10) calls cultural "homogenisation and erasure". The result of this homogenisation and erasure has been to create an enabling space for the continued appropriation of the voice and history of the other. In this article, I argue that novels such as *Cape Town* by Brenda Hammond (2012) and *The World Beneath* by Janice Warman (2013) engage with the experience of apartheid in a way that not only appropriates the voice and history of the black populace, but also perpetuates the stereotypical roles of black and white characters that is evident in much YA fiction (Sibanda

2012).[1] The stereotyped manner in which black characters continue to be included is problematic because it purports to speak about the black experience of apartheid and, in the process, creates historical distortions and inaccuracies. This article explores how two YA novels about the past appropriate the black experiences and narration of the realities of apartheid while simultaneously whitewashing the role of white people during this period.

A significant number of YA novels that are set during apartheid and written by white writers mark a complete reconfiguration of the role that white people played during apartheid (Sibanda 2012). The two novels that I focus on in this article do this by repositioning whiteness from its oppressive place in apartheid ideology and practice and re-centring it within the struggle *against* apartheid. Therefore, white characters do not feature in these novels as mere participants or supporting acts within the liberation movement, but are foregrounded. And in so doing, these novels mark white involvement in the struggle against apartheid as the pivot point of that effort through the construction of anti-apartheid narratives that create the impression that white participation was indispensable to the ultimate demise of apartheid.[2]

Race, Representation and History

Because an oppressive system of racial hierarchy positions one group as dominant and another as subordinate, any account of that oppression will be informed by whichever side of that equation the narrator falls within and their own personal politics or ideology. South Africa's history is a litany of white oppressors' subjugation of their black counterparts, but the ways in which this authority is depicted in texts is largely determined by the ideological orientations of the author. Literary scholarship has widely attended to the fraught relationship between literature, history and claims to notions of an objective truth (Stephens 1992; Hollindale 1992; Crosman 1980; Iser 1980; Sauerber 1991), given the ideological and contextual questions surrounding authorship. Therefore, any writings depicting a historical era, regardless of whether these are thought of as historical or literary texts, are to be treated with some scepticism given the inherent lack of objectivity and personal politics of the authors which inform these texts.

South African scholarship on race has often emphasised how the public's perception of blackness is informed by the writings of liberal academic and journalistic institutions in South Africa, which have contributed to stereotyped representations by depicting African society under apartheid as debased, as well as drawing attention to all that is negative within African communities (Distiller & Steyn 2003; Magubane 2001; Wade 1993; Ndebele 1991). The result of this is that the ways in which black people are perceived by other races is informed by these delineations, which are reinforced in the literary depictions of them in fictional writings. But it should be noted that these writings, be they historic or literary, are never truly founded on objective observations and representations.

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[1] In this article I refer to the Kindle e-book versions of the novels. Page numbers for quotations from the novels are therefore not provided. Keyword searches will, however, enable the reader to identify the passages quoted.

[2] Thank you to Sanele Sibanda for helping me to formulate and articulate this line of thinking, and assisting in the formulation of some of the arguments in this article.

According to Judith Inggs (2007), by the end of the 1990s there was a shift in the literary portrayal of the unequal power relations between adolescent characters of different races. Prior to this, race itself was the marker of distinctions between characters in a text (with black characters portrayed as inferior or subordinate to their white counterparts by simple virtue of their race). Socio-political inequalities continue to be reflected in young adult fictions, only now the dominance of the white characters is reflected in distinctly economic terms, according to which black characters are always poor, and white characters rich and affluent. The impression given in much of the literature that Inggs (2007) considers is that race itself is no longer a factor in South Africa's power politics, with economic factors displacing racial ones in a dehistoricised construction of a post-apartheid South Africa.

Sten Pulzt Moslund (2003) engages with revisionist approaches to history wherein the victor writes history in a fashion that advances their cause and makes them appear superior, either justified in their actions or merely glorifying their victory. According to Moslund, "[c]ounter-histories may rework and restructure the past psychologically, socially and metaphorically to change our experience and perception of truth and the limits of reality" (16). What is interesting about revisionist South African histories is that the reworking of this history is not being conducted by the purportedly victorious black majority who might be expected to glorify their vanquishing of apartheid and moderate related failings and shortcoming of the struggle. Instead it is writers from the white minority who provide not just an elucidation of that history, but even vocalise the black experience of apartheid. It could be argued that this appropriation of the nation's history and the anti-apartheid movement not only silences the black voice, but is also suggestive of who the real victors are and the ideologies with which they now claim allegiance.

