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Gordimer's Home

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It goes virtually without saying that the history of the home in South Africa has been a fraught and in many respects devastated one. The entire record of colonial settlement and appropriation, followed by the entrenchment of apartheid, was in a sense about the home: who belonged; who belonged where; who had a right to belong; what the viability and inviolability of the home meant. One of the most ubiquitous statistics of the apartheid era was that white South Africans, who constituted less than 20% of the population, owned some 87% of the land.[1] Black South Africans were forced into reserves in rural areas and so-called "locations" in urban areas, habitations where the notion of home was at best tenuous and impoverished. The destruction of areas such as Sophiatown in Johannesburg and District Six in Cape Town were nothing less than a deliberate assault on the home. Relocation areas, such as the notorious Dimbaza, became places of hunger and death. The apartheid invention of the so-called "Homeland" – in effect dressed-up and cramped ethnic reserves – became little more than a parodic reversal and inversion of the concept of home. The passbook system in its entirety was an attack on the very notion that black South Africans could be at home in their own country. Homes in South Africa were separated by race, wealth, authority and power, all mutually reinforcing. Jacob Dlamini has reminded us that black South Africans were not simply victims in this regard, that despite all, they managed to fashion worlds of their own. But there can be no doubt that under apartheid the reality of home was both vulnerable and provisional. In all this there was a dialectic which will form a central theme of this article: the link between the home as the physical place of habitation and the country as home – the place of belonging for the people as a whole. Going forward, I will refer to these as the narrow and wide senses of "home". Under apartheid

[1] This under laws enacted by the Natives Land Act (1913) and the Native Trust and Land Act (1936). See Sol. T. Plaatje's comment on the former: "Awaking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth" (21).

we might say that in both senses home in South Africa was a place of un/belonging.

The transition to the postapartheid era in some respects changed that. There was, for instance, freedom of movement and – in theory – of residence, and beyond that a crucial claim on belonging for all South Africa's people. Yet a theoretical right of free movement does not mean that everyone is free to reside where they want. Despite the building of homes, or electrification projects, it is clear that vast disparities of wealth and power remained, along with other fragile meanings of home, whether for whites in their alarmed houses in Johannesburg or the multitudes who continued to live in shacks on the outskirts of Cape Town. Attacks on so-called *makwerekwere*, or foreign Africans, extended the distorted notion of home in new and lamentable directions. Phenomena ranging from exceedingly high levels of sexual violence, to AIDS-denialism, to the Marikana massacre of August 2012 reinforced the idea that not everyone in South Africa belonged in the same way.

Writing in 1998, four years after the first free and democratic elections in South Africa, the writer and thinker Njabulo Ndebele focused on the issue of home. He had returned to the country with his family in 1991, in the midst of the transition from apartheid to the new dispensation. By 1998, however, the question of home for him was still problematic. Ndebele recalled how homes had been demolished under apartheid, how people had been relocated by force; he wrote of how the very experience of space for black South Africans – of movement from one place to another – had been traumatic. Now the question was whether a sense of home could be recovered. What kinds of intimacies could be re-established, whether in the private or public arenas? Could there be a full and integrated sense of belonging? Ndebele wrote that since voting in 1994 black South Africans had regained their voices and their speech. But, he added, "We have yet to regain our homes, our neighbourhoods. We have yet to feel at home" (459).

It was most likely no accident that Ndebele offered these words in tribute to Nadine Gordimer on her 75th birthday. For as much as any writer in South Africa, Gordimer has been drawn to the complexities and complicities of the home in both its narrow and wide senses – both as the place of residence and as the country of un/belonging. All of this has been reflected both in her life and work. However, before exploring some of these contours, I want to embark on a brief digression whose relevance will, I trust, become clear. This concerns what, in principle, it means to dwell, what dwelling is and might be, an issue which has significant

implications for the question of home. The overtones are philosophical as much as political. Strangely, I want to begin with Martin Heidegger, quite some distance from Nadine Gordimer, and that is part of the point.

