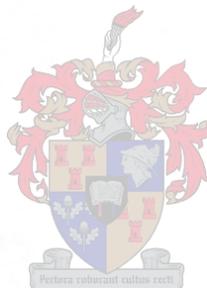


Writing, Reading... Reconciliation?
The Role of Literature in Post-Apartheid South Africa

by
Eugene Bonthuys

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Supervisor: Professor M.W. Heyns

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Abstract

Socially responsible writing has been a feature of South African literature for many years. Under apartheid, many novels dealt with apartheid, as it was one of the main features of our social landscape. The end of apartheid did not however bring about the end of a need for socially responsible writing. South Africa is still faced with many problems, one of which is reconciliation. This thesis investigates whether reconciliation may have become a new theme in South African novels, and whether these novels could play a role in assisting the process of reconciliation in the country. For this purpose, three South African works are analysed, namely Country of My Skull by Antjie Krog, Smell of Apples by Mark Behr and Disgrace by J.M. Coetzee.

The introduction attempts to explain the psychological discourse surrounding reconciliation, especially Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and parallels that may exist. The main body presents detailed readings of the three works, with the focus being on the presentation of reconciliation in the works, and the role that the individual works could play in assisting the reader in coming to terms with his or her feelings of guilt.

Opsomming

Vir baie jare was apartheid die onderwerp van baie Suid Afrikaanse skrywers aangesien dit die mees problematiese element van Suid Afrikaanse samelewing was. Die einde van apartheid het egter nie die einde van alle probleme beteken nie. Een van die belangrike probleme is versoening. Hierdie tesis ondersoek die moontlikheid dat versoening die nuwe tema in Suid Afrikaanse letterkunde geword het en of hierdie werke 'n bydrae kan lewer tot werklike versoening. Vir hierdie doel word drie werke behandel, naamlik Country of My Skull deur Antjie Krog, Smell of Apples deur Mark Behr en Disgrace deur J.M. Coetzee.

Die inleiding poog om die sielkundige diskoers om versoening te verduidelik, veral rondom posttraumatiese stres, en die ooreenkomste wat mag voorkom. Die hoofdeel van die tesis bestaan uit 'n diepgaande bespreking van die drie werke, met die fokus op versoening in die werk, maar ook die rol wat die werke kan speel om die leser deur sy of haar skuld gevoelens te help.

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Introduction

Throughout the last few decades, white South African literature has focussed primarily on apartheid. This was not only a readily accessible source of stories, but it was also a socially responsible subject on which to write. It was at one stage stated that it would be almost immoral to write on anything else, for apartheid was so central to the South African experience, and literature had a duty to contribute towards its dismantling. This is reflected in the debate about so-called "committed" literature. In The Essential Gesture, Nadine Gordimer states that "[w]hether a writer is black or white, in South Africa the essential gesture by which he enters the brotherhood of man - which is the only definition of society that has any permanent validity - is a revolutionary gesture" (247). This would seem to indicate a deep commitment to the "cause" in her view of literature. In Doubling the Point, J.M. Coetzee, on the other hand, states that "stories finally have to tell themselves, that the hand that holds the pen is only the conduit of a signifying process" (341). This statement seems to suggest that the process of creation cannot be controlled, as it would seem to be necessary for Gordimer's position to function. The fact that there is no agreement on the subject between two of South Africa's greatest writers means that this is definitely not a universal view. Yet, in both the works of Gordimer and Coetzee, the policies of the time did play an important role. Given, then, that apartheid constituted the main source of subject-matter for literature, there were bound to be questions as to what should replace it as subject after 1990, especially if the writing was to be socially responsible.

Although South Africa now finds itself with a democratically elected government, it is by no means a normalised society. There are still huge discrepancies in wealth, education and employment, mainly along racial lines. It would therefore seem premature for writers to turn away from socially responsible writing. Yet one would feel that a new subject has to be found, as apartheid legislation has been removed from the statute books, and replaced with what is widely seen as one of the most liberal constitutions in the world. Although there are doubtless still many stories to be told about apartheid, one would expect a writer of a socially responsible art to look to the present problems of the nation for subject matter, and to strive for the resolution of

these issues. Of all the problems that persist in modern South African society, there seems to be one that demands the attention of the writer more than any other. This new subject is reconciliation.

In spite of all the change that has taken place, or maybe even because of it, South Africa is still to a certain extent divided along racial lines. This is not a sign of a healthy society. It would therefore seem that, to continue the commitment to social justice, writers could plausibly turn their eyes to reconciliation as subject.

In the three novels analysed, reconciliation seems to be a very prominent theme, although the approach to the subject differs greatly between the novels. The apartheid past, and complicity in it, is a legacy that people, especially whites, have to live with, but it is a legacy they must first acknowledge, both as having existed and as being their own, before it can be dealt with. It is hoped that the novels analysed will illustrate this point, and thereby show that the novel has not merely found a new and important political and social subject matter, but also has a role to play in nation building. It has often been said that there can never be reconciliation without something resembling an acceptance of guilt on the part of white South Africans, and the exposure that these novels provide through the stories told may contribute to this process.

To enhance understanding of the processes involved in not only reconciliation, but also the role that literature may play in it, it may prove useful to make a short study of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (fourth edition), a diagnosis of PTSD should be based on the following six criteria (Friedman 12-13):

- A: The person has been exposed to a traumatic event;
- B: The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced;
- C: Stimuli associated with the trauma are persistently avoided, and general responsiveness is numbed;

- D: Symptoms of increased emotional arousal persist;¹
- E: Duration of disturbance is more than one month;
- F: The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Although it may seem that these elements do not play a very important role in reconciliation or reading, they may well prove indirectly applicable to much of what is to be discussed. A perfunctory knowledge of PTSD may therefore prove useful in the analysis of the novels. Although the main criteria mentioned for the diagnosis of PTSD will play a role in the reading of the novels, it is important to note that they will serve merely as a guideline, not the main focus of the readings. The specific complexities of the South African situation may also necessitate some changes to the basic criteria in order for them to be sensibly applied to the readings.

Although the cases in the novels where PTSD can be clearly diagnosed are limited, elements of the psychological discourse surrounding PTSD may also be effectively employed in analysing certain elements involved in the processes of reading and writing. The best example of the direct application of PTSD to the novel can be found in Antjie Krog's work Country of My Skull, where the term 'PTSD' makes an appearance quite often, whether relating to victims, perpetrators or journalists.

The exposure to the traumatic event (A) can be seen under two main headings, namely the experience of living under apartheid and the exposure brought about by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which brings about the re-experience of the event (B) through hearings and reporting. The avoidance of stimuli (C) can be seen in the fact that people attempted to avoid the reports on the TRC, or claimed that the reports were fabrications. The reaction of people to the TRC and the testimonies before it, often violently dismissive, is an instance of the increased arousal mentioned in D. This is clearly illustrated in an event portrayed in Country of My Skull, when a man, upon being questioned on his feelings toward the TRC, proceeds to shout obscenities at the author (327). Though points A – D find application in the novels, points E and

¹ The increased arousal referred to here is an elevated emotional response to everyday events. This could manifest itself in the form of emotional outbursts such as an extreme and angry response to normal questions.

F seem to be less applicable to the readings, relating much more directly to sufferers of PTSD. (These points were added to the later editions of the Diagnostical and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders; the earlier version contained only four criteria.)

Although a clear definition of PTSD is useful in the reading of the novels, it would also seem that there are certain elements of familiar South African life that show remarkable, if mild, similarities to the criteria for PTSD. It may therefore be useful to consider PTSD not only in the reading of the novels, but also when considering the effect that the reading of the novels may have on society in general. If these similarities do in fact exist, literature may prove useful in easing the process of reconciliation, through enhancing acknowledgement of the past and acceptance of what happened. This would seem to address two of the symptoms mentioned in the diagnosis of PTSD. It does not however by any means suggest that the reader of the novel is suffering from PTSD, nor does it suggest that reading novels could serve as an alternative for real psychological treatment. It merely implies that some of the terminology and approaches familiar to PTSD may well find sensible application in the South African situation

Through exposing the nation to the truth, the TRC hoped to exorcise the demons, thereby helping the nation to reconcile. The confrontation with the truth was however, in general, too direct and powerful for people to handle. The events described before the TRC were so brutal, so personal, and so lacking in any form of compassion, that a nation still dealing with changes to its future could not face the revelations about its past. Therefore, even after the final report had been handed in, we still have a nation that is shell-shocked by its past and what happened during those years.

The question now arises whether this writing, or more specifically the novel, can, when read by another party, assist the reader in dealing with his or her own problems. This possibility is posited upon the supposition that, through reading, the reader is able to experience the emotions and events of the characters in the novel. This is more successful if the reader shares some elements of the main character, as

identification is then easier to accomplish. Although this would seem a rather utilitarian reading of the novel, it is not denying the artistic impulse or the novel as art, merely suggesting that the novel can play a larger role than "mere" art or entertainment, moving into the social and political sphere. This is the position that the South African novel occupied so effectively during the apartheid years through its questioning and criticising of the government and its racist policies.

It is clear that apartheid can be read as a national trauma, thus becoming universal, something shared by all South Africans. The experience of apartheid obviously differed between groups of people, and therefore the analysis will focus on one group only, those who supposedly benefited from apartheid. The phrase "supposedly benefited" is used because it would seem that no one could truly benefit from an inhuman system that caused such pain and unnatural separation.

The analysis of the novels selected will take place against the background of the information on PTSD and the treatment thereof. It is however important to note that the analysis itself will still rely on standard literary analysis, albeit with psychological backing. The eventual goal is to find whether these novels can in fact play a role in reconciliation through the exposure that may be gained from reading them. In an attempt to establish this, it is necessary to look at the style of writing, the characters and their circumstances, their reactions to events that impact on their lives, and the position of the author in all of this, where this is visible.

Another important theoretical concept is the word "guilt." Karl Jaspers, a German theologian and philosopher, wrote a book called Die Schuldfrage (The Guilt-question), which appeared in 1946. It dealt with the aftermath of the Second World War, and the problem for Germans of dealing with the revelations of what happened during the war, and their role in it. It was a very similar situation to that found in South Africa many decades later, in that people were having problems dealing with their feelings of guilt, because of a very narrow concept of what guilt means. To deal with this, Jaspers identified four main categories of guilt, through which people could then find a way of dealing with their own personal role in the tragedy of the war.

The first of these categories is criminal guilt. This can be found in the transgression of actual laws, and can be objectively proven.

The second category is political guilt. It exists in the deeds of the statesmen and citizens of a state, as the individual has to suffer the consequences of the actions of the state under whose rule he or she resides and because of whose organisation he or she exists. This concept of guilt presumes that it is the responsibility of every person how he or she is governed.

The third category is moral guilt. For actions that the individual undertakes as an individual, he or she has to take moral responsibility. This is the case with all actions, also political and military actions. One can never be exculpated by claiming that "orders are orders". As criminal actions remain criminal (although danger, blackmail or threat can serve as extenuating circumstances), so every action remains subject to moral assessment.

The final category is metaphysical guilt. There is solidarity between people as people, which makes everyone co-responsible for all the wrong and wrongdoing in the world, especially for things in his own area or of which he is aware. When the individual does not do what he or she can to stop it, he or she also becomes guilty. When the individual has not sacrificed his or her life, but stood by while another was killed, a sense of guilt exists that can not be explained legally, politically or morally. Mere survival clings to the individual as an indelible guilt. This guilt is not something that belongs to humanity, or citizens of a nation, or smaller groups, but to every individual.

The four categories of guilt exist separately from each other. Therefore political guilt clings to all citizens of a state, but does not bring with it criminal and moral guilt for every deed that was committed in the name of the state. The judge decides on crime, the winner decides on political guilt, moral guilt can only be discussed within groups where there is solidarity. Metaphysical guilt remains very personal, and can not be discussed or shared. It exists in the deepest recesses of the human soul.

It is important to recognise these levels of guilt in order to understand the idea of normal South Africans having to accept a level of guilt. There is a type of guilt applicable to every living member of society, and therefore no one can escape blame.

In this respect, it is important to note that Karl Jaspers denies the concept of collective guilt. Collective guilt would imply that a single, quantifiable guilt could be attributed to a group. Jaspers finds this idea thoroughly unacceptable:

Kollektivschuld eines Volkes oder einer Gruppe innerhalb der Völker also kann es - ausser der politischen Haftung - nicht geben, weder als verbrecherische, noch als moralische, noch als metaphysische Schuld. Ein Kollektiv für schuldig zu erklären, das ist ein Irrtum, der der Bequemlichkeit und dem Hochmut durchschnittlichen, unkritischen Denkens nahe liegt.
(Jaspers 20)

(Collective guilt of a nation or a group within a nation can - except for the political - not exist, not as criminal, nor moral, nor metaphysical guilt. To declare a group guilty is a mistake, one that is telling of the laziness and arrogance of average, uncritical thought)

According to Jaspers, it can be said that guilt adheres to an individual and can therefore only be dealt with on a case by case basis. The idea that all who belong to a certain group can be incontestably said to be guilty, is rejected in the strongest possible terms. The different levels of involvement among people leads to the appearance of different types of guilt, and in varying degrees of severity. It should therefore be noted that there can never be one generic treatment for all those who suffer from feelings of guilt connected to apartheid wrongdoing, as the problem is too individual and differentiated. It is important to note that no matter how successfully reading may assist people in coming to terms with their guilt, true psychological problems will still require psychological treatment.

