Unwrapping the Lies of Racial Passing: A Redefinition of the Self in Zoë þÿ W i c o m b s P l a y i n g i n t h e L i g h t

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Unwrapping the Lies of Racial Passing: A Redefinition of the Self in Zoë Wicomb's *Playing in the Light*

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1. Introduction

Zoë Wicomb's third novel, *Playing in the Light,* consists in an enlightenment of "the darkness of deprivation under apartheid" (Wicomb, *Black* 119). It is set in the second half of the 1990s in Cape Town, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings play an increasingly significant role in the lives of South African citizens. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "established to investigate human-rights violations committed by the apartheid regime", raised awareness to the importance of remembrance and historical justice (Altnöder 8). These hearings, however, did not only bring to light the repressed histories of persecution and trauma of non-white people. They caused "Cape Town's residents [to be] in the midst of uneasily recalibrating the terms of their cosmopolitan lives and redefining their relationships – political, personal, and ethical – to one another, while struggling with and against desires for continuity" (Robolin 349).

The individual-building project that arose from this context also affects Marion Campbell, the novel's protagonist, whose life is, on top of that, turned upside down as she discovers that her parents passed as white following the 1950 Population Registration Act. *Playing in the Light* is about her quest for identity and her numerous attempts to make sense of the implications of the different South African identities available. The journey of self-redefinition that she undertakes "involves reconceiving people, spaces and places in order to locate herself in relation to the past and recreate her own place" in the "new" South Africa (Ommundsen 92). By travelling, metaphorically as well as inlands and overseas, she gains knowledge about her ancestors, her family, and herself. Through Marion's "troubled journey in time and space", Ludmila Ommundsen suggests, "Wicomb has constructed a narrative of Colouredness conveying a sympathetic understanding of the dramatic condition of the Coloured as inescapably social beings, shaped by their own actions which, in turn, are shaped by the pressures of the society in which they live and its history" (95).

Indeed, Zoë Wicomb's interest in "interrogating the rich intersection of consciousness, identity, and place" imbues *Playing in the Light* (Robolin 349). This is also what this dissertation will deal with. More precisely, I wish to investigate Marion Campbell's reinvention and negotiation of the self throughout the story. This redefinition of the self, in Marion's case, includes changes in aspects of her personality. It also includes the reluctant realisation of her status as an implicated subject regarding the individual histories that were repressed during apartheid, but also with respect to the still ongoing dynamics of repression in the "new" South Africa. Wicomb indeed also raises awareness to instantiations of

oppression that still take place in the "new" South Africa, despite its reinvention as a "non-racial Rainbow Nation" at the end of apartheid, which should praise its racial and ethnic pluralism, thereby valuing the different "cultural identities in non-exclusionary terms" (Altnöder 4).

In order to explore Marion's reinvention of identity and to argue that it includes the paradigm of implication, I will focus on three specific facets of the prism of her identity: the concept of the journey which symbolises her process of "becoming", the concepts of space and place which are tainted with revealing aspects of her identity, and lastly, the most intimate "space" of herself, which is her bodily identification through the motif of the mermaid.

2. Race, the Rainbow Nation, and the "Implicated Subject"

Firstly, I wish to clarify the notions of "race" and "coloured" as they will be used in this work. I will use these terms mostly without quotation marks, based on the way they are expressed in *Playing in the Light* (without quotation marks). I would also like to note that Wicomb herself has described the concept of "racial identity" as an "unfortunate thing", justifying it as follows: "Racism presses us into the paradox of speaking of racial identity when at the same time we use scare quotes for the word 'race', acknowledging its constructedness. Some replace the term with cultural identity" (*Black* 119). Hence, the notions of racial identity and cultural identity will be used interchangeably in this work, and particular emphasis will be put on the fluidity of both concepts. Indeed, as Wicomb has stated, by "accept[ing] race to be a social construct, [one] can[not] believe in […] racial or cultural *essentialism*" (*Black* 121, my emphasis).

The concept of racial identity plays a key role in the "discourse of rainbow nationalism" (Erasmus 20). Critics such as Zimitri Erasmus, Jeffrey Prager, and Diana Adesola Mafe, have pointed to the fragility and even hypocrisy that is conveyed in the metaphor of the "Rainbow Nation." Erasmus has argued that the image of "unity in diversity […] reads coloured identities (as all identities) as 'merely different' — simply another aspect of South Africa's cultural 'diversity'" (20). She has pointed to the problematic lack of attention given to the still existing "power relations inherent in cultural formation and representation" (20). Similarly, Mafe has emphasised the precariousness of such utopian perspectives:

> the problem with such "rainbowist" or "multicultural" approaches is the assumption that the racist slates of history can be wiped clean and that national life can begin anew with equality and celebratory diversity [while] […] discount[ing] the psychological trauma of racism that carries on for generations and the enduring economic, social, and political effects of past injustices" (146).

In the same vein, Prager has pointed to a very interesting aspect of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC):

> [Despite the] recognition that the apartheid past had to be remembered […] [t]he categories of victims and perpetrators had to be retired by the end of the hearings; apartheid thinking required demarcation from a postapartheid citizenry, neither

> victims nor perpetrators but as post-apartheid survivors of trauma collectively forging a new society and a new politics. (17)

These aspirations were utopian, as they implied that healing from the apartheid trauma required South African citizens solely to "take possession of their past", which would allow them to "demarcate[e] themselves from their discriminatory and exploitative ancestors", which was the supposed key to healing (Prager 17). However, as Erasmus has emphasised, the reconstruction of a "new", "healed" South Africa should not come at the expense of an erasure of the past (see 15). Furthermore, such attempts to erase the past, or consider it as "dealt with", would overlook its significant intergenerational impact:

> We know how unwittingly new generations, in fact, can inhabit a past that preceded them, can be carriers of it, can continue to live it, reproduce it, pass it on and, at the same time, imagine or think themselves free from their history. (Prager 18)

In light of these important claims, I have considered the inclusion of Michael Rothberg's concept of the "implicated subject" to be a necessary component in my analysis of Marion's identity reinvention and exploration. The implicated subject is an essential concept to complete and add nuance to the thus far dual view between victims and perpetrators as mentioned above (see Prager 17). According to Rothberg:

> Implicated subjects occupy positions aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes. An implicated subject is neither a victim nor a perpetrator, but rather a participant in histories and social formations that generate the positions of victim and perpetrator. (1)

He also underscores the fact that such unintended acts of participation in racial hierarchy dynamics, that result in violence or repression, can be found both in "small-scale encounters and large-scale structures [and that] they are also instantiated repetitively in the present, yet burdened with active historical resonances" (2). Indeed, such a statement is particularly relevant regarding the intergenerational legacies of the "ghosts from the past" (Prager 17). Furthermore, Rothberg includes one's unintended participation in "sociopolitical dynamics that create suffering and inequality in the present" as a core component of implication (11). He also includes the analysis of one's status as "beneficiary" in the dynamics of implication (16). This status is indeed very relevant regarding Marion's hitherto far life as a white person, whose "well-being [was] contingent on others' suffering and impoverishment" (Rothberg

16). Wicomb herself shows interest in a similar manifestation of implication regarding the people who passed as white during apartheid:

> I am interested in what it means for individuals born into a society that is hyper-religious and committed to family values to renounce their families. I had to imagine how such characters in the 1940s and 50s negotiated the tension between social and economic advancement and betrayal of their families and communities. (*Black* 120)

Marion did not willingly pass for white, but she nevertheless faces feelings of implication with respect to her parents' passing. Moreover, her own implication is also linked to her identity as a white individual in the "new" South Africa, as mentioned earlier. The slow and discrete realisation of her implication is wonderfully displayed in the following extract of *Playing in the Light* which reflects Marion's thoughts as she has become convinced that there is a secret to be discovered about her own birth:

> Occasionally, on her own, she watches on television the proceedings of the TRC […]. In this world of accusations and confessions, of secrets and lies, Marion is a reluctant traveller who has landed in a foreign country without so much as a phrase book. She forces herself to step out gingerly into its strange streets, her arms clutched, hugged to her chest. She hears the voices of people saying that they did not know, that they had no idea; there is an impulse to say it aloud after them, as in a language lesson, but fastidiousness prevents her from doing so. She does not know why she ventures into a world she has never known, never wished to explore. […] Marion does not speak to anyone of these sessions before the television screen. Somehow, she bears the shame of the perpetrators. (74-75)

The reluctant realisation of her implication imbues Marion's quest for the self, as will be showed in this work.

3. Identity and the Concepts of Space and Place

As a way to advocate for the importance of taking into account space and place in my analysis of Marion's identity, I wish to show my agreement with Yi-Fu Tuan's viewpoint on these two concepts, according to which they "are basic components of the lived world [and that] we take them for granted. When we think about them, however, they may assume unexpected meanings and raise questions we have not thought to ask" (3). According to Tuan, "[i]n experience, the meaning of space often merges with that of place. 'Space' is more abstract than 'place.' What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (6). Hence, in the analysis of Marion's physical environment, I will mostly use the term "place", as her apartment and her office are "endowed […] with values" that are essential in the understanding of her identity (Tuan 6).

Tuan has dedicated his work to the following question: "in what ways do people attach meaning to and organize space and place?" (5). He aims to comprehend "space and place as images of complex – often ambivalent – feelings" and he argues that literature is one of the few fields in which the comprehension and rendering of those "intricate worlds of human experience" are articulated the best (7). In *Playing in the Light*, in addition to the spatial legacies of apartheid, during which racial identity was "fused" with the land (Robolin 361), a close observation of Marion's personal spatial surroundings and organisation points to numerous revealing aspects of her personality and life.

The analysis of Marion's personal development will follow the logic of a narrowing spatial order, ranging from the world of travel to the spaces of her environment (mainly her apartment and her office), and finally to the trope of the body, which, in *Playing in the Light*, is rendered through the mythic, mixed body of the mermaid.

4. Synopsis of *Playing in the Light*

Marion Campbell is in her thirties and lives on her own in an apartment in Bloubergstrand, Cape Town, in post-apartheid South Africa. She has pale skin and light-coloured hair. She is nicknamed "Marientjie" by her father John Campbell, who sees her as his "little mermaid." Despite her very conscious "aversion to travel", she runs a travel agency which she built from scratch and is named MCTravel (40).

Her childhood was characterised by "oppressive silence" (6), "gloom" (47), and her parents' "bitter bickering" (4) all at once. She has clear memories of what she felt as a child: the "air of restraint, as if the very plaster were giving its all to prevent the house from exploding" (47). She also lacked motherly love because her mother Helen Campbell was always distant with her. Marion did not understand the meaning of these family life characteristics then, but they seem to have turned her into a quiet and socially inept person. She has a nearly blank romantic history and struggles to give Geoff Geldenhuys a chance as a boyfriend, and apart from this she has nearly no friends except Brenda, her coloured employee with whom she timidly and clumsily builds a friendly relationship. In all, she could not even imagine inviting someone in her apartment, in her very own, private, home.

One day, at the office, Marion surprisingly tells her employees about the puzzling nightmares she has been having lately in addition to her nightly panic attacks. She hopes that telling her dreams aloud will help her understand their meaning. In one of her nightmares, Marion is inside a house in which she senses the spooky presence of an unknown woman. She cannot escape the house. She "keeps going out to the stoep to get away from the shape of the woman, but cannot tell whether it is the back or the front of the house" (30). In another nightmare, she is climbing up a ladder in that same house. Her own mother is down the ladder, trying to prevent her daughter from going upstairs. Marion, however, opens the door leading to the loft and discovers "an old woman sitting on a low stool" (31). After having heard about these dreams, Brenda's remarks lead Marion to think that "the focus is clearly on doors" (31). Moreover, the old woman of her dream brings back memories of Tokkie, the woman Marion remembers as their black family servant, who died when Marion was five years old. However, those are not the only triggering elements that will lead Marion on the journey of a lifetime. Later, at work, her attention is captured by a face on the cover of the *Cape Times* magazine. The article is about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing of a coloured woman named Patricia Williams. From the very first glance, Marion feels that something is amiss; the face intrigues her. After having looked at the face in the newspaper

again at home, she goes to her balcony and then sees "a floating face on the water" in the sea (55). Marion recognises the face as Tokkie's. She is convinced that there must be a link between the two women, and she wants to "solve the mystery of the face" (56).

As she does not remember herself, she asks her father for information about Tokkie. At first, he pretends that he does not remember anything about her. Later, he answers her questions in a very elusive manner. Marion "has no doubt that he is lying, pretending not to know. But why?" (56). She feels submerged by a growing suspicion that "there is something secret, something ugly, monstrous, at the heart of their paltry little family" (58). Marion does not know how to proceed to discover the truth, but she assumes that she must have been adopted:

> [She] doesn't know where the uncanny certainty comes from, but she knows that the mystery is about her own birth. There can be no other explanation: she is an adopted child […]. Williams's face is simply a sign alerting her to the truth. The truth about a child deceived by adults who have flouted her inalienable right to know who her parents are, to know her origins. (62)

Meanwhile, Patricia Williams's face starts to literally haunt Marion. She sees the face in her bedsheets, it "appears in her father's house, where it hovers, cropped as in the newspaper, on the wall against which the table sits, for all world as if the woman were a dinner guest" (73). An uncanny sense of dim recognition seems to have become omnipresent in her life. To help her discover the truth, and in the hope that she may be relieved from those distressing feelings, she asks Brenda for help in her investigation.

They find out that Tokkie came from Wuppertal, and they arrange a meeting with Mrs Murray, Brenda's sister's acquaintance who lives in this place. She may help clarify the face mystery as she claims that she has indeed known a woman called Tokkie. Marion worries, because she "has to travel miles to find her" and "[s]etting off on any trip is a nuisance for Marion" (80). She does not find travelling meaningful in any way and does not "buy into the transformative value of travel" (81).

On their way there, they come across an old man, Outa Blinkoog. He looks like a "brightly coloured creature from mythology, a messenger from the gods" (87), or a "man out of a storybook" (90). Once a shepherd, he now wanders about with a cart full of "Beautiful Things" he creates with all kinds of things he finds on his way. He talks about his life on the move and how he finds this enriching. He advocates to Marion and Brenda the

utility of "getting to know one's terrain through the soles of one's own feet" (91). During their conversation, both women "are transported to another world" (90).

Once in Wuppertal, during their conversation with Mrs Murray, Marion realises that her foot is badly hurt, and while Mrs Murray tends to Marion's foot, she recognises in the young adult "the spitting image of Mrs Karelse", which was Tokkie's real name (97). It is then that Marion realises that she is in fact Tokkie's granddaughter and that her parents were play-whites, i.e., that they "crossed over" (107). After having discovered this, Marion is plagued by a "terrible emptiness" (102). She feels ashamed, "[n]aked [and] slippery" (101).

Despite the shock, the anger and the shame, Marion wants to know more about her parents' decision to pass off as whites. However, apart from a wedding photograph, a Sunday School religious card, Helen's identity card on which "WHITE" is written, and some unsuccessful research on "play-whites" at the National Library, she does not find much. She has no other choice than to convince John to tell her more. He tells her how one day, while applying for a job as a traffic officer, the Traffic Superintendent "mistook him for a Boer", a white person, which was what set John and Helen "alight with ambition to turn white" (156). In addition to explaining the political necessity to pass as white, he talks about the sacrifice he had to make, which was, in the end, to cut off any link with his family. Marion therefore decides to go on a "quest" to find Elsie, her father's sister, to get more information about her family history (163). There, she realises that Elsie's husband and children have had to face the years of apartheid as coloured people, as opposed to Marion, who grew up "confident in her whiteness" (132). She has in fact has "no claim" on this part of her family, John's parents and siblings, as they have hardly been a part of her own life (174). Elsie also tells her how John used gardening as a form of disguised protest against both the crossing, that had translated into the renunciation of his own origins and family, and his wife Helen with whom he had a conflictual relationship. Gardening, according to Elsie, was his "idea of protest, of standing his ground" (169).

The reader, on the other hand, knows more about Marion's parents' lives thanks to the passages narrated from John's and Helen's points of view. In their "business" of playing white, Helen's mother, Tokkie, had the idea to play the role of a servant to be able to visit Helen, John, and Marion every week without attracting attention from their neighbours in Observatory (see 123). Helen did not want children at first, as she considered a child to be a potential threat to the success of their plan; a plan which had already required her to sacrifice a part of her own self, as she had had to endure sexual harassment by Councillor Carter in exchange for an affidavit signed by him, stating the whiteness of the Campbell family at the

time of the Population Registration Act of 1950. In these passages, the reader also acquires information about how both parents doctored their everyday life in order to perfectly play their roles as white people, such as hiding in their own house because they had adopted "vigilance" as their new watchword, adapting their religious habits and changing parishes, changing their names and accent, and even "taming" the callous skin of Helen's feet lest they should give away a coloured childhood spent barefoot (148).

The mind-blowing revelation and especially the loss of meaning that Marion attaches to the discovery of a life of lies, drive her to want to go away for a while. Despite her initial dislike of travel, she decides to leave home to visit Europe for three months. She visits several capital cities such as Berlin and Rome. In London, where she rents an attic room, she feels "invaded by the virus of loneliness" (188). She spends her time "reading novels indoors", and she thinks "there is something about being cocooned in a single room, about the bleakness of the days, that must be endured", which makes her reflect on her own life and cry (191). She feels that "the world imprints itself on her afresh" (191). Abroad, she seems to be able to take a step back from it all and to accept what happened as well as accept her own feelings that she does not try to hold back anymore. When she receives a phone call from Vumile Mkhize, a man she has had business with in Cape Town, offering to meet up in Glasgow, she simply accepts. She had wanted to go to Scotland anyway, as her father told her it was the land of their ancestors. They have dinner together and she opens up to him in only one evening. When Vumi does not call her back the next evening, she puts things into perspective and simply values him as a "messenger" who has made her travel to Glasgow; his phone call in London, she interprets as an opportunity, a "geleentheid" (201). She thus seems to have matured a lot since she left home. Contrary to Marion's initial expectations, there is indeed a transformative value attached to travelling. Later, in Garnethill, in a little park, she meets an old man named Dougie with whom she talks about the Campbells of Scotland. Dougie also tells her about "the Scottish water spirit, the kelpie, that takes particular delight in drowning travellers, and that assumes various shapes, often that of a horse" (204). She seems interested in this story, which she can compare to the other water-related story of the mermaid that she has been told of from a young age.