Dwelling: Open, Closed, Open[2]

In 1951, two years after Heidegger's return to public life after his ban from teaching because of his Nazi affiliations in the 1930s and '40s, he presented a lecture entitled 'Building Dwelling Thinking', regarded as one of his key meditations after what he termed "the turn" from his earlier work in *Being and Time*. Here his central focus was on what it means to "dwell". As might be expected for Heidegger, dwelling was not simply a matter of existence on earth but more of a turn to, and a call from, Being in the lives of humans. In Heidegger's account, dwelling is fundamentally connected with building, and it is also connected with thinking. Building becomes the habitation and expression of dwelling; dwelling is a kind of building; and it is also a way of thinking which makes of the world a place of dwelling in the profound sense.

This is not the place to embark on a full assessment of Heidegger's formulation, but it is worth noting some features. For one thing, there is a mythic dimension in his exposition combined with a *blut und boden* "volkishness": no accident that the paradigmatic dwelling for Heidegger is a farmhouse in the Black Forest built some two hundred years ago by peasants (361-2). There is also an extraordinary amnesia for Heidegger in which he can talk of the "housing crisis" without any sense – in the wake of the Second World War – of what some of the dimensions of that crisis might be. He is even able to consider the problem of homelessness – presumably in its "profound" sense – as one which might be solved by the proper kind of *thinking*. One wonders what Primo Levi, or Jean Améry, or even Heidegger's former lover, Hannah Arendt, who excused his Nazism but knew all about the homelessness of refugees, might have said.

The key point I would like to emphasize regarding Heidegger's disquisition, however, concerns not what he says but what he does *not* say, and this has to do with the remarkably homogeneous nature of his vision. In his notion of "dwelling" – and building and thinking – there is

[2] I cannot resist an allusion here to Yehuda Amichai's poem, 'I Wasn't One of the Six Million: And What is my Life Span? Open Closed Open', although it deals with a different set of topics.

no sense of division, of alternation, of fracture or otherness in any sense. There are no inhabitants of his ideal thought-dwellings, in other words, apart from the volkish German community – hence the paradigmatic peasant farmhouse in the Black Forest. So, while Heidegger is prepared to talk of the human relation to things, he does not really discuss a relation to other humans. "Being" here is a curiously monadic experience because the only community that concerns Heidegger is itself monadic. There is no sense that the "dwelling" of some might relate to the homelessness of others, no notion, in the wake of everything that Heidegger had apparently lived through without seeing, that homelessness is not purely a crisis of Being, no awareness that its misery can be unabated, no matter how much one thinks about it.

It is telling then that other thinkers have been drawn to the question of dwelling, but in quite different ways. Thus Theodor Adorno, himself an exile from Nazi Germany, writing in 1951 (the very year of Heidegger's lecture) in a section of *Minima Moralia* titled 'Refuge for the Homeless': "Dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible. […] Today we should have to add: it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home" (38-9).[3] Or there is Jean Améry, driven by the Nazis into exile in Belgium, who joined the resistance and was subsequently tortured. "How much home does a person need?" asks Améry, to which he responds, "all the more, the less of it he can carry with him" (44). These formulations, and the experiences from which they emerge, suggest that dwelling is not simply a matter of metaphysics, or ontology, and it certainly cannot concern only an idealized form of homogeneous community. At the centre lies the question of what the home is, and who gets to dwell in it, and with what ramifications. Can there be any proper notion of dwelling without the reality and challenge of otherness?

In this regard, the contrast I want to draw is between Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas. For where the Heideggerian dwelling is more or less confined to the ethnic German community, the Levinasian one is dramatically open. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas gives this definition of the home: "The possibility for the home to open to the Other is as essential to the essence of the home as closed doors and windows" (173). For Levinas, systems or philosophies of what he terms "totality" involve

[3] Adorno began writing the book in 1944, and completed it in 1949. Elsewhere I have argued that the sense of the original German in Adorno's formulation suggests that it is impossible to be at home by oneself, or in and of itself, or on one's own; or when others are homeless (Clingman 2018, par. 4).