Thus, for the individuals who testified before the TRC, both victims and perpetrators, there was treatment. They were in control of their stories, and through the telling,

they could find release, whether from the trauma of being the victim or the trauma of guilt. The same, however, can not be said for those who followed the work of the TRC. The experience was not their own, and although the truth was revealed, which is a very important step towards reconciliation, the guilt was not, and could not, be dealt with through the vehicle of the TRC. Through the nature of presentation of testimonies in front of the TRC, the trauma might in fact have been intensified in many people. This can clearly be seen in the reactions of many to the TRC, ranging from denial of the truth to violent opposition to the TRC as a whole. These are all possible signs of trauma, which may well lead nowhere beyond denial and anger if the matter is not pursued further. It is therefore necessary to move towards another phase, where the guilt and trauma that remain after the truth can be dealt with. This, then, is the aim of this work: to find whether literature can complete the process of healing that was started by the TRC, but which, because of the individual nature of guilt, could not be completed by it.

What should be realised is that the TRC was a structured attempt at facilitating reconciliation in South Africa. Although it did stimulate discussion, it may or may not have helped reconciliation. The novels discussed in this paper all deal with reconciliation as one of their central themes, yet have very different approaches to the subject. Through close analysis of these novels and the different views on reconciliation, it may be possible to form a clearer picture of exactly what reconciliation entails, and how it may come about. By the end of the paper, it should be clear that although there are many different approaches to the subject of reconciliation, literature may well play a central role in presenting these different approaches, and allowing readers to choose their own preferred path.

Country of My Skull - Antjie Krog

"Only literature can perform the miracle of reconciliation." Adam Small (Krog 26)

"And that tale was, for Krog, clearly also a personal rite of passage from the relatively secure world of the liberal Afrikaner to the frightening sense of complicity with the perpetrators of the horrors recounted at the hearings." (Heyns 44)

"South Africans are discovering that the relationship between truth and reconciliation is far more complex than they ever imagined." (Krog ix)

Antjie Krog, although well known as an Afrikaans poet, took what would seem a great risk in deciding to write an English account of her experiences as reporter on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The resulting work, Country of My Skull, presents the reader with a unique combination of fact and fiction, almost seamlessly blending the two dissimilar styles. The unique nature of the work does however greatly complicate the reading, and makes direct comparison with the other purely fictional works examined rather difficult. The work seems to hover somewhere between a report on the day to day operation of the TRC, a diary of a reporter, and a novel. Much of the work seems to be factual, yet the authorial persona in the work acknowledges that some of the elements are fictitious or are composites of more than one real event. Large sections of the work also contain verbatim retellings of testimony given in front of the TRC. This complicates the reading, and also raises some interesting questions on the nature of copyright and plagiarism. For the purpose of comparison with the other texts analysed, Country of My Skull will, rather arbitrarily, be treated primarily as a novel.

In a post-script to the work, Krog states that she has "told many lies in this book about the truth" and "exploited many lives and many texts" (425). This, along with the difficulty encountered in classifying the work, has drawn scathing criticism,

especially from some overseas reviewers.² Through there is definitely merit to these criticism, it should however take the experimental nature of the work into account. It is also important to place the work within its context, that is, a changing and rather confusing South Africa, where old enemies have become new leaders, and where people are still trying to make sense not only of the present, but also of a past long hidden.

When analysing this work, the stages of dealing with trauma, as set out by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her work Death and Dying, seems to be useful. These stages relate to the reaction of patients informed that they are suffering from a terminal illness, but can find application with other forms of trauma. According to Kübler-Ross, the process starts with the trauma, followed chronologically by denial, anger, bargaining, depression and eventual acceptance. If these stages are to be loosely applied to Country of My Skull, it is important that the trauma first be identified. In the first section of the discussion it will be shown that not merely apartheid-era abuses, but also exposure to the truth that had been hidden for so many years can be said to have caused something resembling a wide-spread trauma in South African society. Although the focus will be mainly on the reaction of the author-figure to the TRC revelations, the reactions of other figures will also be taken into account.

As can be expected in a work dealing with the TRC, there are many cases of serious trauma, especially among victims of apartheid-era abuses. The cases of apparent PTSD are however not limited to those who fall under the traditional definition of victims. Even among the perpetrators of the crimes there exist signs of some form of PTSD. The main interest of this reading is in the traumatic experience of the truth revealed on a nation who had, at least to a certain extent, been unaware of the full extent and brutality of apartheid-era atrocities. Testimonies in Krog's account often relate brutal wrongdoing on the part of the apartheid state and its agents which,

² A good example of this is an article written by Sarah Ruden and published in Ariel 30, No. 1 (1999) in which she states that "there is too little that is shaped, too little of a story" (168) and that Krog is "manipulating other lives like inanimate materials in an abstract design" (170). These remarks seem to indicate that Krog's work and the methods employed in writing it can be controversial. Ruden even states that she has "never been more leery of post-modern appropriation than in reading Krog, or more inclined to call it ordinary theft" (171). This would seem to indicate a lack of understanding of the unique form and function of the work. The fact that it can not easily be placed into a traditional category should be taken into account when attempting to apply traditional ideas on ownership of ideas.

through legislation, was kept "out of sight" (67). The effect of this constant covering-up by the apartheid state was that when the hearings of the TRC commenced, much of what was revealed was new to the majority of white South Africans. The same can however not be said for black South Africans. Through one of the characters in the work the author notes that "[t]hey have known the truth for years" while "[t]he whites are often disconcerted: they didn't realise the magnitude of the outrage, the 'depth of depravity' as Tutu calls it" (68).

Truth in its full brutality was revealed, not only by those who suffered pain, but also by those who inflicted it. These testimonies are left untouched, appearing in the words of victims and perpetrators, thereby retaining truth in all its brutality. The words are not softened by the author, but reprinted verbatim, thereby retaining all the raw pain that they expressed when first spoken, even though they are already made easier to deal with by being in written form.

There is one moment of testimony that seems to rise above the rest as an indication of the cold and brutal truth that was revealed in front of the TRC. During the testimony of Eugene de Kock, a man who became known as 'Prime Evil' for his part in apartheid atrocities, he states, quite simply, that "the burning of a body on open fire takes seven hours" (91). The horror of this statement is almost overwhelming. In the simplicity of this statement lives the truth about the terror of the apartheid regime. One would almost have expected such a revelation to contain something more, maybe some form of emotion. Yet its cold matter-of-fact tone makes it ring all the more true. There lies the truth about apartheid, in the statements of a man who was entrusted with ensuring the safety of the state.

If this one line of testimony can have such an impact, it is difficult to imagine the impact of a seemingly never-ending barrage of such testimonies, from both perpetrators and victims. The effect of such a barrage could be devastating. The pain inflicted and pain suffered that is reflected in the testimonies could well be expected to relentlessly pound the listener into submission. This pounding finally split open the Pandora's box of South Africa's history, a story that many had hoped would remain hidden forever. Afterwards, things could never be the same. The truth was now

indeed out there, and it had to be dealt with. No denial could ever wipe away what had been revealed by the TRC. Suddenly supporters of the former government would have to deal with what was done in their name. But it was not only done in their name. It was done on behalf of all of us, whether we willed it or not. Apartheid was a system kept in place by brutality and violent oppression, and in some way the guilt that spewed forth from this clings to all the people of this country. It clings to us, not only because of what we did, but also because of what we did not do, or even because of what we received, never knowing what the true price of it was.

While the normal definition of PTSD would seem to suggest that only victims could suffer from it, it is important that during one of the perpetrator hearings, the lawyer for Geoffrey Benzien claims that his client is suffering from post traumatic stress disorder. This statement is immediately questioned by the victims' advocate, who mentions "the textbook definition of post-traumatic stress: it can only be experienced by a victim." He then continues that surely "Benzien cannot be classified as a victim" (116). This implies a very narrow definition of both PTSD and the term "victim", as Krog suggests by questioning this textbook definition: "[i]f this definition is accurate, [why do] the Commissioners, the briefers, the statement takers, the journalists all get psychological treatment?" (116). The root of the problem is that South Africa, the TRC and apartheid are not textbook cases, but very much situated in the real-world. It should therefore be considered that it may well take a new and innovative approach to find a solution to the unique problems that the situation presents. Only through a concerted effort can a solution possibly be found.

Although the testimonies of victims and perpetrators have a central part to play in the work, Krog has been criticised for presenting the testimonies out of context. Some commentators on the work have felt that there is not sufficient background information on the people and events involved for the testimonies to truly make sense. Ruden, for instance, suggests that "Krog...may have reduced the victims...to literary figures" through her treatment of the testimonies (171). It may well be that, although Ruden is well intentioned in her criticism, she is missing the point. The people involved in the events that eventually came before the TRC were not special. In general they were just normal people. What made them special is that they were

targeted, for whatever reason, by the apartheid regime. Through the lack of background information, these acts are made to seem even more random and senseless, which provides a true reflection of the apartheid state. The random nature of the people involved makes it seem possible that anyone could have become a victim, just as anyone could well have become a perpetrator. This would seem to counteract the distance that many people attempt to create between themselves and the perpetrators. What may well be accomplished by this line of writing is that the reader may be made to feel a certain familiarity with the perpetrators, and through this familiarity even a shared responsibility.

An important part of the theory underlying the thesis can be found in Krog's description of a visit by a counsellor to the journalists covering the TRC: "You will experience the same symptoms as the victims. You will find yourself powerless - without help, without words" (55). The fact that even people merely covering the events surrounding the TRC can become so severely traumatised clearly points to a psychological strain that functions not merely in victims, but also in those confronted with the past, with the truth. The counsellor suggests that the journalists should "talk to one another...be one another's therapists" (55). Krog attempts to use writing instead of talking. The work therefore serves as her therapist, in the same way as the counsellor suggested the journalists should use one another. Through writing Krog struggles with her own experiences and feelings. She attempts to navigate a path through past and truth, and most importantly her shared responsibility for that past. This can be seen in her treatment of the perpetrators, when she relates them to people and places familiar to her, in an attempt to make them easier for her to understand. The whole process affords the reader an opportunity to gain insight into the author's mind, a mind troubled by the times and changes. It is however central to any possible solution that there should be an end to the denial of various events and details that plagues the process of reconciliation.

Denial plays a very important role in the book. Denial, whatever its cause, involves creating distance, moving the truth a little bit further from home and creating a comfortable space where one bears no responsibility for what happened in the country. There can be said to be three main elements of denial in Krog's account. At the start,

it would seem that some people attempt to deny that atrocities ever occurred. In the second phase, they attempt to deny knowledge. Thus what is being denied changes: "[w]hereas before people denied that atrocities happened, now they deny that they knew they were happening" (137). Lastly, the humanity of the perpetrators is also denied. What they all have in common is that they seek to evade any form of guilt, regardless of whether it is criminal, moral, political or metaphysical in nature.

The response to the TRC found most often in the work is of people who attempt to deny complicity by claiming that they did not know what was happening in the country. Even those who voted the apartheid regime into power and kept it in power claim that, because they did not know what the regime was doing, they cannot be held responsible for its actions. An example of this can be found in the work, where people whose son was tortured by the apartheid regime claim, after being confronted with the testimonies in front of the TRC, that they "just didn't know" (220). It is therefore clearly a case of attempting to avoid issues of guilt through denying complicity. In this respect, it is interesting to refer to Jaspers, and his statements about guilt, as mentioned in the introduction. In his view, it is the responsibility of the citizen to police his own government. Lack of knowledge is therefore not an excuse, it is a self-accusation of dereliction of civil duty. From Jaspers' work, it becomes clear that direct involvement, political involvement and even knowledge are not prerequisites for guilt. Thus, the denial would seem to be futile, although it does have a definite negative influence on possible reconciliation.

Another aspect of denial is the attempt by many people, including the author, to distance themselves from the perpetrators. For the author, the greatest shock of the TRC can be seen in her recognition of the perpetrators. She finds that they are predominantly members of her own group, white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. Understandably this creates an uncomfortable closeness, as becomes clear when she states that "Jack Cronjé...in his grey suit and inoffensive tie...could have been my own Oom Albert from Reitz; he could have been sitting in the *ouderlingsbank* in Morewag Church" (138). However, Jack Cronje is one of the operatives of the apartheid government, a perpetrator of terrible crimes. This presents the author with a problem, as she attempts to deny what binds her to these people, and yet cannot avoid all the

familiar sights and sounds that mark her as one of them. Her reaction to the perpetrators affords a very good insight into her inner struggle.

Aversion. I want to distance myself.