Marion comes back home in Cape Town and learns that Brenda has been visiting her father, even if she was not supposed to do so. Brenda has spent a lot of time talking with the old man, and she tells Marion that she has started writing a book about his life, "with his pale skin as capital, ripe for investment" (218). Marion is very upset, and claims that she knows "[her] father's fucking story", to which Brenda replies: "Actually […] I suspect you

don’t” (218), which serves to suggest that the novel’s embattled protagonist still has a lot to come to terms with.

5. Identity and the Concept of the Journey

The concept of the journey can be considered as one of the many facets that constitute the prism of identity construction as outlined in the novel. In Marion's case, this prism changes throughout the story as she discovers her true identity. She has been "confident in her whiteness" (*Playing in the Light* 132)[1] until adulthood, but after having discovered that her parents had crossed over to pass as white, she must "[reflect] on her hitherto unquestioned 'whiteness'" (Jacobs 10). Her identity prism then changes from a seemingly "single and uniform" one to a more hybrid affair. It is in this sense that travelling and journeying play a key role. When considered metaphorically, Marion's journey encodes her complex self-redefinition in the light of these revelations in "present-day, non-racial South Africa", or I would rather say, in post-apartheid South Africa (Jacobs 10). Marion will have to travel, both physically and mentally, and her "exhausting journeys" will lead her to explore "the discontinuities and contradictions of her own heterogenous history and identity" (Jacobs 12). Her journeys echo an expression borrowed by Ludmila Ommundsen in her analysis of the novel: they represent, inter alia, a "pilgrimage of inquiry" (Dixie 396 qtd. in Ommundsen 86). Ommundsen explains this as follows:

> Just as a Christian pilgrim visits the locations associated with the Messiah, so Marion, affected by "the mystery … about her own birth" (62), visits the places associated with her past, undergoing a process of decentering and deconstruction as she recaptures scenes of repressions and translations. As memories belch forth she relives - and re-leaves - moments in her grandmother's and mother's lives in the Cape region then sets to Scotland where "her father wants her to look up the Campbells, find out about their Scottish background" (203), thus undergoing a process of self-discovery too. (86)

By adapting this holy expression to refer to Marion's journeys, Ommundsen seems to spotlight the almost sacred process of coming to terms with one's own identity. By bringing the spiritual, almost divine, facet of this journey to the forefront, she conveys a form of solemnity to this journey that so many people have embarked upon in the shadows.

This chapter aims to explore Marion's physical and mental journeys, and how these affect the person she is in the process of becoming. Furthermore, these explorations will reflect more global aspects that infuse Marion's life more generally, such as the importance

[1] Further references to the novel will be given with the abbreviation *PL*

of the body, the symbol of light, the capacity for and the importance of imagination, the mechanism of coping with memories, and Marion's constant craving for motherly love and affection.

5.1. Physical Travel and Identity

John Locke has emphasized "the role of travel in the shaping of personhood" (Lipski 1). Indeed, one of the ideas that Jakub Lipski retains from Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) is that "travel enables self-development through contact with otherness" (Lipski 2). More specifically, Locke argues that travelling leads to "an improvement in wisdom and prudence by seeing men, and conversing with people of tempers, customs, and ways of living, different from one another, and especially from those of his parish and neighbourhood" (*Some Thoughts* 175). Therefore, as Ommundsen has also pointed out, if Marion wants to go on a quest of self-discovery and self-identification, she has no other choice than to "leave her apartment" (86). Self-development indeed happens when one travels "outside of [their] parish and neighbourhood" as mentioned above, but Marion also needs to escape the "*the classic view* of Table Mountain on the left and Robben Island on the right" which she has from her apartment (Ommundsen 86, emphasis in original). The word *classic* may mean 'traditional', but another meaning of the word is 'historically memorable.'[2] Ommundsen focuses on the second meaning, arguing that:

> Marion is seen as 'out of place' in that she belongs in ambivalent spaces. On the one hand the "classic view" may refer to the traditional view of Table Mountain as the starting point of white colonisation in the seventeenth century, marking the erasure of indigenous cultures, and Robben Island as the place used for isolation and imprisonment during the apartheid era. Tucked in these geographical pages of history, Marion is associated with a contemporary state of "in betweenness." (86)

However, Marion seems oblivious to the historical meanings of her "heart-tugging postcard view of sea and mountain" (*PL* 3). This is precisely why she needs to take a step back and travel away from this location to be able to complete her quest, which is tightly linked to explorations of apartheid South Africa as well. She must leave in order to "find her place" and to make sense of her state of in-betweenness.

[2] *Merriam Webster Online* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/classic

Based on Locke's ideas, the experience of travelling equals a "trajectory of change; […] the one who returns […] differs from the one who departs" (Lipski 2). However, Lipski also agrees with a more essentialist viewpoint. Based on an analysis of travel in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, he concludes that "the travelling self is not meant to be *shaped*, strictly speaking, but *explored*, with the assumption that the road is not so much the space for metamorphosis but one conducive to an accrual of self-knowledge" (2-3 emphasis in original). Hence, Lipski's work is based on the belief that it is both "the *shaping of* and the *exploration of* identity" (4) that are the key links between travel and identity:

> When the self is being shaped on the road, there is no coming back, strictly speaking; the returned self is a new man. Conversely, the exploration of identity depends on the psychological construct of a circular journey—the destination becomes home; the self may be changed but only inasmuch as the change is tantamount to greater self-knowledge. (4)

Marion does not have any other choice than to become a new version of herself, as her hitherto white identity has been questioned and undermined. Her "old self" is now an incomplete identity, and she must complete it by going on a quest of self-identification. Marion thus both re-*shapes* her identity in light of her discoveries, and she *explores* her identity as well. At the end of the novel, "the returned Marion" is a "new" person, she has let go of aspects of her "old self" on the way, and she has become a different version of herself. Moreover, the ending of the novel, which can be considered as the end of her journey, equals to the supposed final destination of her current journey to "self-knowledge." She has explored her (coloured) identity and she finally finds herself in a state of acceptance of who she is; she has explored and accepted her own identity as a possible "home" (Lipski 4) to herself. The results of both the process of shaping as well as the process of exploration of identity can be recognised towards the end of the novel, when Geoff makes Marion aware that she laughs much more than before, to which she replies: "I feel fine – a personality change perhaps? Perhaps it's what the touchy-feelies call finding myself" (*PL* 182). In fact, it is both: her personality has inevitably changed, and she has also "found herself."

5.2. Provincial Sensibility and Cosmopolitanism

Travelling and its transformative value are important aspects of *Playing in the Light*, and the concepts of provincial sensibility and cosmopolitanism explored by Abdulrazak Gurnah are useful tools to analyse them. He has claimed that there is a "tension in [Zoë Wicomb's]

writing between the value of travel and the value of rootedness" (261). This tension is clearly recognisable in the novel as Marion experiences the need for a negotiation of her self-identification at times at home, and at times outside of the comfort zone of the places that are familiar to her. Based on this tension, Gurnah also identifies a distinction in "Wicomb's writing between the enriching experience of travel, which might be taken as a kind of cosmopolitanism, and the wish to stay at home, which might seem like a kind of complacency or provincialism" (264).

The choice of the location of Marion's apartment, that is known to the reader from the very first pages, is not insignificant. She lives "by the cool waters of Bloubergstrand […] with [a] heart-tugging postcard view of sea and mountain" (*PL* 3). As we know, this location is known for "the classic view of Table Mountain on the left and Robben Island on the right" (*PL* 2). Marion lives in this popular destination that is well known to tourists, yet she has a clear "aversion to travel" (*PL* 40). There seems to be a contradiction between her opinion about travel and her choice of living in Bloubergstrand. Moreover, she lives in an "inviolable" property, which she finds to be an essential feature of her place; there is "[n]o point in having a glorious outlook on the sea, […] if you are not secure" (*PL* 2). Her attention to security combined with her aversion to travel might suggest a valuing of Gurnah's "rootedness" as something personal and intimate that needs protection. Marion also seems to like her comfort zone and the routine of her daily life; she does not understand why people travel, and more precisely their "*need* to travel" to escape "the reality of their humdrum lives" (*PL* 17-18, my emphasis). She does not understand how one could *enjoy* travelling either:

> Why would anyone want to see the world from the discomfort of a suitcase? […] Could [the] experience [of travelling], in the final analysis, be any more pleasurable than seeing the world on film or television? She supposes that it's all part of the contemporary fuss about authenticity. (*PL* 40)

Ironically, Marion herself "sells travel" as she runs her own travel agency, MCTravel (see Gurnah 271). It is indeed entirely to her benefit that some people are delighted by the experience of travel. Another ironic element is that Marion herself will *need* to travel, both in order to discover the truth about her origins, but later also because of an inexplicable impulse, and it turns out that she will *enjoy* it, too.

Gurnah interprets Marion's inability to imagine the pleasure of travel as a "failure of imagination" and ties it not only to "an expression of a provincial sensibility", but also to a

form of "cultural ignorance" (272). Though provincial sensibility is not a lack per se, nor necessarily the "very opposite" of cosmopolitanism, it is, in Marion's case, the expression of her fear and "avoidance" of the outside world (see Gurnah 272). Marion's provincial sensibility is thus not a manifestation of her well-being in the place she calls home, nor an expression of loyalty tied to her own roots in Cape Town. Her aversion to travel seems instead to be linked to a paralysing fear, a lack of (self-)confidence that locks her up in the comfort zone of the local, her home, Cape Town. Her provincial "narrow-mindedness" is an expression of a "fear of exposure and a habit of secretiveness" (Gurnah 272). This can also be recognised in Marion's equation of travelling with a "nuisance […], a wrenching from the familiar" (*PL* 80). The habit of secretiveness is most probably a manifestation of her parents' behaviour and ever-enigmatic lifestyle, according to which living behind closed curtains and whispering in the house was the norm, one that Marion has in turn internalised. Yet, in order to get answers about her family, she must overcome her reluctance to travel and she "sets off on a quest for self-knowledge", both physically and metaphorically (Gurnah 273). This quest will help her outgrow her habit of "terrified isolation" and will help her open up to the world but also to herself (see Gurnah 271).

5.3. Outa Blinkoog: The Richness of Travelling

The first step of this discovery journey is Wuppertal, the place where Marion must meet with Mrs Murray, an old acquaintance of Tokkie's. However, on their way there, Marion and Brenda encounter a man who will prove to have a long-lasting impact on Marion. This man, Outa Blinkoog, seems so unreal that he looks like a "creature from mythology, a messenger from the gods" (*PL* 87). Gurnah describes him as a man "who joyfully represents the urge to nowhere[3], a man who finds pleasure in moments and fragments, and for whom *being* is this momentary movement, a travelling that leaves no trace but which is continuous" (273, my emphasis). Outa Blinkoog represents quite the opposite of Marion's lifestyle. He takes delight in every moment that passes, he travels alone in the land, but he still spends quality time with whomever he meets on his way. Marion's life, on the other hand, is characterised by the hustle of work, the city of Cape Town buzzing with activity in which she nevertheless feels lonely and ill-adapted, and the comfort of her own apartment that does not suffice to make her feel fulfilled. This resonates with another important aspect of Marion's opinion

[3]Drawing on a parallel with John Ashbery's poem "Sunrise in Suburbia", in which "the urge to nowhere" is represented by a figure who is "heading nowhere" and who finds happiness in the concept of life as constituted of "moments and glimpses", all temporary in essence (Gurnah 273).

about travel that has been quoted above: her questioning of its "authenticity" (*PL* 40). She refers to travel as being a manifestation of the "contemporary fuss about authenticity" (*PL* 40), which she mocks by pointing to the supposed 'experience' of travel one is expected to have:

> Something is meant to happen when you travel: you are supposed to traverse the terrain, when in fact a ravenous vehicle has consumed it. For Marion, the truth is that she is *passing* over the land, her only contact being through the cushioned rubber tyres of her moving vehicle. (*PL* 80, my emphasis)

Outa precisely embodies "[the] experience [of travelling] as a fulfilment in itself" (Gurnah 273). He is the physical manifestation of that, in which Marion does not believe. Whereas she *passes*, he *experiences*. As if to counter Marion's argument that her car is the only thing setting her in motion through the journey, Outa Blinkoog shares personal advice:

> [H]e really would recommend getting to know one's terrain through the soles of one's own feet. He pats his own appreciatively, hard as leather; he thinks they have covered a million miles. A stubborn pair of travellers they are, he says affectionately. If they decide to get going, there's just no stopping them. (*PL* 91)

Not only does Outa focus on the body as his sole intermediary instead of a car or even shoes, but he also insists on the 'power' that the body can have. Feet are not only a useful means of travelling, they are also the potential of travel itself; they are force and energy in essence. In this passage, Outa actually grants its authenticity to the experience of travel thanks to the capacities and the active influence of the travelling body.

More than just "transport[ing] [Marion and Brenda] to another world" spiritually during their encounter, Outa Blinkoog helps Marion in the journey of her life too (*PL* 90). The encounter helps her, though subconsciously, in her psychological journey out of her comfort zone, and in her journey of self-identification and acceptance. It will help her realise that the key to finding and accepting oneself is to be found in letting go, which is embodied by Outa. One can sense the effect he has had on her already in the way Marion struggles to recount the encounter to her boyfriend Geoff when she comes back from the journey during which she has learnt that her parents were play-whites:

> [I]t is surprising how little there is to tell. Have she and Brenda imagined the man? It is a mistake: her account of him is silly, a betrayal. Try as she may, she makes him

> sound clownish. Well, she says lamely, it was amazing, coming across him in the veld, like some kind of creature from another world. I can't explain. (*PL* 105-106)

Marion finds it difficult to describe the encounter, and when she does find words, they seem not to reflect the complexity and the richness of the exchange. It was the first time that Marion really stepped out of her state of provincial narrow-mindedness and that she opened herself to an exchange with a person whose "tempers, customs, and ways of living" were different from hers (Locke, *Some Thoughts* 175). Therefore, Outa's impact on her is tremendously important; so much so that words do not suffice to express her account of him and their conversation. Moreover, this inability to word what happened can resonate with Marion's failure to comprehend the truth. She has only just discovered that her parents were coloured. She is a step further on her way to the truth, but she cannot make sense of everything yet. As J. U. Jacobs has pointed out, "the truth of what [Outa] represents [only] gradually becomes clearer to Marion in the course of the narrative […] as Marion comes to understand the full implications of her mother's 'playing white'" (13).

The lasting impression that Outa Blinkoog leaves on Marion is also manifested physically through the gift of a multi-coloured lantern (see Gurnah 273). Outa "[would] not let [Marion and Brenda] go without a present" (*PL* 91). As if this almost surreal person knew Marion's personal background, Outa "digs around in the back of his cart; he knows exactly what they should have": the lantern (*PL* 91). This lantern bears great significance because of two important features. Firstly, it is handmade. Outa Blinkoog created this object himself, and more importantly, he assembled it thanks to bits and pieces that originally were not meant to 'fit together'. It is "an exquisite thing of scrunched-up tin with something of a rim in which disks of red and green glass are embedded" (*PL* 91). It is one of the Beautiful Things that he makes with "the scraps and broken bits that are wasted and thrown away […]. His treasures are all from found things that others throw away" (*PL* 89). The lantern can, in a way, be said to be representative of his own experiences, of his own pathway, of the bits and pieces of his own experience of travel; it is an authentic and personal production. It could be argued that it is thanks to this authenticity, a value that Marion seems to hold dear, that this "thing" becomes "exquisite" (*PL* 91), and that Outa considers it to be one of his many "treasures" (*PL* 88). These bits and pieces, thrown away by other people, form a harmonious whole once they are arranged together and lighted: "The candlelight glows green, red and blue through the rough shapes of glass, spreading a magical warmth" (*PL* 184). Thanks to the light, "the colours shine like jewels" (*PL* 91). Outa explains that this lantern is "especially

for when the candle grows short. Then the last hour of candlelight is sweetened with bright colour, so there's no place for sadness" (*PL* 91). Perhaps this lantern stands as a symbol for the acceptance of hybridity, as well as for hope. Jacobs interprets the figure of Outa himself as being a "symbol of an identity assembled out of various cultural bits and pieces", and I think the lantern manifests this hybridity particularly well too (13). Outa tells Marion and Brenda the following: "We take [light] too much for granted; coloured glass helps us to remember the miracle of light. You should see my cart, a palace at night, when all these lanterns are alight" (*PL* 89). Besides hope, light could also refer to the truth. It is only when the truth is accepted, when all the cultural parts of oneself are accepted and given recognition, that the authenticity of hybrid identity can "shine".

In the case of Marion, it can be argued that the hints and the scattered evidence that she finds all constitute the whole truth in the end. The different bits of evidence, or even only the hints, that Marion cannot make sense of, that at first sight do not 'fit together' and that generate her numerous efforts to comprehend "the puzzles of her own life" and her "attempts at making sense of the world", ultimately constitute the complex truth of her family history (*PL* 29). It all makes sense in the end once all the bits and pieces are assembled. Her white and her coloured identities, which she, at first, seems to consider as two separate ones, seem to be in opposition. She cannot imagine or grasp how both 'identities' could ever coexist together in one and the same body. In her utterance – "Once I was coloured, now I am white" – Marion indeed seems to consider both identities to be separate, and more importantly, mutually exclusive (*PL* 106). It is only after her journey of self-discovery that she realises that hybridity can reflect a harmonious whole. Hybrid identity can be, on the personal level, even if it does not seem that simple or straightforward, a harmonious identity, just like the lantern. Furthermore, the lantern, which looks like a "bit of junk [that] could do with some help from above" (*PL* 184) at first, eventually "comes to signify inspiration and deliverance for [Marion and Brenda]" (Gurnah 273-274). It is when looking at "the warm insistent light [of the lantern, that] an inchoate thought flickers and writhes into being", leading Marion to make the decision of travelling overseas for a few months (*PL* 185).

5.4. Journey through Europe

During her trip in Europe, Marion's way of experiencing travel seems to be changing. Previously, she was not moved by travel, she "[did] not buy into the transformative value of travel" (*PL* 81), and "the meaningfulness that people claim to find in making a trip, well, it [made] her feel inadequate" (*PL* 80). Now, however, she seems to have changed her mind,

thinking that if there were discoveries to be made in some place, "she should surely be doing her own" and not merely visit other people's shared discoveries (*PL* 187). She is aware of her "inevitably revised view of travel and [of] how her mind has been broadened" (*PL* 187).

