

**MOTHERHOOD AND PERPETRATOR**  
**REPRESENTATION IN SOUTH**  
**AFRICAN TRUTH AND**  
**RECONCILIATION FICTION: ELLEKE**  
**BOEHMER'S *BLOODLINES* AND**  
**SINDIWE MAGONA'S *MOTHER TO***  
***MOTHER***

LITERARY RESPONSES TO THE MECHANISMS AND RESULTS OF  
THE TRC

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Masterproef voorgelegd voor het behalen van de graad master in de richting Taal en Letterkunde  
Engels-Spaans

Academiejaar: 2016 – 2017



## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the following people for their support and encouragement:

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to my promotor and supervisor Prof. Dr. Stef Craps for supporting the development of my master dissertation, for continuously giving me thorough constructive feedback and urging me to delve into South African truth and reconciliation fictions. His critical guidance has made this journey truly interesting and engaging.

Secondly, I am highly grateful to my parents who have encouraged me throughout the entire research process, who have never doubted me during my academic studies, and who have allowed me to follow my dreams. My father, Dirk Cogen, for being my inexhaustible source of writing inspiration, for rereading the almost finished product, for pondering together with me on the wonders of South African literature, and for being the person I look up to the most. I would like to thank my mother Ann De Keyser, for her moral support, for always knowing the right words to say at moments when this bridge seemed insurmountable, for being my tower of strength, and for being the light in my life.

Finally, I would like to thank my best friend Thijs Lippevelde for listening to many of my contemplations on the complexities and struggles of writing a dissertation, on marvelling with me about South African history and culture, for surprising me with chocolate and ice-cream, for being there for me every hour, minute, and second of every single day, and for your everlasting love.

Ultimately, I dedicate this dissertation to my grandfather, Guido Cogen, a writer, a painter, an intellectual, a language and literature loving man, and above all, an inspirational person.

Hannah Cogen – May 2017



## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
List of Abbreviations .....	7
Introduction.....	9
1 Literary Responses to the Mechanisms and Results of the TRC .....	15
1.1 Ending Apartheid: The Establishment of the TRC .....	15
1.2 Criticism of the Mechanisms and Results of the TRC.....	19
1.2.1 Five General Constraints and Two Debates within the TRC .....	20
1.2.2 Individualisation of Victims .....	22
1.2.3 The Bifurcated Nature of Apartheid.....	23
1.2.4 Impunity for Most Perpetrators .....	24
1.3 Truth and Reconciliation Fiction .....	25
1.3.1 Inspired by Real Events .....	25
1.3.2 Elleke Boehmer and Sindiwe Magona .....	27
2 Representations of Motherhood .....	31
2.1 South African Narratives Set during the Transition Period .....	31
2.2 Literary Responses to the TRC .....	31
2.2.1 A Response to the Format of the TRC .....	31
2.2.1.1 Language of Nationalism and Gender.....	32
2.2.1.2 Gendered Subjectivity .....	34
2.2.2 A Response to the Representation of Women before the TRC .....	35
2.2.2.1 Secondary Victims .....	37
a. Mother-Witness .....	37
b. Mother-Servant .....	41
2.2.2.2 Systematic Violence .....	44
a. The Xhosa Cattle Killing.....	45
b. The Boer Wars.....	47
c. The Forced Removals .....	48
2.2.2.3 Double Colonisation: The System of Patriarchy.....	50
a. The Representation of Wifehood.....	51
b. The Colonised Maternal Body.....	52
2.3 Intergenerational Transnational Connections .....	53
3 Perpetrator Representation .....	55

3.1 Different Representations of the Perpetrator .....	55
3.1.1 Social Representations of Perpetrators .....	56
3.1.2 Mother Representations of Perpetrators .....	59
3.1.3 Self-Representations of Perpetrators .....	62
3.2 Perpetrators and Trauma .....	63
3.2.1 Trauma and the TRC .....	63
3.2.2 The Trope of Perpetrator Trauma.....	64
3.3 The Banality of Evil and Victimhood.....	65
3.3.1 Systematic White-on-Black Violence .....	65
3.3.2 Perpetrators as Victims.....	66
3.3.3 Black-on-Black Violence .....	67
Conclusion .....	69
Works Cited.....	75
Additional Reading List.....	79

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## List of Abbreviations

ABF	Amy Biehl Foundation
AC	Amnesty Committee
ANC	African National Congress
HRVC	Human Rights Violations Committee
IFP	(South African) Inkatha Freedom Party
MK	uMkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation)
NP	National Party
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PASO	Pan Africanist Student Organisation
PNURA	Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act
RRC	Reparations and Rehabilitation Committee
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAP	South African Police
SDU	Self Defence Units
USA	United States of America
UWC	University of the Western Cape
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission



## Introduction

Post-apartheid South African literature deals with social and collective memory, culpability, remorse, and empathy, as did the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC was a court-like institution that addressed the injustices of the oppressive apartheid regime. Post-apartheid literature *and* the Commission exhibit “a collective sense of loss, mourning, and elegy” (Graham 1). Both intent to investigate the human rights violations that took place under apartheid. They offer a public platform of memorialisation and reconciliation. Noteworthy, the South African author André Brink remarks:

*that certain territories of experience (gender relations, for one) and certain regions of the past [...] remained unvisited, or were visited only rarely, in much of South African literature, specifically in fiction. In the spectrum of possibilities now opening up to the writer in post-apartheid South Africa, these silent places invite exploration, almost as a condition for future flowering. (Brink 30)*

He concludes that the “imaginings of literature” have to extend, complicate, and intensify the enquiries of the TRC in order for the South African society to “come to terms with its past [and] to face the future” (Brink 30). This is exactly what Elleke Boehmer’s *Bloodlines* (2000) and Sindiwe Magona’s *Mother to Mother* (1998) do. On the one hand, they go beyond the TRC’s examinations and explore the history of colonisation, apartheid, and modernisation. These mechanisms have largely served to fracture entire racial and ethnic communities (Graham 2). The authors investigate changing systems by revealing structures of discrimination throughout South Africa’s past. On the other hand, the novels focus on individual forgiveness and understanding. The texts illustrate the possibility to overcome a breach between people and pave a reinvented path towards truth and reconciliation.

This dissertation offers a comprehensive comparative analysis of both novels. It thoroughly compares the content of the novels with the TRC’s workings and results regarding their exploration of South African history, the representation of motherhood, and the depiction of perpetrators. The comparison of the texts lays bare remarkable limitations in the TRC’s workings. The key theme consists of the idea that the authors offer a literary response to the mechanisms of the Commission. Critics such as Shane Graham (2003), Fiona C. Ross (2003), and Richard Wilson (2001) examine various constraints of the TRC, such as the narrow definition of apartheid’s victims and perpetrators, the lack of resources to investigate all violations, and the TRC’s examination of a limited timeframe. This contribution moves the

debate forward by exploring both novels as ‘imaginings of literature’. It highlights significant differences between the TRC’s mechanisms and the objectives of fiction with regard to the achievement of truth and reconciliation. Brink states that:

*the TRC is intent on effecting reconciliation through establishing, as fully as possible, the truth [...] about human rights infringements during apartheid years – ‘truth’, in this context, being equated with ‘facts’. The enterprise of fiction [...] reaches well beyond facts: inasmuch as it is concerned with the real [...] it presumes a process through which the real is not merely represented but imagined. (Brink 30)*

The novels do not solely reproduce historical facts. These fictions intent to (re-)imagine the entire historical and social truth in order to offer reconciliation. The following research questions arise and are examined throughout this dissertation: How do the mothers’ narratives go beyond the TRC’s constraints? How do the authors regard the perpetrators’ violent actions in the light of the criticism levelled at the Commission?

Boehmer explores the lives of four women whose past, present, and future are intertwined. Set during South Africa’s transition, the story delves into the colonial period and uncovers the truth about a black family and their Irish ancestry. A white South African journalist Anthea Hardy tries to unravel the history of a black family who suffered from the apartheid regime. Her search for the truth starts with the horrible news of her boyfriend’s death. He was killed during an explosion that caused the destruction of a supermarket at the Natal beachfront of South Clacton. A black man called Joseph Makken is responsible for placing the bomb. The six victims of the bombing are all white South Africans. Before the trial at court, Anthea wants to arrange a meeting with the mother of the perpetrator, Dora Makken. At first, Dora is reluctant to meet the journalist. She questions Anthea’s intentions. Their grief is not the same. Anthea has lost her boyfriend, a white South African victim. Dora grieves the actions of her son, the black perpetrator. However, during a break in the trial they meet each other in a little café. Anthea wants to reach out to the mother of the perpetrator because she needs to understand what has happened. After the first meeting between the two women, a tender friendship starts to grow. A fragile relationship between a white and a black woman, both representatives of an entirely different racial and ethnic background. Dora still feels cautious about this newfound connection with a white South African woman. Nevertheless, both women repeatedly look for each other’s company.

Through her research, Anthea stumbles upon the diary of Kathleen Gort, an Irish nurse. Kathleen travelled with a detachment of the French Red Cross from Ireland to Natal in South Africa to work at the Izinyanga Stationary Hospital during the Boer War (1899-1902). In her diary she refers to an African woman wearing a boer hat, Dollie Macken. In the writings of Kathleen, Anthea recognises a song that Dora also has sung to her. The journalist immediately notices a strong link between Dora and Dollie. Kathleen describes Dollie's love for an Irish freedom fighter, the difficulties she experienced during the war, and her pregnancy. The child was Dora's father. A crucial turning point occurs when Dora tells the story of her grandmother Dollie, with the help of Anthea. The story reaches back to Ireland and the Easter Rising in 1916. Through Kathleen's diary, both Anthea and Dora learn about the Anglo-Boer War where the Afrikaner and the Irish fought against the British Empire. They are able to link Dollie's life story to the current desperate act of violence perpetrated by Joseph. Moreover, Anthea strongly believes there is a connection between these generations joined by 'bloodlines,' marked by racial violence, and ultimately brought together because of their freedom struggle. The Irish and the Boers fought against the British to gain their independence. The anti-apartheid struggle consisted of the natives fighting for freedom against the non-natives. Both groups battled against their oppressors to obtain independence. In return for sharing her grandmother's story, Dora wants Anthea to visit her son in prison. Anthea and Joseph reflect on his actions and on the Makken's family history.

Magona portrays a heartfelt mother's lament, exploring the history of apartheid. The driving force behind her novel is the murder of an American Fulbright scholar, Amy Biehl, on Wednesday, 25 August 1993 in a South African township called Guguletu. She is killed by a mob of black youths. Before leaving for her home in the USA, Amy wants to give her black friends a lift home. When she nears the Caltex filling station in Guguletu, the road is blocked by a group of protesting black students. When they discover that a white woman is behind the wheel of the car, they start to throw stones at her. Someone stabs her with a knife. The protagonist Mandisa, a black South African mother, tries to comprehend what has happened on that critical day. She realises that her son Mxolisi is involved in Amy's murder. In Mandisa's lament, the mother addresses the American mother of the victim. She asks for forgiveness. It is a plea for understanding and an exploration of her life during and after apartheid. Mandisa works as a domestic servant for a white family. When she goes to work on that particular day, Mrs Nelson sends her back home earlier because something horrible has happened in the township not far from where Mandisa lives. From her neighbours she learns

that a group of black youths killed a *mlungu* (white) woman. Mandisa starts to question Mxolisi's absence. The next morning, Mandisa receives a mysterious note, connecting her with her son. She meets him and asks him why he has committed this crime.

Through flashbacks, Mandisa describes her own youth. She remembers herself as a child, being part of the black Xhosa community of Blouville which strongly values the Xhosa traditions. She recollects the forced removals from Blouville to the townships outside the city of Cape Town. She lived through the hardships of institutionalised apartheid. Mandisa explains that she experienced a bad relationship with her mother and suffered from her community's patriarchal principals. Her family's protectiveness over her female body and the obligations related to her position of wifehood rendered her unable to pursue an education. Furthermore, she elaborates on Mxolisi's childhood and his introduction to racial and political violence. It starts when Mxolisi as a young boy betrays two of his friends to the police. As a consequence, they are shot in front of his eyes. He witnesses this traumatic event and it haunts him for years, rendering him temporarily mute. Mxolisi becomes a respected member of a revolutionary student organisation and finally participates in Amy's murder.

In previous research, Paul Cready (2009), Stef Craps (2010/ 2013), and Meg Samuelson (2007) examine some striking parallels and differences in both novels. On the one hand, the plots revolve around black perpetrators and white victims. The role of the mother is omnipresent throughout the texts. The mothers' voices figure as maternal lenses through which the broader history of South Africa is uncovered. On the other hand, the distinction between the authors' racial background is investigated: Boehmer is a white South African woman born in Durban, while Magona is a black South African writer who grew up in Guguletu. Both authors each address the oppressive system from their side of the apartheid spectrum. Moreover, the identity of the victims' relatives with whom reconciliation is sought is strikingly different. In *Bloodlines* it is the relative of a victim, the white South African journalist Anthea who addresses the black mother of the perpetrator. By contrast, in *Mother to Mother* it is the perpetrator's black mother Mandisa who seeks to address the victim's mother.