The history of oppression and violence that is South Africa's legacy necessitates more conscious attention when featured in fictional works in which apartheid atrocities are the main thematic concern. This is especially true of those texts written by white writers using a black character as the focaliser, because it effectively becomes a story of the black experience of apartheid from a white perspective. Louise Bethlehem (2004: 94) concisely articulates why the depiction of black history should be referenced in a very deliberate and delicate fashion: “[w]riters and readers collectively assume that literature and life in South Africa maintain a mimetic or one to one relationship, that writing provides a supposedly unmediated access to the real”. As it is, there is a tendency among many young readers to unquestioningly accept the world that is presented to them within a novel, creating the epistemic risk that distortions, stereotypes or inaccuracies present in the novel may take on the power of truth.

Several critics (Jenkins 1993; Inggs, 2002; Jamal 2005) acknowledge that the implied reader in most South African YA fiction is white, and that one of the primary functions of texts that use apartheid as a backdrop is to inform and educate the implied reader about apartheid and black life under that system. Judith Bentley and Peter Midgley (2000) argue that educating the implied white reader about apartheid and the black populace continues to be an integral aspect of post-apartheid literature. However, in the process of educating this implied reader about black reality, white authors have assumed the function of voicing the other and constructing a rendition of the other for the educative benefit of the implied white reader (Sibanda 2012).

The tendency to “write the other” has caused scholars of literature consternation because of the perceived appropriative nature of this narrative approach, especially if the other is being written by the socially, economically or politically dominant group. Kelwyn Sole (1993) argues that, given the history of black oppression in South Africa, only black people can write about the experience of that racialised oppression, thus automatically disqualifying white writers from being able to do so. David Ward (1989) suggests another reason why many critics question white writers’ ability to write about blackness when he notes that most readers outside the continent derive their information about Africa from texts; their understanding and perspective of, and response to, apartheid is therefore determined by white writers, who thus contribute to a distorted depiction of the continent, or one that centralises white experience and erases or relegates black people to the margins of (hi)story in the retelling. André Brink (1998) contends that white writers formulate aspects of their personal experience by appropriating the black experience and making it their own. Brink maintains that the ability to empathise or identify with the black struggle does not qualify white novelists to write about it without seeming false and inappropriate. This view is shared by Bheki Peterson (2006: 182) who argues that, even with the best intentions, white writers’ attempts to reflect the black condition run the risk of being patronising or simply regurgitating black stereotypes.

Discussing images of black people in the media, Stephen Small (1999: 53) argues that these portrayals “influence the attitudes, expectations and responses” of both black and white people from various communities. He adds:

> These images are also important because they do not reflect the general experience of black people – they abbreviate it, encapsulate it, and in doing so distort it. Though they appear to present a range of roles such images are

> overwhelmingly narrow, unrepresentative and stereotypical. This means that given the dramatic patterns of residential segregation most whites get their views and beliefs about blacks not from personal experience but from the media.

Although speaking about American society, Small's observations are also applicable to South African society and the representations of blackness in youth novels, which in turn inform and influence the ways in which black people are seen by the white populace. Additionally, the ways in which apartheid and black experience appear in these novels also significantly impacts people's perception of South African history and the race politics that are part of it. Moslund (2003) asserts that art plays a significant role in conveying and deploying historical knowledge to the general public. He argues:

> On the one hand, light has been shed on the often neglected fact that creative discourses play a significant role in the formation of historical awareness. It may be observed, for instance, that our "knowledge" of the past is shaped to a large degree by artful renditions such as monuments, paintings, historical plays and novels, as well as by T.V. drama series of historical eras and the inescapable show "based on a true story". (24)

The novels that I analyse below strongly illustrate the power of representation in constituting perceptions about race and history, evidencing Andy Carolin's (2019: 234) assertion that in post-apartheid textual cultures, an "unacknowledged whiteness marks privileged ways of both speaking and being heard".

Re-centring Whiteness in *The World Beneath* and *Cape Town*

Cape Town and *The World Beneath* are examples of South African YA fiction that employ the novel form for the purposes of both education and reconciliation. By locating their narratives in the apartheid era, these novels attempt to depict the history of the period while also exploring the race relations prevalent at the time. These novels exemplify the concerns of this article in that they both engage with apartheid history, represent their factual and spatial contexts in a way that appropriates that history, and thus vocalise the black experience of this history – thereby revising and, in doing so, distorting it.