Especially in the attic room she rents in London, she spends a lot of time reading, thinking, and crying "[w]antonly – for Helen, the mother, and for representations of herself, which are of course not herself" (*PL* 191). According to Gurnah, Marion "is grieving for both a loss and a discovery of self", and along with this, she is finally overcoming her initial failure of imagination (274). Gurnah objectifies this emergence of imagination by focusing on Marion's obsession with "a rectangle of light projected opposite the window" of her attic room in London, on which she reflects for a long time:

> On the wall, light seems to come to life with a shiver, and Marion watches, mesmerised. The rectangle is a painting, or rather, is painting in action, of white light on the white wall. It is a picture of time, a projection of rain drilling into the angled glass, rolling down the pane, translating itself into a dance of light on the wall. It is water silk come alive: a mother's hidden aquamarine gown, its forbidden, sumptuous folds dragged by the child into ludic light. (*PL* 192)

Not only is this a demonstration of Marion's imagination, but it is also an expression of her repressed thoughts, fears, and memories. Light, water, and above all, motherliness, indeed play an important role in her own life story. Jacobs has pointed out that this

> composition of white on white, of light in motion against a static background of light, symbolises, with its forming and re-forming abstract images, the increasingly complex, unpredictable and irreversible course that Marion's life has taken since her discovery of her coloured parents' decision to recreate themselves in terms of whiteness. (10)

However, it is the first time that Marion succeeds in rendering these complex life-changing revelations into something more concrete and physical. Her imagination projects her thoughts onto the wall, and it is this "metafictional moment" that reveals Marion's "reflection on [her] racial and cultural identity" (Jacobs 10).

Another manifestation of Marion's developing capacity for imagination is her interest in reading, which "becomes slower and slower as she devotes more time to it" (*PL* 202). Interestingly, it is while travelling abroad that Marion decides to read South African novels. She reads "narratives of the place where she is not, a place encountered through

absence", and I wish to argue that her increasing capacity for imagination compensates for this absence of place (see also Klopper 150). The "terrible emptiness" Marion began to feel after she discovered that her parents were play-whites has become familiar with time but, in London, it transforms into a "sensation of a hole, a curious, negative definition of the familiar emptiness […] in her chest" (*PL* 189). However, while reading Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist*, Marion imagines details of the story herself: "Reading over and over the description of the girl [of the story], she is able to elaborate on it, fill in details of dress and manners from the streets of Cape Town. The hole in her chest seems to fill up with words" (*PL* 190). An explicit expression of her broadening imaginative capacity, that also helps her realise and accept aspects of her own life, in the following thought: "Is this what reading is, or should be: absorbing words that take root, that mate with your own thoughts and multiply?" (*PL* 190). Marion finally words her thoughts, even if those are projected onto fictional characters.

Marion's second most significant stay in Europe is when she goes to Scotland, where her father hopes she will be "visiting the places where his ancestors came from" (*PL* 186). There, she meets with Vumile Mkhize, the South African businessman whose car she had unintentionally damaged in Cape Town. She opens up to him during dinner: "Vumi is warm, cosy; in one evening he extracts information from her about her childhood, love affairs, the business, details she would normally call intimate" (*PL* 200). It seems to be the first time that Marion is able to socialise so easily, and when they leave the restaurant, she feels as if she is "decanted into another world" (*PL* 200). Interestingly, Marion even finds that "[i]t is good to be so far away, to be with someone from home" (*PL* 200-201). Derek Attridge has focused on "the troubling of location" as a main characteristic of Wicomb's writing style (158). Particularly, he claims that Wicomb manages to generate two types of responses from her characters when they interact with their environment: "familiarity" and "strangeness" simultaneously (158). This is exactly how Marion reacts when she emphasises the fact of being "so far away […] with someone from home" (*PL* 200-201). Another significant thought of hers is the following one:

> Garnethill, Glasgow. How has she landed on the very crest of this jewel-named hill with its mixture of old and new? With no desire for crossing boundaries, or none that she knows of, she is a traveller who has stumbled into another country. (*PL* 201)

It seems that Marion has matured, she has changed into a more affable and approachable person, and her senses of self-confidence and open-mindedness seem to have broadened too.

As opposed to her initial provincial narrow-mindedness and her aversion to travel, she now enjoys being away from Cape Town. She realises what she has accomplished, and she does comprehend that there is a huge difference, which she mystically describes as being in "another world" (*PL* 200). Moreover, it appears that she does not overthink nor fear the act and process of travelling anymore, as she finds herself in yet another new place without even having consciously desired to cross boundaries. This implies that she has eventually understood and internalised Outa Blinkoog's words of wisdom when he told her that:

> nothing can stop him; that he has learned long ago, […] that a person must do as he pleases, go where and when he likes. It is God's veld and God doesn't say when, where or what, and that means you do what must be done. (*PL* 89-90)

It is now during the final step of her journey that she finally engages with the guidance she received during the very first step of her journey. She has followed the track back to the land of her ancestors, she is an element of the "new", "mixing" with the "old" (*PL* 201); she has taken a step back from South Africa, her home and the home of the disruptive truth, physically and mentally, and she has now become "a traveller" at last (*PL* 201).

It is during this journey through Europe, when Marion is out of the comfort zone of Cape Town, and when she "experiences the world in reverse [and] feels the topsy-turviness of being in the wrong hemisphere" (*PL* 188), that she finally fully mourns the discovery and that she gives way to acceptance, open-mindedness and imagination: "The world imprints itself on her afresh; her days are rinsed in rain" (*PL* 191). Gurnah has pointed to the "link between travel and a capacity for imagination" that has finally been recovered and that allows Marion to cope with the truth and with her hitherto repressed memories (274). As Marion learns to handle the intrusions of the past and to make sense of them, she embodies Wicomb's concern with keeping memory alive, which, in this novel, helps Marion in her identity reconstruction (see Gurnah 270). Gurnah states that it is precisely "while [Marion] is moving in a landscape where she leaves no mark that she learns to travel in the mind", thereby also learning to cope with the truth through the medium of an imagination that transforms the spooky, scary, life-changing revelations into something more real and more easily acceptable. Thus, during her own "journey into the self", thanks to "[her] process of self-liberation and self-knowledge", Marion has been "forced […] to shift to a more worldly vision of [her] worlds" (Gurnah 275).

5.5. Journey(s) into the Past

Marion's journey of self-(re)discovery is also defined by the "multidirectional trajectories of her own life into past and present" (Jacobs 13). According to Ommundsen, "Marion undertakes a journey that involves reconceiving people, spaces and places in order to locate herself in relation to the past and recreate her own place" (92). Indeed, she must explore the past in order to try to make sense of her present and future identities, and it is by travelling back in time, indeed by digging, and by finding her way through memories, that Marion will be able to spotlight truth-revealing events of her childhood and their meanings.

Gurnah points to the importance of "memory and the necessity to keep it alive" in Wicomb's writings (270). In *Playing in the Light*, this aliveness is reflected, inter alia, in the "'attacks' of unacknowledged memories" Marion experiences (Gurnah 272). Marion does not only consciously try to remember elements of the past, but she is also subject to the uncontrolled re-emergence of "suppressed memories" (Gurnah 272). An example of such an incursion is the story of Annie Boshoff, Marion's childhood friend. Annie's family, after having been involved in a scandal because her father was discovered to be a play-white, represented a threat to Helen's plan of passing as white. Therefore, Marion was not allowed to see her friend again. Marion, after being given their joint scrapbook by Annie as a goodbye gift, threw it away into the dustbin (*PL* 195). According to Gurnah, this story "returns to [Marion] as an epiphany" (272). Indeed, Marion tries to remember what happened to Annie on several occasions, but she fails. Chapter 16 starts with these lines: "What happened to Annie Boshoff? Marion has no idea; she can't remember, hasn't really thought about Annie since – well, since she was a child" (*PL* 162); and the following chapter begins likewise: "What happened to Annie Boshoff? Marion doesn't know. She hasn't even thought about Annie for years" (*PL* 175). It is only when Marion is travelling overseas that she finally remembers the story. It is when she is in her attic room in London, lost in the "forest of hieroglyphs" that mirror her thoughts, that "the thought comes boldly, with the old-fashioned sound of a typewriter, a headline being printed, letter by clacking letter: The *Betrayal* of Annie Boshoff" (*PL* 193, my emphasis). Marion then recalls everything that happened in those days and interprets her throwing the scrapbook away as an act of betrayal towards the friend whom she considered as "more than [a] [sister]" (*PL* 194-195). Marion thus seems to slowly acknowledge her role as implicated subject in this story about friendship that was put to an end because of "racial" motives. Marion was not responsible for what happened to Annie, yet the throwing away of their joint project can be considered as a symbol for the

unconscious nurturing of Annie's persecution and exclusion. It is only during her stay away from home that Marion reluctantly realises this.

Suppressed memories also pervade Marion's life at night, triggering panic attacks and turning dreams into nightmares. Her nightmares are imbued with uncanny feelings. In one of her nightmares, Marion tries to access the loft of a house whose "woodwork is painted black" by climbing up a ladder, but her mother "plead[s] with her to come down" (*PL* 31). She nevertheless succeeds in reaching the loft, as "there is no other course to follow":

> An old woman sitting on a low stool is illuminated; the light falls on a white enamel basin on her lap. Her face, sunburnt and cracked like tree bark, is framed by the starched brim of a white bonnet. She is surrounded by a sea of peaches, their shrivelled halves drying on sheets of brown paper. (*PL* 31)

Marion feels distressed and does not know how to respond to this dream, she does not know what it means, nor can she make sense of the odd familiarity attached to it. It is the old woman from this dream who "triggers the memory of […] Tokkie" (*PL* 31). In her dream, Helen embodies the lies, and the old woman in the loft represents the hitherto misunderstood truth. Marion gets a glimpse of the truth in her dream; she knows, even unconsciously, that something is off in her life. In fact, the dream withholds fractions of reality, suppressed memories of some of Marion's childhood moments spent with her maternal grandmother Tokkie who is disguised as a servant, and, as shown in the following quote, moments with her father and paternal grandfather on the family farm in the Karoo:

> John took [Marion] up the ladder to the loft, where he turned the drying apricots […]. [T]he dangerous trip up the ladder was no longer so exciting. Who cared about a loft with a black door high on the side of the house, when tomorrow she and Pappa [her grandfather] would fly through the land on horseback, on a real horse? (*PL* 112)

Thanks to these descriptions, one can notice that the house of her nightmares is probably inspired from the real family house in the Karoo, both houses having their woodwork painted black.

However, some meaningful elements of Marion's childhood surface back in her everyday life also without Marion even paying attention to it. When she goes to the Italian restaurant with her boyfriend Geoff, she refuses the parmesan, of which "she can't bear the sight" (*PL* 41). The sight of parmesan reminds Marion of:

> [A memory] that won't be shrugged off: she'd heard her mother cry out, so she'd rushed into their stuffy bedroom. John was doing something to Helen's feet – doing the weird things that grown-ups do behind closed doors. Beside the enamel basin of water in which her mother's feet were soaking was a heap of crumbly, greyish yellow. She rushed out in disgust. (*PL* 42)

As Gurnah points out, Marion did not, back then as a child, understand the meaning of this scene (see 272). However, she did understand that there was a secretive dimension to this act of foot care, as she knew it was something, at least in their household, that was supposed to happen "behind closed doors" (*PL* 42). Hence, I agree with Gurnah's suggestion that Marion might have "rushed out in disgust" (*PL* 42) because of a common experience of "the secret shameful life she share[d] with her parents, without quite understanding what there was to be ashamed of" (272). However, when Marion recalls this memory, she still has not grasped the truth yet; she still has not discovered that her parents were play-whites and that the foot care was in fact an act of 'disguise care', so that Helen's coloured origins would not be given away by the physical aspect of her feet. Therefore, one could also wonder why Marion still has such an aversion to parmesan, if she does not know the significance lying behind that memory. Gurnah argues that it might be linked to "an unacknowledged grasp of the real circumstances of her life that she has understood and suppressed into memory" (272). As is the case with her nightmares, Marion seems to be oblivious to the signs pointing to the truth. Yet, those repressed signs play an important role in her life as they are present in her daily life and even influence some of her choices.

When one considers all those mental returns to the past, which sometimes even feel as the past coming to haunt the present, Marion also seems to be on an unconscious and instinctive journey towards the truth. In this sense, her obliviousness can be interpreted as a state of liminality. She clearly senses that some things are wrong: she does reflect several times upon her inability to remember what happened to Annie Boshoff, she does feel that there are hidden meanings behind her nightmares that she still has to decipher, and she still remembers the unpleasant feelings associated with the parmesan. However, she has not succeeded in *understanding* the further significance of all those indications. She is thus in a state of in-betweenness, in which she represses the realisation that those clues exist, and the penetration of their respective meanings leading to the truth and some even to the realisation of her status as implicated subject.

Marion's journey into the past, however, is also depicted by more rational and conscious types of investigation. First, she tries to find answers about her past by searching through her mother's possessions. She finds her mother's "Black Magic box" that contains "the meagre remains of [her] possessions", and she goes through its contents, but "[n]one of these things […] yields any meaning, any insight into the past or into the mind of the woman of whom she knows so little" (*PL* 116). Among several photographs, "Helen's green identity card marked WHITE", and other seemingly insignificant objects, Marion is puzzled to find a Sunday-school card: "She shouldn't expect it to make sense, but believing that everything about Helen is imbued with hidden meanings, she takes it to her father" to question him about it (*PL* 116-117).

John, however, is reluctant to "summon [the] past that they had so long ago suppressed" (*PL* 117). He does not provide Marion with enough detailed answers about the Sunday-school card, nor can he justify the lies with a more elaborate answer than this: "We just did what we thought best for you"; and Marion subsequently feels filled with rage against him (*PL* 118). She reminds herself, "*He is your father*", but those words do "not mean what they meant before" (*PL* 119, emphasis in original). As Jacobs has pointed out, in the context of the deconstruction of lies and the reconstruction of truth, Marion will also have to re-evaluate "her relationship with her elderly father" (12).

Marion decides to go to the National Library in the hope of finding more information about the Sunday-school card, but the "card leads nowhere. There are no leads" (*PL* 119). This phrasing shows the true investigation-like nature of Marion's search. Marion decides to move on to another research topic: that of play-whites. However, there are no entries for "play-whites" in the index cards of the library. Marion and the librarian, a kind woman dressed in navy blue, assume that "[p]lay-white […] must be a condition of whiteness; but whiteness itself, according to the library's classification system, is not a category for investigation" (*PL* 120). Both women must exercise strategic thinking. They look for the entry about "coloureds", which yields hundreds of results, among which none "address[es] the condition of play-whites" (*PL* 120). Finally, after having analysed "the laws and confusing racial definitions" (*PL* 120), they conclude that those represent "decades worth of folly" (*PL* 121). This search conducted in the library represents a more rational way of digging into the past, and Marion has to be critical about what she reads. However, during this careful investigation, she cannot help but to feel touched by the librarian:

> The kind woman, who has curly grey hair, plump cheeks and sensible shoes, is nothing short of motherly, and Marion has to admonish herself for having become such a sissy, for wanting to bury her head in the strange woman's bosom and sob over that motherliness. (*PL* 120)

Because of her ever-distant relationship with Helen until her death, her feelings of alienation from her mother have only became aggravated by the discovery of her lies. Marion has to "come to terms with the figure of her mother and the memory of the grandmother who had been disowned", and Marion finds herself craving for motherly love in the process (Jacobs 12). The yearning for motherliness is a condition that will characterise Marion's emotional state throughout the story.

Later, Marion also decides to go on a "*quest* to find her father's sister Elsie" (*PL* 163). The choice of the word "quest" is meaningful. A "quest" can be defined either as "an investigation" or as "an act or instance of seeking", possibly meaning a "pursuit or search", or "a chivalrous enterprise in medieval romance usually involving an adventurous journey"[4]. Marion's life has taken a distressing turn since she learnt about the disruptive truth, leading her to travel on routes she would probably never have embarked upon otherwise, meeting people like Outa Blinkoog and Mrs Murray, whom she would probably never have met otherwise, and becoming interested in her employee's family and household, which probably would not have happened had her friendship with Brenda not started because of Marion's need to confide in someone about her feelings. Therefore, we can retain the words "adventurous journey" from the above definition of "quest" to characterise Marion's journey(s).

Marion succeeds in finding Elsie. Thanks to her, she learns how the members of her family who did not pass as white lived, and died, throughout the years of apartheid. Elsie and her family were expropriated when the area they lived in was declared "a white area" (*PL* 163-164), and her husband protested against the apartheid policies by becoming "a prominent Unity Movement rebel" (*PL* 170). In addition to that, they endured the pain of "[John] turning himself into a Boer… the shooting of the Soweto children in '76, and then [Elsie's son] William shot dead by Boers" (*PL* 166). Elsie adds that "[Marion's parents] were so convinced of the importance of skin, so pleased with their paleness, that they just couldn't understand *the real world*" (*PL* 171, my emphasis). Marion realises how terrible the late seventies were, when "one just didn't know whether [they]'d see [their] children

[4] *Merriam Webster Online* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/quest

alive the next day" (*PL* 171). Having grown up and having been brought up as a white person, she had never really felt implicated in what happened outside the fortress of their whiteness, i.e., in the real world, where violence, fear, and injustice, were the defining characteristics of the non-white people's lives. Marion also understands why John ceased to have any contact with this side of his family: "Those were bad times, […] it may not have been fair to John, but then this was a place of black and white, not a place of fairness, *no room for concessions*" (*PL* 172, my emphasis). This emphasises the betrayal perpetrated by Marion's parents, as they chose to become part of the "white oppressors' pole" in this binary survival classification of the time. Moreover, it also echoes the complex position of the implicated subject, who was neither a victim nor an oppressor, but who nevertheless bears responsibility. As Elsie explains, there was "no room" for in-betweenness at the time. Hence, the implication of individuals should be acknowledged nowadays; it should not be forgotten only because there was "no room" for such discussions during those times. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings therefore participate in encouraging Marion to "ventur[e] into a world she has never known, never wished to explore" to realise her own implication in the history of apartheid (*PL* 74).

When Marion looks at the portrait of her paternal grandparents, she admits that "they are and are not Marion's grandparents; they are strangers who hint at a connection with her father […] she has no claim to these people" (*PL* 174). Marion feels alienated from these family members; her parents' crossing marked a cut-off with John's family, not only because "[John and Helen were] just being law abiding" (*PL* 168), since white people had to sign a form stating that they would "relinquish all contact […] with coloureds" (*PL* 157), but also because she does not feel legitimate to tie herself and her life of privileges to her coloured family members' lives characterised by persecution and exclusion.