They are nothing to me.

I am not one of them.

(135)

There are some very telling markers in this statement. The words "they" and "them" are well-known markers for creating distance, often used, for instance, in racist and discriminatory speech. What is more interesting is the use of the word "want". It not only indicates desire, but also hints at the fact that the distance is not pre-existent and that she is in fact bound to these people through shared culture and language. It is clear that a bond exists between the author and the perpetrators. They share a history.

The only element of shared experience that might still be questioned is the humanity of the perpetrators. If they are not human, if they are insane, if they are monsters, then there would be no reason to feel guilt for what they have done. The shared elements would be merely incidental, and would have no bearing on their actions.

One of the clearest instances of an attempt at distancing through questioning of the humanity of the perpetrators can be found in the character of "The Leader", quite clearly former State President F. W. de Klerk. He has an added incentive to distance himself from the perpetrators, for as leader of the country for a part of the time when these crimes were committed, there are questions as to his involvement and knowledge. These atrocities could, in his case, involve criminal accountability. In response to a question from the author persona, he responds that he "will not take the blame for people who acted like barbarians, who ignored the parameters of their duties" and states that "[t]hey are criminals and they ought to be punished" (147).

This is not merely a denial of belonging to the same group, it is a denial of the full humanity of these perpetrators. They are said to be "barbarians", thus lesser humans, and "criminals", therefore people who acted outside the law and deserve punishment.

This response attempts to create scapegoats, as the leader attempts to pin the blame on a few individuals, not the system that allowed these atrocities to happen, and not the government that must have turned a blind eye while policy was enforced. This point is taken up by a psychologist in the work, who states that because "[s]ome individuals are targeted as scapegoats for past atrocities" it "allows other citizens to deny any complicity" (143). This denial ignores the fact that, although individuals were responsible for the actual atrocities, other people gave the orders, and even more others voted for a government that gave those orders.

A strong argument against creating scapegoats or denying the humanity of perpetrators runs that the humanity of even Adolf Hitler should be recognised. It is stated that "[b]y refusing to acknowledge that he is human like yourself, you are saying that you are not capable of what he did" (396). If Hitler is made out to be a monster, what he has done cannot act as a warning to others, for it would then not be within the realm of human action to perpetrate such evil. On the other hand, if his humanity were accepted, it would mean that all of us should be watchful of our own actions, as we may well be judged by history as Hitler has been judged. We have to accept that all humans are capable of evil, not merely monsters, but all of us. Although this paints a very dark picture of humanity, it is one of the most important realisations that one can come to. Jaspers refers to this as metaphysical guilt, that is, the guilt we feel for every act by another human because of our shared humanity

Antjie Krog highlights this shared humanity by presenting the reader with the human side of even the most frightful of perpetrators. She makes a point of telling the reader about their suffering, their confusion at a system that once rewarded them for their success, and now persecutes them for their excesses. Many of the perpetrators are in fact shown to be suffering from what would seem to be post-traumatic stress syndrome, something that some of the prosecuting attorneys would claim as only belonging to victims. Geoffrey Benzien, one of the infamous apartheid era operatives, famous for his brutal methods of torture, is even described by his lawyer as "a victim of inhumane working conditions" (116). The same thing can be seen in Mentz, whose psychiatric report states that he "shows symptoms of shell-shock" (143). Although these are the very people from whom the author wanted to distance herself, their

psychological suffering because of what they did shows them to be human after all. The realisation of their humanity allows the author to accept that, even if only on a metaphysical level, she is guilty of their deeds. When this guilt is accepted, it becomes possible for a person to ask for forgiveness for what happened during the apartheid years. Without apologising for what happened during apartheid, there can be no reconciliation, for it would seem that people just want to put it in the past. If however we fail to learn from history, we are bound to repeat it. For any apology to be real, it has to involve an acceptance of guilt.³

The most important realisation on the part of the author is that "[i]n a sense it is not these men but a culture that is asking for amnesty" (144). It is the culture that created a climate in which these events could take place, in which it was thought that the end justified the means. The atrocities could not have been perpetrated in an open and democratic society, and therefore it is important to look at the climate that was created in the country. This is summed up very well in the statement that "[w]hile some men were out killing black people, many whites were busy dreaming of a life without black people: separate laws, separate amenities, separate churches, separate homes, separate towns, separate countries" (140). This implicates all those who did not resist the society that apartheid brought about in creating an atmosphere in which atrocities could be committed. People preferred not to know how things were done. They only wanted the results, results that could only be provided through the use of force. If you wanted your way of life, you signed a blank cheque for the government to do whatever was necessary to keep the status quo. The government did a good job of hiding the work behind the scenes, and people were in general not aware of the true brutality of apartheid. This effective misinformation by the government, as well as the fact that people did not really want to know what was happening, made the revelations in front of the TRC so much more shocking. In this regard the testimony of the perpetrators was of particular value, through which not only their reasoning, but also their humanity and suffering could be revealed, as well as their sense that they did what they did for their people, once again implicating ordinary citizens in the whole system.

³ The nature of this guilt depends on the level of involvement of the person, and can therefore be criminal, moral, political or metaphysical in nature. The cases this work is primarily concerned with will most likely fall into the last two categories.

Jack Cronje says "[w]hen I drove back in the mornings after an operation, and people passed me on their way to work, I thought: I did it for you and for you...you could sleep safe and sound, because I was doing my job. ...I did it for the country" (138). If the perpetrators were doing it for us, to keep the life we so cherished intact, then we, as the beneficiaries of apartheid, should share in their guilt. This is the space that we must inhabit in the process of reconciliation. The author was protected by these men: her culture and lifestyle were upheld by their actions. This allowed her to be who she is; therefore she owes the country a debt on account of what she received from these atrocities.

This shift in thinking is central to the whole concept of reconciliation. It is an acceptance that, even if one did not support the apartheid regime, on at least some levels one did benefit from it, if one was "white". If this is the case, all "white" South Africans bear some burden of guilt. When, and only when, this is accepted, can reconciliation become a reality. It is however not an easy shift in thinking to make. In this case the author has the advantage of having been there, of seeing the perpetrators, of recognising them. Yet for the reader the concept is more difficult. Through her writing, the author personalises the whole TRC experience, making it more relevant to herself, but in effect less relevant to the reader. Through relating the perpetrators to people familiar to her, she occasionally moves them even further away from the reader. For those people who do have family in Reitz, whose uncles do sit in the "ouderling bank", for them her descriptions might be useful. For the rest of us, the perpetrators might seem more human, but they do not seem more familiar.

It is at one point stated that the "point of the TRC is to enable healing to happen" (219). This comes about through the revelation of the truth. However, another and maybe even more significant element in terms of reconciliation may well be the recognition of the self. Only if this is recognised can the reader truly come to accept guilt and find reconciliation. It is on this point that the work seems to fail. The reader does not seem to become part of the story and is not drawn in to a sufficient extent. The uncomfortable position of this book in terms of genre comes to the fore as possibly the main problem to be faced. The reader cannot be fully engaged, as the work seems to lack the flow of a well-written novel. While the author's struggle with

truth and reconciliation does seem to extend the understanding of these concepts, the lack of engagement of the reader does not allow the same level of growth. The author is completely submerged in the TRC on a personal level, but is unable to do the same for the reader. Although the work is very useful in exposing the reader to fact and theory, the actual ability of the work to facilitate reconciliation is more questionable. Reconciliation is, however, a personal thing. There can be no single prescribed formula, and this is where the work seems to fall short. Through all the theoretical speeches and discussions included, there emerges a formula of response in which the reader can see the inner workings of reconciliation, but merely how it works for certain people. In this case it might seem questionable whether a mere list of examples is good enough. There needs to be a greater level of involvement of the reader in the work, and Krog does not seem able to supply this. Strangely, although the work seems extremely personal, the author seems not to give enough of herself in the writing of it. It would seem that the reader is not presented with enough background and motivation and it is therefore difficult to feel through the characters. This type of vicarious experience is what makes a successful novel. It would seem that this could also be what makes a successful work of reconciliation.

It has already been illustrated that the work presents the reader with a very clear picture of trauma and reconciliation. It is however possible that the failing of the work could lie in this very fact. It is very effective in telling the reader what to do, but it would seem much less effective in allowing the reader to do this. It is a very important principle in the treatment of PTSD that the patient should control the session and come up with his or her own answers. The therapist should merely act as a facilitator. Yet Krog attempts to do much more than this. She wants to provide the answers, something that she may well do very effectively, but she does not allow that reader to come to his or her own conclusions. The nature of the work allows the author to select the testimonies and people she will discuss. Yet, although these cases may speak to her, they do not necessarily speak to the reader. Through the lack of engagement that the reader might feel with the author, it seems possible that, unlike the effect of events in a conventional novel, the reader is not absorbed enough in the events depicted in this work to accept them as important. Although it therefore presents the reader with a very good academic description of reconciliation and all that

goes with it, including PTSD, it does not seem to allow the reader to grow in anything but knowledge. Thus, although it is a very insightful work, it does not really seem to provide the reader with opportunities to come to terms with his or her own guilt, through a lack of emotional engagement.

Country of My Skull is a brave work, breaking boundaries in many ways. The work brings together the testimonies of many people, in a format that is easy to read. It presents the reader with solid theoretical knowledge on the subjects of guilt and reconciliation. It confronts the reader with the atrocities committed by the Apartheid State, and thereby opens discussion on it. Yet, although it opens the discussion on reconciliation, it is by no means the last word.

'These apples are rotten or something'

Apartheid exposed in Mark Behr's The Smell of Apples

"If the book has assisted white people in coming to terms with their own culpability for what is wrong in South Africa, then it has been worthwhile." Mark Behr (Heyns 42)

In The Smell of Apples, Mark Behr paints a picture of apartheid at its peak. In this, the novel differs from the other novels discussed, as it does not deal with post-apartheid South Africa. It was also published in 1993, before the first democratic elections in South Africa. This does not, however, preclude the possibility of the novel assisting in reconciliation. The novel should be read as an exposé of what happened during the time of high apartheid, not merely of that which was obvious, but also of that which remained hidden. In this it precedes the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in that it made a point of revealing some of the evils hidden behind the idyllic, for some at least, apartheid myth. It does not, however, merely paint a picture of life in apartheid South Africa. The novel investigates the ways in which people became a part of this system; how ordinary citizens became functionaries of the apartheid regime, and what happened to those who did not. It is therefore an extremely useful novel from the perspective of reconciliation, as knowledge and acknowledgement of the past are central to reconciliation. In this regard it is important to note that the reading of the novel will be, to a certain extent, metaphorical in nature. Although a literal reading is also useful, it is on the metaphorical level that the novel provides most insight into the apartheid system and how people were drawn into it.

The fact that the novel pre-dates the Truth and Reconciliation Commission not only distinguishes the novel as being ahead of its time, but also manages to raise questions about the intent of the author. As the novel progresses, it would seem that the characters are drawn into the apartheid system without really noticing it, and that they are, to a large extent, helpless against the powers that lie behind this. The fact that the author is also an Afrikaner makes it seem possible that the novel was written as an explanation, and maybe even as an excuse, for his own complicity. His later

revelation that he had been an operative for the security police while still at university makes this seem even more likely.

A vital element in keeping the novel from becoming exculpatory in nature, and therefore more of a hindrance than a help to reconciliation, is the use of the child narrator. The use of a child narrator allows the author a certain leeway in the style of the novel. The innocence and naivety that is usually associated with children makes it possible for the author to write a novel that shows the apartheid state from a position of privilege, without any signs of guilt on the part of the narrator. The child narrator can also present a fresh look at many of the elements of apartheid society that had become so much a part of society that an adult narrator may well have overlooked their significance, or avoided them for reasons of guilt. Although Marnus has been thoroughly indoctrinated, he has not yet begun to think exactly like his society. The ideals that are held by his society have not yet become a true part of him. Thus, Marnus only repeats what he has heard and does not build on the myths that upheld apartheid society. The indoctrination that he has been exposed to is parroted back to the reader and is in this way revealed. The fact that it is not yet his own gives it away to the reader. In an adult narrator, the logic of apartheid would have become self-generating and would therefore be impossible to extricate from the fibre of the tale. The child, although indoctrinated, does not attempt to indoctrinate. The author explains the need for the child narrator when he states that he "needed a voice that would seem not to seek pardon or excuse, in a language different from the adult's which invariably contains in it whether it wants to or not, a corrupt and corrupting formula, always an attempt to justify or frequently to demand absolution" (Heyns 50).

