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Declaration of authenticity

I confirm to have conceived and written this paper in English all by myself. Quotations from other authors and any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are all clearly marked within the text and acknowledged in the bibliographical references.

Wien, im Mai 2010 .................................................................

Hinweis

In memory of my grandfathers,  
one a gardener and one a hunter.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the people who endured my spontaneous and sometimes misplaced asides about animal philosophy throughout the period of writing this thesis and I sincerely thank Prof. Dr. Ewald Mengel for introducing me to the fascinating field of South African literature in the first place.
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1. Introduction

Since the evolvement of the conscious mind animals have been playing an important role in human approaches to interpret the world. Instances of animal symbolism can be found in every culture from the first societies onwards. What exactly an animal represents within a specific society considerably depends on way it is encountered in the immediate environment. This can lead to contrary meanings in comparison to other cultures. For example, the snake in the Christian realm stands for evil, temptation and the devil in general, whereas the Igbos in Nigeria worship the snake as a holy animal. Wound around the staff of Aesculapius the viper represents healing while the serpents on Medusa’s head are a sign of malevolence and perdition (see Garai 84). Despite the contradictions within animal symbolism, a great part of animal metaphors created by humans retain their inner meaning and value, their core statement, when transferred to other cultures or other times. In other words, one and the same animal metaphor is capable of appropriately representing specific living conditions and social circumstances in utterly different societies. What this means becomes clearer if we read The Kingdom of the Lion, the ninth of Aesop’s ancient fables, against the background of the new South Africa.

THE BEASTS of the field and forest had a Lion as their king. He was neither wrathful, cruel, nor tyrannical, but just and gentle as a king could be. During his reign he made a royal proclamation for a general assembly of all the birds and beasts, and drew up conditions for a universal league, in which the Wolf and the Lamb, the Panther and the Kid, the Tiger and the Stag, the Dog and the Hare, should live together in perfect peace and amity. The Hare said, “Oh, how I have longed to see this day, in which the weak shall take their place with impunity by the side of the strong.” And after the Hare said this, he ran for his life. (Aesop 9)

Already the title is quite evocative if we consider the fascination lions have always been having on the inhabitants, immigrants and visitors of South Africa, in one way or the other. With good reason the lion is widely seen as the most majestic animal and therefore often referred to as the king of all beasts. The demand of the lion king in the fable for living together of his subjects is equal to the craved social structures so many activists have been fighting for during the repressive reign of apartheid. In the euphoria following the 1994 general election, which officially marks the fall of white supremacy, this dream seems to be within reach but the vast social problems in South Africa today show that the
weak in the ‘rainbow nation’\(^1\) symbolically still have to run for survival like the hare in the fable.

The unchanged social hardship often appears as a theme in contemporary South African novels, one of several reasons that cause literary critics to repeatedly describe South African national fiction as having cathartic qualities. Not only has writing been a mode of pacifistic resistance against apartheid before its fall but is also said to be a way of coming to terms with the collective trauma the country suffered through a history of colonialism and apartheid. In addressing critical issues in contemporary South African fiction animals are often used as a prominent means to create symbolic references to the topics in question. These metaphors range from direct and clearly discernible ones to skilfully disguised and indirect ones. Regardless of the grade of clarity of such allusions, one can be sure that prominently featuring animals somehow always hint at solely human problems. This claim also goes along with Rosemary Jolly’s claim “that what we say about animals says more about us than it does about the animals” (Jolly 159). In concordance with this argumentation it can be assumed that what South African authors as a group say about animals tells us more about South Africa than it does about the depicted creatures themselves.

Besides the psychological traumata they caused, the uncountable atrocities South Africans committed against each other also lead to a problematic relationship of people towards nature frequently depicted in contemporary South African novels. Witnessing the brutality in the destruction of other life tears South Africans out of their place within nature, leaving them ended up with a distorted attitude towards their environment. On the juncture between the human world and nature, animals in contemporary South African fiction are often chosen as a means of healing this disfigured relationship and thus serve as a gateway for a reconnection with nature. However, these quests for reunion are not always successful if the divide is too great and the wounds are too deep.

Another way of curing the wounds apartheid left can be found in spirituality. As authors set on a quest for rediscovering tribal mythology and belief systems the great challenge South Africa faces through its multiethnic society becomes apparent. Even the struggle between myth and religion poses a stage for the

\(^1\) A term for the new South Africa coined by the Anglican archbishop and anti-apartheid activist Desmond Tutu.
appearance of animals in contemporary South African novels. Although symbolic meanings vary widely in different cultural settings, the importance of animal symbolism in all ethnic value systems ultimately constitutes a unifying momentum between all of South Africa’s cultural subgroups. The following thesis aims to shed light on some of these different manifestations of animals in post-apartheid fiction.
2. Theoretical framework

South Africa is a country in which centuries dominated by colonialism and apartheid have left marks on country and people that cannot be erased by any means. How important these parts of history still are in present day South Africa is also represented in contemporary literature. Thus, reading a post-apartheid novel does not mean the reader is solely confronted with contemporary issues of South Africa. On the contrary, contemporary authors repeatedly make the past a subject of discussion and reveal how history is the producer of many problems the nation faces today. Actually, stirring up history is vital part of coming to terms with the past. Adopting this task has a reputation of post-apartheid fiction of having cathartic effects for South African society. Therefore it is also no surprise that almost every novel discussed in this thesis includes some references to and touches on topics like the state of emergency, the apartheid era or even the more distant past of the colonisation period.

As we deal with fictional representations of the past one must not forget that authors of fiction do not necessarily have the aim to depict historical events completely accurate. This also reflects the general problem in the writing of history that, depending on the background of its authors, the acknowledged historical truth can diverge from the perception of historical events by others. Regarding fiction, however, accuracy is secondary to what illustrations of South Africa’s history within novels tell us about the meaning of being a South African today. It is more important to see how authors of fiction tackle the problems of their home country than to gain an objective understanding of past events. The preoccupation with the past in literature shows how South Africa longs for coming to terms with the numerous atrocities in its history. As the following chapters will show, these cruelties are not exclusively human affairs but very often involve and affect animals. Animals either become direct or indirect victims of violence or they are engaged in characters’ attempts to understand and cope with the ferocious deeds of the past.

Due to the wealth of the wildlife of South Africa, animals have always played an important role in the country but subjecting interrelations between humans and animals to critical scrutiny is a specific characteristic of post-apartheid fiction. By this means, all South African novelists included in this thesis are trying to take a stand towards their home country, its present and its past from a post-apartheid point of view. Obviously, only a limited number of novels can be
taken into account in the range of this thesis but the selection forms a representative cross section of contemporary South African writing, including black, white, male and female authors. This assures that the examination of animals featuring in contemporary South African novels is not one-sided and based on a subgroup of authors. Diversity is not only important regarding the choice of primary literature but also in connection to the employment of different aspects of literary criticism. A diversity of methods is necessary to guarantee an extensive examination of the complex relationships between personal identity, national identity, trauma, and history within contemporary South African fiction. In connection with animals in South African fiction, two prominent schools of literary criticisms emerge that provide meaningful concepts for the examination of that matter, namely postcolonial and psychoanalytic literary criticism. The former seems to be important for South Africa anyway, due to its past state as a colony but there is a more profound reason why postcolonial literary criticism is important for analysing the appearances of animals in contemporary novels.

From the beginning colonialism is driven by the idea to conquer new lands and tame the wild nature that is to be found there. Europeans slaughtering a countless number of bison in North America or going on safari in Africa are sad evidence for the instrumentalisation of animals as the paragon for a wilderness to be tamed. Symbolising an opposition to human culture, animals are also frequently used in colonial discourses to represent the assumed inferiority, irrationality and uncivilised nature of women, indigenous people, or other groups of outsiders in male-dominated and colonial societies (see Jolly 150). Above all, the rendering of non-whites as animals is still excessively used during the apartheid era and beyond. The remarkable persistence of that colonial discourse makes postcolonial literary criticism so outstandingly valuable in connection with the topic of this thesis. It especially comes into play when taking a closer look at power relationships between blacks and whites, which still feature as a prominent theme in post-apartheid, South African fiction.

According to scholars like Homi Bhabha or Arun P. Murkerjee postcolonialism as such ‘is a set of diverse methodologies that possess no unitary quality’ (Bressler 201) and thus does not necessarily correspond to one specific, clearly delimited period in a country’s history. Therefore the apartheid era, with all its policies inspired by the colonial mind, has to be seen as another period of colonisation, which subsequently makes post-apartheid South Africa a
country where postcolonial methodologies occur frequently. This also becomes clear by taking a look at Gregory Castle’s definition of the postcolonial and using it as a frame for looking at post-apartheid South African fiction. Castle himself adapts a definition of the postmodern by Jean-François Lyotard and concludes that “the postcolonial refers to the unpresentable in the colonial: racial difference, legal inequality, subalternity, all of the submerged or suppressed contradictions within the colonial social order itself” (Castle 135). All the concepts he lists here are also “unpresentable” during the apartheid era and emerge as discussable topics only after the fall of the regime. As will be shown, animals are more often than not part of these discussions and are frequently employed in critiques of both apartheid and colonialism.

The need for representing such controversial topics in order to come to terms with the past is yet again shown in the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission\(^2\) presented in Rosemary Jolly’s essay “Going to the Dogs”. There she reveals the importance of “non-human animals”, or more precisely the concept of animality, in connection with the crimes against humanity committed during the apartheid era. She states, for example, that J. M. Coetzee’s novels "The Lives of Animals and Disgrace [are] enquiries in their different ways into our obsession with reading human behavior against what we perceive to be nonhuman, animal behavior" (151). One of her major concerns in this respect is the examination of the double-sided description of perpetrators and victims as animals. For her the aforementioned habit to interpret human actions as animal behaviour produces a paradox in the use of "the imagery of the bestial" (155). She points out that "[t]he confusion of perpetrators and victims, in which both are described in the language of animalism, is no metaphysical matter" (155) but is rather an inherent part of everyday language in South Africa. To illustrate this, Jolly refers to specific passages of the TRC hearings. She highlights utterances of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and one of his colleagues, who both "refer to the perpetrators as those who have become animals because they are nonbelievers" (155). In other words, for them the perpetrators do not show any signs of being religious or spiritual, and thus miss a vital constituent that renders humans superior to animals. These descriptions used by the two TRC officials stand in contrast to commissioner Wendy Orr’s reference to victims of apartheid violence, when she declares that she "hope[s]...\(^2\) From here onwards the common abbreviation TRC will be used.
that [the TRC] ensure[s] that human beings are never again treated like animals" (qtd. in Jolly 155).

However, not only members of the TRC use animals metaphorically but also perpetrators and victims themselves include similar descriptions in their testimonies. One specific, significant case is described by Jolly where a perpetrator's defence is based on his belief that "blacks are animals" (156) or as he formulates it in Afrikaans "'diere van die veld' (animals of the field)" (156). This statement is of special importance in connection with the interpretation of Lisa Fugard's *Skinner's Drift* later in chapter 3. The victim survivor in the described TRC case opposes the defendant's argumentation by pleading to refuse amnesty "because he and his comrades were treated like wild animals" (156, own italics). Jolly concludes her discussion about the TRC hearings with the following analysis:

> [T]he testimony from both sides - the TRC and the victim-survivors on the one hand and the perpetrators on the other - form a series of tautologies. The perpetrators are animals because they have abused humans to such degree that these victimized humans have been reduced to, or become, nonhuman animals; the perpetrators have become animals in the process of victimizing humans: and the measure of the humanity of a subject is reflected substantially in terms of that particular human's treatment of nonhuman animals. Hence nonhuman animals are made to stand both as marker of humankind's barbarity and a testament to humankind's innate humanity. (156f)

The essence of these remarks is that in order to retain their own humanity in exceptional circumstances both perpetrators and victims reduce each other - or more generally an entire group of others - to being an animal. On the one hand, this implies that it is legitimate to treat others badly if they are not human. On the other hand the brutality of the perpetrator is attributed to his inhumanity, his animality. In other words, to hold together their identity as humans, people sometimes need an opposing other – an animal other – in contrast to which they appear as higher beings of creation.

As mentioned above, others are of central importance for colonial policies since their otherness is interpreted by the colonial mind as a marker for their inferiority. This way of seeing things is so deeply rooted that colonizers strictly employ it on the perception of any group of others, no matter if it is women, indigenous people or animals. The question is, where this attitude towards others comes from?
Jolly argues that since Descartes it has become a general custom in Western thinking to connect our body with the idea of the other. This other is typically seen as being mainly driven by desire and is characterized by its inability to think, its lack of morality and its corporeal susceptibility to environmental influences (see 152). The interpretation that the body “signifies everything that is opposed to the rational” (152) is clearly linked to the 17th century philosopher. In his Meditationes de Prima Philosophia Descartes employs the method of radical doubt to show that his activity of conscious thinking can by no means be separated from himself. Therefore, he concludes, it is necessarily true that he exists. “Ego sum, ego existo; certum est.” (Descartes, 82). This is obviously a reformulation of his earlier, more famous statement “cogito, ergo sum”, which likewise declares the conscious mind as the only ontological truth. By ascribing it only to mankind, Descartes elevates humans above all other beings, which in his view possess only a body but not a mind. Another consequence of his method of radical doubt in the Meditationes is that he not only deprives the human body of all ontological importance but also paves the way for it being interpreted as the inferior part of every human individual, a part shared with all animals.

Jolly also points out that, according to that interpretation, “the body [has been] subconsciously read as the locus of vulnerability and that this vulnerability is registered in the projection of the offending body onto the other” (Jolly 152). Following the argumentation of Mike Marais, Jolly adds that “for Levinas, the very act of representation [of the other] is an act of containment, of mastery” (153) and accordingly his “concern is to confront without objectifying, the other”. Furthermore she argues that Coetzee's work goes beyond Levinas because

Coetzee's task is possibly more specific: that of rendering the corporeality of the other in terms that do not fall back on objectifying that corporeality through an identification of it with the traditionally objectifying discourse of the body as that which is animal, that which traditionally has no soul. (Jolly 153)

In Disgrace, Coetzee undertakes that task by employing a revolutionary approach of equating humans and animals. In contrast to the reduction of humans to their corporeality - and thus their animality - he represents animals as having a soul and by this means lifts them up to a human level. In this regard, it is remarkable how he uses the ancient mythological association of
dogs with death. De Vries points out that “[e]vidence of the primary mythical role played by the dog, that of psychopomp, is worldwide” (de Vries 296). In his novel Coetzee reverses the image of the dog accompanying the human soul to afterlife and lets David Lurie “become a dog-man: a dog undertaker; a dog psychopomp” (Coetzee 146). Now, it is a human that takes care of the proper journey of dogs’ souls to the otherworld.

As the remaining chapters show, Coetzee is by far not the only South African author who criticises the Western, colonial perception of the body and the other. With increasing frequency, alternative views, based on folk memories of indigenous peoples concerning that matter, find their way into post-apartheid literature. Suppressed during the long years of the apartheid system, these different perceptions of the body and the animal now propose a recollection of some traditional tribal values. By rewriting the relationships of humans and animals in the light of these ancestral beliefs, contemporary South African authors like Zakes Mda often explore the theme of finding a reconnection with nature in a more and more modern and globalised world.

The differences between Western and African perceptions of animals are sometimes specifically used as an instrument of postcolonial criticism in literature, unmasking hidden colonial discourses still existing in the present. In the light of this technique Western readers have to be careful with interpretations of animals featuring in contemporary South African novels. This required caution is frequently pointed out in connection with postcolonial criticism in general. Charles E. Bressler, for example, indicates that it obviously makes a difference “whether or not the one performing the act of literary criticism has been a colonial subject” (Bressler 204) him or herself. Outsiders, for whom this is not the case, “must be forever on guard against ascribing [their] own cultural ideas into postcolonial works” and have to realize “that any attempt to completely understand a subaltern group will be impossible and can lead to another form of repression” (Bressler 205). Furthermore, Bressler also warns that Western literary critics “must question the taken-for-granted positions held by the Western mind-set” (Bressler 205). Now, this precept is all the more true for the reading of animal appearances in contemporary South African fiction and thus plays an important role in the course of this thesis. As we will see, it is exactly the contrast to Western mind-sets that in many respects accounts for

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3 For a detailed account of the symbolic connection between dog and death see de Vries „dog“.
the prominence of animals in South African fiction. Beyond that, it will become apparent that attempts to understand these differences automatically lead to further, deeper questions in connection with colonisation, apartheid, contemporary history and South African identity.

What all these questions raised in post-apartheid literature have in common, is the vital importance of the issue of coping with traumata. Etymologically the word derived from the Greek word for ‘wound’ and is used in medicine to denote a physical injury (see “trauma” OALD). Now, it is undeniable that during centuries of violence countless South Africans have suffered serious injuries. However, ‘trauma’ has a broader meaning for the country. This is because, apart from physical harm, particularly the ‘mental wounds’ suffered by its citizens have thrown the country into a state of psychological trauma. In psychology, trauma is a rather complicated concept, which is reflected in the existence of numerous definitions. Nevertheless, a short paragraph in the preface of The Encyclopedia of Psychological Trauma provides a clarifying summary.

A common feature of past and current definitions of psychological trauma is that it represents events that are emotionally shocking or horrifying, which threaten or actually involve death(s) or a violation of bodily integrity (such as sexual violation or torture) or that render the affected person(s) helpless to prevent or stop the resultant psychological and physical harm. (Reyes et al., X)

In South Africa it becomes apparent every day, how such “[t]raumatic events challenge an individual’s view of the world as a just, safe, and predictable place” (“trauma” APA DOP). During the years of the liberation struggle such devastating experiences are happening on a daily basis causing a state of collective trauma. Contemporary South African fiction is often said to play a major role in the country’s coming to terms with this condition of mental paralysis caused by the atrocities of the past. Considering this psychological dimension of post-apartheid literature and its cathartic qualities, one necessarily has to pay attention to ideas of psychoanalytic literary criticism. In this respect, two psychoanalytic concepts are of particular significance. The first one goes back to Sigmund Freud’s belief in the importance of dreams for psychoanalysis. According to his theories “dreams have two kinds of content, the manifest and the latent” (Castle 163). The dream itself is the manifest part whereas the underlying, repressed feelings and wishes that triggered the dream are the
latent part. Thus the dream is the object of the analyst’s interpretation through which he or she tries to uncover the real meaning of the imagery hiding in the patients’ unconscious. Freud argues that “[a] work of literature […] is the external expression of the author’s unconscious mind” (Bressler 126). Consequently, a “literary work [can] be treated like a dream” (Bressler 126) and the analysis of the manifest text provides insights into the author’s unconscious. As every single experience is processed by the unconscious, it follows that a literary work written by a South African necessarily tells us something about how past and present events in the country are perceived. In Freudian dream analysis animals are interpreted as highly significant symbols for repressed wishes and desires. Accordingly, the assumption that literary criticism can follow similar rules as dream analysis implies that animals are of equal importance in works of literature. That is why it is essential to bear in mind that a number of animals “are so strongly imbued with symbolism as to retain a permanent value throughout human history” (Vries 25).

A weakness in Freud’s theory is that he just focussed on the dreamer’s or respectively the writer’s repressed sexual desires. This reduction is also pointed out by Carl G. Jung – arguably Freud’s most famous student – who reasons that dreams and literary works alike include more than just sexual images (see Bressler 126). At this point the second psychoanalytic concept comes into play, namely Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious. In his model of the human psyche, the collective unconscious is the third part besides the personal conscious and the personal unconscious. It “houses the cumulative knowledge, experiences, and images of the entire human species” (Bressler 127) and is therefore responsible for identical responses of all humans to specific stories and legends. The form of these memories Jung calls archetypes, which can be described as “patterns or images of repeated human experiences […] that express themselves in our stories, our dreams, our religions and our fantasies” (Bressler 127). Transferred to the situation of South Africa, it has to be the case that the repeated experiences of atrocious deeds have had an impact on South Africans’ unconscious. Following Jung’s argument, the contents of that ‘national

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4 Although ideas about the existence of an unconscious part in the human mind evolved some time before Freud formulated his theories, the term ‘unconscious mind’ is today commonly associated with his work. For a detailed description of the Freudian unconscious see Freud’s Die Traumdeutung (1899) and Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse (1917).
unconscious’ likewise articulate themselves in South African stories and fantasies. Bressler neatly describes what these archetypes are able to accomplish in creative writing in general:

Occurring in literature in the form of recurrent plot patterns, images, or character types, the archetypes stir profound emotions in the reader because they awaken images stored in the collective unconscious and thereby produce feelings or emotions over which the reader initially has little control. (Bressler, 127)

As will be shown, there are some very prominent reoccurring themes in post-apartheid literature that very well qualify as Jungian archetypes. It is exactly by producing stories loaded with archetypes and disguised references to repressed emotions in connection with the atrocities of the past, how South African writers try to come to terms with the collective trauma the country has suffered throughout a history of apartheid and colonialism. Thus, in order to understand what contemporary South African fiction tries to do, it is essential to discover these hidden archetypes in the novels. In other words, what is important to look at is how the collective unconscious is woven into fictional writing rather than analysing the authors’ individual subconscious by means of interpreting their novels.

After these general considerations let us now take a closer look at the term animal itself, including its potential meanings and the problem of species boundaries. This clarification is necessary because the word is loaded with a vast body of meanings and connotations.

Etymologically the word ‘animal’ derives from the Latin word animal, “a living creature” which again derives from the term anima, which means “air, breath [but also] life” (“animal” OED). Consequently, the adjective animal is understood in Roman times as “is having the breath of life” (“animal” OED). According to the OED, its noun form primarily denotes any “organized being […] endowed with life, sensation, and voluntary motion” (“animal” OED). Apart from this primary meaning, the OED also reports the following secondary meaning:

In common usage: one of the lower animals; a brute, or beast, as distinguished from man. (Often restricted by the uneducated to quadrupeds; and familiarly applied especially to such as are used by man, as a horse, ass, or dog.). (“animal” OED)
A comparison of the entry in the OED with the entry in the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* shows that the sequence of meanings has changed. The formerly “uneducated” usage of the word, with some minor alterations, has become commonly accepted knowledge. Today an animal is primarily understood as “a creature that is not a bird, a fish, a reptile, an insect or a human being” (“animal” OALD), or in other words, a mammal excluding humans. However, the third subsection of the entry gives a definition that also subsumes humans under the term animal.

The disagreements about the inclusion of humans into the category of animals is important insofar as throughout history humans once and again try to define themselves by deliberately distinguishing themselves from animals, i.e. standing above the ‘lower’ animals and thus on top of creation. Obviously this belief grounds on Christian doctrine, since it is explicitly mentioned in Genesis that humans should “have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Authorized King James Version, Gen. 1.28). As such, this attitude is also particularly characteristic for the colonial mind, which strives to subdue all the animals it encounters in a newly conquered country in order to proof and affirm its own superiority. Even more so, it is not uncommon that colonialists use similar arguments to justify the suppression of indigenous people after ascribing them a lack of humanity resulting from their heathen beliefs.

The commonly recognised distinction between humans and animals is challenged only after the publication of Charles Darwin’s famous, revolutionary work *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, when the heyday of colonialism is already over. Since Darwin’s theory of evolution, however, it has become more difficult to claim that humans are entirely non-animal. That becomes obvious also if one takes a look at the concordances of all recent biological and zoological definitions of the term ‘animal’. Scientists generally agree that animals are “multicellular organisms that develop from embryos” (Martin and Hine, “animal”), gain mobility in order to secure ingestion/nutrition and via sense organs receive information from their environment, which is processed by a nervous system, enabling them to respond to their surroundings. All of these descriptions are true for humans as they are for the ‘lower’ animals. The fact that some literary critics differentiate between humans and non-human – or

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nonhuman – animals is evidence that the controversial question about the inclusion of humans into the category animal is omnipresent also in academic discourse.

Beyond linguistic and biological definitions of animals, there is yet another field where the species boundary between humans and non-human animals is blurred, namely mythology and religion. From the beginning of civilisation animals serve as symbols for particular parts of human life or even represent specific human characteristics. Examples for the variety of this symbolism can be found throughout human history in Egyptian, Mayan, Babylonian, Greek, and Germanic mythology as well as in Hinduism, Christianity and other religions, to name just a few examples. Jung interprets animals mainly as symbols for the instinctive part of human nature:


The animal is a symbol of man’s drive and instinct nature. Even the civilised human experiences the power of his drives and his inferiority to the autonomous desires and affects erupting from the unconscious. (my translation)

Jung argues further that for humans “[t]he acceptance of the animal soul is the condition for wholeness and a fully lived life” (qtd. in Vries 24). This argument stands in contradiction to the moral belief that one has to overcome one’s instincts and drives in order to be able to govern them and thus become fully human. After all, it is exactly this animal side of humans that is made responsible for the committed crimes in the TRC quotations mentioned above. The atrocities appear to be so separated from human reason, emotion or spirituality that they cannot be imagined as deeds done by a morally thinking human being. As we can see, in their use as symbols, animals can stand for gods and demons alike, which accounts for their potential to refer to contrasting topics alike. This multifaceted potential can be seen throughout the remaining chapters of this thesis.

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6 Cf. „animal“ in Dictionary of symbols and imagery and Jung p. 237f. for detailed examples of animal symbolism in mythology and religion
3. Animals and power

A main theme in contemporary South African fiction is the multifaceted relationship between superiority and inferiority. As diverse as the multiple forms and qualities of this dichotomy may be, they all share the underlying concept of power. In this respect, power can be seen as an umbrella term for the complex network of interrelations that forms of dominance in South Africa embody. Studying the country’s national literature one gets the impression that also animals seem to be prominently involved in this system of domination. Consequently, the examination of power relations in present-day novel writing brings about a number of hypotheses in relation to the animals represented in the texts.

The first hypothesis concerning this matter is that the appearance of animals as innocent victims of human violence is a prominent means to criticise humans’ strife for the possession of the land. In Going to the Dogs Jolly emphasises “the principle that in order to understand social violence, our most intimately held notions of what it means to be human need to be scrutinized” (150). This question about humanity is also linked to the behaviour of humans towards animals. Therefore, it is also useful to investigate violence against animals in order to arrive at an extensive comprehension of violence among humans. In this regard, a necessary distinction one has to make in contemporary South African fiction is the difference between animals as primary targets or as secondary targets of violence. In the latter case, they are exploited to stand in for other people. In other words, they become surrogate targets of violence when the actually intended targets are not at hand or when the aggressors cannot overcome their inhibitions to hit the real targets. Examining the appearances of this human behaviour in the novels additionally reveals crucial problems in South African society authors want to point out by depicting the abuse and suffering of animals.

Secondly, animals as others are frequently used to represent subaltern human others, especially blacks. Through their unjustifiable suffering in the course of human power struggles, animals form ideal symbols for all the innocent victims of a seemingly endless cycle of colonisation.

Thirdly, moral implications of human behaviour towards animals are used to criticise colonial and apartheid politics. This is predominantly done by depicting
the colonial mind in contrast to anti-colonial, emotive points of view represented by certain characters’ specific sympathy for animals.

Finally, this chapter shows that animals often function as symbols of power, representing the social dominance of one person or group over others. A prerequisite for this mechanism to work is the instrumental reduction of animals to being human possessions. In other words, animals can only serve as status symbols if they are seen as things that can be owned by a human individual. Although this is a predominant feature in the depiction of the white supremacy and is accordingly used to criticise the social inequality under apartheid rule, it can also be found within black communities. In this respect, it becomes apparent that the instrumentalisation of animals for human purposes is a fundamental human behaviour.

On a general level this chapter demonstrates that the four hypotheses just mentioned cannot be separated from one another but are rather interrelated in a complex network of links.