Although both novels speak to the arguments raised in this article, there are some significant differences between them. In *The World Beneath* the focaliser is Joshua, a young black man living in a Cape Town suburb in 1976 with his mother, a domestic worker for a white family who lives in the servants' quarters. *Cape Town* is set in 1989 and focalised through Renee, a white Afrikaans first-year dance student at the University of Cape Town.

While the focus of *The World Beneath* is the experience of apartheid through a majority black cast of characters, the reverse is true for *Cape Town*.

Because of these differences between the novels, it might be difficult at first to determine how such widely differing approaches to the same subject matter could result in a similar conclusion about the texts. *The World Beneath* appropriates the black voice by interpreting the experience of apartheid for Joshua and other black characters through a series of increasingly improbable scenarios devoid of any recognition or articulation of the emotional and psychological impact apartheid would have had on those black characters. *Cape Town* does something similar by silencing the black voice altogether, relegating it to atmospheric background noise against which the drama of the white characters' story plays out. Apartheid in these novels is therefore represented in a manner that fails to recognise the ways in which the oppressed black masses encountered the regime, or the consequences thereof.

Throughout *The World Beneath*, Joshua undergoes a series of corrosive experiences without the reader being given any insight into his response or the overall effect of these experiences upon him. He is removed from his family home in rural Transkei and, although he remains with his mother, he is forced to skulk and avoid bringing his presence to the attention of the white family for whom she works. His time in exile and subsequent return to South Africa is portrayed in a manner consistent with adventure stories, filled with suspense and drama, and devoid of any kind of reflection on his emotional and mental state. *Cape Town* on the other hand, does not have any black characters of which to speak, but one is constantly made aware of the background context of apartheid. The novel, however, fails to acknowledge the fact that, as much as apartheid affects and generally inconveniences the white characters, there is an entire population of black people more adversely and directly affected by its policies. The exclusion of black characters from a distinctly apartheid-era text effectively nullifies black claims to being affected by the violence of apartheid; indeed, it nullifies black claims to involvement in the struggle against it, providing, instead, a white refashioning of the period.

The usurpation of black history in both novels is exacerbated by their whitewashing of apartheid and concomitant re-centring of whiteness and marginalisation of black involvement within the struggle against it. This is especially true of *Cape Town* where Renee's English boyfriend, Andrew, and his family are active participants in the struggle. Andrew's father and brother are in exile, his mother is a member of the Black Sash, and – true to its narrow production of an anti-apartheid white liberalism – the family has adopted their black domestic worker's niece. Indeed, the only resistance to apartheid to which the reader is privy is that of the white characters, creating the impression that they alone were actively engaged in the resistance movement. What these texts therefore do is to reconfigure whiteness within the struggle, transforming the association of whiteness with the oppressor to its association with the liberator. Whiteness is thus purged of the taint of the tyranny of apartheid and rebirthed in the guise of the emancipator. The history of the country is thus rehistoricised, altering the chronicling of the country's past in order to reaffirm the constructs of whiteness as unblemished, scrupulous and acting in accordance with notions of justice and equality associated with western democracies – what Andrew describes in the novel as "the British tradition of human rights, and fair play, and justice" (Hammond 2012). This pronouncement typifies the revisionist whitewashing of the pernicious role of whiteness in South Africa's history of oppression. The white activist families depicted in the novel draw attention to phantasmagorical aspects of white rule, which belie apartheid's reality and the function of whiteness in its construction, implementation and sustention.

The World Beneath uses a very different narrative technique to attain the same outcome. The novel has a wide array of white characters who all seemingly play peripheral roles in the major plotline of the text, but prove to be integral to Joshua's survival and well-being and, by extension, to that of the liberation movement. All the white characters in the novel, with the exception of Mr Malherbe, who is abusive to everyone, especially his wife, are presented as stepping stones for Joshua and as catalysts for the anti-apartheid movement itself. Although presented as marginal to the overall plot, these characters constitute a vital part of the whitewashing underpinning the text. From the Malherbes who take Joshua in, despite the fact that it is illegal for him to live in a white suburb without permission, to the elderly white gentleman driving a Mercedes Benz who gives Joshua a lift, every achievement that Joshua is able to attain in the text is enabled by a white character.