Marion tries to further grasp the history of South Africa, which she had only some knowledge of, gained through the lens of a supposedly white person, through literature. More specifically, she reads Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist* and J. M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country*. It is the bookseller who recommended to Marion that she should read "a couple of novels from each decade, saying that that would give [Marion] an overview, an idea of the country's history" (*PL* 190). Marion "decides to carry on reading, to get to know [the] dark decades when the Campbells were playing in the light" (*PL* 191). As Dirk Klopper states it, *Playing in the Light* "specifically links exploration by travel and exploration by reading, discovery of otherness and discovery of self" (150). Marion does not seem

interested in the history of her own country just for the sake of it. Rather, literature seems to be a key tool in Marion's investigation of the Campbells history, and hence of her own.

5.6. Cultural Journey

Marion's journey of self-(re)discovery also takes on another dimension: she will have to 'find herself' among the various cultural identities apparently available. Marion knows that "she is […] not the person she thought she was" and that the meaning attached to "being white, black or coloured" has changed since the abrogation of apartheid: "Things are no longer the same […]. These categories may have slimmed down, may no longer be tagged with identity cards, but once they were pot-bellied with meaning" (*PL* 106). Marion tries to understand what all this entails for her, and she thinks that it may be "a question of time, the arrival of a moment when you cross a boundary and say: Once I was white, now I am coloured" (*PL* 106). According to her, that implies that "[she] will have to cross over" (*PL* 107) herself, from "thinking of herself as white to conceptualising herself instead as coloured" (Jacobs 11). However, as those identity categories do not bear the same significance as they did during apartheid, as "those places are no longer the same, have lost their meaning, there can be no question of returning to a place where [her] parents once were" (*PL* 107). The only metaphorical journey Marion can think of, is therefore that of a "crossing to and fro, to different places" (*PL* 107). Indeed, Ommundsen has developed this idea, stating that "Marion's is a journey of redefinition - out of the dark night of her soul - whose geographical expression recalls the movement of a shuttle, going back and forth between differentiating classifications and differing eras" (89). Negotiating her newly discovered identity, trying to make sense of it, will be tantamount to a number of "*unremitting* crossings" (*PL* 107, my emphasis). This, according to Jacobs, is Wicomb's way of defining Marion's self-exploration, which is undertaken in "chaotic terms" (11). He defines this process as an "ongoing process of migration, but not a linear one, and one that is, furthermore, irreversible" (11). Marion's journey of "cultural repositioning […] is an ongoing process, and one which is necessarily inconclusive" (Jacobs 13). Indeed, as Stuart Hall has claimed, "[c]ultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*" (237). Amidst the never-ending crossings, Marion stays *in-between* the different cultural or "racial" poles, in a state of constant *positioning*. However, there might still be hope for inner peace for Marion if she succeeds in finding a state of equilibrium that may reflect her acceptance of a hybrid identity.

As we have seen, the concepts of journeying and travelling clearly participate in creating "the narrative of a 'new' individual which eventually concretizes itself" (Ommundsen 88). In other words, Marion has embarked upon many different types of journeys, spatial and temporal, conscious and unconscious, each of which has contributed to shaping her into a new person whose main characteristic is of having found themselves. Her journeys, physical and mental, have been imbued with expressions of the importance of the body, of light, of imagination and of Marion's relation to motherliness. Furthermore, the concept of the journey itself implies that, during a major part of the story, Marion finds herself in a state of in-betweenness, either in between destinations, or on her way towards the ideal of self-discovery.

Marion, in the end, reassesses the view from her apartment at Bloubergstrand. The story started with the protagonist praising the inviolability of her apartment, as well as "the classic view of Table Mountain on the left and Robben Island on the right" (*PL* 2), and its ends with her, on her balcony, again

> admir[ing] the classic view of Table Mountain. That is one good thing about going away, Marion says: seeing afresh how lovely the sea and mountain are. And the clear, unambiguous light. But she will be moving to the city soon; Blouberg is too far away and she no longer enjoys the isolation. (*PL* 215)

One can indeed underscore Marion's self-development: throughout her journey(s), she seems to have matured, as her new self has let go of her former obsession of isolation. However, one could wonder why Robben Island has suddenly disappeared from the classic view. Robben Island, "the Alcatraz of South Africa" (Benson), a symbol of apartheid, has disappeared from Marion's visual assessment, but Table Mountain, which represents "the starting point of white colonisation in the seventeenth century, marking the erasure of indigenous cultures", is still acknowledged, and even considered as "lovely" (Ommundsen 86). Perhaps this is a sign that Marion's travelling has indeed made her seen things afresh, but the process seems to be incomplete; she might not have gone back in time far enough to realise that her history, a coloured one, might date back earlier than the years of apartheid.

6. Identity and Interactions with Space

This chapter addresses the way Marion interacts with her environment and how her self-definition is linked to her surroundings, whether in the past, in the present, or in her dreams. Equally interesting is the way Wicomb infuses the spatial setting with a sense of trauma and the consequent quest of the self, or conversely, how trauma is reflected in one's relation to space and place. Indeed, spatial configurations are considered to be "transformative keys to the dynamics of identity" in *Playing in the Light* (De Michelis 70). In addition to the "active" configuration of space, "spatial *sensibility*" will also be shown to be a significant feature in the novel (Robolin 350, my emphasis).

6.1. Environment and Intergenerational Trauma

Trauma is a major theme in *Playing in the Light*, and one that is tightly linked to Marion's struggle to make sense of who she really is after having learnt that her parents were play-whites. She has experienced trauma during her childhood, even without realising it. As a child, her life was carefully *configured* by her parents in order to guarantee the success of their passing. At first, Helen thought that having a child would threaten her newly built white identity, but she was determined to "fight back" any hypothetical traces of coloured origins in her future child (*PL* 125). She soon realised that she "would see her *project* completed in the child" (*PL* 125, my emphasis). She wanted her child to "grow up in ignorance [and be] a perfectly ordinary child who would take her whiteness, her privileges, for granted" (*PL* 125). However, in order to achieve this, the *project* had to be managed perfectly. Consequently, Marion grew up as if in a theatre; as a puppet whose surroundings were artificial, full of lies, deceptive, while her mother was the scriptwriter. Some time before discovering the truth, but at a moment when she was already suspecting the existence of a terrible lie, Marion seems to get lost in her thoughts:

> [T]he world of grown-ups [is] an alien world that necessarily clashe[s] with that of a child's. Her parents may have hated each other, but they had connived, conspired against her in the whispering that stopped when she entered a room. Addicted to secrecy, hermetic, so that even the ordinary acquired an air of conspiracy. (*PL* 60)

Marion, at first, can only think of the inevitable and natural discrepancy between a child's life and an adult's life to explain the feelings of alienation and distance she felt back then, but these thoughts are in fact a manifestation of trauma, and more specifically, of the

intergenerational trauma Marion's parents have unconsciously transferred to their child. Sheena Goddard and Kevin Goddard have written about Wicomb's representation of intergenerational trauma in *Playing in the Light*, and they have argued that the trauma at stake is inseparable from the in-between space of the "'shadow' of racial classification in which the 'coloured' must live" (72). They also claim that one of the "layers" of trauma in the novel revolves around the "false 'freedom'" acquired through passing (72). The most relevant "layer" regarding our analysis refers to the emotional impact this decision, taken by the older generation, has on the younger generation: "The 'lie' lived by the older generation disables the succeeding generation from dealing with the trauma because its origin is in the past, unreachable in a way that is itself traumatic" (Goddard and Goddard 72). Marion indeed finds herself in a state of limbo most of the time, sensing conspiracy and secrecy without comprehending their origins. Goddard and Goddard rely on research by several trauma specialists to assert that "the effects of trauma are as much influenced by *how* the trauma is framed as by the trauma itself" (72, my emphasis). This is particularly relevant in Marion's case, and this chapter aims to explore the nature of this *how*, by analysing the staging of the theatrical play in which Marion unknowingly played a role as a child and its effects on the way she relates to space in her adult life.

Cathy Caruth has stated that it is precisely the trauma's "lack of integration into consciousness" that haunts the individual the most (152). In the same vein, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Gurnah's assumptions are that Marion could be affected by "an unacknowledged grasp of the real circumstances of her life that she has understood and suppressed into memory[, or by the] consequence[s] of the secret shameful life she share[d] with her parents, without quite understanding what there was to be ashamed of" (272). This all speaks to Marion's unacknowledged, and later misunderstood, legacy of intergenerational trauma. This affect, in addition to being the personal and private consequence of passing, is also a shared trauma of apartheid oppression in general. Even if Marion never felt as a victim in these times of oppression because she was brought up as "white", she nevertheless grew up in a society that was deeply marked by segregation, whose consequences she was not immune to (an example of this is her friend Annie whom she had to stop seeing because her parents were involved in a scandal about race). As Lidia De Michelis has argued, traumatic consequences of apartheid include "the enduring legacies of apartheid's racial and spatial engineering" (69). Indeed, "apartheid's concerted project of social engineering through spatial engineering" is still very much perceptible even nowadays (Robolin 351).

These transmitted traumas largely infuse Marion's life: they are reflected in her character, in her social interactions, but also very much in the way she unwillingly relates to, designs, and arranges the spaces around her. Indeed, much of her parents' crossing lifestyle legacy has become an organizing principle in Marion's relation to space. This also echoes Gaston Bachelard's claim that "over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us", and is reflected by "a group of organic habits" (14). The latter viewpoint, however, is devoid of the "recognition of space's social and historical dimensions", and thereby cannot account for a complete analysis of the "Wicombian space" at stake here (Robolin 353). In order to present a correct analysis of Marion's self-discovery and self-identification in relation to space, the historical background of racial dynamics in South Africa must be taken into account too, as the "deep reaches of the political, complexly and often ambiguously experienced in everyday life", cannot be overlooked (Robolin 353). Marion's interactions with space are hence motivated by those interlinked and interdependent phenomena: the legacies of personal and collective trauma which have shaped the spatial lifestyle of her childhood, and the spatial habits one almost unconsciously inherits and reproduces from one's childhood.

6.2. An Analysis of Marion's Environment

Marion's apartment is in many ways similar to her childhood house. Bachelard's claim that "over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us" and that it manifests itself through "a group of organic habits" (14), is very relevant to an analysis of Marion's apartment. In her relation to space, she indeed reproduces habits of isolation, darkness, and artificiality. Marion grew up in a silent house characterised by her parents' bickering, closed doors and sight-hindered windows. Consequently, as an adult, Marion seems to suffer from "CHAOS", an acronym for the "Can't Have Anyone Over Syndrome" (*PL* 71). Ironically, however, she does not acknowledge this, and she falsely assumes that she knows herself: "There seemed no advantage in overcoming a so-called syndrome when in fact she simply preferred not to have other people in her house. She supposed that this amounted to an understanding of herself" (*PL* 72). This "syndrome", that is reflected by her social maladjustment, also seems to be linked to the way she describes herself as a "fairy princess […] in gauzed limbo" in her four-poster bed (*PL* 2). These words echo several important aspects of her relation to the place she lives in: she inhabits a place that can be described as unhomely, she inhabits a place that is characterised by artificiality,

and she inhabits a place that can be compared to a fortress. All three aspects participate in a better understanding of who she is as an individual.

Unhomely Spaces

In her four-poster bed, Marion feels like "an egte fairy princess, who [c]ould lie for a hundred chaste years in gauzed limbo, waiting for the world to change into a better, a more hospitable place" (*PL* 2). This description evokes feelings of unhomeliness, even though her bed should be offering reassurance as it almost looks like "a house in itself", in addition to the house (or apartment) she already lives in (*PL* 2). De Michelis has argued that this state of limbo mirrors Marion's "state of denial concerning her origins and misidentification with whiteness" on the one hand, and that it also reflects her "inability to adjust to the new South Africa" on the other hand (73). Hence, Marion's struggle to come to terms with both her identity as an individual, as she is simultaneously white and coloured and at the same time neither of the two, as well as with her identity as an inhabitant of the new South Africa, permeates the way she feels inside her own apartment, as well as the way she organises her domestic space. Homi Bhabha has attributed to the unhomely house a "deeper historical displacement", which, in our case finds its roots in Marion's parents' experience (13). According to Bhabha, this displacement is "the condition of being 'coloured' in South Africa", which is the exact condition Helen and John tried to escape from and protect their daughter from (13). Quoting Nadine Gordimer, he argues that this condition is impossible to define, and hence must be observed like a "taboo" (13). Minesh Dass has pointed to two possible meanings of the term "taboo" in Bhabha's argument, which is evocative of both the sacred and the shameful (141). One could wonder, then, in what sense the word is used in Bhabha's affirmation: "Is the 'unhomely' coloured the hybrid, positive and true character of cultural exchange (what Bhabha would surely view as sacred to his postcolonial project), or its silent, shameful effect?" (Dass 141). It is the latter suggestion that Wicomb has strongly criticised in previous essays, because of its reminiscence and reinvocation of the "violence of colonial discourse" (Dass 141).

Bhabha continues with his explanations about the unhomely house: "This halfway house of racial and cultural origins bridges the 'in-between' diasporic origins of the coloured South African and turns it into the symbol for the disjunctive, displaced everyday life of the liberation struggle" (13). There are two elements that can be contested here in regard to *Playing in the Light.* First, Bhabha presupposes the existence of a link "between colouredness and revolutionary struggle" (Wicomb 1998:102). This cannot be asserted

regarding Helen and John, who, after all, denied their colouredness in order to pass as white. The link is also precarious when it is applied to Marion, who until now has been completely unaware of her coloured origins. Nevertheless, Marion's childhood house as well as her current apartment were/are both the inhabited spaces of "disjunctive [and] displaced everyday li[ves]", to which she now tries to give meaning (Bhabha 13). Secondly, Bhabha presupposes the existence of an in-between space that is presumably inhabited by the coloured South African. Wicomb criticises this viewpoint according to which "lived experience is displaced by an aesthetics of theory", as well as the characterisation of the coloured's identity as "taboo", as mentioned above:

> How, one is tempted to ask, do people who live in communities inhabit, spookily and precariously, a rim of inbetween reality? Symbolically, of course, and therefore, according to Gordimer, in silence, the shame of it all encoded in the word *taboo*. Surely relegation to such a space relies on an essentialist view which posits a 'pure' reality that is experienced in the space inhabited by the racially pure. (101-102, emphasis in original)

The problem with assuming that coloured people inhabit an *in-between* space is that it presupposes the existence of two "pure" poles that are inhabited, in this case, by the "racially pure", white and black people. It is in this respect that Bhabha's definition of the unhomely coloured and their unhomely house is problematic. In light of the latter observation as well as of the colonial violence imbued with notions of silence and shame, I agree with Dass' statement that Wicomb "(implicitly) further develops this polemic by linking it to the notion of travel and to the trope of home" (141). I would even argue that Wicomb precisely fills in, and therefore displaces, this "silence" and this "shame" by explicitly putting words on the space(s) inhabited by Marion and her parents. I would then say that Wicomb wishes to raise awareness to the fact that:

> The pursuit of whiteness is in competition with history. Building a new life means doing so from scratch, keeping a pristine house, without clutter, without objects that clamour to tell of a past, without the eloquence – no, the garrulousness – of history. (*PL* 152)

Wicomb implicitly denounces this through her writing, precisely by describing inhabited places such as her characters' houses in an *eloquent* and *telling* way. *Playing in the Light* is characterised by extremely rich descriptions of the characters' living places. The

"exceptionally detailed features of Marion's domestic setting" (Robolin 350) ultimately stand in stark contrast with the silence and shame that are linked to a pristine house.

Furthermore, Goddard and Goddard have identified the "return *home*" as one of Wicomb's options in order to come to terms with the trauma linked to the South African history of apartheid (82, my emphasis). They explain this "return home" as a sort of paradoxical "transcendence arising from an acceptance of real experience, without the need to escape reality" (82). "The site of recuperation" that can make Marion experience catharsis is, according to them, "really closer than one might think – not in Scotland or Wuppertal or any of the literary texts she encounters. It is in one's own history, and it lives down the road" (82-83). It is in keeping with this perspective that De Michelis argues that Marion precisely longs for a home when she comes back from Europe, as she "sets off to re-inhabit her own life and negotiate its interpersonal contours" (71). Henk Van Houtum and Ton Van Naerssen, whom De Michelis quotes in her argument, state the following:

> Life would […] be unbearable in the long run, Bauman warns, if there were not an imagined place where the *whole self*, the self beyond the street-wise surface, can come to rest, where there is room for morally open and complete relationships in which proximity is searched for, no distance is kept, where responsibility is needed and wanted, in short, a home. (135, emphasis in original)

Marion, upon her return to Cape Town, decides to "exchange her exclusive place on the seafront for a less pretentious flat which she might share with her ageing father" (De Michelis 71). Isolation and solitude will be traded for proximity and togetherness, and the luxury of her apartment will be surrendered in exchange for a place that will reflect her new self, the one "beyond the street-wise surface". Marion seems to wish for a new place that will counterbalance the "de-humanising spatiality of apartheid" that she had hitherto endured both inside and outside of houses (De Michelis 71). The combination of the two ideas cited above can be considered as a hint that Marion has, at least partly, achieved the state of "acceptance of real experience" mentioned earlier. One might wonder if Marion's future home could be the true "site of recuperation" that will allow for a more complete acceptance of who she is. This would include the realisation of her implication in the history of her own country too, and would be reflected, in a more intimate context, by the "responsibility […] needed and wanted" at home.