The authors transcend the TRC's constraints, by exploring the portrayal of women and perpetrators. Interestingly, although they wrote their novels while the TRC's workings were in full swing, neither Boehmer nor Magona mentions the TRC explicitly. The authors give a more accurate description of the social and historical context that preceded the violent incidents by broadening the timeframe of their explorations and examining the social

structures of the black communities. They explore the Boer Wars, colonialism, the Xhosa Cattle Killing, the forced removals, and the system of patriarchy. This dissertation will go beyond the obvious similarities and contrasts between both novels mentioned above. Moreover, it contributes to the ongoing discussion concerning the limitations of the TRC explored in these truth and reconciliation fictions.

The first chapter serves as a historical and theoretical framework of the analysis. It discusses the ending of apartheid and the establishment of the TRC. It unravels the criticism levelled at the Commission: it focuses on five general constraints and two particular debates within the TRC's workings with regard to the notion of apartheid as 'a crime against humanity', the definition of 'gross human rights violations' and the interpretation of 'severe ill-treatment'. Furthermore, this chapter examines three noteworthy limitations of the TRC: the individualisation of the victims, the bifurcated nature of apartheid, and the impunity for most perpetrators. Importantly, this chapter exceeds the apparent criticisms of the Commission and highlights apartheid's use of existing structures to implement inequality, such as the patriarchal system. It even focuses on the TRC's application of the white regime's rule of law in its own hearings, furthering racial discrimination. Subsequently, it deals with the plot of both novels, highlighting that they are inspired by real incidents which took place during the early 1990s. Joseph's crime is similar to the bombing at Durban beach perpetrated by Robert McBride. Magona's novel is based on the real murder of Amy Biehl.

The second chapter analyses the authors' literary responses to the TRC concerning the representation of motherhood. With regard to the TRC's format, it examines the specific language of nationalism and gender through an examination of the mothers' experiences. This chapter investigates how both authors subvert the nationalistic discourse of the Commission by highlighting the TRC's failure to address the country's past and present as one that harboured and still continues to discriminate women. Women who suffered from 'ordinary' harms on a daily basis were excluded from the Commission's hearings because of its limited definition of apartheid's victims. Furthermore, this analysis goes beyond earlier investigations concerning the TRC's Christian language and the depiction of women as Mater Dolorosa bearing witness on behalf of their sacrificial sons. The authors subvert the Commission's representation of women as secondary victims by offering a challenging portrayal of Mandisa and Dora as mother-witnesses and mother-servants. Magona and Boehmer point out the emotional strain the mothers' work had on the education of their children and explore the psychological tensions influencing family life. The literary responses

evoke an intergenerational bond between various family generations. A specific part of this chapter looks into the mothers' familial history and analyses the systematic violence that bred the sons' brutal actions. More specifically, the references to the Xhosa Cattle Killing, the Boer Wars and the forced removals lay bare a broader context that gave birth to these violations. This chapter also takes a closer look at the double colonisation of women during South African history. The original patriarchal social structure within the black communities oppress and discriminate women. It discusses the role of wifehood and the colonised maternal body. It concludes that the novels provoke transnational connections through an exploration of the relationship between the mothers, the sons, and their victims.

The final chapter discusses the representation of the perpetrator. The authors overcome the TRC's limited definition of the perpetrators by going beyond the perception of the 'racialised other'. This chapter compares the TRC's discourse with the social representations of the wrongdoers in both novels. At first sight, the sons remain the violent unidentified others. However, the author's subvert the social depiction by exploring the mothers' reminiscences and the perpetrators' self-representations. Dora and Mandisa attempt to contextualise the crimes of their sons in order to offer understanding. Furthermore, this chapter briefly touches upon trauma theory, by discussing the trope of trauma within these narratives. The nature of the sons' killings highlights the importance of the perpetrators' psychological burden. Subsequently, it examines the perpetrator-sons as victims of the structural white-on-black violence. A link with Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) explores the systematic violence and situates the sons' actions within a larger social, political, and historical context. The perpetrators are ordinary people transformed into murderers because of the injustices that took place during South African history. Apart from the obvious black-on-white violence, this chapter also examines black-on-black violence during the transition period.

## **1 Literary Responses to the Mechanisms and Results of the TRC**

### **1.1 Ending Apartheid: The Establishment of the TRC**

In 1948 the National Party (NP) of South Africa made racial segregation legal through the institutionalisation of apartheid (Wilson 232). According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED 2010) ‘apartheid,’ a term originated from Afrikaans, literally means ‘separateness’. It refers to the segregation of South African “inhabitants of European descent from the non-European” such as Bantu, Indian, coloured, or mixed (OED 2009). Moreover, what made apartheid different from earlier instances of racial segregation was the fact that it was now a part of the South African law. Four legal ratifications predated the establishment of apartheid. The first legal enactment was the Natal Code of Native Law in 1891. This act not only rearranged the relations between the white state and the natives, but also reorganised relationships within the native communities. It focused on the native customs of patriarchal control which were already enforced during the colonial period. Directed by white colonial officers, black chiefs were allowed to remain in power over their tribal societies. The second act was the South Africa Act of 1910. It guaranteed the union between the English and the Afrikaners and asserted a democracy for whites only and “rule by decree over natives” (Mamdani 52). The latter meant that natives were legally considered inferior. The final two acts, the Native Administration Act of 1927 and the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 formed the basis for the racial and ethnic divergence. The indigenous people were ethnicised according to their tribes. They were governed by customary law enforcing patriarchal authority. The non-natives were racialised in two groups: the master races, i.e. the whites who enjoyed civil rights, and the subject races, i.e. the coloureds and Indians who received residual rights. Together, these four acts provided the legal context in which the apartheid regime started to evolve (Mamdani 52-53).

During the following years the government maintained this system through further legislation. In 1950, the Population Registration Act formed the true foundation of the apartheid system: it consisted of a register of South African people based on whether they were black, coloured, white, or Indian. It stipulated how they would be treated differently and in which population group they would belong (van der Leun 116). Another noteworthy law was the Group Areas Act, introducing the state’s “intervention in controlling the use, occupation, and ownership of land and buildings on a racial basis, and emphasised separate residential areas, [and] educational services” (Maharaj 135). The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act in 1959

included the forced removals of black South Africans to the various townships and underdeveloped areas outside the cities (Mamdani 43). The cornerstone of apartheid was racial superiority. Also the white minority's concern about the "rising tide of African nationalist sentiment" supported the apartheid system (TRC Report 1: 33). Until 1990, apartheid triggered various forms of discrimination: political, economic, and social inequality vis-à-vis South Africa's non-white population.

South African freedom movements and liberation groups such as the South African Communist Party (SACP), the militant organisation of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), and the African National Congress (ANC) gained strength and recognition in their fight against apartheid during the 1960s. However, the government decided to ban the liberation groups and imprisoned important leaders such as Nelson Mandela. He was a well-known anti-apartheid activist and a member of the ANC. From the 1960s until the late 1980s, the freedom struggle against apartheid grew (Hayner 41). The ANC's first attempts at resisting the government consisted of peaceful protests. They primarily stressed a nonviolent approach of resistance. However, the Sharpsville massacre of 21 March 1960 was a turning point in the peaceful freedom protest of the black community. The PAC refused to work together with the ANC and announced that it would embark on an anti-pass campaign (van der Leun 130). This protest was directed against the Pass law. It stated that natives had to carry passes which did or did not allow them to go to visit other black communities and white areas. If they did not meet the requirements, black people were sent to prison or had to perform coerced labour (Mamdani 46). The Sharpsville police station was strongly defended by cautious policemen. A large group of protesters walked in the direction of the police station shouting out slogans. Suddenly, the non-violent protest transformed into a massacre: "Though the exact chain of events remains unclear, analysts and spectators believe that a single inexperienced policeman panicked and fired a lone shot, setting off a chain reaction of bloodshed" (van der Leun 131). The confusion escalated and other members of the police also began to fire. After only 40 seconds, 69 people were killed (van der Leun 131).

As a result of the continuing brutal oppression of black people and the imprisonment of activists, the ANC formed a military wing with the SACP called uMkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) or MK in 1961 (Wilson 177). In the years that followed, the conflict between the government and the liberation groups resulted in numerous human rights violations and abuses, including terrorism, massacres, and torture (Hayner 41). During the early 1980s, resistance in schools, communities, unions, and workplaces grew across the entire country.

Local anti-apartheid organisations were created to support issues concerning education, transport, and housing. They organised enormous boycotts. Moreover, the previously fractured black majority began to collaborate with white South African liberals to protest against racial inequality (van der Leun 163). In 1986, the apartheid regime announced the State of Emergency. It banned “TV and radio from broadcasting rallies and protests” (van der Leun 164). The oppression continued. It included “the detention of thousands of activists, [...] the continued banning of organi[s]ations and individuals” (van der Leun 164). However, the white state lost its firm grip on the black majority whose “political protests peaked in 1989 with the Defiance Campaign” (van der Leun 164). The black population and white liberals started to openly defy the apartheid laws. The international community also increasingly disapproved “of the country’s race based legislation” (van der Leun 46).

Noteworthy, “[b]y 1990, the country was facing a stalemate. The apartheid government was unable to govern; the liberation movements were unable to seize power” (van der Leun 164). The South African president Frederik William De Klerk recognised the decline of the white minority’s superior position and the rise of the oppressed black population. He acknowledged the state’s inability to rule because of various military expenditures and numerous international sanctions. The ANC desperately needed financial and logistical support. It became clear that “both parties would benefit from a peaceful handover of power” (van der Leun 164). De Klerk released Mandela, cancelled the ban on the liberation groups, and tried to pave the path for a peaceful transition to democracy. The ANC decided to suspend the armed freedom struggle (van der Leun 164). Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa in a general democratic election in 1994. He was the first black president after years of dominant white minority rule in South Africa (van der Leun 62).

During the transition period from 1990 until 1994, brutal political clashes prevailed. Despite peaceful efforts, violence nonetheless “snowballed as the country navigated the rocky road from minority rule to inclusive democracy” (van der Leun 165). However, the need to address the injustices committed during the apartheid period started to increase. Mandela’s particular attitude towards his oppressors influenced the South Africans’ readiness to confront the past. He wanted to reconcile with the oppressor, building a bridge across racial differences (Graybill 371). After negotiations between the ANC and the NP, the TRC was established. The Commission was the result of a political compromise “reached as part of the overall deal leading to South Africa’s first all-inclusive elections” (van der Leun 271). The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act (PNURA) stressed the primary mandate of the

Commission: it had to establish a bridge-building process “designed to help lead the nation away from a deeply divided past to a future founded on the recognition of human rights and democracy” (TRC Report 1: 48). It “was to uncover as much as possible of the truth about past gross violations of human rights” (TRC Report 1: 49). The Commission wanted to focus on both victims and perpetrators (Mamdani 33). The TRC did not support punishment (van der Leun 270). Victims of violence could come forward and address their experiences. Similarly, perpetrators could give testimony and could formulate a request for amnesty (Mamdani 33). Mandela appointed archbishop Desmond Tutu as the chairman of the Commission (Graybill 372). Tutu was a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. As a social activist, he was intensely involved in the freedom struggle. He was devoted to a non-violent protest against apartheid. He influenced the Commission’s workings with “a strong Christian flavour” (van der Leun 272).

The TRC consisted of three committees: the Committee on Human Rights Violations (HRVC), the Amnesty Committee (AC), and the Committee on Reparations and Rehabilitation (RRC) (TRC Report 1998). The HRVC investigated the human rights violations committed between 1960 and 1994, examining the victims’ stories through public hearing interviews and oral testimonies. The AC dealt with applications for amnesty. This was an official legal act to pardon perpetrators of crimes carried out in the past. Two conditions had to be met: the crimes committed by the perpetrators needed to occur between 1 March 1960 and 11 May 1994. The crime also had to be politically motivated. It needed to be perpetrated by an employee of the state, or a member of a public liberation movement or political organisation. For example, members of the police, the ANC, and ordinary citizens were not exempt from being charged. The perpetrator was free of prosecution when amnesty was granted. Finally, the RRC decided how the compensation for each victim should be organised. It had to provide support for the restoration process with regard to the victims' dignity, the formulation of policy proposals, and recommendations on the rehabilitation and the healing of survivors (“Committees”: TRC Report 1998).

The first formal meetings started on 15 April 1996. In 1998 the TRC published a five-volume report, each part discussing the various stages of the project (TRC Report 1998). The first volume introduces the rationale behind the workings of the Commission. The second volume addresses the human rights violations and discusses the specific role of the state. It also dedicates a separate chapter to the political environment during the 1990s. The third volume takes into account the perspective of the victims. Volume four portrays the social and cultural

environment of the South African society during apartheid. It also includes self-examinations and discusses plans for the Commission's role in the future. The fifth volume contains a conclusion, consisting of analyses and findings. This final volume highlights that the PNRUA focused on violations committed by all parties of the conflict, not only those perpetrated by the former apartheid state (TRC Report 1998). The TRC bases its evidence on the approximately 20.000 statements of human rights violations it received (Mamdani 35).