Warman's *The World Beneath* (re)envisions the role of whiteness within the struggle as more than assisting or participating, but rather making possible its success: there is no instance in the text in which Joshua, or any of the other black characters, accomplishes anything without white intervention. Necessary to this is the (re)construction of whiteness in conjunction with the (re)imaging of it and its function within the anti-apartheid movement. In pursuit of this (re)structuring and (re)imaging, Warman presents us with a gamut of white characters, all of whom prove to be compassionate and selflessly willing to risk incarceration in order to make possible the success of each of Joshua's endeavours to thwart the apartheid regime. Unlike in *Cape Town*, which at least presents us with snapshots of white racism and complicity in apartheid, this novel renders whiteness devoid of racism and deploys it as the vital component in the success of the struggle. The credibility of this depiction is contingent on the black other being presented as utterly dependent on the white characters and incapable of keeping themselves safe or making any progress without white intervention. So focused is this text on the magnanimity of white characters that the horrors of apartheid visited upon the black character are subsumed beneath the overarching compulsion on the author's part to reiterate the positive and necessary participation of white people in the effort to bring down the apartheid government.

Michael Jackson (2002) suggests that part of the reason for the failings of white writers to adequately depict black suffering and the trauma that was apartheid is due to their inability to empathise with the other; they are therefore incapable of reflecting on their oppression or speaking to the impact thereof. He goes on to argue that "[o]ne has to locate in one's own experience something that corresponds roughly to the other person's experience – that can provide common ground and assist comparison" (238). Yet, in the case of South Africa, there is no comparable experience of apartheid for white South Africans to draw on, not even for those who were active participants in the struggle.

De Kock (2004) also contends that the history of political violence in South Africa has resulted in a violence of identity, in which a series of distortions in the depiction and representation of the other are used as a means of justifying the practices of the oppression and dehumanisation of the black other. The cleavages that have resulted and become part of South African society have since infiltrated the country's literature, whether quotidian or belletrist, and this crisis of dichotomy and representation is reflected in much of this writing. This is why white authorship of the other is doomed to failure, because of the race relations that have dominated the country for decades and continue to inform the current modes of racial engagement and placement on the socio-cultural hierarchy.

Bentley and Midgley's (2000) research stands out as one of the few studies suggesting that white writers' efforts to vocalise black youths and other marginalised groups have been successful, referring to this aspect of the writing as "crossing over". According to them, crossing over is attained when a white writer uses a range of different races and cultures in their novel, thus allowing them to cross over the various barriers of race and culture. For Bentley and Midgley, it suffices that white writers include other races in their writings; they do not question the propriety of appropriating the history and voice of the other, nor do they concern themselves with the accuracy of the portrayal of the other in these novels.

Bentley and Midgley's argument would seem to be consistent with Benedict Anderson's (2006) notion of imagined communities. The text is a vital component of the formation of the community, made possible by the constructed imaginary connections that bind these otherwise disparate communities. In the novels under discussion, these communities, within the text, are those built around the resistance to apartheid and the attainment of freedom for the oppressed black majority. What is suggested by these novels is that South Africa's collective identity is no longer centred on racial identities, but has rather consolidated itself around a rainbow nation nationalism grounded in the belief that ethical South Africans long ago recognised the malevolence of apartheid and actively opposed it. In this way, white authors use the past to create a sense of unity between black and white through a suggested commonality of purpose against apartheid, and an absenting of white complicity in the regime itself.

Distortions of History in *The World Beneath* and *Cape Town*

In addition to the issues of appropriation and revisionist whitewashing contained within these two YA novels, another mechanism used in advancing revisionist appropriation is the distortion of not only the *experience* of apartheid, but also the very history itself. While works of fiction are instrumental in the educational process, and people glean a significant amount of their historical knowledge from fictional sources including the novel (Carolin 2015), this is more pertinent with younger readers whose contextual grasp of history is informed even more significantly by YA fiction. Therefore, there is an expectation that novels such as *The World Beneath* and *Cape Town*, which intentionally locate themselves within a particular historical period in order to explore it, as well as inform their readers about it, relate a construction of that history with a measure of veracity and accuracy. However, this is not the case in either Hammond's or Warman's novels. Instead they distort not just the realities of apartheid for the oppressed masses, but the factual and operational aspects of the struggle, reflecting the writers' clear lack of awareness of what are not just verifiable facts, but also the nature of a resistance movement.

