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Katrin Harvey

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Declaration of Authenticity

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Katrin Harvey
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1. Introduction

*But she hath lost a dearer thing than life*

*And he hath won what he would lose again.*

Years after the downfall of apartheid not much has changed for many people in South Africa. Additionally, as victims of double discrimination it is women who bear the greatest cross. The much hailed idea of *Black Renaissance* that took over from Nelson Mandela’s legislation put an end to the rose-tinted view people held of a (quick and easy) solution to the problem of apartheid, a terrible ideology which cannot be overcome within a decade. Nonetheless, achievements have also been made throughout this time period. The economy has thrived, housing has improved and urban growth has soared. South Africa is on the rise and can without a doubt be called one of the most developed countries on the continent. All this has also led to societal changes in the country, some of which are positive and some negative. Often the difference between acceptable change and problematic change lies in the eye of the beholder. Not unlike many other countries, be they “developed” or not, there is a huge difference between the ways the different population groups conduct their lives. More globalized ideologies and Western ideas concerning certain ways of thinking (especially health and racial equality) have only been able to get a partial foothold and many people in rural and poor urban areas still cling to very traditional belief systems about certain issues such as AIDS or gender relations. Equally important, the interest in South Africa and its current tribulations has led to the misconception that many issues have only arisen recently and only in South Africa. With regard to the topic of rape, problematic conditions such as child rape (nowadays hailed as a cure for AIDS) have existed for a long time and therefore, these “new” discussions are at the most a breaking of taboos and can be unveiled as a constructed way of explaining a horrendous atrocity.

Novelists in the past decade have tried to portray the lives of people in the country and their interaction with others. They show their audience how reality works in South Africa, in their eyes, a reality that not many people are willing to talk about openly, especially those topics that are still considered taboos and not suitable for

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public discussion. It is not surprising, therefore, that when asked about their political
ingclinations in their novels authors deny their involvement in any political thought.
This was made obvious during a literary symposium in Vienna in March 2006:
Whenever the audience asked questions with a political connotation the answers
were evaded. Yet, it is obvious that South African writers express different views of
the world than writers of other countries. In a more detailed investigation, it is their
personal backgrounds that distinguish writers from others, even from the same
country. Consequently, their novels and the characters within these novels treat
certain topics in very specific ways depending on the context particular novels are set
in. This is also reflected in the author’s literary style, the perspective he/she uses or
his/her . It is in this environment that we need to ask ourselves whether it is art that
imitates life, or if it is life that imitates art. Most writers who were present at the
literary symposium mentioned above would probably argue that they write for the
sake of writing.

Many critical voices have been heard uttering a certain skepticism that analyzing the
topic of rape within the boundaries of South African Literature might be a very
constricted way of addressing this delicate subject. However, literature is a way of
conveying realities to others, and it can be a mirror of one society, which shows the
world what the issues at present are. By choosing authors for this analysis who are
well known to a wide range of audiences (including authors who have won a Nobel
Prize), and are from different backgrounds and incorporate both genders, such an
analysis will prove those critics wrong and will give a good overview of the topic. As
aforementioned, it is often through art that certain topics are dealt with the best.

The immediacy of the cultural and political problems addressed by postcolonial
writing often gives that literature a relationship to reality that seems more
direct and urgent than that found in Western literature.\(^2\)

In the light of this statement the discussion of a social problem in novels of
postcolonial writers is well justifiable. Not only that, it is even necessary to speak of
these issues as “[l]iterature and other forms of artistic expression have an unruly way
of not only reflection but also actively spilling into reality.”\(^3\) Where colonialism
worked as a silencer to the colonized voices, now, after it has been overcome, the

\(^3\) Katrak 2006. p. xiii.
voices must be heard loud and clear. Through colonization the colonized people were forced into the realm of the inferior other. This inferiority was pertained through physical violence, epistemic violence (the colonized people’s knowledge was ignored), ontological violence (un-assimilated indigenous people were denied a status as human beings) and symbolic and psychological violence – “the silencing of the voice of the colonized, the denial of the latter’s ability to tell his or her story”

Rape is a horrible crime, which must be seen not only as a crime between a perpetrator (or multiple perpetrators) and a victim but which holds many a meaning in today’s world. When using it as a tool for the analysis of novels, one must not only analyze its different definitions and explanations but also its impact on the personal and the societal sphere of life. Rape is a means of conveying a power relation between the oppressor and the oppressed, even today it is used as a way of keeping women in their pre-ascribed spheres of activities, out of which it is hard to escape. Evidently, rape cannot be restricted to a man-on-woman crime, but includes many different spheres of this act. However, for the novels being analyzed here there is only a male-on-female rape, as the homosexual realm would burst the bonds of this thesis.

Coping with crime and overcoming the traumatic events of one’s past are major aspects in the novels. In only one, Gem Squash Tokoloshe, the victim does not survive and the rapist is not punished. Also in this novel, there is no mention of impregnation. The rape of a black woman by a white man is not politically stimulated and is not placed in a political frame, other than the narrative time of the late 1980s. Bitter Fruit and Disgrace both focus on interracial rape that is spurred by apartheid’s regulations and its aftermath, while in the first the rape is committed during apartheid, the latter is rooted in the past but happens because of retaliation. I Speak to the Silent has an intra-racial rape at its core which shatters the belief system of a black father. Astonishingly, the latter three novels all have multiple rapes in their plot, which are used as a framework for the main deed.

The rapes are all used as a starting point from which the story unfolds and are the cause of certain events that follow, be it the conception of a child or the murder of

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4 Couze 2006. p. 11.
the perpetrator. Furthermore, by using rape as a metaphor for the way people (not only the victim) try to overcome a trauma and try to continue their lives the authors elaborate on acute issues such as forgiveness and revenge, breaking the silence, the various truths of a shared memory, faith and belief systems, modern visions of reality, relationships in a new-found country, generational conflict, gender issues and racism and eventually the role of the author in a post-colonial world.
2. What is rape?

Rape is one of the most complex and controversial crimes that can be committed against another human being. However, it is also one of the oldest. People may think that rape is something that only happens very seldom, but in fact it is an astonishingly common crime all over the world. The problem is that people who were raped do not want to come forward with it, mostly out of shame. Today still, despite frequent confrontation with sexuality in everyday life – be it in advertisements, awareness commercials, biology classes in school, TV shows, Hollywood movies or others – it is not easy to speak about one’s own sexuality with strangers. Thus, though the mass of people do not hear about it, it is still there.

In the USA, for example there are 89 110\(^5\) rapes every year (that is 30\% of all rapes in the world\(^6\)), and in South Africa there are 53 008\(^1\) (17,9\% of rapes worldwide annually). These figures cover the period of time between 1998 and 2000 and suggest that the USA might be the country where the danger of being raped is the highest. However, if we compare the rapes figures with the number of people living in the respective countries, South Africa is the country with the highest rape per capita ratio\(^7\), with an estimated 1,2 people in 1 000 who are raped. In contrast to this, the USA fall back on rank 9, with 0,3 people in 1 000 who are victims of a rape. Hence, it is not surprising that South Africa is constantly referred to when speaking of a rape crisis. There also exist NGOs, who are exclusively dedicated to victims of rape with tell-tale names such as Rape Crisis\(^8\) and the National Network on Violence on Women\(^9\).

It is necessary to understand the legal implications when speaking of crimes. For the grounded analysis we should know what the law classifies as rape. In South Africa, the law says the following about rape:

\(^5\) Nationmaster 2005a.
\(^6\) These figures must be taken with a pinch of salt, as any statistic must be. There are virtually no rapes reported in Arab countries, which might suggest that there are no rapes in those countries, but only means that women do not report rapes that they have endured.
\(^7\) Nationmaster 2005b.
\(^8\) http://www.rapecrisis.org.za/, also referred to in Wittmann 2005, page 224.
A person who unlawfully and intentionally commits an act which causes penetration to any extent whatsoever by the genital organs of that person into or beyond the anus or genital organs of another person, or any act which causes penetration to any extent whatsoever by the genital organs of another person into or beyond the anus or genital organs of the person committing the act, is guilty of the offence of rape.\textsuperscript{10}

This means, that rape consists of a penetration by a genital organ (most probably a penis) into the anus or genital organs of someone else, or of forcing someone else to penetrate into the genital organs of the offender. This has to be “in any coercive circumstance, under false pretences (…) or in respect of a person who is incapable in law of appreciating the nature of an act which causes penetration.”\textsuperscript{11} Furthermore, the document also comments on the marital status of the victim and the perpetrator, stating that marriage (past or present) is not an acceptable defence.\textsuperscript{12} All other ways of penetrating bodily orifices – human or animal - , which do not include a genital organ as means of penetration are not considered rape but sexual violation or oral genital sexual violations.

Other explanations that do not have a legal background have different definitions of rape:

“Human copulation resisted by the victim to the best of her ability unless such resistance would probably result in death or serious injury to her or in death or injury to others she commonly protects.”\textsuperscript{13}

This definition, though broader, has its pitfalls. On the one hand, it also only considers rape when there is “human copulation”. This term is a very broad one and therefore lacks an in-depth explanation of what is considered as human copulation. On the other hand, the fact that it includes the victim’s resistance “to the best of her ability” gives the offender a possibility to be acquitted if there are no signs of this resistance on his body. Also, women react very differently to rape, which will be further explained below, this very often bearing a passive stance. Furthermore, the use of the female pronoun limits the definition to a female victim, which is not the case in the legal definition or in real life. In all-male situations, as prisons, it is not

\textsuperscript{10} Republic of South Africa 2003, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Cf Ibid, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{13} Estrich, 1987 cited in Thornhill, 2000, p. 150.
uncommon that men rape men. However, despite the frequency of male-on-male rapes remains a taboo as many people still consider rape to be a crime committed for sexual reasons and not because they want to exert power over their victim, this will also be discussed below\textsuperscript{14}.

2.1. Why do people rape?

This question cannot be answered with a simple explanation. There are several theories which try to give the reader an insight into what makes a perpetrator commit a rape. Of course there can never be one sole theory that explains the reasons behind every single rape. Also, there are many ideas and presuppositions in people’s minds, which have been discovered and labelled as rape myths. Perpetrators sometimes try to get out of the trouble by stating that the victim had wanted intercourse and that a woman’s “no” must be interpreted as a “yes” or other such prejudices.

The usual way of trying to understand and portray the reasons behind a rape is based on a balance between psychology and sociology. Rape is understood as an act of violence, when a rapist tries to exert power over the victim – sometimes as an outlet for his frustration over the denial of this power -, an act that is carried out through sexuality. Sexuality, therefore, is an instrument and not the cause of an assault\textsuperscript{15}. An indication for this is that some men are not fully potent during a rape, that they have difficulties ejaculating or cannot have an orgasm after a rape has taken place\textsuperscript{16}. Feldmann\textsuperscript{17} further provides a system of classifying rapists. The first kind is the anger rape, which is the most common kind of perpetration, where the rapist takes out his anger on the victim. This perpetrator has a low level of tolerance towards frustration. The second kind is the so-called power rapist. For this kind of rape it is far more important for the rapist to exert his power over the victim. There is usually less violence involved, but the rapist can only achieve sexual satisfaction through humiliation and subjugation of the victim. The third kind is very infrequent: the

\textsuperscript{14} In this paper, I will use the female pronoun whenever addressing a rape victim, simply because the majority are women. I am fully aware that rape victims can also be men or children. Should there be an instance where I only refer to men or children, I will explicitly point to it.

\textsuperscript{15} Cf Feurer 2001, p.7.


\textsuperscript{17}Cf Ibid, p. 7 ff.
sadist rape. In this case the rapist lives through his sadist fantasies during the crime. However, rapes within relationships (marriage, partners, friends, colleagues etc.) are not included in this characterization, because these rapes are hardly ever reported and are therefore not available for analysis. During a rape the victim is generally depersonalized, attractiveness for example is not considered a trigger for a rapist to attack a certain woman. There have been reports of rapes of children and babies as well as rapes of octogenarians, which would support the statement of attractiveness not being a major factor when choosing a rape victim.

Some scholars consider rape as a crime that purports a hegemonic ideology, namely that of the male part of society. It can be seen as a tool for all men to show all women that they are in control. This need not involve every man raping every woman, but it is sufficient that every man has the ability to rape every woman. This theory was first made public in the 1970s by Susan Brownmiller.\(^\text{18}\) She considers the crime as the one essential way of subjugating women. Many women even play by the rules set by men, without knowing it. The fact that women need to be careful when walking alone at night, when hitch hiking or flirting in a bar, because they will then make themselves easily available as a rape victim is only made possible by rape and the rapist. This was also the case in war, when rape was used as another weapon against a people. Sadly, the slogan “Stop the Rape of Vietnam”\(^\text{19}\) did not mean the rape of Vietnam’s women, but the rape of the country. Women were not included in this view. The same holds true for the rape of slave women in the US. Raping one’s slave was not only considered semi-legal, but also necessary to provide the household with more labourers. Brownmiller demands that “the nation’s entire lawful power structure (...) must be stripped of male dominance and control – if women are to cease being a colonized protectorate of men”\(^\text{20}\).

One of the most disputed theories on rape is the one based on evolutionary theory.\(^\text{21}\) In this explanation of rape, based on evolutionary theory, sexuality and sexual desire are the major triggers of rape. Even in war, men rape women because of sexual motivations and not because they want to humiliate their enemy, rape is not an

\(^{18}\) Brownmiller, 1975.
\(^{19}\) Ibid, p. 113.
\(^{20}\) Ibid, p. 388.
\(^{21}\) Cf Thornhill 2000.
instrument of social control because it cannot be excluded that “sexual feelings are not also involved”\textsuperscript{22}, and even convicted rapists have stated that they raped primarily for sexual reasons. This explanation omits the notion on male-on-male as well as child rape as these rapes are not carried out to produce offspring and would challenge their own rationale.

Here, scientists try to explain rape by taking into account the evolution of the human species. The gist of the theory is that rape has nothing to do with power relations or violence but is best explained via biological developments of humans’ sexuality and psychology. Scholars try to show that it is the male’s urge to produce as much offspring as possible that forces him to rape a female. Because women have to invest much more effort into reproduction (pregnancy, breast feeding, maternal care…) they choose the prospective fathers of their children very carefully. This is based on different factors, such as health and good looks as well as financial and social stability. Men, on the other hand, need not dedicate so much effort to reproduction and can hence sow their wild oats freely. Every man strives to have as much offspring as possible, but is restrained by their more selective female counterparts. That is why they need to force them to copulate; it is in their evolutionary code to impregnate as many women as possible to secure their genetic line. “Rape behaviour arises from elements of men’s sexual nature – their sexual psychology. This psychology is characteristic of men in general”\textsuperscript{23}. Since rape is understood as part of men’s general psychology it confirms Brownmiller’s theory that every man has the potential – and now also the psychology – to rape every woman.

The reason why men do not rape constantly (as the supporters of evolutionary explanation of rape put it!) is their ability to evaluate the potential risks which could be involved, including a calculated resistance from the victim, or retaliation from her or her family. Besides men’s urge to reproduce as frequently as possible, there are also other factors that enhance their rape potential. These can include their socioeconomic status (how rich they are), their lack of access to willing women, their upbringing and their experience with women in general. It seems here that the scholars are making an effort to bridge the gap between a nature and nurture

\textsuperscript{22} Thornhill 2000, p. 135.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, p. 194.
explanation of behaviour, which is odd in the frame of their general argument relying so heavily on a biological construction of the human psyche.

There are other theories that try to explain the reasons for rape. For example, the theory based on Freudian ideas which states that women secretly wish to be raped, or a theory on men’s being the victims of society who try to “take revenge” on the females in his life (mother, teachers etc)\textsuperscript{24}. It is also necessary to mention that rape must be also categorized as a form of torture. Women would be raped to extract information from them or from their male companions. Especially in war times and times of struggle would a woman have to face this form of torture, and despite the fact that men were and are also raped, they still have to bear the brunt of the threat\textsuperscript{25}.

2.2. Rape myths

There are certain notions and ideas that people have about rapes, though these are sometimes true, they are very often a product of fear, irrationality and unreliable information on the crime. Scientists have detected these assumptions about rape and have analysed not only the prejudices that form them but also their impact on society’s understanding of rape. There are four such persistent myths, which are worth mentioning. These are the stereotypes of the unknown perpetrator, of the kind of women who experience a rape; a woman’s secret wish of being raped and the bad reputation of women who were raped\textsuperscript{26}. Another way of labelling the myths concentrates on four classifications concerning women and one about men. In this case women are labelled as having made up an accusation without a crime ever taking place that “no harm was done”, that she was the one who initiated the crime and that “she deserved it”. Presuppositions about men who rape, according to this system, are that they must be insane and that men in general have problems with controlling their sexuality which only reacts to female provocations\textsuperscript{27}. Some of these stereotypes also come up in other texts on attitudes towards rape victims, where the way a woman was dressed or how attractive she was were counted against her.

\textsuperscript{24} Cf Mörrth 1994, pp. 43-45.
\textsuperscript{25} For further information on a woman’s fate see Kaplan, 2002.
\textsuperscript{26} Cf Feurer 2001, pp. 14-16.
\textsuperscript{27} Cf Ibid pp. 23-28.
same holds true for her lifestyle which was also taken into account when being judged by the people in her immediate surroundings\textsuperscript{28}.

2.3. Reactions of rape victims, their families and the public

Understanding what a rape victim endures during and after a rape is essential for an analysis of rape. For most women rape “causes a serious life crisis”\textsuperscript{29}. This does not only include direct physical and psychological suffering from the crime, but also her secondary victimization. The term \textit{rape trauma syndrome} was coined to identify these specific reactions, which will be discussed below. Furthermore it is also necessary to comprehend how the near family (or family-like structures, like her circle of friends) reacts once they find out about what happened to the victim and how the public views the victim, e.g. during a trial.

During the rape victims react differently, depending on (among others) their perceptions of the world, men and themselves. On the one hand, there are cognitive strategies that victims try to use: thinking about a way out, memorizing distinguishing marks of the rapist, concentrating on a single thought. A common way of this reaction can be found in the nineteenth century, when women were reported to “Lie back and think of England.” The origins of this idiom cannot be traced back to its initial utterance. But the fact that it came up during the heydays of colonialism has a high significance in this discussion.

There are also verbal strategies that a victim may try, such as talking soothingly to the rapist, and physical strategies like fighting or trying to escape\textsuperscript{30}. Fighting with the perpetrator can be very important later on, when a conviction might become difficult without marks that prove a battle between the victim and the assailant\textsuperscript{31}. There are also reactions which work on a psychological level. Most women feel ashamed during a rape, sometimes they feel so frightened that they believe their life is in danger (which might be the case). Often they are frightened to such a level that they are immobilized not only physically –restraining themselves

\textsuperscript{28} Cf Allison 1993, pp. 122-126.
\textsuperscript{29} Mörtl 1994, p. 105 (my translation).
\textsuperscript{31} Cf Estrich 1987, p. 19.
from fighting the assailant- but also psychologically. In its utmost stage of regression this can lead to the victim’s feeling pity for their rapist. However, the fear that a victim feels during the rape can also lead to a full subjugation of the victim, which amplifies the immobilization to such a degree that psychologists speak of shock or

*frozen fright*.

Shortly after the rape victims likewise do not react in a standard way. While most victims remain in a state of shock and are unable to believe what happened, some appear confused and shaken, and some appear very collected and focused. Many women quickly adapt to their daily routine after this initial phase of shock which is usually only a superficial coping because they are afraid of facing their feelings. A rape can lead to a serious life crisis, which eventually evolves into a crisis of identity when the relationship between the self and the body has degenerated. The body is perceived as a hindrance for the self (it is vulnerable and might react with illness and psychosomatic disease) and is rejected by the self. The body becomes an object and is no longer subject for the woman’s identity. The fact that “blaming oneself may be the second most common reaction after fear” will further the victim’s perception of no longer being in control of themselves. These reactions all happen shortly after the rape and can last up to a year.

After that phase, scholars generally speak of long-term reactions. These very often result in phobias and general fear, but also in depression, sensitivity toward stress and familial adapting to everyday life. However, these long-term reactions are different for every woman and usually do not follow a certain pattern. It can happen that if the victim is not treated psychologically, she may encounter a state of mind where the phobias or other symptoms of distress can become chronic. This is usually the case when the victim does not deal with the situation immediately. If she speaks about her rape she will be able to connect certain issues with the crime. Women who do not deal with the situation will have difficulty in finding the

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connections between the ramifications of the rape\textsuperscript{38} and the rape as such. If the victim cannot unload her feelings she will start to suppress them. Suppression will eventually “immure [the victim’s] personality”\textsuperscript{39}. Also, rape can lead to a general sense of insecurity and many women tend to feel guilty for having become the victim of a rape.

For all the reactions that victims show, there is no one distinct form of dealing and healing. The ways that women (or men) cope with the rape can differ according to age, intelligence and social standing of the victim, the force used during the crime (and whether or not you can detect signs of such force) and the actual penetration.

In the public eyes, a rape victim is not seen with the same empathy as a victim of any other kind of crime, e.g. a burglary or assault, since often the victim is given (partial) fault for the rape. This different treatment starts in the family or the love relationship. Usually it is necessary for the victim to open up to someone that she trusts, however, the inappropriate reactions of those closest to her might lead her further into depression and trauma. Rape was long considered a crime against the father, husband or other males in the close vicinity of the victim. Therefore the reactions of these associates have been varied and sometimes have enhanced a woman’s inability to cope with the crime. Victims have reported that they couldn’t tell their families out of fear of being reprimanded or even expelled\textsuperscript{40}. The first and very natural reactions of lovers or family members, such as anger and confusion might be misunderstood by the victim. She might interpret these reactions as being held against herself and her behavior. The best way of reacting is listening calmly without too much physical contact\textsuperscript{41}.

The same holds true for the whole of society. Since in rape cases the victim’s way of life is scrutinized the public ascribes parts of the guilt towards her. This is hardly ever the case when prosecuting e.g. assault or theft. The existence of rape myths (as mentioned above) also contributes a large part to the common preconceptions of rape and rape victims. One way of trying to understand people’s reactions toward rape

\textsuperscript{38} e.g.: shame, guilt, nightmares etc.
\textsuperscript{39} Mörh 1994, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{40} Feldmann 1992, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{41} Cf Allison 1993, p. 221ff.
and rape victims is the idea of a just world, or the *Just World Theory*. In general, individuals have a certain way of seeing and grasping the world. Mostly people will think that bad things cannot happen to them, because they always happen to the others. Also, people tend to think that incidents don’t just happen randomly. They – or we Westerners – are usually convinced that if we behave correctly, nothing bad will happen to us because we are good persons. This forms our perceptions of rape victims. In a just world, rapes only happen to people who deserve it or who provoked it in some kind of way. That is why we tend to put the blame on the victim. Not only do the bystanders and witnesses draw such conclusions, but also the victims themselves\(^42\).

The wrong kinds of reactions might be encountered at the ward, at the hospital, in the circle of acquaintances and the courtroom. In almost every one of these situations a victim might have to face the ordeal of a so-called secondary victimization. In most cases secondary victimization consists of reliving the rape while telling other people about what happened. This can happen several times, e.g. at the different departments of a ward. The personnel may be educated in treating victims of rapes, but need not be. Therefore this retelling of the crime might be as traumatic as the crime itself. Even in hospitals that have especially trained staff there is also a tendency of “blaming the victim”, as victims who could not have anticipated a rape (e.g. children) are treated more friendly and compassionately than victims that have a less acceptable background, such as prostitutes\(^43\). In publicly speaking about their rape a woman could be socially stigmatized as the “Rape Victim”, and might consider it as a flaw, the bright scarlet letter attached to her coat. This can lead to the inability to fully partake in a social life and not being able to receive acceptance in society. In order to avoid this path, victims will recoil from others, move further into their self and neglect or even ignore their feelings and shut themselves away from the world. As a direct consequence to this seclusion victims will also experience economical or psychological hardship (and they might no longer be able to concentrate on their school/job). They are no longer self-confident and might even start to fully rely on somebody else to take care of them\(^44\).

\(^{42}\) Cf ibid, p. 127ff.

\(^{43}\) Cf ibid, p. 223.

\(^{44}\) Cf Mörh 1994, p. 128ff.
Defining the crime of rape and its effects on the victims, the perpetrators and society as such is a task that is not easily achieved. There is no simple answer as there are many factors and circumstances that must be considered. Over the past years there have been great steps into the right direction which have stripped the myths and provided the public with a more sober explanation and definition of it. And yet, there are still the presuppositions that are persistent in every man and every woman. There might be an easy answer to the first question in this chapter: Rape is “the ultimate violation of the self.” But this can only be true, if we widen our understanding of “self”. It is the victim’s identity that is shattered; it is the victim’s body that is injured; it is the rapist’s ideology that is amiss; it is a society’s values and a people’s safety that are violated.

45 Feldmann 1992, p. 27.
3. Rape in South Africa

As mentioned above, the state of South Africa is suffering from an overwhelming problem with regard to violence and especially the crime of rape. Therefore it is necessary to look closer at these issues in the course of the state’s recent history. In the past thirty years, South Africa has gone through a tremendous political change that has logically affected its society in all aspects of daily life. This includes a shift in the value systems and a change of roles of the individuals.

Political change is as much viewed with skepticism as with optimism. It means a reorganization of society and often those in power are not in favor of change if it advances those who are less powerful. Women are usually not in the top position (compared to men); and their counterparts are usually not willing to step down. Once political change has taken place and men understand that they have not in fact changed much about their own position in the society concerned they tend to take their frustration out on those who are “below them in status”. In the average patriarchal society, those who suffer most are women. One tool to keep them in subjugation is rape. The crime is used as a way of putting women in their place, it should remind them of “their essential and inalterable femaleness”.

In South Africa as much as in many other parts of the world, the classic understanding of gender ideologies, is that as long as men are in the working force, they feel powerful and masculine. Women on the other hand, as they usually have the role of wife and mother in “normal” or traditional family structures, become social inferiors and objects.

3.1. Colonial history

“Because, when man conquers the world, he also conquers woman.”