The narrator has not yet played a conscious part in the crime of apartheid, and is therefore unaware of his complicity. This makes it possible for him to comment on the world around him without attempting to explain or excuse it. There are no issues with guilt or attempts to seek pardon. When the age of the narrator is taken into account, it is also quite realistic that he would merely parrot the words of his father, as children are at that stage prone to doing. This assists the reader in understanding the world through the eyes of the child, and thus the true nature of apartheid can be revealed. In the novel almost all of the passages of racist rhetoric are preceded by

phrases such as "Uncle Samuel always says" (Behr 39). This clearly indicates that the phrases are often a parroting of other voices, thereby indicating outside influence. This provides the reader with insight into how people were manipulated and thus enables the reader to read events from a fresh perspective. In the eyes of the child there is no clouding of issues by guilt. The child does not attempt to excuse, the child has no fear of retribution and therefore does not hide anything from the reader. The world is presented as it is experienced, not excused because of fears or moral issues. Through this writing the reader may well happen upon some elements only vaguely remembered from a similar childhood, or otherwise gain insight into the childhood of another section of the community. The author makes a similar claim when he states that "[t]he child's voice could, I felt, succeed in accusing the abusers while at the same time holding up the mirrors" (Heyns 50).

Through portraying the lives that the adults of today lived while they were children, this novel may well assist in reconciliation for all involved in the past of the country through better understanding of what happened in the white suburbs at that time. The most important point of investigation in this novel will, however, be the role that it can play in reconciling Afrikaners with their past, thereby allowing them to reconcile the present and the future.

The novel paints a picture all too familiar to those who know South African history. What makes the novel unique is that the tumultuous events that surround the narrator are merely part of the background to his own life. The narrator has no idea that he is living in an artificial world; all the elements of apartheid seem to him to be regular life. It never really occurs to the narrator that there is anything wrong with the world surrounding him, as he can only compare it to what he knows and to what he is told. This is quite strictly controlled, as with everything in the Apartheid State. Many elements of apartheid are therefore dealt with as mere observations in the background, never really questioned, but not defended by the narrator either.

There are two main components of apartheid that can be traced in the novel. The most concrete example can be found in the apartheid laws that can be seen throughout the novel. The other main element is the much more insidious racism that inhabits the

novel. The laws can be read as a part of society in general, outside the sphere of control, and even of knowledge, of the narrator. Racism plays a much more direct and personal role in his life, as it is practised not only by his family and those close to him, but also finds its way into his own behaviour.

The presence of laws in the novel appears mainly incidental, a small part of the social background to the narrator's own life. He carries no direct concrete knowledge of the laws, but their effect on his environment is clearly visible, even if only through the absence that they create. The "Other" scarcely makes an appearance, except for the occasional servant or vagrant. This shows the success with which these laws were implemented. The laws, and the way in which they were forced on people are not completely hidden, but given a sugar coating. A very good example of this can be found in an apparently incidental reference to on forced removals:

When Doreen first started working here, she still lived in Newlands and came straight to work every morning by train. But after Oupa died, when we moved into the house with Ouma, she was already living in Grassy Park, where the government built nice houses for all the Coloureds. In the mornings she first catches a taxi to somewhere like Retreat, and from there she gets the train to St James station, right down the hill from us. (Behr 23)

Marnus seems happy about the fact that the government "built nice houses for all the Coloureds". Although he mentions the fact of a much more intricate and longer route to work, he does not seem to register this as a real inconvenience. For him it is clearly outweighed by the charity of the government, the "sugar coating" of the forced removal, with no regard to the preferences of the people affected. This is however left to the reader to deduce: the influence of indoctrination, in the form of information supplied by parents and authority, can be seen clearly in the way Marnus describes the removals, which he was too young to fully understand or in fact see. Details like these are extremely important in the novel, as the author presents the reader with an exercise in subtlety.

The same technique is applied two more times in the novel, relating to the fishermen who sail from Kalk Bay. In both cases the words "nice homes" are used, a phrase that might well indicate a parroting of a phrase heard elsewhere. The blame for the removal is placed on tourists who "complained about the Coloureds' dirty houses" which, for Marnus, is an adequate explanation of why the fishermen moved away from their harbour, without any responsibility attaching to the government (58). Marnus also notes, without recognising the economic reality of what he observes, that "there are fewer boats going out of the Kalk Bay harbour every morning" (121). Marnus is incapable of realising that this may well indicate unemployment among the former fishermen. The reader is left to come to this conclusion without being told directly. The same would not be possible with an adult narrator, whom one would rightfully expect to see the link between the subjects mentioned.

The same innocent ignorance of the world and politics comes to the fore when the question of separate amenities is raised. Marnus unquestioningly accepts his mother's statement that she "wasn't sure whether Coloureds are allowed into the museum"; in his eyes this is just the way things are (9). His mother's uncertainty indicates that this is not even an important issue for her. This reveals to the reader the way in which many white South Africans grew up. There was never a question as to why, and if the question was asked, it was never answered. Not only public places like the museum were separate. There are gentle reminders in the novel that the races were separated at all levels of society. When Little-Neville is transferred to Groote Schuur hospital, Marnus and his family must first find the "Coloured section" of the hospital (187). Little-Neville had dreams of becoming a minister, but even in this he was limited to becoming a minister in the "Dutch Reformed Mission Church for Coloureds" (114). Students even had to study at the "Coloured University on the Flats" (32). All these instances of separate amenities are never questioned or even given a second glance. The same can be said about the narrator explaining that they are not used to blacks because Coloureds are "the only ones allowed to work here legally" (53). It is mentioned merely in passing, as it appeared to the narrator. There are no questions as to the validity of these and other laws; it is merely a fact of life in South Africa. The reader is left to draw his or her own conclusions about society and its laws. The laws are merely incidental, not central, to the life of the narrator. Because of the structure

of society, those influenced by the laws are pushed to the periphery, and therefore remain unseen and unheard. The impact of apartheid laws on the life of the "Other" thus remains hidden from white suburban society. This also makes an important point about apartheid in the lives of many white South Africans. Through careful social engineering and clever lies the laws themselves did not seem to impact directly on the life of your average young boy living in the white suburbs, at least not in ways that he could see.

Whereas the laws that govern apartheid seem to be almost unseen in Marnus' world, racism is openly practised, whether in the discussions and events that surround him, or even in his own actions and thoughts. The all too familiar racist clichés inhabit every facet of the novel; supposedly strengthening the mythical status of the Afrikaner as they degrade all other races and groups.

One instance of racism in action is the family's reaction when their gardener, Chrisjan, is suddenly absent from work, and does not return. Although he had worked for the family for close on 30 years, his absence is not viewed as cause for concern. When it is noted that the fishing tackle has gone missing, Lenore immediately "knows" that it has to be Chrisjan who took it, because "Chrisjan liked fishing" (19). This illustrates not merely the racism involved, but also extreme paranoia and lack of trust. Even the fact that Chrisjan had been a loyal servant for 30 years does not afford him any status because "that's exactly the way the Coloureds are...[y]ou can never trust them" (20). The mere fact of race makes him guilty. Chrisjan is immediately treated as part of a group and not as an individual. The personal bond is severed without any indication of emotional attachment, although the reader might suppose that there would have been some form of attachment after almost thirty years. Distance is created through the use of words such as "them" and "they", both well-known markers of racist speech. This indicates a certain laziness of thought and a capacity for gross generalisation. This is the logic of the apartheid state, where the inferiority of the other was accepted as a given, never to be questioned. It was also assisted to a great extent by almost institutionalised stereotyping.

There are many remarks regarding race in the novel, but one of the more notable is the assertion that all Coloureds are drunkards. Even if this assumption were correct, the reasons for the sad state of affairs would never feature in the mind of the child narrator, and might well even be unknown to his parents. Even if they knew, they would never tell. One of the major causes of alcoholism among the Coloured community is in fact hidden and perpetuated by the remark that "[t]hey all prefer a drop of wine to money" (39). This myth was started because of a tot-system instituted on farms in the Western Cape, whereby a part of the wages of farm workers was paid in the form of wine. This would then cause addiction, and the workers would not leave the farms because of the impossibility of finding wine elsewhere. Thus, the statement became a self-fulfilling prophecy, as the more alcohol was handed out, the more it was needed.

Marnus further parrots racist stereotyping in asserting that "[a]ll the Coloureds live on the Cape Flats and at weekends they get drunk and then they murder and rape each other" (32). Apart from being a gross generalisation, Marnus' statement does not take into account the socio-economic causes of the phenomenon he mentions. This is a displaced community, ripped from their homes during forced removals, and dumped in the middle of the Cape Flats. There is nothing there, no formal entertainment, nothing but a large concentration of people, far from any of the traditional jobs, like fishing, as illustrated in the remarks on Kalk Bay harbour. Therefore the people are likely to be unemployed and miserable, and, in these circumstances, it would be understandable if the amount of violent crime and substance abuse were to rise. These elements are however never brought to mind, for that would imply that the government that built them nice houses had made a mistake, or knowingly acted against the best interests of the people.

Throughout the novel Marnus seems mostly innocent of apartheid and racism, even though he often repeats the stories told to him by his father. It becomes clear, though, that, in spite of his apparent innocence, he has absorbed much of what surrounds him. This is illustrated in his chance encounter with Chrisjan, their former gardener. Although Chrisjan is his elder, he shows no respect for him whatsoever, also disregarding the many years that Chrisjan had worked for his family. Marnus acts as

an aggressor towards the old man who is down on his luck who was once almost a part of the family, although never an equal. He views Chrisjan's inability to recognise him as a challenge to his authority, something that infuriates him so that he attacks the defenceless old man, breaking the bottle that Chrisjan wanted to return to the store in order to earn some money. Marnus' view of Chrisjan's behaviour is backed up by some commentators on the work, although it would seem doubtful that Chrisjan was refusing to acknowledge Marnus.⁴ He did submit to him, through his servile gestures, but was unable to recognise him, not unwilling. This assumption is based on various clues in the novel that would point to disease and age as the reasons for this inability. The fact that he left work and never returned, after working for the family for nearly thirty years, and his general behaviour during this encounter shows anything but resistance. The important factor here is not Chrisjan's attitude, but Marnus' anger at the perceived wilful failure to recognise him. This shows a need for affirmation; a need to know that he is master. This reflects on the doubt and paranoia that was a permanent part of white South African society. The superiority of the Afrikaner had to be reinforced constantly; otherwise doubt could be created. The frequency of this reinforcement would seem to indicate that even those who attempt to reinforce these beliefs are themselves subject to doubt. The fact that Marnus accepted these values would seem to indicate that he was as guilty as any other party in the growth of apartheid, although one would have to keep in mind that in this he was in all probability mirroring authority figures.

The internalisation of the racism and values that were prevalent in the Apartheid State can be better understood when it is read in context with the controlled society and family in which Marnus grew up. It is already clear that through the Group Areas Act and Separate Amenities Act, Marnus was separated from other races. An important insight into his upbringing is provided by his Aunt Karla, who states that her parents had "made [her] afraid of the whole world" (110). Although the statement refers to the way in which she and Lenore were brought up, it can also be seen in Marnus' upbringing. He is sheltered from any influence that might lead him to question society

⁴ Rita Barnard states that Chrisjan is refusing to recognise Marnus as a way of resisting the supposed hold that Marnus has over him. The "exaggerated and wheedling servility of the beggar" that Chrisjan adopts is seen as a way to undermine Marnus' authority (221).

and government. This includes surfers, who, his father tells him, "are all dagga-smokers and [. . .] put stuff on their hair to make it white" (138). This serves as an explanation as to why he cannot have a surfboard. Another familiar example of pop culture being demonised is the reaction of General Erasmus to pop music. Marnus is told that listening to it "can cause you to become a drug addict" and the artists are "really instruments of Lucifer and the Antichrist" (67). These two examples are a clear indication of xenophobia in the Afrikaner population. The children are "protected" from the corrupting influences of strangers. Although Marnus may not seem fully aware of this, Ilse is.

As the story unfolds, Ilse is busy reading Moby Dick, which forms an interesting inter-textual reference in the novel, as it deals with affiliation and choices.⁵ In Moby Dick, the boy is presented with two role models, Captain Ahab and Queequeg. When discussing Moby Dick, Ilse comments on the fact that she is not allowed to meet any Queequeg figures, only Ahabs. When the visiting Chilean general suggests that he could serve as a Queequeg figure, a dark stranger from a far-away country, Ilse responds that he is "still...a general...like [her] father, like Captain Ahab", and that she is therefore not presented with a real choice (151). The fact that even the "stranger" who is allowed in the house is a general, and therefore more akin to an Ahab than to the "dark stranger" he claims to be, indicates the limited range of affiliation open to the children. The system can only be expected to run smoothly as long as the children follow in the footsteps of the parents.

Although strangers who fit the Ahab mould are allowed into the inner circle of the family, family who do not fit are expelled. When Karla, Marnus' aunt, becomes too questioning in her views, she is banned from the Erasmus household and called a Liberal, in a tone that would have one believe that it is a bad thing. Although Lenore still visits her with the children, this ends the moment she questions the nature of Lenore's marriage, even though it is quite clear that she is correct when she states that it is not a marriage of equals. At that point, she is even called a Communist by her own sister, who insists that liberals and communists are one and the same thing.

⁵ In this regard, it is interesting to read the very thorough discussion of the role of Moby Dick in The Smell of Apples in the article by Rita Barnard.