In *The World Beneath* the operations of the underground movement are presented in such a way as to leave the reader in no surprise as to the need for white intervention, the only wonder being that anything was achieved by black activists at all. Joshua encounters Tsumalo, an escaped activist hiding in a tree on the street where the Malherbe home is located. After informing him of the house number, Joshua later finds Tsumalo on the premises, ostensibly there to thank the young man, but ending up staying for an extended period of time. As the story unfolds, the reader is presented with yet more unlikely scenarios: Tsumalo's comrades discover his location and congregate at the white family's house for a meeting without drawing the attention of the home owners or the neighbours; Mrs Malherbe finally learns of Tsumalo's presence and invites him to move into the house; Tsumalo subsequently assaults Mr Malherbe to protect his wife from his abuse; Joshua attempts to protect Tsumalo from the police by lunging at them before being plucked away from their clutches by the comrades who conveniently materialise at the house and then drive Joshua overnight from Cape Town to Mozambique before leaving a week later to go to Angola; Joshua then returns to Cape Town and unsuccessfully attempts to plant a limpet mine in a shopping mall, an attempt foiled by a child who reminds him of Robert, the son of the white family; and then Joshua is secreted away by the elderly white gentleman in the Mercedes mentioned above.

These occurrences are not only improbable, but also give the reader a particular idea of the competence of the movement and those involved. They also undermine the threat of danger inherent in taking part in the struggle and the meticulous planning and preparation that was necessary not just to execute those plans, but also to protect the identities and lives of those involved. As has already been mentioned, this text serves to position whiteness as the axis of the struggle and, in so doing, rewrites the role of whiteness during apartheid. For this rewriting to occur, further historical subterfuge is necessitated, accomplished through the falsification of the operations of the anti-apartheid movement. The portrayal of white characters' roles is equally suggestive of the author's ignorance of the machinations of apartheid in its bid to inculcate racial division, mistrust and hatred, which strongly contradicts the novel's suggested comradery and responsiveness of the white characters towards black people.

In addition to the caricature of the liberation movement with which we are presented in this novel, there is the concomitant worrying geographical obtuseness, all the more concerning for its implications with regard to the author's awareness of the region. There appears to be no cognisance of the impossibility of driving overnight from Cape Town to Mozambique (especially in the car described in the novel), nor the fact that, regardless of the point from which one leaves Mozambique, one has to cross through at least two countries to get to Angola. The absence of regional or simple geographic familiarity is compounded by the author's obvious failure to realise that any of the border crossings to which she refers so casually would have had to be conducted clandestinely through unofficial exit points because Joshua certainly does not have a passport that would allow him ease of travel. Authorial failure to take cognisance of these elements of, and challenges faced by, the resistance movement further indicates the racial barriers precluding this white writer from adequately writing blackness and the apartheid struggle.

The historical distortions in Hammond's *Cape Town* are more obvious and therefore more concerning not simply because they are so glaring, but also because they are easily verifiable factual errors. There are three instances in the novel where the author's historical knowledge is questionable at best. The first occasion is when Andrew introduces Renee to Zekile, another comrade. When dropping Zekile off, Renee asks Andrew what kind of handshake Zekile had bestowed upon her, and Andrew tells her it was a "struggle handshake". However, no such handshake, specific to the resistance movement, has ever existed. There are, certainly, variations on the handshake predominant among black people, but they are not struggle related or specific. This assertion is indicative of the racialised perceptual caricatures that the author is reliant upon in her understanding and subsequent portrayal of the anti-apartheid movement and the black populace of South Africa.

The second instance occurs when Andrew picks Renee up for a date and she notices the sticker of the United Democratic Front (UDF) on his car. We are told that she notices the yellow, green and black sticker with UDF printed on it. She knows that the UDF is a banned organisation but she does not know the significance of the colours, and asks Andrew what they symbolise. He explains to her that they are Rastafarian colours. This rather absurd exchange is important because of what it tells the reader about the author's familiarity with her subject. The initial error is the suggestion that the UDF used the colours of the African National Congress (ANC) or Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) as part of its logo. Although the UDF was an anti-apartheid movement, it was intentionally unaffiliated with either the ANC or PAC in order to minimise the chances of it being banned and so worked at the grassroots level with community organisations and trade unions. The second issue with the explanation of the sticker proffered by Andrew – who has, of course, been positioned as an exemplar of the liberation movement – is his assertion that the colours are Rastafarian colours. But there is no point in the history of the anti-apartheid movement where the Rastafarian religion was so closely linked to the groups involved as to inspire them to emulate its colours. Additionally, the colours of Rastafarianism are yellow, green and red, missing the black that was part of the colours of the banned ANC and PAC. Similarly, unlike the colours associated with Rastafarianism, there is no red in the flags of these South African liberation movements. The UDF's logo, if it can be so described, consists of a red background with a group of marching workers holding up a flag in black. Andrew is presented to readers as a participant in the struggle, and therefore, if not an authority on it, should at least be familiar with its cultural markers such as the colours of the UDF and the non-existence of an absurdly formulated struggle handshake. The failure by the character, who functions as the reader's guide to the struggle, to account for basic aesthetic features of the UDF raises serious questions about the author's trustworthiness as a source of historical knowledge.