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46 Green 1999, p. 68.
South Africa’s colonial history, just like so many other countries, is often understood as the white man occupying a barren country, a white spot on the map and making it his own. The indigenous people are objectified (subjected in the empire, but at the same time made objects in relation to the white man, the acting subject) and often forced into slavery, if not killed or forced to flee their country. The reader of African history books, most of them written for and by Europeans, will have to look hard to find a mentioning of the indigenous people and their stance on these struggles. If they are mentioned, it concerns their chiefs being tricked out of power by cunning European politicians and business men.

When the first Dutch people settled around the Cape of Good Hope in the 17th century to become farmers in Africa, nobody could have known to what it would lead. It would not take long before the British arrived a hundred years later and would in the end fight a war against the Boers in the famous Second Boer War (or South African War) of 1899, which led to the incorporation of the former free states of Dutch settlers in the British Empire.

Travelogues written by British travelers in the nineteenth century are full of racist depictions of Africans and their women. Most of these travelers were male, but there were also European women who travelled the continent, who, because of the racial implications became “honorary males”, a status that was below white males, but above anybody of a different skin color. It comes as no surprise that an African woman went around Europe on a bizarre tour, as a specimen of the African body and its steatopygia. Her name was Saartje Bartman, better known as “The Hottentot Venus” whose remains were finally buried in South Africa as late as the end of the 20th century after being preserved and displayed in European museums. It was then as it is now that the woman’s body is the object of desire and a dehumanized thing to admire. Why, if not because a woman is not fully human, did they use a female body to display and not a male? By the end of the nineteenth century the African body (be it male or female) had become the epitome of hypersexuality, while at the same time,

48 African histories are often retold orally, when a written language doesn’t exist.
51 Cf Mama 1997, p. 66.
52 A word for the body built of Khoisan people, which were seen as having extraordinarily big buttocks.
black women were being convinced by the white colonizers that their bodies were not sexually attractive.\footnote{Young 2003, .p. 152.}

With these thoughts in the back of your mind, it is not hard to make the connection between colonization and the rape of Africa. It was also “in colonial fiction, \[that\] Africa is metaphorically depicted as a female body, which the white male seeks to unveil, penetrate and despoil”\footnote{Ibid p. 67.}. Only when a society can eliminate male dominance in the power structure it is possible for “women (…) to cease being a colonized protectorate of men”\footnote{Brownmiller 1975, p. 389.}. Just like women, the African continent was raped by men\footnote{Or white women, acting as “honorary males”.}. It is the white spot, the virgin land forced into a relationship with white men. In the same way as women are objectified and their body used for display of men’s power in the act of rape, Africa was used to do the very same on a global scale, in times of colonization. It is equally hard eliminate male dominance out of a power structure of a society, as it is hard to take the white men in the power structure of a country (or continent). When speaking of South Africa, the situation had to become worse before it could become any better.

3.2. Apartheid

Only three years after Europe had overcome Nazi rule and ended a war that was based on racism, South Africa started its own system of racial discrimination. The people of South Africa, sadly, had not learnt from Europe’s mistake. One character of Nadine Gordimer’s novel, \textit{None to Accompany Me} puts it like this: “The Nazis didn’t end the war where your parents died, they were reborn here.”\footnote{Gordimer 1994, p. 68.} Rape has played its own role in this political system; it was during this time that the term “rape culture” first emerged.

During the apartheid regime, rape was very common in South Africa, since that era has reinforced the male-dominated power relations in the country. The gender dichotomy was strengthened: Men belonged to the military, powerful part of society,
and women were stuck in the female attributes such as softness, compassion and trust. Manhood was defined in a way of machismo, and traditional African systems of patriarchy slowly dissolved. While masculinity was partly based on employment, the steadily rising unemployment rate among the black population did not only undermine men’s self esteem, but on a more practical side it was no longer possible for them to pay the bridal price, or dowry. Rape slowly turned into the only way to conquer a woman and to show how powerful a man was.

Rape statistics soared and they found no interest in the media. White men were not charged after having raped a black woman (provided that she did speak to the authorities), whereas black men were actually hanged if they dared rape a white woman, something that founded its counterpart in the USA, where the lynching of black men for the alleged rape of a white woman was not unheard of. In the 1950s new laws came into force that prohibited any cross-racial sexual intercourse, including the so-called Immorality Act. This anti-miscegenation law did not forbid marriage between two people of a different race (as there was a separate law for that), but their sexual intercourse. In this way the authorities wanted to make sure that there was a total segregation and that there were no offspring that came from such an “indecent act”. Although this law was enforced just as any other law, it was not a true protection from rape, especially for the black women. For poor black women, being subject to a triple oppression (class, race and gender), rape was thought to be just a part of life, it was an accepted phenomenon.

At the height of apartheid, South Africa was of course not the only country in the world which was facing racial problems, while simultaneously a feminist movement was emerging. Along with this feminist movement came a new consciousness toward rape and its indications. As mentioned above, the USA also had to face racial issues in connection with rape, a situation that was very similar to South Africa: “The myth of the black rapist of white women is the twin of the myth of the bad black woman –

58 Cf Green 1999, p. 70.
59 People who violated against this act were persecuted and sentenced to long prison stays.
60 This means that black women were oppressed through their economic class; via their gender as being female and being controlled by men and their race which was being subjugated by the white population of South Africa.
both designed to apologize for and facilitate the continued exploitation of black men and women (...)\textsuperscript{61}.

Of course this notion goes hand in hand with the pre-established logic of the hypersexual African and would consequently explain white women’s fear of being raped by a black man and black women’s appeal for the white man. Both of these are racist myths that have bloomed in a racist society. While interracial rape was in fact more common, it was the black woman who was the main target of rape, partly on the grounds that it was much easier to attack a black woman. December Green called the effect that this frequent rape had (and still has at some point) on women “mass political terrorism”\textsuperscript{62}.

Before apartheid ended, it was no offence to be violent towards your wife in your home\textsuperscript{63}. Just like in any other country it was hard to establish that rape in a marriage was very much possible and that it should be treated as a crime just like a stranger-rape, when the victim and the rapist haven’t met before.

On the issue of reporting one’s rape, Heather\textsuperscript{64} says that “no black woman would go to a police station. In those days, just to be seen near a police station might mean you were perceived as an informer, your home would be burnt down and you would be killed.” Many women did not report to the police that they had been raped, because they were afraid of the way they would probably be treated by the authorities. Today, this secondary victimization is still a reason why women do not want to place charges against their rapists (be it a stranger or someone they know) although there has been a lot of awareness building going on in the past few years.

As sexism and racism determine each other\textsuperscript{65}, or are at least interrelated, apartheid provided fertile soil for an emerging rape culture in South Africa. A political system which was so much askew and that functioned on the basis of racial premises was prone to eventually lead to an uprising of the subjugated. That the rape situation would not improve but deteriorate in times of armed struggle was foreseeable.

\textsuperscript{61} Davis 1982, p. 174.
\textsuperscript{62} Green 1999, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{63} Cf Maitse 1998.
\textsuperscript{64} cited in Armstrong 1994, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{65} Cf Mörth 1994, p. 34.
3.3. Armed struggle

Ever since apartheid was established there were people fighting against it. The first few uprisings were successfully put down, and the main leaders were put into prison. By the beginning of the 1970s it was becoming evident that the uprisings could not be easily suppressed anymore. The Soweto Uprisings of 1976 where many students were killed can be seen as a trigger for underground movements and armed conflicts with the police. “Rape is used in armed conflicts to intimidate, conquer and control women and their communities. It is used as a form of torture to extract information, punish and terrorize.”

During times of conflict it was common to rape the wives or other affiliated women of the opposing group’s men (soldiers or civilians) to harm them in an indirect way, in order to damage the reproductive functions and social status of these women. As women are seen as the bearers of the morale of the family and society, it is exactly these institutions that are hit when a woman is raped during armed conflict. In these circumstances it can be seen as a political weapon. Not only in South Africa was rape a common tool used to punish the opponents. In the Civil Rights Movement of the USA, a famous Black Panther activist, Eldridge Cleaver, admits that

[r]ape was an insurrectionary act (...) trampling on the white man’s law (...). I was defiling his women [an act which] was the most satisfying to me because I was very resentful over the historical fact of how the white man has used the black woman. I felt I was getting revenge.

In South Africa women’s bodies were used as battlefields, as a ground for shaping a new national identity. Rape is one of the weapons of mass political terrorism, as it can be used for ethnic cleansing by impregnating raped women with “a new race”. This can be put on a level with conquering new territory and its natives. In these instances the rape is no longer an individual act but it becomes the rape of a whole nation. Feminists criticize this stance for neglecting the female’s role in the rape,

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68 Brownmiller 1975, p. 251.
69 Cf Green 1999, p. 88.
e.g. the slogan “Stop the rape of Vietnam” was not a cry for compassion with the rape victims during the war, but concerned the destruction of the country’s crops\textsuperscript{70}.

In general, it is usually the winning side that rapes\textsuperscript{71}. This has shifted in the times of armed struggles in South Africa. While in the beginning it was clearly the whites who were prevailing, that situation changed in the course of time, as slowly those fighting against apartheid were gaining control. However, it is still hard to say who was raping more. What can be said is that the women were the ones who suffered the most, and again it was black women who were more prone to be raped. They were less protected and therefore provided a larger point of attack than white women, who lived in real houses and safe neighborhoods.

Rape is also used as a method of interrogation\textsuperscript{72}. Although women are not usually the ones that have information to give to the enemies, the threat of raping one’s wife, daughter or friend was and is enough to get a man talking. Some women might be involved in political activities or might have information through her husband (or other male affiliates). This kind of rape can no longer be understood as an individual crime between a perpetrator and a victim that happens on a very personal level, but must be interpreted as an act of torture.

During times of armed struggle, especially in the fight for the abolition of apartheid, it is hard for anyone to “stay out of it”. Such a struggle becomes part of the every day life of the country. Even if the direct fight is terrible - and many forms of killing that happened in South Africa, like necklacing, are monstrous acts of inhumanity – women must bear a heavier cross than most men. Admittedly, men can be raped as well, but it is a lot easier and unfortunately more acceptable among men to rape a woman. This is not only the case for the ones directly involved in the fight, but also those women who are raped in the cause of events when “normal men” get frustrated over the consequences the fight has on them.

\textsuperscript{70} Cf Brownmiller 1975, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{71} Cf Mörth 1994, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{72} Cf Ibid, p. 37.
3.4. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

After apartheid had been finally abolished, a commission was brought to life, which guaranteed amnesty to those who committed political crimes during the past thirty years. Any person who was guilty of such a crime could come to one of its meetings, under the presidency of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and ask for amnesty. The commission would then decide if the act was committed under political circumstances and then grant amnesty if there was full disclosure (a different committee would then probably sentence reparation) after also hearing the victims of said acts. Also, human rights abuses were looked into.

The South African legal definition of rape after apartheid is that it is a violation between a man and a woman, involving the penetration of the vagina by the penis. There is also indirect mention of rape among men and the insertion of objects into orifices of the victim. In the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) rape as such is not mentioned at all, but must be interpreted as being part of “severe ill-treatment”. Concerning the amnesty of the perpetrators, it was understood by the TRC that whites would act on a political basis when they raped black women, but if black men raped black women, there was no political reason seen behind it. This is a major point of criticism, since it can very easily be the case that a black man can rape a black woman out of a political reason, e.g. when he thought that she was giving out vital information or working for the other side. The possibility of such a motivation should have been taken into account.

While male victims never speak of rape when they are assaulted sexually (even if this assault was only very slightly sexual, e.g. inappropriate touching) they were seen to have gone into a perverse kind of brotherhood with their perpetrators, by constructing rape as a specific female issue\(^7\). By making rape a female problem and on the other hand not explicitly mentioning it in the TRC’s legislation, women who had experienced rape were made secondary victims of lesser importance. Some even argue that by not speaking about their own suffering, “[t]heir shame effectively places them in a conspiracy of silence with their torturers, as if the victims bore some

\(^7\)Cf Krog 2001, p. 208.
responsibility for what happened”\textsuperscript{74}. There were very few rape victims speaking in front of the Commission and this added to the problem that women mostly talked on behalf of their male family members when they were questioned, and not on their own behalf. It is sad to see that women who had come up to tell their stories ended up telling someone else’s\textsuperscript{75}: “They're the ones who lost their husbands; they lost their sons; they lost their daughters; and therefore they're the ones who are coming out to talk about \textit{what happened to them}.”\textsuperscript{76}

Their own suffering got covered up by everyone else’s so that it is only the victim herself who can see that she in fact is a victim. Provided the fact that she does see herself as such – if rape is perceived as a normal part of life, a woman might not realize that in fact she is a victim of an atrocious crime. Many women on the other hand feel that they are seen as a subordinate group to men, and to keep up the little dignity and respect they still have, they do not want other people to know that someone has raped them and reduced their self-esteem. They have come to see themselves as survivors and not as victims. Re-telling their rape would bring them back into a victim position\textsuperscript{77}.

There are other reasons why women did not report on their rapes. Besides the fact that South African society is split up into a private and a public sphere, both existing on their own, never touching, women feel that even if they did overlap, whatever happened to them was not important enough to be told in public. Obviously, sexual violence is a very intimate offence and nobody likes to talk about it explicitly in front of an audience of strangers. The giving up of this privacy might even betray the woman’s coping methods that she had established to deal with the rape, and also there might be a certain degree of self blame involved (the woman thinks it was her fault and that she could have prevented being raped). Reliving the trauma can also lead to a loss of face and pride and last but not least, relating the rape by comrades would be a betrayal of their political loyalty\textsuperscript{78}.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{74} Kaplan 2002, p. 182.  \\
\textsuperscript{75} Cf Owens 1996, p. 66.  \\
\textsuperscript{76} Zulu 1998, p. 155 (my emphasis).  \\
\textsuperscript{77} Cf Owens 1996, p. 66.  \\
\textsuperscript{78} Cf Goldblatt and Meintjes 1997, p. 12.
\end{flushright}
'As women speak, they speak for us who are too cowardly to speak. They speak for us who are too owned by pain to speak. Because always in anger and frustration men use women’s bodies as a terrain of struggle – as a battleground,’ says Thenjiwe Mthintso, chairperson of the Gender Commission.79

In a submission to the TRC, its authors purposely omit the male side of a gender analysis, because women are generally left out of the narrative about apartheid and its legacy. They also acknowledge that women tend to speak about other’s problems and experiences rather about their own and that “this distorts the reality which was that women too were direct victims of past abuses”80.

3.5. Rape culture (AIDS, virgin rapes)

In 1994 still, there was one in four women who had been raped, maybe even one in two.81 In the first three weeks of June in 1998 at least 62 women were raped in Johannesburg, most of them in the rapist’s home82. A newspaper article of the year 1999 reports about the rise of sexual violence and the fact that “‘jackrolling’ - a South African term for recreational gang rape - was fun”83 among South African school boys. According to Epstein84, this relates to an old custom of the Sotho people, where men would offer their women to others as entertainment. She argues that rape in South Africa is an attempt of men trying to reinstall the old conventions in an urge to regain power over women. Unfortunately, her argumentation has racist undertones and must therefore be considered with caution.

In a bold estimate Cock and Bernstein85 state that one out of two women in South Africa will go through the trauma of rape once in their life. Although the high numbers of reported rapes are outrageous it can be granted that there is a severe under-reporting still in South Africa. This comes from a deep mistrust towards the police (especially in black women), who is still seen as being an arm of the oppressor. “The criminal justice system was seen as an integral part of the State

79 Krog 1999, p. 271.
80 Goldblatt and Meintjes 1996.
83 BBC News 1999.
84 2006, p. 38.
violence that was directed against the black population during the previous regime, and therefore the decision to report a rape to the police is made almost as reluctantly as during apartheid days.

Most of the rapes that take place are committed by someone known to the victim (this is the same in South Africa, as anywhere else in the world), a fact that contradicts the rape myth of the stranger who lurks in the dark, awaiting his unknowing victim. In fact, most violent crimes are committed in the homes of the victims, but while murder incidents have decreased, there was an increase in rape incidents between 1994 and 1999. If the rapist is the husband of the victim, this fact might also add to her reluctance to report the crime because many women consider a rape by her lover not a crime but a normal part of sexuality. After all it would mean that she would lose one source (sometimes the only one) of the family income, and that she would be the one to blame for the breaking up of her family. Here again, it is black women who suffer the most and to make matters worse: they are the ones who are the most unlikely to report a crime due to a lack of access and trust toward the police.

Women have been subjects to men’s brutality throughout the past of South Africa a country which is often referred to as a “rape culture”. This is evident from the way authorities treat women who were raped. Some people try to explain the high crime rate towards women historically, as a side effect of social struggle, but this cannot hold true from a historical point of view, since men have always held a superior role in comparison to women in the majority of human societies. The emancipation of women has tried to strip men of their power over women. While only a few decades ago, men were almost entirely in control of women’s lives, this has changed nowadays. Most of the graduates of secondary school are female, and yet women are the ones who face the most disadvantages and who live below the poverty line.

Despite the fact that women are present in the post-apartheid government, this “does

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86 Coomaraswamy 1997.
87 Cf Butler 2004 p. 43.
88 Cf ibid, p. 45.
89 Cf Green 1999, p. 106.
90 Cf Coomaraswamy 1997, see also Hootnick 2003 for further information on the failure of the police in South Africa.
not necessarily translate into effective and practical policies regarding gender
sensitivity, family, or other issues.” On the contrary, on an everyday level women’s
empowerment could not be pushed through so easily: “[M]en (...) found in acts of
violence against women temporary relief from the humiliations of living in a society
based on the presumption of white superiority.” This idea, combined with women’s
further emancipation away from dependence on the man to feed them and their
children, aggravated men’s feelings of losing control, and losing respect.

The media have a tendency of boasting about the crimes committed by blacks on the
whites. These cases usually get a great amount of attention, and the white farmers
can keep up their claim “that such violence constitutes an attempt to force them off
the land” , the reality is of course different. The poor black population are those
who face the highest victimization, including their being more likely to be victims of
inter-personal crime.

In his opening speech to Parliament in 1994 President Nelson Mandela said that,
“freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms
of oppression.” So far, freedom has not been achieved in this country, though the
constitution speaks of guaranteed equality between men and women. The high crime
rate in 21st century South Africa has given ground to a flaring up of the racist debate:
“it reinforced apartheid stereotypes of rape and pillage, something the National Party
ideologues had always said would accompany black rule (...)” . The disappointment
was great for those who had hoped for a swift change to the better after the end of
apartheid. It is in human nature to unleash one’s dismay onto the less powerful –
women. Unsurprisingly Butler further acknowledges that “the problem of violence
against women in this country is serious”.

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94 Epstein 2006, p. 34.
95 Butler 2004, p. 50.
96 Cf Butler 2004, p. 51.
97 Cock and Bernstein 2001, p. 146.
98 Butler 2004, p. 42.
In a society that is so deeply rooted in patriarchy and *machismo*\(^{100}\), where a human rights culture has not yet been fully established, it is often the case that female crime victims are not receiving support but blame,\(^ {101}\) as it is still common to believe that the woman might only accuse a man of rape to get out of the situation without greater trouble. The notion that it is normal that the male sexual predator has to force a woman to have sexual intercourse is not only bad for women, but also for men. This way they are all summarized as potential rapists\(^ {102}\), once again supporting the idea of male hegemony through the threat of rape toward all women.

When touching upon sexual violence in South Africa, one is bound to encounter the difficult topic of HIV and AIDS, since the feminization of the disease is argued by many specialist, including former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who stated in 2006 that AIDS had “a woman’s face”\(^ {103}\). UN specialists relate the rise of AIDS to the low status of women in South Africa and see the rape cases (for women and children alike) as mere symptoms of this subjugation.\(^ {104}\) Withal it is “the rape of young children [which] has become an increasingly widely recognized scourge in South African society”\(^ {105}\). This specific kind of rape has brought South Africa to the table in many discussions worldwide, when several child rape cases were brought into the world-wide media. In connection with the rise of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, child rapes have suddenly become a daily issue in South Africa. On the one hand, men were making use of an old war tool. If one considers the struggle of emancipation between men and women a war, then the rape of the beloved of the opponents – in this case women – is a weapon of mental torture.

On the other hand the “virgin rape myth” evolved out of the belief that sex with a virgin would cure a lethal affliction, like HIV/AIDS. Though this explanation for child rapes might seem logical with an outsider’s viewpoint, it is not as simple. Albeit the myth does exist, not many child rapists claim this myth to be the reason for their crime. The low infection rate of the victims backs this statement, in addition

\(^{100}\) A strong sense of masculinity and pride in being a man. This is contrasted with a female version, *Marianismo*. Both have their sources in Latin America. Maleness is associated with men’s superior physical force and power over women and children. Femaleness is founded on motherhood, beauty, servitude, weakness and on silence.

\(^{101}\) Cf Coomaraswamy 1997.

\(^{102}\) Cf Green, p. 124.

\(^{103}\) Suich 2006.

\(^{104}\) Cf Epstein 2006, p. 31.

\(^{105}\) Shaw 2002, p. 83.
to the ignorance of many rapists toward their own infection status. Most rapists simply do not know that they have HIV/AIDS. While the notion of the purifying forces of sex is persistent, it does not necessarily mean that men act it out\textsuperscript{106}. In addition to this, there are voices that claim that child rapes have not increased in the last decade and that the cause of many of those rapes can be found in gang initiation rites\textsuperscript{107}.

The reasons for the extreme frequency of violent crimes in South Africa, including rape, are manifold. The disappointment from the bursting bubble of post-apartheid promises\textsuperscript{108}, the uncontrolled and irresponsible use of alcohol, the ever-present breakdown of the family, the tendency to solve arguments in a violent way which was imbibed during apartheid, the low status of women in present day South Africa\textsuperscript{109}, the fervent belief in rape myths and the ineptitude of the South African police and judicial system\textsuperscript{110} must all be mentioned in this context. Although women are the primary victims of rape, men and children are also prone to become victims. On a general basis, it is of course South African society that suffers from the frequent rapes. Women remain the subjugated objects of rape, while men abide in their role of oppressors. The discourse on rape must change to ensure a change in reality. One way of shaping the discourse is through art, of which literature is a major part.

\textsuperscript{106} Cf Epstein 2005, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{107} Cf Limson, 2002.
\textsuperscript{108} Cf Green, 1999 p. 71.
\textsuperscript{109} Butler 2004, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{110} Cf Robertson 1998, p. 141.
4. Theoretical Considerations

As a matter of fact rape features in many modern South African novels. Maybe it is even possible to speak of a “rape culture”. Certainly many novels which focus on a rape plot seem to take the rape itself only as a metaphorical tool to represent race relations in the country. Rape in South African novels is mostly an interracial one, often resulting in the conception of a child. This does not reflect reality: rapes within the same race group as the perpetrator are much more common. Furthermore, the fact that the act of rape as such is usually not really depicted\(^\text{111}\), maybe because the author is often a man, maybe because the author does not want to use brutality explicitly in his or her story, maybe because the woman’s body is just used as a symbol again. In many of these novels, it is the man who stands for the future, for change, and it is the woman who represents the static and the stable\(^\text{112}\). This idea is closely linked the linkage between women/nature and men/culture. Women, as they are the ones rooted in nature, will remain in their pre-destined role, while men, who are forward looking, agile and inventive will forward the country and their family by their industriousness. “Women are (…) inert, backward-looking and natural, embodying nationalism’s conservative principle of continuity. Men [are] forward-thrusting, potent and historic, embodying [its] revolutionary principle of discontinuity.”\(^\text{113}\)

For a very long time, the theory has persisted that while male sexuality is normal, female sexuality deviates from the norm and must be kept in the vague shadows of silence. Traditional sexual relations are constructed around these inadequacies. The image of the man being a sexual predator is very common, whereas the same idea of a woman predator is still not accepted and even met with scorn. A woman who is free in her choice of sexual contact and who might “use” men to satisfy her sexual needs can easily be called a slut or even worse. This has its roots in cultural conditioning and has little biological foundation. Victims of the ultimate hunt for female sexuality, rape, must hence become the ultimate sexed bodies.

\(^\text{111}\) An exception to this is Mtutuzeli’s *I Speak to the Silent*, where the rape is narrated through the eyes of the perpetrator’s wife and Duiker’s *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, where the rape is told by the first-person (victim) narrator.
\(^\text{112}\) Cf Samuelson 2003.
In traditional African societies it was not possible to have an abortion unless the child was born as a result of a rape. Often, young women who had become pregnant without having been raped at all would make up a rape story, in order to have a legal abortion. Sometimes the problem of a rape conception was dealt with differently: As a raped woman had no prospect of being able to marry a “decent” \(^\text{114}\) man, and an unmarried woman had no status or economic support, her only chance would be to marry her own rapist. In fact, it was even possible to force the rapist into marriage with his victim \(^\text{115}\). Such solutions were, of course, devastating for the woman and her child.

In apartheid South Africa, women were given very special roles which differed according to their skin color. The white Afrikaner woman was referred to as the *Volksmoeder* (mother of the nation), which correlates with the notion of “making one’s own race” or the idea of the white colonizers impregnating black women to “form [the next generations] into a new super-race” \(^\text{116}\). Afrikaner womanhood consisted of suffering, stoicism and self-deprivation, which ties in with the role of women as being the stable, non-changing part of society. The only power white women had in this role was over their domestic servants \(^\text{117}\), which gave them a higher position in South African society than black or colored men or women. The Africans also used this imagery to put their women in their place. Winnie Mandela was referred to as “mother of the nation” while the popular singer Miriam Makeba had the nickname “Ma Africa”. Womanhood was later used as a common denominator for an alliance with the white women, where some women referred to themselves as “mothers of the revolution”. It seems as if the fact that somebody is a woman is not enough to make her a valuable member of the struggle. Only being a mother will enable the woman to be a full person.

The connection between woman, mother and nation is very common in nationalist discourses, since such discourses are in many cases gendered. Women are often used as icons, who are passively waiting for men to protect them, which, for example, makes men the ones in charge of decolonization. While women wait for their

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\(^{114}\) They could be glad to find any man to marry.