Feigning Homeliness through Artificiality and Control

However, before she acknowledges this longing for a home, Marion first tries to "feign" homeliness (De Michelis 73). She succeeds in creating an atmosphere of artificial homeliness in the two places she inhabits the most: her apartment and her office. This artificiality is a habit that she has reproduced from her childhood house. More precisely, she has unwillingly internalised the lifestyle and decoration habits of her own mother, as it was Helen who paid the most attention to all the details of the setting of their "new lives" as white people. In addition to the drawn curtains and the closed doors, Marion's mother also requested that "the fresh arrangement of artificial blooms [be] replaced on Friday evenings by the flower company" (*PL* 6). Helen made efforts to maintain artificiality through time and to make it look as real and authentic as possible, as is mirrored by the weekly replacement of the artificial flowers, as if they were real ones. However, one day, while working in "the specialist trousseau shop that she managed, a chic customer spoke of her future mother-in-law's vulgarity, her pride in the plastic bouquets, to which Helen nodded in a flush of embarrassment" (*PL* 6). Right after this, Helen decides that she will never have artificial flowers at home ever again. Helen's management of artificiality indeed largely depended on other people's (white people's) standards. Similarly, Marion's decisions regarding decoration largely depend on seemingly accepted standards of beauty such as the ones she reads about in magazines: "There is a tingle of recognition when she flicks through *Home and Garden* magazines and her interiors seem to spring from the glossy pages" (*PL* 2, emphasis in original). Her flat is "the fulfilment of an adolescent dream", and her four-poster bed is the epitome of the same fantasy:

> She remembers distinctly when she first saw such an astoundingly luxurious thing: subtly lit photographs of a country house in an English magazine, and a bed that was hardly an item of furniture. Rather a bower for an egte fairy princess. (*PL* 2)

Again, the choice of her bed rested mainly upon its luxurious look and its appearance in a magazine which is allegedly a trusted source of respectability and style. Interestingly, Marion seems to notice the artificiality of it all, as she recognises the lighting techniques that allow for an astounding rendition of the bed's beauty, but she buys it nevertheless, signalling to the attentive reader that she might actually genuinely like the bed merely because of its luxurious appearance. The explicit reason, however, that she gives for having bought it, is that she has "deserve[d] it, this marker of her success" (*PL* 2). Paradoxically, she never invites anyone over to her house, so that nobody will ever be able to see it. The other reason

for the purchase of this "extravagant" item of furniture seems to be linked to Marion's need of "emotional safety." Her thought that her bed is "[r]ather a bower for an egte fairy princess, who would lie for a hundred chaste years in gauzed limbo, waiting for the world to change into a better, a more hospitable place" (*PL* 2), is also typical of her need of emotional and spiritual reprieve, as also confirmed by De Michelis' previously mentioned suggestion that the four-poster bed is "an emblem of Marion's state of denial concerning her origins and misidentification with whiteness, but also signals her inability to adjust to the new South Africa" (73). Just as Marion seems caught up in her adolescent dream come true, she is also in a state of denial because of the childhood trauma she has repressed until now. She seems to be stuck in the mind of the child and adolescent she once was, and the reason she praises this bed is because it is "a house in itself, into which she can retreat from the larger one when she needs the cocoon of draped muslin after a hard day's work" (*PL* 2). This bed therefore represents an escape from the frightening adult, outside world, from which Marion's inner child sometimes needs relief, and it represents a cocoon, a refuge, that seems to provide her with feelings of homeliness.

However, Marion seems to "resist disorientation and bafflement by feigning homeliness" also through other strategies (De Michelis 73). Nothing was left to chance when she redecorated the kitchen of MCTravel: "Marion kn[ew] how to make a place look homely: she followed a recent style feature in *Cosmopolitan* to the letter, right down to the shallow earthenware bowl of pebbles on the coffee table" (*PL* 35). Again, one can recognise the curious combination of homeliness and the artificiality reflected by the magazine, as well as the irony of Marion's criticism of the "contemporary fuss about authenticity" (*PL* 40). Paradoxically, however, while Marion tries to make her office look homely, she also seems to want to do so "through wishful scenarios of emplacement and control" (De Michelis 73). In her office, which is described as "her little kingdom", "[a]ll that matters is that things are returned to their rightful places, for that surely is her prerogative: determining where things go" (*PL* 16). In addition to the denial Marion is subject to, the way she relates to homeliness and to the arrangement of space around her is also significant of something central to her personality. Stéphane Robolin has argued that this behaviour, caused by her "understanding of space" in the new South Africa, mirrors Marion's political and social viewpoints (355). Despite the policy she implemented at work, according to which "politics is not allowed in [her] office" (*PL* 37), Marion betrays her own political opinions when she comments about the "opportunistic layabouts of Cape Town" (*PL* 25) and when she points to the fact that "before the elections, when things were supposed to be so bad… well, the city wasn't a

haven for people standing around and harassing car owners" (*PL* 28). She even betrays the race-neutral viewpoint she wants to adopt at work through the recruitment of a coloured employee, Brenda, by saying: "You can't go anywhere nowadays without a flock of unsavoury people crowding around you, making demands, trying to make you feel guilty for being white and hardworking, earning your living" (*PL* 28). Robolin has highlighted her racial and political hypocrisy and has pointed to the fact that it "communicate[s] a racial politics of resentment and suspicion, underwritten by a whitewashed bourgeois ideology" (355). According to him, it is precisely this that causes Marion to adopt "a rigid sense of order and [take for granted] the entitled right of the proprietor class", such as can be recognised in the way she relates to both the space of her apartment and the space of her office (355).

Nevertheless, Marion's relation to these intimate spaces, which at first conveys her state of denial as well as the way she has "naturalized her surrounding social order and her place in it" (Robolin 355), seems to change over time. When she comes back home from Europe, she contemplates her apartment and finds it "dark, unwelcoming, unfamiliar; she ought to do something about the dreary bedroom. The bed, stripped of its muslin drapes, is bizarre; it will have to go. She can't imagine ever having wanted it" (*PL* 209). After her journey of self-discovery, Marion seems to have realised the correlation between her flat's artificiality and the sentiment of unfamiliarity that it provokes. Her opinion about her four-poster bed has also drastically changed. She had already realised that her childhood was rooted in a "world whose authenticity […] [had] always [been] in question" (*PL* 60); she now realises that the authenticity and homeliness of her own adult world were always in question too. Therefore, her wish to move to a new place could reflect this emerging wish for authenticity, which also mirrors her sense of having achieved a "renewed self" and a detachment from the repressions of her childhood. In the same vein, she finally takes notice of the darkness of her flat, which she now also dislikes. Ommundsen, in her explanation of the title of Wicomb's novel, has pointed to the possible reference to John Locke's concept of the "dark closet" (88). According to Locke, the human process of *understanding* is not unlike a dark closet that needs to become lighted (*An Essay* 212). In this sense, Ommundsen argues that "the title of the novel *Playing in the Light* conveys the notion of achievement, the accomplishment of the individual-building project - the narrative of a 'new' individual which eventually concretizes itself" (88). I agree with this interpretation of the title, and I would like to extend Ommundsen's explanation to Marion's dark flat as well. As the protagonist realises her distaste of the darkness of her apartment and her wish to move out,

the possibility for a new, *lighted* place, offers hope regarding her process of self-understanding and coming to terms with her own life story.

The House as a Fortress

In addition to the unhomeliness and the artificiality that characterise Marion's apartment and office, and which she inherited from her parents' lifestyle, a third aspect of her flat can be highlighted: it resembles a fortress. As Robolin has stated, Marion has created a "cocoon largely impenetrable to the sight and presence of others, a space of almost complete seclusion" (352). Again, this was an aspect of Marion's childhood home too, in which doors were closed and window curtains drawn, signalling complete isolation. As a child, Marion even preferred to go to school rather than to stay at home: "Blue Monday. That's what they called it at school, but Marion loved going back to the classroom after a weekend at home, where the silence was relieved only by bickering" (*PL* 25). However, she has partly reproduced this state of isolation and silence by adopting a lifestyle of "luxurious insulation" in adulthood, too (Robolin 352):

> Residents are more than happy to pay for smartly uniformed attendants who monitor all and sundry entering the grounds. Every car owner must stop at the barricades to fill in a form recording the names of driver and passengers, registration number and purpose of visit. Security – you have to pay for it these days […] Here, your property is inviolable. (*PL* 2)

Marion's attention to respect for property echoes not only the habits of secretiveness of her childhood, but also her own implication in the social and economic dynamics of the new South Africa: Robolin has highlighted that Marion's "assurance of armored security and moneyed exclusivity" points to a "system of race and class privilege" (353). Citizens from a poorer social background, and, as Robolin says, "racially othered" citizens, cannot afford to live in such luxurious and safe places (353). Brenda, who lives in the less sanitized township of Bonteheuwel, and who must share her bedroom with her mother, is an example of this disparity. Marion, on the other hand, has the power to choose where she wants to live. Drawing on Lindsey Bremner's work on emerging post-apartheid landscapes in relation to crime[5], Robolin argues that Marion unwillingly participates in "post-apartheid spatial and social economies […] which are primarily characterized by segregation, privatization, militarization, and fortification" (353). The dynamics that allow for "economic exclusivity"

[5] Bremner, "Crime and the Emerging Landscape of Post-Apartheid Johannesburg."

indirectly and sinuously reproduce "former overtly raced-based inequalities" by fuelling disparities between social and "racial" groups within the South African population (Robolin 354). Hence, Marion's position as an implicated subject is confirmed here, as she participates in "sociopolitical dynamics that create suffering and inequality in the present" (Rothberg 11). Her lifestyle indeed reflects her unintended implication in these processes. According to Robolin, "[her] participation in this spatial and political economy is inadvertent and perfunctory. Part of the white, professional middle class, she demonstrates little self-reflexivity or critical consciousness of the geographical and racial logics of Cape Town" (354-355). This is reminiscent of the concepts of parochial sensibility and provincial narrow-mindedness mentioned previously (see Gurnah 272). Though the latter behaviour was justified by fear and internalised habits of secretiveness, Marion's obliviousness to the geographical and racial logics regarding her unconscious implication in the power balance of the new South Africa is rather linked to "a lack of historical knowledge about how apartheid practices constituted and codified racialized space" (Robolin 355). Indeed, Robolin argues that this ignorance hinders Marion's process of "negotiat[ing] spatial and social relations" (355), and I would say that she struggles to negotiate her own identity as a result of this too. However, throughout her journey(s), and as she gains more and more knowledge about her past and her family, she appears to acquire more "spatial literacy", leading her to a seemingly improved understanding of her surroundings and hence to "the reluctant realisation of her own unreflective complicity in perpetuating the tyranny of whiteness" (De Michelis 70). Even though a question mark persists, as the reader does not know where she will move to, Marion's decision to move out of her luxurious, guarded, and isolated apartment, might provide a sign of hope regarding her comprehension of her own identity and implication.

Another feature that arises from the image of the house as a fortress is its isolation from the outside world and the strong distinction between private and public that usually ensues from it. However, interestingly, this distinction is not completely relevant regarding Marion and her parents' lives. They did praise the concept of privacy, especially by focussing on the thresholds between private and public, as will be analysed later, but Marion's parents' "vigilant safeguard [did] not stop at the front door" (Robolin 358):

> There was nothing playful about their condition […]. Not even in the privacy of their home, between their own four walls, could they let up, act the fool, laugh at those who'd been duped, or mimic their public selves […]. With a child to raise, a public-

> private distinction was a luxury they could not contemplate; the public selves required all their energies. Playing – as others would call it – in the light left no space, no time for interiority, for reflecting on what they had done. (*PL* 123)

There was no distinction between the private and the public anymore, and on a deeper level, as Andrew van der Vlies phrased it, "the private [even came] to be governed by the necessity of a publicly informed identity" (591). In other words, the obliteration of their private "selves" made it impossible for them to reflect on their decision of crossing over. However, this needs to be qualified, as we know that John nevertheless tried to "protest", to "stan[d] his ground", by "refus[ing] to grow the gladioli" that Helen wanted him to plant in their garden in order to fit the supposed gardening standards of their white neighbourhood (*PL* 169). Besides discrete acts of protest like this one, John nevertheless had to inhibit his "old self" (*PL* 123) in order to be fully committed to his new white identity. Helen and John, by getting themselves voluntarily trapped in a public, "glaring spotlight of whiteness" (*PL* 123), exercised "repetitious repression" of their private selves (van der Vlies 591). The necessary "racial attentiveness" that ensued from this repression led them to develop an "agonizingly extreme consciousness of space" (Robolin 358). As we have seen, Marion, as an adult, does not share this particular spatial sensibility. Instead, it seems to have translated into a puzzling attraction for in-between spaces. Already as a child, she would dream of living in one of those houses with "verandahed stoeps, edged with broekielace, [that] were wrapped around at least two sides of the houses, so that people could spend all day outside in the ambiguous space between private house and public street" (*PL* 9). Clearly, she will be fond of other in-between spaces later, as an adult, as well.

The In-Betweenness of the Balcony

The novel begins with the following sentence: "It is on the balcony, the space both inside and out where she spends much of her time at home, that it happens" (*PL* 1). It is significant that the story starts this way, because it explicitly refers to both the in-betweenness and the ambivalence of the balcony, which also mirror Marion's state of mind in her process of self-definition as it unfolds throughout the novel. As Robolin has stated, this ambiguous liminality "prefigures the precarious positionality that Marion will soon assume as she discovers her parents' play-white past" (350).

In addition to its inherent physical and spatial liminality, the balcony also represents an indirect way of being in contact with nature. From her balcony, Marion is able to enjoy

"a glorious outlook on the sea" without having to leave the protection offered by her inviolable property (*PL* 2). She seems attracted to nature, and especially to the sea, which she loves, just like her father who still calls her his "little mermaid" (*PL* 22). She can make the most of the view, the smell, and the sounds of the waves, without having to face the "outside world." As Robolin has argued, Marion's valuing of property protection and her fear of the outside world are linked to the "raced, classed, and gendered dimensions of post-apartheid life [that] signal undercurrents of a tense, unequal, and variously insecure terrain" (350). However, her reluctance to find herself in the outside world is also tightly linked to her "fear of exposure and [her] habit of secretiveness" that she has internalised already as a child (Gurnah 272). Therefore, the balcony seems to represent a shield from her hitherto unacknowledged and repressed trauma(s) and fears of the outside world.

However, it might also serve as protection from the inside space of her home, too. Indeed, Marion grew up in a "house of choked history" (*PL* 149). It is possible that that the balcony represents a way for her to escape the inside space of any house or apartment, which Marion might unconsciously associate with negative feelings, conspiracy, and secrecy, almost "as if her unconscious [had already] t[old] her more than she realise[d] about her origins" (Goddard and Goddard 78). Thus, the balcony may represent shelter from the claustrophobic "air of restraint" that was so characteristic of her childhood house and that she has never forgotten, and from the fatal collapse it threatened while "the very plaster were giving its all to prevent the house from exploding" (*PL* 47). In this sense, the in-betweenness of the balcony could represent a safe space for Marion. In the same vein, Goddard and Goddard use Freud's theory on the uncanny in order to explain Marion's longing for liminal spaces (see 78). Freud's concept of the uncanny, a term meaning "strange and eerie", derives from the notion of the unhomely, which is itself translated from the German word "unheimlich", the opposite of "heimlich", which itself means "home" (Freud 124). The word "heimlich", however, also carries the meaning of "geheim", that literally means "secret." Furthermore, the concept of the uncanny potentially refers to both a "physical experience and an emotional one" (Goddard and Goddard 78). Uncanny feelings can originate from the secrets that "homes, like histories", can carry and which "can develop into feelings of alienation" (Goddard and Goddard 78). Goddard and Goddard (78) argue that, in Marion's life, the uncanny originates primarily from her parents' house, the "house of choked history" (*PL* 149), where the child and her family "kept indoors, even in summer" (*PL* 9). To escape those uncanny feelings, Marion has a natural attraction to the outside, yet because of her aversion to the outside world for reasons of security and because she has been formatted

according to a lifestyle of secrecy, Marion now holds dear the in-between space of the balcony, a liminal space that was lacking in her childhood house.

Hauntings and Dreams

De Michelis has argued that the "uncanny images of [Marion's] unconscious […] inform her embodied experience of houses as haunted places of denial urging her nonetheless to question the past" (De Michelis 73). This seems to start on Marion's balcony, the place from which she sees Tokkie's face (which eerily resembles that of Patricia Williams) on the water for the first time. According to De Michelis, these hauntings are necessary for Marion to "reinstate her[self] within webs of responsibility and belonging", and hence to recover from her "traumatic disconnection from the 'authenthic' self and memories – or, figuratively, from national history as a result of national amnesia" (73). The "success" of this reinstatement can be considered as at least partial, as, towards the end of the story, Marion realises that, "[n]ow that she has a past, a family, no matter how distant, […] the terror of the Williams face stretched on the water is dissipating, dispersed into family history" (*PL* 177). Through her questioning of the past, Marion thus seems, albeit tentatively, to have reinstated her own position as an implicated subject in the national history of South Africa.

It is interesting to note that it is from the hitherto emotional safety of her balcony that Marion sees Tokkie's face in the water:

> From her balcony, she stares in horror at an enlarged face floating on the water, a disfigured face on the undulating waves, swollen with water. A smell of orange, the zest of freshly peeled orange skin, wafts up from the shore, mingling with the brine. It is not until she goes back indoors that recognition beats like a wave against the picture window: Tokkie, it is Tokkie's face on the water. (*PL* 55)

Not only does the memory of Tokkie come as a visual intrusion, animated by Marion's favourite natural element, water, but it also affects her olfactory senses. Marion is completely overwhelmed by this uncanny experience, of mentally seeing a familiar person's picture and even imagining their scent. The concept of the uncanny, which seems here to stand in correlation with the liminality of the balcony, is even further accentuated as "the recognition beats like a *wave* against the picture window" (*PL* 55, my emphasis). Again, the semantic field of water is used to depict the physical medium that conveys Patricia Williams'/Tokkie's face, and most importantly, the wave beats against the liminal object of the picture window.

Despite its inherent transparency, the picture widow, serving the function of a door as well, symbolises the access to Marion's unconscious.

Doors are also symbolically loaded in-between elements and they convey a metaphorical access to Marion's mind when they appear in haunting visions such as the one mentioned above. Other examples of these "mythical doors into the unconscious, her repressed underworld", however, are the doors and thresholds envisioned in Marion's dreams (Goddard and Goddard 79). In one of these, she approaches a "house [that] seems to pulsate with light" and that has a loft with a "black wooden door, against which a rickety wooden ladder leans" (*PL* 29). De Michelis has pointed to the "sharp contrast" between the enlightened house and the dark door and ladder, arguing that this picture represents "an overt translation of apartheid's rigid spatial structuring and the act of crossing over" (73). Racial passing, in spatial terms, thus seems to be conveyed by a physical contrast between the lightness of the house and the darkness of the door. Marion's fear is that she will be "exposed by [her] night dreams, that people will shake their heads or wink at each other when [her] back is turned", but she does not realise yet that the exposure in fact implies the revelation of her parents' secret, and hence of her own coloured origins (*PL* 29). Marion's first dream indeed contains other, explicit references to the truth that she has not discovered yet. In that house, she feels:

> The palpable absence of a woman who threatens to materialise […]. Marion keeps going out to the stoep to get away from the shape of the woman, but cannot tell whether it is the back or the front of the house, and so must return indoors. In the telling, it would seem that this is the key to the dream. (*PL* 30)

In this version of her "recurring dream" (*PL* 30), the absent woman foreshadows Marion's longing for Tokkie, her grandmother whom she remembers as their family servant. According to De Michelis, Tokkie's "ambivalent position as both a complicit family insider and a subaltern other, visiting at the back door" (73), is reflected in Marion's dream as she "cannot tell whether it is the back or the front of the house" (*PL* 30). Furthermore, I would argue that the "palpable absence of [the] woman" can also be interpreted as a felt absence of knowledge of the truth so far. Marion is unable to find the door to escape the house. She cannot find the threshold she should cross in order to get away from the woman, or the seemingly threatening truth. In this passage, the absence of a clear exit reflects Marion's feelings of being trapped and mirrors her sentiment of being "ensnared in the fabric [of her bed sheets] that wraps itself round and round her into a shroud from which she struggles to

escape" (*PL* 2). These feelings are also expressed in the way Marion reflects upon the "the long house of [her] dream that is *stuffed* inside the house where [she] live[s], that in turn is *stuffed* into the four-poster where [she] lie[s] dreaming, but no, that is the wrong way round" (*PL* 30, my emphasis). The first interpretation might refer to the truth that is contained and caught up in her own life, only needing to be discovered and "freed", as if the truth "suffered from claustrophobia". Dass has phrased this idea too by stating that "Marion's dream (which holds a kernel of the truth) is 'stuffed inside' her reality, yet it dis-places the real, making her home 'un-homely' […]. The real house is rendered un-homely, inaccessible, almost dream-like in nature" (140). The other "way round" would mean that Marion is herself trapped in something that is intangible and bigger than she; in lies which are still unknown, and which she unconsciously wants to be freed from. In that sense, it is Marion who suffers from the claustrophobia caused by a lifelong history of lies.