closure and exclusion; but infinity – its hint, or trace, or vastness – comes through openness, not least in the dwelling. For Levinas, it is the encounter with the Other – the absolute Other – that constitutes the foundation of the ethical response, and the breakthrough of infinity into our systems of closure. This means that such an encounter is also connected with hospitality: what it means to face the Other, to welcome the Other, to respond to the Other. I am tempted to say that for Levinas, dwelling without hospitality is not dwelling at all. This is not then the relation of humans to nature – Heidegger's mystical "fourfold" of humans, earth, sky, divinities—though a different form of the mystical may come into it, but profoundly and essentially a relation to other *humans*, humans who are, in and of themselves "Other". For Levinas the question of hospitality also means there is a link between the home and the homeland. "To shelter the other in one's own land or home," he suggests, is nothing less than "the criterion of humanness" (98). Jacques Derrida offers his own note on this: "The dwelling opens itself to itself […] as a 'land of asylum or refuge'" (41-42).

The home and the homeland: this is the polarity I spoke of earlier in relation to South Africa, the narrow and the wide senses of home. There is much to contemplate in these propositions, such stirring thoughts on the home, the homeland, refuge and hospitality. In this regard, however, I want to be clear on a rather crucial point. It is not that Gordimer plays the role of Levinas as opposed to Heidegger. Rather, her situation is both more complex and intriguing, for in a sense her writing exists *between* them—between the *fact* of home in South Africa and what it *might* or *should* be. The home of apartheid is closed; the one Gordimer writes towards is one that is open. In her writing Gordimer does not ignore the closed home; rather, that home is the very foundation of her fiction as she explores all its ramifications, political, economic, cultural, ethical, psychological, existential. In a quite vast paradox we find in her work that the closed home is for that very reason fragmented and divided, both in itself and as set against the other. The open home would, by contrast and in an equally far-reaching paradox, be unified, but that is at best the home of the future. The home of the present offers only a closed, and therefore ironic hospitality; the one of the future might just be hospitable to all.

Between closed and open, present and future: this oscillation represents both the topography and topology of Gordimer's home.

Gordimer's Home

How has this played out in Gordimer's life and work?

On the first count, that of her life (though at some point life and work become hard to separate) it is clear that Gordimer's home was a divided one, in both the narrow and wide senses. In the narrow sense, in the domestic environment, it was divided between her mother and father. Both mother and father were Jewish, but her mother came from England, and was quite "Anglo" in her associations and dispositions, whereas the father was an immigrant from the Lithuanian-Latvian borderlands, part of a much larger migration pattern of the time. The father was a watchmaker and jeweller in Gordimer's home town of Springs, and spoke with a heavy East European accent. He was in a way culturally alien, and the Anglo-Jewish mother looked down on him, something that was absorbed and recapitulated by the children. Emphasizing the split, Gordimer was sent to a convent school, and then withdrawn at a young age on the spurious grounds of a heart ailment – something that might have related to the division in the household.[4] Some of this very personal history emerges in one of Gordimer's stories in *Jump*, 'My Father Leaves Home' – a story to which I will return.

By the same token, in the wide sense, it was clear that Gordimer was alienated from her African environment – not so much the landscape which absorbed her from the first, but from the world of black South Africans, a syndrome common to many if not most whites under apartheid. As she writes of Helen Shaw, the quasi-autobiographical figure at the heart of her first published novel, *The Lying Days* (1951), the very language of Africans was to her "like the barking of dogs or the crying of birds" (186). By the time Gordimer was in her early twenties, it seems that she felt a sense of alienation and lack of direction in general (1988a, 24). If so, it was an alienation that was overcome primarily through her writing, the pursuit of which took her to Johannesburg, and the extraordinary world of black and white interaction it heralded. As she put it one of her essays, it was writing that sent her "falling through the surface of 'the South African way of life'" (Gordimer 1988b, 26). One key aspect of that was the discovery for Gordimer that her proper material as a writer *was* the South African world, not the European or American models that came from afar. If that was a personal moment of writerly decolonisation, however, it was the same South African world of

[4] For the fictional analogue of this in Gordimer's novel, *Occasion for Loving*, see Clingman (1992/93, 86).

division and fracture to which her writing then turned, incessantly and with tremendous intensity. If this was a new "home" in her writing, in other words, it was so *because* it was still a remarkably fragmented home. That was what gave her writing its energy and direction.