\(^{115}\) Cf Green 1999, p. 147.

\(^{116}\) Young 2003, p. 144.

\(^{117}\) McClintock 1997, p. 105.
freedom, they are not accepted as playing a full and active part in the freedom fight, and they end up not benefitting from this said freedom, as they are immediately put back in their place as soon as the fighting is over\textsuperscript{118}. As women, they only have certain functions in nationalist discourses: giving birth to children of their ethnic community, making sure that this reproduction is safely within ethnic boundaries, raising and educating the offspring, playing the role of an icon and mother-figure and only lastly of an active participant in struggles\textsuperscript{119}.

4.1. Postcolonial writing and the novel

Madhara Prasad starts the opening paragraph of his article “Questions of 3\textsuperscript{rd} World Literatures” with a quotation from Frederic Jameson which says that “‘all’ third world literary texts are national allegories”\textsuperscript{120}. In the first instance, this seems plausible, as for the outsider, e.g. the European, literary productions from the former colonies have a different set of images and narrative techniques from those found in European literature. As Bakhtin says: “In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding – in time, in space, in culture.”\textsuperscript{121} Therefore, as outsiders in terms of the culture and the space of post-colonial writing, we can really understand the object – the post-colonial culture - despite the fact that a writer will only tell a story of his personal experience in his own time and space, and not in all the post-colonial states as a unit. However, this point (about the outsider’s understanding) is also exactly where one can find fault in the quotation above. On the one hand, Prasad lumps together everyone from Third World countries into one, and on the other hand, he speaks of national allegories. The statement is much too general, as it does not define what a third world country is. It uses the category of nation, which is not acknowledged in every part of the world, and it puts all literary texts into the same group. A more differentiated approach must be taken to avoid such gross generalizations, and a very eurocentric view of binary oppositions between the First and Third worlds\textsuperscript{122}. Furthermore, Suleri suggests a retreat from the

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{118}] McLeod 2002, p. 115
\item[\textsuperscript{120}] Prasad 1997, p. 141.
\item[\textsuperscript{121}] Cited in Katrak, 2006, p. 9.
\item[\textsuperscript{122}] Suleri 1992, p. 13
\end{itemize}
idea of nation, and that we should “read the narratives at hand for their revision of
the more precarious question of the complicities of memory between a colonial and a
postcolonial world.”\textsuperscript{123} Since there cannot even be one coherent narrative within one
nation, a generalization of half the globe is certainly out of focus. “Nationalist
discourses are \textit{ultimately} illiberal and must \textit{always} be challenged.”\textsuperscript{124}

Recent literature in South Africa could be divided into two eras – the one during
apartheid, and the one afterwards. During apartheid, many writers chose to or were
forced to write and live in exile. The literature of writers from South Africa during
the last decades of apartheid, were of two sorts: the nationalist texts that served as
propaganda for the values of apartheid and the other kind, where texts were used to
depict heroism and resistance. Although the second kind served a nobler cause, they
were also very often simplistic and biased. The general theme was an “us versus
them” storyline, marked by stories of martyrs and heroes, which were “based on
simple moral premises of black virtue versus white evil”\textsuperscript{125}. After the end of
apartheid, literature is in a situation where writers will have to learn to make a new
way of thinking and imagining possible; especially in those novels and stories which
try to recount their own history. “There is an interconnected, meta-narrative
challenge of finding new ways of representing and using the past that radically depart
from the recurrent exploitation of history in the schemes of oppression.”\textsuperscript{126} For white
and black writers alike this challenge is ubiquitous and should be thoroughly
analyzed.

There are two directions that postcolonial writing usually takes: the normative style
and the liminal style. The normative way of writing is done “to, or for, or in the name
of the post-independence nation-state.”\textsuperscript{127} In these novels, the writers return to
traditional lifestyles, sometimes relying on reinventions of forgotten (or destroyed)
customs to resurrect the African way of life. This remembrance of former times is
used to reinstate the African values and to lift the African lifestyle to a higher level
than the imported European one, which had been forced upon the African people by
the colonialists. These novels contain little or no criticism of the new governments,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123} Ibid. p. 14.
\item \textsuperscript{124} McLeod 2002, p. 120 (italics in original).
\item \textsuperscript{125} Pultz Moslund 2003, p. 27.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Ibid, p. 28
\item \textsuperscript{127} Jeyifo 1991, p. 53.
\end{itemize}
whereas colonialism and the Europeans are heavily criticized. One of the most
renowned theorists for this style is the Kenyan writer and activist, Ngugi wa
Thiong’o.

The other style in postcolonial writing, the liminal style, is more differentiated. The
writers have overcome their urge to return to the old ways, and their writing
resembles the patchwork their identities have become. For them, it is no longer
possible to return to the old, traditional African societies and, when portraying
modern African life and identity, they have to include some European ideas and
concepts. Isolation of cultures is no longer an option and so their writing becomes
“diasporic, exilic, hybrid, in-between cosmopolitan”\textsuperscript{128}, a complex mix between their
third-world realities and their first-world hopes and goals. In Booker’s\textsuperscript{129}, opinion,
the African novelist finds himself in a tricky situation: on the one hand he/she wants
to keep up the old traditions, which are often considered “savage” or “unrefined”, in
Phyllis Wheatley’s terms, while on the other hand, he/she is urged to include new
ways of telling their stories, which might lead to his/her being referred to as
imitators.

The novel is a natural genre to choose for postcolonial writing. It is the most hybrid
form of writing; it can include all kinds of other styles, like a poem or a short story.
Moreover, in postmodern novels, for example, the author has the possibility to
include photographs and graphics. As contemporary African literary style is more
like the liminal style in postcolonial writing, the concept of hybridity is an important
characteristic which is best displayed in the novel. The diverse narrative techniques
used in African story-telling practices, such as the common “we” narrator and the
oral tradition in myth-telling can easily be included in the novel. Furthermore, the
novel is a form of resistance for some writers. “The novel has also been one of the
most important genres in which political writers from Africa and elsewhere have
attempted to assert their independence from European cultural domination.”\textsuperscript{130} It has
been one of the most common tools for the empire to write back.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Cf Booker, 1991, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., p 19.
This aspect of hybrid identities has led to different theories. Yenn Couze labeled it an “inner-nowness” or doubleness, in relation to colonial subjectivity. This issue is not only the case in high literature, but also in everyday life. De Kock has discovered a “crisis of naming either a naming of people (…) or a naming of oneself in (…) relation to others” which has spawned a desire “for a unitary political identity and for the suppression of difference”\(^{131}\) in the new-born rainbow country, a desire to become a melting pot rather than a salad bowl. The construction of identity is a constant game of question and answer within the self, when the subject tries to find a balance between “traditional” African life and modernity\(^{132}\).

One way of explaining this imbalance is that the import of capitalism forced women to take part in the labor market, leading to the eventual demise of a division of labor according to the sexes. With colonialism had come the traditional Western division of genders, where the woman was to stay at home and care for the house and the man was to “feed the family”. This did not last long, however, as capitalism soon set in and forced women to work, too, in order to feed the family. Sometimes this led to a situation where the wife had a job and the husband was unemployed. It is important to ask how men reacted to this new situation, how they coped with it, and how this perceived imbalance might have led to greater violence toward women as men felt their power being undermined. Notwithstanding the fact that many women have fought for their right to go to work and make their own money, which must have been another blow to men’s power over women.

Language decisions are also important when speaking of South African novels. The authors must decide who will read their novel and who will not be able to read it. In a country with eleven national languages, the decision to write in English can be based on several factors. The most obvious reason must be that English is the author’s mother tongue. A more commercial reason is the larger audience when writing in English. Capitalism has been a part of the arts industry for a long while and also affects South African novelists. English is also a language of education, so it is highly likely that educated people will be the ones who can read the respective novel. On the other hand, many people are not able to read an English novel, and we must remember that there is a high rate of illiteracy in South Africa.

\(^{131}\) De Kock 2004, p. 19.
\(^{132}\) Couze 2006, p. 3.
For some feminist thinkers, the use of the English language can be equated with the rape of the tongue. This radical thought denies the English language its ability to tell an African story. Ngugi wa Thiong’o even called the use of English a mere continuation of cultural imperialism. He is clearly an advocate of the normative writing style, as he is a stern believer in the return to the African traditions and Kiswahili as the lingua franca for Africa. However, this must be taken with caution, since English has become the mother tongue of many native Africans, and it is impossible to forbid people using a language which they have been using daily for more than a century. Moreover, English has had an influence on the other languages and might be used simultaneously with other languages or with Pidgin English throughout a novel. Though critics have often spoken about the missing roots of the European languages in Africa, this is most certainly no longer a valid point. As Chinua Achebe has pointed out, “A language spoken by Africans on African soil, in which Africans write justifies itself.”\textsuperscript{133} Anthony Appiah takes this further when he states that it is no longer possible to take Europe out of Africa or their people, who have accepted Western pop music along with their traditional songs and he concedes that “[g]rounding oneself in Africa, in short, is grounding oneself in the present, not the past.”\textsuperscript{134}

4.2. Women’s version: The feminist take on the topic of rape

Feminists have accused men of thinking so much about the race issues in post-colonial thinking that gender has become completely subsumed under race. In the discussion of rape in the literature of an African country, this is certainly not the case, as gender cannot be excluded in such a theme. The classic patriarchal thinking of the binary oppositions concerning men and women include nature–culture and private–public. The woman is considered to be more connected to nature, as she is, for example, the one who is responsible for child bearing and raising while her husband is working. This is closely connected to the private vs. public opposition. Women work and live in private surroundings, while men take part in public life. However, we have learnt that this simplistic thinking is no longer possible. In fact it

\textsuperscript{133} Achebe 1975, p. 83, quoted in Ojaide 2002, p. 163.
has never been an acceptable theory for many women. “For women the public and the private are not as dichotomous as for men who desert wives publicly, yet privately demand sex. For women the public and the private come together with their very bodies that bear children.”

Furthermore, women’s issues, including violence against women, must be articulated in new ways, that relate to the particular context of third world women. This is not an easy task, but the discussion in “Western” (feminist) circles is not a sufficient point of attack, as there are many more facets to the situation of third world women, including dowry payments and polygamy. The silence that envelops female sexuality in many countries of the world must be lifted in order to stop making this silence a tool of oppression. Often, men, South African men in particular, are afraid that their women might become feminists, and any deviation from the normal/traditional ways of life will be interpreted as an act of feminism. Feminism, in this case, is considered the seed of evil which will lead to the end of family structures.

Strikingly, it is feminists who link interracial rape occurrences to the lynching practices of the 19th century USA. Because of this, it is important to discuss the topic, despite its historic distance. While the lynching of blacks who were accused of having raped white women took place about a hundred years ago in the South of the USA, it has its equivalent in the South Africa of the 20th century. Here, through the miscegenation act, it was also prohibited to have sexual intercourse with a member of another “race”. Vron Ware calls lynching “the ultimate of historical white rule and black death”. This logic prevailed in apartheid South Africa. Apartheid is also a kind of ultimate historical white rule and death of blacks. While the law protected white women from the assumed uncontrollable sex drive of black men – both in apartheid South Africa and in the 19th century USA – it did nothing to protect black women from the frequent assaults from white men. The laws were both based within the context of a strict patriarchal system. All women, white wives and black (slave) women, were considered the property of white men. White women became the white man’s property through marriage, and black women as slaves or simply as inferior human beings. Both “belonged to” the white man and were expected to be at his

135 Katrak 2006, p. 185.
137 Ware 2003, p. 106.
disposal at any given time. It was feared that freeing the slaves would lead to a great turmoil of sexual attraction among the people in the South. A Southern woman was rumored to feel sexually drawn toward the Black man and she could only yield to her desire as long as these men were her slaves, since “[f]reedom, she knows, would separate her for ever from the coloured (sic!) man”\(^{138}\) whom she loved. This panicky proclamation was not issued by a Southern author, but by one from the North, arguing for the abolition of slavery. It is clear from these statements that not only were white men attracted to slave women but also white women to slave men. The question as to whether there was any attraction felt from the other halves of these passions is not answered. Obviously, this was not worth thinking about or worth mentioning.

4.3. The symbolism of rape

While rape must always be understood to have a strong symbolic value on the personal level, the concept in combination with postcolonial literature has its particular weight. Rape must be investigated as a crime between two individual people, where one of the two is in an inferior position, amplified not only by gender but also by race. This is especially so in the case of the white slave owner, who rapes his female slaves without impending punishment. Often, conflicts are fought on the body of a person or a people; the way an outsider is seen will influence how he is treated. The perceived emasculation of women and the feminization of men in orientalist thinking have led to a certain understanding of the bodies of “the others”, and in the end, this has also led to the double colonization of women. The body is “a space in which conflicting discourses can be written and read, it is a specially material text, one that demonstrates how subjectivity (…) is ‘felt’ as inescapably material and permanent”\(^{139}\). Imperialism as such only worked through the people who enforced it and those who let it be enforced.

On the other hand, rape is also significant when speaking of colonialism itself. The white man has penetrated not only the lands of the colonized continents, but also the indigenous cultures and people. He has forcefully installed his value systems and

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\(^{138}\) Young 2003, p. 145.

\(^{139}\) Ashcroft 2005, p. 184.
traditions and has planted the seed of racism. “The rape of native cultures, their
penetration by ship, train or boat, makes up the gendered tales of modernization, of
technological mastery and its usually baleful human effects.”

This idea must be
read with caution. Suleri writes that connecting a whole culture with a gender can
be a risky undertaking, especially when one of these genders is described as weak
while the opposing culture (in this case the colonizer) is strong. She takes her
argument further when she discusses Said’s orientalist views, by saying that it is not
so much the foreign bride but the effeminate groom and his ambivalent sexuality
who catches our glance. She also makes a point of stressing the homoerotic
symbolism inherent in this view of Orientalism. The rape narrative was often used by
simplistic, nationalist and anti-imperialist propaganda. She quotes the Indian Nehru
who said about India: “They seized her body and possessed her, but it was a
possession of violence. They did not know her or try to know her. They never looked
into her eyes, for theirs were averted and hers cast down through shame and
humiliation.”

We must understand that colonialism as rape is somehow an “easy
way out” of analyzing the relationships between the imperialist and the colonized
subject.

The general notion of the colonialist discourse is covered in sexual connotations,
despite the criticism that has tried to debunk it. “The idea of colonization is grounded
in a sexualized discourse of rape, penetration and impregnation (…)”, so there is
no way around a discussion of colonization on these premises. Issues such as
miscegenation, transgendered sexualities (the effeminate male oriental), and the lure
of the exotic have often come up in the colonial discourse. Throughout this period of
time, theories have sprung up that determined why the colonizers were so drawn
toward the colonized people. While European men were “impelled by a civilizing
instinct to mix their blood”, only their hugely powerful position allowed them to
“overcome the allegedly natural repulsion felt by the black or yellow woman”.

This is a direct concession for raping the indigenous women, who are only allegedly
repelled by the white men, and who, on the other hand, only try to do good and to

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140 Goebel & Schabio 2006, p. 5.
141 1992, p. 16ff.
142 Ibid, p. 17.
144 Young (2003) actually uses the word “Aryan” here.
145 Both quotes from Young 2003, p. 108.
foster civilization. In the context of slavery, again, the offspring is important for the slave owner. However, this will ultimately “initiate [...] degeneration that [...] brings about civilization’s end.”

146 So, although the impregnation of the colonized race will serve as the master’s own race, this offspring will never be fully accepted as civilized. To turn to genders themselves, it is obvious that all of the colonized people were subsumed under one gender, namely female, while the Europeans were the dominant male counterpart. Just as Suleri has pointed out, this general distinction ultimately links an interracial sexual relationship with a homo-erotic relationship. An important point of criticism within the trope of Orientalism is that the authors of this kind of writing, installed with the gendered and sexualized concept of the orient, did not only depict the views the white people had of the orient, but even more so, “they were (...) writing about themselves, putting on the page their own desires, fantasies and fears.”

In older stories of rape, the act is not so much displayed with the distinct sexual connotations and implications, but has more to do with theft, e.g. in The Rape of Europe, where Zeus, disguised as a white bull “took” fair Europe and stole her from her father. Although this rape is sexual only through allegories, what is striking is that the true crime is not done to the victim, Europe, but to her father, Agenor. Zeus is a thief who steals his property. The German title of the myth, Der Raub der Europa, shows the true meaning (in this case) of the word rape. Agenor sends his sons after Zeus to bring back what is his, but to no avail. This way of thinking is still common nowadays. If a woman is raped, it is very often the case that men close to her (father, brother, husband etc) feel that they have been victims as well and will often attempt to punish the perpetrator. Unless, of course, the rapist is one of these men, then the same notion applies, only with different implications: Since the woman “is his”, he has all the rights over her body.

Shakespeare’s The Rape of Lucrece is another example of rape in the Western literary canon. Although here, the rape is in fact a sexual assault, the meaning is still the same. Lucrece is another man’s possession that is taken from him. In contrast to Europe, Lucrece is not avenged by her husband, but takes here fate into her own hands. The shame is so great that she cannot live with it and commits suicide. The

146 Ibid.
147 McLeod 2002, p. 46.
historic Lucrece’s dead body is the trigger for the foundation of the Roman republic; the question stands as to how a woman could have otherwise participated politically? Lucrece, the fledgling nation, is a very common allegory in nationalist thought. “Nation as a mother threatened by foreign aggression often appears specifically in terms of sexual aggression.” For Shakespeare rape is one of the unforgivable crimes, but he does not mention the person who has the ability to forgive. A victim always has the possibility to forgive and by generalizing the impossibility of forgiving rape, he takes away the power from the victim. Any kind of murder can be unforgivable, as the victim can no longer forgive. In rape, the victim is still alive and should decide by herself whether or not a pardon is possible. The fact that women are usually the victims of rape means that the statement about the unforgiveable nature of rape denies women the right to decide on such a very personal issue.

4.4. Reading rape

Rape can be read on three different levels. While of course and most obviously, rape is a crime that happens on a very private and personal level, a rape plot in a novel is very often used as a metaphor for social or historical issues. So, for an analysis on the personal level, the main point is an opposition between the interiority and exteriority of the topic. While interiority is concerned with the psychological aspect, the feelings and emotions of those involved, exteriority should focus on the material survival of the victim and along with that, of course, the rape act itself. When we understand that rape is the ultimate violation of the self, this notion must be brought into connection with the concept of “the other” and “othering”. Does the fact that a rapist forces his victim into the victim’s role (or the survivor’s role) change the person’s status? Does she or he become objectified and therefore part of the others? Is the stigma of being a rape victim so extreme, that she or he no longer feels as part of society, or as a “normal” person in this society? Would he or she rather remain silent so as to not become branded?

When used as a social metaphor, the most obvious binary opposition is, of course, the one between the genders, a dichotomy between men and women. Rape has very

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149 We can offhandedly say that during Shakespeare’s life the victim of rape could only be a woman.
often been used to explain the inherent problems of modern, patriarchal society. This is especially so when the rape is committed between a husband and wife (an act that, even today, many people would not consider a “real rape”), but it can be taken as proof of problematic gender issues in any instance of rape between two people of different sexes. On the other hand, we must also consider that there are rape plots that do not include man-on-woman-rape. We must also find interpretations for homosexual rape plots and ask how this may fit into South African society. Again, rape is not primarily a crime based on un-resolved sexual urges, but more often one that is used as a display of power and submission.

In South Africa (as in many other parts of the world), this societal aspect of gender is further enhanced by the category of race. While this category is founded in the third level of analysis, history, its legacy is still evident in 21st century South Africa. Many of the rapes in novels are interracial. Although we have mentioned that this is neither the case in every novel nor in reality, an analysis of South African novels (or anything else with a South African focus!) cannot ignore the race factor. In South Africa, even after the end of apartheid, race division is still so evident that we can speak about an internal colonization. Labor is still very much divided, as are land ownership and capital. Again, black women remain the ones who are oppressed the most and who suffer double discrimination.

Rape on a historic level is based on colonialism and the inherent rape of the colonized countries and their people. While we have seen that this way of thinking is not as clear-cut as many nationalists of the affected countries would like, it is still a necessary point of view in the analysis and it is evident that many authors are still convinced that it is valid, or at least they portray their characters as believing in this idea. A rape plot, therefore, does not necessarily have to be used as an allegory for the “Rape of South Africa”, but it could be understood in such a way by the novel’s characters, or it could be the first impression the reader may have when reading it, even if the intention of the author is a very different one.
5. *Disgrace* by J.M. Coetzee\(^{150}\)

*Disgrace* is J.M. Coetzee’s 1999 novel about David Lurie, a university professor who falls into disgrace after having seduced one of his students, Melanie Isaacs. The realist plot is narrated by a third person narrator whose point of view is limited to the protagonist. The reader only has a direct description of what David Lurie actually witnesses; the thoughts and feelings of the other characters are only portrayed through David’s eyes and thoughts. His relationship to women, his daughter’s rape and how everyone copes are all aspects where the analysis must take into account that the impression might be slurred. Through this unreliable way of narrating the events of the story, “the novel denies the reader direct access to Lucy”\(^{151}\) or other women of the novel. Some analysts even argue that “[t]he novel employs free-indirect discourse to such an extent that it is, in effect, a first-person narrative”\(^{152}\).

David is an arrogant old-time scholar who is as much in love with his poems as he is in love with himself. Through the course of the novel he rediscovers the meaning of love and humility and overcomes the person he was in the beginning, a cynical man who was reducing love and sexuality to a convenient appointment with his prostitute Soraya, taking place once a week. The novel is set between David’s home in Cape Town where he works at the Cape Technical University and his daughter’s farm in the countryside near a town called Salem in the Eastern Cape. The setting is important, since in the city, he is the sexual predator of exotic or colored women, whereas, once arrived in the Eastern Cape, he has become a kind of lame dog, with his tail between his legs, asking to be taken in by his daughter.

While talking to his daughter about the kind of life she leads, trying to rescue unwanted and unloved animals, the cheeriness and the do-gooders that make up this life make him “itch to go off and do some raping and pillaging” (p.73). The great lover of beautiful women is reduced to taking whatever he can get, although he would never have thought that he would ever stoop so low as to consider sex with that unattractive friend of Lucy’s, Bev. Being a professor of Modern languages he

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\(^{150}\) Unless otherwise indicated all quotes in this chapter are from Coetzee 1999.

\(^{151}\) Marais 2006, p. 86.

frequently uses poetry and expressions from literature to voice his emotions. He sees himself as a modern-day Byron, but in the end he discovers that he is not the great lover he had perceived himself to be.

5.1. Lucy’s rape

The main rape in *Disgrace* is not directly described to the reader. We only know what David hears from his prison in the bathroom and what Lucy decides to tell her father. The rape takes place in Lucy’s house and is committed by three black men who come there on foot, gaining entrance after asking to use the phone. David is locked into the bathroom and set on fire while the men abuse his daughter. Since the narrative focuses on David, we never actually know any details about the act; we do not really know how the rape is done or how the men or Lucy behave exactly. Later on in the novel, Lucy reveals her pregnancy to her father, and she wants to keep the baby. As if conceiving a child through rape is not enough, she doesn’t even know which one of her rapists is in fact the father. As the rapists rummage through the house, killing the dogs in Lucy’s kennel, David tries to convince himself that they will not harm him or his daughter, that the three men will only get the valuables and then leave again. When one of the men soaks him with gasoline and sets him on fire, he knows that there will be a lot of harm done. The reader never gets a glimpse of Lucy’s reaction during the rape as such. David never even hears screams or other sounds. We only meet her again after the deed is done and the rapists have left, but she only reacts to the murder of her beloved dogs and doesn’t let anything slip about her own condition.

The irony of what Lucy says to her father on the morning of her rape is significant: She is standing on her porch, early in the morning, watching three wild geese. “I feel lucky to be visited. To be the chosen one.” (p. 88). The utterance is a forecast of what is going to happen later on, when she will be chosen by another set of three visitors. When David is finally let out of the bathroom after the rape, he finds Lucy dressed in a robe, with wet hair. She has obviously washed herself before she let out her father, probably feeling soiled and not wanting to face anyone before she is clean again. But her worries are not for herself or her father, but for the dogs that have been violently shot. When David wants to hold her, she frees herself from his embrace. As a lesbian
the only time she has probably been held by a man was the rape, and she puts her father on the same level as the rapists, although her father’s embrace should not be unfamiliar. David is later contemplating Lucy’s exceptional situation as a lesbian, suddenly realizing what such an atrocity would have to mean to a woman who is not attracted to men: “Raping a lesbian [is] worse than raping a virgin: more of a blow. Did they know what they were up to, those men? Had the word got around?” (p. 105).

When the police finally arrive at the farm, they are not told about the rape. They only infer what might have happened, as they treat Lucy as if she was dirty. When they walk into the bedroom, the policemen do not look at the stripped bed, obviously knowing what has happened there. Lucy and David report the theft and the murder of the dogs, but there is no mention of the rape.

The timing of the rape is somewhat odd. Lucy had been living on the farm for quite a while, and only a few days after her father arrives, three men come to her house and rape her. Why now? For months, she had been on the farm alone, after having lived with another woman. David seems to be the trigger for the rape, a threat to the ländliche idyll he describes. Is a woman alone in the country accepted, or at least tolerated, as she poses no harm to the fragile power relations that have been established? The presence of a man might indicate change, so it must be shown where his and his daughter’s position lies.

5.2. Lucy’s reaction

Lucy does not want to deal with her rape, she does not want to talk about it or be comforted by her father. She is traumatized. She is much more concerned about her dogs and getting things back to normal. The only thing she initially does is clean herself. David is not being let into her grief; he is an outsider and must stay there: she asks him to not tell anyone about what happened to her.

Lucy falls into a deep depression and chooses to speak about what happened to her only with other women. Where she lives, there is only Bev in whom she can confide,
but during the first few days Lucy remains practically silent and locked in her room. During their conversation with her neighbor, she is standing with the two men, “arms folded across her breasts” (p.100). David thinks this is because she might be trembling, but considering her demise later on in the story, especially the way she dresses and does not take care of her personal hygiene, her posture might also imply that she is trying to cover up her femininity, hence disposing of the major point of attack she offers: being a woman.