The TRC indeed figured as a prominent component in South Africa's transformation towards a free democratic nation. Its aim was to create the possibility of coexistence in a strongly divided South African society. Nevertheless, it did not lead to perfect reconciliation, as Graybill reminds us: "Is the TRC perfect? Not by any means. It was a compromise between the morally ideal and the politically possible [...] If justice depends on groups' agreeing on a tolerable solution to inevitable conflict, the TRC meets that requirement" (395). The Commission's workings contain some remarkable flaws such as the lack of sufficient resources, a limited definition of perpetrators and victims, and the failure to address the political system that treated natives differently from non-natives.

## **1.2 Criticism of the Mechanisms and Results of the TRC**

In its final report, the TRC recognises some of its own shortcomings. It highlights five general constraints. Due to its limited investigative capacity, the TRC was not able to address all cases that were submitted. It focused on 'window cases' that were representative for a larger number of violations involving the same classification of perpetrators. It also failed to deal with significant violations in certain geopolitical areas such as Venda and Lebowa. It neglected to address civil society's complicity in diverse crimes committed during apartheid. The report similarly points out the lack of time and energy to provide thorough examinations. Finally, the Commission also acknowledges its failure to appoint key actors of apartheid. This signified that the TRC did not address the involvement of certain important figures of the apartheid state. It feared that these people's appearances before the Commission would give them a platform from which to oppose its objectives and principles (TRC Report 5: 206-07).

The TRC's mechanisms and results received numerous criticisms throughout the years. Critics such as Paul Gready (2009), Shane Graham (2003), and Fiona C. Ross (2003) examine the various weaknesses in the Commission's workings. Moreover, Mahmood Mamdani discusses the flaws of the TRC in detail in his 2002 article "Amnesty or Impunity?"

A Preliminary Critique of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa”. Mamdani summarises the TRC’s aim as a legal pact that would offer “individual amnesty for the perpetrator, truth for the society, and acknowledgement and reparations for the victim” (33). Ross explains that the TRC’s hearings served “as a mechanism for forging national unity premised on a shared knowledge of suffering in the recent past” (326). However, the PNRUA on which the TRC was built, did not clearly define either ‘victim’ or ‘perpetrator’. It was the Commission’s task to formulate definitions of both terms. In relation to the criticism levelled at the TRC, Mamdani focuses on three key limitations with regard to the interpretation of ‘crimes against humanity’: the individualisation of the victims, the bifurcated nature of apartheid, and the impunity for most perpetrators.

### **1.2.1 Five General Constraints and Two Debates within the TRC**

Mamdani first recognises two noteworthy debates within the TRC concerning the interpretation of ‘gross human rights violations’ and the definition of ‘severe-ill treatment’. To begin with, he examines the Commission’s definition of apartheid as a crime against humanity in terms of ‘gross violations’. The Commission’s report investigates a few examples of these violations: the denial of constitutional right, the abuse of farm workers, the discrimination with regard to work opportunities and education, and the rejection of the freedom of movement (Mamdani 36). The TRC describes the subject of its mandate:

*‘gross violation of human rights’ means the violation of human rights through – (a) the killing, abduction, torture or severe ill-treatment of any person; or (b) any attempt, conspiracy, incitement, instigation, command or procurement to commit an act referred to in paragraph (a), which emanated from conflicts of the past and which was committed during the period 1 March 1960 to 10 May 1994 within or outside the Republic, and the commission of which was advised, planned, directed, commanded or ordered, by any person acting with a political motive. (TRC Report 1: 60)*

Concerning the definition of ‘gross violations’, Mamdani observes three constraints with regard to this particular mandate: the interpretation of time, the conflicts committed in the past, and the need for a political motive. The TRC limited its research to the period of 1960 until 1994. Earlier instances of gross human rights violations dating from the colonial period until the beginning of apartheid were neglected. Of all the recorded violations, the Commission acknowledged that only fifteen percent had occurred at the height of apartheid. 35 percent took place in the heyday of the popular freedom struggle against apartheid.

Another 50 percent of the violations occurred during the transition period from 1990 until 1994. According to the Commission, most of the human rights violations were not committed when the apartheid system was implemented *but* when it was predominantly challenged (Mamdani 35). The TRC referred to the violations that occurred from 1960 until 1994, as ‘conflicts of the past.’ However, the Commission did not consider the ‘conflicts of the past’ as a part of the policies of the apartheid regime. The TRC only acknowledged the apartheid procedures as a part of a larger context in which these violations occurred: “Reduced to ‘the context’ or ‘the background’ of gross human rights violations, apartheid was effectively written out of the report of the TRC” (Mamdani 38). The Commission did not deal with apartheid as a system that discriminated against entire communities. Mamdani argues: “It consequently ignored apartheid as experienced by the broad masses of the people of South Africa” (38). The TRC exclusively focused on the individual ‘window cases’ of violations. Additionally, the Commission’s need for a political motive highlighted that they solely concentrated on crimes committed by state agents, individual members of political organisations, and political activists of liberation movements.

The second debate within the TRC concerns its understanding of ‘severe ill-treatment’. Mamdani focuses on three oppositions within this definition. He suggests that the TRC only focused on crimes that violated the bodily integrity rights of the victims, more specifically, the infliction of severe physical suffering. It did not take into account the subsistence rights, dealing with the discriminations based on economic principles such as coerced labour and the forced removals (Mamdani 39). The TRC made a distinction between individual rights and groups rights. A person was considered to be a victim of ‘severe ill-treatment’ when the individual offered a personal statement to the Commission, or when a relative of the victim addressed the wrongdoings at the TRC’s hearings, or when the individual was identified as a victim in an amnesty case applied for by a perpetrator (Mamdani 40). Other victims were not acknowledged by the TRC and therefore could not appeal for any form of reconciliation. The TRC’s hearings excluded the testimonies of prisoners ‘detained without trial’. The South African Human Rights Committee estimated that 80.000 people had been detained between 1960 and 1990 (Mamdani 48). Of the 80.000 detainees, 20.000 were tortured and suffered from human rights violations. The TRC already had recognised in its report that more than 20.000 others were seen as victims. This would bring the total of victims to 40.000. As the TRC’s programme was already overloaded, they did not take the 20.000 detainees into consideration for reparation and rehabilitation. The final contrast observed in the notion of

‘severe ill-treatment’ is political versus non-political motives (Mamdani 40-41). The Commission “turned a blind eye to gross violations that occurred in the course of the implementation of apartheid” (Mamdani 41). The Commission did not fully accept the outcome of the legal hearings that apartheid was *not* a rule of law. Its victims hearings proceeded on the assumption that the project of apartheid and its policies were not political. As a result of this, the TRC was not able to define the “very agenda of apartheid – and not just its defen[c]e – as political” (Mamdani 38).

### **1.2.2 Individualisation of Victims**

The TRC’s identification of apartheid as a ‘crime against humanity’ provokes an ironical finding. Although the Commission recognised apartheid as a ‘crime against humanity,’ it became clear that it rather “individuali[s]ed the victims of apartheid” (Mamdani 33). Gready explains the TRC’s working method as “a victim-cent[re]d approach” (157). The TRC’s first volume “affirms its judgement that apartheid, as a system that enforced racial discrimination and separation, was a crime against humanity” (TRC Report 1: 94). In its final volume, the Commission highlights again: “The recognition of apartheid as a crime against humanity remains a fundamental starting point for reconciliation in South Africa” (TRC Report 5: 222). In addition to the first volume of the TRC’s report, an appendix serves as a formal acknowledgement that the Commission was aware of apartheid targeting “entire communities for ethnic and racial policing and cleansing” (Mamdani 33). However, apartheid was reduced to a ‘context’ in which the gross human rights violations took place. Moreover, the fact that this notion of a ‘crime against humanity’ is just a part of an appendix, a mere addition in the entire report on the Commission’s workings, highlights the following question that arose during Mamdani’s critical analysis: Could these gross human rights violations, considered as a crime against humanity only have around 20.000 victims (35)? This number should have indicated all the people who suffered from apartheid. It seems rather small, considering that the natives formed the largest part of the entire South African population. During its hearings, the TRC mainly focused on the relationship between individual victims and specific perpetrators rather than the state-organised gross human rights violations against entire communities (Mamdani 33-34). The Commission concentrated solely on political activists, state agents, and individual members of liberation groups or political institutions.

More specifically, the Commission only addressed cases where one victim was violated by one perpetrator or a group of perpetrators. It did not acknowledge apartheid as a conflict

between entire black communities and the state. The TRC on the one hand identified the group of violated people as ‘victim organisations,’ including the ANC on the first place, the Inkhata Freedom Party (IFP) on the second place, and the South African Police (SAP) only on the seventh place in their list. On the other hand, the groups of perpetrators that were included were IFP and the SAP as the first two ‘perpetrator organisations’. The ANC was similarly identified as the third perpetrator group. A researcher of the Commission surprisingly noted that the crimes against humanity consisted of ‘black-on-black’ violence. Not only were the victims black, the perpetrators were also natives. In conclusion, the TRC’s inability to clearly define both victims and perpetrators rendered them incapable of addressing apartheid as a system that affected the entire population (Mamdani 35-36).

### **1.2.3 The Bifurcated Nature of Apartheid**

Richard Wilson investigates the TRC’s constraints in his book *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State* (2001). He argues that “the TRC transcended some of the limitations of its narrow human rights mandate and did address, albeit in a fragmented fashion, certain important elements of the social context and institutional structure of apartheid” (36). By contrast, Mandani argues that the TRC actually furthered the polarisation of the nation. Its second limitation was its inability to underline apartheid as a political system that treated non-natives differently from natives. He calls this the “bifurcated nature” of apartheid (34). The South African population was divided into two groups: the natives and the non-natives. The natives were ethnicised according to the tribes such as the Bantu and the Xhosa. The immigrants were a part of the non-native population. Through racialisation, this group was subdivided into a master race, i.e. whites, and a subject race, i.e. non-whites (coloureds and Indians). The accompanying legislation correspondingly consisted of a separate set of laws. The indigenous people were subject to the customary law enforcing the patriarchal system. Therefore, tradition made this particular legal system legitimate. The tribalisation of the natives was one of the structures that kept apartheid intact. Each tribe was led by a black authority figure who had power over its members. The tribal chiefs were directly controlled by the whites. This increased black-on-black violence. Mamdani states: “when the Commission came to narrate the history of the legal regime in South Africa, its account was confined to the history of the ‘civil’ regime that ruled non-natives; it had nothing to say of the process by which the multiple ‘customary’ regimes that ruled natives came into place” (50). For example, there was also resistance within the black tribes and within the native liberation movements.

Furthermore, the whites were ruled by democratic law and the natives were ruled by decree. The white population was governed by full civil law and enjoyed all civil rights, the non-native subject race population only enjoyed the residual rights (Mamdani 53-54). During apartheid, it was clear that not everyone was equal before the law because of the racialisation and ethnicisation that characterised the legal system. Apartheid worked by rule of law. The TRC used apartheid's rule of law as a dividing line between the Commission's interpretation of what was legal and what was non-legal; what was acknowledged by the TRC and what was not acknowledged by the TRC. For instance, the application of the pass laws included the implementation of coerced labour. Natives had to carry a pass book. After they had applied for written permission, they were allowed to visit certain areas. People who did not act within the pass law were given a choice: either they were sent to prison or they had to labour as farmers (Mamdani 46). The TRC considered these procedures as part of the South African common law. Those who infringed these laws were not acknowledged as political prisoners by the TRC. As a result, these violations were similarly neglected during its investigations.

#### **1.2.4 Impunity for Most Perpetrators**

The final limitation Mamdani proposes relates to the individualisation of apartheid's victims. Because there was no full recognition of the victims, there also could not be an outright identification of apartheid's perpetrators: "For a perpetrator who was not so identified was a perpetrator who enjoyed impunity" (Mamdani 34). The TRC granted exemption from punishment to most perpetrators who applied for amnesty. These wrongdoers had nothing to lose, because they were already in prison. Graham explains that "amnesty in South Africa was granted on an individual basis to those who gave 'full disclosure' of politically motivated crimes. Thus amnesty was used as a tool for excavating the truth about the past" (11). Some of the perpetrations nonetheless fell within the TRC's limited definition. Those who refused to apply for amnesty could still be prosecuted. In order to apply for amnesty, perpetrators had to have a political motive for the crimes they had committed. This signified that they had to be a part of a political organisation, a liberation movement which supported the anti-apartheid struggle, or the state or the security forces who acted against the freedom struggle. All others who did not qualify for such political motives could not apply for amnesty. Additionally, Graham states that during amnesty hearings, the Commission accepted "the perpetrator's version of events, even when it directly contradicts the evidence given by his victims" (12). The TRC's workings even oppose the victims' testimonies with the perpetrators' accounts.