In that regard, it is evident that challenging as the South African context was, it was nonetheless the locus and definition *of* home for Gordimer. Indeed, it seems there was only one moment when she considered the possibility of leaving South Africa, and that was in the late 1950s when the apartheid onslaught began to be felt in full and a countervailing strict African nationalism took hold. This was when Gordimer wrote, "If one will always have to feel white first, and African second, it would be better not to stay on in Africa" (1988a, 37). Yet her fiction as much as her life tells us that her commitment remained to stay on in South Africa—not only the South Africa of the present but the intimated one of the future. This is true in *The Lying Days*, when the decision is split between Helen Shaw – who will leave at the end of the novel but decides she will then return – and her friend Joel, who emigrates to Israel. In *A World of Strangers* (1958), it is the outsider, Toby Hood, who has fallen into the multiracial world of Johannesburg in the 1950s who promises at the end of the novel he will return – an instance of his commitment to the black friends he has made. In *A Guest of Honour* (1971), set in an unidentified postcolonial African country, the central character, Colonel Bray, returns to continue the struggle for liberation, dying in the process and becoming, insofar as he can, a white African. In *Burger's Daughter* (1979), in the wake of the Black Consciousness movement and the Soweto Uprising, it is Rosa Burger who decides that she does not know "how to live" in her father Lionel's country but then returns after a sojourn in France to be detained in solitary confinement, just like her father before her: the home to which she must come. Gordimer's final novel, *No Time Like the Present* (2012), faces a postapartheid South Africa of rampant corruption and complexity with a decision for its central characters of whether to emigrate to Australia. But, in the voice of one of those characters, the final words of the novel are, "I'm not going" (421). They could have been Gordimer's own words—and in a writerly sense, of course they were.

If any of Gordimer's novels encodes the complex dialectics of home in their deepest form, for me that would be *The Conservationist* (1974). Here the central character is Mehring, a white industrialist who indulges his feelings for nature on a farm just outside Johannesburg which he owns as a tax writeoff. But there is another "resident" there, the

body of a black man murdered and buried shallowly under the surface of the farm. The body becomes Mehring's uncanny double in the novel: the home that excludes become a spectral location.[5] In Freud's terms, the *heim* (home) has become the *unheimlich* (unhomely), an uncanny place of haunting, the doubling and distorting mirror that intimates the concealed. Ultimately the black body – raised to the surface of the farm by a storm from the Mozambique channel – returns to be buried by the black community of farmworkers, and this is how Gordimer describes it: "They had put him away to rest, at last; he had come back. He took possession of this earth, theirs; one of them" (1978, 267). These are words, as we shall see, that resonate in the final story of *Jump*. It is a description both visionary and prophetic in which the two aspects of home are reconciled: both the farm as place of habitation and the land as home. In *The Conservationist* the home of the present has encountered the home of the future. The Other (nothing more absolutely Other than a dead body) has been claimed by, and claims the land; the land itself has become host, hospitable. The novel's vision in this respect is only enhanced by the fact that it came at a time when the apartheid edifice – its versions of both home and homeland – seemed impregnable and impervious (Clingman 1992/93, 167-169).

This is a different kind of "building dwelling thinking" in Gordimer's fiction, therefore, a different breakthrough of alternation into and through the world of totality. As we shall see, the idea of the underground resurfacing is also crucial in *Jump* – but with a difference.

Jump: The Home of Paradox and Loss

It is remarkable how many of the stories in *Jump* concern home. In fact, with some exceptions, the collection might be seen as a circumambient set of visions of the South African home from various angles—in itself an interrupted and multiplanar narrative. My plan, though, is not to deal with the collection as a whole. Rather, with my previous thoughts in mind, I will focus on a few stories which seem paradigmatic of Gordimer's characteristic motifs. In that light, let me begin with two that might well be considered as a pair: 'Once Upon a Time' and 'The Ultimate Safari'. The two stories are adjacent to one another in the volume. Both concern children, one white, one black. But

[5] As Derrida suggests, "There would be no hospitality without the chance of spectrality" (111-112).

if both explore a condition of "unhomeliness" (a term worth exploring further), it is perhaps no accident that they are mirrored and reversed in their depictions, settings, and structures, a feature we might take as resonant for the collection as a whole.