The silence with which Lucy decides to handle the rape is her way of dealing with the trauma that has afflicted her. David accuses her of burying her fate and of allowing the others to talk about her behind her back. However, it must be taken into account that reporting a rape and the following procedures are often a secondary victimization for the victim, especially in Lucy’s case where the majority of the people whom she would have to encounter in such an undertaking would be male. This ordeal could also be another: men’s second victory over Lucy’s body. She does not wish to discuss the rape with anyone else. As she sees it, “what happened to [her] is a purely private matter” (p.112), especially in the South African setting. Keeping the crime private proves to be a futile wish, a hope that is squashed by the story being told throughout the region, by the rapists. Lucy falls into her depression even more deeply, spending her days sleeping and wasting time in the house. She never sets foot into her room again and she neglects her chores. She has no appetite and sucks her thumb when she sleeps. The eating disorder cannot be shrugged off as a loss of appetite (the main food she refuses is meat), but has clearly a psychological cause. She might not want to feel her body anymore, numbing it through hunger and neglect. On the other hand, there might be other reasons that could include a possible infection that might cause her pain when she needs to use the bathroom, or she might already know that she is pregnant. By not eating, she might have found a passive-aggressive means of abortion by provoking a miscarriage. The thumb-sucking indicates that she is falling back into childish patterns. All in all, the rape has clearly thrown her off track and she cannot get back into her routine.

It is when she finally meets one of her rapists again – the young boy - that she is pulled back from her daze, but she still will not hear of an accusation and wishes to keep her story silent. She tells David off, claiming that it is not his right to deal with
her rape, and that she will take care of it herself. While David is only interested in retaliation, Lucy thinks further ahead about her future in this part of the country where “no one disappears” (p.133), where she has to stay and live with her destiny. Again, although David is not aware of it yet, she might already know that she is pregnant. Shortly after they have fallen out, David confronts Petrus, who tells him that Lucy “is a forward-looking lady, not backward-looking” (p.136). What does he mean by that? Lucy is the one who lives for the future and not in the past; therefore she knows that she cannot continue her life in the Eastern Cape without protection from Petrus, her former worker. David, on the other hand, only sees Petrus as the dog-man and doesn’t understand his new position in modern South Africa. But if Lucy is not backward-looking, how can it be that she is so overly liberal and tolerant to her black rapists? It seems that she is bearing the cross of the rape and a resultant pregnancy exactly because of South Africa’s past. She tries to make up for the sins of the apartheid regime by letting her rapists go unharmed. Lucy’s remark about her pride of being the chosen one comes back to mind: is she in fact proud to be the one chosen to make up for the past with her own body? It is possible that although she is ashamed of what happened to her on a personal level, she at the same time sees it as a chance to undo the wrongs that have been done to the black race, by keeping the rape silent and by giving birth to the child in her womb?

When she finally opens up to David and they speak about her rape (after David has finally called it by its name), she tries to see the reason for her fate. She is clearly still confused, as she is at first angered by the fact that the rapists seemed to hate her so much, and that the whole deed was very personal. Lucy is convinced that hatred is an important aspect of heterosexual intercourse, and she draws a parallel between this kind of sex and murder: “isn’t it a bit like killing? Pushing the knife in; exiting afterwards, leaving the body behind covered in blood – doesn’t it feel like murder?” (p.159). Since the rape is overshadowed by this hatred, the connection to the term hate-crimes comes to mind. A hate-crime is a “criminal conduct motivated by prejudice”, such being race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Rape can therefore be also considered a hate crime, and in Lucy’s case, this hatred can be directed at her gender, her race and sexual orientation.

Shortly after contemplating the rapists’ emotions towards her, she declares that the men were rapists by profession. “I think they *do* rape” (p.158) she concludes. Obviously, professionals are not involved as much as a lay person would be, just as a prostitute will not let the sexual act with a suitor become a personal matter. However, this hatred she feels is the largest shock for Lucy. In the end she admits that she felt marked, as if she had paid for her being able to stay on a piece of land that she inhabits, thinking along the line of David’s argument, that it was “history speaking through them” (p.156). They wanted her to subdue and to become their own, “[n]ot slavery. Subjection. Subjugation”, is the explanation with which Lucy tries to take the wind out of the sails of David’s argument.

In a letter to her father, Lucy calls herself a “dead person” (p.166), not knowing what is needed to revive her body. When David comes back from his trip to Mr. Isaacs and to Cape Town, Lucy admits to her father that she is pregnant and that she wants to keep the child. She sees no evil in the child and explains that she is a woman who loves children, no matter who the father is. Maybe the baby in her womb is what Lucy needs to come back to life, but it is more likely by the looks of it that it is not what she needed. She is still neglecting herself; she is a shelf without emotions. She gives in to Petrus’ offer of marrying her, in return for her land; it is the only way that she can survive in the Eastern Cape as a single woman. She sees a way out in starting afresh, without anything:

> But perhaps this is a good point to start from nothing again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity. (p. 205)

This is her way out: to clean her slate and to forget about the past. David compares this situation of being property-less to that of dogs (and Lucy concurs) but in fact, this was also the situation of the black population during apartheid. Lucy intends to take the position of an immigrant, with nothing in a foreign country, although this *is* her country (as well). In this position, she has taken on the life of the black people during apartheid; she is reinventing their life for herself to learn about their suffering, to improve her understanding of their present actions, and to finally get an answer to why they chose her to be the future mother of the next generation.
Since the novel was written in a time that was heavily influenced by the TRC, Lucy could be seen as a one-woman TRC. However, not everything in her demeanor is what the TRC stood for. On the one hand, she would do whatever it takes for peace. She is willing to give up everything to live peacefully, even her father and, with him, her history. While David seeks retribution, Lucy seeks peace and therefore they must part as their ideologies clash so vehemently. Lucy wants to be reconciled with her rapists, but on the other hand she is not interested in the truth coming out. For her, the truth could harm her by reminding her of what has happened and by letting others in on her past. She would rather it remained hidden and that she could silently be reconciled without further trouble.

Throughout the novel, Lucy becomes the epitome of a mother. First, she cares in a motherly way for her dogs, and her love is expressed by how she first tends to their fate, and only then her own, after the rape. Her being a lesbian has so far prevented her from becoming a mother, and the rape has made her one. She will overcome her horrific memories of the conception in order to be a mother to the unborn child, despite its genitor(s). When David asks her whether she loves the child, she answers,

The child? No. How could I? But I will. Love will grow – one can trust Mother Nature for that. I am determined to be a good mother, David. A good mother and a good person. (p.216)

Lucy alludes to Mother Nature, who will take care that any mother will love their child. This is simply not the case, as there are many mothers who do not love their child (e.g. postpartum depression). The connection between the child and nature has been highlighted before, when David calls it “a child of this earth” (ibid). If we take this literally, what is Lucy then? The earth, the nature and the soil that makes the child come to life. It will be through Lucy that the new face of South Africa will be born, but Lucy remains a woman and mother, the eternal feminine figure, however hard she may try to become sexless. While the fathers and other men fade into the background, Lucy-as-woman stands in the spotlight (“and at the centre of the picture a young woman, das ewig Weibliche” (p. 218)) and will have to make it live, make this “project” work.
5.3. David’s reaction to Lucy’s rape

David is left out of Lucy’s suffering completely and so is the audience, as they rely on his view. Whenever he tries to elicit some kind information about Lucy’s coping, he is met with silence and rejection. He starts pondering about his daughter’s situation and about women in general and whether women wouldn’t rather live in a community without men (p.104). His inadequacy in helping Lucy to prevent, and later on in coping with, her ordeal gives him the feeling of being useless, of having learnt and studied all his life without being able to come up with a tool to help his loved ones. He compares himself to an Aunt Sally figure, who realizes that her mission work was a complete failure. Does he conclude that rape couldn’t have happened in a country where missionary work has succeeded? Is it obvious to him that Christians could not have done this; that rape is a savage act? David is Aunt Sally who cannot do anything to prevent the savages from eating her, i.e. the sophisticated white man who can do nothing to prevent the savages (in this case, the black rapists) from raping his own flesh and blood, Lucy. The derogative term of “savage” is commonly used to describe an unrefined person, untouched by enlightenment and reason who acts impulsively, who has no god and no technology – and often has no conscience. If a savage reacts to his impulses and desires without thinking, there is hardly a difference between rapists and savages, if we use David’s dog allegory. He compares the neighbor’s dog and the repression of its instincts and desires to that of men. For the dog, he assumes, it would be better to be shot than to suppress his desires. Although David would sometimes rather live without desires as such, it is clear to him that they should not be kept at bay, since no animal should be punished for its instincts. If the same holds true for men, then there is only a small difference between civilization and savagery.

In the beginning, shortly after the rape, David’s attempts to help Lucy with reasonable suggestions, as going to see a gynecologist, to make sure that she did not contract any diseases. He also finds comfort in thinking of life working along a giant redistribution system, where everything will have to circulate. As much as he can, he thinks about the bright side of what happened – they both are still alive. However, in his giant circulation theory, he equates women (including his own daughter) with other possessions, such as a car or a pack of cigarettes. He tries to hold her in his
arms, to love his child, but is coldly rejected, and is not offered a reason why his daughter is unwilling to file a complaint about the rape. In his dreams, he is called by Lucy, his little girl, asking for help and security, but it is not a vision of the real Lucy, it is his own desire that emerges, of being able to comfort and protect. He knows that he is being left out of a bond between women and he just does not know how to reach his daughter. She refuses to follow his suggestions of seeing a doctor and telling the police and he is left to himself to find a way of coping with what happened to his daughter.

David usurps his daughter’s fate and calls it “Lucy’s secret; his disgrace” (p.109). While the woman is trying to retain her dignity by keeping what happened to her a secret, the story travels through the grapevine and, sooner or later, everyone knows what happened. Lucy is no longer the owner of her story; the rapists have taken over again. What makes it David’s disgrace is that it was his daughter who was attacked and he could do nothing about it. This is a very common reaction for the male relatives of a rape victim. In fact they feel that their property has been blemished and that they will need to take revenge for the deed. In particular, when the man thinks he could have prevented the rape, and when the victim shows no signs of vengefulness. Exactly the same thing happens in Lucy’s case, as it did with Melanie – it is not the victim who files the charges, but the people she trusts - and David acts accordingly. For him, Lucy is conceding the rapists a victory by remaining silent. He moves into Lucy’s room to not let their presence linger in her surroundings, he is taking charge and is trying to chase the ghosts out.

He is eager to find the culprit and soon suspects Lucy’s helper, Petrus, to be behind the rape. David’s suspicion is later confirmed, when he finds out that one of the rapists is related to Petrus.

The worst, the darkest reading would be that Petrus engaged three strange men to teach Lucy a lesson, paying them off with the loot. (...) [H]e does believe that Petrus knew something was in the offing, he does believe that Petrus could have warned Lucy. (p.118)

Although Lucy will eventually find a suitable solution for herself and Petrus, David is trying to do the same, without involving Lucy. Petrus’ detached reaction to what happened to Lucy enrages David even more. He wants to force some emotions out of
him, wants the man to admit the wrong that has been done to his daughter. This again, is a parallel to David’s abuse of Melanie, as his aloofness during the hearing was met by reactions of anger from the committee. In his frustration and his care for Lucy he is starting to lose himself, which is not a bad thing after all. He is changing his opinion of women and sex; he starts to see that he is no longer a desirable man, as he becomes aware of how his body must look, with “his bowed shoulders and skinny shanks” (p.150).

At the party where David and Lucy come across one of the rapists, David reacts with all the macho affections that have been bubbling inside him. The boy is called Pollux, which David finds out toward the end of the novel, named after a Roman half-god whose brother was killed while raping (read: abducting) two sisters known as the “white horses”. After learning his name, David only ironically comments on the name not being unpronounceable. Without considering his daughter’s wishes, he affronts the young man, embodying the picture of an angry old bull. He is about to punch the boy, when Petrus breaks the commotion and the two leave to call the police. However, Lucy prevents David from following through with his threat; she is still not willing to speak about the rape openly. David cannot understand Lucy’s decisions and accuses her of trying to make up for the past, of waiting to be killed.

Again, silence is suicide for David. He takes on another tactic, and tries to seal a deal with Petrus. While laying a pipe, they discuss the situation. While David is trying to convince Petrus that the boy must be brought to the police, Petrus does not see any sense in that. For him, Lucy is safe now; no more danger is to be expected by the woman. During their conversation, the two men put in a pipe, and when the job is finished, so is the conversation. This highly phallic imagery sums up what happened – “the pipe is in” (p.139) and now Petrus just has to fill the whole with dirt. The seed has been sown, and now he will just have to finish it up and marry the impregnated white woman to get her land.

David does not give up that fast and tries to organize Lucy’s return to Cape Town with him; he does not want her to stay behind on the farm. In this decision, Lucy does not have a voice, as the planning is done between David and Petrus, but Petrus declines David’s request that he should run the farm while Lucy takes a holiday.
However, Lucy does not wish to get away and is not even willing to weigh up the options. David is very irritated, but finally confesses his guilt of not being able to help his own daughter during the rape. David is also the one who ultimately speaks the word out loud: rape. He starts to consider the word and what it always meant for him – in art and poetry. How the same act could be interpreted in different ways, but he concludes that if there is no evident danger of death for the victim, the term doesn’t have the same meaning attached to it. Once he tries to see the rape from a different perspective, he can begin to understand how Lucy must have felt during the crime. In fact, the narrative perspective changes and the reader gains an insight into Lucy’s point of view. But David is not trying to see from his daughter’s, the victim’s, perspective but from that of the thugs, because that is the only insight he can have, the only way that he can be there.

After his deeper insight, he decides to meet Mr. Isaacs and his family to apologize for the wrong he has done to Melanie. It is what he at least expects Lucy’s rapists (or their patron, Petrus) to do, and what would give him peace of mind. He is tired of the trials and tribulations with Lucy, and wishes life could be as simple as he makes out to the Isaacs. Mr. Isaacs does not make it easy for David and lectures him on questions about forgiveness and being found out. In some instances, Mr. Isaacs is similar to Desmond Tutu, speaking about God and forgiveness. David connects his relationship with Melanie to Lucy’s rape, the rape being his punishment for what he did to Melanie. This explanation is too simple, as cause and effect are not so linear. However, the fact that the rape of Lucy happens only very shortly after Melanie’s abuse must be read as intentional on the part of the author. On the other hand, David’s apology should then be understood as a trigger for restoring his relationship with his daughter, which it isn’t, as Lucy shortly after admits her pregnancy. This, of course, hits David hard again.

While Lucy finds an explanation for her rape in the hatred the three men felt for her, David now understands it differently. He sees that they did not do it because they hate women or white people, but they did it to mate. This conclusion runs along the lines of the evolutionary explanation for rape, where males try to inseminate as many females as possible. David is in fear for his progeny, not knowing what to expect from a child that has sprung from an evil seed. The question is, is that all he fears, or
does the color of the child also play a role in David’s despair? After all, it is only after he realizes the fact that his daughter is pregnant that he can release his tears. For what or whom he is crying is left open, although one can safely assume that it would be the culmination of events that have finally led to this outburst. After finding out that Pollux is related to Petrus, he fails to recognize that the baby in Lucy’s body is not only his family, but also Petrus’:

‘Your child? Now he is your child, Pollux?’
‘Yes. He is a child. He is my family, my people.’
So that is it. No more lies. My people. As naked an answer as he could wish. Well, Lucy is his people. (p.201)

This is probably founded in his inability to accept the baby as his grandchild yet (he refers to it as “a worm” (p.199)). Lucy has come to a deal with Petrus, but David does not see it, he cannot understand how his daughter can marry the man who is protecting her rapist. His daughter sees the threat behind her living alone without Petrus’ protection and is willing to pay the price. The fact that Petrus is now willing to protect Lucy, and that David has failed to do so, leaves room for speculation about Petrus’ involvement in the rape or the planning thereof. All David can come up with as a solution to Lucy’s situation is sending her away to Europe, where she is safer. Thus they have no other choice: if Lucy wants to stay in the Eastern Cape, she has to marry Petrus and the child will become the black man’s child, a humiliating solution for both of them.

The opera which David is writing is coming to an end. The high hopes he had had for it were shattered by the effects which his daughter’s rape had on him. He wanted to write an opera about Byron’s life as a lover and now he is writing an opera about the left-behind lover, Teresa, who wishes in vain for Byron to return. But David is unable to write more than Teresa’s whining on the balcony, there is no way out of the hoop and he cannot bring the story to evolve. The scholar has become the dog-man, patiently waiting for his daughter to give birth to the child in her womb.
5.4. Melanie’s rape

Lucy’s rape is not the only one in the novel. David’s affair with Melanie can also be interpreted as at least an abuse, but, more frankly, as rape. He himself even considers it a rape of the young woman. David is obsessed with the thin line between sexual passion and rape. When he is having sex with Melanie for the first time, he asks himself how far “too far” was for her (p.19). He tries to understand her reactions toward him, how her frowns might not mean passion but pain and how her part in the intercourse was more of a passive kind. Without actually allowing his thoughts to go all the way to rape, he does start to interpret everything in a less harmless way. After his short orgasmic nap, he wakes up and Melanie can finally “free herself” (ibid) and get up without looking at David. Their first encounter is described as having taken Melanie by surprise, whereas the following instances are told more in a way that shows David in the role of a rapist. He visits the girl in her apartment and completely throws her off guard. The reader sees the girl through David’s eyes, as she can’t “resist the intruder” (p.24) and goes limp all of a sudden, seemingly giving in to the man who forces himself onto her, to avoid further damage. Her feeble attempts to stop him are completely ignored by the passionate professor. He rides over Melanie like a steam train. He does notice that the girl doesn’t really react to his moves and rather recedes into herself:

Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nonetheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration. (…) So that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away. (ibid)

A radical approach would certainly define sexual intercourse that was undesired by one of the two people involved as rape. Indeed, how can something be “not quite rape”? For the victim of rapes there is surely no such thing as saying “he quite raped me” or “the sex was quite rape-ish”. There is either a mutual desire or passion or there is not, and whether a victim puts up a fight or not, does not form part of the definition of rape. “Going slack” is one of the many reactions victims have during the rape, and since the narrative is focused on David, we can assume that the sex he has with Melanie is rape for the girl herself. Afterwards, she is obviously in distress, as she wants to drop out of school and tries to avoid David. There are rumors about her having tried to commit suicide. However, all the reader knows about Melanie’s
reaction to the rape is vague and second-hand information. She avoids David and hence she is no longer clearly visible in the novel.

5.5. David’s reaction to and impression of Melanie’s rape

When David is first accused of abusing one of his students, he behaves like an offended child, not wanting to speak about it or offering an apology. The reaction is understandable, as his male pride is tarnished, although he himself was feeling that Melanie was not really cooperating during the few times they had intercourse. He notices Melanie’s mental withdrawal from the scene and her passiveness, their first night is framed by David’s telling Melanie what she should do: When she asks him why she should spend the night with him, he answers, “Because you ought to,” (p.16) as she doesn’t even possess her own beauty. By justifying his means with reference to the great romantics he incapacitates her, takes away her choice over her body and its features. He argues with the great philosophical and literary heritage of Europe, but what has she to counter? Melanie is a young girl, who is not so much interested in her academic advancement as she is interested in her acting ambitions at the local theater. She is still quite naïve and can be easily influenced by a male confidante, be it her father, her violent boyfriend or her professor.

David neither takes the allegations very seriously, nor does he take Melanie seriously. During the first confrontation between him and Mr. Isaacs, Melanie’s father, he avoids the conversation and runs away from him. He sees himself as a viper, but does not offer an apology. David is not willing to believe that it was Melanie who filed the complaint; he is convinced that she doesn’t have the valor to file a complaint against him for sexual harassment and accuses her father and her cousin of forcing the girl to do so. He does not want to blame her. That might be a reason why he does not take it too seriously, but he also has no respect for the hearing in front of a tribunal. He does not want to openly discuss his affair with a committee of other professors.

In this denunciation of the committee, Coetzee plants another kind of criticism of the TRC, especially as one of the members is called Desmond Swarts – a reference to
Desmond Tutu and the Afrikaans word *swart* for black. There is no use in a committee that cannot come up with a real change or solution to the issue on trial.
The refusal to give a statement is another way of criticizing the function of the TRC, David mocks the committee by asking them, “[a]nd you trust yourself to divine that, from the words I use – to divine whether it comes from the heart?” (p.54).

He does not even want to read Melanie’s statement, still acting like the gentleman who will keep private things private and who is still trying to protect Melanie from being dragged through the mud. The committee discusses David’s case and asks him whether he accepts Melanie’s accusations as the truth. He answers, “I accept whatever Ms Isaacs alleges.” (p.50) On closer inspection, he does not really accept her statement as the truth, but only as allegations. Clearly, there is a strong doubt in David (as well as Coetzee) that there is one single truth, as Melanie’s statement must clearly have been influenced by the people she trusts. The farthest he concedes to go is claiming to be a “servant of Eros” (p.52). He refuses to play the university’s bureaucratic games and leaves Cape Town to live with his daughter, not even awaiting the final decision from the rector.

After Lucy’s rape and Petrus’ reaction to it, David starts to feel remorse on the matter of his relationship with Melanie. He sees why an apology would be so important for Melanie’s family (if not for the whole university and its committee) and decides to meet Mr. Isaac at his home. He asks for forgiveness, just as he expects his daughter’s rapists to apologize to him. Of course, such an idea is highly chauvinistic, as he has no right to hope for an apology from Lucy’s rapists, just as he should be asking for forgiveness from Melanie and not from her father. On the other hand, after the discussion with Mr. Isaacs, he genuflects before Mrs. Isaacs and her younger daughter. This silent act can be read as an apology to all women for his wrongdoings and for the desire looming in men, since although he is literally on his knees before the two women, he still feels a flame of passion spring up for the younger of the two.
5.6. Conclusion

Evidently, the two rapes in *Disgrace* are closely related, although it is not as easy as the obvious connection perceived by David as an interception from a higher power to punish him. More so, the rapes are a binary opposition in several points. Of course the victim/perpetrator roles are reversed. In Melanie’s case we know both by name, the victim and the rapist, while in Lucy’s case we only know the name of one of the rapists. However, the race distinctions are clear in Lucy’s case – black on white –, while Melanie’s skin color is only alluded to as “dark”. So, for both rapes the white person involved is fully developed and introduced, while the black persons are either unknown or at least only described superficially through David’s eyes.

David, as the white rapist or abuser is the one rooted in European history and formed by its long philosophical heritage; he is a single perpetrator who works, lives and acts alone, independent of family structures and other social connections. He is unable to have a long-lasting relationship, hence his numerous divorces and affairs. Since he is a well-educated man he can use his persuasion skills to make his victim comply. The reader gets to know David very intimately, as he is the protagonist, and he is the link between Melanie and Lucy. Only after Lucy’s rape does he realize what he did to Melanie and what her family might expect him to do. If David is the symbol for the white population, the message Coetzee is trying convey is clear: only after the whites have suffered what the blacks have suffered under their rule, will they know how to react and at least have the possibility to apologize.

Lucy, the white victim, lives in country surroundings, unusual for a single woman. Her livelihood is a modern one, a single, independent lesbian working and living on a farm, also without any close family ties. Although white farmers are nothing new in South Africa, her particular role is one of a somewhat privileged outsider up until the day of her rape, when the privilege is taken from her. However, she is a martyr Madonna who takes whatever card she is dealt and puts up with her destiny as a way of paying for the wrongs that her race has done. It seems that she “understands” the black people, without questioning their ways, afraid to take a wrong step in world that is hostile towards her. Her reactions during the rape are not described, but the trauma she suffers after the rape is overshadowed by the blow to her self-esteem and
therefore ends in the neglect with which she treats her body from that point on. Her pregnancy will not let her recover anymore, since the child will be a constant reminder of its fathers.

The black rapists are plural to begin with, and besides the youngest of the three, they are not named throughout the novel. They are clearly native and only speak the most necessary sentences to get access to the house. Obviously, persuasion is not their tool to make their victim obey, they rely on brutal force. This way of describing the rapists and the outcome of the novel indicate that Coetzee is referring to these men as the mass of people, the underprivileged majority of blacks that have only recently gotten back their freedom and rights and are not yet able to control this freedom. The mass is vengeful and they have strong social ties to cover up the way they demand a payback from the whites. This is quite a one-sided portrayal and lets the black population of South Africa appear in a bad light. They are the vengeful mob who anonymously goes out to rape and put history right through vigilante justice.

The colored victim, Melanie, is an insecure young woman who is easily influenced by men. Not only David, who has no troubles convincing the girl to go to bed with him, but also her dominant boyfriend and her righteous father. The fact that the reader never really finds out Melanie’s heritage (whether she is colored or black) and how she would have thus been categorized during apartheid makes her appear even more indistinct – she is another example of the undefined mass of people in South Africa (unlike the white population who are very closely described). As a young girl, her self-esteem and confidence are not fully developed, which becomes clear in the way she goes limp during the rape, and how she tries to avoid David instead of confronting him. However, her social network (family, friends) gives her a possibility to overcome the rape, to deal with it and to accuse David as her rapist. She recovers fairly well, according to her father.

Besides the character oppositions, there are others as well. The timing is indicative of the historical insinuation – Melanie’s rape, the one that is white on colored, stands for the oppression of the black population during apartheid. As it is the first rape in the novel, this conclusion is clear. The second rape, Lucy’s, is also significant in its timing. It symbolizes the present and the present-day desire for revenge allegedly felt
by the blacks. The question remains as to how far history is really speaking through the rapists. Below the obvious revenge message, other implications are buried, as the simple meaning of the blacks’ pay-back is not sufficient. It goes further, as it is not only a subjugation of Lucy as a white person, but also as a woman. She later becomes Petrus’ wife, a man who already has two other wives, so she is robbed of her independence and land, thus becoming a man’s woman instead of remaining a single lesbian. This indicates two steps backwards, toward an amalgamation that is to the detriment of women. The one step is toward the traditional way of life, including polygamy, before the arrival of the white man on the continent. The other backward step is the one where women are deprived of their rights again, reinforcing a patriarchal society where single women are nothing but fair game.