Not only one of the most important South African authors in general, J. M. Coetzee is also of specific importance for the issue of animals in South African fiction. Steven G. Kellman writes in his article, “J.M. Coetzee and the Animals”, that “Coetzee’s imagination has been challenged by the autonomous presence of non-human animals” from early on and that “[h]is critique of the colonial mind often assumes the form of a bestiary, in which humans expose their arrogance in their contempt for and abuse of other species” (Kellman, 327). After *The Lives of Animals* Coetzee retains his examination of “animals and others” (333) in his subsequent novel, *Disgrace*. In the eyes of the public, the book evokes a considerable amount of criticism, since he seemingly once again refuses to offer “transparent pronouncements about [South Africa’s] contemporary problems” (333). In contrast to similar accusations, prominently brought forward by numerous Coetzee critics, Kellman attest *Disgrace* a totally different quality. He clearly differentiates it from the mainly “polemical texts that have emerged out of the agonies of South Africa” (334) and therefore evaluates it as a much more innovative work of literature. He argues that *Disgrace* is the continuation of its author’s “insistence on inserting dialogue into a monologic culture” (334). At this point it has to be mentioned that none of the primary sources discussed in this thesis could arguably be classified as polemic, which can be taken as an
indication that South African literature has undergone considerable changes in the last one or two decades.

In the case of *Disgrace*, the most prominently featuring animals are dogs. The special thing about the dogs in *Disgrace* is that they are not only employed as symbols for one specific problem but rather depict the whole complexity of South African daily life. Coetzee manages throughout the book to build a versatile network of meanings around the dogs as animal others and thus shows the naturally complex interrelation between personal emotions, everyday problems of society and deeply philosophical questions of humankind.

Concerning personal emotions, Coetzee’s most significant considerations of morality in *Disgrace* is David Lurie’s “ethical evolution” (Kellman 334). The novel’s main character evolves from a state including sexual abuse of women – making the most of their positions as socially deprived female others – and scorn for animal rights issues to a life, dedicated to the compassionate treatment of animal others. What seems to be an essential influence in this process is “his daughter’s radical biological egalitarianism” (336) which is best expressed in her, namely Lucy’s, own words:

“This is the only life there is. Which we share with animals. That’s the example that people like Bev try to set. That’s the example I try to follow. To share some of our human privilege with the beasts. I don’t want to come back in another existence as a dog or a pig and have to live as dogs or pigs live under us.” (Coetzee 74)

Her empathy with animals goes “beyond race, beyond sex, and beyond species” (Kellman 338), a state that David’s morality also seems to approach at the end of the novel. The task he takes up at the veterinary clinic of euthanizing sick and unwanted dogs and “of disposing of their corpses in a way that does not violate their dignity” (336) appears to be based on the “respect and love for [the dogs] as autonomous beings” (338). However, one significant difference remains in contrast to his daughter’s set of morals. Lucy’s empathy is grounded on the fundamental respect for the life of other creatures while David’s takes their lives away, no matter how lovingly and dignified this may happen. The success of his moral transition is especially questioned in the case of a young dog with a crippled hind leg. Over some time he has grown fond of it, since it appears to like listening to him as he plays parts of his unfinished opera. One day, when he and Beth are nearly done with their work, he picks up the dog and
carries it into the operating room. He knows that he could adopt and save it, but he has decided days before not to befriend the animal, since he is convinced that the killing of the dog is inevitable. So he decides that it might as well happen sooner than later. On Bev Shaw’s question whether he is giving him up Lurie answers, in the last sentence of the novel: “Yes, I am giving him up” (220).

It is remarkable to see here that although “he has been careful not to give it a name” (215) he refers to ‘it’ by using ‘him’. Against his intention, he develops a relationship with the dog, touched by its “generous affection” (215) for him. He does not manage to keep the emotional distance that he believes to protect him against the grief and pain one feels after the death of a dear creature. In this respect, his decision not to “save the young dog […] for another week” (219) becomes more understandable, since every additional day of delaying the execution would make their final parting more difficult. No matter how comprehensible his reasons may be, his decision strikes deep feelings inside the reader and does not lose the taste of being an abandonment of a devote friend. The fact that Lurie is unable to prevent himself from developing feelings for the creature shows in itself how the contact with animals always stirs human emotions. Nevertheless, all his affection is questioned by his decision to give up the dog. Initially, Lurie takes up the job of disposing the corpses of the dogs because he condemns the cruelty of the incineration facility workers. In “his idea of the world […] men do not use shovels to beat corpses into a more convenient shape for processing” (146). Experiencing the inevitability of the euthanizing practice, Lurie gets convinced that it is also unavoidable that the young crippled dog has to be put down. Giving his three-legged friend up in the end is a sign that David has finally surrendered to the governmental programme of decimating stray dogs that he actually despises in the depth of his heart. His capitulation is also an allegory for all those white South Africans living in the days of the apartheid regime that were ideologically not convinced of the system but still did not take any action against it. Assuming that apartheid policies are executed anyway, many of them come to believe that it does not make a difference if they as individuals reject to follow the rules of segregation or not. Due to a lack of civil courage they judge that they might as well obey the system. In doing so, they choose the more convenient way and eventually betray their own convictions and human values. But it is exactly this
surrendering and assimilation to values imposed from above that makes systems like the holocaust or apartheid possible.

Ironically, the government that enforces the euthanasia of stray dogs is lead by the African National Congress, holding the absolute majority of seats. In other words, a government lead by the formerly oppressed blacks is responsible for the extermination programme David Lurie submits to work for. Like the apartheid state tried to dispose of the masses of blacks in the townships, the ANC government now tries to get rid of the innumerable ownerless dogs that roam the poor areas of the country. In this respect, the dogs in Disgrace metaphorically represent the underprivileged and prosecuted non-whites of the apartheid era. Moreover, by employing this symbolism Coetzee shows how people in charge, regardless of their ethnicity, are always tempted to just wipe out groups of marginalised others that seem to pose a threat to their concepts of society. By working at the animal clinic David Lurie becomes a puppet in this common mechanism of domination.

In David Lurie’s defence one could argue that he just releases the sick dogs – including his crippled friend – from their suffering and pain and tries to make their last moments as convenient for them as possible. What Coetzee’s depiction of Lurie’s emotionally challenging work implies on a more abstract level are ethical questions about the right and wrong of euthanasia as such, regardless of the species of the ‘victim’. Being a delicate issue as such, Euthanasia is even more problematic if the suffering patients are not able or not able anymore to communicate whether they want to live or to die. In that case another person has to decide for the living being concerned when its time has come without getting its approval or disapproval for that decision. Here a general problem comes into play for the decision maker, namely the fact that humans, despite their nature as thinking and feeling individuals, cannot directly perceive thoughts and emotions of other creatures. Now, through the development of language, humans have become able to transmit emotions and thoughts between themselves to considerable extent. But even that does not guarantee that the intentions of an opposing individual are fully understood. In the end, ideas and impressions of any other are fundamentally inaccessible. That holds true for humans as well as for animals. The young, crippled dog cannot be asked whether he is suffering and wants to die or whether he would rather continue listening to David’s music in days to come. This impenetrability
of the other's mind inevitably leads to the question whether euthanasia is ethically right as such or not. This, however, is an issue that leads deeply into moral philosophy and can therefore not be reasonably dealt with in the scope of this thesis.

Regardless, the problem of putting down dogs in *Disgrace* goes beyond the justification of euthanasia in so-called ‘hopeless cases’ anyway. The argumentation that David Lurie and Bev Shaw just release the dogs from their suffering and pain is deficient, since David also brings in “the young, the sound – all those whose term [sic] has come” (Coetzee 218). But who decides when their time has come? Bev Shaw? Lurie? Society? In the case of the three-legged dog it is Lurie’s individual decision. This determination of the dog’s moment of death is, besides all emotion, a remarkable representation of David’s ‘naturally given’ superior position and the power he has over the lives of the animals. He is not only “a dog undertaker; a dog psychopomp” (Coetzee 146) but has also become a dog executioner. Putting down perfectly healthy dogs cannot be classified as euthanasia anymore but is rather a case of mass murder. Officials would probably reject such a provocative labelling, since the killing of the dogs is part of South Africa’s fight against the stray dog plague the country is afflicted with. Indicating this problem Coetzee writes that “[t]he dogs that are brought [into the clinic] suffer […] most of all from their own fertility” (142).

There are simply too many of them. When people bring a dog in they do not say straight out, ‘I have brought you this dog to kill,’ but that is what is expected: that they will dispose of it, make it disappear, dispatch it to oblivion. What is being asked for is, in fact, Lösung (German always to hand with an appropriately blank abstraction): sublimation, as alcohol is sublimed from water, leaving no residue, no aftertaste. (142, italics in original)

In this respect, euthanizing the crippled dog is not only an emotional matter but also signifies that South Africa actually does have a severe problem with an overwhelming number of stray dogs. Unfortunately, the only way people have found to deal with this problem is killing as many ownerless dogs as possible. In another passage of the novel, where David’s transformation into a “dog-man” is reflected upon, the narrator once again names the problem by using the intertextual reference “because we are too menny [sic]” (146, italics in original). Originally, that sentence appears in Thomas Hardy’s book *Jude the Obscure* on
the suicide note of Jude’s eldest son – Jude junior – after killing his siblings and hanging himself. He believes this deed to be necessary, since society rejects his family because of him and his siblings being illegitimate children. Considering this background, Coetzee uses South Africa’s stray dogs in *Disgrace* as signifiers for all unwanted Others victimized by societies throughout history such as women, indigenous inhabitants of colonies, Jews or, in the case of apartheid South Africa, non-whites.

The procedure of just getting unwanted creatures out of the way stands in contrast with Lucy’s “biological egalitarianism” (Kellman 336) and confirms humankind’s absolute position of power over other species. Now, the actual core of this ‘euthanizing machinery’ is before all a power struggle. South Africa as a country proves to be too poor to provide enough food and drink everyday for all its citizens. It is not that nothing could be done against this situation but it is not in the interest of the few wealthy and powerful to share their privileges with the countless poor. So, if there are not enough resources provided to feed all the people, how can the insufficient amount available for the masses be shared with a horde of stray dogs? Apart from that, the dog plague is also a threat in terms of hygiene and health. In other words, stray dogs have become competitors in the battle for daily food and thus pose a threat to the survival of numerous poor South Africans. As the very basis of people’s lives are under threat, the existent human control over the land is perceived to be taken away by animals living inside the very same country. According to the danger stray dogs constitute for human survival, it seems justifiable to reduce them in number in order to secure the existence of South African citizens. On a different level, a similar idea stands behind the workings of the apartheid regime. Under its reign blacks, coloureds and other groups of Others are often proclaimed as being animals, in order to justify rounding them up in designated areas, locking them away or killing them right away if the rebellious among them get too many. In this respect military prisons of the apartheid state and the animal clinic in *Disgrace* have the same function, namely getting creatures out of the way that are unwanted and labelled a threat by those in power. Approaching this matter from a slightly different angle, one has to pay closer attention to Lucy Lurie’s point of view. If we take her believe in the equality of humans and animals seriously, we have to attest that killing a human or killing an animal is of the same quality. Under this presumption the systematic killing of stray dogs in
South Africa takes on a different complexion. It is a decision of those in power that a specific group is unwanted and becoming a threat to the ‘perfect’ society due to the growing number of its group members. As a consequence of the leading group’s perception of reality, measures are taken to erase that pretended threat. Since deportation outside the country is not a possible solution in this specific case, the only measure that deals with the problem directly is the extermination of the marginalised group. This means, from Lucy’s point of view the deadly fight against the stray dogs has to be equated with atrocities of the apartheid era and even with those committed under the cloak of National Socialism in Germany. In contrast to apartheid South Africa and Nazi Germany, however, now a government lead by blacks is responsible for conduction a brutal campaign against a helpless group of others. The question is where this inversion of power relations leads?

The intentions of Bev Shaw and David Lurie to accompany the moribund creatures and give them love do not soften the general cruelty of the systematic extermination of the dogs as the amicably behaviour of individual SS guards does not soften the unbelievable deformity of the Nazi ideology. Of course, this is a very provocative comparison that initially might seem out of place. But, whether intended or not, the imagery used by Coetzee in connection with the elimination of the stray dogs actually does carry some reminiscences of Holocaust methods. Representative examples thereof can be found in various scenes. One depicts David Lurie bringing the dead dogs to the incineration facility, where the workers use to beat the corpses of the dogs with their shovels in order to make them fit properly into the feeder trolleys of the incinerator (see Coetzee 144 f). Another reference to the Holocaust is the contemplation of the German word “Lösung” (142, italics in original) in the quote above. Coetzee’s narrator articulates, how fittingly it describes what is actually asked from Bev and David at the clinic, namely “that they will dispose of it [i.e. the animal brought in], make it disappear, dispatch it to oblivion” (142). For every reader with basic knowledge about the Holocaust this is a clear reference to the term ‘Endlösung’, final solution, which “was the Nazi euphemism for the extermination of the European Jews” (Vogelsang & Larsen paragraph 1). ‘Lösung’, however, can also be read here in the sense of detaching oneself from something. On the one hand it indicates David Lurie’s process of letting go of the crippled dog and consigning it to its fate. On the other hand it also point at
Lucy’s decision to part with everything she possesses and handing it over to Petrus, her black neighbour and former worker. In a country where whites are deliberately attacked in their homes and where a predominantly black government does not refrain from killing unwanted others – although ‘just’ animals for the moment – this is a significant sign. Coetzee seems to suggest that the time has come for whites to detach themselves of South Africa and leave before they are more systematically prosecuted for the colour of their skin. After all, the pessimistic attitude towards the future of whites in South Africa depicted in Disgrace hints at Coetzee’s personal consideration of leaving the country and hence already heralds Coetzee’s emigration to Australia in 2002.

Concerning the comparison between the Holocaust and the disposal of stray dogs, critics may become infuriated and argue that the killing of animals – which happens every day for the sake of nutrition anyway – is a completely different thing than genocide of thinking and feeling human beings. But, from Lucy’s point of view such an argumentation would just prove the point that humans tend to see themselves as being of a higher order of creation. Now, it is not intended here to claim that the extermination camps of the Nazis are one and the same thing as euthanasia clinics for animals like the one in Disgrace, or vice versa. What should be pointed out instead is that the mechanism working in the background is the same, regardless of the ethnic background of those in charge. First, those in power come up with somewhat arbitrary characteristics that declare a subaltern group as inferior and in most cases render its members as non-human, or not human enough. These segregating definitions are then used to classify the seemingly inferior group as a threat to society and are in further consequence employed as a justification for systematic mass murder of members of the subaltern group. This mechanism of suppression appears so consistently in human history that one is even bound to argue that it has to be seen as an archetype in a Jungian sense. In the new South Africa, under an ANC dominated government, the workings of this mechanism and its consequences are still omnipresent. Thus, Coetzee’s critique of the colonial or rather the racist mind, which in Disgrace is depicted with the aid of stray dogs as symbols, is, against the opinion of critics, strongly concerned with contemporary South African problems. Not only does he touch upon the subject
of speciesism but also addresses the general problem of abuse of power. The inversion of power relations after the fall of apartheid has by no means lead to a complete abolition of oppression and reversed racism is gaining ground. Blacks have become the ruling social group but they do not refrain from suppressing others, despite their former experiences of being suppressed themselves. In Disgrace dogs are the defenceless victims of an oppressive system like all non-whites have been under the apartheid government.

Concerning the formulation of this critique, however, it is true that it is not as direct and transparent as some critics regard it necessary. In this respect, Kellman rightly values Coetzee’s profound and substantial language in Disgrace above one-sided accusations that just pinpoint what is going wrong without providing any alternative solution. How deep Coetzee’s style of writing is, can be seen in the following quote, which shows how he disguises extensive metaphysical topics in seemingly everyday problems. In this scene Lucy finds her father lying next to the aged female bulldog Katy on the floor of her cage, accidentally fallen asleep:

‘Making friends?’ says Lucy.
‘She is not easy to make friends with.’
‘Poor old Katy, she’s mourning. No one wants her, and she knows it. The irony is, she must have offspring all over the district who would be happy to share their homes with her. But it’s not in their power to invite her. They are part of the furniture, part of the alarm system. They do us the honour of treating us like gods, and we respond by treating them like things.’
They leave the cage. The bitch slumps down, closes her eyes.
‘The Church Fathers had a long debate about them, and decided they don’t have proper souls,’ he observes. ‘Their souls are tied to their bodies and die with them.’
Lucy shrugs. ‘I’m not sure that I have a soul. I wouldn’t know a soul if I saw one.’
‘That’s not true. You are a soul. We are all souls. We are souls before we are born.’
She regards him oddly.
‘What will you do with her?’ he says.
‘With Katy? I’ll keep her, if it comes to that.’
‘Don’t you ever put animals down?’
‘No, I don’t. Bev does. It is a job no one else wants to do, so she has taken it upon herself. (Coetzee 78f)

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7 The term speciesism was coined by Richard D Ryder and describes the prominent view that humans are intrinsically superior to animals. (see Ryder „speciesism“)
The primary subject of this discussion is the dog Katy and what should be done with her in the future. Although the conversation then takes on a somewhat metaphysical quality, it seems to be quite straightforward. At least it can be assumed that most readers are likely to agree that a debate of that sort could occur in everyday conversation.

On closer inspection, however, their dialogue includes utterances that are not at all trivial but rather include references to a complex body of philosophical ideas, some of which are going back to ancient Greece. To be specific, the scene resonates with the ideas of three great philosophers.

Firstly, Lucy criticises that animals are predominantly treated like things and not like individual beings. A famous mentor of perceiving animals as inanimate objects is the French, 17th century philosopher René Descartes, who claims, “that animals are nothing more than machines” (Francione 28). According to Francione Descartes also believes that “just as a clock can tell time better than humans can, so some animal machines can perform some tasks better than humans can” (28). Even more radically, he also asserts “that animals are not sentient [and therefore] not conscious of pain, pleasure, or anything else” (29). To proof that, Descartes carries out brutal experiments on animals but, absolutely convinced of his theory, he discards cries of pain as a sign for the machine’s improper functioning. For him, “[a] crying dog” was “no different from a whining gear that needs oil” (29). From that perspective it is easy to argue that humans cannot “have any moral obligations to animals” (29), an opinion that many of his contemporaries and successors share with the exception that some of them do accredit sentience to the animals.8

Secondly, what David Lurie says in the quote about the approach of the clergy towards this problem actually grounds on a part of Aristotle’s detailed, philosophical study of the soul. In Greek the title of this piece of his work is called De anima, showing the etymological origin of the word ‘animal’ going back to the Greek word for soul. In his theory, the soul is the driving force in every living thing and as such tied to its body. The connection of body and soul is mandatory, since the body, as a heap of matter, needs the forming principle of the soul to gain its actual shape. Additional to that ‘body-soul’ Aristotle

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8 Among those rejecting moral obligations towards animals Francione also names Immanuel Kant. For a suitable description of Kant’s opinion see Francione p. 29f.
ascribes a ‘mind-soul’ to humans, which distinguishes them from animals.⁹ So, in their account on the souls of animals, the “Church Fathers” (Coetzee 78) are actually reciting Aristotle.

Thirdly, David’s attempt to give Lucy reassurance on her personal existence as a soul that already existed before she was born resonates Plato’s concept of immortality. In his dialogue *Meno* he elucidates that before humans are born into the world, their souls exist in a realm where they have access to eternal knowledge, or in other words, where they still know everything about anything. This knowledge is forgotten, as soon as a soul is born into this world. During the course of life, it then has to rediscover all things anew. This rediscovery functions according to the principle that “[a]ll knowledge […] is actually recollected from [the soul’s] prior existence” (Brickhouse & Smith 6.c.). As we can see, Lurie’s attempt to comfort his daughter is characterized by an idea that is introduced to human contemplation more than two thousand years ago.

Apart from these philosophical implications, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at Lucy’s statement that dogs in South Africa are part of the alarm system. Obviously, the dogs can only function as a part of an alarm system for people who own a property or possess something else of value that can be guarded. Although the property situation is slightly changing since the fall of apartheid, the majority of property owners and wealthy people in South Africa are still whites. Accordingly, mainly dogs of white people are part of alarm systems. These ‘white’ dogs are not the ones David Lurie and Bev Shaw put down in the animal clinic. Only roaming township dogs, living among the poor and mainly non-white population of the country, are the targets of the government's euthanasia programme. So once again the dichotomies colonial versus indigenous and white versus black have influence on something that normally lies beyond human affairs. In other words, the social divide also determines the conditions of the existence of dogs and the roles they fulfil in everyday life. The difference between dogs of blacks and dogs of whites can be perfectly seen in Lisa Fugard’s *Skinner’s Drift*. Martin van Rensburg, an Afrikaner farmer, has always had a dog since the day his family settled in their farmhouse near the Limpopo River. His dogs have the functions of hunting dog, watchdog, animal companion and daughter’s pet. They are regularly fed and live in the

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⁹ The terms ‘body-soul’ and ‘mind-soul’ are literal translations of the terms ‘Körperseele’ and ‘Geistseele’ used by Prof. Dr. Josef Rhemann in his anthropology lecture at the university of Vienna from the summer term 2007.
farmhouse, together with the van Rensburgs. The way they are represented, they are perfect examples for the symbolic meanings of dogs that are currently prominent in Western cultures, such as courage, vigilance, loyalty, faithfulness, guidance and watchfulness. These meanings have only been existing since people started to employ dogs as sheep dogs and hunting dogs, which led to the replacement of the formerly widespread symbolism of the dog connected with death (see Garai 60f).

In contrast to the dogs of the white farmer family there are also the dogs of Lefu, one of the black farm workers, which are strictly kept outside the old stables he inhabits with his daughter, Nkele, and his grandson, Mpho. His dogs roam the farm as they like and do not follow on the heels of their owner as Martin’s dogs do. The freedom they enjoy is once nearly fatal for them when Lorraine, Martin’s wife, mistakes them for something dangerous creeping up on the farm. In their role as an invisible threat hiding in the dark they symbolise the freedom fighters waiting across the border, which are the ones Lorraine is actually afraid of. When Martin leaves the house with his semi-automatic gun to face the intruders, the dogs are just saved because Martin’s daughter, Eva, prevents her father from shooting into the dark. “Lorraine remain[s] outside for a few more seconds, long enough to see Ezekiel’s dogs – a grey pair that [are] whippet-thin like all African dogs – trot through a splash of light” (Fugard 116f). As we can see, these dogs are not as well-fed as the Boer dogs since Lefu and his family are hardly getting enough food for themselves and cannot spare any of it for their dogs. African dogs have to find their food themselves. The fact that dogs of whites are generally well-nourished is also the reason why the starving amaXhosa in The Heart of Redness steal the dogs of British colonialists.

What the different living conditions of ‘white dogs’ and ‘black dogs’ show once again is the opposition between the colonial mind and nature. Martin’s dogs are perfectly trained to fulfil all the function for which they are kept. Their ‘wild’ nature is broken and destroyed by the white man’s drills. In the end, they are completely obedient. This obedience is in turn often mistaken for unconditional loyalty in the picture of the dog as man’s best friend, when in fact it really is conditioned devotion. What matters most for Martin is the functionality of his dogs. As soon as they are not able anymore to perform all the functions a ‘dog machine’ normally executes, they have to be disposed of, just like other

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10 Lefu is the man’s real name in his own language. His white masters call him Ezekiel.
machines that are beyond repair. This pragmatic attitude of seeing dogs as a means is even stronger in Martin than his genuine affection for his dogs. In the end, his functional worldview also becomes the death sentence for his favourite dog, Tosha. After experiencing once again that her blindness and her old age handicap her more and more, he kills her with a headshot. To disguise his deed, his practical thinking even makes him discard his long-lasting intention to “give [the dog] a decent burial” (Fugard 50. Instead, he just dumps Tosha’s corpse in a remote and hard-to-reach area of his farm premises.

As regards the bodily defects of Tosha, similar questions concerning euthanasia are raised as in Disgrace. Whether one reads the killing of the dog as an execution or a generous act of putting it out of suffering, depends on which part of Martin’s personality one concentrates. On the one hand, his dogs mean the world to Martin, but on the other hand, he treats animals as objects he has completely at his disposal.

Using this discrepancy in Martin’s attitudes and behaviour, Fugard comes up with a complex account of a racist personality that goes beyond simple condemnation. Depicting the process of his slowly growing aggressions, at a time in South African history when the tension of the freedom struggle is noticeably rising, she illustrates how a number of independent factors can play together to make ethnic prejudices escalate in racial violence. Studying his behaviour throughout the novel, an astonishing parallel can be found between Martin van Rensburg and the testifying perpetrator in the TRC hearings mentioned in Jolly’s essay, referred to in the previous chapter. Not only his murder of a black child – the core scene in the novel – but also his general behaviour towards his workers throughout the book shows that the Boer farmer believes that blacks are "diere van die veld" (Jolly 156). This mental equation of blacks with animals is proof of the fact that Martin’s racism and his speciesism are inextricably linked with each other. This link can particularly be observed in his treatment of jackals and other scavengers that live on his farm. Following Jolly’s argument, that “the measure of the humanity of a subject is reflected substantially in terms of that particular human’s treatment of nonhuman animals” (Jolly 157), it becomes clear how the direct connection between Martin’s treatment of animals and his racism actually constitutes itself.

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11 See footnote 7 above.
In Fugard’s narrative Martin owns a farm in Northern Transvaal, including an extensive area of property that spreads alongside the Limpopo River. Thus, his land forms a part of South Africa's border area to Botswana in the North. As a farmer he naturally is a game hunter as well, which he proudly presents by means of placing trophies and stuffed animals throughout his farmhouse. What is special about him being a hunter is his habit of hunting at night, driving around his property, shooting the game that gets caught in the headlights of his truck, struck blind and unable to move. He cannot understand that his wife, Lorraine, disapproves of this custom, since for him “it [isn’t] sport, just food for god’s sake” (Fugard 38). As we can see, for him the game on his farm is just a source of food, i.e. a means of nutrition. He is not at all interested in the natural beauty of the animals, let alone recognising them as individual beings. What he also does against the will of his wife is that he takes their daughter, Eva, with him on his nightly hunts. When Eva starts attending a boarding school these father-and-daughter-trips become more and more rare. At the same time, a drought has the land in its dehydrating grasp, reducing the game population dramatically and making hunting difficult. Whenever his daughter returns home, Martin takes her with him on his hunting trips, trying to persuade her to shoot her first animal. Eva always puts him off by promising to do it the next time. One night, however, she refuses to kill an impala without giving her usual excuse, which convinces Martin that his wife has “finally claimed [their] daughter” (Fugard 42, italics in original). Still sitting in the truck in the middle of nowhere, Martin tries to overcome his disappointment by draining a hip flask of strong liquor he always carries with him in the truck. At that moment the impala wakes up from its shock and brakes away just to be followed by a jackal coming into sight. The tension that has accumulated inside Martin van Rensburg in the course of weeks of persistent drought is released at that moment, triggered by the anger and sadness he is feeling about the assumed loss of his daughter’s affection. He takes out his pistol and furiously shoots at the jackal, hating it for just being one of numerous perpetrators that seem to be “the only creatures thriving on his drought-stricken farm” (Fugard 42). Actually, he does not really hate the jackal as such but rather uses it as an object onto which he can project his anger. By exploiting it as a target, he can relieve himself of his inner tension. Besides that, for him the jackal also symbolises the injustice of life that makes
everybody on the farm suffer under the drought, humans and animals alike, except the useless, free-roaming scavengers.

After calming down from his fit of rage, he hunts down the meagre impala his daughter refused to shoot and loads it onto the flatbed of the truck. On their way back to the farmhouse, another creature is startled by the truck and tries to hustle out of the vehicle’s cone of light. Without being able to clearly identify what it is, van Rensburg draws his pistol and fires, untouched by the cries of his daughter. After that, he gets out of the truck to track his prey through the bush. When he finally finds it, he realizes that he has hit a little black child. Standing over it, he hears a gasping sound and judging it still alive, he points his gun at the motionless body, sinking another bullet into it. Before shooting a third time, he realizes that the wheezing actually comes from his daughter standing behind him.