'Once Upon a Time' encodes reversals of its own. Certainly it fulfils the gory themes of many a fairy tale, but it inverts the standard model: beginning with a "happily ever after" it ends with disaster, rather than the other way round. The entryway into the narrative is intriguing. The author – Gordimer herself, or some authorial avatar: is this a matter of fiction or non-fiction? – is invited to write a story for children, and at first refuses. Yet at night, lying in bed in her creaking home, she imagines the sounds she hears are made by intruders, an experience of immediate terror. There are no intruders: it is her own mind, prompted by the realities of the world she lives in, that has spontaneously entered into its narrative. The terms Gordimer writes in are both suggestive and revealing: "The house that surrounds me while I sleep is built on undermined ground; far beneath my bed, the floor, the house's foundations, the stopes and passages of gold mines have hollowed the rock…" (Gordimer 1991, 24).[6] "Undermined ground": this is a familiar feature in the life of Johannesburg, the earth tremors caused by the subterranean gold mines, and it is a familiar Gordimeresque motif as well: the mines "undermine", the source of wealth and power threatens those who benefit from it. (This could be Mehring in *The Conservationist*.) And it is a different kind of murmuring too: as the "author" lies in bed, she is "authored" by her subconscious, a different kind of subterranean zone which prompts her narrative of the intruders. This is the return of the repressed, depth rising to the surface, a form of the political unconscious so important in Gordimer's fiction. The home is both the generator and repository of its own hauntings: the haunted home indeed.[7]

This then leads into the story which the "author" tells herself lying in bed, the fairy story of the title. The perfect white family living "happily ever after" is prompted by anxiety to ever more barricaded defences: a maid working in a neighbouring home has been tied up and

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[6] Henceforth, all references to work by Gordimer are to this edition of *Jump*, unless otherwise specifically noted.

[7] There are various iterations of the underground rising to the surface in white South African literature and art. See Gordimer's story, 'The Termitary', as well as works by Kentridge, Gevisser, Beukes, Rose-Innes among others.

locked in a cupboard (something that later happened to Gordimer herself); there have been riots in the black townships; there are unemployed loiterers on the streets.[8] Eventually, the parents line the high walls of their house with razor wire – a ubiquitous sight in Johannesburg. The company that installs it is called "DRAGON'S TEETH The People for Total Security" (29), but like the dragon's teeth of mythology, total security produces only unintended and paradoxical results. The mother has read her small son a fairy story which inspires him; he is the Prince braving the thicket of thorns to enter the Palace and kiss Sleeping Beauty. He takes a ladder to the wall, and becomes entangled in the razor wire, from which his body must be hacked out.

Fairy tales and allegory go together, and this one is probably no different. The home as fortress is the very threat it is constructed to resist, the hazard to those whose safety it ostensibly secures. To be homed by apartheid is to be unhomed, even for those whose privilege apartheid safeguards (one thinks of this, for instance, in connection with Gordimer's *July's People*). The home here is not the site of the homely but, as in *The Conservationist*, of the Freudian *unheimlich* – the "unhomely", otherwise known as the uncanny. The home is the double of itself, governed by irony, almost its own parodic version, where subterranean and subconscious hauntings will invade not *despite* high walls and protection but *because* of them. If the Heideggerian home is homogeneous and closed in its orientation, it is nothing less than its own liability. Or, the home without Levinasian hospitality, without open "doors and windows", becomes inhospitable to its own residents. They become little more than the ghosts they are trying to keep out, phantoms of their own spectrality. If we think of this in terms of temporality, the walled home is the ironic halfway house to the future, but only because it is always falling back into the past. In both the narrow and wide senses, this is the sealed white apartheid home. But note here a developing pattern: the threat of depth returning to the surface is coterminous with a threat from *out there*.