Graham concludes that the “political need for amnesty and the humanitarian need for reform and restoration appear to be contradictory, perhaps even mutually exclusive” (12). Consequently, the TRC failed to find a balance between the victim hearings and the “perpetrator-oriented amnesty process”, it “actually threatens to reproduce the [...] erasure of the impoverished black [...] masses” (Graham 12). By neglecting some of the victims’ testimonies, the TRC failed to address the oppressive segregated system.

In conclusion, Mamdani primarily argues that “without a comprehensive acknowledgment of victims of apartheid, there would be only a limited identification of perpetrators and only a partial understanding of the legal regime that made possible the ‘crime against humanity’” (33). The bifurcated nature of apartheid resulted in the polarisation of the South African nation: non-natives against natives, civil law against the customary law, democracy against patriarchy, us against the others, whites against blacks. Apartheid’s legal system gave the white minority the power and authority over the majority of natives. The TRC maintained this polarisation in its own mechanisms. It only recognised individual victims of human rights violations and therefore neglected large communities of people who suffered under the apartheid regime. As a result, it let a vast majority of the perpetrators of the hook.

Finally, Mamdani adds: “The point is to go beyond recogni[s]ing perpetrators and victims of gross human rights violations. [...] The next step is to recognise both as *survivors* who must together shape a *common* future. [...] reconciliation cannot be between victims and perpetrators; it can only be between survivors” (Mamdani 56). Apartheid affected both victims and perpetrators. This is exactly what Magona’s and Boehmer’s novels do. They portray the perpetrator-sons as people who suffered from the apartheid regime by addressing the broader South African history.

### **1.3 Truth and Reconciliation Fiction**

#### **1.3.1 Inspired by Real Events**

Both novels build on real-life events. In Boehmer’s *Bloodlines*, the similarity to an explosion in Magoo’s Bar and the ‘Why Not’ restaurant at Durban beach on Saturday 14 June 1986 is striking. MK placed the bomb in a car near the bars. A black South African man called Robert McBride led the attack. Two other people accompanied him: Greta Apelgren and Matthew le Cordier (TRC Report 2: 330). The Durban bombing caused the deaths of three white South African women and injured another 69 people. McBride was convicted. In 1992, he was

sentenced for life imprisonment (TRC Report 3: 230). In April 1997, he applied to the Commission for amnesty. He was cleared of his charges because it became clear that his actions were politically motivated (TRC Report 2: 331). The similarities with the character Joseph are the following: the victims of the bombing at Clacton beach were also white South Africans, the perpetrator of the crime was equally a black South African, they both used a bomb to cause the destruction of facilities that symbolised the white population's wealth. In reality, two bars were destroyed. In the novel, a bomb placed in a refuse bin claimed the lives of six white people in a Right Now Superette. 67 persons were injured. Joseph attempted to hit the post office. The aim of the Durban bombing was the 'Why Not' bar because Security Force members frequently visited the place. Both perpetrators wanted to destroy a governmental structure that represented the apartheid regime, fuelling racial discrimination. Different from the real event that occurred at the end of the 1980s, the attack in the novel happened on Maundy Thursday (referring to the Thursday before Easter) in the early nineties. In both cases, the perpetrators were involved in political riots and boycotts. McBride acknowledged that the crime he committed was commissioned by MK (TRC Report 3: 230). Joseph was also involved in earlier attacks. He started to participate in activist groups at an early age. However, during his defence at court, Joseph claims to have acted alone and not by order of a specific black liberation movement.

Magona's *Mother to Mother* is based on the real murder of the 26 year old Amy Biehl. The young American scholar was killed by a black mob in the township of Guguletu on 25 August 1993. Four black men were ultimately convicted of her murder: Easy Nofemela, Mongezi Manqina, Ntobeko Peni and Vusumzi Ntabo. They were part of the Pan Africanist Student Organisation (PASO). In 1998, the TRC granted the four murderers amnesty. Nofemela and Ntobeko began to work with Biehl's parents at the Amy Biehl Foundation (TRC Report 3: 510-11). ABF is a non-profit organisation established by Amy's parents who wanted to further Amy's work. Today it offers education programmes for children and youths in underdeveloped communities ([amyfoundation.co.za](http://amyfoundation.co.za)). Throughout the novel, Magona describes numerous detailed references of the attack, using exact dates and time indications. Magona focuses on the crucial moments right before, during, and after the incident. Amy Biehl worked and studied at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in Cape Town. As an anti-apartheid activist, Biehl was closely involved in various programmes to help black people, especially women. They consisted, for example, of voter education in order to prepare for the first all-race democratic election. Magona describes how Biehl left the university and

prepared for her trip back home to the USA. She narrates how the young woman proposed to give her black friends a lift home. When they drove towards the Guguletu township, Operation Barcelona took place. This demonstration aimed to stop all deliveries into the township. Black members of the student organisation and the PAC marched violently around the township, burning cars along their way. The slogan ‘One settler! One bullet!’ reverberated through the streets. When the group of black protesters noticed the white woman in her car, they began to throw stones at her. Biehl fled from her car. Her black friends tried to convince the raging crowd she was a ‘comrade’, but to no avail. Biehl was stoned and stabbed to death. Magona learns that one of the boys responsible for Amy’s murder was actually her friend’s son. Magona grew up in Guguletu and knew the perpetrator’s mother. Inspired, she started to write the story of Mandisa. Importantly, Magona focuses on one perpetrator whereas in reality four men were convicted.

### **1.3.2 Elleke Boehmer and Sindiwe Magona**

Elleke Boehmer is a white South African author who was born in Durban. Currently, she is based in England. Boehmer is a prominent figure of South African literature. She is also a professor of World Literature in English at Oxford University ([ellekeboehmer.com](http://ellekeboehmer.com)). *Bloodlines* was published in 2000, shortly after South Africa’s troublesome transition to a democracy. Post-apartheid narratives focus on the country’s traumatic history. It produces an iconic canon of literature dealing with racial divergence, political and social discrimination, and human rights violations, such as J.M Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999), André Brink’s *An Act of Terror* (1991), and Nadine Gordimer’s *None to Accompany Me* (1994). In one of her many critical essays about the nation’s writings, Boehmer asks the following fascinating question: “what has post-apartheid writing been but a writing, above all, of stuttering repetition, of the seeming reiteration of further sorrows?” (Boehmer, “PR” 29). The ending of apartheid did not introduce the promised era of fulfilled “rainbow-coloured hopes” and dreams as new crises came to the surface (Boehmer, “PR” 29). The AIDS epidemic plagued the country and xenophobic attacks caused tremendous uproar. Boehmer notices that the South African narrative does not only focus on stories of “past suffering in the present” but also concentrates on these new post-apartheid traumatic experiences (“PR” 30). In addition, she claims that the TRC sustained and even furthered this type of post-apartheid South African writing. The Commission portrayed its workings as crucial for national psychological benefits and healing. Its Christian principles of redemption and confession underlined the “national talking cure” and sparked the ideas of ‘moving forward’ in many post-apartheid writings (Boehmer,

“PR” 31-32). The TRC’s mechanisms inspired a controversial debate “not only on how a society might bear witness to the unspeakable of the past, in this case of apartheid past, but also on the forms of spiritual recompense as well as material reparation that might be gained, or not, from that bearing witness” (Boehmer, “PR” 32). South African narratives assimilated this concept of bearing witness as part of a general trauma discourse, for example in Antjie Krog’s *Country of My Skull* (1998).

However, Boehmer’s *Bloodlines* deliberately goes beyond the TRC’s trauma discourse. Her critical and historical fiction explores issues of race and gender representation, migration, nationalism, and friendship. She mainly focuses on the colonial period and draws a parallel with the resistance struggles that characterised the apartheid era. She focuses on violations that took place before apartheid: the Easter Rising in Ireland and the Boer Wars. She examines a relationship between the two sides of the racial spectrum: a friendship between people who would put aside their differences and would work together towards a brighter future. She highlights the “surprising proximities” and the “shared rather than divided histories” (“PEB” english.ox.ac.uk). Her novel addresses these ‘surprising proximities’ by exploring the frail friendship between a white South African journalist and a black South African woman.

Magona is a black South African author, who grew up in the township of Guguletu. Currently, she lives in New York. Her work is inspired by her own experiences of discrimination, racial segregation, and impoverishment. She personally lived through apartheid in all its horrible forms. Her memoir *To My Children’s Children* (1990) casts a clear light on the personal encounters of her Xhosa family with the apartheid regime. She wrote this autobiography when South Africa was in full transition towards democracy, but still troubled by various acts of violence. In the preface of her memoir, Magona explains that she not only narrates stories of her childhood but she also reflects on her “womanhood, my wifehood, and motherhood” (*TMCC* vii). She explores issues such as gender discrimination, racial inequality, the importance of a social community, and limitations concerning the pursuit of an education. Magona was a happy child and felt entirely at home. By this, she does not really mean a geographical place, but rather “more a group of people with whom I am connected and to whom I belong” (*TMCC* 2). She recounts that when she was a child she was not fully aware of the racial segregation. She had no idea that there was a link between the different lifestyles of natives and non-natives and the colour of her skin (*TMCC* 22). At that young age, Magona could not comprehend what was happening: “knowing that we were a motif in something

bigger, powerful, and all pervasive [...] We – Them” (*TMCC* 10). Furthermore, Magona talks about racial segregation with regard to education stipulated by the Bantu Education Act of 1954. She refers to the Xhosa tradition of celebrating her womanhood. She also highlights issues concerning her femininity. Her brother was allowed much more. She recollects the start of her teacher training, experiencing difficulties when performing this profession. Magona narrates that the forced removals destroyed family life. Due to the government’s classifications, Magona suffered from racial discrimination throughout her adult life, until she left South Africa. There was no public assistance for black people and little was known about contraception. She gave birth to her children at a very young age. She had to work as a domestic servant. Her husband left her. Magona talks about the fact that she could not take care of her own family because she had to nurture the children of white families.

Magona’s *Mother to Mother* resembles a lot of the issues explored in her memoir. Through flashbacks, Mandisa recollects her childhood and her early adulthood, facing similar hardships as the author. Both women experienced the burden of being a woman in a patriarchal society. Mandisa similarly could not pursue her education because of the Xhosa customs. When her husband left her, she had to work as a domestic servant in order to take care of her children and her family. She also regrets being a domestic servant, because she realises that she does not have a connection with her own children, especially Mxolisi.

In “It Is in the Blood: Trauma and Memory in the South African Novel,” Magona discusses the South African literary tradition after apartheid. She highlights two important concepts with regard to her own post-apartheid writings: the notion of trauma and the idea of memory. She explains the definition of trauma as “a morbid condition produced by violence” (Magona, “B” 93). Magona argues that South African authors “are compelled to write” about “the world they inhabit” in order to deal with the notion of trauma in their post-apartheid literature (“B” 94). Magona’s world was apartheid: “South Africa was a traumatic place in which to live, the times and the manner of living inescapably scarring” (“B” 95). Magona justifies her particular writing by referring to specific examples of traumatic experiences perpetuated by apartheid such as poverty and lack of education. Furthermore, Magona explains the use of trauma in her novel by elaborating on the idea of memory. She claims that the narrator drew from her own life in order to tell a story. (Magona, “B” 97). Through reflecting on her personal experiences, Magona’s memories inform and shape her writing. The character Mandisa also remembers her first pregnancy, Mxolisi’s traumatic childhood, his father’s abandonment, the horrible poverty, and Mxolisi’s participation in political activities. Magona

concludes that her novel equally explores the collective trauma and memory of her entire race. Throughout her novel, beliefs about gender and ethnicity highlight, strengthen, and cross generations (Magona, “B”, 104).

In conclusion, the authors’ personal backgrounds influence their approach on the racialised and ethnicised South African history and directs the portrayal of their characters. The pressing question that seems to arise in Boehmer’s work is the following: How can we reimagine a unified community in post-apartheid South-Africa, a country tormented by its past of racial and ethnic division? (“PEB” english.ox.ac.uk). Both novels set out to explore this.

## **2 Representations of Motherhood**

### **2.1 South African Narratives Set during the Transition Period**

Both novels are set during the transitional period in South Africa. The crimes committed by Mxolisi and Joseph occur during the early 1990s, a time highlighting a tremendous change for the nation and its population. In *Bloodlines*, Joseph places a bomb near the Right Now Superette just when “the country was turning itself round, the Old Man was free, rumours of big change dusted the air” (Boehmer 2-3). The ‘Old Man’ is a reference to Nelson Mandela, who was released from prison in February 1990. In *Mother to Mother*, Mxolisi is responsible for the murder of Amy Biehl. She was killed in 1993, just before the historic democratic election that would make Mandela president. During this period of transition, people like Amy Biehl wanted to help pave the path towards a democracy: “Ironically, therefore, those who killed her were precisely the people for whom, by all subsequent accounts, she held a huge compassion, understanding the deprivations they had suffered” (Magona, v). These crimes were committed during a time of political and social negotiations between president De Klerk, representative of the white regime, and the previously banned black opposition and their liberation movements. The novels were published in 1998 (*Mother to Mother*) and 2000 (*Bloodlines*), shortly after the final report of the TRC was published on 28 October 1998. The narratives do not directly criticise the TRC’s workings and results. The aim of both novels is to offer a literary response which introduces truth and reconciliation fiction as a critical supplement to the shortcomings of the Commission. The authors explore a different approach to bearing witness and giving testimony about the atrocities during the apartheid era. Both novels subvert the TRC’s format and its representation of women.