Here it is important to note that although Fugard’s novel has an omniscient narrator every chapter has its own central character. The murder of the black child is narrated in the section focussing on Martin van Rensburg’s point of view, which allows the reader to gain insight into his thoughts. This is important insofar, as the depiction of the murder completely lacks an identification of the killed creature as a human being, let alone naming it ‘child’ or even ‘boy’ or ‘girl’. Instead, just an uninformative and ambiguous ‘it’ is used. In this way, the narrative technique represents Martin’s denial of his deed and the refusal of acknowledging it as the criminal act it actually is. What he really shot is only revealed in a later chapter, when Lefu finds the skeleton of the child in the bed of the Limpopo River.

That the child is not worth more than an animal to van Rensburg is also shown by the thoughts that come to his mind when he mistakes the sounds of Eva trying to dig a grave for falling raindrops. Martin thinks, “If this is what I needed to do to bring rain I would have shot one a long time ago” (Fugard 43, italics in original). He thus degrades the black child onto the level of a kind of scapegoat. When he realizes that it is not the first raindrops he is hearing but rather his daughter digging into the dried out earth, he gives her a slap in the face and drags her back to the truck. Underlying this scene, one can again detect the twofold and contradictory depiction of both victim and perpetrator in terms of animality, pointed out in Jolly’s essay.
On the one hand, Martin treats the little black child as if it was just another “animal [...] from the field” (Jolly 156). Since it is not a creature that he can take home to produce meat or to mount as a trophy, it is even less to him than his actual prey. If at all, it is a welcome sacrifice for summoning the rain he is so longing for. Since it does not fulfil that function either he just leaves it in the bush like one of the vermin such as jackals and hyenas, which he also shoots and leaves to rot where they fall. This subordination of blacks beneath the value of animals is actually the most characteristic feature of van Rensburg’s underlying racism. This mechanism is deeply rooted within the Boer farmer’s mind and also manifests itself throughout the novel in the way he talks with his black farm workers. The following two examples are representative for Martin’s disrespect for blacks and his belief that they are nothing more than animals. In the first representative scene, Martin asks Lefu if he has already cleaned the stables that day. The black worker truthfully confirms without hesitation that he has fulfilled his duty like always, just to hear his master comment that the stables “look[...] filthy [and that he] wouldn’t even l-l-let a kaffir sleep in them” (Fugard 72). In the second scene, Martin is explaining that he wants Lefu to ride with his daughter to protect her against terrorists that might come over the boarder from Botswana. Surprised by such an unusual order, Lefu just answers with a shaky “Yes, baas” (Fugard 91), which unexpectedly makes Martin astonishingly angry. “Don’t say yes like a monkey until you understand what it is I’m saying” (Fugard 91), he silences Lefu.

Although Eva condemns her father’s deeds and tries to atone for them by burying the victims of his rampages, she once also resorts to rendering the murdered black child an animal. This happens after Lefu finds the skeleton of the murdered child. At first, he wants to share his secret with Eva but while talking to her it dawns on him that she might have something to do with it. He tries to downplay what he started to tell her and walks away. Eva follows him nevertheless and he leads the way to a ditch created by the heavy rainfalls that ended the drought. When she catches sight of the small human bones she denies their authenticity:

She did not move. ‘It’s just a jackal. I remember. I buried it. One of the first my dad shot and because it was close to the house I did it myself.’
‘No, Miss Eva, look at this. It is not a jackal.’
‘I told you. My father shot the jackal and I came back and buried it.’
‘Naledi . . . this is not right. Maybe we must go to the police.’
'Ezekiel!' Eva pounded her hands at her sides. 'I've told you what happened. You go to the police and there will be trouble. Big trouble!' (Fugard, 99)

Although Eva is definitely able to tell the difference between a human and an animal skeleton, something inside her refuses to acknowledge the truth. Witnessing her father killing the child is too much for Eva’s innocent young mind. She is traumatized and the truth is repressed into the depth of her unconscious mind\(^{12}\) in order to keep alive her positive image of a beloved father. Being confronted with the evidence of her father’s deed, her mind tries to hold back her repressed trauma from surfacing out of the unconscious mind. This also accounts for the emotional intensity of her reaction. The need she feels to protect her father lets her betray her real morals and make her oppose her friend Lefu. The way she threatens him shows how she is caught in the social hierarchy of the apartheid system. The moment she realizes how dangerous the situation is for her father, she almost automatically plays the race card to silence Lefu. By making him realize that nobody will believe a black man, she bribes him into accepting her version of the story, which is nothing more than the killing of a jackal.

In contrast to the depiction of the black child – the victim – as an animal, the portrayal of Martin – the perpetrator – also involves the concept of animality. Martin’s inability to control his anger includes an animal component according to Jung’s description of the workings of human drives.\(^{13}\) It is also reminiscent of Jolly’s argument that the body as other is seen as driven by desire and thus “signifies everything that is opposed to the rational” (Jolly 152). Van Rensburg’s behaviour in the described situation is fully governed by drive reduction in the Freudian sense and thus lacks all rationality. He just wants to get rid of the tension the anger creates within him and unloads it onto the first available ‘object’. Additionally, Martin’s lack of compassion for the black child and the loveless treatment of his daughter let him lose his humanity and let him appear like an animal, similar to the description of the perpetrators at the TRC hearings quoted by Jolly.

\(^{12}\) Although theories about the unconscious already existed in the 19th century, the term ‘unconscious mind’ is generally ascribed today to Sigmund Freud. Detailed information can be found throughout his works.

\(^{13}\) Cf. Definition of ‘animal’ in Section 2
In contrast to her father, Eva cannot stand the idea of just leaving the corpse of the child in the bush, where it is accessible to the scavengers roaming the farmland. The same night she goes back to the site of crime and secretly buries the child. Moreover, she tries to cover her tracks, hoping to make the grave undiscoverable for her father. The next day, however, Martin’s outstanding experience as a hunter and farmer lets him find a spot where softer soil gives away the hiding place of the little dead body. At that moment rage and anger fill his heart and a single thought occupies his mind: “Mine! This is my land!” (Fugard 44, italics in original). This thought shows that the Afrikaner farmer actually feels an overwhelming threat to his territory. Skilfully employed, this aspect of Martin’s personality is reminiscent of a territorial animal defending its terrain with all possible force. The only difference seems to be the means of defence. While animals defend their territory with their natural weapons, Martin’s defence includes the employment of firearms, since he belongs to a species that has learned to use all kinds of complex tools to govern its environment. Despite the importance of animal symbolism for the creation of van Rensburg's character, such a comparison of his behaviour with that of territorial animals is an interpretation, too simple and insufficient. This is also shown by the change of personality he undergoes after murdering the black child. Martin exchanges his old hunting rifle with a semi-automatic gun, thus doing much more vile damage to the animals he shoots on his increasingly frequent hunting trips. More and more often, he just drives out to slaughter roaming scavengers, ignoring the game he used to hunt for food. This new obsession of him does not stay unnoticed on the farm and a friend of Lefu pinpoints what is going on by remarking that “Martin [is not] hunting any more[...] he [is] killing” (Fugard 89). But how exactly does this new habit alter the Afrikaner farmer’s personality?

What he does to the animals is absolutely inhumane and has the appearance of deeds done by some savage, rabid beast. Initially, this makes him look like being beyond rationality and one might be tempted to argue that without rationality he has lost one vital constituent of his humanity. Although his depiction clearly includes the concept of animality here, one must not forget that he is neither hunting for food nor defending against an actual attack by one of his later victims. No wildlife animal, not even one infected with rabies, would scour its territory for innocuous intruders, killing them on the spot. Therefore his
behaviour has to be classified as the outcome of deeply human mechanisms. The combination of his helplessness against the persistent drought, his hatred for blacks and the anxiety to lose his beloved land to an invisible force waiting across the boarder make him develop a paranoia he is not able to cope with. The only thing he can do is projecting his hatred and anxiety onto for him useless animals in order to create an enemy he can fight against. By this means, he can bypass the powerlessness he is feeling and take things into his own hands. In that sense, what first seems to be a sign of Martin’s animality is rather a differentiation from the animal, namely his human mind trying to process evolving emotions. This means, in Fugard’s depiction of Martin van Rensburg’s character we find the opposing concepts of animality and humanity fighting against each other.

Besides that, Martin’s immoral, repeating gun rampages are contrasted with the actions his daughter undertakes to make amends for her father’s cruelties. Starting in the night of the black child’s murder, Eva rides out at night to bury all the animals her father shoots. Since she does not have enough strength and stamina to dig the holes deep enough, she asks Lefu to help her. At first Lefu does not know what to make of Eva’s seldom commitment to playing undertaker for predators, but he helps her nevertheless due to the friendship they developed over the years. He has no idea about the real reason for Eva’s actions, namely the trauma she suffered when she saw her father shoot the black child just like another jackal. In fact, giving the animals a place to rest in her father’s beloved earth is her way of returning the dignity to the animals and also a symbolic act of penance for her father’s wrongdoing. The deep compassion she develops for her father’s victims grounds on the innocence they share with the murdered child. In paying her last respects to these animals, she attests these non-humans a soul, deserving to receive humane treatment even after death and a burial as decent as the circumstances allow. In this respect she tries something similar to David Lurie in Disgrace, whose treatment of animals is meant to put them on a somewhat equal level with humans. At least, both characters show the belief that they “have […] moral obligations to animals” (Francione 29) and thus contradict the Cartesian view of animals as things.

Eva’s “special empathy with other species” (Kellman 328) in Skinner’s Drift appears to be all-embracing and includes even creatures most people would
find abhorrent. For example, she also wants to bury a hyena, an animal that her otherwise helpful companion Lefu refuses to touch because “it is dirty” (Fugard 83). This denial of help and her black friend’s disrespect for the dead animal bring another side of Eva to the surface. Filled with anger, she hits the bushes with her riding crop, which frightens her horse, Casper, and makes it back away. The steed’s frightened reaction, however, infuriates her even more:

‘Stupid!’ she yelled at her horse, bringing the crop down on his neck. He shied. She hit him again and he reared up, hooves dangerously close to her face. (Fugard 83)

Lefu shouts at Eva to stop her stupid behaviour. He fears that the girl might get hurt and with the reins of his horse in one hand, he snatches Casper’s reins from Eva with the other. While this happens, she still has the riding crop lifted in the air but then drops it and runs away bursting into tears. Lefu finally manages to calm the horses but he is angry with his young friend since “he [knows] who Eva had really wanted to hit” (84). Parallel to her father, she attacks an innocent animal instead of the person who is the reason for her anger. Somewhere in her psyche there is a barrier that prevents her from hitting Lefu and thus the horse has to stand in for him as a substitute target. Despite her genuine respect for animals, she is not resistant against this mechanism of projection and as she is overwhelmed with emotion, she resorts to an action that stands in contrast to her actual ethics. In her case, however, venting her rage on an animal is a singular event, which she regrets in difference to her father. His efforts to cope with his emotions have gone out of hand. Seen under a wider scope, he is actually not merely defending his farm, which might have been his initial intention, but is rather fighting his racially motivated, private war for South Africa. He is convinced that the whites – and the Boers in particular – are the rightful owners of the country. Because his real enemies are not at hand, animals have to suffer in their stead. Symbolically van Rensburg represents the apartheid regime and more generally the colonial mind. His way to remain in power is to kill every other that might have a rightful claim for the land. In this respect, it seems as if he interprets animals also as a threatening group of others besides the indigenous people of South Africa. When you come to think of it, their claim for the land is at least as justified as that of the Boers, the British and even that of the indigenous tribes. After all, the land was all theirs before humans started their campaign of taming and cultivating nature with the
goal of subjugating all the ‘wild’ creatures under their supremacy. As to that, Martin’s claim – “This is my land!” (Fugard 44, italics in original) – can be seen as a general credo of colonialism. His actions do not only say that South Africa is not the land of the black people but that it also does not belong to the native animals. This attitude is depicted in contemporary South African fiction as stereotypical for Afrikaner farmers. According to Märit’s contemplations in A Blade of Grass, they “have no sentimental notions about the animals. They are practical men and women, intent on growing their crops, on taming the wild, on being successful farmers. There are guns to keep the animals away. Their guns are a solution. (DeSoto 28).

How wildlife animals become the victims of the colonial mind is also strikingly depicted in another novel, namely in Patricia Schonstein’s A Quilt of Dreams. There, the grandmother of Vita, a little black girl whose family has suffered immensely under apartheid politics, neatly illustrates the role of South Africa’s wild animals in the struggle for the land. She describes how in the past a multitude of wild beasts inhabit the land and how “all of them [are] walking around as they wished” (Schonstein 232). She tells her grandchild about herds of game crossing the land, about swarms of butterflies and about birds governing the skies. But this perfect idyll is abruptly demolished when colonialism strikes the country and its inhabitants.

The old lady sighed. ‘The British and the Boers did not like the wild animals to be free and running. They wanted land for their farms, for tame animals and crops; for themselves alone. They preferred the skins on the floors as mats or across their beds and they enjoyed the horns and the heads of the animals hanging on their walls. They did not wish to have buffalo or kudu side by side with their sheep and cows. ‘So they came with big guns and shot everything in many numbers. They made a sport of it. At times meat was left to rot, for there was too much of it. They shot elephants and all the rhino and even the little zebras that were so harmless.’ (Schonstein 233)

What we find in this quote is a description of the colonial mind and its obsession to possess land and to have power over all other beings living on that land. It does not care about the well-being of neither indigenous people nor native animals and tries to subordinate them to its own goals. It is also indicated in Makhulu’s14 story that the intruders’ claim for the land is absolute, not including the slightest idea of sharing it with the people who have been living

14 ‘Makhulu’ is the Xhosa word for grandmother.
there for ages. Consequently, the colonial mind, absolutely convinced of its superiority, forces its ideology on whoever gets in its way. Throughout colonial writing the discourse persists that aboriginal people are inferior to the colonizers due to their primitive way of life in proximity to nature. Interestingly, the quote of Vita’s grandmother shows the expansion of this racist belief onto the differentiation between indigenous animals and those brought along. The colonialists’ sheep and cows are given a higher status than buffalos and kudus. This distinction also has to do with the fact that the tame animals are easier to handle and can be manipulated by feeding and conditioning to bring more profit than the uncontrollable wild beasts. So in the view of the old woman, the white intruders kill the inferior animals in order to make space for their better ones. From the dead animals they just take skins and horns as trophies, letting the unwanted meat rot. Especially this killing for entertainment seems to be completely unintelligible and meaningless for her as a member of the amaXhosa, to whom every living creature is precious. Despite its ostensible absurdity, however, the game hunting of the foreigners is actually one of the best markers for understanding the workings of the colonial mind. First and foremost, it shows how power is very often maintained by acts of physical violence. By killing ‘wild’ animals the colonizer once and again re-establishes his superior position in creation and demonstrates that he has the uncultivated nature at his mercy. What is also foregrounded in the quote, reflected by the mode of hunting, is the technological advantage of the colonizers over the indigenous people. The use of “big guns” as such is already a pure demonstration of power. But apart from representing differences in technological progress, firearms are also signifiers for the superiority of humans above animals. The production and use of complex tools is often classified as a proof for the possession of consciousness and as such represents a defining element for being human. On the other hand, the use of weapons as instruments for killing innocent creatures in masses questions the existence of colonizers as ethical beings. For Levinas, however, acting on the basis of ethics is a prerequisite that distinguishes humans from animals:

[The] being of animals is a struggle for life. A struggle for life without ethics. It is a question of might.... However, with the appearance of the

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15 I only use the masculine form here since colonization primarily has been driven by men. As I see it, the colonial mind is congruent to a great extent with a dominant masculine mind.
human - and this is my entire philosophy - there is something more important than my life, and that is the life of the other" (qtd. in Jolly 153).

What then might be said in the defence of the game hunters’ humanity is that they are not killing the animals as a consequence of a struggle for life. Quite oppositely, they are not threatened by the animals and are not even in need of their meat for nutrition. Nonetheless, what is true is that they do not value the life of the other and that is what accounts for the inhumanity of their deeds. But, what one is tempted to classify as a cowardly murder – killing a creature from far off without it having any chance to defend itself – the colonial mind would interpret as an evidence for the dominance of the human intellect. Due to their ‘primitive’ instinctive behaviour, animals are predictable for the analytically and anticipatorily thinking humans. Therefore animals – no matter of what kind they are – will always lose the fight for survival against humans, who do not seem to be involved anymore in the struggle of eat or be eaten but rather appear to govern it from the outside.

However, the quote included above is not indoctrination by Vita’s grandmother about the colonial mind, but the introduction of the story of the child’s great-great-grandfather, who lived in the time where “the Boer and the British farms were still few enough so there were not fences everywhere to divide up the land” (Schonstein 232). In that story about Phathuxolo, as Vita’s great-great-grandfather is named, animals are also of special importance. One, namely “[t]he Boer Isaac’s favourite bull” (321), is even said to be the cause of the misfortune Vita’s family suffers from Phathuxolo’s time down to the present.

Additionally to a great number of cows, this bull was demanded from Phathuxolo as the lobola 16 for his bride, Vuyolwethu, by his prospect father-in-law. What is so special about that bull is its bloodline, which goes back to Jingqi, the mythical companion of the famous umXhosa warrior Maqoma. 17 Now, it must be clear to Vuyolwethu’s father that it is impossible for a black man at that time to buy the cattle of a white farmer. So the reader gets the impression that Vuyolwethu’s father actually does not want Phathuxolo to marry his daughter. In this respect, the bull, as the desired lobola, functions as an instrument of power, a legitimate power the father-in-law has over the bridegroom according to isiXhosa tradition. Nevertheless, Phathuxolo tries to

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16 the compensation paid for the bride – for additional information see Glossary in Schonstein p. 358
17 A closer examination of the myth of Maqoma and Jingqi can be found in chapter 7. A poem telling the story is given in the Appendix.
purchase the bull and goes to Isaac to ask for the price. After laughing his head off upon hearing the black man’s ‘impudent’ demand, he finally names his price, “one solid, gold British sovereign” (238). The proposal of this bargain is obviously as dishonest as the demand of Vuyolwethu’s father, since the Boer knows that amaXhosa people do not “use coins for money, but cattle. He believe[s] [Phathuxolo] would never get his hands on British money” (238).

Actually the Boer knows that the black man will not be able to get hold of a British sovereign because nobody trades with the amaXhosa for money. So he really wants to make fun of the umXhosa warrior instead of proposing a genuine offer. Phathuxolo, however, takes him for his word and goes off into the hills to hunt in the wilderness. From his standpoint, the only means he has to get hold of money seems to be selling skins at the market in town. So for six long months he hunts wild animals and prepares their skins for trading. He wants to sell the skins at the trade fair, an event the British have come up with in order to have the monopoly on trade with the amaXhosa tribes and thus prevent indigenous people from trading with the Boers. As already mentioned, the amaXhosa do not get money for their skins but are paid in beads, buttons and copper wires because they cannot use money anyway when they get home to their tribe. With the beads, however, they can buy cattle from other clans. British money is worthless in the countryside, where cattle are the primary currency. When Phathuxolo tries to explain to the British traders that he wants a British sovereign by drawing a circle in the sand, they laugh at him. It is the second time he gets laughed at in the course of his quest to gather the lobola for his prospected bride. Both Boers and British do not take the indigenous man seriously, although it is the most serious matter for him. From their ‘superior’ point of view, they perceive the demands of the ‘wild’ man as awkward or even impertinent. As the British traders know that he does not have any idea what a gold coin is worth, they make a game out of it and present all kinds of things they are willing to give him as a payment for his skins. But Phathuxolo insists on his price, since it is his only intention to get the British sovereign he needs to purchase the bull that his prospect father-in-law wants so much. Since his skins are very rare and beautiful, the traders actually really want them. The umXhosa warrior detects the desire for the skins in the eyes of the British and proudly waits until finally, late in the afternoon, one of the merchants gives him a gold sovereign.

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18 “[A]n old British gold coin worth one pound” s.v. ‘sovereign’ OALD.
coin. At long last, he gets what he wants, which in his mind enables him to buy the Boer Isaac’s favourite bull. Unfortunately, he is mistaken and never manages to purchase the bull from the farmer. The reasons for his ill success are left to speculation, since Vita’s grandmother does not know whether Phathuxolo returned to the Boer’s farm at all or what happened there if he did return. Nevertheless, Grandmother brings forward a suspicion and says that probably Isaac never actually wanted to sell the bull and just wanted to torment the umXhosa warrior.

Be that as it may, Phathuxolo marries his chosen one but he never fully pays for her. Since he does not fully pay, the bride’s father does not want to host a marriage feast for them. According to Vita’s Grandmother, the absence of the celebration for the young couple’s marriage is the trigger for all the bad luck that comes upon Vita’s family throughout the years. After Grandmother ends her narration, Vita asks her if she can have the gold coin in order to buy a bull and pay great-great-grandfathers lobola. With that deed she wants to end all the bad luck her ancestors and relatives have suffered. Before dealing with what happens to Vita on her mission to buy a bull with Phathuxolo’s gold coin, let us summarize the important elements concerning animals that turn up in the story of her great-great-grandfather.

The first aspect is the double-employment of the bull as an instrument of power. On the one hand, it is instrumentalized by Vuyolwethu’s father as the price he asks for marrying his daughter. Regardless whether his desire for the bull is genuine or not, it becomes the object that fosters the power relationship between him and Phathuxolo as soon as he names it as the expected lobola. Being part of the lobola does not distinguish it yet from all the other cows that are demanded besides the bull. What does make a difference though is the animal’s blood link to a famous, outstanding bull appearing in isiXhosa mythology, which is the actual cause for Vuyolwethu’s father wanting it so desperately. The bull’s special descent is also the reason for its exceptional beauty and strength. No experienced farmer would sell a bull of such a special breed. Thus, its non-saleability makes it function as a marker for Phathuxolo’s inferiority from two sides. Firstly, demanding it as a lobola is as if Vuyolwethu’s father is saying, ‘I can demand anything from you, even things you will never be able to get and you can do nothing about it because it is my traditional right’. That it actually is unpurchasable for Phathuxolo is determined by his social
status in relation to the white owner of the animal. Thus, the second power relationship signalised by the bull’s uniqueness is based on racism. The existing social hierarchy is even exploited further by the Boer Isaac, when he draws entertainment from posing a dishonest offer for sale, watching the black man rush off on his quest to meet the agreed terms. As mentioned in the story and pointed out above, Isaac just dares to demand a gold coin as a price because he knows that amaXhosa never trade for money.

That amaXhosa use cattle as a currency, is the second aspect to be highlighted in connection to Phathuxolo’s story. As trading goods, the animals are reduced to things and as such their existence as living beings is rendered unimportant. Important is only the value they represent as possessions to be traded with. However, one must not overlook here, that the use of cattle as a currency is only working because of the high value cattle has for the amaXhosa people. Were they of little or no value, it would not make sense to trade them. Main reasons for the high value of cattle for the amaXhosa, apart from providing basic needs for survival, are its mythical qualities and social meanings. These two are also the cause for Vuyolwethu’s father demanding the Boer Isaac’s bull as a lobola for his daughter, since possessing the bull is not essential for his immediate survival.

What the amaXhosa and the white settlers share is the understanding that possession means power. The difference is that the Westerners have abstracted the value of things by using money, which over time has become the most valuable thing itself. In other words, for the colonial mind the amount of one’s power rises proportionally with the possession of money. For the amaXhosa, a man’s state of power is distinguished by the quality and quantity of his cattle. This difference is responsible for Phathuxolo having to earn a gold coin in the first place, since Isaac denigrates the umXhosa warrior for his incomprehension of the value of money. He arrogantly uses the knowledge of that difference to ridicule the black man and thus demonstrates his power over him. Phathuxolo, however, does not get the mockery and starts hunting rare creatures in the mountains, skinning them and preparing their skins for the market fair in town. The only reason for an existing demand for these skins lies in the white colonizers appreciation of rare animal hides as decorative accessories in their houses. One must consider here that a wild animal’s skin on the floor always signifies the mastery of humans, and especially of
colonizers over nature and all the non-animals as part of it. In this respect, it becomes apparent why the skins become more precious the wilder the animals are it belongs to. Phathuxolo actually does something he would never do in the course of his daily tribal life. In his tribe they would hardly ever attack a beast of prey if it were not in self-defence or to guard their cattle. They would never set out on a Safari to kill wild cats in great numbers just to use their skins as trophies and leaving the rest of the carcasses to rot. The kind of hunting he practices does only make sense in the economic system the Colonizers brought with them. Finally, it comes down to the simple formula that demand determines supply. Without the British signalising a demand for skins it would not make sense to hunt any of the creatures he actually kills.

In that sense, the exploitation caused by the whites is twofold. On the one hand, they exploit indigenous people who hunt for them in remote areas, where whites avoid going due to the obvious dangers. On the other hand, they exploit nature by killing animals just because they value one part of their body as decoration without being in need of the meat for nutrition. In order to achieve his final goal, Phathuxolo submits to the mechanisms of the colonialist economic system, but it remains questionable whether the end justifies the means. By turning the wild animals into enemies, into prey, he betrays isiXhosa tradition, which is constituted by living in harmony with nature rather than dominating it. That he finally manages to earn the British sovereign is not at all a fair price for all the innocent lives he has taken to satisfy the colonialists’ greedy desire for ‘exotic’ trophies. The only thing that can be used as a justification for the betrayal of his people’s affinity with nature is his longing for a legitimate marriage with his beloved Vuyolwethu. That is to say, he betrays isiXhosa tradition on the one hand, in trying to adhere to it on the other hand. Unfortunately, he does not manage to buy the bull and provide the desired lobola, in spite of earning the gold coin. Even so, he then marries Vita’s great-great-grandmother and consequently violates the customs once again, initiating all the bad luck that befalls his descendants up to the present situation of Vita’s family.

From a factual point of view, a curse is not a valid explanation for any real event. From an academic standpoint Vita’s family is not struck by a curse but

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19 I have to remark here that I got this impression of amaXhosa life on the basis of their representation in literature, fictional and non-fictional. To what extent this view corresponds with true historical circumstances remains questionable.
falls victim to the defence mechanisms of the apartheid government against the liberation movement. Accordingly, the detention of Vita’s father as a political prisoner and the murder of her older brother in the border conflicts would be two individual fates among numerous similar ones in the course of the freedom struggle and as such cannot be connected whatsoever to the actions of an ancestor in the past.

In her narrative Schonstein contrasts this sober analysis of events through the interpretations of Vita’s grandmother, who holds isiXhosa mythology and tradition in high esteem and keeps them alive. According to her meaning making, it definitely is important for the present that the Boer Isaac refuses to sell his bull two generations in the past. After all, the relationship between the native umXhosa warrior and the immigrated farmer symbolises, on an individual level, the general relationship between blacks and whites in the history of South Africa. In the concluding events of the novel, Schonstein then offers a transformation of that historically developed social constellation by letting two descendents of the umXhosa man and the Boer meet each other under precarious circumstances. One is Vita and the other is Reuben, the actual protagonist of the novel. Apart from the interrelation of their ancestors, they are indirectly linked in two other ways that are unknown to them. Firstly, in the course of his boarder duty, Reuben is commanded to execute Vita’s oldest brother Boniface, after the latter was caught re-entering South Africa from Angola. Secondly, Vita’s mother, Gladness, works as a housemaid for Reuben and his wife. Their lives then interlace directly with each other only in the course of Vita’s attempt to end the bad luck that has befallen her family.

Vita takes her plan to finish her great-great-grandfather’s business very seriously. After her mother has left for work the child sets off to town. She does so against the instructions of her mother, who does not want her daughter to get involved in a student march against the imprisonment of a black principle that is taking place that day. Nevertheless, Vita boards her uncle’s taxi to town and also rejects his advice to stay at home for her mother’s sake. Vita only replies that she is “going to town […] because [she has] business to do for Makhulu [and adds that it is] big business and it cannot wait another day” (256). In town the student march has progressed so far that the taxi driver refuses to enter down town and lets off all his passengers at the main road. While the students are marching on, Vita enters the first available shop, where she tries to buy a
bull. As Phathuxolo decades before her, she is also not taken seriously and the shopkeeper rudely throws her out, before closing his shop in reaction to the protests. Vita is not discouraged by this first failure and decides to “run from shop to shop, crossing over the road and crossing again so that she would zigzag all the way down, ahead of the marching students” (259). However, the execution of her plan is suddenly interrupted, when a police truck turns up, in order to end the gathering of the students. But the orders to disperse out of the loudspeakers only spur on the students, who increase their marching pace. Unfortunately, Vita does not expect that sudden change of the situation and the pace of events increases dramatically.