After Brenda suggested that, in Marion's dream, "the focus is clearly on doors" (*PL* 31), Marion decides to tell her employees another version of her dream:

> This time, all the doors and windows are shut […]. When she looks up, the loft door bangs, although there is no wind. She climbs up the ladder. Her mother is at the foot of the ladder, pleading with her to come down, giving the ladder a gentle shake to frighten her. But Marion carries on; she climbs the ladder because there is no other course to follow. When her head reaches the height of the loft door, she pushes it wide open so that a broad shaft of light falls across the floor. An old woman sitting on a low stool is illuminated […]. Her face, sunburnt and cracked like tree bark, is framed by the starched brim of a white bonnet. (*PL* 31)

In this dream, Marion does not try to escape the house. The loft door bangs, without any rational explanation, as if it was trying to attract her attention. This could represent a call for the discovery of the truth. Marion indeed feels like "there is no other course to follow" than to climb up the ladder; the truth is then bound to be discovered. In the loft, the "palpable absence" of her previous dream has materialised into an old woman, who, as Marion will later realise, is of course Tokkie. However, Marion's mother apparently tries to hold her daughter back from the truth. In the end, Marion does not go as far as crossing the threshold of the loft: she does not (yet) access the full state of discovery. Instead, on the ladder, she only sees the whole story through an aperture; she is, again, in a momentary state of liminality. She is in between the ground, where her mother embodies the lies, and the loft above her, representing the thus far unreached but tantalising truth.

It is also interesting to observe the symbolic meanings of the attic and the ladder in Marion's second dream. Bhabha has elaborated on Renée Green's "'architectural' site-specific work, *Sites of Genealogy*", that analyses the binary vision generally adopted when discussing "identities of difference […] - Black/White, Self/Other" (3). More specifically, Green reflects on this logic by metaphorically analysing the museum building itself, thereby giving value namely to the attic and the stairwell (Bhabha 3). Bhabha develops her viewpoint as follows:

> The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (4)

This interpretation further underlines the importance of the spatial setting and interactions in Marion's dream. The ground floor and the attic are considered as respectively representing white and black identities, and this seems to be confirmed by the dream, in which a black woman whose "face [is] sunburnt and cracked like a tree bark", and whose dark skin is set in contrast with her "white bonnet", is sitting in the attic (*PL* 31). Tellingly, Marion's mother, who is a play-white, is standing on the ground floor, desperate because of her daughter's attraction towards the attic. Marion, the victim caught in the web of lies that has made her the traumatised daughter of play whites, thus seems to embody the above cited "interaction, the connective tissue", between the two vertical spatial extremities of the house. She feels drawn to the black identity, "because there is no other course to follow", as those are her true family origins (*PL* 31). Nevertheless, she does not cross the threshold of the loft, merely momentarily staying on the ladder before coming back down again. Therefore, one should note that the permanence, the fixity and the stability of the staircase in Green's analysis, that should allow for "hither and thither" movements, "prevent[ing] identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities", are features that cannot be applied to the ladder in Marion's dream (Bhabha 4). The ladder, that Helen "gentl[y] shake[s] to frighten Marion", is less solid and secure than a stairwell, and Marion, not knowing the truth about her origins yet, returns to the ground floor and to her life as an unwillingly and unconsciously play-white descendant (*PL* 31). Significantly, this physical inability and instability is translated

into Marion's cultural ignorance, leading her to be oblivious to the deeper racial dynamics still ruling post-apartheid South Africa. What she does not know (yet), she cannot reflect upon. The ladder, instead of a sound stairwell, may also be representative of the fragile negotiating between "raced identities" that is called for. The structural soundness of the staircase, which could represent the supposedly social soundness championed and asserted by the utopian aspirations of the Rainbow Nation, is undermined by its replacement by a ladder. The ladder might have been Wicomb's attempt to bring to the fore the fragility of racial interactions even in the New South Africa, suggesting that racial equity and equality should never be taken for granted, as it can always be shaken or moved away.

On the other hand, the attic, too, is significant in itself. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard analyses the connection between space and imagination. He notably approaches the space of the house according to its verticality, which is determined by the "polarity of cellar and attic" (17). In dreams, the space of the attic is attached to rationality, whereas the cellar is a typical manifestation of irrationality (18). He justifies this by pointing to the objective usefulness of the attic, above which the slope of the roof provides mankind with shelter from any kind of weather (18). According to Bachelard, "[e]ven a dreamer dreams rationally; for him, a pointed roof averts rain clouds. Up near the roof all our thoughts are clear" (18). By contrast, the cellar "is first and foremost the dark entity of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces. When we dream there, we are in harmony with the irrationality of the depths" (18). In light of Bachelard's theory, it is interesting to note that, in her dream, Marion's attraction is directed towards rationality. More than being in between two polarities of identity, white and black, she is also, on the ladder, in between the lies embodied by her mother on the ground floor, and the truth, embodied by the dream-figure of Tokkie in the attic. Despite the almost spooky and surreal depiction of the old woman's appearance in the attic, her presence does represent rationality; it represents truth. Therefore, even though Marion's dreams are depicted as accompanying "panic attacks" (*PL* 31) and described in a way that alludes to claustrophobia and hauntings, her dreams unconsciously drive her towards the truth, and her interruption of her ascent up the ladder precisely mirrors the fact that "[her] thoughts are [*not*] clear" yet (Bachelard 18). This dream, in which Marion struggles to find her way between ground floor and attic, lies and truth, and the state of in-betweenness of her identity, is also reflected in the way she feels in her awakened life, as if her bed was the place where she could "lie for a hundred chaste years in gauzed limbo" (*PL* 2). Unconsciously, she seems here to acknowledge her lack of self-definition. Her dream

could thus be considered as a call towards the opening of doors and hence the exiting of liminality.

Doors

The significance of real, physical doors, on the other hand, can be traced back to Marion's childhood. Marion had always thought that "the world of grown-ups [was] an alien world that necessarily clashed with that of a child's" (*PL* 60), and she was aware of the "whispering that stopped when she entered a room" (*PL* 60). However, she now realises the significance of it all; that most of what her parents did, the secretive talking, the grooming of Helen's feet, everything happened "behind *closed doors that locked her out*" (*PL* 60, my emphasis). Marion now associates the closed doors as clues to the lack of authenticity of their lives back then (*PL* 60). She grew up in a household characterised by silence, and it is only now that she grasps that all the whispering hid a terrible truth. Effectively, this secrecy translated into the closing of doors, which "locked [Marion] out" (*PL* 60). It is, however, interesting to note that Marion was an insider to their lives as play-whites without even knowing it, even though she felt like an outsider most of the time in her parents' house. This duality, a propensity for being at once on the inside and on the outside of the doors of their house, is also reflected in Marion's way of trying to negotiate her shame. Indeed, she tells Geoff that "[her] parents were the play-whites; *they* crossed over. [She] was white" (*PL* 107, emphasis in original). Not having been "on the same side" of those locked doors now allows Marion to try to distance herself from the responsibility and shame that she believes accompanies the act of crossing over.

On the other hand, having grown up in a house where open doors represented a threat to her parents' secret and where they "kept indoors even in summer" as a result, Marion has internalised an intense valuing of property and privacy (*PL* 9). Bachelard has argued that "everything becomes [concrete] in the world of the spirit when an object, a mere door, can give images of hesitation, temptation, desire, security, welcome and respect" (224). In Marion's case, doors mainly gave images of hesitation, of *in*security, of the *un*welcome intuition. "Mere doors", by always locking her out of the family life, yet keeping her away from the outside world as well, served to make her feel "displaced and unwelcomed" already as a child (Dass 141). The consequences of these images given by doors concretely translated into the way she now praises the security measures that ensure that her property will be "inviolable" (*PL* 2). This obsession for territorial integrity is also noticeable when Marion tries to convince her father that he should call someone to come and tend his garden: "Marion

explains patiently that nature means not only weeds, but also mice, rats, snakes even, who'd have *no regard for the threshold of the back door*" (*PL* 13, my emphasis). Marion repeatedly insists on the importance of demarcating such boundaries, thereby focusing her attention on thresholds, stoeps, and other in-between spaces felt to enclose the self, especially those which maintain a reassuring difference between the intimacy of the inside and the threats of the outside. Later in the story, Marion sees rats moving in the scrub when she is sitting, significantly, in the doorway of the cottage that she is renting by the coast in a fishing village (*PL* 22-23). The rats come and go between the bushes. When they dare to come out of their original hiding place, they always use the same path, sometimes stopping mid-way, fearful, and going back to the first bush. Marion feels "torn":

> She leans towards sympathy for the hazardous lives they lead, for their vulnerability […]. She watches one sitting in its doorway, summoning up the courage to make a run for it. The bush shivers with its fear, even though there appears to be no danger at all […]. What kind of life is that – to be burdened with such timidity? To have to overcome so much in order to achieve so little, to be the object of such irrational fear and loathing? (*PL* 24)

Ironically, Marion unwillingly compares her parents' lives to the existence of such rats. She does not realise that her thoughts about the rats mirror what she has experienced with her parents during her childhood. In this passage, she links feelings of vulnerability, a lack of courage, and fear, to being "stuck" in one's doorway. She is very critical about what she observes; she does not understand how one could possibly endure such a life "burdened with timidity", especially if the end result does not seem to be worth it. Having not learnt the truth yet, she cannot grasp the implications of her parents' lives, which were imbued with fear and in-betweenness. They too, like the rats (though this comparison is of course symbolic), were constantly trying to decide between the different destinations available to their true and their new selves in order to build new lives for themselves, and to build a "nest" that might seem "without the burden of history" (*PL* 152) for their daughter. Moreover, Marion and her parents stayed indoors most of the time and barely talked to their neighbours, because, as Helen said, "children should keep to their own families" and, using "maxims about the self[, she also said that] [i]t is best to keep oneself to oneself" (*PL* 61). Crossing doors might represent evidence of courage as well as a social opening to the world; yet, paradoxically, Marion does not seem to cross many doors herself. Not totally unlike the rats' whose lifestyle she has observed, keeping indoors has led Marion to adopt, in turn, a habit of misunderstood

fear, feelings of vulnerability, and isolation behind the closed (and guarded) doors of her apartment.

De Michelis has pinpointed yet another meaning behind these (closed) doors, linking them to a more collective dimension:

> Marion's emphasis on the materiality of the doors is an unconscious attempt at self-deception, pointing to the strategies of exclusion put in place - in the house as well as the nation - by the closed windows and doors, and foregrounding her inability to trespass the forbidden archive of her family memories. (73)

The exclusion felt by Marion and caused by her parents' reclusion inside their house, and the "exclusion" from the outside world caused by their self-isolation, reflect the "strategies of exclusion" set up in the nation at large. The system of apartheid did not only advocate the geographical, social, political, and economic exclusion of non-whites. It also encouraged an exclusion of the mind; one should close one's "mental doors" to non-white people. Marion grew up, as she says herself, as "white" (*PL* 107), surrounded and influenced by all these strategies, which is why she feels alienated when it comes to race and to the negotiation of her own identity. She is unable to "trespass the forbidden archive of her family memories" because she has grown up on the other side of the locked doors of apartheid, which she unconsciously even helped to close (De Michelis 73). Ironically, however, Helen herself viewed racial passing as follows: "She favoured the image of a door: opportunity as a threshold over which you stepped lightly, without fuss" (*PL* 142). It is interesting to note how she tried to undermine and downplay the implications of crossing, most probably in order to make the act more bearable for herself. There is thus a significant paradox attached to Marion's position(s) of exclusion and the long-lasting damaging effects it has had on her as an adult, and the self-deception that Helen imposed upon herself.

A further interesting insight into the mental dynamics that doors can reflect is provided by the descriptions of other houses in the story: Vumi's, Brenda's, and Elsie's. Vumi tells Marion that, during apartheid, he was "brought up as Victor McKee in a coloured neighbourhood where no one was fooled by the family. They called them kaffirs" (*PL* 205). Despite their lie being exposed, "at home […] the doors [were still] shut" to the outside world, but inside, "[the parents] made sure that their children knew about their forebears" (*PL* 205). Vumi's childhood home, and house, has then been characterised by a closed door (physically and metaphorically) to the outside as the family tried to hide their true origins to the world. However, the doors inside the house itself (again, both the physical and

metaphorical ones) were always open; the family were united, the children were not being excluded or lied to in any way, as opposed to what Marion experienced throughout her childhood. Brenda's house, on the other hand, is characterised by open and unlocked doors – something that is true of the front door as well as the other doors inside. This is ostensibly an aspect of the political context, post-apartheid. When she goes to visit Brenda, in whose house the doors are remarkably unlocked, and she becomes aware of this family's "warm, unquestioning hospitality", Marion feels submerged by a growing "longing for a true home" (De Michelis 75). This is then inseparable from Marion's decision to visit her aunt later in the story. In Elsie's house, the windows are "unhindered by lace curtains" (*PL* 172), and there is not even the mention of the word "door" during the whole narration of the encounter, as Elsie "receives Marion as if it were nothing out of the ordinary, as if she'd been expecting her" (*PL* 166). This is also an unsettling aspect for Marion who is not used to such openness. Basing her argument on Elsie's "pacified" reaction to her parents' portrait that had been "touch[ed] up […] according to [the photographer's] own ideal of beauty, of whiteness" (*PL* 173), De Michelis claims that Elsie embodies the "nation's deep desire for a non-adversarial way of coming to terms with difference and to look at the present as a fluid, transitional space where open-endedness is ripe with possibility" (75). I would argue that this desire is also represented by the absence of the mention of doors during her encounter with Marion. I would say this also illustrates the need for a "fluid, transitional space[, and optimistic] open-endedness" (De Michelis 75). Marion, however, has to unlock and deconstruct all the doors that have hindered her understanding of herself and of the world until then, and it is through the report of Vumi's childhood house, as well as through her visits to "sites of instructions and self-discovery" such as Brenda's and Elsie's houses, that she achieves a more concrete imagination of the state of (self-)acceptance that she should aim for (De Michelis 71).

In the same vein, De Michelis also takes into account the "opening" that doors enable, as she states that "the dual agency of doors as fluid boundaries which at once separate and connect[, also] points to Marion's growing implication in the transitional dynamics of post-apartheid South Africa" (73-74). The doors that have been closed for most of Marion's life still hold the potential for opening. This opening is reflected in Marion's quest for the self, which requires her not only to reflect on who she really is as an individual, but also on who she used to be and who she could become as a member of the new South African society. This implies reflecting on her own (at times unconscious) role and implication in the history of apartheid, and on the role she wants to play in the New South Africa. The doors that are

opened to Marion during her journey, in Mrs Murray's house, in Brenda's house, in Elsie's house, in the museums and the several other places she visits during her stay in Europe, allow her to enrich her capacity for personal and historical understanding, a process during which she namely tries "to reposition herself within the ('coloured') history of [South Africa]" (De Michelis 75).

However, against this hopeful note suggested by the motif of opening doors, the novel significantly ends with the closing of one. When driving Brenda back home after work, Marion learns that she has wanted to write John's story because of "his pale skin as capital, ripe for investment" (*PL* 218). Marion strongly disagrees because she thinks it is not Brenda's to tell: "Why don't you write your own fucking story?" (*PL* 217). Finally, Marion orders Brenda to get out of her car:

> That's enough. Get out. I know my father's fucking story.
>
> Actually, Brenda says, I suspect you don't.
>
> She keeps her eyes averted as she gets out. Her thumb flicks at the lock before she shuts the door with a quiet click. (*PL* 218)

This ending suggests that Brenda could be the narrator of the story, and that Marion, after all, has not succeeded in coming to terms with her own identity and with her implication. Furthermore, the possibility that Marion does not actually "know her father's fucking story" and that Brenda thinks it should be written down from a non-white perspective, attributes the responsibility for "giving voice to the stories to which Marion remains deaf" to Brenda (van der Vlies 598). It is Brenda who then "bear[s] witness to the ghosts of the archive" (van der Vlies 597). Indeed, Wicomb has highlighted the importance to "[assert] an ethics of authorial responsibility", which may explain this final plot twist (*Setting* 150). This, in turn, also serves "to undermine the veracity of any project pretending to truth, [and as] an insight contributing to a reassessment of narratives of nation (and of ethnicity, of ethnic purity) half a decade into the New South Africa" (van der Vlies 596). Indeed, Marion's reaction seems to suggest a(n) (un)conscious attempt at "assert[ing] exclusive proprietorship (or at least her family's) over the story of racial passing" (Robolin 364), whereas this story is shared by many South African individuals and families who have been caught up in the unhomely, closed, and excluding spaces of apartheid. Those stories are "uncontainable—already told and mixed, conveyed by multiple voices", and this is symbolised by the notion of Brenda taking over the role of authorship that Marion claimed to be hers, or her family's (Robolin 364).