### **2.2 Literary Responses to the TRC**

#### **2.2.1 A Response to the Format of the TRC**

This part compares the novels’ format with the configuration and composition of the testimonies given during the TRC’s hearings. The Commission constructed a nationalistic discourse that subjected female testifiers into stereotypical lower positions (Samuelson 1). Although the TRC is never explicitly mentioned in both novels, the narratives lay bare some striking differences (Samuelson 160). The texts engage with the TRC’s theme of bearing witness in order to obtain reconciliation. However, Mandisa and Dora bear witness outside the structures of the Commission.

### 2.2.1.1 Language of Nationalism and Gender

In *Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women? Stories of the South African Transition*, Meg Samuelson (2007) explores the making of nationhood during South Africa's transitional period from apartheid to a post-apartheid era. The rhetoric of nationalism introduced the instalment of a new unified South Africa (Samuelson 12). In this particular rhetoric, the representation of the nation as a female body is the main theme. Samuelson argues that South Africa's nationhood was contested and consolidated in the representations of women (Samuelson 1). She refers to the term nation as 'imagined communities', a term coined by Benedict Anderson. According to Samuelson, the term refers to a period of transition as a time of reinvention, rebuilding and thus re-imagining a new unified South Africa (2). Nations as 'imagined communities' are frequently imagined "through gendered tropes: women bear the symbolic weight of nationalism; their bodies are the contested sites on which national identities are erected and national unity forged" (Samuelson 2). Women and their bodies are metaphorically "shaped into the ideal forms that reflect the desired national body – usually that of Mother, or simply Womb" (Samuelson 2). By trying to reimagine a unified South Africa in the transitional period, the national discourse dismembered and fragmented the female body in order to represent the concept of nation-building. More specifically, the imagery of the womb was used to exemplify the birth of a new nation. The figure of the Mother was used to indicate the nurturing, the mothering of the frail 'child' towards a new 'adult' South Africa (Samuelson 2).

More specifically, the discourse of nationalism and its accompanying representation of women occurs in the TRC's narratives. For example, the first volume of the TRC's report recognises South Africa as the 'motherland' and apartheid as a 'sickness' that needs to be nurtured with the right kind of medicine, i.e. motherly love: "To lift up racism and apartheid is not to gloat over or to humiliate the Afrikaner or the white community. It is to try to speak the truth in love. It is to know the real extent of the sickness that has afflicted our beloved motherland so long, in making the right diagnosis, prescribe the correct medicine" (TRC Report 1: 16-17). Additionally, the first South African recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize Albert Luthuli referred to the country as "a home for all her sons and daughters" (TRC Report 1: 109-110). This illustrates the nation as the Mother and its population as her children. Moreover, the TRC's mantra 'the road to reconciliation' included the "nurturing of respect for our common humanity" (TRC Report 1: 110). The verb 'to nurture' refers to the

maternal task of 'upbringing' and 'moral education'. This illustrates the Mother, the nation, as the figure who is responsible for the positive construction of a unified nation-building project.

However, in Magona's novel, the transitional period towards peace is interrupted by Amy Biehl's murder. Mxolisi is responsible for the horrible interruption in the country's narrative towards a unified nation. Moreover, this disruption already commences before Amy's death. The idea of a nation as an 'imagined community' is completely disturbed by the unexpected birth of Mxolisi. Ironically, the family of Mandisa calls the child Mxolisi: "He, who would bring peace" (Magona 136). However, his birth drastically changes Mandisa's personal life and brings havoc to the entire township. Ultimately, it will alter the very essence of the nation: "He who came unbid; bringing a harvest of shame to my father's house. Bitter tears to a mother's proud heart" (Magona 115). Mandisa reflects on the birth of her three children: Mxolisi, Lunga and Siziwe. The birth of her first child Mxolisi did not bring peace. After the Amy's death, Magona does not represent Mandisa as the Mother who will enhance the nation-building project. People in Guguletu refer to her as "Mother of the beast", "Mother of the serpent", or even "Satan's mother" (Magona 115). She is not the Mother of the unified nation. The upbringing of her child did not lead to unity. Metaphorically, the product of her womb contradicts the desired formula for national unity. Her child is the product of the apartheid regime that bred this violence and stalled the way to freedom.

In Boehmer's novel, Joseph's actions clearly put a halt to the narrative of a unified nation-building project during South Africa's transitional period: "It was the timing, not the violence only but the time of the thing that hit so hard. The dust of his prison cell had barely been brushed from the Old Man's shoes. The blue sky had burned brilliantly overhead as he had walked painstakingly, unstopably, down that tarred road into his freedom" (Boehmer 10). Mandela's release from prison had sparked a national discourse that introduced a positive path towards the construction of a unified South Africa. However, the mother-protagonist's son places a bomb shortly after the good news of Mandela's freedom: "This act grabbed the new signs of hope and smashed them underfoot at the very moment of their emergence" (Boehmer 18). The bomb placed by Joseph disrupts the transitional discourse of nation-building. Moreover, Boehmer challenges the role of the Mother as the figure who has to bring up this unified nation: "What does it mean for a mother to rear her child, and tell him right from wrong, and then hear him branded a murderer who took life without thought or scruple, reddening the country's new horizons with blood" (Boehmer 35). The Mother's failure to provide her child with a moral education results in the crime. Furthermore, when Dora leaves

her son after a visit in prison she contemplates her failure: “Yes goodbye, her lips perform as they must. Good speech always, good sentences open doors, fair’s foul, foul’s fair, the body betrays the heart. Her womb feels emptied, split in two” (Boehmer 143). Her body, i.e. her lips, performs the required national discourse, but her heart, i.e. her feelings, do not express the narrative of national hope and unity. Her fragmented maternal body symbolises the collapse of the unified national frame the transitional narrative prioritised. The womb of the female protagonist illustrates the rupture of national unity: “The body, the belly, betrays the heart” (Boehmer 144).

Finally, Magona’s and Boehmer’s protagonists challenge the representation of women as female bodies who produce national unity. The mothers’ bodies do not represent a unified South African nation and similarly do not give birth to a brighter future. Their maternal bodies reflect their ability to alter, subvert, and contradict the subordinate position of women in the national discourse which the following part discusses in more detail.

#### **2.2.1.2 Gendered Subjectivity**

Concerning the representation of women in the TRC’s narrative, this part builds on Samuelson’s understanding of Judith Butler’s notion of ‘gendered subjectivity’. According to Samuelson, Butler means the following: “agency lies not in forsaking the position into which one is subjected, but, instead, in inhabiting this position and then destabilising it through an iterative performativity” (7). The authors deliberately locate Mandisa and Dora in the subject position of the mother, i.e. mother-victim (2.2.2.1.). Through the explicit repetition of this subjected mother-victim performance, the authors give their protagonists a voice, an agency which destabilises the nationalistic representation of women in the TRC’s narrative. This part focuses on the notion of ‘voice’ as opposed to ‘silence’ and agency as opposed to non-agency. The women who testified before the TRC were subjected into specific positions of motherhood. Their voices were limited to that of the suffering mother (Samuelson 161). The possibility of agency is located in the repetitive performance of the subjected mother-position. Samuelson concludes that the act of repetition with regard to the performance of motherhood actually subverts this subjected position (Samuelson 162). In both novels, this repetitive performance reveals the restrictions and incoherent configurations of the mothers’ subordinated position. Mandisa and Dora perform the act of motherhood. However, they stray away from the inactive silent subordinate position. Their testimonies about their mother-performance reveal some contradictions in the TRC’s discourse.

Magona's *Mother to Mother* challenges the performance of motherhood through Mandisa's lament and her recollections of her girlhood and wifehood. This lament exemplifies Mandisa's active voice and agency. She tries to explain her grief to Linda Biehl. It highlights the hardships she had to endure during the apartheid era, not only because of the state's oppressive regime, but also because of the patriarchal values of her community. In the novel's preface, Magona explains the aim of Mandisa's lament: "In looking for answers for herself whilst talking to the other mother, imagining her pain, she draws a portrait of her son and his world, and hopes that an understanding of that and of her own grief might ease the other mother's pain" (Magona vi). Mandisa sheds a light on the circumstances in which she grew up and how they ultimately influenced not only her own life but also the life of her son.

In *Bloodlines*, Boehmer explores Dora's agency. Dora is able to let her voice be heard with the help of the white journalist Anthea. They examine the crime committed by Dora's son and relate it to her family's Irish legacy. At first Dora's voice is taken away from her when she is not allowed to testify before the court when her son is at trial: "Mrs Makken's prepared testimony on her son's behalf was ruled out" (Boehmer 116). Nevertheless, she finds her voice when narrating the story of her grandmother Dollie: " 'Like I said, this is my story, parts of it, believe it or not, I might just know a bit about' " (Boehmer 181).

The authors locate the mothers' performances in the subordinate role of mother-victim, more specifically as mother-witness and mother-servant. 2.2.2.1. and 2.2.2.2. discuss how both authors challenge these specific stereotypical motherhood positions occurring in the TRC's discourse.

### **2.2.2 A Response to the Representation of Women before the TRC**

People who testified before the TRC and recounted their terrible experiences during the apartheid period helped shape the South African public memory and its nationalistic discourse which introduced the construction of a brighter future. According to Samuelson, the TRC was therefore in fact a public theatre of national memorialisation and a platform for the remaking of South African nationhood (161). However, Analisa Oboe claims the following: "Despite the framing of equality and sympathy which is at the core of the TRC, forms of social, cultural, and gender inequality did get into the proceedings, which were uneasily located between past horrors and present dreams of reconciliation and justice" (63). The TRC as an institution of its testifiers' memory shaped South Africa's national history. However, the

transitional period in which the TRC was founded still harboured the inequality of the segregated apartheid world.

In order to understand the above mentioned claim by Oboe, the TRC's attitude towards women needs to be discussed. The legal decree on which the TRC was built, the PNURA, stipulated the dream of a unified South Africa. The Commission's pursuit of reconciliation consisted in its desire of national unity. Its objective was the creation of a harmonious nation-building project that introduced a rhetoric of forgiveness and emphasised the philosophy of Ubuntu (Oboe 67). The latter term refers to the African values of respect, compassion, humaneness, caring, and sharing. The TRC embraced this philosophy during its hearings (Oboe 73). In *We Are Not Such Things*, the American author Justine van der Leun (2016) explains the aim of the TRC related to the notion of Ubuntu. The Commission wanted to "restore that common humanity to the fractured people of South Africa" (272). This philosophy includes a saying 'a person is a person through other persons'. It highlights the "idea of a shared identity" (van der Leun 272). Moreover, van der Leun explains that the TRC's goal "was a radical approach to dealing with and healing from the past, one that played into global and national fantasies about a new multicultural South Africa that might emerge" (van der Leun 272). The Commission researched issues with regard to racial superiority and inferiority, more specifically the opposition between black and white communities. However, in relation to the representation of women and the notion of gender within the TRC's national narrative, the Commission portrayed an ambiguous discourse. Some critics offer positive statements concerning the representation of women during the TRC's hearings. For example, South African cultural activist Njabulo Ndebele declares that the Commission illustrated a social and cultural movement "from oppression to expression" (20). Oboe explains Ndebele's assertion as the idea that the TRC was "a movement in which women are encouraged to turn from silent icons of past horrors into active producers of words and speech" (61). By contrast, the South African author Antjie Krog questions the gendered inequality produced in the TRC's narrative. In the chapter 'Truth Is a Woman' of her book *Country of My Skull* she asks the following burning question: "Does truth have a gender?" (Krog 271). The journalistic account of van der Leun similarly criticises the workings of the Commission related to gender. Van der Leun's opinion also differs from Ndebele's: "During the TRC process, the large-scale suffering of women – especially black women – was often pushed to the side or ignored outright" (278-79). In her compelling reportage, she even argues that instances of sexual violence were almost never addressed (van der Leun 279).

Magona's and Boehmer's literary responses explore two constraints with regard to the representation of gender in the TRC's discourse. The Commission only recognised women as secondary victims (2.2.2.1.). Similarly, the TRC neglected the systematic violence of apartheid (2.2.2.2.). These two shortcomings coincide with two of the TRC's limitations Mamdani proposes (chapter 1). Mamdani argues that the TRC individualised its victims. The perception of women as merely secondary victims fits in with the Commission's failure to recognise the influence of apartheid's atrocities on entire black communities, similarly effecting the lives of many black women. Mamdani's second constraint of the TRC states that the Commission neglected and even furthered the bifurcated nature of apartheid. Therefore, it failed to recognise the systematic violence that took place in the lives of the black population. The systematic violence not only consists of the hardships experienced because of the discrimination of the natives, it also included the oppression by the patriarchal system which formed the foundation of many traditional black tribes. The following parts examine the novels' subversion of the TRC's constraints with regard to its representation of motherhood.