The crowd caught up with Vita and she became one of their number, drawn into their midst, into the pounding heartbeat of a marching army. She could smell sweat and fear. She could feel the excitement and heard many feet pounding on the tar. Her heart was thumping. She was not afraid. She thought of the great herds of wild animals Makhulu had told her about, running like this, snorting, hot in the heat of the sun. A shot rang out and then another: Tak! Tak! The herd of animals she had sensed a moment ago bolted, panicked, trampled. Students were screaming, running, falling. (260)

Getting caught up in the crowd of students is an overwhelming experience for the little girl. She perceives her surroundings with outstanding intensity. Schonstein uses the situation’s intensity of emotion to bridge Vita’s immediate impressions with the visual images her Grandmother’s story evokes in her imagination. Beneath this imaginative comparison, however, a profound symbolism is hidden. The mass of black students is equated with a herd of wild animals in two contrasting ways. Firstly, although sweat and fear are already lingering in the air, the momentum of a homogeneously moving herd represents the power that arises from the unity of the protesters. The multitude becomes an inseparable, unstoppable entity, greater than the sum of its parts. In a country where non-white individuals are of little value, merging together proves to be the means to fill the suppressed with courage and hope. Secondly, the herd’s confrontation with an overly powerful predator scatters the unity immediately. Homogeneity is substituted by chaos, which immediately returns all the group’s members to their individual vulnerability. The black students scatter on hearing the first gun shot by the police, just like a herd of wild animals panics shortly after the hunter pulls the trigger. In this simile it becomes clear, why animals are so commonly used in South African fiction to symbolically
represent blacks and the oppressed others. They all have in common that, in the majority of cases, their enemies are people carrying firearms. Thus the naturally given helplessness of game against the hunter is a perfect image to represent the inferior position of violently subjugated groups of humans, in this case black students.

In the animal-like panic of the fleeing youths, Vita gets hit by one of the bullets fired by the security forces. She slumps down, bumps her head on a kerbstone and falls unconscious. Struck with terror, none of the running students notices Vita’s little body and she is nearly trampled to death. Luckily for her, Reuben follows the events from inside his bottle store, which is situated among the other shops along the street. When he feels that the situation is going to escalate he tries to unlock the door but fails due to do so in his panic. When he finally gets out on the street, it is too late and the police have already opened fire. After all unwounded marchers have fled the location, an eerie silence covers the scene. While Reuben has dropped to his knees in despair, Vita on the other side of the road becomes conscious again, just remembering “the terrifying stampede” (325). Agitatedly she notices that she has lost her grandfathers gold coin but has to realize that she is too weak to search for it. In a mixture of desperation and bodily exhaustion, she hallucinates that an angel statue across the street comes to life and takes her in her arms. Although the statue is actually there, covered in one of the fleeing student’s protest flags, it is actually Reuben, who has come to life again. Awakened from his stasis, he sees Vita, dragging herself across the pavement. After taking her in his arms, the girl points across the road but he does not understand what she wants to show him. Vita, still captured in her vision, sees a bull appear that looks just like the one her grandmother told her about. Unintelligibly for Reuben she whispers: “That is the bull I have to buy. That is the Boer Isaac’s favourite bull (327)”. Since Reuben has no idea what the girl wants to show him, he provisionally dresses her wounds and carries her worn out body to a nearby hospital. When the nurse in the trauma unit tells him that they do not take care of the black girl in “the white Casualty” (330) and that they “have orders [from the security police] not to treat blacks who get injured in riots” (330) Reuben loses his temper. He curses the nurse and pushes her away from the intercom to call for the doctor on duty. He only calms down after Dr. Rudi Marx, who has become a
friend of him over the past years, appears and assures him that he will do his best to keep the girl alive.

After some time, Dr. Marx informs Reuben that the operation went fine and that he probably saved her life by bringing her into the hospital. Had the security police transported her to Port Elisabeth for the treatment, as the official rules would have dictated, she almost certainly would have died. Although members of the staff repeatedly tell Reuben to go home, take a shower and get something to eat, he stays in the hospital for the night and most of the next day. When the admissions clerk asks him why he would not leave, Reuben answers: "Because. Just maybe she asks for me. Maybe I want to give her something" (336). He finally stays until Dr. Marx informs him that he has examined the girl thoroughly and is sure that she will soon wake up from her coma. This information seems to be reassuring enough for Reuben to believe that he has done his bit. Before he goes home, Dr. Marx tells him that president De Klerk held a speech in which he announced that he “unbanned the ANC and the Communist party [and that h]e’s going to release Nelson Mandela” (339). At home he ignores the upset comments of his wife and her indignation because “that damn Gladness didn’t come to work [that day]” (340). What Georgie does not know is that her housemaid is actually looking for her missing daughter, the very girl Reuben has saved only hours before. Without diversion, Reuben locks himself in the bathroom to take a shower. Standing under the running water, he finally begins to weep the tears he has held back all his life.

While Vita is slowly surfacing from her coma, she hears her father talking to her brothers, enquiring what had happened. All they know, however, is that Vita was not supposed to be in the march but somehow got caught up in the protesting students and that a white man had taken her to hospital after she had been hit by the bullet. Nobody is able to tell them who that man was or who is paying for Vita’s stay in hospital. What is also a riddle to them is a carved wooden figurine of a bull Vita has been pressing against her chest since the first day they found her in hospital.

What they do not know is that this bull is carved by Reuben’s father, a descendant of the Boer Isaac, during his stay in a mental hospital after the suicide of his fiancé, Reuben’s mother. When his condition is stable enough, he is allowed to teach handwork to political prisoners in the black ward of the hospital. There he becomes friends with the son of Nicodemus, who has been
working for Reuben’s grandparents in their trading store. Nicodemus gets informed about his son’s death only because Reuben’s father takes the trouble to tell him. Since the white man was good to his son, Nicodemus feels obliged to return the carved bull to his family and hands it over to Reuben when they meet after his grandparents’ death.

When Vita opens her eyes she cannot believe that her father is really present, since he has been locked away as a political prisoner some time ago. To destroy her disbelief he whispers:

‘I am home now, my child. While you slept this long sleep, a miracle happened in our country. While you slept this long sleep all those who were imprisoned unjustly have been freed, all of them, even Nelson Mandela. Our country is free now. We are like birds, my sweet one, like birds.’ (345)

Here it can be seen once again how animals also find their way into everyday speech. In this simile, a common symbolic meaning of birds is employed by Vita’s father to depict the new freedom of his people. Strikingly, such figurative language loaded with animal metaphors appears more often in representations of black characters than in the portrayal of whites. In Schonstein’s case the main reason employing this technique lies in her sensibility for the deeper mythical meaning animals have in isiXhosa tradition. This becomes all the more clear in the reply of Vita’s grandmother after her grandchild tells her, freshly waken from the coma, that she has seen the Boer Isaac’s bull.

‘Makhulu,’ whispered Vita. ‘I saw the Boer Isaac’s bull. He was mighty and tall, and his colour was the colour of the sun touching dry grass in the late afternoon. And his horns, his horns … they were really the right horns.’

‘Yes, child,’ said the old lady, taking the carved bull from Vita and looking closely at it. ‘The spirit of that great bull came to you, from out of the shadows, from the life beyond, for he saw your earnestness. Of this I have no doubt. But how is it that he left you this likeness of himself?’

‘I don’t know, Makhulu.’

‘Let us not seek that answer, then. It is enough that he came to you. When you are well, we will lead the spirit of that golden beast home, and stand this his likeness at our doorpost for the sun to touch and for our ancestors to gaze upon. Great-great-grandfather will have peace now, for you have found the essence of what he left unfinished. Bad luck will never visit us again.’ (346f)
As we can see, the story Patricia Schonstein narrates deals with seemingly random individuals within South African society and how their lives are subtly interconnected with each other. However, the connecting element at the heart of the narration is one specific bull that holds together all the different subplots. It is the Boer Isaac’s favourite bull and comes from the blood lineage of Jingqi, the bull of the great umXhosa warrior Maqoma. But if Isaac’s bull is a descendant of a bull owned by an umXhosa in the past, how come it is in the Boer’s possession? Although this question remains unanswered in the novel, it still imposes itself on the critical reader. One could speculate that, according to the discourses that exist about the customs of white settlers and colonizers, it is likely that it was either taken from the amaXhosa people by force or bought at an unfair price. For the orally handed down story of the amaXhosa, the answer to that question seems to be unimportant. What is of great importance, however, is Phathuxolo’s descent from Maqoma and the blood-link of the Boer Isaac’s bull with Jingqi. Therefore, the Boer’s denial of selling his bull to the umXhosa is perceived as a great injustice among the amaXhosa in the novel.

Later in the story, the bull – in the form of Jaco’s carved statuette – finally does change its owner, and several times at that.

Firstly, Reuben’s father, as aforementioned a descendant of the Boer Isaac, sculpts a figurine of a bull at the time he teaches political prisoners in a mental institution. There he befriends one of the black captives and gives the carved bull to him as a present. After the latter dies, his belonging are passed on to his father, who gives the figurine back to Reuben, thinking that he returns it to the family of its creator and rightful owner. The family the bull actually belongs to gets it only later, when Reuben gives the figurine to Vita at some point during her rescue. With that gesture, he ends the curse that lies upon Vita’s family, a curse of which he became an agent when he killed Boniface. This deed of giving back the bull is also a symbolic return of dignity to the amaXhosa and all other suppressed non-whites. Thus, it partly redeems the guilt he, his ancestor and numerous other whites in South Africa have loaded upon their shoulders in the past. By this means Schonstein uses the bull as a symbol to show that redemption and reconciliation is possible between blacks and whites.

In the context of the struggle for the land, the bull can also be read as a symbol for South Africa as such. One time in history it was taken from the indigenous people and only returned after long years of doubtful ownership.
From this point of view the returning of the bull also stands for a return of the land to the legitimate owners, especially since the return coincides with de Klerk announcing the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela. This speech marks the transition point in South Africa that leads to the abolishment of the apartheid system and finally paves the way for an admittedly tedious but still promising process of relocation of formerly evicted natives. Considering the legitimacy of land ownership, some authors raise the question in their novels, if not South Africa’s wildlife animals have the most legitimate claim for possession of the land? In a modern world with its proliferations of hunting safaris and boat-based whale watching, however, this claim seems to be more utopian than ever. As long as humans have to protect entire species of animals against being exterminated by other humans, Lucy Lurie’s “biological egalitarianism” (Kellman 336), which grants humans and animals an equal right to live peacefully side-by-side in any country, is still a long way off. Finally, the infinity of humanity’s attempt to gain power over nature assures that inferior treatment of animals stays an apt metaphor for social power struggle.

Until now, the appearances of animals in contemporary South African fiction are related to issues of colonialism and apartheid. By contrast Zakes Mda’s The Heart of Redness shows that human power struggles at the expense of animals are not only a matter of black versus white. In this novel the amaXhosa community of Qolorha-by-Sea, a village at the Indian Ocean coast, are internally fighting against each other. The present day conflict between two subgroups within the community already exists for approximately one and a half centuries. At that time a lung sickness strikes all the cattle of the amaXhosa when a teenage girl called Nongqawuse starts receiving visions of the amaXhosa ancestors. The young prophetess reports that the voices have told her that “all the cattle now living must be slaughtered [because] they have been reared by contaminated hands because there are people who deal in witchcraft” (Mda Redness 54). Her uncle adds that only if every umXhosa man kills his cattle and stops cultivating the land, the ancestors will arise and bring “new cattle, horses, goats, sheep, dogs, fowl, and any other animals that the people may want [since] the new animals of the new people cannot mix with [the amaXhosa’s] polluted ones” (55). The ancestors are also said to drive the British out of the country and free the amaXhosa people from the threat of colonialism. These prophecies divide the amaXhosa people into two groups,
namely the Believers and the Unbelievers. What follows is a civil war in which the Unbelievers try to stop the Believers from killing all the cattle they can find. In order to achieve this some of the Unbelievers even collaborate with the British, which in turn infuriates the Believers all the more. Finally, nearly all the cattle are killed and the amaXhosa are starving. For depicting their desperation, Mda skilfully employs the imagery of the bestial:

Sometimes, even before he reached home, Twin would be attacked by hordes of hungry people who would grab the meat and run away with it. Or, while Qukezwa was cooking it, hungry thieves would steal the whole pot, right from the fire, and run away with it. It was a dog-eat-dog world. And to their utter shame they did actually eat dogs. They stole the well-fed dogs of the colonists and cooked them for supper. But death continued unabated. [...] Dying wives watched as the family dogs ate the corpses of their husbands. They knew that sooner or later they too would end up in the dogs’ stomachs. But then the dogs themselves would end up in some hungry families’ stomachs. It was a dog-eat-dog world. (Redness 254)

The situation for the amaXhosa has become really bleak after they followed Nongqawuse’s orders to fulfil the prophecy. They have come down to an animal-like state in which survival is the only thing that counts. It seems as if there are no ethics anymore and their traditions have become obsolete. Eat or be eaten is the only rule their life seems to follow. To escape starvation they even eat dogs, giving the expression dog-eat-dog a bitter kind of literal truth. Purely metaphorical, the idiom also appears in contemporary South African fiction as the title of Nicholas Mhlongo’s first novel, Dog eat Dog, in which he vividly depicts the hardships caused by institutional racism and the desperation of township life. In the case of Mda’s quote above, one aspect of the animal imagery is easily missed, namely the fact that he uses the depiction of the dogs to covertly criticise the social hierarchy between colonizers and indigenous people. After all it is the “well fed dogs of the colonist” (254) that are stolen and eaten by the amaXhosa people in their struggle for survival, before they themselves get eaten by their hungry family dogs. As subjects of their respective masters the dogs naturally reflect how well off their owners actually are. In Mda’s critique we once again find the differentiation between dogs of whites and “African dogs” (Fugard 117) that is also illustrated in Skinner’s Drift.

The ultimate reason for the devastating famine that makes it necessary for the amaXhosa to steal and eat dogs in the first place is obviously the genocide
of isiXhosa cattle. What the Believers really do by killing their cattle could be provocatively denoted as a collective suicide, which brings their people to the brink of extinction. That it actually comes that far is at first completely unintelligible, considering the great value animals have for every umXhosa. Ludwig Alberti writes in the beginning of the 19th century that “to a Xhosa his cattle are the foremost and practically the only subject of his care and occupation, in the possession of which he finds complete happiness” (qtd. in Jolly 9). The appropriateness of that description can also be seen in The Heart of Redness by the intensity of grief the amaXhosa feel for the cattle that is killed by the lung sickness. It becomes even clearer in the situation where Twin’s prize horse, Gxagxa, is also struck by the disease. The amaXhosa are taken aback by the fact that the lung sickness is even able to attack horses, which has never happened before. Their astonishment and disbelief, however, does not help Gxagxa. When Twin realizes that his beloved animal is sick he does not leave its stable although it is hard for him to watch “the beautiful brown-and-white horse […] becoming a bag of bones in front of his eyes” (74). He neither sleeps nor eats during the long days and nights of Gxagxa’s death fight. He does not even touch the food and drink that are normally his favourite and his wife becomes worried that her husband might die together with his horse. Twin continues his deathwatch even after Gxagxa has died and does neither speak nor move, no matter what his wife tries to convince him of coming back into the house. She is so helpless, that she even asks Twin-Twin, Twin’s brother whom she normally dislikes, for help. He is shocked by Twin’s fragility and tries to make him realize that it was just “the death of a mere animal” (Redness 75). Although “he himself had felt the pain when his favorite ox died” (Redness 75), he finds his brother’s exaggerated sorrow ridiculous. He addresses Twin with harsh words, which makes the latter speak for the first time in days. He tells Twin-Twin that their people need a prophet who can save them. He pleads that they should give Nongqawuse a chance, since the disease had even killed Gxagxa, the wondrous horse that had astonishingly known the direction to the new pastures for their cattle without needing any guidance by a rider. For him, that is proof enough that the land and the animals of the amaXhosa people are contaminated. Twin-Twin is furious about his brother’s believes, since he is convinced that Nongqawuse is only a puppet in the hands of her uncle, who uses her to get power over the isiXhosa nation and spread his own ideas. Doing
justice to his role as “the original Unbeliever” (62) he even suspects that “the prophetess was a liar who had been bought by white people to destroy the black race” (62). This draws the colonizers into matters that at first seemed to be only an internal quarrel among the amaXhosa people. Whether this suspicion is true or not, the whites are at least partially responsible for the killing of the isiXhosa cattle because they bring the lung sickness to South Africa by importing their own cattle, carrying viruses the indigenous animals’ immune system is not able to cope with.

Regardless of the whites’ involvement in the development of the situation, the amaXhosa are faced with their best animals dying painfully. Without being able to do anything against this devastating experience the amaXhosa are susceptible for Nongqawuse’s prophecies. The intensity of feeling their helplessness grows with every additional dead animal, which more and more increases their longing for a spiritual solution. They see their only hope in the new, strong and uncontaminated animals their ancestors are said to bring with them from the Otherworld. With a new, healthy breed their emotional pain would also be taken from them. Thus, the number of Believers rises with every new prophecy Nongqawuse receives from ‘the Strangers’, as she calls the people that materialize in her visions. The balance between Believers and Unbelievers among the amaXhosa people finally turns when the prophetess

also pronounce[s] that if the people killed all their cattle and set all their granaries alight, the spirits would rise from the dead and drive all the white people into the sea. Who would not want to see the world as it was before the cursed white conquerors – who were capable of killing even the son of their own god – had been cast by the waves onto the lands of the amaXhosa? (77)

The message of this additional promise also finds its way inland to King Sarhili, whose father had been deceitfully murdered by a British governor during the war for the land. With numerous followers he travels to the mouth of the Gxarha River to see for himself the visions that promise revenge on the British. In the waves of the ocean he sees his own son on his best horse, which had both recently died, riding with the ancestors. Encouraged by his visions he pronounces that in the next three month he will extinguish all the cattle he possesses.
The first victim was his best bull, which was famous for its beauty in all the land. Poets had recited poems and musicians had composed songs about it. When it fell, people knew that there was no turning back. The cattle had to be killed. (79)

The slaughter of the king’s best bull triggers a genocide of cattle that is historically known as the cattle killing movement of the amaXhosa. Once again bulls and cows are killed in large numbers shortly after they have been targets of British attacks in the campaign for conquering the land of the amaXhosa and other indigenous tribes. This tactic of gaining power over an enemy by killing its animals is a theme that appears repeatedly in contemporary South African fiction. In the case of the cattle killing movement it is slightly different at first, since the Believers kill their own animals and not those of others. Their goal is not to harm someone by murdering their animals but to find salvation through an immensely big sacrifice. This pacifistic attitude changes, however, when the Unbelievers not only refuse to kill their livestock but also comply with the whites to save their herds. Also Twin-Twin, whose “unbelieving had started as a matter of common sense [...] was being seen more often with [...] men who were benefiting from the new opportunities offered by the rule of the white man” (110). The ignorance of the Unbelievers and their better situation infuriates Twin and the Believers and they decide to punish their fellow tribesmen without remorse.

Twin led his men to destroy the Unbelievers’ fields in the dead of the night. He started with his own brother’s fields. He opened Twin-Twin’s kraals and drove his cattle onto his fields and gardens to trample the crops. Then his men stabbed some of the prize bulls with spears. When Twin-Twin’s family woke up the next morning, they were consumed by explosive rage. (111)

It is remarkable here that before the Believers kill the cattle they use them as a weapon for destructing the property of the Unbelievers. Instrumentalising animals in order to use them for hurting others is a theme that is also encountered frequently in contemporary South African fiction. In the quote it is remarkably combined with its contrasting theme, namely animals being targets of violence in order to hurt their owners. Despite the differences of these two themes, they have two important points in common. Firstly, in both themes the animals are reduced to objects and are just used as a means by the respective

20 For further detail see http://www.xhosacattlekilling.net/
human agents. Secondly, in both cases animals serve as instruments to demonstrate, further and secure the power of one group of people over another. In other words, human power struggle is carried out at the expense of animals in different forms.

After these considerations the reasons for the genocide of isiXhosa cattle have become clearer. In the course of events the animals are objectified and for the amaXhosa people lose their existence of esteemed living beings. The lungsickness has turned into a fundamental spiritual dispute between humans, in the course of which the ‘destroyed’ animals are just collateral damage. Driven by their desperate longing for a better future the Believers only concentrate on the tribal custom of paying homage to a prophet and thus neglect and betray all their other values. With their fanatic actions they finally achieve the opposite of their intentions. Instead of summoning the ancestors to drive away the conquerors the Believers make it easier for the white man to conquer the land and rule over the amaXhosa people.

As we can see, in *The Heart of Redness* animals twice become direct targets of violence because attackers know that they can harm their human enemies if they hurt or kill their animals. Firstly, the British attack the cattle of the amaXhosa in their campaign for the land in order to take away the people’s food supply and to break them emotionally by killing their beloved animals. Secondly, the Believers kill the cattle of the Unbelievers to make them give up and surrender to the prophecies of Nongqawuse. By this means the Believers take revenge on their brothers and sisters who seem to prevent the resurrection of the ancestors by refusing to sacrifice their life stock. This method of harming other people who oppose the attitudes of the attackers is not something that lies in South Africa’s past. In *The Memory of Stones* Mandla Langa depicts a scene in KwaZulu-Natal after the fall of apartheid in which the henchmen of a warlord, Johnny M., slay the goats of an opposing group of women.

The women’s goats, hacked with edged instruments fashioned for bringing about sudden death, lay in destroyed heaps on the ground on which their blood had flowed. The eyes of the beasts, dull and accusing and infinitely alive in death, stared in lifeless incomprehension, speaking of the pain that had throbbed before the final gasp. MaNdlela was aware of a whistling in her head, a circumstance that told her in eloquent and unmistakable terms that horror was upon her. In the land of the warlords in the Natal Midlands, where slaughtering had become so commonplace that in the mortuary the drunk police had the gall to refer
to dead women as cows, she had dedicated her life to saving the lives of children. (Langa 208)

This atrocious deed happens in the course of the competition for the succession of the late leader of the Ngoza settlement. Johnny M. has made his way in the new South Africa from a small gangster to a powerful and wealthy criminal leader and also claims the position as the official leader after the old leader’s death. He is opposed, however, by the former leader’s daughter, Zodwa, who returns from her urban life and is determined to follow in her father’s footsteps. The group of women in question are supporters of Zodwa, which is reason enough for Johnny M.’s men to attack them. Once again animals are instrumentalized as targets of violence in order to intimidate and emotionally hurt their owners or caretakers, a method that is depicted as still being as common in the new South Africa as it has been under apartheid.

What is also striking about the quote above is the policemen’s labelling of dead women as cows, which is another incident of depicting victims by employing animal imagery. The reason behind the equation of women with cows here is the frequency with which cruel murders take place in the Natal Midlands. Killing a woman is as common and bloody as slaughtering a cow. This comparison is not just a depiction of the morbid joking of individual drunken policemen but is evidence that it is hard for the human psyche to grasp and to bear that innocent humans are murdered in such great numbers and with such brutality. Thus, their coarse humour is not only a utility to despise others but actually also a psychological defence mechanism. It is easier for the policemen to see these victims as slaughtering animals in order to be able to continue their job.

The intimidation of others and the demonstration of power positions involving animals as direct targets can also be found in *Disgrace*. The three perpetrators do not only rape Lucy but also let David watch how they execute his daughter’s beloved dogs in their cages. The animals become victims simply because they are in white people’s care, whom the three black men have chosen as targets for revenging themselves for years of black suppression. Their violence against Lucy’s dogs is the exact reverse of a behaviour the

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21 Already in the early stages of psychoanalysis followers of the superiority approach pointed out that „humor enables us to protect ourselves from painful emotions associated with adverse circumstances […] and furthermore helps us to avoid becoming emotionally involved in the distress and problems of others“ (R. A. Martin, 49). For a detailed account of the psychological side of humour cf. *The psychology of humor* by Rod A. Martin.
armed forces resorted to during the crucial stages of the freedom struggle. In *A Quilt of Dreams* Vita’s father, a pacifist leader of the liberation movement, is forcefully dragged out of his township house one night. The first thing the soldiers of the secret police do before they seize their victim is kicking the family dog so hard in its belly that it remains lying on the ground whimpering in pain. With this initial act of brutality the soldiers signalise that they are determined to execute their orders with as much violence as needed and that it is better for anyone to refrain from getting into their way. The intimidation works out very well, since the family members are so shocked that they hardly protest against the deportation of their husband and father. The poor dog, which is only exploited as an object for demonstrating the soldiers’ resoluteness, hardly survives its treatment and for days is barely able to stand up (see Schonstein 225). On the evidence of this conduct towards blacks and their animals it is not astonishing that the revenge on the whites towards the end of apartheid and after its fall is of similar brutality. Retaliation in South Africa most of the times also involves animals, which is also shown in the case of a farm murder described in *Skinner’s Drift*. On a neighbouring farm of the van Rensburgs a farmer and his son are “hacked to pieces with machetes” (see Fugard 115) while their dogs are all killed with a shot in the head. Here as well as in *Disgrace* the execution of the animals is a demonstration of power, by the means of which blacks tell whites that they can attack at any time. Their message to their former suppressors says, "We will come to your house, execute your watchdogs and rape or torture you". A reason that makes the farm murders in *Skinner’s Drift* even more frightening than they are anyway is the fact that the murderers come at night, commit their ferocious deeds and disappear again into nothingness. This signalises they can attack anyone at any time and cannot be stopped. The only traces they leave are corpses, both human and non-human.

In Lewis DeSoto’s *A Blade of Grass* a special nightly attack takes place on the farm Kudufontein in which all the remaining chickens, including the alert rooster and the newly hatched chicks are killed. A hole in the fence indicates that some kind of animal has broken into the chicken-coop but when Tembi, Märit’s black maid and friend, sees the bloody mess, she does not want to believe the seemingly obvious.
“I don’t understand this,” Tembi moans. “This wasn’t done out of hunger. It couldn’t have been. What animal could have done this? What evil? I don’t understand why everything has to be killed.” She grabs a handful of soil in her fists and flings it away from her. “I hate this country!” (DeSoto 240)

For Tembi it looks as if the war between Afrikaner government and freedom fighters creates such a vicious atmosphere in her home country that even causes wildlife animals to become unnaturally brutal, almost insane. Additionally, Tembi’s words imply the slight suspicion that the attacker might not have been a simple animal but something utterly malicious. This uncertainty about the identity of the perpetrator that carried out the nightly assault leaves the two women feeling completely weak and powerless. They are subject to a force they cannot challenge, a situation that is reminiscent of the conditions blacks have to endure during the days of apartheid. Thus, the slaughter of the chickens does not entail fear Märit and Tembi can confront but rather evokes irrational ‘angst’. In Märit’s case this non-directional anxiety is only an intermediate state between two concrete states of fear. In the beginning of the novel Märit is afraid of animals, especially of snakes. During the narration, this gives way to the angst of an unknown evil and finally transforms itself into a plain terror of humans after Khoza throws her out of the farmhouse and fires a shot after her. That night she sleeps in the Kraal, alone.

Sometime in the night she wakes to hear the snuffling and snorting of an animal at the door of the hut, and she sits up, waiting for it to go away. She is not afraid. Not of animals. It is people she fears. (DeSoto 321).