Another dichotomy is public/private. Melanie’s rape is very public, as there are hearings and David’s name is soon known around campus and he is attacked by reporters. Lucy’s rape, on the other hand, is not really made public (despite the story being told among her neighbors), and the rapists are never put on trial. Additionally for Melanie, there is a late apology from her rapist, whereas Lucy never receives one. The difference here is that Lucy does feel that she can forgive her rapists, and she is confident that she will be able to love her child. Melanie’s father is not willing to forgive, mostly because he cannot tell if it really came from David’s heart. Again, the white people are portrayed as more magnanimous than the coloreds, as they can forgive, which the blacks cannot do so easily. This could be because the blacks have learnt to distrust the whites, or because they feel that too much has happened in history for a white man to be so easily forgiven. This is also another attack on the way South Africa has dealt with the atrocities during apartheid, the TRC. For many white perpetrators, it was a very easy way out, and the aftermath of the hearings as well as the formation of the so-called New South Africa has not brought a lot of change for the majority of the blacks, e.g. in the land redistribution issue. Coetzee’s frequent use of the term “redistribution” after a robbery has happened in the novel (during the rape, David’s house in Cape Town) addresses the fact that this has not worked yet. The failure of the TRC was not only in the fact that the one truth is hard to find, but also in the fact that reconciliation is nearly impossible; for many it should involve retaliation and/or redistribution.
The outcome of the novel is unclear. The reader does not witness the birth of Lucy’s baby, and we thus never know its face and can only guess at the shade of its skin. Its future is unforeseeable just like South Africa’s future. The baby stands for the New South Africa that has not yet been born. Despite the end of apartheid, there is still a lot to overcome and deal with before one can actually speak of the country as “new”. In *Disgrace* this newness is brought about by women; as long as they remain in their role, they can forward the country. Men are too involved in revenge and their own advancement and desires. Women should not neglect their femininity, their being “ewig-weiblich”, their ability to inspire and spiritualize mankind. Whether or not this eternal femininity does really exist is highly dubious, as we are not born as women but become women through socialization. In conclusion, in *Disgrace* it is clear that women should bear the cross of giving birth to the New South Africa, by staying women and not breaking out of the pre-established gender roles. No matter what might happen.

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6. *Bitter Fruit* by Achmat Dangor

Bitter Fruit is Achmat Dangor’s latest novel, a story about a colored family in the turbulent times of the last year of the past millennium. We witness the accomplishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the shift in government in the new South Africa as a parallel to how a family copes with its own past and how they try to tackle the future. The rape of Lydia, the mother, which resulted in the conception of Mikey, the son, hovers over the family and comes back to everyone’s mind when Silas, the father, accidentally runs into the rapist, a white former security police officer, Du Boise. The suppressed traumas boil up again and are finally solved when Mikey finds out about his natural father and eventually kills him and then goes into hiding. The marriage of Silas and Lydia shatters like the glass Lydia drops to the floor to dance on the broken pieces when she realizes that she can no longer hold back her feelings. Silas gives up in the end while Lydia at last finds her personal freedom and discovers herself and her sexuality all over again after breaking free from the demons of her past.

The novel itself is divided into three parts, Memory, Confession and Retribution. The first part takes up about two thirds of the book and is equally important in the plot. Through the omniscient narrator the readers get direct insight into the events which take place and the minds of the protagonists. By using Lydia’s diary to elaborate on her rape, the crime is experienced first-hand through her own words, read by her son Mikey. In fact, the story of the rape is said to be that of a friend of Dangor’s, who never spoke before the TRC. The narrative time is set in late 1998, but “*Bitter Fruit* starts by foregrounding the past, and through this past the present becomes fraught with difficulties”.

Achmat Dangor uses rapes in many different ways in *Bitter Fruit*, not only the rape of Lydia by Du Boise, but also the other two rapes that occur of Vinu and Hajera. By choosing South Africa as his setting, Achmat Dangor not only writes about

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155 Unless otherwise indicated all quotes in this chapter are from Dangor 2001.
157 Raditlhalo 2004, p. 68.
something familiar to him, but also tries to depict how people try to come to terms with the past in public as well as on a very private level. He not only plays with the clear cut race distinctions, but his characters are all hybrids of some sort, colored, neither black nor white. In this variety of identities which mix within the characters, he also interweaves different religions and classes so as to make it very clear that nobody can be seen as a single individual with one culture and identity, especially not in a country where ethnic diversity is so prominent.

In *Bitter Fruit*, Lydia’s rape looms over the entire plot, the ever dormant presence of a horrible crime, committed to one woman, but influencing the whole family. Not always perceptible it hides in dark corners, in words left unsaid. The rape as such happens nineteen years before the narrative time. Its effects are still visible, not only in Mikey, who is the direct result of the rape but also in Lydia’s behavior, her lack of sexual interest in her husband, her crying and in Silas’s behavior, his alcohol problem. However, these subtle effects on the parent’s behavior, who are the only ones who officially know about it reach a culminating point when after all these years Silas meets his wife’s rapist again in the shopping centre, an everyday life setting, and finds out that Du Boise does not even remember him. In other words, the incident that changed their life is not even a distant memory to the former police officer. Silas asks him “Do you remember me?”, to which he responds “Should I?” (p. 5)

During the plot of *Bitter Fruit* we as the readers are not shown what really went on during the crime. It is only Mikey who knows everything after he has read his mother’s diary. In so doing, Dangor does not depict the rape as such. Nevertheless, Lydia’s body is very often the centre of attention. We see her through the eyes of Silas and Mikey, showing us her legs, her feet, her moves when she dances, and how she pulls João closer when they are having sex. Then again Lydia is also not the archetype of the black woman. She is a colored catholic. That is why we cannot really assume that Lydia stands for the African continent as such, being raped by male colonists intent on taking whatever they can. She is quite independent and can thus not be put on the same level as the black slave women who were raped by white men simply because they owned them. However, you cannot disconnect race relations completely from this rape. After all, she is being raped by a white police
officer because she is colored, because her husband was part of the liberation movement, because it was no real crime to rape a colored or black woman if you were a white man. In the beginning it is Silas who represents movement and change in the country. His wife Lydia is stable, maintaining the daily routine despite her problems and fears. However, this changes in the end, where Silas is the one left sitting at home alone on the veranda, realizing that his wife has left him. Lydia leaves it all behind, her family and friends, her home and her job to become an independent woman, able to drive a long distance away from it all through the desert. She does not rely on anybody but herself, movement and change are her key to freedom, both psychologically and physically.

6.1. Lydia’s rape

After Silas tells her that he met Du Boise in the mall Lydia is at first ignorant. She does not comment on it, she concludes that is the reason why Silas did not bring home any groceries. Clutching the steering wheel of the car she tries to keep on track but she does not make it very far. She wants to get to work but does not manage to drive and sits on the front porch. When Silas finds her sitting there and wants to embrace her she confronts him.

“Silas, I’d forgotten...”
“I’m sorry, I did not intend to run into him.”
“You chose to remember, you chose to come home and tell me.”

This reproach is not only connected to her not wanting to remember, but also to her blaming him for being raped. Had it not been for Silas’s involvement in the underground movement, she would probably not have been raped. Now Silas is the hero among their friends, the one who fought for the country’s liberation but it was on Lydia’s body that this battle was fought. Silas was never tortured; he even had an affair with one of his comrades which he tries to explain by saying that they were so close in the struggle that it was inevitable. Lydia does not only feel betrayed because of his having an affair with this other woman, but also by his indifference to her part of the struggle, she is also a comrade in arms in some way. Later in the hospital she
silently thinks about it all and blames him again for bringing her rapist home. Her peace is disturbed, she can no longer distinguish the two from another, Silas has been made Du Boise’s instrument. The ghost that had been locked in the dungeon of her soul has been freed and haunts her on every occasion. She is forced to relive everything again.

She does not want to talk to the Truth Commission, as Silas proposes; she sees that no man can understand what she has gone through, not even Archbishop Tutu. Understanding that Silas wants her to go to the TRC to show everyone how objective he can be, despite his heavy involvement in the case. She however does not want to give him the satisfaction. The way she sees it,

Nothing in her life would have changed, (…) nothing could be undone (…). Once that violating penis, that vile cock had been inside you, it could not be withdrawn, not by an act of remorse or vengeance, not even justice.

p. 156

By putting it this way, Dangor takes away her possibility to overcome the trauma by confronting herself with her rapist, by relating her story to others. Nothing that anyone could do would help Lydia overcome the trauma she has been through. That is why she does not want Du Boise to appear in front of the amnesty committee, and therefore she asks Silas to stop him. Only in the end when she leaves them all behind, along with the roles she has been playing throughout all those years, most of them unloved by others, she can find her freedom and peace. These many roles she had played over the years made her the woman she is and she represents women who are never only one person, but have many parts to play in life. In time, distance and his death she is able to see Du Boise only as a minor interference in her past.

She wants Silas to kill the man who committed that horrible crime on her body and hereby scarring her soul, who planted his seed inside of her and called her dirty names while doing it. She wants Silas to prove that he is a real man after all, although he did not help her when it happened, he could now make sure that justice would be done. Lydia’s wounds are ripped back open, the ones she had covered thoroughly throughout the years and she must now finally let her pain surface. To get over her inner agony she mutilates herself by dancing on broken glass, a way to let it all out through physical pain, all this while she is passionately kissing her husband.
Maybe it is also a way of feeling physical sensation again after years of indifference towards touch. Numbness is a normal reaction in depression and trauma, especially the trauma of being raped might take years to overcome. Lydia needs words to reconcile a verbal dispute, “spoken out loud” (p. 107), whereas Silas is fine with an embrace. But after the rape, as the two of them walk home she longs for his touch. A touch would have changed everything she had felt. But he did not touch her and so she “crossed over into a zone of silence” (p. 129) instead of becoming a ruthless soldier taking part in Silas’s and South Africa’s fight.

Lydia believes that Silas only sees her as the rape victim, the heroine of the struggle, undergoing so much pain and still holding on. She blames Du Boise for making her seek pleasure in fantasies about Cathy and Sister Catherine, making love to the crucifix.

He had hurt her, Du Boise, yes, but more than the mere brutalizing of her vagina, he had violated her womb with the horror. He had driven her to seek salvation in myths and invoked spirits, to deny herself the reality of her body, its earth, its power to conceive.

p. 119

She says that she could feel that she was pregnant, immediately after he had let go of her. This is something quite strange. There are not many women who can feel that they are pregnant within an hour after conception, especially at that age and with their first child. What is more likely is that she felt an inner turmoil, which in fact is very normal among rape victims. Over eighty percent of all rape victims feel an inner instability and nausea. This causes us to question how sure we can actually be that Mikey is Du Boise’s son. All we know for sure is that Lydia got pregnant immediately after the rape. But what if she was already pregnant at that time? Mikey does indeed look very much like his dead uncle Toyer, who is his father’s brother. On the other hand, we are not talking about real people in the real world. It could be that Dangor depicts Lydia as this complete woman picking up the theme of the hypersexual with all the positive and negative things that come with the idea. Regardless of who is indeed Mikey’s father, Lydia decides to give birth to him and not to give him away. She can distinguish between his monster-father and the child himself. But she also decides not to have another child, that Mikey shall be the only

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158 Feldmann 1992 p. 54
one. This could be because she does not want another child out of love who she could probably love more than Mikey and who would be there as a contrast where she could see the difference between him and the love-child. On the other hand, it is not likely she could have a love-child, since she has difficulty loving her husband and actually has sex with him because it is his right. If a woman does not enjoy making love with her husband, she is only fulfilling her duty. How much does she have to disdain this act, for it to become a kind of rape? In the light of the argument that rape is more about power than sexuality, there seems to be a certain degree of power which Lydia believes Silas to have, as he can “use” her body, and she lets him. His right over that body is a way of Lydia’s conceding a part of herself to her husband. Certainly, it is not the same as an average rape but the dividing line is a thin one and it reminds us of the countries where rape was (and in some still is) not considered possible in marriage.

In her diary she writes about her rape. It is of course a way of dealing with the pain, of getting over the trauma. Here we can see the different stages of recovery. First she relates the color of the sky, and the grass underneath her. Right after that she says that she will get over it, because she is a woman and they always get over everything. She tries to talk to God but He is silent. She cannot confide in Silas or her family because they would take her pain and make it theirs and again, she as the woman tries to save the ones around her by not talking to them about her problem. We are told that she describes the rape in minute detail, remembering everything there was, including Silas’s screams. This woman can overcome all the ugliness and hatred felt when she is raped and bear a child and love this child so much that it is almost unhealthy in a Freudian way.

As things get back to normal and the code of silence is established in the house after her self-mutilation, Lydia tells herself that she is not interested in what Silas might think about what happened and why she danced on the glass. She knows the truth and nobody else does.

Lydia reinvents herself after the incident. She starts a new job, and is no longer a nurse. Dangor must have deliberately chosen her occupation as a nurse. It implies so many things that are inherent in Lydia’s character. The nurse who is there for the
helpless patients whenever they need her, any time of the day, whatever they wish. Nurses do all the dirty work; they are the ultimate servants even taking care of the most unwelcome chores. They are clad in pure white uniforms they are almost indistinguishable women, an obedient army to the doctors, the gods in white. On the other hand nurses are sex symbols, as a prominent feature in pornography. Dangor is playing with male fantasies of female sexuality - the sexy nurse dreaming of a nun and an exotic girl being intimate with each other. Lydia is reduced to this nurse concept, she as a nurse is not an individual but part of a group of people; she is depersonalized, just as the rape victim is by the rapist.

After Lydia’s rebirth the people she is surrounded with, almost cannot recognize her any more. She has gone through a major transformation. ”[A]ll look at her as if she is a strange insect emerging from a cocoon they had mistakenly assumed was her permanent, incarnate being.” (p. 170). Finally she has coped with the rape and has confronted herself with it, spoken to Silas how it felt when the penis of that filthy man stabbed her in her most intimate sexual part and expressed her wishes of what was to happen with Du Boise. It is on Silas’s birthday party that she ultimately frees herself. She encounters a young man from Mozambique who is fascinated by her and courts her. They dance together and in the end they have sex on the billiard table while Mikey and Silas are watching.

He would have to live with that. His wife had found release at last from both her captive demons: from Du Boise and from himself. Now not every man would be a rapist to her.

p.267

Is Lydia released because she has slept with this man with “skin so black it was almost blue” (p. 266) because he was so black and his semen cleansed her inside from all the white men’s semen? Or was it because he is so young and still adores her, saying that he had fallen in love with her immediately after they had had sex? Probably it was that after all her bad experiences and confusions with her sexuality, after having made the mistake of almost sleeping with her son, she realized that being cherished by someone she does not know and having passionate and noncommittal sex with him was a way of showing her that she could have sex with someone she wanted to have it with and when she wanted it. Not being forced by
someone or feeling obliged to do it because her husband has the right over her body. She has finally broken out of the cocoon she had constructed around herself, has fractured the zone of silence that she had gone into when she had felt that she was pregnant. Now she can cope with the world in a direct way that she feels is her own way of doing so, by being who she wants to be, no longer held captive by the demons who stayed with her all her life.

6.2. How do Silas and Mikey react?

Very often scientists writing about rape mention that it is common for the husband or male family members of the raped woman to feel that they were raped as well. The rape gives them a feeling of impotence, of not being able to protect their wife, mother, sister, daughter from this atrocious crime. Also, an attack on the wife can be seen as an indirect attack on the husband who is insofar affected as that his wife is blemished and no longer the woman he had married. His sex life will be transformed; the woman may no longer be able to be sexually active etc.

6.2.1. Silas

When Silas is confronted with Du Boise in the mall, he reacts immediately. He forgets about the chores he was to do and confronts him. But when Du Boise is oblivious, he goes home and decides to get drunk in a park, until his son comes and picks him up. When he is left alone he starts to remember the night, first Lydia’s voice when she was screaming and then the voices of the police men who watched as their colleague raped her.

He heard Lydia’s voice, different as well, hoarse and rich, vibrating like a singer’s voice too deep to be played so loudly through a set of worn out speakers. ‘Naai her, naai her good!’ another voice said.

Silas believes in the system he has helped to establish, he believes that by speaking to the TRC Lydia can be freed from her problems. When his wife asks him to kill Du Boise he rejects it, a man of the law, civilized as he is, he would never do such a
primitive thing. He reacts just like his name giver would have done, using his “reason as leading principle”\textsuperscript{159}. This provides a stark contrast to the way Mikey reacts. Silas is not directly involved as he is neither the one who was raped and traumatized nor is he the one to lose his identity. He can distance himself now and be reasonable. Earlier on in his life he needed alcohol to find the distance (and he falls back on this coping method when he encounters DuBoise after all those years), but now he has a new remedy: the TRC.

Lydia questions his manhood but he does not let it touch him, he cannot see the impotence she is accusing him of, or does not want to see it. When she starts to cut herself up, he does not realize in the first instance, overcome by the way his wife kisses him. For a moment he feels the panic overwhelming him, does not know how to react, but he starts to understand that he cannot again just scream louder than her, as he did nineteen years ago in a police van. In the end that is exactly what he does. He does not comfort his wife with all that he can, but gets ill himself, undergoes a seizure and has to stay in hospital overnight, just what he did right after Lydia’s rape. In his firm belief that he can deal with all the problems in the country he just cannot get things right in his own home. All he does is escape in his own physical weakness or seek comfort in alcohol. When he sees Lydia crying and just cannot deal with it he takes off and goes for a stroll in the night looking for distraction. One night when he goes to have a drink with his brother-in-law, Alec asks him how he found the bar. “‘How did you find this fleapit?’ he asked. ‘One night on my way to you, looking for, you know refuge from Lydia’s fucken tears, I saw this place and decided to stop.’” (p. 213). Anything would do, as long he isn’t confronted with his inability to talk to his wife, to get close to her and help her with her problems. Dangor plays with the man/woman stereotypes that are prevalent in many societies. Women will want to speak about their emotions, discuss it with someone who is close to them, while men prefer to endure them in silence or wash them down with alcohol. Ironically, as the story unfolds, it is Silas who insists on speaking out loud about the past during the TRC hearings and Lydia is not willing to voice her feelings.

Once they are all back home after Lydia’s dance on shreds of glass, in a silent home, Silas does not try to understand Lydia or overcome the wall she has built up. He tells

\textsuperscript{159} Zellweger 2005, link 2.
himself that it is all her problem, that it does not concern him and that she can hide whatever she thinks needs to be hidden. He has given up trying to get close to her, sees that there is nothing he can do, everything he does is wrong. Maybe somehow he finally understands that she sees in him just the same villain as in Du Boise. He turns to the things he knows he can manage, leading a whole country into reconciliation with their past. What he cannot do in his own private home – coming to terms with the past – he can accomplish for the state of South Africa. This is his real baby; he has brought the country to maturity and now he is no longer needed.

6.2.2. Mikey

Mikey has a very close relationship with his mother, they like to sniff at each other, and he does not think that it is a bad thing, until he finds out why his mother sniffs at him all the time: she tries to find out whether or not he smells of the evil that his real father was.

Suddenly, every tender touch, hug, or kiss on the forehead she had offered him no longer seemed like a spontaneous, simple, motherly gesture. (...) Lydia had loved him out of pain and guilt.

pp. 129, 130

When she is in hospital Mikey finds his mother’s old diary and starts to read it. That is where he finds out that he is not Silas’s son but the son of his mother’s rapist. Within a second Mikey loses his identity. His mother returns home shortly after he has read the journal and when she comes home they spend a long time together being completely alone, sucking in each other’s odors. Though this behavior seems absolutely natural to them they sense that this is not a normal thing to happen between a mother and her adult son.

After routine has got the house back in its grip, Mikey tries to tell himself that nothing happened, he wants to believe that everything was the way it had been, no disturbance, his mother not having danced on broken glass, him not having read her diary. He finds himself in a state of denial. This does not last too long, he soon starts to reconstruct his identity and he tries to trace his family’s moves through the townships. He remembers that one day when he stayed at his Ouma Angel’s house
Du Boise was there to tell them that they had to move. Although Mikey can only be sure that he is the natural son of his mother, not of his father Silas, it is his family he looks for when he tries to find his identity.

Even if he is not his natural son, he might as well be a spiritual descendent of the Ali family. He goes to their family’s home and gets involved with his cousin Sadrodien’s Sufi affiliations. When he is sitting with Silas’s part of the family, he feels that this is where he belongs, he wants to find a mirror, to contradict that he is Du Boise’s son and find similarity between him and these people.

He feels immersed in his family, these are his people, theses dark-faced, hook-nosed hybrids; he longs to go and look in a mirror, seek confirmation of his desire to belong. Lydia must be wrong! How can Du Boise be his biological father?

p. 189

Sadrodien introduces him to the Imam and Mikey, who is slowly finding his own new identity as Michael, helped by his friend Vinu, sees after all this that Islam is the place where he belongs. Here he gets the straightforward answers to his questions; these people understand his feelings and help him complete his revenge. Michael, the lover of older women, steals from his sex partners to get his goals accomplished, he steals from his father to get the information that he needs to pay his Muslim friends, he uses Kate (another woman he has slept with) to get the data on Du Boise. Not only does he change drastically in his behavior, he also changes his looks, his music tastes.

Michael has a feverish energy that seems to consume his youthfulness. He is taller and leaner, he acquires a dark-clothed attractiveness that strikes Silas’s indifference (...) and corrodes Lydia’s still tender membrane of guilty remembrance”.

p. 169

Michael is the cool calculator, the one who can bring this spook to its end. The solution to his problems is to get the intruder who changed his whole life so abruptly out of this world as fast as possible, to get rid of the evil to re-establish the world order as it was before. Together with the Imam he manages to get whatever he needs and finally not only kills his mother’s rapist and his father, but also another rapist, Vinu’s, the girl’s own father. It is not so uncommon with Muslim fundamentalists to
spring from a family that is not very Muslim in their everyday life, just like Lydia and Silas. Mikey grows up understanding Islam as a part of his father’s heritage, not being practiced; his only anchor to the faith the Kaaba stone he stole from his father. For him Islam is a pure religion full of flawless poetry and mysticism. When he loses his identity by intruding on the privacy of his mother, he finds that faith is the only thing that connects him to his ancestors and he clings to it with feverish affection. This is what happens to many Muslim fundamentalists, they seem to be well embedded in Western society, to be quite worldly in their behavior, until something piercing happens in their life and they become terrorists\footnote{Six, 2004}, as they long for stability and simple answers to the problems they encounter in an unknown and unfriendly country.

6.3. Vinu’s rape

Vinu is a close friend of Mikey’s. She is the daughter of a Hindu woman and an Afrikaner father who has fought in the struggle for the liberation of South Africa. The girl is highly conscious about her being a hybrid and sees Mikey as a friend in whom she can confide. She is the one who helps him overcome his nickname, finding his own identity by not conforming to the role he is supposed to play according to his parents. He declares that he wants to be called by his full name as a sign of his loyalty to her.

One day she shows up and tells Michael her secret. She confides in him how she has been sleeping with her father for many years. For her it was a very beautiful and intimate relationship with her father, it was something special, a way for the two of them to cope with the coldness of being in another continent. Up until the day when her father has an affair. She could cope with his sleeping with her mother because that was his duty, but not with another woman. Here again Dangor picks up the idea of where to draw the line between love making and performing one’s duty as a spouse. Only this time it is the husband who is doing what he has to do, without love, but that is not as easy as it is for a woman to “pretend” passion. A man must feel some sort of arousal, whereas a woman can fake lust. So it is questionable whether
Vinu’s father did in fact not feel anything for her mother anymore, or if he was just using her (just like their daughter) for his sex drive.

I was angry, not for her sake, but for mine. I told her ‘Leave him!’ I couldn’t leave him, not in that sense, because suddenly I knew he did not belong to me, he never had.

p. 209

To this betrayal her father adds that he confesses to his counselor that he has abused his daughter. Now she is doubly betrayed, not only by his sleeping with another woman but also by betraying their relationship by calling it wrong, an abuse. Somehow her eyes are opened and she senses that it might not have been the beautiful relationship she had told herself.

After pondering this confession, Michael thinks about this father-daughter relationship and comes to the conclusion that the beauty and love Vinu sees in having an affair with her father is all but an illusion she has come up with to deal with the horror of what it really was: rape. He wakes her from her sleep and tells her: “‘Vinu, listen. Don’t fool yourself. There was nothing beautiful about it. It was rape, Vinu, simple, crude rape.’” (p. 210).

Finally the girl awakes from her dream and realizes that Michael is right and she starts crying like a child, like she should – or maybe has – when she was a young girl. Michael has only one way to deal with this. He already knows what he has to do with men who rape women who are close to him, and so he chooses Vinu’s father to be the one on whom he can practice his final deed: murdering Du Boise.

6.4. Hajera

The third rape that is mentioned in the novel is Hajera’s. Hajera is the sister of Ali Ali, Silas’s grandfather, an important figure in the South African Muslim community. Michael hears about her rape when he talks to Moulana Ismail. He is Michael’s ultimate source of truth, he is the one who helps him make his decisions, and he also tells him what he wants to hear: “‘You are truly your grandfather’s seed,
such a subtle mind”’ (p. 195). Moulana Ismail relates to Michael Ali Ali’s story, and how he came to South Africa from India in the form of a fable.