### **2.2.2.1 Secondary Victims**

This part analyses the challenging portrayal of the mother-protagonists in their subject position as secondary victims. More specifically, it focuses on their role as mother-witness, taking into account the notion of 'Mater Dolorosa'. Furthermore, it examines their representation as mother-servant during apartheid. It also discusses their role as mother-servant and as wife in relation to the black traditional patriarchal communities.

#### **a. Mother-Witness**

In the Commission's narrative, women were largely reduced to the producers of 'sacrificial sons'. The mother-son relationship depicted in the TRC's discourse consisted of suffering mothers and sacrificial sons. The mothers were considered to be secondary victims in their position as mother-witness. The TRC's narrative was limited to a "teleological script of loss and sacrifice leading to reconciliation and redemption" (Samuelson 9). This signified that women testifying before the Human Rights Violations Committee were positioned into the role of mothers who could solely bear witness on behalf of their sons. On the one hand, this happened e.g. because of their children's death due to the crimes committed by political liberation groups or the apartheid state. On the other hand, this could also occur because of the crimes perpetrated by their own sons as political activists or members of liberations movements. In *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in*

*South Africa*, Fiona C. Ross (2003) concludes that only 14 per cent of the women who testified before the TRC talked about their personal experiences of human rights violations during apartheid. Another significant 40 per cent only testified on behalf of their dead sons or talked about the crimes their children had committed (Ross 17). This highlights the Commission's failure to look beyond the mother's status as secondary victim and examine the daily hardships these black women endured before, during, and after the apartheid period.

At first sight, Magona and Boehmer both clearly represent their protagonists as mother-witnesses. Magona portrays Mandisa bearing witness on behalf of her son. Mandisa's lament includes a plea for understanding and forgiveness: "God, please forgive my son. Forgive him this terrible, terrible sin" (Magona 4). She not only recollects his birth, she also gives the reader and Linda Biehl an insight into Mxolisi's childhood and early adult life. She remembers his involvement in student organisations as a renowned political youth leader: "Mxolisi got himself involved in politics. Boycotts and strikes and stay-aways and what have you?" (Magona 161).

In Boehmer's novel, Dora literally witnesses the trial of her son as he has to testify about his crime before the court. The journalist Anthea reflects on Dora's position during the trial: "Sitting there helpless as her son damned himself" (Boehmer 9). Anthea's reflection highlights the secondary victim-position of the mother. When both women have a picnic after the last day of Joseph's trial, Anthea once again contemplates Dora's attitude: "She cleared her throat, pulled back her shoulders. As if preparing for a performance, Anthea thought, the mother as witness" (Boehmer, *B* 84). Dora remembers Joseph's childhood and his time as a student when he prepared speeches to address his fellow comrades in their common freedom struggle. At that specific moment, the journalist explicitly recognises the perpetrator's mother in the secondary position of the mother-witness.

Moreover, the TRC used in its representation of women the Christian language of the mourning mother of Christ, the *Mater Dolorosa* or the Mother of Sorrows. The TRC's narrative represented the victim-mothers as weeping female figures, tears rolling down their faces as they recollected their lives. These testimonies before the TRC produced national history as redemptive (Samuelson 163). More specifically, with regard to the Human Rights Violations Hearings, Samuelson also quotes Ross who explains that "the experience of violation was often recast as 'sacrifice' [...] Women testifiers were thanked for the 'sacrifice' of their dead or injured kin and told that their sacrifices [...] had redemptive power for the

national body. Suffering and sacrifice, heavily predicated on a Christian model, were depicted as constitutive of the foundational order of ‘the new South Africa’” (Ross 154). For example, when the TRC explains its public nature, the following observations occur in its report: “A distinctive feature of the Commission was its openness to public participation and scrutiny. [...] They saw weeping [...] women asking for the truth about their missing loved ones” (TRC Report 1: 104). Samuelson argues that the TRC’s investment “in the biblical narrative [...] reiterates its ‘identification of maternal speech with maternal suffering’ [...] the tearful act of bearing witness became the mode of performance through which women gained a voice, and female testifiers were conventionally depicted weeping” (163). For example, when summarising the hearings in its final report the Commission notes that a lot of victims “succumbed to tears or expressed their anger as they relived their experiences” (TRC Report 5: 3). The Commission shaped its witnesses and influenced their stories. The TRC’s production of the mother-witness underlines its philosophy of forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation, and national unity.

However, Magona and Boehmer offer an alternative literary response in order to come to that desired reconciliation. The protagonists’ testimonies indirectly highlight the restrictions of the TRC’s fragmented national discourse. In relation to the mother-son relationship, the protagonists go beyond the subjected position of the suffering mother of ‘sacrificial sons’ and the mother as *Mater Dolorosa*.

In *Mother to Mother*, Mandisa does indeed at first exemplify the Christian narrative of the *Mater Dolorosa* because of the virgin-birth of Mxolisi. Mandisa’s conception of Mxolisi is an allusion to the Virgin Mary’s conception of the Christ (Samuelson 165). After an examination of her body, it becomes clear that Mandisa “had done no shameful thing” but that she had been “jumped into” (Magona 112). Mandisa has become pregnant without having had sexual intercourse, just like the Virgin Mary. Mandisa’s family names the child Mxolisi, “He, who would bring peace” (Magona 136). This is a direct link to the Christian narrative referring to Jesus. However, Magona subverts this biblical connotation. After Mxolisi has committed his crime, the people of Guguletu refer to Mandisa as the mother of ‘Satan’, a figure introducing horror and pain. By repetitively portraying Mandisa as the *Mater Dolorosa*, Magona subverts this secondary position, intervening with contradictions to the configuration of the Virgin Mary, e.g. mother of Satan (Magona 115).

Magona rather represents Linda Biehl as the Mother of Sorrows, when Mandisa explains Amy's death as a 'sacrifice' of the white population: "Your daughter, the sacrifice of hers" (Magona 210). Remarkably, this does not refer to the 'sacrificial son', but Mxolisi's victim. More specifically, Amy's death represents a sacrifice of the white population in order to build a new unified nation. Moreover, Magona does not portray her mother-protagonist as a woman who willingly surrenders to the subjected position of motherhood and the tearful Mater Dolorosa: "Nothing my son does surprises me any more. Not after that first unbelievable shock, his implanting himself inside me; unreasonably and totally destroying the me I was. The me I would have become" (Magona 88). She mentions several times that Mxolisi's birth has changed her life, and not necessarily in a good way: "it was brought home to me what turmoil the coming of this child had brought to my life. Were it not for him, of course, I would still be in school. Instead, I was forced into being a wife, forever abandoning my dreams, hopes, aspirations" (Magona 132-33). Mandisa could not fulfil her girlhood ambitions because she could not pursue her education. She needed to take care of her child. When thinking about Mxolisi, Mandisa describes his presence in her life as "always negative, always cheating me of something I desperately wanted" (Magona 142).

In *Bloodlines*, it is not Dora who exemplifies the Mater Dolorosa, but rather Kathleen Gort, the Irish nurse working at the Izinyanga Hospital. According to Samuelson, Boehmer based the name of the Irish character on W. B. Yeats's play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (1902) (173). In Yeats's writing, this female figure refers to the "idealized Mother of Irish nationalism" (Samuelson 173). Kathleen's journal narrates her life during the Boer Wars. She has to take care of soldiers who were hurt during battle. The Irish woman represents the Mother-nation trying to patch up the wounded soldiers, i.e. the 'sacrificial sons' who fought in order to obtain their country's independence. Interestingly, although Anthea is not a mother, she uses the 'sacrificial son' language when talking about her deceased boyfriend: "Not a death in vain but a sacrifice towards something bigger, a changing country" (Boehmer 68-69). Anthea recognises her boyfriend's death as something that could possibly have a positive outcome, i.e. a way to alter the racial discrimination and better the lives of the black population.

Moreover, Boehmer offers a counterpart to the female figure of the Mater Dolorosa with the mother-protagonist. Dora subverts this female representation of the weeping mother who tearfully bears witness to Joseph's defence at his trial. The mother seems to perform the subjected position of the suffering mother when talking to the journalist Anthea about Joseph's actions: "I see why he did what he did, I weep for him" (Boehmer 36). In this case,

the tearful act does clearly represent Dora as mother-witness. However, throughout the novel, Dora challenges the subjected mother-witness position. For example, after she has visited Joseph in prison, she does not feel comfortable, nevertheless she masters enough courage to overcome her sad feelings: “She can’t bear it, it’s not possible, she can’t do it. But she goes on walking, evenly, steadily, a decent upstanding woman always, one foot in front of the other” (Boehmer 143). Moreover, Dora is depicted wearing red, the colour of the freedom struggle, the colour of her son’s struggle: “He likes red, [...], the colour of struggle” (Boehmer 33). Furthermore, after the journalist Anthea has tried to convince Dora of narrating the story of her grandmother, she calls her son to tell him about this newfound information of his Irish ancestry. After the telephone call, “She finds there are tears of relief cooling her cheeks, relief that the call is over, they’ve got this far, herself and Joseph – and Anthea Hardy. She dabs the tears with a tissue and straightens her back, finds she can do this, it’s not as difficult as it was. This disquiet that’s been breaking her inside is easing, as if a gap, a wound, is beginning to knit” (Boehmer 187). These are not the tears of a suffering mother, but rather the tears of a mother reinventing herself. The suffering mother surfaces, however Boehmer represents Dora as a woman who is able to subvert this subordinate position. She literally wipes the tears away, she destabilises the female representation of the Mater Dolorosa, and builds up confidence to tackle the hardships of the day.

### **b. Mother-Servant**

The TRC invoked a language of repentance and redemption in order to establish national unity and reconciliation. However, these nationalistic narratives did not lament “a loss of status: women do not only protest about violence, torture and rape, but about the lack of quality in their life” (Oboe 64). It is just this lack of quality in the daily lives of these women the Commission failed to address. It did not focus on their poverty, their exposition to social and psychological harms, the breaking up of entire families and the absence of their men (Oboe 64-65). This part focuses on the secondary position of the mother-servant. Magona and Boehmer give their characters a voice that highlights and similarly alters this position of servitude by addressing the effects it had on the upbringing of their children. Furthermore, the mother-servant position also took away the women’s identity and their sense of dignity. During the TRC’s hearings, neither the position of mother-servant nor the loss of identity was addressed. The authors offer an alternative to the Commission’s workings by providing a literary platform discussing these issues.

Because of the bifurcated nature of apartheid, the unequal division of civil rights, the social and educational discrimination, both men and women in black families had to work to provide for their families. In her memoir *To My Children's Children* (2006), Magona gives a heartfelt description of the domestic work that female members of the black communities had to perform in the houses of the white non-natives, "keeping the native in her proper place" (Magona, *TMCC* 67). Apartheid caused "the destruction of African family life, communal life, and all those factors that go towards the knitting of the very fabric of people" (Magona, *TMCC* 85). Magona explains that being a domestic servant was a way of helping your family to provide them with food. However, she also argues that being a domestic servant destroyed family life, because the women took care of many children but not their own: "My very endeavo[u]rs to maintain my family contained the seeds for its destruction. [...] Mine was not the choice of being a working mother or a not-working mother. [...] Whose mother would I have been had my children died from starvation?" (Magona, *TMCC* 133). The domestic servant's subordinate position resulted in the provision of food, but not in the much needed motherly love and moral education for their own children.

In *Mother to Mother*, Mandisa tries to explain the actions of her son. She believes that the perpetration of his crime was partly her responsibility. She was not there to teach him otherwise, to give him a good upbringing: "there was no food in the house and I was away, minding the children of the white family I worked for" (Magona, *MTM* 3). During most of Mxolisi's childhood and early adulthood, Mandisa had to work for white families and nurture their children in order to earn some money and provide food for her entire family. With three children of her own to take care of she had no other choice but to leave her home and to take "a job. What else? As a domestic servant" (Magona, *MTM* 145). In the beginning, her children notice her absence. Her second son Lunga even confesses that he misses his mother's influence in the kitchen (Magona, *MTM* 3). As a result, Mandisa feels terribly guilty and contemplates the idea of her being at home to take care of her own children: "I swallow my guilt. What would happen if I stayed home doing all the things a mother's supposed to do? We couldn't possibly survive just on what Dwadwa makes ... We hardly make it as it is, with me working full time" (Magona, *MTM* 8). The mother-protagonist realises she could not be present at home every day because she needed to work in order for her family to live. Her husband does not earn enough. At the beginning of the novel, Mandisa asks the following question: "Why is it that the government now pays for his food, his clothes, the roof over his head? Where was the government the day my son stole my neighbour's hen; wrung its neck

and cooked it” (Magona, *MTM* 3). This quotation demonstrates the discrimination perpetrated by the apartheid government. Paradoxically, when Mxolisi is detained for his crime, he is cared for rather well in prison. However, during his childhood the state did not undertake any actions to help with the provision of nutrition for the natives. Once again, this highlights the mother’s awareness that she was not there to educate her child and to complete a positive upbringing for Mxolisi. Instead, Mxolisi roamed the streets of Guguletu, participating in boycotts and protests orchestrated by political student organisations. In Guguletu, most of the mothers were domestic servants in white family homes and could not prevent their children from taking part in such activities: “There are not enough mothers during the day to force the children to go to school and stay there for the whole day” (Magona, *MTM* 32). Mandisa expresses the powerlessness to affect the course of events in her son’s life: “as a mother, I’m supposed to have authority over my children, over the running of my house. Never mind that I’m never there” (Magona, *MTM* 8).