The image of animals driven into hiding in the wilderness by the white man is also a metaphorical reference to the freedom fighters, who sneak into South Africa from across the border, concealed by nature, ready to attack out of their hiding-places. At first this is only Märit’s abstract apprehension, which becomes abruptly concrete when black soldiers appear to occupy Kudufontein.

Another, direct reference to the invisibly approaching freedom fighters can be found in Skinner’s Drift, although the wildlife animals play a different role there. Both soldiers and beasts appear in a vision Lefu has after he recovers and buries the bones of the black child shot by Martin van Rensburg.

He rose to his feet, and as he slowly walked home Lefu had his vision. [...] Men with guns were crossing the river, they carried AK 47s and they streamed over from Botswana and the foxes and the jackals and the
hyenas and the lions let them be. Lefu saw the black hell of the hyena’s thick mouth and the moonlight shivering on the silvery hairs on the back of the jackal. He saw the small veins in the ears of the bat-eared fox, hundreds of them, like footpaths lacing Skinner’s Drift, the footpaths that he and his family and families before them made as they walked the land, the map the white people didn’t know about, the one his brothers with their AK 47s were following. The bat-eared fox stood silently in the bush and heard the grass sighing under the feet of Lefu’s brothers. The jackal lifted its head and smelled their sweat. Then Lefu saw Martin’s headlights, now shining this way, now that. The animals leapt into the air, they offered their throats and their skulls and Martin’s gun blazed. Lefu knew then that they were offering their lives so his brothers could slip by in the darkness. He saw them dancing, machine-gun fire spinning them into the air. (Fugard 100f)

From Lefu’s point of view all of South Africa’s wildlife animals are allies against the white oppressors. In his vision they voluntarily sacrifice themselves to make the fall of apartheid possible. Seeing them in this way also implies that they have a free will to decide and thus are individuals in their own right. Lefu’s vision is the exact opposite of the colonial mind’s interpretation of animals.

All things considered, the roles animals have in contemporary South African novels in connection to power are manifold. They appear as primary and secondary targets of violence, as status symbols confirming power, as enemies or as allies. However, it is not primarily the variety of symbolic potential that is responsible for their prominence in the theme of power struggles but rather a unifying element that lies at the bottom of all the aforementioned roles. In fact, it is their nature of constituting perfect representations of others that accounts for their frequent appearances within the novels, which initially results from their intermediate position between humans and inanimate things. And like every opposition of two groups this one is also necessarily linked to questions of power relations. In relation to Jolly’s argument mentioned in chapter 2 – that depictions of animals reveal more about the human speakers than about the animals themselves – the portrayal of animals shows that issues of superiority and suppression still preoccupy the minds of South Africans, especially those of authors of fiction, after the fall of apartheid. In other words, power is still such an ever-present topic in the country that it is scrutinized within fiction not only in connection to the interaction between humans but also and even more far-reaching with regard to relationships between humans and animals.
4. Animals as weapons

In contrast to their role as victims, animals are also regularly encountered in South African fiction as weapons used against other humans. The most obvious animals to be used as weapons against others are dogs, due to their widespread function as guarding animals. Keeping dogs for this reason is mainly common among whites in South Africa, who feel the need to protect their property. In this context, the appearances of guarding dogs in the country’s contemporary fiction are extensively frequent. Thus, the following two excerpts serve as representative scenes out of numerous others in which dogs are depicted attacking humans.

In *A Blade of Grass* a woman sets her dog on Märit because the latter enters the dog owner’s garden to drink some water from a tap. Märit does not expect to be met with such aggression because in the past she has always been treated with respect when she came to town. What she and Tembi do not realize before that incident is that “Klipspring has been reclassified as a whites-only town” (DeSoto 193). This unexpected change of communal law turns Tembi’s presence into an illegal act. Above that, Märit wears a headscarf, bound in the way black women use to do when they go into town in order to “look respectable” (183). This seems to be reason enough for the local woman to become hostile and command her dog to “Vang haar, vang haar! […] Get her!” (190, italics in original).

In *Disgrace* another example can be found of how a dog is used to attack another human. When David Lurie approaches his daughter’s house on his return from a walk with the bulldog Katy, he catches the boy who took part in raping Lucy as he is peering through the bathroom window, secretly watching her. Full of anger he slaps the boy in the face, who falls down and is immediately attacked by Katy. Although Lurie does not explicitly command the dog to attack, his hostile action towards the boy let the dog support its master’s violence. Furthermore, David does not hold the animal back since its behaviour suits his intention “to give the boy what he deserves” (Coetzee 206). The dog is so incited by Lurie’s violence that it only lets go of the voyeur after Lucy comes out of the house and drags at the dog’s collar, soothing it with a soft voice. The ultimate reason for attacking the boy in this scene is David’s desire for revenge. This longing for retribution is not only important for this specific scene but is
rather a primary driving force for most characters in South African fiction who abuse animals as weapons.

In *The Heart of Redness*, the young Qukezwa is at one stage verbally attacked by a group of girls, who rail at her dead mother’s asserted witchcraft. This incident happens while she is riding her father’s horse Gxagxa – named after her ancestor Twin’s favourite horse – at the beach. When she hears the insults she makes the horse charge at the girls. When they try to get out of the way, one of them “falls down and Gxagxa gives her a kick in the stomach before he gallops away” (173). Here as well, the horse, forced by its rider, becomes a weapon of revenge.

An even more outstanding case is the revenge of the Believer Zim on the Unbeliever Bhonco, who first “engage[s] a group of *abayiyizeli*, the ululants, to ululate” (196, italics in original) whenever they see Zim.

Finally Zim gets his revenge. He sends *ing’ang’ane* birds, the hadedah ibis, to laugh at Bhonco. They are drab gray, stubby-legged birds with metallic green or purple wings. Three or four birds follow him wherever he goes, emitting their rude laughter. They sit on the roof of his ixande house, and continue laughing.

There is a feeling that things are getting out of hand. There is talk in the village that the war of the Believers and Unbelievers has advanced beyond human prowess. It is rumoured that Bhonco is about to enlist the assistance of the *uthekwane*, the brown hammerhead bird. With its lightning it will destroy Zim’s fields, or perhaps his homestead. But some people laugh the whole matter off. They say it is an empty threat. Bhonco does not know how to talk with birds. Only Zim can talk with birds. Yet others feel that it is a shame that these elders have now stooped to the level of sending such innocent creatures as birds to battle on their behalf. (196f, italics in original)

Although it is pure myth that humans can command birds to work for them or that birds exist that can fire lightning bolts, this passage is evidence for the importance of animals in South African fiction. Precisely because Mda employs the dimension of myth here, he manages to challenge especially the Western readership of the novel. The characters show a belief in supernatural powers of animals that contradicts the strictly biologically based view that is wide spread in Western societies as a result of the overemphasis of natural sciences. Even Bhonco, a stern Unbeliever and advocate of Western values, is expected to use his abilities as an umXhosa elder and finally call a mythical bird to his assistance. Through his firm non-believing, however, he has lost his connection to nature like his fellow Unbelievers, and thus is not able to talk with birds.
Bhonco’s inability to commune with nature is a fortunate coincidence for the brown hammerhead bird because the umXhosa man is prevented from using it as an instrument to carry out his counterattack on Zim. In the opinion of some of the villagers such an employment of the bird would be just another abuse of an innocent creature anyway. The abuse of the birds’ mythical powers in this section is another instance of the instrumentalisation of the animals and their use as weapons in a fight between two opposed human parties.

Since the battle between Zim and Bhonco is actually the continuation of the battle between Believers and Unbelievers that started at the time of Nongqawuse, the methods of fighting have not changed much. From the very beginning it is a common strategy in this war of brothers to use animals in order to harm one’s enemy. It is exactly what Twin does when he lets loose Twin-Twin’s cattle and then urges the herd to trample the fields of the latter. Once again the motive for a depicted assault is a longing for revenge. In this case, however, it is not retaliation for something the opponent has done but for what he has not done, namely obeyed the orders the prophetess receives from the ancestors. In the eyes of the Believers the Unbelievers’ refusal to kill all the cattle brings disaster upon the amaXhosa and denies them the paradisiacal life the arrival of the ancestors promises. From the Believers point of view it is clear that such impertinence has to be avenged.

In DeSoto’s A Blade of Grass two instances show how a horse is used as a weapon. In the first one Tembi arrives at the old church where the Sunday classes for the black workers’ children take place. She is astonished to find the door locked with a chain and a padlock. After walking around the building once to check for other entries, she becomes aware that someone is watching her. Under a nearby tree a young white man, the son of a neighbouring farmer, sits on his horse. He rides up close to Tembi and tells her that there would not be any classes anymore. When Tembi answers that the old church is the school of Mr. Simon, their teacher, the man gets angry and accuses the educator of telling black children that South Africa belongs to them and that they will get it back after they have driven off the Boers. Finally, he commands her to “voetsak off” (69). Tembi winces when she hears the word, since “[i]t is an insult, used only on dogs” (69).22

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22 voetsak (or voetsak) derives „from Dutch voort zeg ik – be off I say“ (cf. „voetsek“ in The Oxford Essential Dictionary of Foreign Terms in English)
Here, addressing a black person like an animal reflects how white racists see blacks as inferior beings. From their superior point of view they feel justified to command non-whites with any level of rudeness they like. Furthermore, they are used to encountering unquestioning obedience to their orders. Even the slightest opposition fuels their hatred. When Tembi does not react to the farmer boy’s offence and adamantly refuses to disappear, he “kicks at the horse’s flanks, forcing the animal forward, towards Tembi, and the big head of the animal pushes her back against the door” (69). To demonstrate his power over her even more, he reaches for her breast but Tembi defends herself. Once again he kicks the horse in the flanks and forces it towards Tembi. Frightened but trained to obey its master unconditionally, the horse presses Tembi painfully against the door and the padlock, nearly crushing her bare feet under its hooves. Only by means of a loud cry Tembi manages to make the horse rear back, giving her just enough time to flee. Subsequently, she hides in the long grass, holding her breath and hoping not to get trampled by the man on the horse who is frenetically galloping back and forth searching for the “nigger bitch” (70) that has just escaped from him.

Later in the novel it is not a white farmer’s boy but the black freedom fighters who use their mounts as instruments to hurt other people. A few days after they temporarily take the farm under their control, the soldiers prepare to leave the farm again. Their captain ties a rope around Khoza and Tembi and fastens the loose end to his saddle. When he drives the animal forward the captives have to run, in order not to fall down and get dragged along. Märit tries to convince the soldiers to let them go and grabs the rope to unbind her companions. Her protest does not show any effect on the oppressors but as a reaction to her attempt at releasing the two hostages one of the soldiers urges his horse towards her. It is Joshua, a former farm worker, whom Märit dismissed on the grounds of his defiant behaviour. He rides by and kicks Märit down to her knees.

The horse is charging down upon her again, the hooves flashing and whirling around her. She falls to one side, raising her hands to protect her face, hearing somewhere the screams of Tembi, then a sudden pain burns along her leg, a pain so intense that nausea rises in her throat, and then a light bursts between her eyes. She hears a sound like the rushing of wind, and the wind sucks the light away, leaving her in darkness. (359)
Joshua’s attack in this scene is motivated to a great extent by the anger he feels towards Märit for getting dismissed. When he charges at Märit he does not act on order of his commander but is eager to satisfy his own desire for revenge. He wants to pay her back for making him leave the farm premises. His attack is intended to demonstrate that he is now in a position of power – namely on the horse – and Märit does not wield authority anymore. Beyond his personal hatred for Märit his assault is also a symbolic act of vengeance against the whites, the former oppressors of him and his people.

Sitting on the back of a horse as a symbol of power is an important theme in Lisa Fugard’s *Skinner’s Drift*, which appears primarily in the context of Eva and Lefu’s nightly burial tours. Here the mounts are not directly instrumentalized as weapons against a specific opponent but in their function as status symbols the horses are still an instrument of maintaining the social hierarchy. Since the animals Martin van Rensburg’s shoots suddenly become so numerous and their carcasses so widely spread around the farm territory, Eva and Lefu need horses to be able to collect them all during the night. This is problematic, since Lefu as a black man is strictly forbidden to ride his master’s horses and fears to get punished heavily when caught. Finally, Eva manages to convince Lefu to ride her father’s favourite horse, Donder. After their first ride guilt overwhelms the black farm worker as he gets down from the horse to bury the dead animals. Fugard skilfully describes his nagging anxiety, once again employing the language of animality:

A hyena standing on its hind legs, walking into the big house and pouring itself a drink was no more of an aberration than Lefu galloping across Martin van Rensburg’s farm on Martin van Rensburg’s horse. With the drumbeat of the hooves still reverberating in his body he pressed his forehead to the earth and begged God’s forgiveness. (Fugard 70)

The metaphor of the hyena Fugard uses here to describe the abnormality of Lefu riding the horse is chosen in accordance with Lefu’s character. Equating himself with a hyena, an animal he actually strongly detests, vividly depicts the deep feelings of guilt his action evoke within him. Inferiority is so ingrained in him that questioning it feels like committing a sin to him. In his comparison with the hyena, the commonly hated animal dares to stand up and walk on his two hind legs, a privilege that is normally exclusively reserved to humans among all mammals. Naturally, the hyena is assign to run on all fours as Lefu is assigned
to his place on the ground. The animal’s unnatural process of standing up symbolizes Lefu mounting his master’s horse, which he initially experiences as rising himself above his rightful place. However, the comparison goes beyond that as the hyena does not only mimic human locomotion but is also bold enough to enter the human home, not to say the white farmhouse. Finally, it also serves itself with something belonging to the human inhabitants of the house. This shows how adamant the separation between blacks and whites is and how this social hierarchy has burned itself into the minds of South Africans – both black and white – since the first days of colonialism and especially during the decades of apartheid. Lefu is a modest person and has been living under the unfair social hierarchy for all of his life. He has always known where his position is and has never really dared to revolt against the system. He has accustomed himself to the circumstances and accepted the role that the system has ascribed him. This disposition within him is so powerful and axiomatic that he immediately gets a guilty conscience the moment he slightly crosses the predefined boundaries. He feels that he is betraying his master and deems himself guilty. What he has done appears to him even so hideous that he equates himself with an ugly, carrion-eating beast of the night, or to use his own words, a “dirty” (Fugard 83) animal.

Despite his fear of doing something wrong, the ride strikes deep feelings within Lefu and he feels freedom like he never did before. Riding after his master’s little daughter, he is “flying across the foreign land that [is] Skinner’s Drift experienced from the back of a horse” (82). As he is cleaning the stables during the day after his first nightly ride with Eva, anger against his master arises within Lefu, an emotion he never dared to feel before. As soon as he catches himself feeling “enraged at Martin for having such fine horses, for not allowing him to ride” (77), he regrets his revolting thoughts and thanks “God that Martin ha[s] shown up to remind him of the parameters of his world. Donder belong[s] to the baas” (77). These rueful thoughts show once again how he is caught up in the social order apartheid has created. He is so used to his position as a subordinate that every single one of his thoughts questioning apartheid hierarchy makes him feel guilty. The white man’s possession of exceptional horses is symbol for this hierarchy and stands for his place above while the black man is standing on the ground.
At the same time a riding horse also always stands for human domination over nature, since it is an animal that is tamed in order to carry its master on its back. The process that actually makes it possible for humans to ride horses in the first place is an act of breaking the animal’s will. Only after humans have signalised that they are stronger than the horse, it acknowledges them as its masters. By this means a human takes the position of the alpha animal and is seen by the animals as the leader of the herd.

Accordingly, the white man on horseback is actually a twofold symbol of absolute domination. Firstly, he dominates his steed and has the power to force it into performing actions that actually would be against its instincts. That is perfectly displayed in the situation in which the white farmer’s boy on his horse terrorizes Tembi in front of the Sunday school. Although his mount already shows the white of its eyeballs – a sign of the state of terror it is in – he still forces it forward to press the black girl against the locked entrance gate. This in return shows that he also dominates his black interlocutor on the ground. DeSoto stresses this domination once again by representing Tembi’s thoughts on her way back to the farm.

The man on the horse is the law, the iron law of this country, and there is no recourse for her. She must accept her lot; always in this country, this life, she must accept her lot.
She weeps. Tembi weeps for what is taken from her. She weeps for what will never be. (DeSoto 71)

It is this position of power on horseback that symbolically lifts up Lefu in *Skinner’s Drift* from his inferior position during the secret rides with Eva on her father’s horses. For the time of the riding trips the black man and the white girl are absolutely equal. However, this shared experience and his helpfulness are turned back against Lefu when he shows Eva the bones of the murdered child. Once again confronted with the crime her father committed, Eva suddenly uses Lefu’s initial obedience to her order of riding her father’s horse to press him for remaining silent. She threatens him to give away their secret and reveal his illegal actions. More than any other situation this sequence shows how blacks are at the mercy of whites during the reign of apartheid. Whatever privileges they receive, they just get them on the basis of their masters’ good will.

The subordinate position of blacks in South Africa, which characters as Lefu and Tembi experience as something eternal, officially disappears with the fall of
apartheid. In the new South Africa, however, other people take their places on horseback to dominate the people below. In numerous cases they are black men who take the opportunity during the first chaotic years after the fall of apartheid to seize positions of power. It is not the white man anymore who owns the fine horses but upcoming township criminals like Johnny M in Mandla Langa’s A Memory of Stones. By exploiting other people in his township he acquires a considerable amount of wealth, which he partly uses to buy rare breeds of riding horses. After all, keeping fine horses is quite expensive and can only be afforded by rich people. And as it is in human society, wealth entails status and power. For Johnny M his horses are luxury goods that function as status symbols to demonstrate his power position. For the horses their function as representing Johnny M’s superiority becomes fateful when Venter and Mpanza need fast means of transportation on their way to free the kidnapped Benedita. They steal three of Johnny M’s horses in order to come to Benedita’s rescue in time. Since Johnny M has been intimidating Mpanza days before he spontaneously decides to revenge himself and “releases all the horses, among them the thoroughbred Johnny M had ridden the other day” (Langa 397).

Here, it is not only relevant that they steal and drive away the newly rich warlord’s horses to deal him a blow but also how they go about doing it. In order to get past the sleeping watchmen they use Blackie, a monkey Venter has taken charge of, to drive off the guard. Venter sneaks up to the stable gate and puts Blackie just in front of the man’s face. Venter then throws a stone against the beer crate next to the guard who wakes from sleep with a start. Opening his eyes [...] he had taken one look at Blackie who was gazing at him with great haunted eyes and had concluded that he had woken up to a nightmare. Mouthing an oath, he dropped his weapon, upsetting the crate in his haste, and took to his heels, yelling, ‘Umhlola! Umhlola!’ (306)

The word the guard shouts in his terror is Zulu and means ‘extraordinary thing’ or ‘evil sign’ (see Roberts 90 & 207). For the man Blackie’s face is completely unexpected and therefore so frightening to him that he regards it as an evil omen, something demonic one better flees from as fast as possible.

Another monkey is used to achieve a similar effect in A Blade of Grass with the difference that it is used against its congener and not against humans. It features in an anecdote Märit is told about her neighbour’s father. In the story
the farmer is pestered by a group of baboons that keeps raiding his mealie fields, destroying all the crops. Since the baboons hide immediately when they recognize a firearm hunting them with a gun is ineffective, so the farmer has to outwit them with a trick. He sets up a trap with some delicious food as bait. When he successfully captures one of the monkeys alive, he paints it with white wall paint and releases it again, allowing it to join its fellows. When they encounter the white copy of themselves, however, they get frightened and run away, no matter how excitedly the unfortunate white baboon cries after them. Astonishingly this trick solves the farmer's problem and the baboons do not come back. Nevertheless, this is yet another instance of how South Africans use animals in their environment to further their own cause.

In summary it can be stated that the reappearing theme in contemporary South African fiction of using animals as weapons always comprises three crucial components, namely revenge, dominance and disrespect. After the extensive sequence of attack and counterattack throughout South African history it is long forgotten when and how this circle of violence started exactly and by whom the first act of aggression was set. In a vicious circle of alternating retaliation the answers to these questions seems to have become irrelevant. What remains detectable is the deeply rooted, sometimes subconsciously disguised desire for revenge that all of the characters who employ animals to hurt an opponent share. Disregarding the question whether a specific act of retaliation is objectively just or not, the perpetrators always believe that the others have done something that deserves to be revenged. And since the others have dared to do something that is beyond their scope, revenge always has the goal to put them in their assigned places, to drive them back to where they came from. To put it another way, the perpetrators want to re-establish their dominance over the others by resorting to their still intact dominance over a third party, namely animals. This superiority over the beasts is perceived as a law of nature that is not to be questioned meaningfully. What is more, the use of animals as weapon is an instrumentalisation that builds upon the Cartesian view of animals as automatons, as machines that can perform certain actions – as for example kicking humans, trampling crops or scaring off other creatures – better than the perpetrators themselves (see Francione 28). This attitude is nothing more than structural disrespect for animal others as multifaceted individual beings.
After all, it seems that the ongoing strife for power and the struggle for survival is not entirely a matter of the survival of the physically fittest but also a question of who most artfully instrumentalizes the objects in their environment – including animals – as weapons to promote their own interests.
5. Animals and rape

In June 2009 South Africa’s Medical Research Council published a study about the country’s current situation concerning the frequency of rape. The alarming findings are that one out of four men has at least raped once in his life regardless of his ethnicity, social position and region of residence. The majority of these perpetrators, however, do not show regret for what they have done (see Lindow par. 1 & 2). According to Mbuyiselo Botha from the Sonke Gender Justice Network the study’s results “highlight the lack of remorse among men in [their] country, and also the attitude that women remain fair game for [them]” (qtd. in Lindow par. 2). This reference to women as ‘fair game’ indicates the fundamental link between rape and the concept of animality and more specifically the language of animality. In this chapter I will show that this concurrence of the suppression of women with the depiction of the bestial is frequently addressed in contemporary South African fiction. Furthermore it will become apparent that rape as such has been a central theme developed by numerous authors in post apartheid literature, who use their novels to call attention to the country’s rape epidemic long before the publication of the study mentioned.

In her essay about humanity in two of Coetzee’s works, Jolly dedicates an entire subchapter to South Africa’s “Culture of Systemic Rape”. Considering her argumentation one has to state that rape as a theme is the essential driving force for the progress of the plot in Coetzee’s Disgrace. The reader joins the story at a point where David Lurie gets problems at university because he uses his power position as a professor to satisfy his sexual desires by abusing one of his students. As the participants of the study mentioned above he does not regard his actions as something dramatically immoral. His character also corresponds with the findings that “men most likely to rape [...] are [...] those who have attained some level of education and income” (Lindow, par. 1). When he urges his student Melanie into sexual intercourse the concept of animality is immediately at hand to describe the situation.

She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes. She lets him lay her out on the bed and undress her: she even helps him, raising her arms and then her hips. Little shivers of cold run through her as soon as she is bare, she slips under the quilted counterpane like a mole burrowing, and turns her back on him.
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, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck. So that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away. (Coetzee 25)

The woman in that scene is compared to an animal twice. In the first simile the comparison to the mole signifies how she burrows herself, disappears from the surface of reality in a way, in order to emotionally survive the situation to come. The mole in its symbolic representation of secrecy also hints at the low detection rate of sexual harassment and rape in South Africa. In other words, rape is a severe problem that is hidden in the depth of society and unlikely to come into the open. It symbolizes how women are abused in concealment and how many of them keep their states as victims a secret so as to protect themselves from acknowledging the crimes committed against them as a fact. Actually this frequent behaviour is an act of dissociation23 – a psychological defence mechanism that includes denial or alteration of identity – that helps the victims to experience that the trauma is not happening to them personally but to somebody else. This is also supported by the second simile, which describes how Melanie seems to decide to “die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck” (Coetzee 25). Making use of Lurie’s language of animal metaphors one could say that Melanie’s immobility is an attempt to feign death that in the wild is often the last resort of the prey to create a last chance to escape if the predator is successfully tricked.

In “Going to the Dogs” Jolly also points out this section in Disgrace and enlarges upon the female victim’s state of being or pretending to be dead and what significance it has for the male perpetrator. Although her remarks are well worth being considered I rather want to concentrate here solely on the rendering of the woman as animal. The comparison of Melanie with a rabbit caught by a fox shows how Lurie, in line with Mbuyiselo Botha’s quote mentioned above, interprets women as prey hunted down by men. Although David Lurie is a learned man he cannot avoid being caught in stereotypically masculine thinking in this respect. This predisposition of Lurie to compare women with animals is for instance also represented in his detection of “the proximity between mothers and animals” (Jolly 161), which he makes responsible for being rejected by Soraya, his favourite prostitute, after visiting

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23 For further information on dissociation disorders cf. „dissociation“ in A dictionary of Psychology, Oxford Reference Online and linked entries.
her at her private house outside her working hours. He compares her to a vixen reacting aggressively towards all intruders – in this case him – who enter “the home of her cubs” (Coetzee 10). By using this comparison he reduces Soraya to being a creature that is only acting according to its natural instincts and thus he denies her even the slightest nuance of agency. Additionally, interpreting the Other like this also makes it particularly easy for him to put up with the rejection he experiences. To be precise, by this means he manages to deny his defeat entirely and creates an excuse that lets him keep his face. If Soraya’s negative response to him is purely attributed to her instincts neither his personality nor his behaviour can be made responsible for his lack of success at satisfying his appetite. Consequently, his pride as a ‘hunter’ is not hurt but remains undamaged. The hunting metaphor is frequently employed in connection with sex – and rape – from men’s points of view as Botha’s statement and Lurie’s use of language illustrate. As a woman, Lurie’s daughter approaches the suppression and derogation of women as sexual partners, which seems to be so commonly encountered not only in South African men, from a slightly different and more emotional point of view. In one of the discussions with her father concerning her own rape she wonders:

“Hatred . . . When it comes to men and sex, David, nothing surprises me any more. Maybe, for men, hating the woman makes sex more exciting. You are a man, you ought to know. When you have sex with someone strange – when you trap her, hold her down, get her under you, put all your weight on her, 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, like getting away with murder?” (Coetzee, 158)

At first glance her general effort to understand what makes men become rapists does not resort to animal symbolism like her father’s interpretations of his actions. The most striking thing about her interpretation is the comparison between penetration and the act of killing. Only on closer inspection one realizes that this metaphorical use of language explicitly emphasises the importance of the woman’s body – in its function as the object of the man’s sexual desire – as the one thing that is left behind. Carnal intercourse in the literal sense so to say, negating any psychological component whatsoever. If we recall Jolly’s argument of the habitual interpretation of the body as the animal part of humans, which is characteristic for male-dominated Western societies until today, Lucy’s account once again indicates how women are
rendered animals in the eyes of men. In this way she strongly criticises how women are made objects that men are hunting down in order to possess them. In this context it is striking to see that, after all, Lucy herself is not immune to comparing others with animals. After contemplating her words David asks her if the rape was “[l]ike fighting with death” (159) for her too with both of her rapists. Lucy replies that “[t]hey spur each other on, [which] is probably why they do it together. Like dogs in a pack” (159). By equating her rapists with animals she does something similar to what she criticised before, namely refusing to see the others in their integrity as human beings. The question is how justified this comparison is in connection with real life behaviour of dogs. Do they really “spur each other on” (159) like the rapist are said to do? If one investigates the etymology of the word ‘to spur’ it becomes apparent that this verb depicts a behaviour that is more human than anything else. It derives from the noun ‘spur’, which denotes “[a] device for pricking the side of a horse in order to urge it forward, consisting of a small spike or spiked wheel attached to the rider’s heel” (“Spur” OED). In its verb form it first appears in 1205, designating the action of putting one’s spur to use. Only later, the word is used figuratively to describe the act of inciting or urging somebody to doing “something, or some course of action” (“Spur” OED). Nevertheless, the emphasis of the word remains on the conscious suppression of one being by a superior other, a behaviour that is atypical for animals.