Through this level of indoctrination and false information it is not remarkable that Marnus cannot see the light. In the artificial environment that is created through xenophobia and expulsion, it would be very difficult for Marnus to grow up to be anything but like his father, as he lacks real options as far as role models are concerned.

The one other option that would appear open to Marnus is through his friendship with Jan Bandjies, a Coloured fisherman. The idea that Jan might present an option seems to be undermined in a play with reality. Jan is not "a real whaler", which would seem to downgrade his status in the eyes of Marnus (151). He may well have become a friend, or even a role model, but he is expelled from the story once Marnus becomes like his father. It is interesting to note that Jan tells his children not to come down to the docks, thereby preventing them from becoming like him. This is in contrast to Marnus' father, who seems to be doing everything in his power to make his son become like him. Jan attempts to steer his children to a better life; Marnus' father merely attempts to perpetuate his way of life.

Another important factor limiting Marnus' role models is the silenced voices of women. In the patriarchal apartheid Afrikaner society, the women are expected to know their place. This is illustrated painfully well when Marnus states that, whenever the Erasmus family visits their minister, "Mum and Mrs Dominee mostly speak about the flower arrangements and cake sales for church, and Dad tells Dominee about national affairs" (52). It is quite clear that the women are not meant to involve themselves in matters of any real importance, that national affairs are the sole domain of the male. A very poignant reminder of the silenced voices of women can be seen in the fact that Lenore used to be an internationally recognised opera singer, but left her singing career behind her when she married, and has refused to sing in public since. She only teaches students at home, something of little enough importance, as befits a woman in the patriarchal society. Karla is silenced not only for her radical views, but also because she, as a woman, has the gall to actually have an opinion. It is interesting that the same fate befalls Ilse, as will be illustrated later.

The preparation for Marnus' taking after his father was made by society and its laws, and through his sheltered upbringing filled with lies, but his eventual move to manhood, and becoming an Ahab, is much more shocking than any other aspect of the novel. The previous two sections demonstrate that society and family are very closely controlled and managed, but power as such does not show its true brutality in these examples. Power, raw and unrefined, does however eventually play a very important role in turning Marnus into yet another Ahab.

Throughout the novel the author uses the child narrator to reveal how obvious apartheid was, even to those who merely benefited from it. The laws and the stereotypes were easy enough to spot, if one looked closely enough. This however is not the full extent of apartheid. The novel reveals much more than the familiar face of apartheid, going beyond the life that all South Africans knew, to the twilight zone of dark dealings and violence. In her article on The Smell of Apples, Barnard states that "[o]ne should note that any fond beliefs regarding the openness of power in South Africa have scarcely remained tenable after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's revelations about the apartheid government's extensive investment in all manner of underhanded skulduggery: shady operatives, covert arms distributions, remote killing fields, secret scientific projects - the list can be continued ad nauseam" (Barnard 225). It is important that the secret nature of these events be kept in mind, especially from the point of view of a child growing up in a sheltered environment. In Behr's novel, this side of the apartheid state is often revealed not through direct reference to events, but through parallels drawn with other regimes, and also through revelations about the inner life of the Erasmus family.

Much about the apartheid regime is revealed by the stories told by a visiting Chilean general. The Chilean regime shows many parallels with the South African regime, not only in its oppressive nature, but also in terms of its main enemy, communism. Although racism does not play a major part in the oppressive nature of the state in Chile, the methods employed in political "cleansing" are worth noting, especially when compared to what would be revealed during the sessions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Chile is also a military state, which South Africa can be said to have been, especially during the states of emergency in the 1980s. Much of

what the general relates about his government's tactics can, through inference, be linked to the South African government and Defence Force. Through the use of this tactic, the author allows disgust for the tactics employed to grow in the reader, without the reader being blinded by issues of guilt, as might well be the case if events in South Africa were discussed in the same way.

A powerful example of this is when the general advises that "the Republic should get rid of the leaders who are the real trouble-makers" (Behr 116). This was clearly advice that the Republic took to heart and exercised with extreme prejudice. The author never states that what happened in Chile happened here, he never suggests that the Republic took the general's advice, but the link between the two regimes is established. If one looks at the history of the South African struggle, one often comes across the death, under suspicious circumstances, of major leaders in the struggle. The name of Steve Biko comes to mind immediately, as well as a litany of other names mentioned in Antjie Krog's Country of My Skull. Many of these people died while awaiting trial. The by now well-known euphemism "permanently remove from society" comes to mind. It is therefore strongly insinuated that, as we shared the same common enemy and the same style of government, it was to be expected that we would act in the same way. Through the use of this technique, the author empowers the reader to question other events in the novel. A prime example of this is the report that the police had shot "twelve drunk blacks" at the Western Deep Levels mine (70). The reader may well start to wonder if the people shot were in fact drunk. History has recorded this event slightly differently. The truth is that the police had opened fire on a crowd of striking workers whose demand for higher pay had been rejected, and killed twelve of them. The only reasons for the shooting that Marnus is aware of is that the miners were drunk and black. Neither of these would seem to be a capital offence, not even in South Africa. Through revelations in the novel of what was happening behind the scenes, the reader is forced to re-read and re-evaluate events, not only events in the novel but also other events that occurred during the apartheid years.

Although much of the information on the dark side of the state can be learned through parallels, there are also instances where the author gives direct examples of state violence. These cases reinforce the implication that violence was extensively used by

the South African government. The prime example of this is the slide show that General Erasmus gives to the visiting Chilean general. It is interesting that it begins as something beautiful and innocent, with pictures of the Erasmus's second honeymoon in Mozambique. The slideshow degenerates into a horror show when the pictures of beauty are replaced by pictures of violence and death. Ilse leaves in time to miss what is coming, but Marnus is exposed to the full brutality of man, and of his father, when he views all the slides of the war in Rhodesia. The scene is structured so that the reader feels caught up in the show, unable to escape, as does Marnus. The images are those of utter brutality and inhumanity, with clear indications of murder, not merely war. It is ironic that children who are brought up in an extremely sheltered environment, away from the "evils" of pop music and Liberals, should be exposed to these extreme depictions of violence. From Ilse's reaction, the fact that she gets up to make coffee the moment that the slides of the holiday are replaced, it would seem that this is not the first time that the children have seen these slides, that they have repeatedly been exposed to these images. It is difficult to imagine what the impact of this could be on the psyche of a young child, especially the fact that his own father was involved in the deeds depicted. It is interesting that, if the children had indeed seen the slides before, Marnus chooses not to leave as his sister does, but stays to watch. This already indicates a greater willingness on his part to be "involved" in the violence. Almost as disturbing as the images themselves is the statement by general Erasmus that "[e]very atrocity committed by those guerrillas is imprinted on your brain, just like the faces of your wife and children on the pictures you carry in your inside pocket" (167). One is bound to wonder whether the atrocities committed by the South African Defence Force are imprinted on the brain in the same way. More importantly however is the link established here between the violence and the family. It could easily be read as the excuse mentioned by many perpetrators of apartheid-era crimes, the fact that they did it to protect their families, to protect their people, from the "swart gevaar." There would seem to be even more sinister implications hidden in the statement. This is the first indication of two completely different people; the violent soldier and the loving father, sharing one body and one mind. Up until this stage it is almost possible to ignore the fact that General Erasmus is a soldier, but the slide show makes it very clear that there is another side to the man. The same thing could be said for the state, which shows a caring face to those it loves, and an angry

and hateful face to those not in its favour. Thus, it was easy for whites to love the state, as it cared for them. The same could never be said for people of colour.

Although the slides reveal a side of General Erasmus that has up until that stage remained hidden, his true brutality is only shown in action after the slide show, when he rapes Frikkie. Although this is of course a very shocking moment in itself, the rape also operates at a symbolic level, and should be read in a figurative as well as a literal sense. Johan Erasmus, as a general in the SADF, is expected to be a protector and upholder of the values of the state, which would therefore include a strict code of morals. In spite of this, he becomes not a protector, but a violator. He abuses his position of trust as Marnus' father for his own needs, to the extreme detriment of Frikkie, and the relationship between Frikkie and Marnus. In this respect, General Erasmus can be compared with the state that he represents. The state should uphold its laws and protect its citizens. This is however not the case, as it would seem that some must suffer for the state to function. What is even more notable is that it is not only those who are oppressed by the state who suffer, but also those who are supposed to benefit from its protection. The ostensible beneficiaries of apartheid also become the victims. It could be stated that all power structures are merely extensions of the family unit, as this represents the basic unit of control. A case could therefore be made for a reading of events in the Erasmus family as an allegory for the state. Although the state and the family can to a certain extent be read as synonymous, it should be noted that the Erasmus family does not represent the 'average' South African's experience of family life in this time. The public life of the family does however seem to represent the perfect South African family. They seem to be a close-knit family unit with two beautiful children. What is hidden behind the perfect façade is the sordid truth of abuse and violence. In this way it represents apartheid era South Africa very effectively, as it reveals that behind the perfect lie there can be a terrible truth.

All power structures are in the end based on the family unit, as the basic unit of all organisation in society, and therefore the family is a very successful metaphor for the state. Therefore, it can be read that the state, although it is supposedly there to protect all its people, or in the case of the apartheid regime all those people who had the right

skin colour, ends up exploiting them, even those who should benefit from it. Marnus, even though his father is a general, and later a minister, is killed in the secret war in Angola, where he has to suffer for the state to operate successfully. He reaps nothing of his supposed beneficiary status. There is an extreme sense of betrayal involved here, as can also be found in the rape of Frikkie. It is not that the author lessens the impact of the scene through the parallels; it merely underlines the implications of the novel. Another interesting element in the rape-scene is that Frikkie is clearly too afraid to call for help. Although it may well have been futile to attempt resistance, resistance does however seem necessary. This is interesting when compared to the excuse of many South Africans that resistance to the state would have been futile and dangerous, and that therefore they did not resist. The next morning, Frikkie obviously denies that anything happened, as is to be expected in a situation that would definitely lead to some form of post-traumatic stress disorder.

The morning after the rape, when Marnus and Frikkie are in the kitchen, Marnus asks Frikkie three times what caused his hand to smell "sour", when he notes that it is not the apples that are "rotten or something", but Frikkie's hand. The fact that Frikkie's hands are dirty causes him to deny that anything happened, as he feels that his hands are unclean, not merely physically but also in a philosophical sense. It is important to bear in mind that rape is not primarily driven by sex, but by the exercise of power over another human being. In this sense, the rape can also be equated with the exercise of power by the state. It is a brutal form of power, to the detriment of all. Frikkie's emotional response to his rape is similar to the emotions of many people toward apartheid and the state. Many were too afraid to speak out, even though they were aware of what was happening. Yet, although they may have had no direct involvement and be considered victims of the system, feelings of guilt for their supposed involvement makes it impossible for them to cry out, or to even face the facts. There is a definite echo of the 'dirty hands' idea that seems to present such a problem to Frikkie.

The position of Marnus is no easier to pin down. He runs to wake his father while he is still under the impression that the Chilean general is raping Frikkie, but he then finds that it is in fact his father who is the perpetrator. This realisation brings him to a

stop, as he now has to contemplate the implications that his actions may have. Suddenly he is torn between betrayal of his father and betrayal of his best friend. There is nothing that prevents Marnus from 'doing the right thing' and crying out; he chooses not to. When he is forced to weigh the protection and love that he receives from his father against the evil that his father perpetrates, the protection wins without contest. This would seem to be merely a preliminary alliance to his father, as there are still elements of mistrust present when he faces his father the next day. In a very dense section of the novel, Marnus receives his first hiding ever from his father. The hiding reveals a violent side of General Erasmus, and although Marnus has had glimpses of it on slides and through a hole in his bedroom floor, it is something that has never been turned against him. It is however not the hiding itself that creates the powerful bond between son and father, but the complete loss of control of which this is but one symptom. This is emphasised when General Erasmus breaks down in tears after hitting Marnus. In this loss of control, he reveals his own humanity to Marnus for the first time. In this recognition of mutual humanity, the recognition by the father of strength in the child, and by the child of weakness in the father, there lies the seed of a new and stronger bond. Marnus also seems to be motivated by that fact that, to a certain extent, he has now also become a protector to his father, as he has saved his father through not revealing what he had witnessed.

He hugs me and holds me tightly against his chest, until I feel his tears through the shirt of my camouflage suit. I put my arms around his head and we both cry, holding on to each other. We stay like that for a long time, Dad and me together, with him kneeling on the bathroom floor. (197)

Through this emotional bond, Marnus becomes more like his father, something which is signified by the pinning of the epaulettes to his camouflage suit.