Hajera, named after Mohammed’s first pilgrimage, a journey pious Muslims still undertake, is raped by a British soldier in India. The soldier later denies having anything to do with the girl, especially after she gets pregnant by him. Although the soldier claims that Hajera took an active role in the act and is rejected by her own family, she is seen by Ali Ali as the pure angel who has been dirtied by the evil hand of the British. She, in contrast to Lydia, does stand for the Indian subcontinent that is being raped by the evil European colonialist forces. Hajera is sent away to give birth to the child of the soldier, but soon afterwards the baby dies while she is breastfeeding it. She is accused of having choked it and sent into a madhouse. This can be interpreted as standing for children being born from a rape between a white man and an Indian woman. These children cannot survive, either from their own weakness, or from mother India who chokes her hybrid children. Moulana Ismail comments on this by saying that Ali Ali remembers the following:

One day evil incarnate will come in the guise of saviors. (…) These unbelievers will rule the world for a long time and not only will they inflict mental and physical pain on true believers, and make them fight among themselves, but they will cause them to forsake their own children.

p. 201

Ali Ali sees what the soldiers are up to and decides to lure the soldier into an ambush. The soldier is arrogant enough to go to the meeting with this Muslim in the mango grove. This is where he meets his murderer. Ali Ali kills him and hangs him from the tree for all to see. In the same way, years later, it was black men who were hanged for raping white women, to put it in Billie Holiday’s words:

Southern trees bear strange fruit,  
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,  
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,  
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Billie Holiday: *Strange Fruit*

In the end Moulana Ismail gives Michael a simple and clear answer to his question if he would help a man on his quest for vengeance. He encourages Michael to bring his
quest to an end and justifies murder as a payback for rape: “There are certain things people do not forget, or forgive. Rape is one of them.” (p. 204).

Moulana Ismail concludes by mentioning other regimes that raped and impregnated women of the oppressed, as the Romans with the Sabines, the Nazis with Jewish women and the Sowjets with the women in Poland. It is clear to him that this is the only way to conquer a people: “You conquer a nation by bastardizing its children.” (p. 204).

6.5. Conclusion

Different to the other South African novels, Bitter Fruit does not give the reader a happy outlook for South Africa’s future. The outcome is pessimistic as far as the TRC is concerned. Dangor is clearly of the opinion that the Commission has not given the country or its people a possibility to get over their past. The novel underlines the fact that coming to terms with the past is something everyone has to do for themselves and might sometimes not be as easy as the TRC puts it. As we have seen, individuals deal very differently with the past and have distinct ways of coping with it. Not everyone is glad to reconcile with the perpetrators that have done harm to them or their loved ones. Silas is the one who stands for the TRC and the first government after the fall of apartheid, and he is the one who does not get over the past. He has to give up and is stuck in his state of mind. It is a different kind of coping that helps people move on. On the one hand it is Lydia’s version which opens the graves of the past and deals with them, she goes a step further and literally leaves her past behind as she drives through the desert into a better future. On the other hand there is Mikey, the adolescent, who just like this New South Africa has his roots in a valueless, abominable past and has to look into a future that does not promise to be any better. He has to go an extreme way to get over it and has no other possibility but retaliation.

Thus we can conclude that for this particular author the way of dealing with the past will only be of substance if one stops talking of truth and reconciliation and starts understanding that it will only work with truths in the plural and by giving everybody
their own way of getting over it. Be it by reconciling, ignoring or sometimes pure revenge.

During the hearings of the TRC, not many women came to tell their stories. There were women who spoke, but mostly on behalf of someone close to them. As *Bitter Fruit* is a story about a woman and her ordeal during and after apartheid, it is a mouthpiece for those who are not able to speak for themselves. “*Bitter Fruit* confronts the TRC’s inability to listen to women’s voices and considers the continued effects of this silencing on those still staggering under the burden of traumatic memory.”

That Lydia is a colored, Catholic woman and her rapist is a white police man during apartheid, will strike a chord with the image of Africa being conquered by the Europeans. If Lydia is indeed Africa, she is an Africa that has already gone through a few changes, as for example by Catholic missionaries. While DuBois is clearly not African in ancestry, he was born there and as an Afrikaner his roots might also be found in Africa. The metaphor is only a half-hearted one and the distinctions are no longer clear-cut. We must see this metaphor not as the one of the African continent being raped by the white man, but as the dark-skinned African people being raped by those of fair skin, who would nonetheless also identify themselves as Africans. So it is no longer a problem between Africa and the white men but an inter-African one. This might also contribute to Mikey’s loss of identity. Mikey stands for the new Africans who are products of the country’s past and who can no longer place themselves in one group of people. In a country that was built on these exact distinctions based on race, the new generation who are the first to live without these concrete rules of who/what to belong to are at a loss. They must find their own way of finding their place in a society that hasn’t yet overcome its own past, where routine has not been able to find a foothold just yet.

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161 Strauss 2005.
This book is about the story of “a little girl watching her mother descend into madness and later struggling with her own mind”\footnote{Unless otherwise indicated all quotes in this chapter are from Zadok 2005.}. Rachel Zadok’s \textit{Bildungsroman} leads us through an entangled story, where the reader will only find out at the very end what really happened in 1985 on the farm of Faith’s mother. After her father’s disappearance, Faith’s mother Bella falls into deep depression and can no longer look after her child because she hears the voices of fairies speaking to her. The live-in household help, Nomsa comes to the farm to take care of Faith, who in turn takes a great liking to the young black woman. The last time Faith sees her is when she is being carried away on a stretcher, shot to death. For the rest of her life, Faith believes that it was her mother who killed Nomsa, but after Bella’s death Faith finally remembers that it was Faith who fired the rifle at Nomsa’s rapist, Oom Piet and accidentally killed the woman.

The prologue and epilogue open and close the novel. These two separate chapters are not only set apart from the rest by their position in the book, but also by their font and the style in which they are written. In both it is the voice of Dead Rex, the fiercest of Bella’s fairies, who portrays his view of the story and the way he is involved in it. Dead Rex’s narrative is broken, simple words and incorrect grammar, the voice of a dark creature that is not fully cultured and not human. The problem with this way of introducing an old fairy of African tradition is that the meanness and darkness he exudes can be easily mistaken with an African \textit{sangoma}, because it draws heavily on white superstitions and prejudice. The vernacular resembles that of an African who speaks a kind of English that is different to the Standard English spoken by the white women, whose story is told in this novel.

Beside the Dead Rex chapters, the story is told by the unreliable first-person narration of Faith herself. As a seven year old girl she doesn’t have a full grasp of the goings-on around her. She is not exposed to a lot of human contact, as she hasn’t started school yet and the only time she sees other children, they only tease her. She is surrounded by women and fairies only, as the farm hand and her father both leave.
the farm. The girl also inherited her mother’s instable psyche, so she suffers from self-induced amnesia and faints frequently. As a young woman Faith has forgotten a lot about the past (including her father’s face) and contorts the little memory that she has been able to keep.

This novel is split into two parts, one at the beginning of the last decade of apartheid in 1985, the second at the turn of the millennium. Both parts are about the protagonist, Faith, and her different lives, on the farm as a little girl and in the city as a young woman. The year 1985 is just like any other on the farm in Northern Transvaal for Faith. She lives protected in her rural life, caught in her mother’s fantasies about fairies and monsters, not realizing what is truly happening in the country. Only when she is taken to Tannie Hettie’s house after her mother has another break-down and she gets to watch TV for once, does she notice the news, the rubble and the burning cars, but all that is just boring to her\textsuperscript{164}. She does not truly understand what it means to be black during apartheid and is confused about the treatment Nomsa receives when she runs her mother’s stand at the market.

The second part starts on New Year’s Eve of 1999, the end of an old and the start of a new millennium. The time is not randomly chosen, as this will mark the year when Faith overcomes her past and can start anew. At 20, she is not able to hold a relationship with another man and toys with the thought of jumping off a balcony. Very shortly after midnight, the women she is staying with, Mia is a friend of Bella’s and Molly is her daughter; receive the phone call telling them that Bella has died.

7.1. Nomsa’s rape

The rape as such is only depicted in a fragmented way and through the eyes of two protagonists. One, of course is Faith who buries the memory of it deep down inside her, the other one is Dead Rex. Through the prologue the reader gets a glimpse of what happened to Nomsa. Here, Dead Rex is awakened by Nomsa’s fear and the hatred in Oom Piet, who rapes her. Faith sees through the cracks of Nomsa’s shed, how her friend is being raped. The rapist is “mash[ing] into the woman” (p.3), as she

\textsuperscript{164} Cf. p. 111.
is bent over her bed, Oom Piet pushing her head down, breaking her arms while
Nomsa is screaming silently, begging him to stop. Apparently, the girl was a virgin
before the rape, as her rapist has a “dark juice stain on his legs” (ibid.) which leads to
the conclusion that this is blood of the ruptured hymen. By using the omniscient
point of view of Dead Rex, Zadok manages to get a slight idea of Nomsa’s reactions,
before she is killed by Faith. Before the rape she was a happy young woman, and
now there is something for the monster to feast on: her pain and fear. While the
majority of the book is written in a limited first person narrative of Faith (girl/young
woman), the direct description of the rape, told through Dead Rex’s eyes, stands in
harsh contrast to the general style. The rape is depicted in a very direct, brutal and
real way; there is very little space for inference, no ambiguity in the violence and no
euphemisms. The reader gets the full and ugly force of the crime and the horrible
feelings that come with it, which delight the monster.

Faith remembers the night when Nomsa was raped in a dream, when she is finally
back on the farm. Seven-year-old Faith goes to the shed and sees her nanny lying on
her bed, spread out and with her skirt up “around her waist like a tyre (sic!)” (p.307).
This is after Faith has shot at Oom Piet, before Nomsa dies, with the last strength left
in her she comes back to consciousness and starts screaming again, asking for the
“baas” to stop. This striking image of the tire around her hips, while the candle is
flickering and the shadows dance over the black woman’s body, reminds the reader
of the practice of necklacing. Where does the little girl get that image from?
Obviously she has understood something of what is happening in South Africa
during childhood. It is left to wonder if this metaphor comes from the young Faith –
if she thought this when she was witnessing the rape – or from the older Faith, who
came up with this metaphor in her grown-up dream. However, the connection is
faulty, as necklacing was used to mainly punish traitors among the blacks during
apartheid by lynching them with a burning tire around their bodies. Nomsa has not
betrayed anybody and the one who is torturing her is a white man.

The reason for Nomsa’s rape is obscure. Oom Piet has not been attracted to her (at
least openly), but is courting Faith’s mother, Bella. He starts visiting her, bringing
her flowers and sitting with her. Faith is angry about this, as she still believes that
Bella is her father’s wife (which she technically still is, despite his absence and affair
with the other woman). The rape occurs on the night when Oom Piet and Bella go on a real date for the first time. On the next morning Faith wakes up, feeling sick after a terrible nightmare, with an aching shoulder. She finds her mother sitting at the kitchen table, absent minded, “mascara had run down her cheeks”, her dress “torn at the neck and her lipstick had rubbed away” (p.166), the lipstick which on the previous night had looked like “a gash against her ghost-powder face” (p.165). Obviously, Oom Piet was expecting to get something from Bella, which she was not willing to give, so he went to get it from the young black woman in the shed.

Oom Piet is the town’s playboy, married but still visiting other women at night and getting what he wants. Before Bella breaks down, he has no chances with her, although he doesn’t give up on flirting with her. He claims that he doesn’t have a clue about art, but he can spot beauty, ineffectively hiding a compliment for Bella. In the night of the rape, he is already with Bella, and he also tries to get intimate with her, so why does he stop at a certain point and go to Nomsa? It might be that Bella fought too much, but considering her prior demise and how she has somehow given up, she must have not been able to fight hard enough. Nomsa is a strong young woman, so she has probably put up more of a fight than fragile Bella. Keeping in mind that rape is mostly committed in order to prove the rapist’s power over the victim, Oom Piet might even have been turned off by Bella’s lack of resistance. On the other hand, if he is attracted to beauty, he might not have been so attracted to Bella who is skinny and old, wearing an ugly brown dress, with a bloody gash as a mouth. Nomsa is young and beautiful, and maybe, as a black woman in the eyes of an Afrikaner, oversexed and always willing. Lastly, going back to the power relations, Nomsa is Bella’s maid. She takes over her role in the household, as a farmer and as a mother to Faith. She is considered inferior because of her dark skin, so she will also have to step in as a substitute for Bella’s affair and take that stab as well. Her position in this household and consequently in the relationship portrays her double discrimination, as a woman and as an African in South Africa.

In contrast to the position of the raped woman, Oom Piet’s is that of the white man, who is in power and who has relatively little to fear. Even after Faith remembers what happens, Oom Piet is not punished for raping Nomsa. He even leaves Faith in the back of his butchery and walks out on her with a face “twisted into a victorious
sneer” (p.317). Although it is an accident that kills Nomsa and saves Oom Piet, the author did not let Faith shoot the wrong way without purpose. It shows that the white man will always win and, especially in 1985 South Africa, there was no real justice for their crimes committed against the blacks. In Faith’s attempt to protect Nomsa, she kills her because she chose to protect her by using the violent but easy way out. This quick and easy solution harms the victim and the protector, but not the perpetrator. What does this allegory signify, the white man raping the black woman, and the white child killing the victim in an attempt to save her? The young child, acting from an outsider’s position in this rape could stand for the foreign countries, who tried to help the black people in apartheid South Africa by sanctioning the country. But this way of trying to force a country and its leaders into a different mindset has not helped the blacks. Since the blacks were also the poorest, it was them who had to bear the problems and drawbacks that came with these sanctions.

7.2. Bella’s and Faith’s reactions

Bella overcomes her loneliness with art; it is her compensation for depression. She paints pictures of the fairies who communicate with her and then sells these pictures at the market. The pictures are an important part of the story, as all of them seem to speak to Faith in a certain way, as a girl she is very scared of them. Each fairy has the same little girl’s face: Faith’s. In the end all of them are destroyed by water seeping into the shed where they are stored after Faith and Bella have left the farm behind. All but the one of Dead Rex which finally triggers Faith’s memory of the eventful night when Nomsa was killed. Water and rain take a vital stance in the novel’s development. The trouble with Faith’s parents starts when the eagerly awaited rain begins to fall and it becomes clear that her father will not return to the farm. In the end, when Faith finally overcomes her demons and she is free of the trauma she has subdued for almost her whole life, in this calmness, “outside it begins to rain” (p.324).

The underlying message of the novel is that Africans can deal with the fairy world of South Africa, while Bella, the white woman, cannot. She is very labile in her loneliness and isolation, her dependence on her husband and his love make her lose
control. The fairies speak to her and she is very superstitious, a way of thinking that is transplanted and amplified in Faith’s vivid imagination. When her husband Marius leaves her, she falls into deep depression, from which she never really recovers. The news brought by Tannie Hettie leads to her full nervous breakdown and depression. As Faith does not find out the news that triggered this, neither do the readers, but one can safely assume that it has to do with Marius’ moving in with Tannie Hettie’s daughter, Liesel. Faith is now not only scared of the fairies, but also of her own mother. Bella tells her daughter, that she is a child of the fairies. This is devastating information for the child. She steals her mother’s compact mirror and starts comparing herself with the pictures, especially with Dead Rex. Faith detects striking similarities with the monster: her eyes, her wrist, and her fingers – she understands that she is different to the other people: “I was something else, a Halfling, a changeling.” (p.133). All these similarities convince her that she is Dead Rex’s child.

Why does Bella make her daughter believe that she is an offspring of the worst of all fairies? True, she is in a sick state of mind, but she paints her daughter’s face and some other bodily features into the faces of the fairies. There must be a connection for her between the fairies and her daughter. Bella is Faith’s mother, but is Dead Rex a version of Marius? Dead Rex could stand for men in general, the monster feeding on other’s fears and pain. Or is Dead Rex a version of Faith? Bella could see in Faith the reason for her loneliness, for being stuck on the farm, of not being able to go anywhere. Their relationship is not really filled with an abundance of love and care between mother and daughter, as Bella even tries to leave the child behind in the diner where Liesel works. It could be that Bella is still mad at Faith for causing her pain when being born. Bella has had a good life before coming to the Northern Transvaal, she doesn’t belong there, stands out. Without Marius’ love there is nothing for her that will make her feel at home. So Dead Rex could stand for her motherhood, for being caught in an unfriendly environment, caught on a farm with only fairies to keep her company. Lastly, Dead Rex could stand for sexuality per se, Faith’s face is in the faces of the fairies and also that of Dead Rex and Faith is the ultimate product of Bella’s sexuality. If Dead Rex stands for all that is bad and evil, and Faith looks like him, there must be something bad and evil in Faith.
As a young woman Faith looks a lot like her mother. She is mistaken for her by many people, so Bella might have seen a resemblance between herself and her daughter, before her daughter was able to see it. This offers another explanation for Dead Rex and the fairies looking like Faith. It is Bella herself who is portrayed in her daughter and thus also in her own paintings. It might be Bella’s disappointment in love, Dead Rex standing as a symbol for the love that has been lost – the fairy of the broken heart.

After the eventful night, Bella slips back into a protective mode towards Faith. She realizes that her daughter cannot remember anything about the shooting or what happened to Nomsa, so she makes sure that the girl does not remember anymore. When the police come, she takes full responsibility and admits a lie: that she shot Nomsa. She is brought to an asylum for the criminally insane where she stays until she dies. Faith stops visiting her after a while, fully believing that her mother is a “crazy bitch” (p. 174). Her mother’s death does not affect her really; she remains cool when she hears about it. There is no need for her to mourn. She has never been able to forgive her mother for presumably killing her only friend.

Faith’s life in Johannesburg is in stark contrast to her life on the farm. She now has a kind of sister in Molly and has to learn to share. Her past haunts her in her nightmares but she never remembers Nomsa’s murder. There are no fairies in the city and she is surrounded by people. Although she is finally among other people, she is not able to develop love toward a man and she prefers a violent kind of sex. When she sleeps with a close friend, Ketso, it is Faith who behaves like a date-rapist because he does not follow up his initial “Don’t” with actions, she proceeds with having sex with him. It is the woman herself who compares her behavior with a date rapist. She wants to have sex, so she will make him do it. Is this rape? Is it possible to force a man to have sex with a woman? Or is it Faith who misinterprets this act, and Ketso actually enjoys letting her take charge? After all, the intercourse as such is marked by Ketso’s rough handling of Faith’s body:

“[T]hrusting his cock against me until he found the access it wanted. It was brutal, in every hard thrust I could feel his anger. His teeth bit into me […] like he was trying to eat me. […] I came but it was hard and mechanical and soulless.” (p.214ff).
After the act, she sees her face in the mirror, looking at an image of a woman, very similar to the one of her mother after Oom Piet raped Nomsa: raw skin around her mouth and swollen lips. She notices how Ketso, just like Faith, cannot love anybody, although she wonders how he became this way, she does not want to know. Probably because she does not want to go in too deep and find out why she herself cannot love anybody. Molly confronts her about this reckless act and Faith is unable to tell her that it is she who desires this punishment and not Ketso. It is not him who cannot love, but Faith and she does not know why that is the case.

Faith’s encounter with the blind prayer woman marks the beginning of her rekindling the memory of her past. The woman sees that Faith has something vicious slumbering inside of her. There is bad in Faith’s past and she is not allowing it to surface. The advice she can give her is to go home. That afternoon Faith has a fierce nightmare and is in a deep dream for the whole afternoon. When the woman’s granddaughter comes to collect the payment for the advice her grandmother gave she is confused and goes to a very dangerous area to draw cash. The sangoma woman comes to their apartment and after a drug induced nightmare they discuss Faith’s fate. She detects evil spirits around Faith and advises her to go home and get rid of them, otherwise she would get sick. She starts to realize that there is something buried inside of her, unless she gets it out she will become just like her mother.

The return to the farm is hard and full of obstacles; she is greeted with contempt by the farm overseer, Petrus, and his family. She is not welcome at the dark place, which is her home. The image is clear; darkness is what describes her homecoming. There is the dark house, the dark people around her and the dark past with which she has to eventually deal with. She has to bring light into this darkness by remembering what happened all those years ago. Her visit to Tannie Hettie does not give her the information she had hoped for, all she gets from the Alzheimer-stricken woman is “Don’t stir the pot. Leave it, I told him, she’s just a girl. He’s a bad man. I told you that Bella, he’s a bad man.” (p.288). Little does Faith know that it is her who needs protection from the bad man, that she should be left alone and in blissful ignorance of the truth.
Faith meets Oom Piet for the first time again when she is in the shed where her mother’s paintings are stored. There is not enough light there, and in this twilight she starts to catch the first glimpse of memory of who this man is. His voice “knots [her] stomach and makes the hair at the nape of my neck prickle” (p.297). She feels uneasy under his scrutinizing eyes and folds her arms to protect her breasts from his gaze. Their conversation is a play of cat-and-mouse where Oom Piet tries to pry information out of Faith, probing for memory that is not yet unleashed. After a while he is no longer patient and asks her flat-out about the horrible night but when Faith asks him if he remembers, he lies to her, claiming that he was not even there. This lie and his visit assure Faith that he was there indeed during that night. And then she finally remembers. She goes to visit him in his butchery and confronts him. She tells him that she remembers everything but in the end, it is necessary for Oom Piet to tell her the full story of what happened, to make her “look at the blood that stains [her] palms red and [she] wonder[s] why [she] never saw it before” (p.317).

The girl reacts to the rape of Nomsa with the same brutality she witnesses Oom Piet treating the black woman with. The violence stirs a desire to protect in the little girl, who remembers the rifle stored in the secret cabinet. She has shot with it before, with her father helping her. Back then her father explained to her that he was keeping it “to defend my women” (p.156). Now it is on her to take the rifle and protect this woman from the evil man doing a bad thing to her, just as Nomsa has protected Faith from the neglect and lunacy of her own mother. Faith’s act of defense achieves the exact opposite, killing Nomsa instead of defending her. All that is left in Faith the next day – as she probably also faints as soon as she realizes what has happened – is the memory of a nightmare (which was actually reality) and a huge bruise on her shoulder from where the rifle recoiled.

Finally, Faith is confronted with her past and what she did. But she finds no outlet and crashes fully into a trauma from which she cannot escape without help. Like her mother, she is surrounded by the fairies who constantly remind her that she is nothing but a killer. Petrus calls a sangoma to heal her, to get the thing out of her “a thing that has been there for many years, maybe since she was a small girl. It grows. She will not let it go” (p.321ff). When the treatment is over, Faith is finally able to let go and to mourn for the things she has lost – including her childhood and
innocence, her “small self that died with Nomsa” (p.324). In the end, Dead Rex comes to get what was taken out of Faith: her pain, fear and her guilt and he eats it, knowing it will be long before he can get something again, but it will not be forever. The fairies that are present in the African farm setting can only be scared off by traditional African healing methods, but they can never be extinct.

7.3. Conclusion

The two related concepts of truth and reality are the most prominent ideas in question in the novel. Both are not easily defined and exist in an ever-shifting and organic way, truth and reality must always be interpreted by the narrator and the reader and therefore can never be taken for granted or defined within fixed boundaries. For Faith, the truth is that her mother killed Nomsa, this truth is later refuted when she finally remembers what really happens. For Bella (and for Faith as a young girl) the fairies are reality, they speak to her and she sees them. Faith, the young woman, no longer believes in these fairies, as she understands that they are mere fiction, a concoction of old tales and her mother’s insane imagination. By introducing Dead Rex as an important protagonist and by dedicating two chapters to his view of the story, Zadok installs some kind of realness into the fairy.

The only ones who know the truth of the night in 1985 are Bella and Oom Piet (beside Dead Rex). Faith, who would have been an important witness, has forgotten everything. Her memory however is vital for the truth to be unveiled, although this memory is not fully reliable. The reason for her suppressing this memory, her age back then and the time passed since prohibit a trustworthy version of what happened in that time, including the rape of Nomsa. In connection with the South African setting, this unreliability of memory and the atrocity and unfairness of what happened to the young black woman can be read as a criticism of the workings and usefulness of the TRC. If the victims are dead, who will remember them and who will come forward with the truth? Especially in a case where the crime was clearly a personal one, and not politically motivated? However, the sole fact that Oom Piet in the end raped the black and not the white woman does leave a bad aftertaste of
racism and the power installed in him or the white people by apartheid’s societal structure and ultimately he gets away with it.

Young Faith has forgotten everything; her subconscious has chosen not to remember what happened. This is the cross the young generation has to bear: having witnessed apartheid as young children, oblivious of what was going on but still on the receiving end of its advantages. The state of South Africa in their childhood was neither their fault nor idea and yet they have inherited it from their parents and must deal with its legacy. The actual participation in suppression and racism did not happen but they must remember it to make sure that it doesn’t happen again and to be able to live in a healthy society with healthy relationships between all people. Faith kills by accident, she is inexperienced but she understands that what the man is doing to the woman is wrong, “a bad thing” (p.308). This also implies that the children who grew up to live in New South Africa might have done wrong accidentally; they may have understood the flaws of their parents’ society but acted incorrectly because they did not know how to use the instruments and have not had the proper training.

Whose duty is it to remember and tell the story of those who have been forgotten, whose fate was buried in silence in order to protect others? The young generation must remember for their new-born country to survive. Memory and dealing with trauma is the only way for them as individuals to survive. If the dark thing had not been taken out of Faith’s body, she would have died or at least gone insane. This also entails a telling of the story by way of art – bringing the past out into the open, including writing novels that recapitulate the past. Of course, most novels are fiction (though sometimes based on reality) and should not be confused with reality.

In *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*, the story can be taken for truth and reality, as it is the story of Faith’s life. However the first-person narration will always leave room for doubt in the accuracy of what is being told. The chapters where Dead Rex is the focus of the narration on the one hand impairs the credibility of the story, as fairies and their way of manipulating humans are not part of modern reality and many people do not believe in their existence. On the other hand, introducing these chapters in the novel can also be read as a kind of proof of Dead Rex’s realness. The reader hears his voice and sees through his eyes, and what we read is closer to reality.
than the information gathered by Faith’s limited view of things and her fragmentary memory.

So, are fairies a part of a different reality? Their existence is founded in South African heritage and their belief systems, as the ones who know all about them and who can eventually heal people from their curses are the blacks. The white people who believe in them and who - like Bella- have a kind of relationship with them cannot cope with it and get ill or go insane. Thus we can assume that Zadok tries to convey a dichotomy between history and traditional knowledge versus the present and modernity. While history is easily forgotten, tradition often remains, as old healing methods are still in use and fully functioning. In modern South Africa a lot of the African heritage is buried under concrete buildings and, in this urban context, reduced to prayer stalls on the street.