'The Ultimate Safari' also begins with a "non-fictional" prompt, this time an advertisement in the London *Observer* promising the ultimate African adventure, conducted by "*leaders who <u>know</u> Africa*" (31). Knowledge is a form of being at home, but the outsider's knowledge is only a form of unknowing, and therefore both a symptom

[8] Gordimer was attacked and robbed in her home in October 2006, and locked up together with her maid in a storeroom. For one report see Meldrum.

and cause of the unhomely. There is some irony in the title, therefore, but thereafter the story leaves irony behind, because the account it gives is of a different kind of knowing, poignant and moving in the extreme. It is the first-person narrative of a child refugee, walking with her grandmother, grandfather, and two brothers, from Mozambique to South Africa, after her father and mother have both disappeared in the chaos caused by (most likely) anti-Frelimo forces supported by South Africa. This is not safari as spectacle, therefore, but the journey as a matter of physical and psychic anguish.[9] Multiple references to wild animals and nature as the group crosses the Kruger National Park emphasize the reality of the denatured home. When the family reaches a refugee camp in South Africa, having lost the grandfather, it is only to find other paradoxes, for they are among people who speak the same language. "Long ago, in the time of our fathers," the grandmother tells the girl, "there was no fence that kills you, there was no Kruger Park between them and us, we were the same people under our own king, right from our village we left to this place we've come to" (44). In precolonial times, this space was home, and home invoked continuous time. Now colonial settlement and boundaries have divided both space and time, one definition of unhomely loss. For the grandmother, contemplating that loss (she is asked by a white filmmaker) there is "nothing. No home" (46). The young girl, for her part, fantasizes a return home, where she will find her father, mother and grandfather waiting. In a different form to 'Once Upon a Time', the future is the time of the past because home is a place only of memory for the refugee.

As Adorno remarked in his own contemplation of refuge, "Dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible" (38). In these two stories we have gone from the home as ironic closure to the expanse of space and time as the void: one or the other, or both. This is part of Gordimer's fictional – and therefore quite real – home.

The Other Home: Parallel Universes

In the two stories I have been discussing, it is as if their characters – white child, black child – live in parallel universes, side by side but wholly other to one another, contiguous but not in contact, in one another's fields of gravitation but with unbridgeable space between them.

[9] For the experience of the journey "not as distance to be traversed, but as a series of anxieties to be endured" see Ndebele (456).

It turns out that this too is an intrinsic feature of the topology of Gordimer's home, some of the implications of which are worth exploring.

We see it, for example in 'My Father Leaves Home'. As I have suggested, the story is intriguing because of the personal overtones for Gordimer. It too oscillates between the fictive and non-fictive (another curious sub-theme of the collection as a whole) in that it is apparently about Gordimer's father, while telling a tale in the present tense of a hunting trip in Eastern Europe – a parallel universe to be sure. As a story, it too might be thought of as an emanation from Gordimer's unconscious, the closest she comes to a confession of guilt across familial, national and transnational contexts. On the hunting trip the daughter/narrator who emerges from the mind of the writer enters the world of home her father left, precisely because it was unhomely to him. In this movement, time and space collapse, yet proximity is also distance, affiliation also disidentification. The daughter imagines the life of her father, a European migrant among black South African migrants regarded (in the language of the day) as non-European (another disidentification) or worse. In South Africa the father is "a kaffir" to his wife (64), though he treats the black man he employs in similar fashion, and the daughter witnessed the fear it induced. Now in this parallel universe—in some way the universe her father both left and entered, or never left and never entered—the daughter is in the hunting party, sensing the fear in the birds her party is hunting. Who is at home here, who innocent? Her final plea is "only a spectator, only a spectator, please" (66). This is the daughter's complicity, her betrayal, her denial, her worlding among the hunters and not the hunted, whether the latter means her father or the blacks he came to live among. Gordimer, who in her writing came to be interested in the suppression of the father (see her "reply" to Kafka's famous complaint in her story 'Letter from his Father'), finds the unhomeliness of her own home across the lost linkages of space and time. Her identifications can only be disidentifications – a lost Jewish story perhaps in this unconfronted, half-intimated universe. The daughter has only the negative imprint of affiliation: only a spectator, only a writer, hunting success and meaning in the world, who lost her father in both of his homes.