In choosing for his own advantage and against stopping the suffering of another, Marnus also sullies himself. There is a sense of dogged determination about the way in which Marnus questions Frikkie on the origin of the smell on his hands. Marnus does however seem to let it go the moment he realises what the smell represents; that it is connected to the rape. When Marnus decides to let it go, a conspiracy of silence is

created, although tacitly. Frikkie will not speak about the rape because of shame and fear. Marnus remains silent as well, but not to protect his friend, as he seems to tell himself, but to protect his position by protecting his father. The fact that he saw the violence that his father was capable of does influence his relationship with his father, but after his father's love for him is reaffirmed, there exists an even stronger bond between the two. Marnus will obey because of love. Frikkie will obey because of fear, not only fear of a repetition of the rape, but also fear of the revelation of the rape, because the shame he feels seems to outweigh the injustice done. Both of them will however obey. In this way, Behr illustrates very effectively how people were loved into and violated into the system.

It is also important in terms of the possible father-state metaphor that Marnus did not expose his father. In spite of everything, Marnus loved his father, as his father had done so much for him. He could therefore not tell on him. By implication, even if people knew what the state was doing, it was difficult for them to speak out. If they did speak out, they would be rejected as Liberals and Communists, and because of the fear of the unfamiliar that the system made an integral part of upbringing, they were even more afraid of the outside world than of the state. Marnus is also faced with the problem that he finds himself unable to speak to anyone in the room. The only person who may possibly understand him is his sister Ilse, and he dislikes her and therefore finds himself unable to open up to her. When he does decide to make his stand, he cannot find the words of protest. This is a whole new language, one to which Marnus had never been exposed. Even if he could find the words, he could not speak to anyone in the room, for they have all betrayed him. His mother may have had an affair with the Chilean general, his father raped Frikkie, and his sister betrayed him by suggesting that he put on his military uniform. It is however primarily through his father's reaction that he becomes part of the system. As son stands up to father, and father breaks down in front of son, they both become human, and can bond. They are now the same, and this is signified by Marnus putting on the uniform. When he keeps the uniform on and stares at himself in the mirror, it is clear that he is accepting a certain image of himself. The image that Marnus finds reflected in the mirror is that of his father. This is the most direct reflection of the mirroring that takes place in the novel, although it is not the most important mirroring. The child narrator also

manages to hold up a mirror to the reader, in which many Afrikaners may well find themselves reflected. By allowing people to find themselves in the novel, Behr may well assist them in dealing with issues of complicity that they may harbour. When this complicity is accepted, regardless of what shape it took, the road to reconciliation becomes much easier.

The many parallels in the novel between the family unit and the state allow the reader to recognise not only a familial situation that might be familiar, but also the greater scheme of state and individual, and how one was indoctrinated through this. Through the presentation of life in a seemingly model Afrikaner family, the author attempts to explain, but not excuse, the way in which people acted and thought in that specific section of society at that time. The thought-patterns also help to explain, but not excuse, complicity. In showing how people became completely indoctrinated by the society in which they lived, this novel can assist the reader in coming to terms with his or her own position.

In the end, it would seem that none emerge unscathed. Those who speak out against the system are expelled, but at least they remain morally intact. General Erasmus rapes Frikkie, Frikkie does not tell, Marnus does not stop the rape, Ilse facilitates the final affiliation between General Erasmus and Marnus, and even Lenore has, it is suggested, an affair with the Chilean general. In as far as the family represents the state, no one can claim to be clean. All the people who formed part of the family, thus all "white" South Africans, have a certain amount of guilt to deal with. The novel does not only deal with indoctrination and guilt, but also with reconciliation. In this respect, it is important to note Marnus' recurring dream, in which his true companion is Little Neville, one with whom he could never be true friends in real life. In the dream, they are together, side by side. This represents the ideal that was made impossible by the society in which Marnus was brought up.

Behr makes it clear that a move towards reconciliation is not really an optional response to the novel, through the thought of a dying Marnus, when he states that "[d]eath brings its own freedom, and it is for the living that the dead should mourn, for in life there is no escape from history" (198). This history must be faced. This is

not a gentle reminder; it is a grave warning that action must be taken. It is also the clearest indication of the author's intent with the novel, as a socially responsible work of art.

Reconciliation in the 'real' world

Disgrace - J.M. Coetzee

As one of the great South African novelists, J.M. Coetzee's first work of fiction after the demise of apartheid was eagerly awaited. The resulting work, Disgrace, is set in post-apartheid South Africa, yet no mention is made of the TRC, its revelations or its consequences. This does not however imply that the relevant issues are not dealt with. On the contrary, issues relating to guilt, loss and reconciliation feature very prominently in the novel. By avoiding the specific structure of the TRC, Coetzee manages to create a work that is at the same time more personal and more universal in nature. The intimate picture of disgrace that the novel paints is almost painful to read, and leaves the reader with much to consider, in contrast to the Krog's work, which seems to be much less engaging in its style and content.

From the very first page of the novel, the reader is made aware of the flawed character of the protagonist, David Lurie. Within the first paragraph the reader already learns the age, marital status, and rather loose morals of David, as well as his choice of woman, one with a "honey-brown body, unmarked by the sun" (1). He sees Soraya every Thursday, in an apartment building in the city, in a paid-for arrangement. David sees this as quite satisfactory, even though he is aware that he is old enough to be Soraya's father. There is a certain sense of irony in the arrangement, as David seems to find pleasure in treating this rather more like a real relationship than the mere arrangement it is. He mentions that he finds pleasure in giving Soraya gifts, something one would usually reserve for actual relationships. This sense of irony is continued by Soraya, who has very moralistic views on people who tan topless, yet seems to be unaffected by her chosen line of work.

In spite of David's seemingly rather utilitarian view of sex, he seems to be an anachronism. He had been trained in literature, but now finds himself teaching in a technical environment. Where once he taught the art of English, he now teaches it as a tool, something to be used for mere communication. In a move that is indicative of David's inability to let go, he is still allowed to teach one speciality course, thereby clinging to a bygone age.

Though the relationship with Soraya may at first seem to present a solution to the “problem of sex” (1) as David calls it, it quickly degenerates into a rather sad affair when he starts to delude himself into believing that even this paid-for affair could have some deeper meaning. When, after a chance encounter on the street, Soraya leaves the agency, David is shown to be unable to let her go. He phones the company, and when they refuse to put him in contact with her, as it would be against “house rules” he hires a private investigator to find her. This attempt leads to a final break between David and Soraya, illustrating an inability on the part of David to move on once something is over. It is however interesting to note David’s response to his chance encounter with Soraya. He suddenly sees his ‘relationship’ with her as linking him in some way to her children and family, something completely ludicrous, as this had never bothered him before. This intrusion of reality into his neat solution to the “problem of sex” seems to precipitate much of his future predicament.

In this respect it is worth noting that David used to be, by his own admittance, somewhat of a ladies man. He could be assured of the fact that women “would return his look” and this was “the backbone of his life”. Yet, although he finds that “[w]ithout warning his powers fled” he is unable to move on, but merely attempts to change his approach to the problem (7). This loss of power, sexual power to be specific, is in a sense to blame for his whole dilemma, as he seems to be forced into ever more dangerous situations as his power fades. This loss of power, more than anything else, seems to drive him into a situation where he has to use the position of trust and power as lecturer to get one of his students into bed with him.

David is not unaware of his problem. He knows that his power is fading, and that he should change his ways. He in fact goes as far as to say that he should probably give up on his old ways, in order to “turn [his] mind to the proper business of the old: preparing to die” (9). His inability to accept what he is becoming, namely an old man, makes it impossible for him to follow his own ‘advice’. He finds himself unable to move on, unable to leave the game, and therefore a chance encounter with a student he fancies starts a chain of events that will eventually alter his way of life forever. In his

relationship with Melanie, there is an important element that should however be noted.

It is, within a South African context, significant that both the women with whom he has 'significant' relationships early in the novel are women of colour. This leads one to question whether there may not be a meaning behind this. Is David attempting to make amends for apartheid by crossing the racial divide, or is he merely attempting to extend his tenure as "master" after the end of apartheid. The same question can be raised in relation to Coetzee's novel Waiting for the Barbarians. What is the reason for the relationship between the governor and the barbarian girl? It would seem very difficult to come up with a clear answer, as the complexity of David's interaction with these women precludes a simple analysis. There are however signs that his relationships in general may well be based on the exercise of power. This comes to the fore when Lucy discusses the psychology of sex with her father later in the novel. She makes the point that it would seem to excite men when there is some level of resistance from the woman. This would imply a sense of conquest and dominance inherent in the act. If this is indeed the case, it would seem that there is a certain level of mastering involved. To what extent this is however based on the race of the women involved remains unclear. There seems to be different forces at play when David becomes involved with Bev Shaw later in the novel, but it should be remembered that she is not a young, attractive woman as the other two were. This may well have a greater impact on David's response to her than the fact that she is white.

It is interesting to note that in apartheid-era novels, not only by Coetzee but also by Gordimer and others, sex across the colour bar was often a deeply liberating experience for the protagonist. It contravened some of the most ridiculous apartheid era laws, and in this way represented a personal rebellion against the regime. It represented, on the most personal level, a rejection of all that the apartheid system stood for. In the act the supposed differences between the races were erased, and through the act of sexual intercourse it could even be said that the shared humanity of both parties was affirmed. The mere idea that it could represent anything but rebellion on the part of a protagonist would have seemed ridiculous. In David's case, the

meaning is clearly not as well defined. Where once his relationships would undoubtedly have represented a rebellion, it now seems to represent a sad attempt at recapturing control, with the race of the women seeming to be of secondary importance, at least in his mind.

The fact that the 'code' of the inter-racial relationship has faded away is important not merely in terms of David Lurie, but also for literature in the post-apartheid era. The old codes have lost their meaning, and it would seem that new ones are yet to be created. This would seem to leave the author in a challenging time, where there is room for growth. Yet, as with the loss of apartheid as primary theme, the loss of the old codes can present problems, not only as far as the author is concerned, but also for the reader. The reader can no longer rely on conventions in order to understand the meaning behind events in a novel. Therefore one should note that merely because a certain meaning was once attached to an act does not mean that it is still a valid reading.

It could be that it was merely a 'forbidden fruit' situation, that David wanted that which was once banned. The idea that race may have played a role in his selection of partners can be seen when Melanie asks him whether he had slept with another of his students, Amanda. The author describes Amanda as a 'wispy blonde' and then proceeds to state that David had 'no interest in Amanda' (29). Although this is by no means conclusive proof that race played a part in his selection of partners, it does lend credibility to the argument, as Amanda would seem to be as attractive a prospect as any of the other women, at least in conventional terms. Yet it is worth noting that Soraya was listed under 'exotic' in the books of the agency. It may therefore merely be a matter of a taste for the exotic. This is brought to the fore by David's remark that Melanie had "wide, almost Chinese cheekbones" (11).

When David encounters Melanie, it is merely that, an encounter. Though he is "mildly smitten" with her, he mentions that this is not something exceptional, in fact there is almost always some student whom he fancies (11). In his attempts to seduce Melanie there are echoes of the old womaniser, yet the effect is not quite what he had anticipated. In spite of this, he continues his pursuit of her, showing tenacity, even if

coupled with a lack of discretion and thought. Though there are many signs that he should back off in his pursuit of Melanie, including intimations that she is already involved with someone, and even though he is fully aware that it could place him in a compromising position, David continues the pursuit until he gets what he wants. Although he sees the inherent danger in this, and seems to notice all the signs, he is unable to let go. When he gives her a ride home during a rainstorm, she does not invite him in, even though he goes as far as to ask for an invitation.

The next time he comes to her flat, he is not willing to accept a refusal. Uninvited, he enters the flat, and commits rape. Even though the writing does not quite treat it as rape, the description is definitely that of a rape. Even David himself notices this: "Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she has decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck" (25). Words with definite violent connotations are used, for example "thrust" and "thud," and Melanie says "no", something that David prefers to ignore. All of this would point to rape. The portrayal thereof does however leave the reader with some doubt and reluctance to call it rape. In spite of this, the facts of the situation present a definite case of rape. When this is however compared to David's response when his daughter is later raped, the wording and emotion involved are quite different, leaving the reader in no doubt whatsoever as to what happened on the farm.

It is interesting to note that although David's relationships are first and foremost sexual in nature, this is not the cause of his problems. The emotional bond that he forms with these women, and his inability to let them go, seems more central to the problem, even though this seems to be the very thing he attempts to avoid by entering into relationships that could not possibly work out, for any number of reasons.

In what can be seen as a new phase in the novel, the exposure of David's tryst with Melanie leads to a commission of inquiry into the matter. This represents a formal and structured approach to the issues of guilt and reconciliation. The nature of the tribunal, as well as its purpose and the extent of its power, is interrogated in the novel, not only by David, but also by the members of the tribunal, in order to gain a clearer

picture of its function. Of special interest is the discussion on what the tribunal can actually achieve. Members of the tribunal want David to say that he is sorry, to apologise for his behaviour, in a public way. David's reply to this is that the tribunal want "a spectacle: breast-beating, remorse, tears" and he goes as far as to call it a "TV show" (66). The public nature of the tribunal, and the public playing out of the events surrounding it create an uncomfortable position for David, as he would clearly prefer the business of the tribunal to be conducted in the dark, as his own actions were. The public "TV show" nature of the tribunal could however have played into the hands of David if he had decided to play along. A public show of remorse could have helped to swing public sentiment, even if not completely in his favour, then at least less violently against him.