Having Brenda close the door upon Marion also serves to illustrate that, despite being a secondary coloured character in what, at first glance, seems to be Marion's story, Brenda still "ha[s] the last word: [not only by] resisting Marion's proprietary claim over exclusive versions of South Africa's (hi)story and memories", but also by asserting the "power to 'shu[t] the door with a quiet click' (Wicomb, 2006: 218) on Marion's still problematica[l]" negotiations with her identity as a South African citizen (De Michelis 71). Brenda has tried to be a travel companion as well as a friend during Marion's quest, and in the end, she is confronted with Marion's ingratitude and inconsiderateness. This highlights the fact that Marion has not yet wholly come to terms with "what she has been repressing", in that she has unconsciously "adopted her parents' neuroses" (Goddard and Goddard 74). The door that is shut (and even locked) by Brenda can be considered as a way to show back to Marion "the unwelcome mirror, the inevitable object of projected resentment and anger" that Marion herself, brought up as white, has (un)consciously projected onto Brenda, her coloured employee (Goddard and Goddard 75). These last lines, in addition to advocating for the ethics of authorship that Wicomb praises, thus also serve as a concluding depiction of where Marion stands at the end of her self-definition journey.

There is a clear discrepancy between her current position and her own critique of doors from when she was a child. She hated the fact that her neighbours "paint[ed] their doors in violently clashing colours […], she'd dreamt of a row of houses in uniform whitewash, with woodwork graded from east to west in slowly deepening shades of green" (*PL* 9). In that dreamlike scenario, her father would have unwillingly "stumbled" into the neighbours' house, and a pleasant encounter and dinner would have ensued (*PL* 9). As Dass has argued, this wish for more evenly coloured doors reflects a desire for "a utopian lack of differentiation by (or through) colour, [which] would lead to a greater, more comfortable sense of community" (141). The adult Marion, upon her homecoming, has not managed to become an active actor in her own youthful dreams (yet).

7. Identity and the Motif of the Mermaid

The mermaid is, in essence, a hybrid figure. Hybridity itself is an important theme in Marion's self-identification, but this hybridity can bear several meanings. It can allude to the paradigm of the land and the sea, and hence also to the link between colonised and coloniser as will be explained later, which in turn implies the concepts of in-betweenness, shame, and the body. Moreover, the mermaid also refers to the realm of myth. All these possible meanings will be analysed with respect to Marion's complex (reinvention of) identity.

7.1. The Land and the Sea

The duality between land and sea imbues Marion's life in many ways. To mention only the two most obvious ones, she lives in an ocean-front apartment, and she rents a cottage in a fishing village on the coast, to which she likes to retreat from time to time. The latter place seems to provide her with comfort and reassurance: "at times like this, [Marion] is grateful for somewhere to go" (*PL* 23). The "mermaid" that she is seems to relish every moment of her time spent on the lagoon:

> She is content to walk on the sand, to sit and doze all day on the beach and watch the tide come in, watch the water lap at the fine white sand, *nibble* at the lengthening shadow of the cliff growing *greedier and greedier* until it *roars its hunger* into the cavities of rocks. (*PL* 23, my emphasis)

Marion seems to be "on her home ground" in the space of the lagoon, which physically symbolises a liminal space between land and sea. Furthermore, her description of the scene appears to suggest a personification of the sea or even its animalisation, which renders the water almost threatening. Water is presented as something that can never be escaped from, which provides a parallel with one of John's teachings: "one should not take water for granted, treat it any old how; there are lessons to be learnt from water" (*PL* 22). Water is presented as something that ultimately carries the truth. This point of view mirrors Meg Samuelson's claim that *Playing in the Light* illustrates the concept of the sea as archive. According to her, "the sea casts up into official, land-centred narratives the flotsam of lost, scattered and repressed histories" that are being neglected because of "imperialist and nativist histories" (543-544). In order to do so, Samuelson conceives the sea as "a textual space capable of articulating the losses that remain unspeakable in the new national order" (553). This capacity is illustrated, inter alia, by Tokkie's face "floating on the water", which

sets in motion Marion's quest (*PL* 55). The face is "disfigured", swollen with the "memory" of the "unspeakable" (*PL* 54-55). It is being "return[ed] to land" by the sea (Samuelson 552). However, Samuelson also draws on Greg Dening's emphasis on the "polarity of an unhistorical sea and a historical land" (14). According to Samuelson, *Playing in the Light* precisely "invest[s] the ocean with historical meaning" (544).

On the other hand, Emmanuel Ngwira has argued that the land, just like the sea, is also a location of archive (see 186). He has pointed to the importance of the garden as a site in which identity – whether white or coloured – was (and is) nurtured and cultivated (see 186). The significance of gardens in South Africa can be traced back to Jan van Riebeeck's establishment of a "refreshment station for the Dutch East India Company at the Cape", along with a "gardening enterprise" that would allow not only for the production of fresh vegetables for the passing ships, but also for the creation of a natural fence (a hedge of bitter almonds) around the station, between the Europeans and the South African natives (Ngwira 185). However, according to Ngwira, the cultivation of gardens does not only speak to an archive of white colonisation and supremacy. It also "speaks to the lives of those that grow them: the shame-ridden cultivation of white identities in the case of the Campbells and the nurturing of colouredness by people like Elsie" (Ngwira 186). Ommundsen too has pointed to the meaning of the land as a space that "shows in significant ways greater freedom from cultural frameworks" in terms of identification (93). Through the "presence of both thyme, a symbol of strength, and dagga, a psychotropic herb, [Wicomb seems to] posi[t] the need to oppose the domination of intellect. Psychedelic experience is akin to mystical experience. Truth cannot be realized through an intellectual eye as this mode of perception is not unfailing" (Ommundsen 93).

Therefore, the motif of the (mythical) mermaid can be considered as a symbol for the enrichment that results from the combination of both the archive of the sea and the archive of the land. The mermaid is, in this sense, the embodiment of the need to bring to light the repressed, supressed, and forgotten coloured histories. More precisely, regarding Marion's case, those supressed and forgotten histories also refer to the histories of the people who "crossed over." As Yvette Christiansë has argued, "the figure of the person who 'passed' racially" can be identified as the "loss" that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission failed to remember (376). Their histories are the "quotidian narratives of loss ... lost by the official discourses" (Christiansë 376). This need to remember is thus also reflected in Marion's quest, as she cannot come to terms with who she is without acknowledging the repressed

histories of her parents and ancestors. Taking them into account is a necessary step on her journey towards self-understanding and towards comprehending her own implication.

7.2. The Colonised and the Coloniser

Moreover, the duality between land and sea in turn reflects the duality between the colonised and the coloniser. As Samuelson has argued, the land echoes autochthony and the sea recalls the ocean crossings characterising the arrival of the European settlers in South Africa during the seventeenth century (see 555). This implicit reference points to another important component in Marion's quest, namely to the need for resistance to the colonial, nationalist, and essentialised racial categories of black and white.

Samuelson has pointed to the allusion of the floating face to the African American legal scholar Patricia Williams, who seems to share some of Wicomb's interests (see 553). According to Williams, only a "fluid positioning that sees back and forth across boundary" is able to generate "a nonracist sensibility" (Williams 129-130 qtd. in Samuelson 553). Accordingly, "the hither and thither movements through which Wicomb issues her sharpest retorts to colonial, national and patriarchal orders produce the fluid space in which racist histories can be undone" (Samuelson 553). It is namely when Marion symbolically replicates her childhood fantasies of "darting hither and thither in a world without boundaries" (*PL* 112), inlands and overseas to Europe, that she achieves a "historical understanding of [her] identity" which is *fluid* and which therefore resists the symbolic immobility of nationalist and colonial visions of racial identities (Samuelson 555). Towards the end of her journey, Marion seems to have achieved a better level of understanding of who she is. Inlands, she has mainly rediscovered the history of her coloured family members. Overseas, "across the water, [she has been] visiting the places where [John's] ancestors came from" (*PL* 186). The act of travelling thus seems to be one of Wicomb's ways to "mudd[y] conceptions of location and autochthony with trans-oceanic flows" (Samuelson 543).

7.3. Hybridity

However, a consequence of the encounter between the coloniser and the colonised is reflected in the motif of the hybrid, unhomed, "lacking", and shameful figure of the mermaid. The arrival of the Dutch marked the first interracial sexual interactions between the white male settlers and their slaves imported from the Indian Ocean world as well as the indigenous black women of the Cape (see Ngwira 185 and Mafe 7). The sexual encounters between the Europeans and the native black women produced descendants of "mixed ancestry, [who

would be] later classified as 'coloured' under apartheid" (Ngwira 185). This so-called miscegenation, by definition, caused those descendants to be described as racially hybrid. They were "neither black nor white" (Mafe 7). They could not claim a rightful place or role in the history of the Cape, unlike the autochthonous Khoi, San, or Xhosa, nor could they claim any sense of belonging to the European world (Farred 7 qtd. in Mafe 7). Hence, South African coloured people "belong[ed] only to the site of that first encounter between the colonizer and the colonized" (Farred 7 qtd. in Mafe 7). As they have not been able to claim any right either to "an indigenous history[,] or [to] a European origin", "colouredness has largely and notoriously been defined by lack, by *not* being something rather than being something", at least in terms of historical belonging (Mafe 7-8, emphasis in original). Wicomb has, in the same vein, pointed to the definition of the term "coloured" by the Nationalist government's Population Registration Act of 1950: "not a White person or a Black" (Wicomb, *Shame* 101). From a societal perspective, however, coloured people were "not only not white, but less than white; not only not black, but better than black" (Erasmus 13). Zimitri Erasmus claims that the "humiliation of being 'less than white' made 'being better than black' a very fragile position to occupy" (13). The fragility, or as Diana Adesola Mafe (8) describes it, the precariousness of this position, is reflected in the motif of the mermaid. One could wonder, also, if Wicomb's choice of the motif of the mermaid is a means to express Marion's position as an implicated subject, being *neither* a victim, *nor* an oppressor.

The body of the mermaid, half-human, half-fish, is by definition, physically speaking, a "mixed body". The definition of the coloured identity, however, is not based on a biological conception of the body:

> [C]oloured identities are not based on 'race mixture' but on cultural creativity, creolized formations shaped by South Africa's history of colonialism, slavery, segregation and apartheid. This conceptualization undermines the common sense view that conceives colouredness as something produced by the mixture of other 'purer' cultures. Instead, it stresses the ambiguity and ceaseless fluidity of coloured identity formations while remaining conscious of the conditions under which they are produced. (Erasmus 14)

This claim echoes Wicomb's position on coloured identities, which stands in opposition with Bhabha's viewpoint on the "spooky", unhomely, and taboo in-betweenness of the coloured individual. However, Goddard and Goddard have pointed to the symbolic meaning of the

mermaid's mixed body, claiming that it is nevertheless a liminal, amphibious, and hence unhomed "space", thereby echoing Bhabha's claims (Goddard and Goddard 78). Attention has been drawn to the lack of belonging of the coloured people both to Europe and to the Cape. Likewise, mermaids, being not fully from the land nor from the sea, do not completely belong to one place or the other. However, Goddard and Goddard's claim that they "belong *nowhere*" seems to be incomplete (78, my emphasis). I would say that, in *Playing in the Light*, they do belong to the imaginary landscape that helps to move towards a deeper and better understanding of the "mixed race." Mermaids reflect the need for the "reinvention of colouredness in nonracial terms" (Mafe 145). I wish to argue that they represent one of the imagined supports that is used by Marion (and by her father) in order to meet their individual need of identity (re)construction, according to Mafe's perspective on the imaginary translation of mixed-race identities:

> A "mixed race" identity is only useful insofar as it meets a real need (whether personal or political) through an imagined constituency. Unless theorists, activists, and self-identified mixed race peoples acknowledge and reiterate the imagined parameters of mixedness, the paradoxes remain setbacks instead of logical contingencies. The imperative thus lies in sketching out that imaginary landscape of a mixed identity—a landscape that is fluid and impermanent but which can be a site for mutual priorities and subjectivities. It is here that literature can prove useful for exploring that imaginary landscape. (Mafe 148)

Marion's identification with the mermaid is one of the possible images of the imaginary landscape of mixed identities. The relevance of this image is of course linked to the physical and metaphorical in-betweenness and exclusion of the individual, but most importantly, it is linked to Marion's own need of coming to terms with her identity. During the continuous reassessment of her identity, Marion's conscious and unconscious interrogations "relat[e] to the race she both *is* and *is not*: the 'unhomely' coloured race" (Dass 141). The mermaid, most importantly, serves as a "fluid and impermanent" support that she uses as a way of expressing and projecting her own repressed identity (Mafe 148). According to Ommundsen, Marion's "allegorically monstrous body is the hybrid product of desires, fears and anxieties about race. As the human-animal hybrid she is the externalization of John's inadequately repressed feelings. She is the embodied memory of an untold history of violence" (91-92). It is probable, however, that Marion has also internalised her father's repressed feelings, to which she was not immune. She was aware that "her father who, for all the acrimony of th[e]

marriage, grew silent and brooding with grief[, and that t]he sea revived him" (*PL* 23). Marion has hence also, in turn, and possibly unconsciously, adopted the mermaid as an imaginary way to try to make sense of the person she is. For John as well as for Marion, the mermaid is an imaginary support through which they try to make sense of the "dislocation" of their coloured identities (see Erasmus 23). For Marion more specifically, it is also a way to better comprehend her family's "untold history of violence" (Ommundsen 92). Therefore, as part of an imaginary landscape, mermaids do not "bear a destructive force" as Goddard and Goddard have argued, but rather serve as an identity building support (78). In this sense, they are a *medium* to negotiate and better understand the true self, which is allowed fluidity and mobility, as opposed to Helen's opinion on mermaids according to which it is "[n]o good being half woman and half fish, half this and half that; you have to be fully one thing or another, otherwise you're *lost*" (*PL* 47, my emphasis). In contrast to this viewpoint, one's identity is not defined by racial or cultural essentialism, which is reflected in Helen's advocacy of the need to be "fully one thing or another". Rather, one's identity is constructed by the to-ings and fro-ings between cultural destinations; identity is a fluid, continuous positioning, that develops according to the changing social and historical dynamics in a given time and place.

Indeed, Erasmus has insisted on the following: "Coloured identities were constructed out of fragmented cultural material available in the contexts of slavery, colonialism and cultural dispossession. This leaves their constructed and composite historical nature always evident and their dislocation always present" (22-23). In light of this, instead of viewing the mermaid as the combination of two elements of lack, the mermaid could be seen as a symbol for "the ambiguity and ceaseless fluidity of coloured identity formations", which is to be valued as something enriching rather than something incomplete and disabling (Erasmus 14). Furthermore, as suggested above, the figure of the mermaid could also be recognised as the embodiment of anti-essentialism. Despite warning against the romanticising of the in-between spaces, Grunebaum and Robin agree with the fact that "hybridity, indeterminacy and in-betweenness have come to be celebrated as spaces of radical openness that refuse to embrace *essentialist myths of origins* and totalizing narratives of ethno-nationalism" (169, my emphasis). Precisely because Wicomb presents the reader with the *mythical* figure of the mermaid, known for its two seemingly opposed body parts, she further undermines the essentialist viewpoints of the two fundamentally opposed poles of white and black identities, while resisting the temptation of presenting the coloured identity as a harmonious whole. The mermaid, or more specifically Marion's identification with the mermaid, is not

harmonious, because it does not deny the dislocation of the coloured subject and the conditions under which they were born. Rather, this dislocation is positively *reaffirmed* through the motif of the (hybrid) mermaid.

7.4. Shame

On the other hand, the concept of "racial hybridity" has often been associated with shame, impurity, and degeneracy (see Jacobs 4). These feelings are also reflected in one of Helen's opinions about mermaids: "Ashamed, said [Helen], as they should be, of being neither one thing nor another. No one likes creatures that are so different, so *mixed up*" (*PL* 47, my emphasis). Even though Helen's remarks first and foremost aim to solidify and secure the secrecy of their new lives as play whites, the content of her statements are interesting to consider because they reflect the white hegemonic opinion about colouredness during apartheid. Mermaids, like coloured people, are considered to be "mixed up" and inhabiting the unhomely, in-between state, between the "pure" poles of the sea and the land, and the white and black identities. Yet, as Dass has argued, "[m]iscegenation, which in *Playing in the Light* produces whiteness for the Campbells, has always produced whiteness. It is only with the creation of the impure, mixed race that a pure race becomes tenable" (143). Indeed, the logic of Bhabha's theory, according to which the concept of an *in-between* coloured identity implied two "racially pure" poles (which Wicomb criticised), also functions the other way around. Whiteness could not have been considered as a "pure" race without the assumption of the existence of the "impure, mixed race" (Dass 143). The destabilisation of the concept of "pure" whiteness is also suggested in the novel when it is referred to as being a "chimerical thing" (*PL* 151). The perception of whiteness as something "fantastically visionary"[6] thus undermines Helen's criticism of mermaids, and hence, implicitly, her criticism of coloured people, according to which one should be ashamed of not being fully "one thing [or] another" (*PL* 47). Moreover, Dass has also pointed to the mythical properties of whiteness altogether as a "race", by drawing a parallel with the mermaid's song that served to lure homesick "sailors from their ships" and lead them "to their doom" (142). According to Dass

> The idea of race is like the mermaid's song […]: as an escape from it or as an acceptance of its validity, its purity, which can then be mixed to create the impure hybrid, race beckons us with the promise of a mythic home. So mesmerising is the

[6] *Merriam Webster Online* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/chimerical

> song that we imagine it is the solid floor we stand on that is not real or safe; the rocks and the water seem secure. (Dass 142)

The *idea* of race as something pure that promises a mythic sense of home and belonging, is actually the source of unhomely feelings and causes a sense of loss of belonging to one's real origins (see Dass 142). In this sense, believing in the idea of the pure race is thus presented as a mythic danger that can only lead to one's own "doom"; the loss of the self, by making one believe unreasonably that one's own true identity is not "secure" enough (Dass 142). The undermining of the idea of a pure race also serves to weaken the shame usually associated with coloured identities:

> The sexual encounter between the colonist and the 'other' was marked by shame precisely because the colonist was ashamed. His dis-placement of that shame onto his progeny allowed him a *mythical purity*, a whiteness that could look with disgust upon what it had produced without ever admitting that whiteness was itself a child of miscegenation. (Dass 143, my emphasis)

Interestingly, in *Playing in the Light*, even though she still ignores the reason why, Marion appears to feel ashamed of white people: "she bears the shame of the perpetrators" who inflicted violent acts upon non-white victims during apartheid (*PL* 75). She also considers her mother, who betrayed her own coloured history, to be "a calculating woman with no conscience, no heart, no shame", as she crossed over without any second thoughts, especially regarding her own mother whom she let play the role of a servant in order to keep their secret safe (*PL* 117). Moreover, after Elsie's narration of their family history, "[Marion's] face is on fire with shame" (*PL* 170). Marion's feelings of shame, when expressed explicitly, are only revealed in a context which seems to suggest her growing potential for the acknowledgement of her family's implication and of her own status as an implicated subject. Hence, her feelings of shame seem to be more diversified than her mother's, whose shame was directed only towards colouredness. However, Marion still grew up hearing and internalising her parents' racist comments about non-white people and about how *those people* should be ashamed. Jeffrey Prager has insisted on the transmission of past traumas and "racialized distinctions" from generation to generation, even in the post-apartheid context (14). According to him, this intergenerational legacy of trauma and racism results in a "life constricted by perceived difference" (14). Marion, before having come to terms with the redefinition of her identity, is very much, though sometimes unconsciously, influenced by racist thoughts which betray a sense of shame towards coloured people. A telling example

is the way Marion refers to the coloured cleaning lady of her apartment block. On the very first page of the novel, Marion simply calls her "the girl" and refers to her with the condescending words "such people" (*PL* 1). After the discovery and the already enriching journeys inlands, however, Marion calls her by her real name:

> Why had she left the bird for Maria to dispose of? What had Maria done with it? Soup for her family of ten, fifteen? Her fingers catch in a stretch of snarled fringe – she knows nothing of Maria and her family. (*PL* 178)

The shame that Marion unconsciously associated with non-white people (though only implied and not expressed explicitly) seems to have at least partially dissipated as she realises her own ignorance of Maria as a valuable person in her own right, and not merely as a "coloured cleaning lady."