The third iteration of historical corrigendum that the author of *Cape Town* includes is a concerning statement that exemplifies the distortion alluded to when the narrator states that "[n]ow the people's anger and protest was projected towards June 16th, the anniversary of Sharpeville". This conflation of two significant historical moments is followed by a brief explanation of the Sharpeville massacre which is concluded with the author's assertion that this was the moment at which the anti-apartheid struggle began. This assertion erases several decades of coordinated anti-colonial and anti-apartheid activities and is indicative of the limits of the author's understanding of the black struggle. Both of these inaccuracies show the distortive nature of the historical appropriation on which I am focusing in this article. This extent of historical and social solecism is particularly concerning because the distortions are not interpretive, but factual. While the credibility of the author is brought into question because of these errors, of larger concern is the fact that, as mentioned, young readers especially tend to accept unquestioningly the veracity of historical information garnered from texts, historical or otherwise. In the case of Warman's work, the information with which they are provided is not only incorrect, but provably so, which elicits far greater concern.

Conclusion

Despite the post-apartheid space and the inroads made by black writers and intellectuals, black stereotypes crafted by white authors continue to inform the ways in which black characters and their experiences of history are portrayed. The result of this is that the representation of the apartheid state and its impact on the black population is over-determined by the mostly white authors who depict it in their novels. White novelists, writing in the post-apartheid era, who elect to locate their narrative within the apartheid period are therefore not merely able to construct a fictional world for their characters, but also to provide an interpretive reflection of the experience of apartheid.

This article therefore argues that one of the major failings of Warman's *The World Beneath* and Hammond's *Cape Town,* in addition to the appropriation of the voice of the other and the rehistoricisation of white complicity in apartheid, is the very way in which they deploy history in the novel. This is done not only to engender imagined communities with non-racial solidarity, but also to construct a version of history that will make these communities a material reality. But as Moslund (2003: 9) laconically points out:

> Studies of history and historicism have made it increasingly clear that history as social memory is customarily changed and transformed in order to preserve or generate a certain social identity that may endorse the realisation of imminent social, political or economic visions. Although such uses pretend to be speaking of the reality of the past this is far from the case. The past is rarely, if ever, allowed to stand on its own by and for itself, but is systematically tailored by the present to suit its purposes.

The two novels discussed in this article exemplify the malleability of history and the potential for its use in changing the narrative in order to reshape present and future discourses on apartheid generally, as well as black and white roles in the South African struggle more specifically. While Meena Khorana (1988) observed more than three decades ago that many white writers have used literature not only to recount their history with black people in South Africa, but also to justify their actions within various historical eras, these two YA novels evince the continuities of this narrative mode in the present. In their writings, the two white writers invariably fail to engage with black realities and experiences of apartheid, either glossing over them and, more often than not, failing to see them at all.

Jackson (2002), citing Walter Benjamin and John Berger, suggests that death provides permission for authors to write certain stories, arguing that a story only begins at the point of the protagonist's death, implying that the death of a subject frees the author to write freely, for only with that death can the truth be born. In the context of this paper, the death in question is that of apartheid. Ergo, the end of apartheid has created a space wherein it is possible to write stories that centralise whiteness in the anti-apartheid movement, not as part of a multi-racial collective or even as assisting the oppressed whose struggle it was, but locating itself as integral to that struggle. Instead of the end of apartheid enabling a more authentic narration of black history, and a rehistoricisation of the black experience, however, what has come to the fore is a white reimagining of not just apartheid, but also the very notion of white participation and collusion itself.

Hammond's and Warman's novels reveal that the end of apartheid has created a space wherein it is possible to write fiction that centralises whiteness in the anti-apartheid movement, not as part of a multi-racial collective or even as assisting the oppressed whose struggle it was, but locating itself as integral to that struggle. Instead of the end of apartheid enabling a more authentic narration of black history, and a rehistoricisation of the black experience, what these two YA novels reveals is that a troubling refashioning and recentring of whiteness is being textually constructed and circulated, blind to its own complicity in practices of erasure and misrepresentation.[3]

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