The fact that David is placed in a position where he clearly understands the system, and would be able to use it, but chooses instead to criticise it, sets this work apart. It also presents the reader with some difficulty in reading David's character. There would seem to be a reluctance to abuse the system, yet there is no such reluctance to abuse people for his own selfish purposes. To a certain extent it seems that his reaction to the tribunal is driven by the same selfish motives. He refuses to submit to the judgement of others, he will not explain himself to anyone. David's scepticism of the commission, and his view that it is merely there to pass judgement on him, leads to a situation where the background to the affair is never revealed. He refuses to explain himself to the tribunal, and in so doing, undermines its effectiveness. If the truth is not fully revealed, the tribunal seems to fail, and this could be seen as a victory for David. By not giving the tribunal anything to work with, he makes a truly informed decision impossible. The fact that the affair remains shrouded in mystery because of David's non-co-operation allows him to harbour his own views on the incident, without them being publicly questioned. This does not however lead to a resolution of the problem, neither for the tribunal nor for David.

The aim of the tribunal was however more than merely ascertaining David's guilt or innocence. This would seem to be one of its minor functions. Central to an understanding of the tribunal's mission is the remark that the process does not deal with the incident in isolation, but also with the "long history of exploitation of which

this is part" (53). This "history of exploitation" could be read as referring to David's history of sexual relationships. It could however also be read as referring to apartheid, as Melanie is "Coloured". This makes it of even greater importance that the event be fully investigated. The perpetrator is not merely in a position of power as an authority figure, but as a white male he is also in a position of physical power and even historical power based on his race. It is therefore not only a case of ascertaining whether David is guilty, but also an attempt at exposing the circumstances and forces that prompted his behaviour. This knowledge would then enable the tribunal to adapt existing rules and regulations in order to lessen the chance of a similar incident recurring. The tribunal has a much wider scope than a normal court of law, but this complicates the operation of the tribunal, as its position and aim are not clear-cut. It relates to a much wider social context, not merely the letter of the law. In this one should note phrases such as "[t]he wider community is entitled to know" (50). This statement makes it clear that there is more to the tribunal than the mere meting out of justice. The community's right to know what happened is seen as being as important an aim of the tribunal. This is the very idea that David strongly rejects. He views the public nature of the proceedings, and the public display of remorse that he sees as integral to the process, as unnecessary. David seems to view the entire string of events as a witch-hunt in which he is being unfairly and publicly sacrificed. This leads to a strong reluctance on his part to assist the tribunal in its operation. The fact that David scuppers the inquest through his refusal to state anything beyond his admission of guilt indicates an unwillingness to open himself up to public view. This makes it impossible for others to learn from his mistakes, as there are no details released about what happened. In this way, through his lack of co-operation, David does not allow the event to be of any value to anyone. No-one can learn from it, as detail are not released. No-one can benefit. It would seem to end there.

To a certain extent, one could feel that David should be lauded for his refusal to present a mere show of remorse for the benefit of the tribunal. Yet, in the same breath, one feels that he is to be condemned for not allowing any good to come from the situation. Through his lack of co-operation he manages to completely negate the tribunal. If he was truly without remorse, it would be acceptable for him to state it,

but it seems that he is unable to deal with his feelings of guilt in relation to his feelings of insecurity.

It is interesting that David, although he does admit to the affair, does not accept responsibility for it. He blames his actions on Eros, on an impulse. It seems that David would blame his actions on elements outside the self. Yet the control of these impulses is the very thing that makes civilisation possible, something that seems to be close to David's heart, if one is to judge from his love of music and poetry. This point is taken up in the novel by Swarts, when he states that "for the good of the whole we have to deny ourselves certain gratifications" (52). If people were allowed to give in to their most primitive of instincts without bearing the consequences, it would be impossible to have an ordered society. It is probable that David was not the only lecturer to be tempted by Eros, but it would seem that he was the only one to succumb, and in the process get caught. This seems to be David's main issue with the situation, the fact that he was caught. It seems to become an obsession with him that, if he had only loved better, nothing of the sort would have happened. This affects his sense of self, as it makes it abundantly clear to him that his powers are failing. His refusal to submit his actions and motivations to the judgement of others seems to be a feeble attempt to retain a semblance of dignity in the face of this loss, something that would be taken from him if he admitted that he had been wrong.

As far as the commission can tell, there seems to be no shame on David's part for what he has done, no sense of the wrong that he has perpetrated. This is something to which the tribunal objects. "There is a difference between pleading guilty to a charge and admitting you were wrong, and you know that" (54). The fact that David admits his involvement with Melanie, and thereby his guilt, does not help the tribunal. It does not represent any form of progress. No change is brought about by it; the guilt was there before the tribunal. The only way in which true change can be effected is if the perpetrator comes to the realisation that what he did was wrong, and is then able to apologise. This would indicate growth in the character of the perpetrator, and present the possibility of redemption. The fact that David does not allow this is one of the more disturbing elements of the tribunal. David is in a position where admitting he was wrong may well be read as playing to the gallery. He would be admitting that he

was wrong, but doing so under duress. This seems to be what is questioned when one of the members of the tribunal asks, "does he accept his guilt?" (51). What the tribunal is after is not merely a statement of guilt, but an acceptance thereof. When the guilt is accepted as part of the self, it can be dealt with in a constructive way.

David finds it difficult to accept that the moment he is found out, his private life becomes public. The fact that his life is now public means that his entire trial is also played out in the public eye, and to a certain extent he is even judged by public sentiment. There may have been a time when such a matter could have been handled behind closed doors, and even covered up, but that time has passed. There is a clear advantage for the community in the matter being made public. Through the events played out before the tribunal and in the press, people may learn how to prevent such incidents from happening. For David, it is not acceptable that he should have to suffer what he must regard as public humiliation and ridicule. Matters handled in the dark do not contribute to healing, which has to take place in the wider community. In this respect, it is useful to refer to the two concepts of disgrace and guilt. Disgrace would seem to be the public judgement on the individual, while guilt seems to denote the individual's judgement of himself. In order for true healing to occur, both seem to be necessary, although the public display of remorse may lead to a lessening of the disgrace.

As to the question of the sincerity of submissions and testimonies in front of the tribunal, the statement made by the chair of the tribunal provides considerable insight into the functioning of such a system. "The criterion is not whether you are sincere. That is a matter, as I say, for your own conscience. The criterion is whether you are prepared to acknowledge your fault in a public manner and take steps to remedy it" (58). This statement, although it might well seem to undermine an undertaking such as the tribunal, in fact shifts the focus from the event of lesser importance, the crime, to the more important, which is the effect that the event may have on the public. The tribunal therefore insists that there be some sort of public show of remorse and remedial action, in order to satisfy the public. The fact that the sincerity is not for the tribunal to judge is important, but what is not mentioned is that the public will to a certain extent be the judge of the sincerity of David's submission. Whether this is the

correct course of action to follow may well be questioned, but if the public is to be engaged in the process it is more important to have a public show of guilt than for the show to necessarily be sincere. David clearly recognises this, as can be seen from his statement to Bev that "[t]hese are puritanical times...[p]rivate life is public business...[p]rurience is respectable, prurience and sentiment" (66). In spite of this fact, and in spite of the trouble he is in, he does not act according to it. He seems loath to play a role for the benefit of the community, although in refusing to accept his guilt, he is already playing a role.

David consistently challenges the tribunal, refusing to take it seriously. He does not act according to the conventions of such a body, continually asks the commission what they want, never seeming to speak from the heart. He asks the commission what will satisfy them, not bothering with what the right thing to do would be. There seems to be a lingering suspicion of the whole process, no trust in what the tribunal or its goal. Although the reader might be inclined to condemn David for not taking the commission seriously and not playing along, it could be that at least David is being true to himself, where otherwise he might have abused the tribunal and faked an apology.

This could be related to David's view of scapegoating. According to him, scapegoating worked "while it still had religious power behind it", but that in the modern world, it can no longer work (91). The power of the gods has faded, and no one truly believes that the guilt of a city or country can be purged by the expulsion of an individual. Yet, in David's view, this is why he was asked to make a public statement of remorse. Through this statement and his guilt, it would seem that the university had cleansed itself of the guilt that goes with the long history of exploitation of which David's case was merely a small part.

David is eventually forced to leave the university, and in the third distinct section of the novel he moves to the country, away from his troubles at home. He moves in with his daughter on her farm, where he would seem to be out of the public eye and relatively safe.

Although the relationship between David and Lucy would seem to be rather strained at times, David makes himself useful on the farm, and through this he starts to create a new life for himself. Even though this is a far cry from the academic environment that he had been used to before his expulsion, he retains certain of his old dreams and ambitions. Primary among these would seem to be the completion of his work on Byron. This seems to distract him, at least to a certain extent. When he becomes too much around the house, Lucy asks him whether he would not mind helping out at an animal clinic nearby. This gets David out of the house, but also brings him disturbingly close to the cruelty and death that forms such a large part of life. Although David eventually learns how to deal with animals that are bound to die, he does so reluctantly. This death and violence comes much closer to home though and in a way that David is not prepared for.

In a vicious and brutal attack, David and Lucy are robbed on their farm. Even worse though, David is set on fire and Lucy is raped. This attack, more than any other event in the novel, indicates to David that he is losing control. Even though he recognises the danger when the men enter the house, he is unable to stop them. The greatest loss of power seems to take place when David is locked in the bathroom while his daughter is being raped. He is unable to do anything to help her, even though he tries to break the door down to reach her. He feels impotent, unable to fulfil his duties as a father, unable to be the man that he should be. He feels that he has failed her, and that through this failure he has become even less of a man. This remains a problem for him when facing his daughter, but also when facing her assailants. He is aware that there were certain expectations of him as a father, as a man, and that he was unable to live up to these expectations. He feels that "he must do something" and that "if his child was calling, however mutely, surely he would hear" (94). Yet he does not hear his child and he is helpless to do anything. This is reflected when he thinks on the fact that "[h]e speaks Italian, he speaks French, but Italian and French will not save him here in darkest Africa" (95). At this moment, the mention of the old colonial phrase 'darkest Africa' does not merely indicate a certain view of the African continent. This is indeed the darkest moment in David's life, a moment when he can only guess what is happening to his daughter, but can do nothing to help her. He is

inadequate. His bodily integrity is also violated when he is set alight, although not to the same extent that Lucy is being violated.

It is interesting to compare the rape of Lucy with the rape of Melanie. In Lucy's case, the language is much clearer, and there is no doubt that it was a case of rape. It was violent and planned, and is a direct reversal of what happened earlier in the novel. David is no longer the perpetrator, but the victim, although indirectly. The perpetrators are black, the victim white. David is suddenly placed in the position where he has placed other parents before, for example Mr Isaacs. He has to deal with his daughter's violation.

By presenting the action in the novel through the eyes of David, elements of the parallel are obscured. In David's eyes, he is not the perpetrator of a vile and violent crime, such as the men who rape his daughter and set him alight. David does not describe his own actions in the same terms as he does the rape of his daughter. In his eyes he was overcome with desire, and under the influence of Eros he lost all control. This makes him a flawed human being, but the perpetrators of the crime against his daughter are monsters. The one-sided view of the story makes it difficult to compare the events directly. It is however abundantly clear that both represent a clear case of rape. The one case is just seen in a slightly more forgiving and civilised light than the other. David would like to believe that there were extenuating circumstances for his situation, and that the pre-existing 'relationship' makes it acceptable. All of these factors do nothing to lessen the suffering of the victim, or the gravity of the crime. It is still rape.

The rape of Lucy is clearly a case of exercising power. She also experiences it as such, but also as a greatly personal thing, driven by hate. "It was so personal," she says. "It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was...expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them" (156). This has bearing, too, on her ideas on men and sex, which in turn relate to David's relationship with Melanie:

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? (158)

Lucy sees sex as a form of power over another human being. According to this view, the dominance of the male is based on the overpowering of the woman. The violence of the imagery is a repetition, although more extreme, of the violence in the description of David's rape of Melanie.

The position of Petrus in all of this is also interesting. David suspects him of having had something to do with the attack, but even if this is not the case, he states his terms for Lucy's safety if she is to remain on the farm. She has to marry him, although this is only pretence for the title deed to the farm being handed over to him. He profits from the rape, even if he is innocent of its perpetration. He also protects a member of his family, Pollux, from prosecution by not handing him over to the police, even though he is fully aware of the fact that Pollux was involved in the attack. Pollux is guilty of misdeeds, but will not be punished because, in the words of Petrus, he is "one of my people". His family is much more important to him than justice, which seems a natural development from the apartheid era, where justice was used by the ruling minority for the protection of their own property and privileges. Whites who perpetrated misdeeds under apartheid against black victims were protected because they were "our people". The fact that Petrus states that Pollux is "(his) people" confirms that the great divide between the races still exists (201). It seems to be an "us versus them" situation, with the two sides still being divided by race. The reparations being made are mentioned throughout the novel as theft, murder and rape.