And then another pairing: everywhere one looks, a pairing. 'Comrades', a story inside the home, 'Keeping Fit', outside it – but in both the implications of inside and outside reverberate through one another. In 'Comrades' a wealthy white liberal woman brings home some

young black activists after a day's political meeting. They are rural young men, boycotting school, hungry, and she feeds them – all they really want from her. "She looks at them all and cannot believe what she knows: that they, suddenly here in her house, will carry the AK-47s they only sing about, now, miming death as they sing" (96). The outside has come inside, and it is also the future intruding on the present. In both respects the woman finds herself displaced, unhomed by the meaning her home will no longer have; indeed, *because* she has realized it, it is the meaning her home *already* no longer has. In 'Keeping Fit' it is the white man, out on a run, who finds himself swept by a murderous chase in process across a road, a fence, into a black informal settlement on the edge of his suburb. The story figures boundaries and barriers: a place of radical crossing and transition. Here the man is offered shelter and safety by a black woman and her family. This is Levinasian hospitality, yet the white man is not the dispenser but the recipient – not the subject of power but the Other. Even as the unknown location offers him a new home, it displaces him, and it displaces him into unknowing – of himself, of his environment, of his world. Later, in the no-man's-land of unknowing the man cannot even speak about his experience to his family. What is there for him to say: that their lives are entirely unreal, a construction inseparable from a fantasy? The echoes in Gordimer's fiction are manifold, all the way from her very early story 'Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?' to *July's People*. Homi Bhabha, following Heidegger, describes the unhomely as the "hither side" of the future, a different kind of presencing into the now of an alternate homing to come (7, 18). If this is so in a story such as this, however, it is more likely a presencing into a continuing "interregnum", the undefined space of the past-present-future that Gordimer so notably defined in her essay, 'Living in the Interregnum' (1988d).[10]

Let me explore the implications of what I have been tracing, in almost a geometrical fashion. When the runner in 'Keeping Fit' finds himself in the black settlement, the parallel universe he has entered is on the same horizontal plane as his home environment, but to him it is a kind of underworld, half-intimated but unknown. If we think back to 'Once Upon a Time' in this perspective, we see that one builds high walls (topped with razor wire) to keep the horizontal plane at bay, to

[10] See Samuelson for a thoughtful account of the motif of home in South African fiction, and what it might mean "to move beyond the liminal threshold moment of transition" (130).

keep intruders out. But the intruders are, in a sense, already inside; they inhabit the home as part of its subconscious, and high walls only reinforce that dynamic. There is an interplay, in other words, between the horizontal (here/there) and the vertical (up/down) in the construction of the apartheid home, and this is very much part of the topology of Gordimer's fictional home.[11] What it suggests, in the phase we see in *Jump*, as well as elsewhere in Gordimer's late-apartheid work, is that the uncanny is no longer simply "below" – things that should have remained hidden, in Freud's resonant formulation – but that it has risen to the horizontal surface. It is next-door, on the streets, in the parallel universe, "something out there", to adapt the title of another of Gordimer's stories, but almost here.

Vertical and horizontal: this is akin to Roman Jakobson's distinction between the metaphoric plane of substitution and the metonymic plane of contiguity (1971).[12] In the late-apartheid era, in these paired and doubled stories, the uncanny is no longer vertical, a matter of above and below. Rather it is now metonymic, contiguous. *Jump* was published in 1991. In my reading, the horizontal uncanny presents a fairly exact fictional rendition of the state of the (white) South African home on the brink of its half-known but still shadowed future. This is the dialectic between the narrow and wide senses of Gordimer's home in a new, transitional phase.

Unsafe Houses: Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Home

Let me end briefly with another pairing of two stories in the collection which sharpen these motifs and topologies.

'Safe Houses' (the name itself resonates) tells the story of "Harry", a white man who is a member of the anti-apartheid Movement, moving around Johannesburg, evading capture by the police.[13] In this regard

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[11] For more on some of these dynamics, see Clingman (2016).

[12] Jakobson later acknowledged that the distinction between metaphor and metonymy was not hard and fast (1981, 42). For commentary, see Clingman (2009, 13-15).