“The bad” is rooted in history and will be always-already present. It can be scared away and we can put up a guard of suppressing memory, but it can never be fully overcome. Just as in the context of this novel, Dead Rex can be sent away but he can never be destroyed, there will always be something bad for him to feast on. The same holds true for all things bad, like hatred, social inequality, or racism: people can overcome them on a superficial level, “on paper” so to speak, but we have not been able to conquer it, “the bad” can never be extinct and may surface at any time. Only by remembering the cruel past of South Africa can it be kept at bay. For those who have looked the other way during apartheid, Zadok wants to show them that they should start to remember and deal with what went on, otherwise they will be eaten up from the inside.
The first novel of Mtutuzeli Nyoka is a fictional memoir of the protagonist, Walter Hambile Kondile, an aged man who writes about his life’s story in South Africa, which he spends partly in prison. The reason for his imprisonment is a murder he commits early on in his life, a deed for which the whole country hates him until the truth is revealed. Most of the novel is told as if Kondile was telling his story, but the main act of the rape of his daughter is recounted by the rapist’s wife during a hearing of the TRC. Albeit that the narration is limited, the readers get a glimpse of reality through other’s eyes. In the beginning the writing seems somewhat stilted, as Kondile is writing about his life and is clearly not used to doing so, but as the story progresses, the style becomes more elaborate and complex.

Kondile is full of scorn and hatred toward the white people of South Africa - but he is fully aware of that. As the story unfolds through the protagonist’s first-person narration, the style is limited to his point of view and the stories told to him. Although in the end the readers experience a shift of opinion in Kondile, the main tenor is the dichotomy of the blacks’ being the oppressed and the whites’ being the oppressors. There is a clear-cut distinction between these two populations of South Africa and Kondile finds it problematic to overcome his deep-set prejudices that there is only good in the natives and only bad in the people of European descent. In fact, it is partly the realization that one of the heroic African leaders of the revolution in South Africa is rotten to the core, which brings him to commit such a horrible crime and to rethink his opinion. The few white people he trusts appear as knights in shining armor, unblemished and good-natured, as his employer and friend, Simon Blithedale. While Blithedale addresses Kondile as “Hambile” or “old chap”, Kondile always calls his former boss “Mr. Blithedale”, but Kondile is very much aware of this situation. While he blames the Afrikaners for apartheid, he is somewhat thankful for the British for their colonization and is not so bitter toward them. He believes in the power of education, but he himself was deprived of it at a young age. He wishes nothing more for his only child, his daughter Sindiswa, to go to Lovedale.

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165 Unless otherwise indicated all quotes in this chapter are from Nyoka 2003.
166 Cf p. 25.
College and become educated. Since he is so keen on education and knowledge, he
does use some intertextuality, e.g. quotes from the Bible.

The illusion Nyoka achieves is to give the reader the impression that it is Kondile
who is writing a real story from his prison cell in Port Elizabeth Central Prison (at
least in the beginning). Despite this, the setting and time of the story unfold over
many decades and focus mainly on the town of Alice, which is Kondile’s home. He
takes great pride in his Xhosa ancestry, and seems to have been content with the
simple life he led before the student revolts started. The rape and subsequent death of
his daughter happen in Lesotho, where Kondile goes to find the truth about
Sindiswa’s fate. The murder, however, is committed in Fort Hare, the university
campus in Alice. Kondile starts to tell his memoirs during his prison stay in Port
Elizabeth which we can assume to be the early nineties, as shortly after the TRC
hearings begin. He starts his narration with the story of himself as a boy at the age of
12, when he had to drop out of school. Later on he digresses and explains the history
of his family, taking the time of the novel far back into the past. Guessing from the
vague insinuations he makes throughout the novel, this drop-out must have been in
the early 1950s.

At the end of the novel, Kondile comes to the conclusion that silence is not the way
to survive. All his life he has kept silent, but once the truth has been told he
understands that silence is not survival but defeat. In the very first chapter, which is
written from the perspective of the old and liberated Kondile, who is narrating with a
certain distance from the events of his past, he admits that his initial silence about his
daughter’s life and death might have been a kind of protecting the face of the natives
in South Africa; as a way of not willing to realize that there is bad in everyone, no
matter their race: “Perhaps his truth was too painful. Perhaps it showed us all to be
human – black and white. That we were all fallible and no race had a monopoly over
righteousness” (p.6).
8.1. A backdrop of sexual violence

*I Speak to the Silent* touches upon a few instances of rape, but the only important one for the plot is the recurrent rape of Kondile’s daughter, Sindiswa. However, in Kondile’s narration, he mentions on various occasion that rapes are not uncommon in his South Africa, and this in itself is important to mention. The way the rapes are told, as a passing thought, make the whole novel teem with a violent sexual undertone. It comes as no surprise that a story that focuses on the life of a Xhosa in apartheid South Africa should be filled with violence and death. What is striking in this case is how the atrocities are so often just inserted as a kind of after-thought, sprinkled over the other crimes committed by the whites. The trial that has brought Kondile to prison was not only a faux trial but also headed by a racist judge who did not convict a white rapist and his four sons, who had all raped a black woman, one after the other.

For instance, in the very beginning of the novel, Kondile describes his life in prison. As one of the older inmates he was never really abused in a sexual way by the other prisoners, as he depicts it “[t]he perverts turned their attention to other prison ‘maidens’” (p.4). His social life has been turned from one amidst his family and friends to one where he is surrounded by brutal rapists. He is keen on explaining how sexual desires are dealt with in the prison, speaking about male prostitutes who offered their bodies to the other men. Kondile is glad that there are such prostitutes as otherwise the raping in prison would have been a lot worse. But he doesn’t pretend that it is all about sexuality or love, he knows full well that these rapes happen as a display of power and humiliation. In reality, such conduct is indeed true, as rapes (and even gang rapes) among prisoners take place to establish and protect a hierarchy among the men. As a convict, the moment you step into the prison you lose your identity and status167.

In the novel there are no rapes where a black man rapes a white woman. Most often the rapes are either intra-racial or white-on-black. The brief side remark about Goosen, the brutal police officer in Alice and his black mistress is already filled with the hint of an unequal relationship. As a fierce racist, Goosen cannot be seen with a

167 Cf. p.37
black woman, so there is an underlying accusation of rape there. Furthermore, there is the description of Mrs Steyn an old widow in Alice who is very abusive toward the black staff. The explanation given is a simple one. Her husband was said to have slept with the black maids. “It appeared that Oubaas Steyn had a special predilection for the female help, expecting them to serve him on their backs. (…) They had little choice except to comply.” (p.53). Clearly Mr Steyn was a mass rapist in the town of Alice, fathering many mixed children in the town. Though this is a shocking crime, nothing was done against him and his widow then continued to further torture her husband’s victims because she was still jealous of them.

Rape as part of the common torture methods during apartheid also comes up when Kondile recounts the events after the students’ revolts start, and his daughter goes undercover. The first thing Goosen hints at is that he is going to rape her, should he ever find her (p.83). This threat is not given to Sindiswa, but to her father. Kondile is soon arrested for his daughter’s deeds, and parts of the psychological torture are the police’s stories about what they do to the women they arrest. They start telling him that they slept with his wife, “this form of torture was the hardest to take” (p.96).

Apart from the constant tales of physical and psychological torture and police brutality, these numerous instances of sexual violence build the frame of Kondile’s story. Although his family, friends and Kondile himself are appalled by all these terrible deeds, as the narration continues, it becomes “normal” and blends into the background. As the rape of Sindiswa and the murder of Mbete are the most important strands of the plot, they are set in the middle of a great mass of crimes and injustices. What makes the two main crimes important is the personal involvement of the protagonist, first in proxy as the father of the victim and secondly as the murderer himself. The reader becomes detached from the images Kondile is conveying and will sooner or later be cauterized against the many horrible things mentioned –how harsh it may seem-, until the plot reaches the point where we learn about Sindiswa’s fate through Kondile.
8.2. Sindiiswa’s rape

Kondile never tries to hide the truth about his deed, the readers know from the very beginning what he has done to end up in prison and how he has done it. However, the true reason behind it is left unsaid until quite far toward the end of the story. There are hints about it and the readers are left to speculate, but the real explanation is not offered until after the first two thirds of the novel. Though the abuse is not told by the victim or the rapist, Sindiiswa’s rape and its myriad reenactments are reported by the rapist’s wife in lurid details. Despite the fact that it is the victim’s father who acts as the narrator, the report is not faltered by censorship to protect his daughter’s reputation, as he does otherwise in his history.

The young woman enters her rapist’s house after the invitation given by his wife; she trusts them to have her best in mind. Her future rapist addresses the arriving exiles like a schoolmaster, and since most of those who seek his help are school children, they put instinctive trust in him. The father-like figure exudes authority and trustworthiness in the callow adolescents. What Sindiiswa does not anticipate are the nightly visits of Mr. Mbete who forces himself onto her, while his wife is sleeping in the next room. She does not let it happen to her without protest, but fights with her hands and feet against the rape, trying to scream, with terror in her eyes. Before the first rape she is a virgin, a fact that is noticed by Mrs Mbete the next day, as there is blood on the sheets. Mrs. Mbete only recounts the first of many rapes to follow, including an attempted rape by Mbete’s sidekick, Anil. Sindiiswa’s resistance throws him off, so that rape eventually is forestalled.

There is no direct insight for the reader to Sindiiswa’s feelings and injuries, what is told is told through other’s memories: Mrs. Mbete, Sister Grace, Sindiiswa’s husband Fikile, and Kondile’s inferences. However, from this information the puzzle can be put together about how the girl reacted to the abuse she had to endure. Directly after the first rape, Sindiiswa is hysterical, crying all day and staying in bed. She is under Mbete’s power and has no one to turn to, as everybody is in danger and afraid of the powerful man. There is nothing else to do but to bear her cross, the revolutionist in her flaming up once and confronting Mbete, telling him that “he had betrayed and
sinned against the millions of Africans who had placed their trust in him” (p.181). This is met by ridicule and a continuation of the rapes by Mbete.

The turn in her resolve comes with her first pregnancy and the subsequent abortion. As the readers learn from Kondile, an abortion is not acceptable in a traditional African household; therefore she has difficulties dealing with this, knowing that she would be a disappointment to her family. After the abortion, she starts drinking, smoking and starts behaving sexually explicit. It is obvious that the little self-respect she had left is completely lost after the abortion. She is polluting her body with alcohol, nicotine and a multitude of men, filling the emptiness she feels with harmful substitutes. Although there is no mention of this in the novel, it is a safe assumption that her beauty must have corroded and the fact that her body seems to be of no importance to her anymore, must entail a kind of neglect toward her personal hygiene as well. Mbete is not happy about this change in Sindiswa and throws her out of his home. On the surface this seems a convenient answer to his disinterest in the girl. However, if we consider the fact that rape is more often than not a display of power and not sexual desire, there is also another reason behind this gesture. Once Sindiswa is no longer fighting against the sex, Mbete feels that he has now gained all the power over her and the conquest is no longer attractive.

Also, the girl is jealous of her substitutes, not wanting them to take over her place in the household. This behavior seems odd, as it should be a relief to her that she is being replaced by other girls. For an outsider the only reaction Sindiswa should be showing is happiness that she escaped or at most pity for the girls who are now in Mbete’s power. Yet, this is not the case. Since the way the girl is treated during her stay at the Mbetes’ house can be understood as a form of torture and her situation is similar to that of a kidnapped person, the conclusion is easy to find: Sindiswa is suffering from the Stockholm syndrome. This condition implies that captives or hostages foster amicable feelings, if not love, toward their hostage taker. If the victim experiences the situation he or she is in as life-threatening, only the smallest show of kindness will be interpreted as something to be extremely thankful for\(^{168}\). Therefore, the rejection or the introduction of a substitute makes Sindiswa jealous and afraid to lose her standing in Mbete’s eyes. While there are many instances where the

Stockholm syndrome is used as a part of a story in fiction\textsuperscript{169}, in reality there are very rare occasions where this syndrome actually appears in a victim’s behavior\textsuperscript{170}. The emotions that surge through Sindiswa after she is expelled from the house make her go looking for a substitute herself but she is falling ever more deeply into the trauma. It seems like the repetition of the rapes is a kind of pressure valve on the girl’s emotions, suppressing her true emotions and only letting out undetectable feelings (for an outsider) like her depression. As soon as it stops, the valve bursts and the trauma can finally overcome her psyche. She loses all restraint and with it all her self-respect. As the reject of a brutal man’s violent sex drive she cannot see how anyone else might still be interested in her. The numerous abortions she has undergone add to her self-conception of worthlessness.

The first strand of hope for Sindiswa’s escape and recovery is the Anglican Mission. She finds her faith again and learns to regain her spirit. She starts to fight for her cause and that of the other victims who have fallen into Mbete’s clutches. Unfortunately the man is too powerful in the community and her words only falls on deaf ears. This is the last blow to her fragile constitution and she tries to commit suicide. Somehow, this seems like a radical step to take for a girl who has just begun to get her feet back on the ground. But there is a break in Mrs. Mbete’s story and also in the whole narration as of what really happens in this period of time, so the reader is left to infer the final incidence or sequence of incidents that have made Sindiswa slit her wrists. Nonetheless judging from what we know about her state of mind and the ordeal she goes through, probably not much was needed for her to turn to such a drastic solution.

Amazingly, Sindiswa survives her suicide attempt and regains her strength. Again, there is a lapse in the narration as to how she overcomes this but she recovers and falls in love with her soon-to-be husband. She finally finds a way to go back to school. It seems as if everything is in order again. Being a strong woman and living her own life attracts her old demons and Mbete is soon back in her life. Like a predator in the bush he haunts Sindiswa and is again attracted to her. Sindiswa is the light and Mbete the moth: once the light is out the moth goes away but as soon as it shines again, the moth returns. This time around Mbete is even more vicious and

\textsuperscript{169} One of the most famous examples would be \textit{The Collector}, by John Fowles (1963).

\textsuperscript{170} Cf. Fuselier 1999, p. 25.
uses the girl’s new life to threaten her even more. She is now a mother of a girl and thus doubly vulnerable. Just like the interrogators in prison force the prisoners to talk by threatening their wives and children, Mbete uses Sindiswa’s daughter to get what he wants. This second wave of rapes between Mbete and Sindiswa mark the end of the young mother’s life. She soon falls pregnant again and has yet another abortion, a poorly performed medical procedure that kills her in the end.

While many rape victims in reality experience one rape in their life and suffer to overcome that trauma, Sindiswa is raped multiple times by a man whom she initially trusts. There are, however, many women who go through the same situation. Up to a very recent point in history a wife was not able to file a rape charge against her own husband. In many Muslim countries this is still the case today, so there are numerous women who endure the same fate as Sindiswa. Some might argue that the situation is a different one; that the husband raping his own wife is doing so out of sexual desire, but Mbete rapes to express the absolute power he has over helpless young women. While the latter is definitely true for Mbete’s motives, one can never say that those husbands who rape their wives do not do it because they want to state their powerful position in the marriage.

8.3. Kondile’s reaction

In essence, the whole point of I Speak to the Silent is Kondile’s reaction to his daughter’s rape. Some parts are not directly linked to the crime, but these sequences lead to the rape or are otherwise linked to the father’s reaction. As mentioned before, the reader does not find out what has caused this reaction until the very end of the story. It is, however, also a story of Kondile’s life, and the backdrop of sexual violence is formed by his memories and experiences. Especially the depiction of rapes in prison comes from Kondile’s past.

In the very beginning of the novel, which is in fact very late in the narrative time, Kondile questions the value of truth. He wants to remain silent and he wishes for the “truth” – which is the story the public knows – not to be doubted. This perceived truth is not reality because the public never heard the full background information of what
caused Kondile to commit a murder. To save his daughter’s face and to protect her from a bad reputation he would rather be the scapegoat of the nation for killing the national hero. Even in death, his daughter is still so valued that Kondile is willing to take the brunt. The memory of his daughter as a mother is also an important factor, Kondile wishes Sindiswa’s daughter, Vuyelwa, to have a good and untarnished memory of her mother.

His daughter’s disappearance and activism in the student revolts makes Kondile fear for her from a very young age onward. But the lack of communication that ensues makes him search for consolation in alcohol. This even leads to his drifting apart from his wife. Sindiswa is the most important person in Kondile’s life, she is the one who will continue where he himself was forced to stop and – being the smart girl – she will make it through higher education. He believes in education as the only way out for the oppressed Africans in South Africa. Since it was the English who brought education (even if in its tarnished version of Bantu education) he is somewhat positive toward them. He openly forgives them for colonization and is even a little bit thankful for it (p.25). Through this education, “they gave them [the Africans] free access to literature and science – as if to tempt them into rebellion” (p.98). While he hates the Boers to the core, his relation to the British has not such a negative connotation, but through the last statement one can assume that he accuses the British of tempting his daughter into rebellion, and thus leading her to doom.

Kondile’s opinion about women and men and their respective roles in society are very old fashioned and in a way sexist. He describes the women he is surrounded with through their beauty (his wife, his daughter and even Sister Grace), and only in a secondary position does he acknowledge women’s role in the history of South Africa. Only by telling his tale does he realize what the women in his past have had to endure and how they fought just as much as the men to liberate the country and to keep their homes together. The one time when he does not describe a women in mostly positive terms, is when he speaks about the *sangoma*, who comes to cure his dying father. He himself sees that she is making a different impression, as he describes the features of a so-called Hottentot Venus: short, big round buttocks, giant breasts. This is exactly the picture of what “scientists” tried to proclaim in Europe,

\[\text{Cf. p. 32.}\]
when touring Saartje Baartman through numerous venues. His upbringing and the opinion about women connected with this, plays an important role in why he reacted so deeply to finding out about his daughter’s fate. Despite changing this opinion toward the end of his life, the revelation comes after he commits a murder in the name of his daughter.

One of the traditional practices Kondile describes as part of the life of an African man, is learning how to stick-fight. His description is full of phallic allusions and almost bears some form of analysis: “We spent hours playing with sticks” (p.29), the ambiguity full of hints of masturbation and becoming a man when he discovers the pleasure connected to his penis. “There is a special relationship between a Xhosa man and his stick” (ibid.), just as there is a special relationship for a man with his special organ, as many men even name it, just as Xhosa men give their sticks names as well. The dignity and respect the stick brings a man is a direct link to men’s comparing the length of their penis, or in Western civilization, the purchase of a big car to prove one’s virility. While Kondile’s description of this tradition is innocent in itself, in the context of the novel and before a background of sexual violence, the innocence fades. In addition to this, the inherent violent character of the stick fights, does not make men prone to violence as such, but also builds a strong connection between the violence and fights with the male sex and sexuality.

The news of Sindiswa’s death gives Kondile a reason to travel to where his daughter lived and died. Upon arrival he finds out that the cause of death was an abortion that went wrong. He is enraged as African society does not tolerate the abortion of children, “abortion went against [their] culture” (p.120). What does that imply about rape in “their culture”? The only two reasons Kondile mentions for an abortion is either a promiscuous girl (no mention of the man) or a married couple who already has many children. He does not consider the real reason behind Sindiswa’s abortion: that she was pregnant with the child of her rapist. Obviously, Kondile does not think that rape exists in his culture, which is highly unlikely. A culture where on the one hand, the roles of men and women are so distinct, and male sexuality is closely linked to violence is surely not free of sexual violence. So we can safely assume that Nyoka portrays Kondile with a certain naïveté about his culture, which he constantly praises as free of any blemishes, especially in comparison to the whites.
Kondile suffers from nightmares, in which he sees images of the children of his village going to exile to have sex. He is appalled by what he assumes to be the “inability to control their sex-drives” (p.123). Again, he compares this behavior to the way children who were brought up in his culture should behave, and the reprimands he could have made: “In our culture, the loss of my daughter’s virginity before marriage would have meant that I could lay a claim for damages against this pompous brat’s father” (ibid). So, the virginity of the children is a matter for the fathers to discuss. This deep-felt right to reclaim his “damaged daughter” sets the course of the following events, although it is not the “pompous brat”, Fikile, who will be the one to feel Kondile’s scorn. Obviously, Sindiswa is no longer able to file this claim herself, but Kondile would have done the same thing, had his daughter still been alive. However, another girl did try to lay a charge against the rapist, but was sent away for not being a national of Lesotho. The underlying message though is that even as a Sotho, there would not have been a charge against Mbete, because of his powerful position in the community. The disappearance of the girl that dared to file a charge is a proof of his power and how it is exploited as a hectoring for the other girls he abused.

Kondile compares the girls who have to endure Mbete’s abuse to the wild animals he used to hunt with his father. This again shows Kondile’s point of view on men and women. In the metaphor of the hunt, the men are the ones pursuing their prey with weapons. The animals feel hatred and dread for the hunter, but can do little to escape. The image which comes to mind is the frightened but dumb deer that stares into the rifle with big eyes, not understanding what is about to happen and not knowing how to react. The girls don’t know about the evil in Mbete until it is too late and they see no way out of their misery. No one is there to help them; just as in the jungle or the forest nobody will help the deer: Do lunch or be lunch. Kondile refers to Mbete as a “serpent in human clothing” another metaphor from the animal kingdom – a snake that attacks the “vulnerable and weak” (p.128). While young girls are indeed more vulnerable and weak then many others, these girls were fighters in the student revolts, so their weakness – especially in the light of the kind of abuse they face – is inherently their femaleness.
It goes without question that Kondile will have to confront Mbete for what he has done to Sindiswa. What does Kondile seek in this confrontation? The deed is done and he as an individual cannot demand an excuse. It is Sindiswa who could do this, but since she is dead Kondile will go in her place. She probably would not have confronted Mbete herself, as she was not in that frame of mind, but her father must face the man who killed his daughter by proxy. “I had an obligation to look my daughter’s tormentor in the eye and demand some answers” (p.131), says Kondile. In this utterance, following a remark where he mentions that he does not actually want to face Mbete, he speaks not of a wish but of an obligation. It is “the right thing to do” in such a situation. He must claim the damages done to his daughter; at this point he does not seek revenge but only answers to his questions.

After the initial anger, Kondile seeks quietude in church, where he meets Sister Grace and finds out that his daughter reacted in the same way. He feels tired and has no energy left. In this state of shock he is drained from all emotions, just like the victim of a car accident does not feel any pain. The world does not make any sense anymore. This reaction is even more similar to the reaction of a rape victim herself, as a rape victim who suffers trauma also detaches herself from the outside world. It is also at church where he discovers some more information about the reality of his daughter’s past, albeit all he gets from Sister Grace are rumors. The visit does not satisfy his needs. There is also the first flicker of his quest of the truth, a truth he later denies the public in order to protect Sindiswa. However, during his visit to Lesotho, Kondile never acquaints Mbete.

A long time passes allowing Kondile’s resentment to grow within him. Mbete becomes the epitome of his nightmares and bad feelings; Kondile is filled with hatred and thoughts of revenge. The first encounter is twofold, as he not only sees his daughter’s murderer for the first time but also feels him as he brushes past him. Again, Mbete experiences an impact on his psyche, as his “heart nearly stop[s] from the impact” (p. 149). He almost has an out-of-body experience as he recalls noticing how calm he remains. There is no inhibition and Kondile immediately speaks to Mbete, inquiring about Sindiswa. Mbete does not remember, “Sindiswa is nothing to him but a statistic and an unfortunate casualty” (p.150). The period in the

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172 Another symptom of depression.
past which has ended the girl’s life and has tormented her family ever since is unremarkable for the perpetrator. Kondile’s wish for vengeance flames up again and he sets his mind to confronting Mbete and to getting some sign of remorse out of the man. He believes that only through this confession, concession and penitence will Sindiswa’s spirit find rest. While considering his daughter’s peace, he does not mention his own, although there is no need; it will also be his own mind that will finally be able to settle down after this anticipated confrontation. When he discusses his intentions with his wife, his resolve fades and he even thinks about not putting his plan into action. He considers asking the advice of Mr. Blithedale but in the end he decides on his own.

The night before their encounter, Kondile imagines how he can make Mbete confess and feel sorry. In his mind he goes through all the techniques that the police used on him. The victim becomes the culprit in his thoughts, but he does not want to think in such ways, “I hated myself for these violent thoughts” (p.153). He is almost overcome by these instincts and uses all his control to subdue the urge to be violent, despite his thoughts: “My thoughts appalled me. Was I mad? I had become just like them! The violence of my tormentors had become my own” (ibid.). This reaction reminds us of the abused child who later becomes an abusive father, which is another urban myth in psychology: “The notion that abused children grow up to be abusing parents has been widely expressed in the abuse literature (…) few empirical investigations find support for this.” However, just like Kondile admits, he has learnt a skill from his masters which he is thinking of using in his own way.

When Kondile finally knocks on Mbete’s front door, he is asked in immediately, as is the African custom. Just like years ago Sindiswa, who was also asked in by Mrs. Mbete – the great difference this time being that the one entering brings violence and does not receive it. Mbete himself does not seem to remember Sindiswa, but very much remembers his good deeds during those difficult times. The man feigns surprise when Kondile confronts him with the rumors about the center, and only reluctantly “remembers” the cases of suicide in his facility, which he blames on living in the exile. Kondile has to use an extremely direct approach with Mbete, asking him twice to his face “Did you rape my daughter?” (p.155) ending his second

\[173\] A parallel to the rapist’s reaction in *Bitter Fruit* by Achmat Dangor.
question with a “sir”. (Still, Kondile clings to customs and manners.) Mbete is clearly shaken but does not admit anything, turning to arrogance and condescension toward the other one, whom he considers to be insignificant compared to him, the mighty national hero. The two men start yelling at each other, and Mbete’s last words spoken are “Maybe your daughter was a whore, and she died from the consequences of her whoring” (p.156). On the one hand this final sentence is a final accusation; on the other hand Mbete still does not admit anything.