Through the extreme shock of the rape, David does seem to come to a realisation about himself and his actions. Where he once refused to apologise for his relationship with Melanie, he now goes to meet Melanie's father so that he might lie his ghosts to

rest. It would seem that David is on the point of realising what he has to do in order to move on in his life. Yet, in spite of this, when he does decide to apologise for his tryst with Melanie, he does so very uncomfortably and goes about it in completely the wrong way. He does not even seem to apologise for his deeds, only for not fulfilling them better.

'It could have turned out differently, I believe, between the two of us, despite our ages. But there was something I failed to supply, something' - he hunts for the word - 'lyrical. I lack the lyrical. I manage love too well. Even when I burn I don't sing, if you understand me. For which I am sorry. I am sorry for what I took your daughter through. You have a wonderful family. I apologize for the grief I have caused you and Mrs. Isaacs. I ask for your pardon.'

(171)

As an apology, this seems very self-centred and insufficient. There seems to be an element of grief involved, but not guilt. Although it might well be true that, if the relationship had succeeded, it would not have caused pain to the family, the relationship itself is not questioned, merely the outcome. He claims that he did not love well enough, but does not apologise for what he did. It almost seems as though David does not realise that what he did was wrong. His apology almost seems like a man apologising for impotence, not for violating his student and abusing his power. He apologises for not being able to maintain his power, not caring that the power was wrong in the first place. This presents a very interesting insight into the thinking that one may well find associated with wrongdoing. The apology is for the failure of the plan, not for the plan. Even if the relationship had worked, it would still have been immoral, but this does not feature in the equation. The criterion is success, not moral justifiability. It would seem that the concepts of grief and guilt would be useful in this case. Grief seems to relate more to failure, guilt more to moral indefensibility. The crime that was perpetrated would cause guilt; the fact that one was caught would cause grief.

Mr. Isaacs seems to latch on to this when he states that "we are all sorry when we are found out" (172). To a certain extent this applies to David's relationship with

Melanie, but it seemingly would not have mattered to him if the relationship had succeeded. In that case the relationship would not have become public either. It is therefore difficult to ascertain in what his "sorry" to Mr Isaacs is rooted. His inner turmoil about the relationship with Melanie is however not rooted in guilt, but in failure. He cannot accept that he could not hold on to her, and for this he seems truly sorry.

Although this does point to a rather stilted and failed attempt at reconciliation, it is a step in the right direction. What seems to be lacking in this attempt is a more complete understanding of what reconciliation requires. This lack of understanding seems to be seated not in the reaching out to the other, but the exploration of the self.

The novel contains a very important analysis of David's reaction to a loss of power, a loss that occurs on various levels. The reconciliation that must occur for David is not merely reconciliation with his actions in the past, but also with his present position. The most obvious change is that he loses his position at the university, thus changing in status from respected member of the academic community to helper in an animal hospital and on his daughter's smallholding. He reflects with amusement on this change in status when he realises that he will now be working for Petrus: "Give Petrus a hand. I like that. I like the historical piquancy. Will he pay me a wage for my labour, do you think?" (77). The change is not simply from being an academic to being a worker, but from being, in South African society, a member of the ruling class, as a white male, to accepting an equal or even a subservient position to the former underclass.

David Lurie's loss of power and control is a central theme in the novel. David's reaction to his loss of power can be read as an analysis of the general human reaction to such a loss, that is, the attempt at negotiating a space in the present after the space that was occupied in the past has become untenable. This re-negotiation of a space can be seen after the attack on David and Lucy. He is forced to accept the absolute finality of the fact that he is no longer in a position of power. In fact, he has to learn to deal with his position as a victim, something that he never seemed to be before. Society and age have stripped him of all that he seemed to be: now only the real David

Lurie is left, and it is not a pretty sight, neither to David himself nor to the reader. The novel becomes a painful exposé of old age and decrepitude. What is man left with when all of his powers flee? According to Coetzee, not very much. David seems to lose all power to rule over his own life, and all ability to make changes on his way to an inevitable death.

The reaction of Lucy to the reconciliation issue is very different from that of her father, although it would seem that the end is just as tragic. Where David refuses any role in reconciliation, and in the end seems to give up without making any truly positive contributions, his daughter attempts, in her own way, to accommodate change. Her way of doing this seems, to her father and probably to most readers, perverse. Whereas she seems to be quite content and happy in her environment before the attack on her, and her subsequent rape, she is a broken shell when she comes out of the experience, and she makes no constructive contribution to her father's attempt to deal with it either. She gives up, and even states that maybe "[rape] is the price one has to pay for staying on" (158). She seems to imagine that the child she expects after the rape will symbolically serve as a unifier. The fact that she refuses to despise the child "because of who its father is", as it is not responsible for the way in which it was conceived, does however indicate the possibility of a unity that could yet come about (198).

In contrast to David's strong rejection of the idea of becoming a scapegoat, Lucy seems to accept it. She is prepared to suffer for the wrongs committed in the past and even states that rape might well be the price that one pays for staying. Yet, in Lucy's terms, this is not a case of guilt or salvation, as "[g]uilt and salvation are abstractions" (112). In spite of this statement it is difficult to view her actions in any other way, as she denies her father, and through this the reader, any insight into the workings of her mind. Through her actions, it would seem that it is merely on practical terms that she negotiates her position, not only on the farm, but also in life. It does however seem to be a completely soul-destroying compromise. What Lucy is however able to see is that one of the most important elements of reconciliation is sacrifice. She will have to sacrifice something in order to be reconciled not only with the past but also with herself. In this light, her decision to keep the child and stay on the farm seems more

sensible than one would at first imagine. The fact that she hands over the farm to Petrus is not a resignation to fate, it is in fact a re-negotiation of her own space. Lucy decides that she will accept marriage to Petrus, but she retains the house and will live on her own and on her own terms (204). If it had been resignation, she would not have set her own rules on how things would be done on the farm. Even though she no longer owns the farm, she is still in control of her own destiny, while conceding to history and negotiating with the future.

It may however be that the rape had an even more profound impact than one would at first imagine. There is a sense, especially taking the pregnancy into account, that the body had been colonised. This would seem to be the final frontier, the final and most personal sphere. It would almost seem that in some way Lucy understands this, knowing that after the rape and with the resulting pregnancy, she is now part of the new dispensation, even though it came about in a less than ideal way. The same can however not be said for David. Where Lucy was colonised by the rape, David was left scarred. Although fire often has cleansing properties linked to it, this is not what the fire does for David. The incident does not seem to lead him to new insights, which explains the failure of his apology to Mr Isaacs. David can only see the event and the scars it left, and seems to be unable to see the change that had come across Lucy. He finds himself unable to understand her thought patterns, and they end up not speaking to each other.

Only once David accepts that he should let go can he finally find peace. This letting go can be seen in various elements in the novel. David lets Lucy be, moving into his own place, and only visiting Lucy on occasion. He also lets his grand opera dwindle into a small personal project, far from the ears of any audience, except for a cripple dog. Right at the end, David even gives up the dog. In this final event, David had given up all that he held dear, and through this it would seem that he had gained some form of release, a cleansing of sorts. The simplification of his life through this letting go does however seem frighteningly close to a shrugging off of all earthly possessions, almost as if in preparation for death. Yet, strangely, as the novel draws to a close, there are rays of hope. When David visits Lucy, he notes that she is “becoming a peasant” (218). It is not a crass peasantry though. David finds her looking almost

radiant, and compares her to a “Sargent or a Bonnard” (218). There is a civility in their relationship that was sorely lacking in earlier meetings, something that would suggest a process of normalisation and healing. It would seem that they have both found a space that they can successfully inhabit, though it is not what they were used to. Even in the grim ending, where David gives up what would seem to be the last thing that he holds dear, the cripple dog, there is a certain sense of release. Even in the pain that the reader may well experience at the death, there seems to be hope. There is a suggestion that there might be redemption in the simple life, a life uncomplicated by complex commitments, a life at rock bottom. Though the sacrifice of the dog may seem unnecessary in the practical sense, David finally seems able to make sense of life. Once he has let go of everything, there is a chance of finding life itself. In the end, it is not the scapegoat that cleanses, but the dog who, “like a lamb”, serves as the sacrifice that brings closure to David’s struggle with life (220). It would seem that, finally, David has made peace with “turn[ing] [his] mind to the proper business of the old: preparing to die” (9). This seems to be evident from the fact that he lets go of all his earthly possessions without trying to hold anything back.

In this novel it is worth noting that it is not the structures imposed by authority and society that lead to reconciliation. The tribunal did nothing at all to reconcile David with those whom he had wronged, and he learnt nothing from it. Reconciliation and knowledge came through life. David could only come to see who he really was and where he had to go after experiencing all that had happened to him. No formal structure can cause a spontaneous outbreak of reconciliation, nor can there be one set recipe for it. Lucy and David followed different routes, and arrived at different destinations, yet both can be said to be reconciled with their lives and those around them. Thus, even though the novel seems to be without hope at first, it conveys a truth that presents the reader with more hope than expected.

Conclusion

Although these novels have a common theme in the form of reconciliation, they take very different approaches to the matter. This ranges from an almost factual account of the TRC and its hearings in Country of My Skull to no mention of the TRC at all in Disgrace, even though it is clear that it must form part of the landscape in which Disgrace is set. It would however seem that the strength of Krog's work, its thorough engagement with the TRC, is also what limits it. It makes the work very interesting in historical terms, but it seems to limit it in terms of the depth. The factual style, even though at times very powerful, as when testimonies are retold, does not seem to lend the same depth to the work that can be found in the two more traditional novels. It is in these novels that the reader may find the most interesting perspectives on guilt and reconciliation. Through the ability to associate with the characters in the novel, the reader may come to learn more about him or herself.

In the reading of Disgrace, a very important point in this discussion comes to the fore. The novel makes it clear that there is not only one wide road that leads to reconciliation. The main characters both find reconciliation, but their paths are very different. The suggestion in this seems to be that there can never be one single path to reconciliation, and that every person has to negotiate his or her own position. It could be at this hurdle that Country of My Skull fails. In reading the novel, one is presented with the TRC, and its single approach to the issue of reconciliation. Although this seems to suit the author, it does not necessarily follow that it will suit everyone. If this does not however suit the reader, there are no other real alternatives presented. The theoretical backing that is provided by the work is helpful, but it does not seem as useful as the idea in Disgrace that we need to find our own way to reconciliation.

The Smell of Apples, although it does not really deal with reconciliation on the same level as the other two works, does present the reader with an intimate view of the apartheid system and its influence in the daily lives of people. Through the eyes of the child narrator much of the double speak and double standards of apartheid is revealed, thereby giving the reader insight into a life that may be familiar, or otherwise allowing a glimpse into life on the other side. Through the revelation of how people were

indoctrinated, loved and violated into the system, it assists the reader in coming to terms with his or her own complicity in the apartheid regime. This would seem to be the most important element in the novel, as a person who has come to terms with complicity can more easily find reconciliation. There needs to be an acknowledgement of guilt before there can be any mention of reconciliation.

Although this is but a small sampling of current "white" South African literature, the theme of reconciliation is prominent, whether as a theme as in Country of My Skull or as a contentious issue as in Disgrace. The fact remains that reconciliation can be found in all these novels, and that they can all assist in the furthering of reconciliation in South Africa, each in its own way. Whether this is the main intention of the author or merely an effect of the prevailing socio-political climate, these novels should be taken seriously for the role they may still play in the building of a new society. Through the reading of these works, people may yet come to terms with their own involvement in the apartheid regime, and their own guilt. This involves not only an understanding of guilt, but also an understanding of the self. This is accomplished especially well by Behr when he exposes the reader to all too familiar circumstances, but exposes the hypocrisy and twists that were hidden from the young narrator that he employs in the novel. At the opposite end of the scale is Coetzee's main character, who is an old man nearing the end of his life, or at least life as he knows it, allowing the reader to look to the future. If Behr can be said to show us where things went wrong, Coetzee shows us where we may yet go wrong. This allows the reader to realise why responsibility and guilt should be accepted and what may happen if they are not.

While working on this thesis, I fell into discussion on the work with a fellow student. The discussion centred on PTSD, of which I was later to find he had intimate experience. His view of PTSD was that there could be no treatment. One could either dissociate from it, or be so caught up in it that one is unable to function normally. In his view, there could be no middle ground. He agreed with my view that there are similarities between PTSD and reconciliation in South Africa, but unfortunately his view on PTSD held when apartheid was mentioned as well. There could be no middle ground, no space for reconciliation. We could never move through it, only around it.

Trying to work through it would so impede our lives that we would be unable to function. If we can pretend that it never happened, we can at least get on with our lives.

This discussion provided me with the most compelling proof that there is still much work to be done in the field of reconciliation. We have as yet only started what will be a long and painful journey, but the rewards that we can look forward to - one nation united under one flag - more than make up for what we may have to sacrifice on the way there. May this work prove helpful in the journey.

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