In contrast to such a close examination Lucy uses the word without much reflection and employs it for her purpose of equating the rapists with a pack of dogs. So what her utterance is aimed to do is depicting the rapists’ actions as something non-human – or inhumane – in its core. Lucy stresses the animality she feels in the men’s behaviour, with animality being a synonym for impulsivity, rudeness and brutality. Finally, Lucy’s interpretation of her rape is another incidence of how both perpetrators and victims are tautologically represented as non-human animals, in the way it has been pointed out in Jolly’s essay.

The labelling of other humans – especially dominant, aggressive men and rapists – as animals is so deeply rooted within everyday language in South Africa that sometimes simple utterances become ambiguous and produce

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24 The passages quoted in the preceding argumentation coincide with the quotes given in Jolly’s essay, which is due to their prominence in Disgrace. Although Jolly’s interpretations are well worth considering for a detailed examination of Coetzee’s works, the citations are here only interpreted with reference to the concepts of animality they involve.
misunderstandings. In *The Memory of Stones* the women around MaNdlela, alarmed by a cry of pain, rush towards Popolani, who is lying on the ground, in fear that she has been raped.

When the women saw her […] they concluded that the men had struck again. Knowing that no amount of hurrying would improve the harm already affecting the girl’s frame of mind, MaNdlela walked on stolidly until she caught up with her breathless colleagues. ‘Popolani,’ Nosipho said, taking the girl by the shoulder, ‘Kwenzenjani – What’s happened?’ ‘Izilwane,’ Popolani said, getting on her knees, stretching her legs and lying on her back as if overcome by a heavy burden. ‘Izilwane. – The animals.’ […] ‘What animals?’ Popolani looked up at the older woman as if asking herself why they found it so difficult to comprehend something so patently simple. Coiling herself up, as if resisting the impulse to surrender to whatever was pulling her down, Popolani abruptly got onto her feet. As she started walking ahead of the women, she rearranged her dress, whose gingham fabric snagged on her ample, little-girl hips, outlining a promise of the future terror that awaited her at the hands of men. (Langa 206f, italics in original)

For the reader, as well as for MaNdlela, Populani’s short answer when interrogated about what happened is unclear at first. In case of the readers the main reason for that uncertainty is the lack of knowledge about the women’s living conditions. For MaNdlela, however, it should be obvious which animals Popolani is referring to since the keeping of livestock is their basis of life. Thus the old women should have understood immediately that something happened to their goats, which indeed is the case. What interferes with this plain interpretation of the girl’s words are the experiences MaNdlela must have made over the years in a country where men, regardless of race and class, got used to just taking a woman if they wanted one. As we have seen above it is a common habit to label these men, who appear to be solely driven by desire, as animals. This custom now comes into play as MaNdlela is decoding Populani’s answer to her question. Her fears and expectations that the girl has been raped make it impossible for MaNdlela to interpret Populani’s words simply and objectively. To put it briefly Populani’s utterance is not as easy to understand as she imagines it to be. After all, Langa does not give a direct resolution to the ambiguity as to which ‘animals’ the characters actually have in mind and hence leaves the reader a scope for interpretation. Yet, what he does do regardless of
what the women meant is showing how women in South Africa are constantly living under the threat to become the prey of predatory men.

This common metaphor of men as predators and women as game brings rape in context to the ongoing natural struggle for survival in the animal kingdom. It becomes a matter of eat or be eaten, in which women are doomed to lose due to the seemingly inferior physical strength and constitution nature has in store for them. How closely connected rape and the natural struggle for survival are in South African people’s minds becomes apparent through the euphemistic use of animal symbolism in *A Blade of Grass* to describe the rape of Tembi by Joshua. One night Tembi discovers that one of the freedom fighters’ steeds is loose in the orchard. She approaches it slowly with outstretched hand to soothe it and to “feel the gentle life in it” (DeSoto 354). Just before she reaches the animal, however, it jolts up its head in alarm. Joshua, the former foreman of the black farm workers and now owner of the horse, emerges out of his hiding place. Joshua trips her and threatens her into being silent with the bayonet on his rifle. Parallel to the situation of Melanie in *Disgrace* aspects of dissociation come into play and Tembi decides that struggling against the inevitable would only cost her life.

She submits, because it is better to live than to die. If she is nothing to him, then this will be nothing to her – less than nothing. She will not give up her life to this man, no matter what else she must sacrifice. She is not Tembi to him, not an individual. She is just a female animal, to be hunted, to be taken. She is nothing to him. Nothing more than this. (354f)

Although Tembi highly respects animals in general she uses the concept of animality in this traumatizing situation to deny her own individuality in order to keep her identity unharmed. According to the principle that if she suffers what is to come as an animal her existence as a human being is not touched. Or to put it differently in connection to the Cartesian interpretation of the body discussed in previous chapters, if only her body – i.e. her animal side – is violated, her soul – i.e. her human side – does not take any damage. While Tembi is contemplating all of this the course of events progresses in reality. First Joshua violently undresses her and then forces himself upon the motionless young woman. At this point DeSoto does not describe any details of the rape explicitly but instead lets the reader share the impressions experienced by Tembi, whose attention has shifted to a different scene.
She turns her head away. A fallen peach lies near her head, the flesh exposed on one side where birds have pecked at it. She smells the faint sourness of the decaying fruit. A small green caterpillar is making its slow and deliberate way across the surface of the peach. And then there is a sudden buzzing as a wasp lights on the fruit. The caterpillar lifts its head, antennae querying the shape in front of it. The wasp falls upon the caterpillar. 

[...] 

Joshua’s footsteps recede across the grass. Still she watches the wasp devouring the caterpillar, and she lies there under the indifferent sky with the semen drying on her thighs. (355)

In only a few sentences DeSoto skilfully portrays two different symbolic references to Tembi’s rape. Firstly, there is the “fallen peach”, lying on the ground like Tembi, “flesh exposed”, its soft but protective covering severed by hungry creatures for which it is only an object to satisfy their appetite. Secondly, the metaphor of the caterpillar and the wasp is even more direct. Depicting the brutality of the persistent natural struggle for survival it signifies Tembi’s desperate situation. Moreover, by setting rape in context with the food chain, DeSoto shows how natural an incident the violation of women or, to put it more generally, of inferior others has become in South Africa.

Finally, the frequency with which rape appears as a theme in contemporary South African novels correlates with the results of the research study pointed out at the beginning of this chapter. Moreover, it is proof once again that the importance of fiction as a prominent medium for addressing societal problems remains unchanged in post-apartheid South Africa. For Jolly the difficult task that is set by Disgrace – and similarly by other novels addressing the rape problem – is “to envision the epidemic of violence against women in South Africa in relation to international practices of patriarchy and ecological violence in the practice of redefining our humanity” (Jolly 167).

In addition to that the scenes discussed in this chapter illustrate how the concept of animality is employed for expressing the inhumanity that is inherent to all cases of sexual abuse. The use of animal symbolism in this respect has both a positive and a negative side. On the one hand it partly helps rape victims to endure and come to terms with the traumata they suffer. On the other hand, however, the habit of equating perpetrators with animals creates a sort of excuse for the crimes they committed since they cannot be fully responsible for actions their natural drives force them to do. Therefore critical readers have to
be aware of the fact that wherever animality appears in connection with rape
general questions of humanity and morality are always raised accordingly.
6. Relationships between humans and animals: establishing ambivalent connections to nature

Relationship to nature is a constantly substantial issue in South African writing and all the more so in post-apartheid literature. Contemporary authors draw an ambivalent picture of this interrelation including a strong desire to get back to nature on the one hand and anxieties preventing humans to actually create a connection to their natural environment on the other. This ambivalence is evidence for a gap that has opened up between humans and nature. The reasons for this separation can be found to some extent in the traumata caused by the atrocities of the apartheid era as well as in South Africa’s quest for modernity after the fall of the regime.

Attempted reconnection to nature in the novels often starts with a special relationship between one of the characters and animals of various kinds. In contrast to the depiction of how animals are perceived as things or at the most as subordinate creatures, contemporary South African fiction in this respect also illustrates relationships between humans and animals in which both parts are equal. Equal in a sense that particular characters respect animals they encounter as natural beings in their own right to which they concede individuality and agency. This anthropomorphization is a technique that is commonly used by South African writers in post-apartheid novels. In doing so, the authors on the one hand question the Cartesian view of animals as automatons and on the other hand reveal the existence of a desire for reconnection with nature within South African society.

This desire to find a connection with one’s environment is a central motif in Lewis DeSoto’s* A Blade of Grass*. Almost the entire plot takes place on a South African boarder farm near Klipspring during the critical phases of the liberation struggle. At the beginning everything seems to be in order but as time passes, the effects of the boarder war make life on the farm more and more difficult. After driving over a hidden landmine accidentally kills her husband, Märit, who has never had anything to do with farm work before, has to take over the farm. Only due to the friendship she develops with Tembi, the daughter of her late African maid Grace, she is able to live through her grief without breaking down. Meanwhile the situation in the boarder areas gets increasingly tense and the government reinforces its boarder troops. The raised frequency of controls also leads to an incident on the farm, in which an army helicopter tracks down and
kills a terrorist that is hiding on the farm premises. Frightened by this event and intimidated by the explicit recommendation to vacate the boarder area, all black farm workers leave the farm and Tembi is the only one of them who stays behind with Märit. The two women decide to run a small part of the farm that provides just enough resources for the two of them on their own. After the neighbouring farmers also leave, alarmed by the increasing number of guerrilla assaults on surrounding farms, Märit and Tembi are the only ones left in the area. The only people they encounter for a long time are a dumb vagabond called Michael and Khoza, another black man, who moves in with them and finally becomes Tembi’s boyfriend. Over time they suffer one setback after the other until finally a troop of black freedom fighters occupy the farm to regenerate and refill their supplies. On their departure they take Tembi and Khoza as hostages and leave Märit behind, trampled down by one of the mounted soldiers’ horse. Severely injured, alone and with nothing left to eat Märit finally drowns herself in the nearby river. When Tembi comes back to the farm after all her captors are killed in an ambush, her former mistress and friend has disappeared. Throughout the novel both of the women have striking encounters with animals, through which they try to come to terms with a country becoming more and more cruel.

These coincidental meetings between humans and animals start to occur at the very beginning of Ben and Märit’s time on the farm. At that time the Afrikaans name of the farm is still Duiwelskop, or Devil’s Head in English, that comes from a distinctive rock formation near the farm.

She said to Ben that she could not think of living in a place with such a name, so they called it Kudufontein, because on their first visit to the farm they had come upon a magnificent kudu buck drinking at the river. The animal had raised its majestic head slowly at the sound of their voices and stared regally at the two interlopers. Ben had shaken his head in admiration and said softly, “There’s the rightful owner of this place.” (9)

Ben’s statement in this quote raises the question of ownership that is also pointed out in chapter 3 above. Concerning this matter he seems to be more reflective than his Boer neighbours, “who trace their settlement of this land back two hundred years and cling to their God-given rights of occupancy with the same tenacity as their forefathers” (8). However, it is especially in Märit’s encounters with wild animals where DeSoto challenges the legitimacy of the
claim for the land. At the beginning her attitude towards the countryside is equal to the stereotypically Western view of imagining Africa as a wild, free and untouched country. She thinks that out there, in the middle of nowhere, she can see a variety of wild animals and the real Africa. Her neighbour Koos van Staden dashes her hopes when he tells her,

“[Y]ou won’t see much around here anymore. This is all farming country now, the wild things have been driven away into hiding. They are out there, and they see us, but we don’t see them.” (26)

What the Boer farmer’s statement shows is that through cultivating the land the settlers have driven back South African nature. Yet they feel that they are under constant observation by the indigenous inhabitants of the country they have expelled from their habitats. This belief that something wild, something invisible to the observed is waiting beyond the cultivated land is expression for the whites’ fear of revenge, of being attack by uncontrollable nature. This feeling of constant threat is self-made, however, since the whites themselves have driven the ‘wild’ into hiding in the first place. The constant fear that the wild nature might get back at them becomes real for Märit and Tembi in two crucial scenes during the novel. In the first one an unseen intruder slaughters all of their chickens during the night. The women are shocked and initially suspect some wild animal of committing the attack. A striking detail about this incident is the explicit cruelty DeSoto portrays in the description of the scene. He describes the “smell of blood” (240) and “the entrails spilling onto the dust” (240) which leaves the reader with the impression of witnessing the horrifying outcome of a massacre. When Märit discovers what has happened she starts a frantic search, hoping that at least the chicks have been spared. Eventually, her hopes are disappointed.

[S]he sees the hole at the bottom of the fence, and the dug-up earth where some animal has come in. And here she finds a few puffs of yellow down, and here is the body of Dik-Dik, [the rooster], limp, torn, his head almost severed from his neck. Märit recoils from the devastation. Every single chicken has been killed. Butchered. The bodies have been scattered everywhere by some ferocious presence that passed among the hens, ripping and clawing and slashing at random. (240)

A little later Tembi arrives at the scene and cannot understand how something as cruel as this could have happened. Actually, she has the feeling
that the attack has something unnatural to it, something distorted. It is not normal for beasts of prey to exterminate an entire stock of chickens. If it had been for hunger the predator would have killed and taken away one or two of the fowls and spared the rest. The way the chickens are left, lying where they fell, has some reminiscence of Martin van Rensburg’s killing frenzy. It looks as if the attacker has given free rein to its rage. Strikingly Tembi immediately associates this massacre with South Africa as a country. The country is apparently so loaded with aggression that even animals are going crazy and join the succession of escalating violence. Beyond that, Tembi’s instant doubt about the identity of the attacker also indicates that there is actually only one species on earth that destroys other beings in large numbers for various reasons other than nutrition, namely humans. At this point of the novel this suspicion is only a vague feeling that there is something wrong with the manner with which the attack was carried out. Only later in the novel the suspicion that a human being could have been involved in the killing of the chickens comes up again. When Khoza claims to be the new owner of the farm, Märit contemplates whether the murdering of the fowls has been an act of sabotage that made it easier for Khoza to settle in with Tembi and her. However, the suspicion is neither confirmed nor refuted.

Nature seems to revolt against the women’s persistence of remaining on the farm a second time, when a massive locust swarm sweeps across their property. The locust infestation comes about so suddenly that the women can do nothing but flee into the house. In the middle of her flight, it occurs to Tembi that her secret little garden is at the mercy of the insects if she does not protect it. She turns on the heel and storms into the dark cloud of approaching locusts. This daring action shows how important the five little plants that emerged from the seeds she planted are to her. She risks getting lost in a swarm of insects to protect what has become the only genuine sign of hope to her. Tembi only just manages to get back to the house, where Märit is frenetically fighting the locusts that enter the building through the chimney. Although Tembi assists her, the women finally give up that fight and retreat to the safety of Märit’s bedroom.

For readers familiar with the Old Testament this incident calls to mind the locust infestation God brings upon Egypt as the eighth plague that follows Pharaoh decision to refuse letting the Israelites leave the country (see Exodus 10). Since then, locusts have been a symbol of destruction and divine
punishment for disobedience (see Garai p.100, „grasshopper“ and Vries p. 615, „locust“). If one reads the passage in *A Blade of Grass* only against this background, the question evolves what Märit and Tembi are punished for? Is it their impertinence to try and run their own farm in a war zone, a forsaken area, as women? Is it the price they have to pay for staying on when everything signalises that the only chance to survive is to leave the boarder region? The reader finds that there is no plausible reason why the two women should be punished. Apart from that, Tembi’s explanation for the plague completely denies any symbolic or religious meaning whatsoever. When Märit is wondering where the locusts come from and why they specifically infest their farm, Tembi explains that there is no specific reason for such an invasion. According to the stories she has heard from the elders it is just something that happens by chance when “too many eggs hatch at the same time” (263). In order to find enough food the mass of simultaneously born locusts has to fly somewhere else. On their way they eat all the plants they can find, leaving whole stretches of land devastated. When and where such plagues appear, however, is purely coincidental. Thus this explanation also attests that the locust infestation is something absolutely natural. It is a very improbable event but it is something nature has up its sleeve if only a number of circumstances are met at the same time. Nevertheless, it is difficult to accept for Märit and Tembi that such a devastating and existence-threatening experience is part of nature. In the end, it is exactly the unpredictability of the event that nourishes the constant anxiety that some undetectable evil could strike at any time.

In Märit’s case this anxiety materializes in the fear of snakes. Her phobia comes from a shocking experience she has as a child when she accompanies her father to “the Snake Park in Durban” (31). What is more significant than the traumatic situation that triggered her fear of snakes are the effects it has on her daily life on the farm. From the moment she arrives at her new home in the countryside, she tries to find some connection to nature by walking about the land. During one of these walks, however, she suddenly realizes that she is just wearing sandals. Once being aware of her inadequate footwear, the anxiety about her vulnerability to snake bites grows. She cannot enjoy her stroll anymore because there is “[a]lways something to fear, to watch out for” (31). So, it is not an actual specimen of a snake she is terrified of but the mere possibility that one of these dangerous creatures might by hiding in the long
grass to attack her. Thus Märit’s snake phobia is a metaphoric representation of terror of an invisible threat, which is numerously depicted in contemporary South African fiction as a constituting part of the life of white people during the freedom struggle and beyond.

In another instance in the novel Märit’s snake phobia is used to depict a distinction in character between her and Tembi. One day Märit finds a mamba in the laundry and barely escapes from being bitten. When she storms out of the house neither Ben nor any of the farm workers is present. Therefore Märit tells Tembi, the only person in sight, to “find the Baas\(^\text{25}\) or one of the men” (75). Instead of following Märit’s instructions Tembi grabs a shovel and enters the house on her own. When the men arrive, Tembi has already killed the snake, which earns her the men’s respect and admiration. When she realises that Märit has “peed [herself] out of fright” (77) she guides her into the house. After Märit has put on clean clothes the two women have tea together. Märit is very thankful for Tembi’s help but she is also embarrassed about herself. Tembi tries to reassure her by admitting that she was frightened too. She says, “A mamba is a dangerous snake. We always kill them. These snakes are bad” (77). By reporting what they – the workers, the blacks – always do Tembi unconsciously differentiates between Märit and her. Märit is the anxious, white farmer’s wife while Tembi is one of the practical and down-to-earth black workers who take matters into their own hands. They know how to deal with the challenges of rural life. Their difference of capability of living a farm life is again depicted in connection with animals later in the novel. At that point they are already alone on the farm after everybody else has left. Since they have not much left to eat, they decide to kill one of their chickens. Märit is so inept in doing this that she just stabs the hen in the chest and only on Tembi’s command cuts the animal’s throat. This experience is so shocking for her that she refuses to touch the bird ever again. Tembi has to clean up the bloodstained floor without Märit’s help and afterwards also guts and plucks the chicken alone. When Tembi asks Märit to cut the meat for cooking it, she is still so disgusted that she “bites down on her lip and tries not to breathe as she slices the knife into the pale flesh” (222).

Although they are quite different in their capability of managing farm life, the two women share their love for nature and the longing to embed themselves

\(^{25}\) Baas = Afrikaans word for master or boss.
into this nature as human beings. This can be seen when they, independently of each other, experience similar encounters with animals.

In Märit’s case it is a kudu buck, similar to the one that inspired Ben and her on their first visit to name the farm Kudufontein. Ironically she only runs across it because she breaks with her normal walking routine, which includes staying inside the farm boundaries. On this special walk, Märit crosses “the barbed wire that marks the border of the farm, the limits of what she owns, the territory where she may walk without being a stranger” (35). By doing this she really enters the ‘wild’, uncultivated South Africa. She is just taking in the silence and enjoying her solitude and her irrelevance in comparison to the cosmos, when she hears a sound somewhere nearby. At once all her fears are back, her anxious self that tells her to flee. Again “[s]he feels herself watched, seen by the unseen” (36). When finally a kudu buck steps out of the bushes, Märit is greatly relieved. She is suddenly struck by “an almost overwhelming desire to embrace the kudu” (37). She has the impression that she can see the animal’s pure soul and starts approaching it slowly. When the kudu does not run away as she moves towards it, she even introduces herself to the animal.

“I am Märit,” she whispers.
The kudu ceases chewing for a moment, then emits a soft pant, like an answer, and again she smells the warm scent of grass, the very breath of the animal.
She stretches her hand forward, wanting just one touch, and she feels the warm breath on the tips of her extended fingers. Then the kudu steps back, and the regal head reaches up, and the wide shell-like ears swivel away. It turns without looking at her and moves back into the trees, unconcerned. (38)

In Tembi’s case the animal is much smaller than the kudu Märit encounters, namely a lizard. She notices it on one of her visits to the small garden she has built for herself. She sets it out in the bush secluded from the frequented areas on the farm. It is her attempt to claim a small patch of South African soil for herself, a spot so small and hidden that it is unnoticed by others but still her own piece of land. There, protected by stones and thorn bushes she puts five seeds into the earth, which become a symbol reminding her that some hope is still left. One day, when she secretly goes to water her garden, she allows herself to doze in the sun for a few moments, feeling a strong connection to the earth. When she awakes from her slumber, she sees a little lizard sitting on a flat stone close to where she lies. For every different shade of green in the animal’s
skin a particular plant comes to Tembi’s mind. Thus, the lizard’s colourful skin becomes a symbol of the diversity of nature and its “faint beating pulse” (65) a representation of life in general. Tembi is mesmerized by the observation of the little creature.

The small black eyes are like pebbles in the river, alert, glistening like jewels, and she knows the lizard watches her. When she blinks, the lizard makes a quick dipping movement of its head, dainty and quick, like a leaf moved by a puff of wind.

A longing comes over Tembi; she wants to stroke her finger across the smooth underside of the mouth, the way one would stroke a cat. She wants to feel the beat of the creature’s heart, the pulse of the secret heartbeat of the earth, the vibration in all living things.

Tembi raises her finger gently, but the lizard flicks its body around — a flash of green, quick as the blink of an eye — and it is gone into a crevice of shadow. Gone into the earth. (65)

In both cases the protagonists leave their social surroundings and go out into the wilderness, searching for solitude in order to leave their daily problems behind for a short time. They leave their social roles to experience themselves only as a single part of nature, no more, no less. Both of them come upon an animal that fascinates them in a similar way, although the creatures they meet are quite different in kind. It is the purity of life that captivates the women and creates an experience of sudden revelation and insight. The two heroines of the novel are then overcome by an equal desire to touch the respective animal and thus to become part of its existence. They literally feel the need to grasp what nature is. That they strive for establishing this connection to nature via an animal is not accidental. As stated by Martin Heidegger, animals are entities between humans and inanimate things. According to his distinction, material objects such as stones are “worldless” while humans on the opposite are “world-forming”. In other words, “[m]an is not merely a part of the world but is also master and servant of the world in the sense of ‘having’ world” (Heidegger qtd. in Atterton & Calarco 17, italics in original). In comparison to humans and material things, an animal is “poor in world”. This means that although it does not perceive and contemplate “what is around it and about it” (17) in the same way a human does, it nevertheless “has its own relationship” (17, italics in original) to the world surrounding it.

Although Märit and Tembi do not approach the animals they meet from such an intellectual, philosophical point of view, they still perceive them as something
between humans and the rest of nature. They even go beyond seeing their animal opposites as beings in the middle and ascribe human properties to them. Märit interprets the kudu’s pant as an answer to personally introducing herself by name, while Tembi is sure that the lizard is consciously watching her. By anthropomorphizing the animals, the women concede agency to them and treat them as persons rather than as animals. It is this phenomenon of humans sometimes believing to actually detect human features in animals that makes the latter perfect interfaces between humans and nature.

Both women fail to touch the animals in the very last second before their fingertips connect with the creatures’ bodies. The failure of satisfying their desire to feel the animals shows that ‘wild’ nature does not act according to the wishes of humans. No matter how close humans get to nature, they cannot fully grasp it in the end. It is elusive and cannot be held under total control no matter how hard humans try to govern and tame it. In the end, it is the realisation of this insight that drives Märit into suicide.

After the freedom fighters leave her behind, injured and alone, a group of baboons visits her in the house. At first Märit is afraid and thinks they have been observing the house, just waiting for her to be alone. She wonders if now they will “move into the house, as others have done, and possess it instead of her?” (372). This succession of occupation is symbolic for the constant change of leadership throughout South African history. Like the country, the house is taken over and exploited by whoever passes by, leaving the inhabitants helpless. Each new occupation rekindles Märit’s fear to lose land and property. Before things start to fall apart, Märit is the true master of the house. Ben and the workers are outside on the fields, while she works and lives in the house. It is her shelter, the only place that rightfully belongs to her, where she feels at home. For her the house is like South Africa has been for the whites since they colonized the country. Now this security is gone and various others come along to occupy the house as they please. She can neither defend it against Khoza nor against any group of soldiers, no matter which side they are fighting for. Finally, even the band of baboons comes along to claim the house. All these instances reflect a pathology appropriation of whatever one wants that seems to have become so ‘natural’ in South Africa. Throughout the novel Märit is subconsciously fighting this habit and rather tries to find her own place within the integral whole of nature. By making efforts to connect to the environment,
she hopes to obtain a state of peaceful coexist with all the other beings. Her last, desperate attempt in achieving this connection is when she starts to interact with the baboons that are prowling around the house. Once again she tries to speak to an animal.

“I only wanted to say hello,” Märit says softly. The big male barks again at her, like a shot of warning.

How strange they are, she thinks, looking at the baboons. Not like people, and not like other animals either. Yet somehow a bit of both. There is something ancient and dog-like about them, their long muzzles and the way they walk on all fours. Yet they seem human when they sit up and look at her with their intelligent eyes. The two babies are just like human children with their appealing faces. They are a family, a people, a tribe. (373)

In these contemplations about the baboons, DeSoto once again describes a state of being in between. Only this time the animals do not mediate between humans and nature but stand between humans and animals. For Märit the baboons appear to be half-human creatures with some sort of intellect that still walk like dogs. Interestingly here again the dog serves as a representative of the animal world, a paragon of animality so to say. What differentiates the baboons from pure animality is, according to Märit’s thoughts, the social structure they live in. Their solidarity as a group, a family, is what attracts her to them. In her loneliness she remembers that someone once told her that the baboons are also called “Rock People” (374) and she imagines that they are an ancient tribe, whose language has just been forgotten by humans over the centuries. Somehow she seems to rediscover this language when she is already close to starvation. For Märit, the last chance of survival is tied to the baboons and she engages in a telepathic conversation with one of their females.

“Where are your people, sister?” the baboon asks.
“I have none.”
“You have no one to belong to? Where is your family, sister?”
“I am alone on the earth.”
“Without a people to belong to you will die.”
“I am already dead.” Märit answers.
“Not yet, sister. Not yet.”
“What must I do? Where can I go?” Märit asks.
The baboon regards her with its wise and ancient face. “You can come with us.”
“Yes, yes, I can do that.” (374, italics in original)
Being alone, her desire to belong somewhere is stronger than ever before. It is so intense that she decides to live with the primates, subordinating herself to the big silvery male, the leader of the pack. She wants to become one of them, a sister of the other females. After talking to the female baboon, Märit is uncertain whether the conversation really happened or if it was only a hallucination. Anyhow, when the baboons set of to “the wild country beyond” (375), Märit tries to follow them in spite of her severed leg. When the monkeys do not wait for her, she remembers how a former neighbour of her once told her “about a man who had trapped a baboon and painted it with whitewash, so that when it tried to rejoin its fellows they fled from it in terror, as if it were a ghost” (375). It seems as if she is that ghost now, the white creature that the baboons do not want to welcome in their midst. Although it is utterly exhausting and painful for her to walk, she manages to follow the animals ahead of her at a short distance, just glimpsing how they enter a crevice in the Duiwelskop. Märit imagines that they live in there, undisturbed by the outside world. Her previous anxiety to live in close proximity to a place carrying such a name has disappeared. Her only desire is not to be rejected by the baboons. When she enters the crevice herself, however, the leader of the baboons blocks her way. He barks at her and she knows that she is not allowed to progress any further. Unwisely she disregards his warning and makes another step forward. Without further warning the baboon alpha male charges at her, slaps her face and knocks her down. When Märit regains consciousness she is alone and realizes that “[f]or the first time in her life a creature from the other side of life has touched her” (383). To her disappointment this touch of nature she has been longing for so eagerly is hostile instead of uplifting, disconnecting rather than connecting. It tells her that she is not welcome and more generally signifies that the rest of nature can perfectly do without humans. More than all the crises she has lived through, it is this ultimate insight that finally drives her into suicide, that makes her drown herself in the river.