[13] Insofar as Harry is a former lawyer who has absconded from his trial there are echoes of the life of Bram Fischer, who led the defence of Nelson Mandela and the other accused at the Rivonia Trial and later absconded from his own trial before being recaptured and sentenced to life imprisonment. It was a story Gordimer knew well; see Gordimer (1988c).

there are key evocations of the vertical and horizontal. Harry is "underground" as part of the Movement, yet his movement is decidedly horizontal as he traverses the surface of the city. A random meeting on a bus with a white woman initiates the action: she takes him to her house, where they have an affair, but where he is also safe. Chains of deception are involved: he in relation to her, she in relation to her husband. Behind high walls, the house becomes an interior that both includes and excludes Harry, just as he and the woman both open up to and exclude one another. Harry's evasive routes across the city are not routine, but they are deliberate: this is de Certeau with a difference. Equally, there is a parallel between his navigation and his narrative – the stories of his background he concocts improvisationally by way of explanation for the woman. On occasion, in these slidings across the surface of his life, there is a hint of doubleness, of concealed meaning or the symbolic, and therefore of depth: he tells the woman that he is an "engineer", that his "construction work" sometimes involves destroying "old structures" (191). He also says he is no "armchair politician" (198), which in his case is quite true. Harry's reality is parallel to the woman's, at one remove, and the walls which mark what Gordimer calls the "fortress" (193) of her home are the dividing line which both keep him out and let him in unknowingly. The vertical cannot keep out the horizontal, and this is the point of a story with multiple paradoxes, chief among them the reality that Harry is working to undermine the safety of the house that keeps him safe. Or, more accurately, to undermine the political and historical foundations (depth, again) of the "safe house" of apartheid South Africa. The underneath and the outside are in a sense closing in on the home. The repressed has risen, the "double" is defined by x-coordinates rather than y-. This is the figuration of Gordimer's home in the transitional phase.

And 'Amnesty', the story that closes the volume? If 'Safe Houses' advances the story of 'Once Upon a Time' with its tale of paradoxical walls, then 'Amnesty' is the extension of 'The Ultimate Safari'. Again, like the latter, it involves a young black woman, telling a first-person narrative. Again, irony, doubleness, are left out of the picture. At one key moment the young woman who has seen her lover imprisoned on Robben Island (another "safe house", one might say) remarks the following: "I've been thinking we haven't got a home because there wasn't time to build a house before he came from the Island; but we haven't got a home at all. Now I've understood that" (254). This is the home in both the narrow and wide senses, conjoining a story of both the private and public

unhomely. The man is released early from Robben Island, his "amnesty", but then travels away again in further work for the Movement. This is the way the story ends, with the young woman's thoughts:

> […] I'm waiting. Waiting for him to come back.
> Waiting.
> I'm waiting to come back home. (257)

Those words in Gordimer's fiction are never accidental. The idea of "coming back" relates directly to the ANC slogan of the 1950s: "*Mayibuye! Afrika!*" – "Africa! May it come back!" They are similar to the words with which she closed *The Conservationist*, when the black body rises to the surface and reclaims the land: "he had come back. He took possession of this earth, theirs; one of them" (Gordimer 1978, 267).

That was 1974, a visionary moment, when the practical possibilities of the end of apartheid seemed all but infinitely distant. In 1991 the feeling is different, and the ending of 'Amnesty' is significant in two respects. One is that, instead of the murdered black man rising, now it is a young black woman, alive, speaking about coming home. There is a transition in her words from waiting for her husband to return, to waiting in her own right. Though still subject in some respects, she is already on the surface of her world; her waiting marks postponement, but it is also anticipatory.[14] This marks the second important aspect, for what the young woman awaits is the reconciliation of both versions of the home: the place of habitation, and the country of belonging. This may be a renewed version of hospitality in which the land is hospitable to all who live in it, in which walls are open rather than closed, the reconciliation of horizontal and vertical in which there can be a new and unconcealed topology of equality and peace. It is as always the home of the future.

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[14] For a study invoking the capacities of "resistive waiting", see Lagji.

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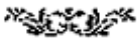
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