7.5. The Body and Mobility

Shame is also expressed with respect to the body, through the motifs of the shameful feet and the mermaid's tail. Helen, who expressed her shame of colouredness explicitly in order to pass as white, also wanted to get rid of the bodily evidence that betrayed her own coloured origins: the callous skin of her feet. It took the form of a "ritual": John carefully "shave[d] off [the] dead skin softened in the water. The newly exposed layer he left in turn to soak, for there was no end to what was removable; besides, he loved to prolong the process" (*PL* 148). However, Helen realises that her attempts to "tame" (*PL* 148) her "treacherous feet, her bête noir" (*PL* 147), are confronted with the "astonishing memory of skin" (*PL* 148):

> Surely the body, she thought, could forget its past, could allow her to forget the unshod coloured child. But no, it wouldn't; nature would assert itself. To her shame, the skin, like any weed, grew more vigorously in spring […] Helen was affronted by the continuous production of redundant, leathery skin, by the obstinate reproduction of cells, by the body's refusal to acknowledge the new woman. (*PL* 148)

In light of this passage, the body can be considered to be an archive on its own too, acting as an omnipresent reminder of that, which she tries to repress: her true origins. If Helen finds her skin to be the shameful reminder of her coloured identity and hence to be an obstacle to the acknowledgement of the new woman that she is, hindering the growth and evolution of her "business" of passing as white and hence of what she considers as to be moving forward in life (*PL* 123), one can also consider the shaving of this skin to be an act of sabotage of her

physical abilities to move forwards. In other words, what Helen considers to be a threat to her mobility in the act of passing is at the same time the assurance of safe physical mobility. By wanting to remove this quality that she considers as "treacherous" (*PL* 147), she reduces her own physical mobility, which, she still realises, serves as protection:

> Helen had a suspicion that the roughness of her soles was what saw her through the trials and tribulations of life in the city. Something hard of her own between the pale, soft body and the asphalt of the world was perhaps necessary. (*PL* 148)

Hence, Helen's criticism of mermaids according to which they are creatures with hindered mobility, is undermined. Indeed, while Marion is impersonating a mermaid, "struggle[ing] to bandage her legs together" (*PL* 46) to imitate a fishtail, Helen tells her that "now [she's] all bound up, [she] won't be able to move" (*PL* 47). John, on the contrary, has always believed in the mermaid's potential and need for free movement, reminding Marion that "mermaids are made for tumbling in the sea, not for turning into harders in sunbaked offices" (*PL* 46). Whereas Helen considers mermaids to be "lost" creatures (*PL* 47), John seems to believe in their potential and power to move forwards: "the mother-of-pearl skin graduates slowly, imperceptibly into the real thing, into hard, glittering scales that whip through the waves" (*PL* 46). Whereas Helen finds the mermaid's hybridity shameful and is ashamed of the hybridity that she attributes to colouredness, John and Marion seem to find the mermaid's hybridity empowering. The only real shame that Marion seems to associate with the figure of the mermaid is ignorance. Indeed, after having rediscovered her family history, Marion realises that she "grew up stupid as a mermaid" (*PL* 171). She also attributes the cause of her hitherto insensitivity to the world around her to the figure of the naive mermaid she had hitherto embodied:

> She has not felt lonely in the past, at least has not recognised the condition as such, too busy, she supposes, being her father's mermaid. Growing up on her own, in blankness and silence, meant that she had no expectations of the world, no patience with what she called the pampered, female world of feeling. Now that she has a past, a family, no matter how distant, something like loneliness has crept in. […] Nothing is the same. (*PL* 177)

The most important part of this revelation is that Marion finally acknowledges what seems to be her spatial illiteracy and narrow-mindedness. Not having had any expectations of the world because of her unconscious imprisonment in her parents' secretive lives as play

whites, Marion had continued to live her life with the naive mindset of a child. However, after having matured throughout her journey, Marion has finally associated the physical mobility of the mermaid with its symbolic mobility thanks to the lessons learnt from the water and from the land, in order to better understand her own identity as an implicated subject. All this also points to a major discrepancy between Marion's viewpoint and her mother's, who seemed to be subject to self-deception. Despite thinking that "[m]ermaids [were] the silly invention of men who d[idn]'t want to face up to reality, to their responsibilities" (*PL* 47), Helen did not realise that by wanting to "tame" her own feet, she herself also tried not "to face up to reality" and acknowledge her own implication in the dynamics of white hegemony.

It is as an adult, during the times of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, that Marion seems to relive her childhood memories, yet in a negative way this time. During her sleep, she suffers from panic attacks during which she feels "ensnared in the fabric that wraps itself round and round her into a shroud from which she struggles to escape" (*PL* 2). She feels "trapped in endless folds of muslin; the bed grows into the room, fills it, grows large as a ship in which she, bound in metres of muslin, flounders" (*PL* 54). It is only when Patricia Williams' face leads Marion to question her past, and hence to question her father about it, that she seems to understand where the uncanny feelings of being trapped come from:

> Where she sits, with elbows planted on the desk, [her father's] swaddling endearments grow tight as bandages, so that she rises, paces around to unwind herself, and feels suspicion surge through her veins. She hears, knows with certainty that the lies are not new. Her father, no, both her parents, have always kept something from her; something they did not want her to know. (*PL* 58)

This passage is indeed reminiscent of the times when, as a child, she "bandage[d] her legs together" (*PL* 46) and her mother even "helped [her] to wind the cloth into a bound tail" (*PL* 47). However, instead of feeling "[f]ree" (*PL* 47) as she did back then, she now feels trapped in lies. It is interesting to note that Marion viscerally experiences the sensation of being imprisoned in lies, while getting more and more absorbed by the testimonies of imprisonment and torture she learns about thanks to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. Also, the feelings of being ensnared significantly echo "Helen and John's story of entrapment in luminous whiteness" (Ommundsen 91). As if she was viscerally alerted to the truth, Marion unconsciously calls her childhood into question.

Ommundsen has pointed to yet another one of Marion's meaningful revelations. While seeing Patricia Williams' face in the *Cape Times* magazine for the first time, she realises that "she cannot bring herself to eat [her prawn salad]" anymore, because "mermaids, it occurs to her, should not eat fish: that would amount to cannibalism" (*PL* 49). Ommundsen has argued that this realisation indicates that "self-destruction with its implicit territorial counterpart, immobility – the symbolic devouring of both past and present – must cease" (92). Those visceral revelations set in motion the transformation of the childlike and naive version of the mermaid, who is afraid of the unknown outside world, into the more mature and implicated version of the mermaid, who sets itself free by overcoming its aversion to travel. The innocent freedom once felt as a child and then repressed during adulthood because of a restraining upbringing has now transformed into a more meaningful form of freedom, namely one's freeing from lies, and the liberating realisation of one's implication in the repression of life histories.

It is by fighting back against the feelings of entrapment and self-destruction, namely by travelling physically and metaphorically (which is, by *learning*) that Marion achieves this more liberated version of herself. In the end, her focus has shifted; she does not concentrate on the feelings of entrapment caused by the suspicion of lies anymore. Rather, she travels overseas. Significantly, "nothing will give [John] greater pleasure than seeing his mermaid across the water" (*PL* 186). There is a shift from feelings of constraint and disability to a fluid movement forwards and outwards to the discovery of the world. In the same vein, Samuelson claims that there is also a change in the way Marion defines the identity of non-white people. While Marion is looking at her grandparents' portrait in Elsie's house, she reflects on their physical appearance: "The grandfather is dark […]. There is the hint of slave blood in his cheekbones, or perhaps it is Khoi. The grandmother seems lighter, more European looking, although her eyes are slanted" (*PL* 172-173). According to Samuelson, this way of characterising her grandparents shows that "[i]dentity is finally lifted from apartheid's ledgers and relocated in a littoral zone of flux in which land and sea – autochthony and ocean crossing – blend imperceptibly into one another" (555). The alleged immobility of the mermaid's body and the supposed mutual exclusion of its two halves, which mirrored the polarised and conflictual racial identification system of apartheid, have been transformed into a fluid, mutually enriching viewpoint about racial identification and definition. Samuelson claims that this shift also evokes a return to the "state of fluidity [Marion] had inhabited as a child" (555):

> A pale moon in the royal-blue sky lay with abandon on its back, winking at the child, so that the patch of grass where she sat clutching her ankles swelled into an ocean. Marion does not remember taking off her shorts and blouse; she was a mermaid under the moon, diving and tossing her tail through the silver waves. (*PL* 60)

At that precise moment, Marion, the little child who was still oblivious to the bitter reality of the "world of grown-ups, [which] […] necessarily clashed with that of a child's" (*PL* 60), was still innocent and self-confident enough to be able to get lost in her dreams and fantasies. She plays the little mermaid without any feelings of constraint. She does not focus on the immobility of her imagined tail. Rather, to her, it only represents the possibility of movement, of "diving and tossing" freely through the imagined waves (*PL* 60). In this state of mind, the patch of grass becomes an ocean; land and sea "blend imperceptibly into one another" (Samuelson 555). Marion's characterising of her grandparents mentioned above reflects the "state of fluidity" once unconsciously achieved as a child when she "was able to access a world from which she had been exiled, a world that, although 'of the land' (i.e., 'native'), [was] approached via the sea" (Samuelson 555). When she describes her grandparents, similarly, the notions of land and sea fuse with one another again and show complementarity; the one can be harmoniously accessed through the other and vice versa.

7.6. From Myth to Reality

Other indications that Marion may have partly come to terms with who she is and with her implication are expressed in the following passage about the last time that she is confronted with a "message" from the sea to "decode", to borrow Samuelson's words (553):

> The sea is mottled with moonlight; a cold wind churns the water and the waves throw up broken images that she strains to put together. At first she thinks that Patricia Williams has returned, but then it seems to be a mermaid, holding like any mother a baby to her breast. The wind wraps strands of wet hair around the lump of baby, then when it grows fiercer the mermaid somersaults, clutching her child, and with her tail whips the water into a moonlit froth in which she disappears. Marion would like to think that it is the sea mammal who suckles her young, the dugong, whom sailors thought to be a mermaid, but the Cape is too far south for that. Thus it is, she says aloud, a figment of her imagination. (*PL* 185-186)

Patricia Williams seems to have stopped "persecuting" Marion (*PL* 73). The end of this haunting might suggest that Marion has completed her mission of remembrance of the

repressed histories and that she has finally acknowledged, at least partly, her own implication, which is "the least she c[ould] do for the demanding stranger, for Patricia Williams" (*PL* 74). On the other hand, Samuelson has argued that Marion has "shift[ed] identification from the figure of the mermaid to that of the dugong" (553). According to her, this shift is enabled thanks to the following advancement:

> As Marion produces a chain of meaning out of the 'broken images' the 'waves throw up', the fluidity of identity that [is] claim[ed] in the face of both colonialist and nationalist fixings of and fixations on race is set in motion. (Samuelson 553)

The change of identification is linked to a repositioning out of the realm of myth to reality. In this repositioning, "the sea as archive of repressed, unspeakable histories flows into the sea as living presence" (Samuelson 556). The objective, unbiased, "genealogical search" that Marion assigns to the dugong, when she reflects that dugongs do not normally live in the waters near the Cape, is indicative of her own "historical understanding of identity" which, it should be hoped, is one that takes the repressed coloured histories into account too (Samuelson 555). The shift from myth to reality is, however, also significant in other ways. Samuelson has pointed to the relevance of gender issues regarding the figures of the mermaid and of the kelpie, which Marion learns about during her stay in Glasgow. Those two mythical figures, according to Samuelson, are "ultimately damaging to women, refusing their mobility" (556). Samuelson has argued that the mermaid is a "multiply encoded sign" which, inter alia, "references gender violence", because of "the ways daughters find themselves entrapped, fixed or rendered immobile in the prophetic visions of fathers" (554). However, as explained above, I do not consider John to be trying to restrain Marion's progress in her quest for the self. Instead, I would say that it is Helen who appears to have internalised gender violence, and who projects it on her daughter. Indeed, as Ommundsen has argued, John's ritual of shaving the callous skin off Helen's feet, or "tam[ing]" the "beast" (*PL* 148), is a "versio[n] of oppression" (91). The kelpie, on the other hand, "takes particular delight in drowning travellers", "patrols the borders", and, as Dougie tells Marion: "keeps an eye like on youse travellers" (*PL* 204). These efforts to hinder mobility are reminiscent of Helen's attempts to imprison Marion in the world of whiteness. Like Marion's mother, who *passed* racially, these mythological figures "are disciplinary and cautionary figures who 'patrol', while *appearing to transgress*, borders", as opposed to the dugong whose freedom of movement is objectively unhindered (Samuelson 556, my emphasis). Moreover, the dugong's significant status as critically endangered species points to "the terror that the sea

can hold" (Samuelson 556). This terror alludes not only to the "histories submerged and drowned out by official narratives", but also the arrival of the white colonisers mentioned earlier in this chapter (Samuelson 553). Finally, the dugong's relevance also lies in its "life-giving properties" (Samuelson 556). Possibly meaning that Marion has eventually mourned the lack of maternal love that characterised her relationship with Helen, the dugong as maternal figure, "who suckles her young" (*PL* 186), might stand as a symbol of hope for the future, when the remembrance of repressed histories and the awareness to one's own implication in the dynamics of repression will be "nurtured" and taught to the next generations.

However, again, Marion's advancement in the reinvention of her identity and her progress regarding the acknowledgement of her implication is tainted with uncertainty, as her vision of the dugong might be "a figment of her imagination" (*PL* 186). Samuelson wraps up Marion's state of self-improvement according to the intertwinement of the analyses of our previous chapters about the role of travelling and about her relationship to space:

> Having read this figure into the sea, however, Marion has at least learnt (some of) the lessons the sea holds for her […] Having learnt her lesson, Marion is finally able to end her self-enforced isolation on Bloubergstrand and overcomes her antipathy for travel. (Samuelson 556)

The passage from the realm of myth to reality as explained above, this time confirms Helen's opinion according to which "[m]ermaids are the silly invention of men who don't want to face up to reality, to their responsibilities" (*PL* 47). Marion's exit out of the "nonsense of myth, [in which John tried] to drown his secrets" (*PL* 58) should mark the end of the series of undiscovered family lies, and the "fac[ing] up to reality, to [one's] responsibilities" (*PL* 47).

8. Conclusion

The analysis of Marion's metaphorical and physical journeys, through time and space, has brought to light the progress she has made in terms of her quest for the self. By travelling physically, she has met people, such as Outa Blinkoog, who have shaken up her beliefs about the world and about herself, pushing her to adopt a more worldwide version of her thus far very restricted life philosophy, both geographically and socially. By travelling through time, she has achieved an at least partial state of understanding of truth-revealing events of her childhood. All these types of journeys have reshaped her own personality, but they have also allowed for an exploration of her identity, namely through her increasing capacity for imagination, which has been shown to be a key tool to remember, make sense, and accept elements of one's past. Moreover, through the analysis of the way Marion relates to and organises the spaces around her, it has been possible to spotlight her own beliefs, apprehensions, and fears, which she mostly inherited from her parents. Furthermore, the analysis of the motif of the mermaid has brought to light the complex dimension of racial hybridity and how Marion positions herself in it.

The analyses of her journeys, of the spaces and places around her, and of the mermaid, are all tightly interlinked. This thesis followed a narrowing spatial order to ensure clarity, but all three aspects influence each other, and their meanings result from their combination with one another. Marion's need to redefine herself has been shown to be tightly linked to her need for a "site of recuperation" in which she could acknowledge her true, so far repressed, self as well as comprehend her own identity as an implicated subject (Goddard and Goddard 83). This "site of recuperation" is to be found in "one's history […]. But it requires the correct mental frame to be encountered" (Goddard and Goddard 83). This dissertation has shown how Marion's mental frame has developed through time, through space, and through encounters with others. In the end, it appears that this frame has positively changed: she has become a more open-minded traveller, she has become a less solitary social being, and she has become a better educated South African citizen. Marion's social and historical understanding of her own identity, but also of the identities of the repressed histories of apartheid, has led her to acknowledge, at least partly, her own implication in "a world shaped by colour and the mystery of roots" (*PL* 124).

Indeed, it can be concluded that she still may have a lot to come to terms with, as has been shown through her wish to claim exclusive authority over her family's history and through the uncertainty that still prevails over the place to which she will move as well as

regarding her possible imagination of the dugong which symbolises her historical understanding of identity. The uncertainty that imbues Marion's redefinition of the self emphasises the "complicated dynamics shaping apartheid and postapartheid racial identities" (Robolin 369). Marion's very complex negotiation of identity and her failure to fully comprehend her own implication also expose the precariousness of the utopian aspirations of the Rainbow Nation. Ommundsen has captured her fragile position as follows:

> Marion [may be seen] as the symbol of a post-apartheid generation – an in-between generation – in a state of rupture with the older apartheid generation and undergoing a crisis in ways of seeing. In engaging with her/their present world across past racial barriers through a shameful history, in stressing the importance of self-identities in forging a national identity, Marion/the new generation present(s) an opportunity to develop an alternative model – based less on rationalisation than on imagination – of tackling the legacy of apartheid. (96)

An interesting question, however, would be to ask whether Marion, as a subject who was nevertheless influenced by the "older apartheid generation", should also bear responsibility for the act of passing itself, or even, if strictly speaking, she could be considered as an individual who *passed* herself.

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