In contrast to Tembi and Märit’s failure in connecting with nature, there is one person in the novel that actually is shown to be in touch with nature. It is Michael, a young black man with his tongue cut out, who just arrives at the farm some day. The women find him, as he is sitting under a tree, mimicking a bird’s song. They invite him into the farmhouse but he cannot stand sleeping there and instead sleeps in company of the chickens in their pen. He enters into a
special kind of relationship with the fowls, especially with the rooster Dik-Dik. Their friendship begins shortly after Michael's arrival, when he unexpectedly leaps at the bird, grabs him and presses him tight against his body. Initially Märit thinks he wants to kill him, before she realises that Michael is stroking the rooster's throat, making him drop his head limp in enjoyment. For Märit this is absolutely astonishing, since Dik-Dik usually aggressively defends his territory, especially against her. Actually she believes that the rooster hates her, again showing that she believes animals to have emotions. Over time Michael and Dik-Dik become best friends. Due to this special capability of connecting to the animals, it becomes Michael responsibility to look after the hens. The reason for the success of this special relationship between him as a human and animals as non-human others, is to be found in Michael's character. First of all, his odd behaviour makes Märit suspect that he is mentally challenged, which also seems to be the explanation for his limited capability of doing hard farm work without continual guidance. Secondly, he is dumb, i.e. not able to engage purposefully in human conversations that go beyond expressing vital needs. His dumbness, however, is not a disability he has been born with, but is the result of someone cutting out his tongue. This also indicates that he has had a hard time among humans. It seems that whomever he met before did not recognise him as a full-value human being for not conforming to some social norms. Thus, he either got kicked out of society or he decided himself to give up his place among humans. Whatever happened in his past, he seems to feel more at home when he is with animals. This special connection to the animal world is shown by his manner of treating the chickens and how he socialises with them. In his intercourse with the birds, it shows that his apparent deficiencies disappear. His tenderness and care for the chickens shows that he is capable of taking responsibility and fulfilling a job. Beyond that, his whistling and imitation of the birds' sounds allows him in a way to speak with the animals. He makes himself perfectly understood, without his missing tongue being any handicap for him.

In academic discourse, especially in anthropology and philosophy, human language has often been mentioned as one of the defining elements that distinguish humans from all animals. What scientists have been referring to is obviously the basic, physical and mental ability of the human species as a whole to communicate in a fully-fledged verbal language. In this respect, it is worthwhile examining the special relationships in South African fiction between
characters having language difficulties and animals and additionally analyzing the role played by the concept of animality within the depictions of these relationships.

The obvious reason for Michael’s inability to speak is his missing tongue but his depicted retarded intellect suggests that he would also have little linguistic competence if he actually still had his tongue. The sounds he actually does produce are either mimicked calls of birds produced with a simple “music box” (DeSoto 233) or “clucking sound[s] that he uses to talk to the chickens” (236). Besides that, there is also the fact that he sleeps outside the farmhouse in company of the chickens that makes him appear as a somewhat animal-like creature rather than a civilized human. In a way he becomes a chicken man, a kind of human rooster, who can only make himself clearly understood among birds. His ability to commune with birds can also be read differently, considering how the Believers in *The Heart of Redness* interpret the language of the birds. Zim, the elder of the Believers, regularly sits under a big tree next to the house conversing with the “amahobohobo weaverbirds” (*Redness* 117).

He is talking to the birds in whistles. “It is the language of the spirits,” he explains to his visitors after greeting them. “It is the language that the prophets used when they talked with the new people.” (117)

In this interpretation of birds, their language is a means of connecting earthly life and the otherworld. Actually, this symbolism is universal throughout human history and among all kinds of different cultures. Besides their predominant symbolic meaning of representing souls they are often depicted as “intermediaries between Heaven and Earth” (Vries, 89). From ancient Egypt over the Celtic world and Christianity to the Hopi Indians, birds are seen as messengers between gods and humans. Beyond that, especially the Koran states that the “‘language of the birds’ […] is that of angels – spiritual knowledge” (Vries 87). As one can see in Mda’s novel, this idea is also true for the amaXhosa people, if not for most indigenous tribes of Southern Africa. Those who can talk in whistles can contact the ancestors to get a deeper insight into worldly matters. Thus, knowing the language of the birds helps a human being – in most cases a shaman or prophet – to gain a deeper insight into the meaning of life. Generally speaking, what Mda depicts in *The Heart of Redness* is another instance of how humans try to find a connection to the great whole of
nature by communicating with animals. Nature in this context does not merely mean the natural environment in ecological terms but rather the underlying nature of all things.

Considering these aspects with regard to Michael in *A Blade of Grass*, he is not a handicapped person at all but rather someone who is closer to nature, not only physically but spiritually as well. He is outside the realm of society, communing with nature through the language of the birds, which necessarily results in a different way of looking at things. That he has a different view of the world is also reflected in his “smile, which is both emptier than that of other people and also shining with something that is not often in the smile of other people” (DeSoto 226). His consistent smile whenever the women address him also adds to Märit’s view that Michael “is like a child” (228). This is significant insofar as children often show a different treatment of animals in comparison with adults. When children start to explore the world, they have not yet learned about the superiority of humans above animals and nature, which the vast majority of adults takes for granted. They are still open to experiencing the creatures in their environment as wonders of nature. Besides that, he also “eats like a child, without the nicety of manners, intent on his hunger” (226), with parts of the food “trickling down his chin” (226). This mode of eating is not only the way children eat but also has reminiscence of an animal feeding. At least people who stand on ceremony and cultivate table culture may be tempted to make use of the idiom ‘to eat like a pig’. Objectively, he is only focused on satisfying his bodily needs without showing any respect for the social ritual of eating. How present the concept of animality is in the depiction of Michael’s character is also shown by the description of how he is “sometimes just sitting contentedly in the sun, just like a cat, his face upturned to the light” (228). Throughout his appearance in the novel he is continuously compared to animals. Finally, he is everything of the following, a dumb, a bird, a chicken man, a child and a cat but, eventually, not a ‘normal’ person.

Although Martin van Rensburg in *Skinner’s Drift* is different in most aspects of his character he shares one feature with Michael, namely his problems in connection with language. Clearly, he is not dumb like Michael but he is a severe stutterer, which also makes it difficult for him at times to communicate with other humans. This handicap earns him the name “Makakaretsa” among the children of the farm workers, “the man who cannot catch his words” (Fugard
Eva experiences her father’s stutter as “donkey-like sounds” (35), which she becomes horrified of. The only times Martin does not stutter are when he whispers something to his wife in privacy or “when speaking to a dog” (119). His dogs are of special importance to him and after his wife and his daughter they are the beings he loves the most. He even intends to give his old and sick bulldog Tosha “a decent burial” (50) after her death. This emotional connection to his dogs is the only sign that the otherwise angry, racist and dominating man can also be affectionate and caring. But even that extraordinary bond is not strong enough to pacify the Boer farmer’s mind. Although it presents itself as a chance for him to create a healthy connection to nature, his ingrained values paired with his insensitive pragmatism prevent him from grasping this opportunity. Instead he upholds his exaggerated and pathological love for South African soil, a love that is actually only a desire to possess a patch of land, disregarding all indigenous creatures living there. His relationship with nature is beyond repair as shown in the moment he shoots Tosha and tosses her carcass over a cliff, abandoning his intention of giving her a respectable funeral. It seems as if he can only connect to other beings through the use of a gun. He hunts for food, he goes on safari for trophies, he destroys scavengers out of anger and hatred and he finally only realizes how much he loves his wife when she is killed by a shot that is accidentally released from a rifle on his return from a safari. It is also at this point in the narration when he completely loses his language and with it his connection to both society and nature. Together with Lorraine his soul has also died and he continues to exist just as body. Reconsidering Jolly’s account of how the body is seen as the animal part of humans, Martin’s state can be described as his animal body having survived his human soul.

An outstanding relationship between a human and an animal that is more mythical and fable-like than all the other cases described so far is presented in Zakes Mda’s *The Whale Caller*. The nameless protagonist of that novel has learned over time to communicate with whales, which stay during spring and summer off the coasts of South Africa. To do this he manufactures horns out of dried kelp that is cast ashore by the sea. More astonishing still is the love relationship he has or claims to have with Sharisha, one of the Southern Right whales that come to Hermanus Bay every year. As a matter of fact their liaison is truly very humanlike, aside from one of the lovers being a whale. The
anthropomorphization of Sharisha is indeed so extensive that even intimacy is possible between the Whale Caller and the whale. Their intercourse happens in form of dance they perform together. While the Whale Caller dances on the rocks of a peninsula, “blowing his kelp horn, […] Sharisha respond[s] with her own love calls” (Whale Caller, 57). During the day this event attracts a great number of spectators but the two lovers continue their dance even during the night, wondrously endowed with extraordinary endurance.

In the cool breeze of the night, and with the absence of the spectators, the dance [becomes] even more frenzied. His horn penetrated deep into every aperture of the whale’s body, as if in search of a soul in the midst of all the blubber.

[…]
It was almost midday when Sharisha sailed away waving her flipper and the Whale Caller found his steps back to the shore. The crowd was going crazy, screaming, making catcalls and applauding. As soon as he reached the shore he fell on the ground in utter exhaustion. He was drenched in sweat and other secretions of the body. The front and the seat of his tuxedo pants were wet and sticky from the seed of life. (59)

Thus, his relationship with the whale is not something he merely makes up in his mind but also includes powerful physical experiences as well. Due to this likeliness to a relationship between humans it is understandable why his feelings for the animal are so intense. The real presence of deep emotions is also seen in the devastation the Whale Caller suffers when he one day has to watch how his beloved mates with four Southern Right males. He is “seized by a fit of jealousy” and calls them “a gang of rapists” (42). For him it is clear that Sharisha does not want this copulation to happen. She tries to flee from the males until they trap her in “shallow waters […] at the risk of stranding” (43) themselves. Although the Whale Caller tries everything, including yelling at the attackers and playing disharmonious sounds on his kelp horn to scare the males away, he is not able to prevent the deed. From his point of view it is impossible to accept that he has observed an event that is actually completely natural. So what he is really trying to do is intervening with the ‘nature’ of things, an undertaking that necessarily manoeuvres him into a state of overwhelming helplessness.
What Mda also hints at in this scene, whether consciously or not, is the epidemic problem of rape in South Africa. Rape is so endemic in South Africa that the Whale Caller cannot help interpreting the mating of the whales as an act of violence. After all, the helplessness he experiences is very similar to the feelings David Lurie in *Disgrace* must have when he is locked up in the bathroom while his daughter is gang raped upstairs. Both men cannot prevent their loved ones from being forced to copulate. Suffering this experience the Whale Caller’s belief in integrity and beauty of nature is utterly disappointed. However, the result of what the Whale Caller sees as an act of violence is that Sharisha gets pregnant, another parallel to Lucy Lurie’s rape. When his ‘girlfriend’ gives birth to a calf the following whale season, the Whale Caller is filled with joy and seems to have forgotten how this new life was created in the first place. Subsequently, he spends a lot of time with Sharisha and her young one, taking on a somewhat unconventional father role. The personification of the Sharisha is not only achieved by the way the Whale Caller treats the whale but also by her role as a competitor of Saluni for the Whale Caller’s affection.

From the first day of her personal relationship with the Whale Caller Saluni is jealous of Sharisha. Although she often claims that the Southern Right female is just a fish to upset the Whale Caller, she also treats Sharisha as a person by actively engaging with her into a competition. After some time Saluni’s aggression against the animal becomes so frantic that she starts mooning it, convinced that her nakedness embarrasses the whale. The complicated love triangle comes to an abrupt end when both of the Whale Caller’s loved beings die a tragic death. For Sharisha’s death he is even partly responsible. After a severe argument with Saluni he sadly leaves the house in his tuxedo, yearning for the presence of Sharisha, “who never calls him names or yells at him [and] who never deems or humiliates him” (196). In this respect he prefers the animal before his human girlfriend because it does not hurt his feelings or to be more precise, it is not able to do so on purpose. Sharisha does not speak the human language of accusations and reproaches, she communicates with her naturally given songs. Her behaviour is the direct expression of her momentary condition. In contrast to humans, who are able to feel one thing and communicate another, the whale is always straightforward. This security about

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26 See chapter 5 for a detailed account on the representation of rape in contemporary South African fiction.
what he can expect getting from Sharisha is an important factor for the Whale Caller’s attraction to her. When he is with Sharisha he becomes a part of nature like her and everything in life seems unmistakably clear. On his way down to the sea he assumes that Sharisha has already sailed off to colder regions of the ocean, in order to spend the rest of the year there. He is so depressed that he longs to die, to “become[…] one with [the mud]” (197) by playing his kelp horn until he breaks down. He closes his eyes and starts playing Sharisha’s song.

As he blows the horn furiously and uncontrollably she comes swimming just as furiously. She has been longing for the horn. She has not heard it for a long time. All she wants is to bathe herself in its sounds. To let the horn penetrate every aperture of her body until she climaxes. To lose herself in the dances of the past. She is too mesmerised to realise that she has recklessly crossed the line that separates the blue depth from the green shallows.

[...]

At first he thinks he has conjured her up in his imagination. But when he hears the deep bellows that send tremors to the muddy peninsula he knows she is all too real. And all too close. (197)

Sharisha has stranded herself because of the Whale Caller’s music. Whatever he and the emergency workers, who arrive during the hours after the incident, attempt to rescue the big Southern Right is of no avail. Finally, government officials decide to put Sharisha out of her misery by blowing her up with dynamite. The Whale Caller’s long years of trying to connect with nature have at last found an unsuccessful end in the death of his favourite animal. This turn of events is beside its dramatic effect also an insistent warning that efforts of integrating wild animals into human life cannot succeed without one party suffering severely. Animals are not made to lead a human life and vice versa. This conclusion must not be misread, however, as a reproduction of the common suggestion that one group is a higher form of existence than the other. Finally, the tragic end of the Whale Caller’s attempt of connecting with Sharisha leaves the question if not both, humans and animals, were better off with a kind of coexistence where one party does not interfere too much with the life of the other.

Summarizing the depictions of relationships between humans and animals in contemporary South African fiction, it evolves that a strong desire can be detected among diverse characters to find or regain a meaningful connection to nature. This longing often goes hand in hand with a return to traditional virtues
as presented in *The Heart of Redness*. It is also very often a reaction to, or rather a protest action against a society that is dominated by violence in present and past. Most of the characters in question leave the boundaries of society to embed themselves into the circle of life as parts of nature, rejecting the human habit of striving for dominance over creation. By attempting to live the “biological egalitarianism” (Kellman 336) pointed out by Lucy Lurie in *Disgrace* they suggest an alternative way of how peaceful coexistence could be achieved in a new South Africa. Unfortunately, most of the characters who search their fortune by turning their back on human society are violently rejected by nature. Thus the authors’ final message is that eventually nature cannot be governed and people would be well advised to leave the land alone.
7. Spiritual animals: mythological and religious references

South Africa constitution acknowledges not less than eleven official languages, which is proof for the country being home to a multitude of ethnicities. At least since the coinage of the term ‘rainbow nation’ by former Archbishop Desmond Tutu, it is clear that cultural diversity is a principal constituent of South African national identity after the fall of apartheid. With Tutu representing the clergy it is also clear that this praised mixture of ethnicities necessarily includes a plurality of religious beliefs. In contemporary South African fiction the coexistence of different creeds often appears as a theme in the form of a struggle between official religions and traditional belief systems of indigenous tribes. Obviously, this controversy is also connected to questions of colonialism, post-colonialism and apartheid suppression, a detailed examination of which would need and deserve a separate research study. Although this chapter touches parts of these questions it cannot give an extensive interpretation of all relevant issues connected to them but rather focuses on explicit appearances of animals in the context of mythical and religious references featuring in the contemporary South African novels discussed.

At first it might seem improper to treat religion and myth in one single chapter but there are two good reasons for justifying such an approach. The first one lies in the aforementioned opposition of different cultural belief systems. After all, it is a simplistic common tactic when criticising the beliefs of others to dismiss them as mere myths. Since a multiethnic country like South Africa is home to so many beliefs it is hardly surprising that religious practice is a constant source of social friction. As a consequence religion and myth frequently appear in the novels in interrelation with each other, which means that one cannot be discussed without making reference to the other. Secondly, a reason for a joint consideration can be found in the similar function of animals as symbols in both mythical and religious references and their consequent employment as narrative elements by contemporary South African authors.

As this chapter will illustrate, allusions to the bible as well as tales of indigenous tribes – both including animals – are used to hint at recent religious, social and political problems to be found in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. In this context both types of references – religious and mythical – have to be understood as long established attempts of interpreting the world that are

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27 For a complete list cf. http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/landpeople.htm#languages
partially based on supernatural explanations, which are then scrutinized in literature against the background of aspects of modern life. As such they are literary instruments, the examination of which must not be misunderstood as either verifications or falsifications of their respective underlying belief systems. In other words, the following remarks do not claim to assess the truth-value of spiritual and cultural beliefs passed on from one generation to the next but rather try to reveal what the animals included in the references signalise within the respective narration in question.

That the issue of religious diversity is not only a question of world religions versus so called natural religion can be seen in Zakes Mda’s book, *The Whale Caller*. In a flashback at the beginning of the novel Mda narrates how the nameless hero’s process of becoming the Whale Caller is actually initiated four decades before the main course of events sets off. At that time he is a fellow worshipper in a Christian community that celebrates mass by dancing to the sounds of harps and drums accompanied by the humming tones of a kelp horn player. When the horn player gets to old to play the horn sufficiently, the Whale Caller-to-be takes his place. Since he performs “so celestially” (*Whale Caller* 6) the bishop decides to remove all other instruments from their religious service in order not to corrupt the sound of the horn. This decision leads to a controversy among the Elders of the community, who insist that harps and tambourines are divine instruments since they back the singing of angels in heaven. As both sides refuse to compromise on this matter, the Bishop and his followers secede from the congregation and found “the Church of the Sacred Kelp Horn” with the Whale caller as “Chief Horn Player” (see *Whale Caller* 6). This new religious splinter group uses to hold its baptisms at the beach where the bishop immerses everyone to be baptised into the sea thrice. This ceremony is accompanied by the sacred tones the Whale Caller plays on his kelp horn. On one of these occasions a whale surfaces a short way off the worshippers and curiously approaches the administration of the sacrament. The whole congregation watches the huge animal in astonishment.

It submerged and waved its tail above the water. It began to lobtail – slapping the water repeatedly with its tail. The congregation cheered. The Chief Horn Player blew the horn to the rhythm of the splashing water. His Eminence was struck by a brilliant idea for an instant sermon on Jonah and the whale.
‘We are being sent to Nineveh, my children,’ he boomed above the din. ‘Like Jonah of the Bible, God is sending us to Nineveh.’ (Whale Caller 7)

After reciting Jonah 1:2 the bishop claims that “God is speaking through this whale [... and is] sending [them] to Nineveh”. This interpretation necessarily leads the congregation to the question where Nineveh is? The Whale Caller suggests that Cape Town has to be Nineveh since the community has long been planning to go there. With all its high society, overflowing tourism and capitalistic commerce it seems to be the perfect embodiment of “the sinful world” (8). The bishop continues preaching that although the bible falsely calls the whale a fish and despite the natural impossibility of surviving in a whale’s stomach the worshippers have to believe the story of Jonah since also Jesus Christ never doubted it to be true. During this enthusiastic speech the Whale Caller is already following his own thoughts. He is fascinated that apparently he can communicate with a whale by blowing his horn. This realisation becomes the turning point in the Whale Caller’s life and he turns his back on the “Church of the Sacred Kelp Horn” and sets out on a 20 year long journey along the major part of the South African coastline. He leaves behind the Christian worshipping in a community and instead chooses a lonely voyage on which he forms his personal religion by continually improving his ability to commune with nature. This pilgrimage finds its ultimate destination in Hermanus, the whale-watching Mecca of South Africa, where he settles to venerate the whales as the saints of his individual creed. Especially Sharisha, a Southern Right whale, is the target of his admiration and he actually falls in love with her. His religious practice also involves regular confessions, similar to the Christian sacrament of reconciliation with the awkward difference that he confesses to a spiritual, omniscient entity called Mr Yodd, who dwells in a cave among rock rabbits. It is an invisible, godlike creature that laughs at the Whale Caller no matter what he confesses. For the Whale Caller to be humiliated in this way serves as “a self-flagellation” and provides the regular “dose of mortification” he needs to feel devoted. In addition to his rituals his renunciation of worldly joys and his celibate lifestyle complete his appearance as an ascetic monk.

This way of life is challenged, however, when he starts to get interested in Saluni, the village drunk, who seems to follow him and observe his actions. When their relationship intensifies and small talk gives way to more personal conversations Saluni becomes more and more annoyed with his rejection of
physical affection. She accuses him that his worshipping of Sharisha has killed his masculinity and that his rigid, pseudo-religious morals keep him from being happy. In one of these disputes Mda counterposes Jonah to Sharisha and Mr Yodd when the Whale Caller tries to give a spiritual explanation why Saluni’s heavy cursing is to be condemned.

'We are being observed all the time, Saluni,' he says, adopting some measure of seriousness. 'We must behave appropriately at all times. Garbage must not come from our mouths.'

'And who is observing us?'

He is rather vague about this, as if the question has caught him off guard.

'Perhaps it is your big fish,' suggests Saluni. 'You are always dreaming of your big fish.'

'Whales are not fish!' he moans.

It is her turn to laugh.

'The Bible says they are fish so they are fish.'

'The Bible says no such thing.'

'It says Jonah was swallowed by a big fish.'

To steer Saluni away from insulting Sharisha he decides that the person who is watching them is Mr Yodd.

'And who is Mr Yodd? Another one of your whales?'

'Perhaps it is time I formally introduced you to Mr Yodd,' says the Whale Caller. (Whale Caller 70f)

Here the reference to the Bible is used by Saluni to ridicule the Whale Caller’s religious beliefs and his adoration of Sharisha. Additionally she also uses the passage of Christian scripture to disparage Sharisha by saying that the whale is ‘just’ a fish in contradiction to the Whale Callers insistent claim that they are mammals. A vital component for this insult to actually unfold its offending effect is the underlying presumption that fish are inferior to mammals, which implies a hierarchical structure within the animal kingdom. Ultimately, it is exactly an attitude like this that places the human species at the top of creation rendering all other animals subject to its power. Apart from that Saluni employs a strictly literal interpretation of the Bible to make her insult work. From an objective point of view, however, this is an insufficient approach towards the religious text since it disregards the metaphorical meaning of the passage in question. In the book of Jonah as well as in a number of “initiation myths of Polynesia, Black Africa and Lapland” (Vries ‘whale’) the whale that swallows a person stands for death and hell as the victims descend into the impenetrable darkness inside the monster’s belly. Accordingly, spitting the person out again
stands for resurrection or initiation. With his affection for and worship of whales the Whale Caller contradicts these old interpretations of whales as metaphorical sea monsters. For him they are evidences for the divinity of nature itself and consequently encountering them can only bring joy and happiness, no matter what the Bible claims they are.

To make Saluni stop insulting Sharisha and him the Whale Callers changes the subject of their conversation and introduces Mr Yodd, another main constituent of his personal religion. Ironically, the insults he cannot take from Saluni he virtually desires to receive from Mr Yodd. At first Saluni tries to resist against the Whale Caller’s suggestion to visit Mr Yodd but he drags her along to his deity’s grotto and introduces her to him. Resenting the Whale Caller for forcing her to accompany him Saluni refuses to follow his example and kneel down in front of Mr Yodd’s habitation. The frequency of his confessional conversations with Mr Yodd drastically decreases from the point on when intimacy enters his relationship with Saluni. Quite contrary Saluni seems to overcome her initial resentment to the Whale Caller’s religious ritual and starts visiting the grotto regularly to confess to Mr Yodd. In contrast to the Whale Caller, however, she is invulnerable to Mr Yodd’s mocking laughter. Despite that, she stays suspicious of the advice she receives from him because she knows that Mr Yodd is “the past master of shaming” (142) who sometimes uses “trick[s] to mortify somebody” (142). Yet, when Mr Yodd proposes a new tactic that seems to have an effect in Saluni’s jealous fight against Sharisha she offers him sacrifices such as fruits and flowers, which she spreads out around the entrance of the cave. Parallel to describing Saluni’s spiritual offerings Mda employs his cunning humour to make her actions look ridiculous. As soon as she puts her presents on the ground of the grotto entrance, rock rabbits come out to drag everything edible inside. Saluni is enraged about the ‘powerful’ Mr Yodd’s lack of control over the small rodents. She complains to him and warns, “Some [rock rabbits] can’t wait before they take a bite. You need to discipline your rock rabbits, Mr Yodd. They must never partake of oblations before they present them to the master” (142).

Eventually, Saluni’s quote from the Old Testament is ineffective since it is not important for the Whale Caller anymore what the Bible says about whales as he has turned his back on Christianity in his twenties. He rather appreciates

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28 cf. Vries ’whale’ p. 1096f and Garai ’whale’ p. 89
myths such as the Aboriginal tale about the origin of the whale’s blow, which he
tells Saluni somewhat after the incident quoted above. According to this legend
Whale Man is the only one among all creatures of Dreamtime who had a canoe.
Since the land is under threat to be flooded by melt water the creatures need
the canoe to save their lives. However, because Whale Man is too selfish to
lend the other creatures his boat they decide to take it away without his
permission. Starfish Man is the only one who was courageous enough to carry
out their plan. He tricks Whale Man by offering to clear his callosities of all the
pestering sea lice. Enjoying his head being massaged Whale Man does not
realize that Koala Man cuts the rope that ties the canoe to its owner’s leg. While
all the other creatures escape, Starfish Man falsely assures Whale Man that his
canoe is still all right. When Whale Man discovers the deceit he leaps at
Starfish Man, who manages to pick up a rock and hit his opponent on the head
twice. The two wounds on his head make Whale Man so angry that he beats
Starfish Man until he is completely flat before he throws him in the sea where he
still lies today. Meanwhile the other creatures have escaped and push the
canoe back into the ocean so that Whale Man can neither track them nor
actually retrieve his stolen boat. Until today Whale Man is still looking for his
“canoe, blowing water from the head wounds inflicted by Starfish Man, way way
back in Dreamtime” (140).

By weaving the different appearances of whales in religious scripture and
Aboriginal mythology into the Whale Caller’s personal relationship to the aquatic
giants Mda creates an implicit confrontation of quite diverging belief systems.
How the whale as the object of observation is perceived from different spiritual
points of view reflects not only the status of animals within these different
mindsets but also allows to draw conclusions about how others are likely to be
approached by members of one denomination or another. In the Aboriginal
myth, for example, the whale is not a mere whale but a Whale Man, i.e. an
individual being that is not just an arbitrary exemplar of a species. In the
comparison with the story of Jonah this clearly reflects that animals are of
higher significance to Aboriginal belief as a result of their closer communion
with nature. One might argue now that the myth of Whale Man is similar to
fables found in Western cultures and therefore has neither more nor less validity
than these narratives. However, since the Aboriginal tale recounted by the
Whale Caller is set in Dreamtime\(^{29}\) it forms part of the complex creation mythology of the Aborigines and thus has a significantly higher influence on their understanding of the world than fables have for Westerners. In his narrative Mda even employs a more explicit level of anthropomorphization by letting the Whale Caller name Sharisha and thus granting her a particular personal identity reflected in the rather human interactions of man and animal. In the introduction to the Whale Man myth Mda writes that the Aborigines “share their love for the southern rights with the Khoikhoi people who lived along the shores of the present-day Hermanus” (138) long ago. By means of comparing the affection for whales between Australian Aborigines and the Khoikhoi\(^{30}\) people Mda establishes a connection between the Whale Caller’s spiritual attitude towards the environment and South African tribal culture. In this respect it is also important to point out that the Whale Caller does not only anthropomorphize Sharisha but that he also animalizes Saluni and himself. After Saluni compares him to a blue whale the Whale Caller discourses on this metaphor in one of his confessions to Mr Yodd. He praises the size and strength of blue whales and argues that “Jonah can’t have been swallowed by anything lesser” (49). True to the motto: ‘God would only use the greatest among the whales to serve His purposes’. After having doubts at first, the Whale Caller becomes more confident and believes that can come up to Saluni’s expectations.