At this point Mrs. Mbete enters the room and offers the apology and remorse her husband is not willing to give and with this act she signs her husband’s death sentence. Now Kondile’s questions are answered and he kills the man with his own two hands, with a very clear head and without much struggle and yet “[He] felt exhausted. [He] felt powerful. [He] felt avenged” (p.157). Taking someone’s life drains the energy from his body. Kondile is a firm believer and knows his Bible, so this act has given him God’s powers, “The lord gave, and the lord hath taken away”\(^\text{175}\). The last sentence is somewhat intriguing – it is Kondile who feels avenged. Shouldn’t Sindiswa be avenged? Logically speaking, the sentence would make more sense this way: Sindiswa was avenged. The way it stands in the novel, though, means that Kondile is avenged for the loss of his daughter, but his daughter’s rape is not required. The murder does not weigh on Kondile’s conscience; he is satisfied and does not regret anything as he has applied jungle justice for Mbete. The snake has been eaten by a larger predator. What matters to Kondile is that his own people turn against him and that in the end he and his family might end up being the subjects of said ‘jungle justice’, as “[his] people love to take the law into their own hands” (p.160). He only finds real closure after the TRC hearings, when Mbete’s wife breaks the silence and tells the truth about what happened, and Sindiswa’s body is brought home and buried in a traditional ceremony.

8.4. The voices of those close to the rapist

I speak to the Silent takes a special look at what the rapist’s family and friends experience and feel about him. His male friend and devotee, Anil, remains on

\(^\text{175}\) Job 1:21 KJV.
Mbete’s side at all times, always hoping for a slice of the other man’s cake. When Kondile comes to the refugee center and asks him about the rumors of what is going on there, Anil answers with a song of praise for Mbete, calling him “devoted”, “brave”, “honorable” and “caring deeply for our young people” (p.132). He goes on, speaking about the happy marriage of the Mbetes and explaining the girl’s allegations with envy on her side. Anil denies everything, however harsh and frank Kondile speaks to him, saying that “nothing ever happened here” (p.133). Years later, during the hearings of the TRC he still does not admit anything except that “relationships took place” (p.164). By stating that he cannot recall any complaints made to him about the center, he even refuses to remember the meeting with Kondile. In consideration of all the facts and evidence that is brought against him, he is not giving in and evades the questions.

What remains unclear is whether Anil cannot remember or is not willing to remember, or better: does he not want to remember because he was part of the deal? Or is he not doing so because he is a blind follower of Mbete even after the man’s death? From the accounts given to Kondile, Anil shared part of the deal, but what weighs a lot more is Anil’s faith in Mbete. The way he falls into paeans for his late boss whenever Anil sees his reputation faltering strongly underlines this assumption. The control Mbete had over Anil is just as powerful as the one he had over the young people in the refugee center, so the idea comes to mind that this relationship might also have been similar with regard to the violence and fear involved. While Mbete might not have used direct physical violence against Anil, there must have been a great deal of psychological violence administered.

The other person who was close to the perpetrator is his wife who lives with him in the house where the abuse takes place; she is fully in the know about the goings-on. She does not do anything to protect the girls, a behavior that creates a situation where there are two abusers, the active perpetrator and the passive on-looker. “In these situations the [other, passive abuser] will allow the abuse of the [victim] in order to not put her relationship with this man at risk.”176 As long as her husband is alive and even well beyond his death she is silent and does nothing to help the victims and their families. She eventually overcomes her muteness in the setting of the TRC

meetings, where she is provided with an audience to hear her voice and where she can tell her side of the story.

Before she speaks of her own fear of her husband she tries to remain silent about her role in the house, but she is usurping her husband’s guilt: “I take responsibility for their pain. (...) This is my apology for the part I have played in their suffering (...). I shall never be able to erase the shame and guilt from my heart” (p. 181). Where does this feeling of liability come from? She says she is under treatment of a psychiatrist so maybe he has been able to help her see her own role in the abuse. However, she has always known about her guilt but could not do anything for fear of her husband’s reactions. This instance, in comparison to Anil, shows that the TRC has worked and that many could find their peace. Anil’s case is different as he was not a passive abuser but a very active one, so he still has a lot to lose from speaking out and speaking the truth. His deeds were not done out of political reasons but out of very personal motives, so it is also highly unlikely that he would have been granted amnesty.

8.5. Conclusion

Sindiswa’s life is a constant repetition of abuse and escape. As a young girl she fights for equality and freedom from the oppression of the apartheid regime and has to escape to exile, a safer place. Once she arrives she falls into the hands of her abuser, from which at one point she can flee but eventually she returns to the abuser, where her final escape is death. Ironically, her death is caused by an infected back-street abortion, so frankly killing the rapist’s child kills the rape victim. This is also preceded by other abortions, so here as well is a repetition of rape and abortion. The hell Sindiswa goes through is similar to hell in the Divine Comedy by Dante Alighieri, where those who sow discord are wounded, the wounds heal and then they are wounded again.

Speaking of heroes, we must not forget that Sindiswa herself was considered a hero for others. During the student uprising she gives speeches and inspiration to many, even her parents. By the time she reaches exile, she is no longer a heroine but a
“faceless number on the run” (p.144). Now, she is a hero to nobody and must rely fully on others to survive in exile, and by becoming just another number she is more prone to danger. She runs the risk of losing her identity as many other refugees do. This is a considerable paradox – on the one hand she flees to a country where she can be free, but becomes just another number. On the other hand, usually those who are imprisoned are reduced to numbers; the ultimate example would be that of Jews in concentration camps during the holocaust. In exile, she is free and yet so free that she is incarcerated by the inability to be herself and by no longer being a person that sticks out from the norm, she is separated from her home and family. Exile is Sindiswa’s prison.

Many actions and wrongdoings in *I speak to the Silent* are done via somebody else or are conceived through a second person. Sindiswa is not murdered by a murderer who shoots her in the head but is killed by proxy through the evil seed of her rapist. She dies of an infection, so Mbete does not actually kill her. In fact it is the person who performed the abortion, if a murderer must be named. Of course, the reason for her death is Mbete’s abuse and the resulting pregnancy. Although Sindiswa obviously undergoes severe trauma, Kondile is also affected by the same symptoms as the victim of a rape. He experiences trauma by proxy. Thirdly, Sindiswa is no longer able to take revenge (if she ever was), so the revenge also happens through a substitute. Kondile takes his daughter’s place when killing her rapist for her. However, the murder of Mbete and the rape of Sindiswa happen very directly, the murderer himself even gives testimony of what he did with his very own hands and how he feels when he kills Mbete.

Kondile overcomes his belief that silence is survival as the story unfolds, however the title suggests that the book itself is a message to those who still remain in the shrouds of mystery about what took place in South Africa during apartheid. The novel is a statement about finding closure only through speaking out. And yet the question remains as to why Kondile kept his secret for such a long time. On the one hand, he wants to know the truth about his daughter, even travels to Lesotho to uncover the secrets but does not want others to know the truth. The concept of truth is not clearly defined for Kondile as there are several truths which he keeps to himself. However, in the end the report about Sindiswa’s life by Mrs. Mbete finally
provides the grounds for him and his wife to find closure. While keeping ‘his’ truth to himself, he denies closure to other victims or their families. Kondile uses his silence to protect his daughter’s reputation but he also protects himself and his wife, as well as Sindsiswa’s daughter from shame. By refusing to inform on one of the heroes of the black liberation movements he also protects his daughter’s rapist. Under normal circumstances, when the rapist is not famous and the setting is not in a country that is ruled by apartheid laws, there is actually no reason for the victim’s father to protect the man who abuses his daughter. Kondile is protecting the order of things by choosing not to tarnish the hero’s reputation and thus helping those who are fighting for freedom and for the end of apartheid. What he knows endangers the trust the black people have in each other and would dispirit those who, like himself, believed that the whites are morally inferior to the blacks. A black man raping a black girl who needs his help will certainly dampen the mood among the fighters. On the other hand, as Mbete is his age, Kondile might also try to protect his own generation from becoming known as those who rape young girls. Despite all their differences he must see the similarities between Mbete and himself. While there might be different truths, it is not the truth but silence that kills or threatens others. Through this message Nyoka proves that the TRC works for many, though it cannot work for all victims and perpetrators of the apartheid regime.

The story of a father telling his daughter’s story will eventually lead to the question of generational conflicts. In the light of the protagonists, this is obvious. Sindsiswa is raped by a man who could be her father and in whom she puts filial trust which eventually leads to an unhealthy dependency and her death. Mbete lures the young people into his house by posing as the well-meaning fatherly helper, like a schoolmaster trying to teach his pupils. Children who were brought up like Sindsiswa have learnt exactly to trust such people and will of course believe what he says. Kondile’s generation did not do much to fight against the way things were during apartheid, they lived according to the race laws and showed acquiescence to their role in South Africa. Their children were the ones to bear the cross of liberation, who fought for a better life. This is not a simple choice that the parent’s generation made, but was also due to the fact that most of them didn’t have a thorough education, unlike Sindsiswa’s generation. They were also not given a voice to speak. And yet,

177 Unless the father is the rapist, the rapist is a family member (e.g. brother) or the father has contrived the rape.
the children are the ones who were killed, tortured, hunted down and raped because they fought for a better life, which their parents failed to provide them with. Admittedly, the parents were also roped in (Kondile did spend time in prison, he was also tortured), but it took the children’s bravery and action to set the ball rolling. Through the raised voices of the youngest generation, who did not listen to their parents and who broke the “conspiracy of silence” (p.168) did change begin to happen. Kondile admits their sins himself: “I conveyed the same message to my daughter: comply and be silent” (ibid), and that through this compliance they were a part of their own abuse and that of many others.

When Kondile recounts the night when his house was set on fire, he says that his history has been destroyed with the house: “The fire took more than just the hut from me, it took away my history” (p.160). This is a compelling contradiction to the whole novel. History is not composed of material things; objects are just relics or keepsakes that only trigger memories. With the (fictional\textsuperscript{178}) novel he has recorded the history of what took place during his lifetime. Especially in a culture that for many generations has recorded history through songs and story telling, the fact that Kondile places his whole history on the same level as his hut does not make sense. In Western culture, history nowadays exists through records such as books and archives. This is also the case in other cultures but all cultures, before alphabetization was fully established, have been able to record their history by passing it on orally from generation to generation and it is evident in their myths and even their very names\textsuperscript{179}. This finds its own proof in Kondile’s flashbacks to the events in his family’s past and his cultural heritage as a Xhosa.

\textsuperscript{178} The novel is a fictional memoir of Kondile’s life – so we can safely equal the novel with Kondile’s life story.
\textsuperscript{179} Cf. Twitty 2000. p. 176.
9. Concluding rape

The female body has been a frequent stage for abuse in literature, not only in the novels analyzed. The basic atrocity in the context at hand is the rape of the woman by one or several men. However, her fate has been used to establish a ground for further metaphors, allegories and as a frame around which the authors build their story-lines. By putting the rape in a political or racist context, the female body was used as a canvas for deeper meaning and the actual rape and the woman herself were reduced to a tool to convey this meaning. The modern post-colonial writers “have brought women’s physical suffering and pain into language, into story”\(^\text{180}\), this writing, furthermore “articulates women’s bodies as sites of protest; expresses their at times unspoken or withheld, always deeply felt, histories of struggle and survival.”\(^\text{181}\) On the one hand this provides a powerful stage for the women’s thus far muted voice to be heard, while on the other hand it will ultimately dampen the obvious crime of rape, and the personal aspect is easily left out of focus, for the sake of the greater good.

While the victims and their future are depicted in detail, descriptions of the rapist’s and their minds feature mostly on the margins of the plots. David is the exception, as he experiences rape from both sides and subsequently reacts differently and undergoes a great development. The other rapists though are not aware of what they did. They do not perceive their role in society as a rapist, as someone who takes advantage of their situation through a seemingly sexual act. The only rapists that are punished for what they did are those killed by Mikey in *Bitter Fruit*, a very irregular form of justice. The others either forget about their deed completely thus further victimizing the women they raped and also feel no regret for what they did, as it is hard to feel remorse for something that has slipped your mind. Or there are simply those rapists who recall everything and just don’t care.

In three out of the four novels the victim becomes pregnant and “the raped woman becomes a potent allegory by which authors rethink the nation through the “mixed

\(^{181}\) Ibid.
race” child spawned in hatred and violence.” One child, Mikey in Bitter Fruit, is actually born within the limitations of the novel but undergoes a heavy bout of identity loss after finding out who his real father is. The trouble here is that letting the protagonist react in such a way puts into doubt the possibility of building one’s identity without belonging to one certain race. This again reinforces (to a certain extent) the logic of apartheid race regulations and the notion of the pureness of blood. On the other hand this loss of identity must not be reduced to the skin color of his mother’s rapist and should be considered a normal reaction to the discovery that one’s father is another and more evil man than the one you had so far believed him to be.

In Disgrace, the child that was conceived through Lucy’s rape is not yet born when the novel ends. Lucy is bent on loving the child despite its father, a thing her own father cannot understand but something that he imputes to his daughter’s inherent and female ability to love. Although the baby’s future is fraught with complications it will survive due to its mother’s loving intentions and Lucy as the abused white woman symbolizes the new mother icon for South Africa. The conception in I Speak to the Silent will not survive, just like its mother. The embryo in Sindiswa’s womb is not allowed to live as his mother does not have the ability to love it like the other two women. Unlike the other two rapes, this one is not interracial, but black-on-black, and yet it also stands for the New South Africa, maybe even more than the other two. As intra-racial rapes are far more common than others this solution of how to deal with a child conceived in rape might even have a heavier impact: as long as there is violence among blacks there is no future.

9.1. Overcoming the past

“As a necessarily textual means to engage with the past, literature is a (historiographical) form of Vergangenheitsbewältigung.” This is the role of fiction or of novelists in narrating a country’s past and bringing light into the dark past of (women’s) suppression. The novelists have all used their own solution to overcoming a past trauma firstly on the personal level of rape and then in the more general way of

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overcoming apartheid and its legacy. The first way of doing so is opposing the two solutions of revenge and forgiveness. Many South Africans have benefited from the platform the TRC has been able to give to them; others have either not taken the stage or doubt its feasibility in helping victims and perpetrators with finding reconciliation. Both Dangor and Nyoka have the rapists murdered in their stories which portrays their doubt in the usefulness of coming to terms with the past by speaking about it. Additionally, the rapists are not killed by their victims but by a close relative of the victim, who has taken the rape and usurped it by taking justice into his/her own hands. While in the end Nyoka lets his protagonist see the injustice of his actions (Kondile understands that speaking about the crime will save him), Dangor believes in retaliation as the only way of coming to terms with the past. Coetzee empowers the victim with the ability to forgive while David is not able to do so and seeks revenge until the very end. Zadok’s rapist gets away with it, although Faith intends to kill him, he will accidentally survive and the little girl has to overcome the trauma of witnessing his survival.

Telling one’s story and not forgetting the past is a constantly recurring theme in all the novels. Often the victims and the witnesses choose to remain silent and to repress what has happened. In fact, *I Speak to the Silent* is a grand message to those who have chosen this path: that it will not lead to salvation. Story telling has always been a major ingredient in African historiography, for a very long time this has been the only way for many people to recount their own history and to preserve their tradition. Therefore a person who decides to withhold information will betray future generations of the truth of the life of their ancestors. The only trouble is that individual memories will always differ as they are directly experienced and immediately interpreted. If only one person chooses to remember and recount, it will be a flawed truth that is passed on, that is why everyone must remember and thus build a history that is the closest to the truth. After all, though a lot of criticism was accurately uttered toward the colonialist history production of Africa, oral traditions “are often the products of selective recall on the part of their keepers”184.

Taking into consideration that at most TRC hearings women’s voices were rarely heard, have the authors managed to give them back their voices, or have they spoken

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for them? Lucy, although she is the most independent woman of them all, has been
given a quiet voice that is always overshadowed with David’s. Sindiswa and Nomsa
both can’t speak for themselves and although in both novels somebody else tells their
stories Sindiswa’s hardship is told by another woman at a TRC hearing. Lydia is able
to break out of the established roles; she succeeds in overcoming her trauma without
speaking out and yet her fate is taken up by her son. By taking up women’s stories
and writing about the past unbeknownst to many, the authors have tried to shed light
on women’s history. The novels serve as a platform for those who were unheard
during the reconciliation attempts of South Africa. They might not have always spoken
with the woman’s voice and often they don’t provide a solution that is as
acceptable and peaceful as that of Bishop Tutu’s commission, at least the authors
have taken up a taboo issue and brought it into the open, for the world to see.

9.2. Generational conflict

What many victims often long for to overcome the trauma they are suffering are
healthy relationships and family ties. Being able to fall back on a security net of
friends and relatives who will help them by speaking to them and taking care of them
is highly adjuvant for a quick recovery. All the protagonists’ families are disrupted:
the Hambiles are torn apart by their daughter’s ambitions in fighting for justice and
yet they are the “healthiest” – if one can speak of healthy families – of them all. The
others are all characterized by miscommunication and certain isolation despite
having parents/children or even living under the same roof. The victims are left alone
in their suffering, partly because they don’t want to burden their family with their
troubles (Lucy), partly because the other family members have chosen to look away
(Silas), partly because they would take revenge in lieu of the victim herself (Mikey,
Kondile).

Strikingly, three rapists are older than their victim. This underlying issue of
generational conflict runs parallel to the relationships issues, and to dealing with the
past. Oom Piet and Mr. Mbete are both father figures and David is in fact a father;
their victims are young women who either trust and/or respect them. Obviously a
young woman is more interesting for a sexually interested man, but we have
sufficiently established that rape is not really a crime motivated by passion but has more to do with power and suppression. Choosing a victim who is a great deal younger than oneself, the rapist tries to prove that he “still has it”. That although he himself is old, the young have nothing against him, he might even fear the younger ones for they are likely to survive him, have more vivacity and strength – in Mr. Mbete’s case the man might fear that the young women are sawing at his throne.

Another very important aspect of this generational conflict that is apparent in the connection with the rape plots is that often the young one will have to carry the burden of their parent’s flaws. Most obviously it is the offspring of a rape that are the most blatant allegory for the future of the country, Lucy’s unborn child and Mikey are the future generation, the new people that were born out of an abominable past. However, by having so many young rape victims in their plots (Vinu, Melanie, Sindiswa, Nomsa) who were raped by their father, their teacher, their caretaker and their boss’s suitor the authors clearly indicate that it is the young women who will have to pay the price for the subjugation of the majority of South Africans during apartheid. The country’s history has put them and their rapists into a social system that has ended up in a war that was fought on their bodies.

In *Bitter Fruit*, Lydia’s character demands a kind of recognition of her ordeal in the fight for equality. Sindiswa really is an active fighter for the cause, but often this role of women is not so openly displayed – only in their position as a rape victim. The young and unborn are the ones at a loss in this New South Africa; they are forced to reinvent their identity markers while simultaneously coping with the trauma of a country’s past that many still prefer to have hushed. This new generation with their privileges born from other’s fights, with their education that was detained from their parents but with a giant shadow of apartheid’s leftovers will have to right the wrongs. Coetzee believes that mainly the women should be the ones to do so, Dangor also believes in *male* retaliation while Nyoka understands that speaking about the past and not forgetting what happened will lead to deliverance. Zadok puts the weapon in the children’s hands and thus exposes the imminent failure of salvation and justice when the inexperienced grab the gun, no matter how well intentioned.
9.3. Gender and race

All the rapes in the novels analyzed are male on female, except Kondile’s experiences in jail. This decision was done purposefully as there are not that many novels that actually deal with homosexual rape and this facet would outgrow this thesis. By having a female victim the authors choose the more conservative path but also include the remaining gender inequalities in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. And yet, although this is clearly the case the analysis of rape should not linger too long on this aspect as it is obvious that a male-on-female-rape (since it is a display of power by the rapist) is a metaphor for women’s inequality.

With this in mind, let us return to the rape as such. Are the women in the novels victims or survivors of rape? The difference here is that a victim will always be seen in a submissive light. A victim will be passive and used, one who is hurt, ruined, immolated and oppressed and exposed to misery. A survivor will stand his/her ground, face the blows to come and survives, a survivor can continue with his/her life without giving in, he/she can live on actively. Of course it is better to feel like a survivor of an atrocity and not as its victim. But is a rape victim a survivor of a rape? In my opinion, the underlying meaning of rape is victimizing the raped person. The term survivor is connoted to an unforeseen tragedy like a natural catastrophe or a horrible accident. The rapist chooses his victim and although it is unforeseen to the victim, the victim’s role in the crime is not simply surviving (as death is often not the ultimate outcome of a rape) but he/she is hurt and abused. In the novels that is exactly the role of the raped women, two of whom don’t even survive.

By returning to the concept of feminizing the colonized, it is necessary to touch on the subject of raping the female continent of Africa. The concept is accurate (although it limits itself to a constricted view of gendered continents/nations) and is taken up by the authors to a certain degree. Especially Coetzee installs the feeling in Lucy that she has to give something back, to stand in for the history of her people. In the modern discourse of these novels however, this idea is not really paramount as the present is more important and the rapes are often triggers of trauma that leads into the New South Africa. Coetzee is the only author where we can assume that he is alluding to retaliation against the white man’s rape of the continent. Though
Dangor’s rapist is also white and his victim is colored, the colonialist allegory is no longer the prior motif, but it concerns the relationships during apartheid between the Afrikaner and the African. Nyoka’s rape is even more explicit in its inherent Africanness, as here the rape is intra-racial. Zadok has introduced an interracial rape but again, it is the catalyst for the young ones to overcome their inherited trauma, which signifies that (the issue of) colonialism is not at the forefront.

To bring the analysis to an end, one must understand its most important categories. First of all, the rape plot is a possibility to publicize the atrocities of a country’s past that were in their kind closely connected to women’s suffering. The authors have used their voices to un-silence this past and to help many with overcoming a trauma by doing so. Secondly, the rape as such must be considered a crime that is a sexualized deed of suppression. While gender issues remain ubiquitous in this discussion, they are not the sole or even predominant reason for the crime. In the South African setting, where colonialism seems already too distant to contemporary literature, rapes and their consequences are used to deal with the younger past of apartheid and the betrayal on the young generations who will have to be answerable to their parent’s decisions on racism and hatred. Not very unlike the German heritage, where those who were born during or shortly after the end of the Nazi regime were just as traumatized or feel just as culpable as their parents, these South African authors have taken up their responsibility in not letting the topic of apartheid become a great taboo that will not be spoken of.
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12. Abstract

Die Arbeit zu *Rape in Contemporary South African Fiction*, Vergewaltigung in zeitgenössischer südafrikanischer Literatur, behandelt das vermehrte Vorkommen der Vergewaltigungsthematik in modernen Romanen aus Südafrika, die alle nach dem Ende der Apartheid veröffentlich wurden.

Um die Instrumente für die Analyse zu finden, wird im ersten Teil die Vergewaltigung an sich besprochen. Diese ist zwar oberflächlich betrachtet eine sexuelle Straftat, es wird aber bei genauem Betrachten klar, dass es für den Vergewaltiger vielmehr um eine Unterdrückung und Erniedrigung des Opfers geht, als um dessen tatsächliche sexuelle Anziehungskraft. Um den Rahmen nicht zu sprengen, war es notwendig die homosexuelle Vergewaltigung zu vernachlässigen und sich auf jene zwischen einem Mann und einer Frau zu beschränken. Da die Romane alle die Trauma- und Vergangenheitsbewältigung aufgreifen, wird auch hierauf eingegangen.

Im zweiten Teil wird die Vergewaltigung in Zusammenhang mit Südafrika und der Literatur gebracht. Die Begriff der „Rape Culture“, der in diesem Kontext aufkommt wird näher durchleuchtet, zudem wird die Idee der Vergewaltigung Afrikas durch die Kolonialmächte thematisiert. Natürlich ist die Analyse in Hinblick auf Rassismus und die dadurch belastete Hinterlassenschaft der Apartheid ebenfalls notwendig und wurde erarbeitet.

# Lebenslauf

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Katrin Harvey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geburtsort</td>
<td>Bludenz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schulbildung</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 – 2002:</td>
<td>Studium der Anglistik und Amerikanistik and der Leopold Franzens Universität, Innsbruck</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seit 2002:</td>
<td>Fortsetzung Anglistik und Amerikanistik und Beginn Internationale Entwicklung an der Universität Wien</td>
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<td><strong>Berufserfahrung</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Seit Sept 2006</td>
<td>Angestellte als Ausbilderin der Reisebetreuer und Assistenz der Geschäftsführung bei PDM Incoming Services, Wien</td>
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<tr>
<td>Okt 2006 – Feb 2008</td>
<td>Tutorin für das Sprachlabor Practical Phonetics and Oral Communication Skills (American English), Universität Wien</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sommer 2004-06:</td>
<td>Delegation Manager, Student Ambassador’s Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter 2003/04:</td>
<td>Garderobenhostess, DO &amp; CO am Stephansplatz, Wien</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sommer 2003:</td>
<td>AuPair und Bürohilfe in La Tardiëre, Frankreich</td>
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<td>Sommer 2002:</td>
<td>Servicefachangestellte im See- und Parkhotel Feldbach in Steckborn, Schweiz</td>
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<td>Sommer 2001:</td>
<td>Nachhilfelehrerin bei Braintr@in, Dornbirn</td>
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<td>Sommer 2000:</td>
<td>Rezeptionistin im Sporthotel Bachmann, Gargellen</td>
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<td>Sommer 1999:</td>
<td>Praktikum als Commis de Service im Eurotel Riviera, Montreux, Schweiz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sommer 1998:</td>
<td>Service- und Zimmermädchenaushilfe im Kleinen Hotel, Gargellen</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sprachen</strong></td>
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<td>Sehr Gut: Französisch</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Zusätzliche Prüfungen</strong></td>
<td>ESP (Teaching English for Specific Purposes)</td>
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<td>CEIBT (Cambridge English Certificate in Business and Trade)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fachprüfung in Kochen und Servierkunde</td>
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<td>B-Führerschein</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hobbies</strong></td>
<td>Reisen, Sport (Basketball, Fitness), Literatur</td>
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