

## London Cape Town Joburg.

Zukiswa Wanner.

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Published in 2014, Zukiswa Wanner's *London Cape Town Joburg* depicts the harrowing consequences of alienation arising from the cultural mix typical of migration in the contemporary globalised world. Racial and cultural mixing is facilitated by both colonialism and characters' migration from London (1994–1998) to Cape Town (1998–2008) and lastly to Johannesburg (2008–2011). These three cities and timeframes constitute the three parts of the novel. Wanner's main objective in the novel is to highlight the fragmentation that results from the othering that stems from cultural mixing and globalisation. According to Frantz Fanon (182), being othered causes the collapse of people's psyches and this leads to fragmentation. It is this fragmentation that is represented in *London Cape Town Joburg*. In short, *London Cape Town Joburg* is a story of marginalised people who exist in a binary opposition with dominant groups. Their subsequent feeling of otherness results in fragmented states such as depression, cultural confusion and suicidal ideation.

The three major settings in which the marginalised characters exist each have dominant groups that relegate the protagonists of the novel to 'others' and, in so doing, ignite self-fragmentation in these characters. Martin, the hero of the novel, is adopted and raised by an Irish foster father after the divorce of his biological father and mother. While strolling in London with his adoptive father, a white man refers to Martin as a "monkey" (139). When he matures, Martin marries Germaine and they are blessed with a son, Zuko. Martin migrates to South Africa to protect Zuko from racial othering. In Cape Town, Black people are favoured over so-called coloured people. While Black people are given greater responsibilities, "[b]iracial persons are assumed to benefit from affirmative action" (182) and they are therefore not selected for promotion. In Johannesburg, Liam, Martin's elder brother, tells Germaine that in the city, "race is everything" (125). When Germaine counsels her friend Victoria against blaming her worker, Noma, for her liaison with Victoria's husband, she gets infuriated and describes her as a "self-righteous posh British bint" (205). Germaine wonders how her race factors into the altercation.

Wanner circumvents linear plot and uses flashbacks. The novel starts with the demise of Zuko, Martin and Germaine's only child. Zuko commits

suicide and as the readers seek to understand the cause, they are taken through a long drawn-out flashback to arrive at it. Christopher Ball and Jennifer Little (175) observe that through flashbacks, traumatised people relive the ways in which their lives have been disrupted. It is therefore appropriate that Wanner uses narrative flashbacks to explore how the different characters, Zuko, Martin and Germaine's lives have been disrupted. The flashbacks in the novel suggest that being othered have disrupted Martin and Germaine's lives. This includes them being othered in terms of class by Martin's brother, Liam. Aware that he is richer and more influential than they are, Liam takes advantage and sexually molests their son, Zuko (332). Martin and Germaine feel helpless and the present of the novel is interrupted by flashbacks to this traumatic event.

The different characters in the novel exhibit the fragmentation of the self through depression, cultural confusion and suicide stemming from diverse states of being othered. Richard Gray defines a fragmented self as a self "in turmoil," a "fractured self" (264). Martin reports that while in London, Liam got into "numerous fights" with white children and that teachers described him as "aggressive and angry" (140). Apart from the relationship between Martin and Liam, class othering is also evident when Liam's wife, Jenny, leaves him for a richer man (155). As previously mentioned, Martin migrates to South Africa in an attempt to protect him from racism, but in so doing he delivers Zuko into the hands of a sex predator—Liam.

Martin's biological father neglected him and is deeply hurt to learn that he is alive. When he reconciles with him, he cons him out of all his savings and this also contributes to Martin's psychological fragmentation (313). Germaine is othered because of her gender in her marriage, as Martin relegates her and his mother to inferior positions in the household because they are women (318). When the novel begins, Germaine avoids her husband's company and cries a lot by herself (9), possibly because she reckons that her husband's male acquaintances have led to Zuko's death.

Zuko is othered because of his age and class. His parents migrate to South Africa without consulting him and he loses friends (240); he can only give expression to his melancholy through writing in his personal journals.

Wanner uses different stylistic devices to express the characters' fragmented psyches, including private journals, first-person narration, lexical deviation and illeism. Zuko writes a number of passages in his private journals as an outlet for his disturbed mind. In one

journal, he reveals that he is haunted by xenophobic attacks in South Africa. He is traumatised by the picture of an immigrant being lynched on television (239). His last journal entry relays his harrowing defilement at the hands of his uncle Liam (332–3). The first-person narration takes the form of monologues in which characters express their traumatic experiences.

In conclusion, Wanner's *London Cape Town Joburg* focuses on the psychological challenges marginal groups face in their interaction with dominant groups. Immigrant characters experience cultural alienation and confusion while women and children become bitter because of how they are othered due to their age and gender, respectively.

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