In *Bloodlines*, even though Dora went to school to learn Shakespeare by heart or follow an “accountancy correspondence course,” she ended up working for the white population as a domestic servant: “Amazing that no matter how hard you struggle, pull yourself up, read and learn, learn your kids, you can land up at the bottom of the ladder again” (Boehmer 52). Similar to Magona’s character Mandisa, Boehmer’s protagonist had to work as a domestic servant in the homes of white people in order to provide for her family. She recounts the hardships that accompanied this kind of work: “So house work it was at first, house work and nanny work, waking dizzy headed at four in the morning, rocking with back pain, seven days a week” (Boehmer 52). Every day of the week, Dora was not at home to take care of her own child Joseph. She was not there to teach him about right and wrong. She was not present to prevent him from participating in the violent protests of the liberation movements and instead send him to school. Because of apartheid which forced her into this position, she could not intervene positively in her son’s life: “you found yourself right inside the machinery, unable to change anything, unable to get out. Often, as part of your daily life, you found yourself caught inside” (Boehmer 28). Dora is fully aware of the effect her mother-servant position has had on her family, although she tried really hard to alter the situation: “how hard she hasn’t worked to raise her family, pull and tug them upwards through this cut-throat and closed-in society?” (Boehmer 35).

In addition, the mother-servant position enhanced the identity loss of women during apartheid (Oboe 64). A clear example of the annulment of their very identity is the occurrence of

'name-changing'. White people often gave their servants a Christian English name and neglected the women's traditional Xhosa or Afrikaans name. For example, Mandisa's white employer calls her 'Mandy'. The reason for this is that Mrs Nelson "can't say any of our native names because of the clicks" (Magona, *MTM* 20). Magona's protagonist is astonished because she knows there are no clicks in her name: "My name is Mandisa. MA-NDI-SA. Do you see any click in that?" (Magona, *MTM* 20). In Boehmer's novel, Dora's sister Bernice convinces her to change her name when she applies for a job: "Martha Christian, that was Bernice's idea. [...] an alias in good faith" (Boehmer 54). Dora agrees to do this because white employers begin to recognise her as the mother of the bomber, the mother of the perpetrator. Consequently, her current employer dismisses her and others avoid hiring her completely. In changing her name to 'Martha' she hopes to obtain new employment.

In conclusion, victims of everyday hardships were excluded from the Commission's hearings because of the TRC's limited definition of apartheid's victims as people who suffered from bodily harm. It neglected the domestication of women, a position they were forced into due to the bifurcated nature of apartheid. It also failed to address the psychological abuse black domestic servants experienced, for instance, the issue of name-changing. The novels go beyond this constraint by highlighting and exploring the mother-servant position of Mandisa and Dora. The authors address the emotional strain the mothers' work had on the education of their children and the bond between family members. Because the mothers had to take care of white children and could not nurture their own sons, familial connections became fractured.

#### **2.2.2.2 Systematic Violence**

The TRC's national script did not take into account the deeper historical influences that shaped black women's lives. It neglected not only the systematic violence that occurred during apartheid but also the impact of colonialism and the system of patriarchy which directly supported the apartheid regime (2.2.3.). The Commission failed to recognise the mechanisms of the old South Africa within the apparatus of the new South Africa. This analysis focuses on the importance of the Xhosa Cattle Killing and its link to colonialism in Magona's *Mother to Mother*. Furthermore, it examines the Boer Wars and colonialism in relation to Boehmer's *Bloodlines*. Finally, it explores the influence of the forced removals during apartheid, an event that Magona discusses in her novel.

### **a. The Xhosa Cattle Killing**

The story of the Xhosa Cattle Killing is very well known in South African culture and history. The event took place between 1855 and 1857, a period in which colonialism entered the South African hemisphere (Lewis 244). In his analysis “The Xhosa Cattle Killing and the Politics of Memory,” Adam Ashforth (1991) summarises the story. The main character was a young Xhosa girl and prophetess called Nongqawuse. In 1856 she “had a vision in which a ‘new people’ from overseas announced to her that the ancestors were preparing themselves to return to life with new cattle” (Ashforth 581). Nongqawuse told all the Xhosa people that they had to slaughter their cattle and burn their crops in order to prepare for the arrival of these ‘new people from overseas.’ Most of the Xhosa population obeyed this specific call and destroyed their entire livelihood. However, the ancestors failed to appear at the prescribed moment Nongqawuse had indicated to provide new cattle and a better future without the white oppressors (Ashforth 581). Consequently, a lot of people died from starvation. Approximately 30.000 people starved to death (Lewis 244). The people who survived the disaster were forced to “seek assistance in the British Cape Colony” and “were driven into the service of the colonists” (Ashforth 581). Moreover, the colonial administration ruthlessly exploited the poor circumstances the Xhosa people lived in as a result of the cattle killing. The Xhosa chiefs both lost their authority and their lands. Ashforth concludes that the “current apartheid version of the story speaks of the ‘National Suicide of the Xhosa’. Xhosa-speaking people today tend to see the events in terms of a conspiracy by the colonial authorities to annihilate the Xhosas” (582). The Xhosa people had to work on the farms of white colonists and perform labour on other public works such as the establishment of roads (Lewis 244).

Concerning Magona’s literary response to the TRC’s workings, the story of Nongqawuse occurring in her novel subverts the Commission’s neglect of the systematic violence that even occurred before the instalment of apartheid and goes as far back as the period of colonialism. Magona presents the reader with a flashback that offers an insight into the early atrocities suffered by the natives. When she was little, Mandisa recalls her mother crying out: “We have come thus to hunger, for white people stole our land [...] We have no cattle today, and the people who came here without any have worlds of farms, overflowing with fattest cattle” (Magona 173). At first, Mandisa does not know what this means. She does not know of the colonial history of her country and its direct consequences that still influenced her people. Her grandfather Tatumkhulu explains to her why the cattle was so important for the Xhosa

tribes. The beasts were not only used to provide the population with milk or dung to smear the floors of their huts with or to produce hide to keep them warm when it was cold outside (Magona 177). They also used the cattle for specific Xhosa traditions with regard to wedding ceremonies, “to offer *lobola* to his in-laws”; to pay respect to the tribes’ chiefs; to use at funerals; and during wars, to give the animals in exchange for their people who were abducted by their enemies (Magona 178). Tatumkhulu explains that the Xhosa did not kill their cattle for the aforementioned reasons. They killed their animals and burned their fields because the prophetess had promised that these actions would send the *abelungu* (white people) back to the sea: “Remember now, the biggest miracle, the mother reason for the whole *indaba*, was the promise of a return to the way of before, when the people with hair like the silken threads of corn would be no more” (Magona, 180). The prophecy did not come true and instead the natives were forced to work in the mines of the colonists in order to stay alive (Magona 182). Renée Schatteman (2008) links the events of the Xhosa Cattle Killing to post-apartheid South Africa. She argues that “Magona’s reference to the Cattle-Killing is crucial in effecting the novel’s transcendence because it [...] enables Mandisa to reinterpret her son’s crisis on a broader scale” (Schatteman 278). In other words, by referring to the Xhosa Cattle Killing, Magona transcends the TRC’s constraints. She goes beyond the Commission’s limited timeframe for the examination of the human rights violations that occurred before, during, and after apartheid. The character Mandisa is able to interpret the actions of her son in light of the atrocities of the past. The mother learns that South Africa’s violent history inevitably bred Mxolisi’s crime.

Additionally, Magona provides a link between the prophetess Nongqawuse and the perpetrator Mxolisi. Both characters are young adults who were involved in movements that required sacrifices in order to find liberation from the white oppression: “The killing of cattle and burning of crops in one historical moment is echoed in the burning of cars, the necklacing<sup>1</sup> of collaborators, and the killing of innocent whites in another” (Schatteman 280). Moreover, in an interview with David Attwell and Barbara Harlow (2000), the author comments on the analogy between the two events. Magona concludes that there must have been Xhosa people who did not want to burn their fields and kill their animals. She also feels the same way about the education boycotts that occurred in real life during the transition period, represented in her novel through the fictionalised account of Mxolisi and his actions:

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Necklacing’ derives from the term ‘necklace’ which is used in South Africa to refer to “a tyre doused or filled with petrol, placed round a victim’s neck and set alight” (OED 2010).

“there was this movement, this feeling that to advance we had to retreat. You know, to be free, to advance in the struggle, every child should just abandon their education. And I say to myself, but how does that help us? [...] And subsequently, the young people who were now not in school began to look to the killing of people” (qtd. in Attwell and Harlow 289). The reference to the Xhosa Cattle Killing produces the idea that the crime perpetrated by Mxolisi during the transitional period was bred and fuelled through decades of systematic violence by the white non-natives. This brings the reader to instances that occurred even before apartheid was officially a part of the South African regime and highlights the human rights violations that already took place during the period of colonialism.

### **b. The Boer Wars**

“But I dare say I can’t look at this thing as an isolated incident any longer, as one life sentence or a single bomb. There’s more to it, a vast network of mixed-up causes and effects. [...] A violent and unjust state breeds a violent society even years after it has itself died” (Boehmer 120-21). This quotation of the journalist Anthea in Boehmer’s novel perfectly summarises the author’s literary response as an attempt to look beyond the limited timeframe of the TRC’s investigations. The reader learns about the broader scale of events that shaped South African history. The author draws a parallel between Joseph’s crime and the Boer Wars. Her writing primarily focuses on the Second Anglo Boer War from 1899 until 1902 (van Wyk Smith 429). She similarly highlights the involvement of the Irish Brigade in the Afrikaner quest for independence from the British Empire. The Boers were descendants of the Dutch settlers who came to the Eastern Cape of South Africa in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (OED, 2010). ‘Boer’ is a term in Afrikaans referring to a ‘farmer’ (OED, 2010). During the Boer Wars, the two Boer republics, the Orange Free State and the South African Republic or Transvaal fought together against the British Empire. During the war, the British oppressed both white (non-native Boer) and black natives (van Wyk Smith 439).

Dora narrates the story of her grandmother Dollie. With the help of Anthea, and the letters and journals of Kathleen Gort, both women dive into the Makkens’ family history. Immediately, the reader learns two things. Firstly, that Dollie is a domestic servant for a white family because she uses the terms ‘Mevrouw’ and ‘Baas Piet’ to address the wife and husband in their superior positions. Secondly, the white Boer family she worked for also suffered from the war: “Wonderful also was the sight of Mevrouw huddled with us under the kitchen table, praying aloud” (Boehmer 199). At a certain moment in Dollie’s story, British troops enter her

white family's farm and destroy their plantation, including the house: "Watching Mevrouw weep and sing [prayers] we stood with our backs to the shady side of the yard wall, Bet and I and Marta the house *meid*. [...] Shaded black servants whom the soldiers busy ransacking the house ignored" (Boehmer 219).

Furthermore, Boehmer clearly represents Dollie as a domestic servant when Bet, her co-worker, narrates to the Irish visitor how they developed their domestic skills: she refers to Dollie as "Dorothy Zwartman", "learning to scour floors", then becoming a "water carrier" and later a "laundry *meid*" (Boehmer, *B* 202). Dollie also explains to the Irish gentleman her ancestry and how she came to be a domestic servant: "My mother's people belonged to a Basotho mountain clan [...] from the blue hills beyond the Free State, but who knows, some said her father was her mother's *baas*" (Boehmer 203). She even clarifies the specific master-servant language in the female domestic work context, disclosing that the term 'baas' refers to "Master" as in "European Master," i.e. non-native (Boehmer 203). Moreover, a link with the Xhosa Cattle Killing can be observed when Dollie talks about the mines. Her father was "a migrant to the mines" (Boehmer 204). The Irish visitor and Dollie seem to get on really well as they find themselves in comparable situations and backgrounds. The Irish man was also a miner "and like the Boers" also a member of "a small nation fighting for freedom" (Boehmer 205). During their journey with the Irish Brigade and the Boer family towards safer places, Dollie and the Irish Joseph Macken start to fancy each other and arrange secret meetings to make love. Evidently, Dollie becomes pregnant of Samuel, Dora's father.

In conclusion, not only the human rights violations of apartheid but also the systematic violence and the hardships of the black community during the period of colonialism affected black women's lives. In addressing this particular part of South African history, Boehmer indicates the larger scale on which the crime of Joseph has to be examined.