> I can be her blue whale. And you know what, Mr Yodd, I was born to be a blue whale, now that I think of it. Blue whales are not common. They are unattainable. Like me ... can’t get ... can’t buy ... can’t deposit! They are not for the land-bound. They are out there, hundreds of miles into the ocean. You don’t toy with a blue whale, Mr Yodd. [...] You can laugh as much as you like, I am a blue whale. (49)

Then, however, Mr Yodd mentions Orca’s and the Whale Caller’s doubts return as he remembers that killer whales “have been known to attack blue whales and tear them to pieces for lunch” (50). He realizes that their size does not make blue whales invulnerable. He tries to controvert Mr Yodd’s suggestion that “Saluni is [his] killer whale” (50) but in the end his self-flagellation through the entity of Mr Yodd makes him lose his newly won confidence, which leads to

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\(^{29}\) For a closer account of the concept of Dreamtime cf. Morphy, „Dreamtime“

\(^{30}\) Together with the San, the Khoikhoi are said to be the earliest people known to inhabit South Africa, the former being hunter-gatherer, the later a partly nomadic people of herders. Cf. http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/history.htm
his relenting acknowledgement that he is “not a blue whale” (50). Despite this final retreat, the Whale Caller’s initial enthusiasm for Saluni’s comparison shows how profound his identification with the whales is and how they serve as his personal totem animals. In this respect it is revealing to take a closer look at a philosophical examination of the religious phenomenon of totemism. The Whale Caller’s case is an instance of individual totemism. This claim is not only based on the equation of himself with a blue whale but also on the circumstance that “[i]ndividual totemism is expressed in an intimate relationship of friendship and protection between a person and a particular animal or a natural object (sometimes between a person and a species of animal)” (“totemism” Enc. Brit.). Hans-Dieter Klein argues that when individuals chooses to be an animal, i.e. when they mentally identify themselves with an animal, they decide against their existence as an autonomous, rational being. At the same time the choosing person also decides for his or her freedom through the mere act of taking this decision. In this way, Klein remarks, the identification with a totem animal is both a decision against one’s autonomy and, at the same time, a symbol of one’s personal freedom. (see Klein 54f). Yet, this does not explain what the underlying purpose is of identifying oneself with a natural being. Klein gives the following answer:

Die Phantasieentscheidung für die totemistische Identifikation mit den Naturwesen hat demnach den Sinn, sich in der Phantasie in einen Zustand zu begeben, in welchem Sein und das Gute nicht so auseinandergetreten sind wie dort, wo menschliche Freiheit herrscht und wo Tugend und Glückseligkeit niemals in entsprechenender Proportion hier und jetzt aufzufinden sind. (Klein 55)

Reconsidering how Cape Town, in its comparison with Nineveh at the beginning of the novel, symbolizes the sinfulness human freedom can lead to, the Whale Caller’s rejection of worldly joys and his devotion to the whales becomes more reasonable. By choosing the whales as his totem animals the Whale Caller unconsciously takes a stand against capitalism, globalisation and extensive tourism, which seem to have become a common feature of the new South Africa. Through his relationship with the whales he creates exactly what Klein describes, a world that is capable of combining existence and moral good. Moreover, the Whale Caller’s strange mixture of individual totemism and remaining aspects of his Christian teaching is the source of his continual inner
conflicts, which symbolically represents the difficulty South Africa faces with being a home to a diversity of ideologies.

A form of group totemism, in contrast to the Whale Callers individual variant, features in another one of Mda’s novels, *The Heart of Redness*. One morning, the novel’s hero, Camagu, is alarmed by a shriek of the housemaid who is cleaning his hotel room. When he rushes out of the bathroom to find out what has happened, "he sees a brown snake uncoiling itself slowly on his blankets" (*Redness* 98). Only seconds later, workers arrive to kill the vermin but Camagu forbids them to hit it. Initially this behaviour raises scepticism among the men.

"Why? Is he crazy like those Believers who want to protect lizards?" asks a gardener.
"No," says Camagu. "This is not just any snake. This is Majola."
It begins to register on the men.
"You are of the amaMpondomise clan then?"
"Yes. I am of the amaMpondomise. This snake is my totem."
[...]
The men understand. They are of the amaGcaleka clan and do not have snakes as totems. As far as they are concerned, snakes are enemies that must be killed. But they know about the amaMpondomise of the Majola clan. They know also that in their upbringing they were taught to respect other people’s customs so that their own customs could be respected as well. As they walk away, they talk of Camagu in great awe. They did not expect a man with such great education, a man who has lived in the lands of the white people for thirty years, to have such respect for the customs of his people. He is indeed a man worthy of their respect. (*Redness* 98f)

As Mda shows here, the diversity of spiritual beliefs does even exist within a people. The amaGcaleka and the amaMpondomise both belong to the amaXhosa people but nevertheless have significant differences in their mythology. The sacredness of Majola for the amaMpondomise traces back to an incident at the birth of king Majola, when a mole snake mysteriously appeared beside the queen in labour. Over time and after recurring visits the snake itself was named Majola (see Scheub 243ff)\(^31\). Despite their different beliefs, the other amaXhosa men respect Camagu’s affinity to the snake or more precisely they are impressed that a modern man like him cherishes traditional, tribal values. However, this kind of tolerance is completely absent in relation to a more prominent spiritual issue among the amaXhosa people, namely the controversy between Believers and Unbelievers. In the quote above,

\(^{31}\) The entire tale about the sacred snake can be read in Harold Scheub’s book *The tongue is fire.*
the men point out the idiocy of the Believers that manifests itself in their ambition to protect lizards. This utterance is a perfect example of a stereotypical insult the Unbelievers use against the Believers. Quite contrary to this reductionistic depiction, the Believers are not just radical environmentalist but rather members of the amaXhosa people who retain their ancestors’ spiritual approach to nature. They consider animals – some kinds more explicitly than others – as sacred beings. Accordingly, encounters with animals, especially wild ones, are not acts of mere chance but always convey meaning. In this spiritual context birds are of specific importance for the Believers. Ibis is called to assist them in their fight against the Unbelievers (see Redness 196f). The Nomyayi bird appears in dreams and takes the dreamer into “the land of the prophets” (47). The essential quality all birds have in common, however, is their ability to speak “the language of the spirits [...] the language that the prophets used when they talked with the new people” (117). As de Vries points out “[t]he flight of birds leads them, naturally, to serve as symbols of the links between Heaven and Earth” (Vries 86). This symbolic meaning is culturally unaffected and can be found in Greek mythology, Taoism, Chinese literature, the religion of the Hopi Indians (see Vries ‘bird’), not to forget the Christian representation of the Holy Spirit as a dove. Beyond that, the association of birds with human souls is a universal image that appears in a great variety of myths depicting the ascension of the soul to heavenly afterlife in the form of a bird. In the Koran “birds are more especially symbols of angels” (87) and their language “is that of angels – spiritual knowledge” (87). Furthermore the Koran states that nobody less than King Solomon was able to speak the language of the birds (see Vries 88). Thus, the Believers’ interpretation of birds goes along with a universal symbolic meaning, an archetype in the Jungian sense. Accordingly, the Believer’s ability to “talk [...] in whistles” (Redness 39) shows their upright spiritual connection to the world of the ancestors and their access to spiritual knowledge. The bird language is such an integrative part of a Believer’s being that they sometimes even use it for everyday communication. For example, when Zim and his daughter Qukezwa are in a good mood, they “talk among themselves in the language of the birds” (39). With these considerations in mind, it is not astonishing that the Believers oppose the killing of any bird even if it is done by herd boys out of naivety, a practice that the eldest Unbeliever Bhonco portrays as a natural part in the process of growing up. Most of the
elders do not agree with Bhonco in this respect as their evaluation of the punishment of boys “for killing the red-winged starling, the isomi bird” (*Redness* 216, italics in original).

It is a sin to kill isomi. [...] These are sacred birds. If an isomi flies into your house your family will be blessed. Isomi is a living Christ on earth. If you kill isomi you will be followed by misfortune in every direction you go. When we punish boys for killing red-winged starlings, we are teaching them about life. We are saving them from future misfortune. (217)

In their announcement the most vehement preservers of amaXhosa mythology call a bird that is sacred in their natural religion ‘a living Christ’. This is another evidence for the common association of birds with heaven but also shows again how intermingled religions in South Africa are today. Mda often uses this combination of religion and myth in his narratives as also Qukezwa’s mysterious pregnancy shows. When it becomes known that she is pregnant the grandmothers of Qolorha-by-Sea examine her virginity and declare that she has never met a man in her life (see *Redness* 174). Although Mda does not ultimately resolve the mystery of the conception the reader is tempted to connect it to Qukezwa and Camagu’s mystic ride on Gxagxa. To understand the role of the mount in this situation one has to recall that another horse called Gxagxa exists in the days of Nongqawuse. It belongs to Twin, Qukezwa’s ancestor, and is venerated for the celestial sense of direction it shows in the quest for new pastures, which are needed to secure the survival of the amaXhosa people (see *Redness* 51 & 76). When the clairvoyant horse dies of the raging, epidemic lungsickness Qukezwa’s ancestral namesake, Twin’s wife, mourns the animal’s death by playing the umrhube, an isiXhosa string instrument. While playing she closes her eyes and sees Twin, herself and their baby boy ride on Gxagxa. On the back of the mythical mount they ascend into the clouds in the sky. “Through the voice of the umrhube she [sees] the new people riding on the waves, racing back according to the prophecies, and led by none other than Gxagxa and the headless patriarch” (154).

In present-day Qolorha-by-Sea the new Gxagxa seems to be involved in Qukezwa’s unsolved pregnancy. It is a “silvery night” (150) when Qukezwa with a “silvery voice” (151) invites Camagu for a ride. At first he hesitates, before he joins her on the back of the “silvery beast” (151), where she sits “all silvery in her smug smile” (151). As always, Qukezwa rides “bareback and reinless”
When Gxagxa “gallops on the rough silvery rock that dot the coastline above the silvery ocean” (152) Qukezwa starts playing the umrhubhe. The tones emitted by the traditional instrument in combination with the young woman’s split-tone singing sends Camagu into a trancelike state out of which he only awakes when “he realizes that his pants are wet” (152). Later, when Camagu is told that Qukezwa is pregnant without knowing the father and still a virgin he mockingly asks if “[h]er virginity was broken by horse-riding, and she conceived from that?” (174). However, the mysterious pregnancy keeps bothering Camagu and he begs Qukezwa to take him on a ride once again so that he can try to understand what happened on Gxagxa’s back the other night. Although they undress during this second trip to ride naked and Qukezwa sings again, “Camagu cannot feel a thing. The silvery night cannot be recaptured” (203). Despite the fact that the myth of pregnancy without copulation is not restricted to one culture of religion it is predominantly associated with the Roman Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Therefore the omission of a rational explanation of Qukezwa’s pregnancy almost automatically creates a reference to the Virgin Mary’s conception of Jesus Christ. Mda puts this reference into the context of a fable-like horseback ride and thus establishes a link between religious teachings and the traditional importance of animals in isiXhosa mythology. As the examinations of snakes, birds and horses suggest, the species of mythical animals within the belief system of the amaXhosa vary widely but undoubtedly one of the peoples’ most important symbol is the bull.

Besides its obvious, mundane significance for a people of herders its prominent part in isiXhosa mythology is extensive. In the times of Nongqawuse the amaXhosa started slaughtering their contaminated cattle in an unexampled incidence of mass sacrifice to fulfil the prerequisites that would bring the new, divine breed of cattle promised in the visions of the prophetess. The symbolic starting point of this slaughtering is the killing of King Sarhili’s best bull, “which [is] famous for its beauty in all the land. Poets had recited poems and musicians had composed songs about it. When it [falls], people [know] that there [is] no turning back. The cattle had to be killed” (Redness 79). According to C.G. Jung numerous myths exist about a sacrifice of a superior animal specimen causing fruitfulness or even the entire creation. In this respect, he mentions the example of Mithras’ sacrifice of the divine bull that creates Earth itself with all its
progenies. (see Jung 237). In their devastated situation the amaXhosa expect a similar salvation of the killing of their contaminated cattle.

In isiXhosa mythology one can also find a tale about a specific mythical bull. This superior bovine animal carries the name Jingqi and is the favourite bull of the great umXhosa warrior Maqoma. The tale of these two is at the centre of Patricia Schonstein’s *A Quilt of Dreams*. In short, the story is about the imprisonment of Maqoma on Robben Island for fighting the British colonialists. Jingqi “wait[s] on the mainland for his master as a dog might wait” (Schonstein 236), or to paraphrase the animal symbolism the bull is a faithful and devoted companion of the great warrior. One day the pet-like bovine decides “to fetch the one [it] was loyal to” (236). Among the amaXhosa people legend has it that Jingqi manages to gallop the entire distance from the Mnqwazi mountains to Cape Town in one day without losing its way. Against cattle’s natural aversion to swimming Jingqi plunges into the water and even swims the distance from the shore to the prison island without trouble. However, the association of bulls and the sea is not abnormal if one considers that they are “sacred to POSEIDON, god of the sea and of storms” (Vries 131) in ancient Greek mythology. Despite the seemingly supernatural skills for one of its species, Jingqi is not successful in rescuing Maqoma. When the bull charges for the sea with his master on his back they are both shot before they can reach the safety of the waves.

In *A Quilt of Dreams* this story is told to Vita in order to make her understand the special value of the Boer Isaac’s favourite bull, which Vita’s great-great-grandfather, who is the nephew of Maqoma, has to buy in order to obtain his prospect father-in-law’s approval for marrying his daughter. The predominant quality that distinguishes it from other bulls is its blood link to the mythical bull Jingqi. Here Schonstein does not only show the significance of animals in isiXhosa mythology but also the importance of lineage for the amaXhosa people in both human and beast. That is to say, they do not only revere their human ancestors but also the ancestors of their animals. Based on this ascription of mythical qualities to outstanding specimen of cattle the bull in Schonstein’s novel functions as a connective symbolic element between the different character’s subplots. The initial point of all these coherences is the unaccomplished purchase of the Boer Isaac’s favourite bull by Vita’s great-

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32 Cf. Appendix part 12.1 for the entire tale in verse form as given in *A Quilt of Dreams*. 
great-grandfather. By marrying without being able to hand over the desired animal as a gift to his wife’s father he brings a curse onto his family that causes bad luck for all his descendants down to Vita. Reuben becomes an instrument of that bad luck when he kills Vita’s brother on duty for the South African army in the fight against black activists. Another manifestation of the curse can be seen in the internment of Vita’s father as a political prisoner on Robben Island similar to Maqoma. After Vita learns this ultimate reason for her families’ hardship through her grandmother’s narration, the little girl decides to right Phathuxolo’s wrong by buying a worthy bull for her ancestor’s gold coin. As a descendant of the Boer Isaac, Reuben one day receives a figurine of a bull carved by his absent father. The black man who gives him the sculpture insists that he can only get it in combination with an isiXhosa legend. By this means Reuben gets to know the story of Maqoma and Jingqi, which he initially underestimates as “just some bit of black history” (Schonstein 303). When Vita is hit by a bullet during a students’ protest march Reuben saves her from bleeding to death, not knowing that she is the sister of Boniface, the activist he has murdered. Rescuing Vita is in a way an act of unknown penance for the killing of her brother. During this rescue operation Reuben gives the figurine of the bull as a present to Vita, who holds it tight in her hand until she awakes days later amid her reunited family. In the carved bull Vita’s grandmother detects a sign that the spirit of the Boer Isaac’s bull must have visited the girl and it finally returned to their family. So in the end, the bull’s mythical powers symbolically free Vita’s father, accomplishing what Jingqi failed to do in the legends. After coming to terms with his past also Reuben is able to experience the spiritual importance of the bull. In the last paragraph of the novel he is setting off to starting a new life, leaving his past behind, when he hears “from the far distance, a bull bellowing loud and triumphantly into the new day” (354).

Although the extracts of the novels discussed in this chapter only constitute a small fraction of all the appearances of myth and religion in contemporary South African fiction they are able to show that challenging and reinterpreting ancient values is a mission numerous authors undertake in their novels. As one can also see the mode of these investigations varies widely. Some of the writers simply take a spiritual or religious dispute as the main content of their narration while others try to employ myth as a narrative technique to rekindle traditional tribal values and beliefs. Some, like Mda and Schonstein, even make efforts to
do both at the same time – to great success. The fact that contemporary South African writing is frequently concerned with traditional spiritual beliefs indicates that there is a strong desire to understand and come to terms with the past.

However, the regular reoccurrences of myth and religion including their respective animal symbolism is not only a question of accepting and making peace with the past but also a means of addressing contemporary problems from another point of view. It is an attempt to find clues in tradition that can help to deal with the challenges of modernity, a modern life where spirituality seems to be losing its place and where globalization blurs the cultural rites and customs of many a people. South African fiction tries to counter this hodgepodge of beliefs and strives to establish recognition for every set of cultural values in its own right. Of course, there is also a strong call for unity of the multitude of ideologies, creeds and religions in South Africa but not by means of cutting of the distinctive features of all different cultures. On the contrary South African novelists occasionally accentuate the boundaries between peoples in order to allow a deeper understanding of the respective other and subsequently make a peaceful coexistence possible. In other words, post-apartheid fiction suggests that South Africa has to become a country where all inhabitants are the same but still different. Finally, one element that points towards a generally human basis for unity is the archetypical interpretation of animals within myth and religion of cultures distant in time and place that is so consistently represented in contemporary South African fiction.
8. Conclusion

Parallel to the Aesopian fable of a united kingdom of all beasts under the rule of the lion\textsuperscript{33}, contemporary South African fiction evolves to be a realm full of animals. Their frequent appearances show that in general animals are an integral part of human meaning-making. However, their roles, functions and symbolic meanings in post-apartheid novels are multifaceted.

The potential of animals as perfect representations of others (see Kellman 326) is widely used by South African authors to raise awareness for the mistreatment of diverse marginalized groups in the country’s past and present. Depicted as victims of human violence they are very often substitutes for out of reach human targets. In accordance with Jolly’s argument, “that what we say about animals says more about us than it does about the animals” (Jolly 159), the depicted treatment of animals holds up a mirror to human behaviour in order to indicate how inhuman it occasionally is.

Due to their lack of human intellect and their instinctive existence, animals are commonly seen as inferior to humans. This perceived subordinate position of animals leads humans to instrumentalize them for all kinds of purposes since the year dot. Thus, relationships depicted in contemporary South African fiction between humans and animals typically imply contemplations about suppression and government of other living beings. In further consequence, the theme of instrumentalizing animals is perfectly suited for metaphorically addressing power relations within South African society. In this respect, animals also appear in numerous novels as being exploited by human perpetrators to gain and maintain power over others. This happens in two different ways. Either they are used as weapons to directly hurt other people or they themselves become victims of violence in order to hurt their owners indirectly.

Related to their appearances in connection with power relations animals frequently feature in depictions of rape and abuse. As the numbers show, South Africa is confronted with a devastating regularity of rape, which consequently is also reflected in the profound significance of rape as a theme in the country’s politically concerned writing of fiction. In this regard, animals primarily function as symbols of the victims’ helplessness against the forced subordination. To achieve this effect, authors like Coetzee, Desoto and Langa often employ the metaphor of hunter and prey and the image of ‘eat or be eaten’ with great skill.

\textsuperscript{33} See chapter 1, “introduction”. 
Because of their intermediate position between humans and inanimate things, which is pointed out by Martin Heidegger, animals are inherently connected to the question of humanity’s place within nature. First of all animals are used as opposites against which humans seek to define themselves. However, this is not entirely successful, since humans and animals also share a number of characteristics. In other words, animals are “both like and not like that which is human” (Jolly 159). As pointed out by Rosemary Jolly, especially J. M. Coetzee is concerned with questioning the abuse of animals for the sake of identifying humans as the crown of either evolution or creation.

Quite contrary to differentiating humans from nature animals are also depicted in some contemporary South African novels as serving characters as a gateway for re-establishing lost familiarity with nature. This frequently represented loss of connection with ones environment is often caused by traumata characters have to suffer in a country full of aggression and violence. Feeling a void within them, theses personae try to build up a relationship with specific animals so as to reconcile with nature and find themselves a meaningful place within its order. It turns out, however, that the majority of these attempts to get in touch with nature fail, some quite catastrophically so. Thus, it finally evolves that nature remains evasive and denies to be embraced.

Beneath all political and other worldly matters, religion and myth have always included animal symbolism on a broad basis. That meaning and use of these symbols in different belief systems can be quite contrasting is even more apparent in a multicultural society like South Africa, where spirituality exists in all colours of the rainbow. Considering the expressiveness of this idiom, it is no coincidence that former Archbishop Desmond Tutu coined the term “rainbow nation” to describe the country’s rich mixture of ethnicities, calling for a new, peaceful South Africa. Despite the occasional inconsistency of animal symbolism, references to homogeneous interpretations of animals beyond ethnic boundaries still prevail in the novels. This phenomenon of culture independent understanding of symbolic meanings of animals is reflected in academic research by C. G. Jung’s theory of archetypes. Most uniting in contemporary South African fiction, however, is the fact that without exception animal symbolism plays a vital role within all represented belief system, be they religious or mythical.
Despite examining all these literary functions and thematic appearances of animals in contemporary South African fiction the list is by no means complete. Some of the discussed topics are only skimmed over here while others are not more than hinted at. Thus, further research could and should focus on the appearances of animals in connection with globalization, international mass tourism and environmentalism. Since the fall of apartheid, these themes have become increasingly common in South African fiction in the wake of the country’s strife for modernity. Another important issue not sufficiently dealt with is the depicted use of animals in everyday language in order to denigrate other people. Since this is a topic exceeding literary criticism, also posing socio-linguistic and historical questions, it seems to call for a separate interdisciplinary approach.

Beneath all topics, discussed or left for future research, one insight remains indisputable, namely the importance of animals in the minds of South African people. The country’s vast wildlife and the significance of domestic animals result in appearances of animals in every aspect of everyday life. In further consequence this omnipresence of non-human others entails that by means of their considerable symbolic potential animals form a vital component of present-day novel writing in South Africa. Wherever depicted, they are closely connected to historical or modern socio-political issues and thus are essential literary instruments for the purpose of voicing social critique within contemporary South African fiction.
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11. Appendix

11.1. The rescue of Maqoma from Robben Island by his favourite bull 1873

(qtd. in Schonstein 11f)

They say that the favourite bull of Jongumsobomvu raised its head, flared its nostrils, champed at the dry ground and followed the wind which had come inland from the ocean to guide him.

They say that the favourite bull of Jongumsobomvu reached the edge of the mainland within one day, and that it plunged into the ocean and swam the waves until it reached the prison Island.

They say that the favourite bull of Jongumsobomvu bellowed and breathed heat and huge courage and that it broke the prison chains which held the great Xhosa warrior.

They say that Jongumsobomvu leapt onto the back of this his favourite bull, which had come from the mainland, from the Mnqwazi mountains, to free him and to carry him back to the lands of his fathers.

They say that the favourite bull of Jongumsobomvu rode proudly into the surf of the prison Island and that the waves rose up the beach to hail him and to honour him for rescuing the great warrior but that two bullets shot by the prison wardens flew through the air and that one struck the great warrior through the shoulder bone and that one struck his favourite bull.

They say that if you look out to the prison Island from the mainland, on a day when the clouds are weaving low in the sky just as the dawn sun rises you might see the mirage of a great bull with a rider on his back, galloping, then swimming through the waves from the prison Island to the mainland and then through the interior back to the Mnqwazi mountains.

That will be the great warrior, Maqoma, praise-named by his people as Jongumsobomvu, ‘The One Who Watches the Dawn’, free and going home on his favourite bull, Jingqi.
11.2. German abstract

Die ursprüngliche Idee zu der hier vorliegenden Arbeit entwickelte sich im Zuge der Lektüre zahlreicher Südafrikanischer Romane. Mit jedem weiteren gelesenen Werk kristallisierte sich eine auffällige Häufigkeit von Tierrepräsentationen in aktueller südafrikanischer Erzählliteratur heraus. Infolgedessen war es von Beginn an das primäre Ziel dieser Arbeit, die Gründe für die Dominanz dieser Darstellungen zu erforschen. Im Mittelpunkt der Untersuchung stehen die Analyse spezifischer Tiersymbolik und die Betrachtung der Rollen und Funktionen, die von Tieren in unterschiedlichen Romanen eingenommen und erfüllt werden.

Methodisch gibt es bei der Behandlung dieser Fragestellungen keine dezidierte Festlegung auf eine bestimmte Art der Literaturkritik, wobei aber dennoch postkoloniale Studien eine tragende Rolle spielen. Weiters wird konsequent versucht, Zusammenhänge zwischen den dargestellten Motiven und diesen zugrunde liegenden, psychologischen und philosophischen Theorien aufzuzeigen.

Im Bezug auf die Rollen und Funktionen der dargestellten Tiere zeigt sich vor allem, dass diese nicht im Rahmen eines spezifischen Themas Verwendung finden, sondern in einem breiten Spektrum von Erzählmotiven auftauchen. Es gibt dahingehend auch keine Tierart, der von den Autoren eine sich heraushebende Beachtung geschenkt wird, wobei aber die Untersuchungen darauf hinweisen, dass Hunde in mehrfacher Hinsicht für Südafrika von Bedeutung sind. Der Grund hierfür liegt in der Symbolkraft der Gegenüberstellung von Wachhunden und streunenden Hunden, deren Gegensatz oftmals dazu verwendet wird die Kluft zwischen einer herrschenden Minderheit und einer armen, unterprivilegierten Mehrheit widerzuspiegeln.

Im Bezug auf die Rollen und Funktionen der dargestellten Tiere zeigt sich vor allem, dass diese nicht im Rahmen eines spezifischen Themas Verwendung finden, sondern in einem breiten Spektrum von Erzählmotiven auftauchen. Es gibt dahingehend auch keine Tierart, der von den Autoren eine sich heraushebende Beachtung geschenkt wird, wobei aber die Untersuchungen darauf hinweisen, dass Hunde in mehrfacher Hinsicht für Südafrika von Bedeutung sind. Der Grund hierfür liegt in der Symbolkraft der Gegenüberstellung von Wachhunden und streunenden Hunden, deren Gegensatz oftmals dazu verwendet wird die Kluft zwischen einer herrschenden Minderheit und einer armen, unterprivilegierten Mehrheit widerzuspiegeln.


In thematischer Nähe dazu werden Tiere auch häufig als Waffen instrumentalisiert um persönliche und politische Ziele von Personen und Gruppen durchzusetzen. Dahingehend werden diese sowohl dazu missbraucht, Kontrahenten direkt zu attackieren, als auch deren Besitz zu zerstören oder ihnen in der Funktion von Statussymbolen die herrschenden Machtverhältnisse beständig vor Augen zu führen.


Um jedoch Antworten auf die essentiellen Fragen des Lebens zu finden bedienen sich Menschen seit jeher der Tiersymbolik, unabhängig von kulturellem und religiösem Hintergrund. In einer multikulturellen Gesellschaft wie Südafrika, in der sich eine Vielfalt von Ideologien gegenübersteht, wird dies besonders deutlich. Nach dem Fall der Apartheid beginnen viele Autorinnen und Autoren in ihren Romanen, vormals vom System unterdrückte

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