### **c. The Forced Removals**

With regard to the TRC's constraint concerning its dubious definition of 'gross human rights violations', Mamdani discusses the term 'severe ill-treatment'. He suggests that the Commission only dealt with crimes that violated bodily integrity rights. Therefore, it neglected the violations of subsistence rights perpetrated by the apartheid state, for example, the discriminations based on economic principles such as the forced removals (Mamdani 39). Apartheid's legislation (e.g. the Group Areas Act) based on racial discrimination stipulated that the natives had to live in certain areas.

In *Mother to Mother*, Magona thoroughly explores the forced removals: “From now on, only white people would live in those places, places from which Africans and Coloureds and Indians had been driven off. The government had decided that residential areas would be segregated, strictly so, and by law” (Magona 28). Mandisa recounts these events that took place during her childhood: “It was early morning when my family got here, early in 1968. How my eyes were assaulted by the pandemonium” (Magona 27). First, it was believed that it was only a rumour that spread through Blouvillei: “Thus, convinced of the inviolability offered by our tremendous numbers, the size of our settlement, the belief that our dwelling places, our homes, and our burial places were sacred, we laughed at the absurdity of the rumour” (Magona 54). But soon after a plane drops pamphlets twirling through the sky down to the playground of the children, the black community realises something serious is going to happen. On the small pieces of paper it says that “the government is going to move all Africans in the Cape Town area to Nyanga” (Magona 52). The adults of her society try to negotiate with the government in order to subvert these forced removals: “our parents appealed for help to Mr Stanford and Mrs Ballinger and the other white men and women who had been the official Native Representatives in the parliament to which they themselves had no access” (Magona 63). However, nothing is to be done about the legalised segregation and therefore the applications for the annulment of the forced removals are to no avail. Mandisa calls the forced removals “the government’s ‘Slum Clearance’ project” as she reflects on the underdeveloped areas they were forced to live in: “Guguletu would have you think it is a housing development, civili[s]ed, better – because of being made of concrete, complete with glass windows. But we lived in Blouvillei because we wanted to live there. Those were shacks we had built ourselves, with our own hands” (Magona 29/33). The township was too small for all the people from Blouvillei.

Furthermore, the forced removals affected family life: “where before we had been members of solid, well-knit communities, now we were amongst strangers” (Magona, *MTM* 29). The black communities had to start from the very beginning. Therefore women had to go to work to earn money in order to provide for their family, forcing the mothers into the subjected mother-servant position: “Soon, all our mothers, who had been there every afternoon to welcome us when we returned from school, were no longer there. They were working in white women’s homes” (Magona 67). Moreover, Magona links the forced removals to the actions of Mxolisi: the forced removals were “a violent scattering of black people, a dispersal of the government’s making. So great was the upheaval, more than three decades later, my people

are still reeling from it” (Magona 48). This is a direct reference to the boycotts and protests during the transition period and explains her son’s crime (chapter 3).

### **2.2.2.3 Double Colonisation: The System of Patriarchy**

Magona and Boehmer offer challenging portrayals of Mandisa and Dora as mother-witnesses and mother-servants. By subverting these subordinated positions, the authors go beyond the constraints of the TRC’s representation of women. They transcend the Commission’s limited examination of the systematic violence that took place before, during, and after apartheid. This broader approach highlights the notion of the ‘double colonisation’ of women throughout South African history. The authors explore the colonisation of women through a thorough portrayal of the role of wifhood and the colonised maternal body.

In *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* (2005), Elleke Boehmer discusses the formation of the new South African nation as a process influenced by its gendered history, “by the normative masculinities and femininities that have shaped its growth over time” (*SOW* 3). Boehmer’s definition of nationalism incorporates the notion of gender: “a specific historical power defined by sexual difference” (*SOW* 22). In her writing, the gendered configuration of the postcolonial nation consists of two aspects. Firstly, women are represented “as the *bearers* of national culture” (*SOW* 4). South Africa is “embodied as [a] woman *by* male leaders” (*SOW* 4). This means that the country’s postcolonial narratives use the figure of the woman to symbolise the nation led by male leaders. Moreover, Boehmer describes the second aspect of South Africa’s gendered configuration as follows: “gendered, predominantly familial (patriarchal), forms have been invoked, paradoxically, to imagine postcolonial nations into being, and [...] reciprocally, constructions of the nation in fiction and other discourses are differentially marked by masculine and feminine systems of value” (*SOW* 4). The Mother-nation is subjected to the rules of men. More specifically, in the transitional narratives, the construction of the unified nation furthered the patriarchal system.

The TRC failed to broaden its perspective on the entire history of South Africa. Not only the divergence between race, class, ethnic, and religious identities, but also the opposition in gender formed the basis of the population before, during and after apartheid. Importantly, patriarchy already existed in pre-colonial communities. During the period of colonialism, the indigenous male dominant system worked together with the colonisers to further gender subordination. In the apartheid era, the black societies were defined as secondary civil and political structures. The status of women was even more diminished by the traditional

customary law as a result of the bifurcated nature of apartheid (Oboe 72-73). The patriarchal communities enforced the colonial system and the apartheid regime. Black tribes encouraged the gendered inequality, for example, by forcing their women into wifedom and motherhood. In both novels, the women perform domestic tasks.

Through the possibility of giving testimony before the TRC, women would normally obtain a voice of authority with regard to their personal narrations of the hardships. However, the TRC's nationalistic discourse limited its process of remembrance by neglecting the female position as subjected by a set of racial laws *and* patriarchal customary rules. Women did not dare to step out of their subordinate positions or were even prevented from voicing their experiences (Samuelson 7). Therefore, the TRC's discourse even furthered the 'double colonisation' of women. They were forced into subjected positions implemented by colonialism, the apartheid state, and during the transition period. The patriarchal black tribes similarly subordinated their women to specific social roles that restricted their political and civil status. Only men were the civil and political representatives of their societies. They exercised unequal authority and power. Women had to take up the role of mothering and were stereotypically forced into the position of the mother and the wife performing domestic chores. The native communities were based on a patriarchal structure which influenced the political, economic, and social system (Oboe 72-73). In both novels, Mandisa and Dora perform domestic tasks corresponding to their position of mother and wife.

#### **a. The Representation of Wifedom**

Especially in *Mother to Mother*, Magona explores the patriarchal system through the depiction of black communities in Blouvtlei and Guguletu. She draws from her own personal experiences in order to narrate the story of Mandisa with regard to the influence of patriarchy on the daily life of women. Mandisa's change from girlhood to wifedom and later to motherhood coincides with the loss of her identity. Not only her position as mother-servant but also her family's decisions put Mandisa into an inferior role. For instance, after her family finds out that she is pregnant, the male members of her community decide she needs to marry her boyfriend China. Mandisa does not have the freedom to decide what she wants for herself. Concerning the arrangement of *lobola* (brides dowry), the men of her family visit China's home in order to make concrete plans for the wedding: "The three men, my uncles, followed in a loss cluster; the two, Father's brothers: Middle Father and Little Father, smoking their pipes while Malume, Uncle-Who-is-Mother's-Brother, walked with both hands plunged deep

into his trouser pockets” (Magona 124). Together with the men of China’s family, they negotiate the terms for the wedding: “The negotiations preceding my joining China as his wife were stormy, full of recriminations and mud-flinging” (Magona 136). After the wedding ceremony took place, the Xhosa tradition of renaming the wife occurs: “Nohehake [...] I had expected the name of wifehood. It was custom to leave all the things of one’s girlhood behind, including the name” (Magona 135). Mandisa was not even allowed to choose the name of her own child. She wants to name him Hlumelo, but China’s father names her son Mxolisi. Furthermore, when Mandisa wants to pursue an education, her father says he cannot make the decision alone to allow her to go to school. His decision depends on the negotiations between the entire black clan, including the male members of China’s family: “‘My hands are tied, my child,’ Tata said, seeing my distress. Custom dictated that he listened to the counsel of the clan. I was not his possession but belonged to the whole clan in good and bad times. And decisions affecting my life were not his to make” (Magona 131).

### **b. The Colonised Maternal Body**

In *Mother to Mother*, Magona also highlights the double colonisation of women through the exploration of the colonised maternal body. In the black patriarchal system women were forced into the position of motherhood. Before actually becoming a mother, Mandisa’s body is subjected to her mother’s investigations. Mandisa’s mother does not want her daughter to become pregnant: “Mama’s making sure I remained ‘whole’ or ‘unspoilt’ as she said” (Magona 95). Mandisa has to undergo numerous uncomfortable examinations of her body. Her mother warns her not to have sexual intercourse: “Mama had warned me never to sleep with a boy as a wife does with her husband” (Magona 96). Mandisa’s mother even threatens her daughter to let her father or uncle investigate her when Mandisa protests against these examinations: “If you don’t want me to see you, I’m calling your fathers to come and do it themselves” (Magona 98). When her mother learns that Mandisa has a boyfriend, she sends Mandisa away to live with her aunt. The ‘forced removal’ of Mandisa to Gungulu similarly corresponds with the notion of the mother’s colonised body: “Mama took me, by train, to the hard place of her birth and growing up, the village of Gungulu [...]. Fourteen almost. Banished to a far-away desert. To go and stay with her mother, Makhulu, someone I had not set eyes on in all my life” (Magona 99). Mandisa recalls that her mother “banished me to this remote village of the Transkei” (Magona 100). Mandisa not only endures the forced removal of the white oppressor to live in underdeveloped areas. She also has to leave her home because of her own mother who wants to prevent her from becoming pregnant.

In conclusion, the TRC neglected to examine the patriarchal system which systematically oppressed women during South African history. Magona transcends this limitation by exploring the oppressive nature of patriarchy through the double colonisation of Mandisa. Her reminiscences highlight her subordinate role as wife and her colonised maternal body.

### 2.3 Intergenerational Transnational Connections

Magona's and Boehmer's literary responses to the TRC's constraints evoke intergenerational transnational connections through the thorough portrayal of the mothers, their sons, and their relationship with their victims. Both authors highlight *intergenerational* connections in order to explain the perpetrations of Mxolisi and Joseph. The mothers' narrations about the Xhosa Cattle Killing, the Boer Wars, and the forced removals lay bare a broader familial history and draw parallels with previous generations. Both mothers link the circumstances of the previous generations with the current events. Dora links the actions of Joseph's great-grandfather, the Irish freedom fighter, with her son's freedom struggle. Mandisa provides a link between Nongqawuse and Mxolisi. Their histories irrevocably influenced past, present, and future.

Moreover, both novels provoke *transnational* connections between the mothers of the perpetrators and the victims. Anthea intends to narrate the "other side of the story" (Boehmer 112). It introduces a familial history that goes beyond the national borders of South Africa and reaches towards Ireland and its Easter Rising. Throughout the narration of Dollie's story, it becomes clear that Joseph has Irish blood and is therefore not purely a black 'native'. His great-grandfather was an Irish freedom fighter. Mandisa tries to understand "the hurt of the other mother" (Magona 4). She addresses her plea for forgiveness and understanding to Amy's mother, an American woman. Magona crosses the national borders of South Africa and the TRC's narrow nationalistic discourse and evokes a connection with the USA.

Additionally, Boehmer's novel even provokes a *cross-racial* connection through the growing friendship between the white journalist Anthea and the black mother of the perpetrator, Dora. The author explores a bridge-building companionship between the two sides of the previous apartheid system. Both Anthea and Dora overcome apartheid's divergence and find a way to understand each other and are ultimately reconciled. Noteworthy, Magona strays away from this cross-racial connection. Mandisa's lament addresses the American mother of the victim. Linda Biehl is not a white South African woman. The novel does not provoke a bridge-building connection of reconciliation and understanding between both sides of the apartheid spectrum.



### **3 Perpetrator Representation**

Mamdani argues that the TRC failed to clarify its definitions of victims and perpetrators during its hearings (chapter 1). The following question thus evidently arises in this chapter: What is a perpetrator? According to the OED (2009) a perpetrator is someone “who [...] commits an evil deed”. In the TRC’s discourse, these ‘evil deeds’ were gross human rights violations and severe ill-treatment, such as abduction, killing, and torture. The TRC examined these violations during the period of 1960 until 1994. The Commission did not recognise these crimes as a part of the policies of apartheid. It neglected earlier instances of violations perpetrated during the colonial period until the beginning of apartheid. The TRC’s definition of severe ill-treatment was limited to the harm of individual bodily integrity rights perpetrated with a specific political motive. Perpetrators who applied for amnesty could either be members of a political organisation and a liberation movement, or they could be representatives of the apartheid state. The perpetrator representations in Magona’s and Boehmer’s novels overcome the TRC’s limited definitions. The authors go beyond the stereotypical social representations of the perpetrators. The mother-protagonists reminisce about the childhood of their perpetrator-sons and the circumstances that preceded the perpetration of their crimes. They take into account a broader part of South African history, including colonialism and the transition period. The authors give a voice to the wrongdoers who elaborate on the reasons behind their actions. Furthermore, they explore perpetrator trauma and the systematic white-on-black violence during South African history. They also highlight the presence of black-on-black violence during the transition period.

#### **3.1 Different Representations of the Perpetrator**

This part generally builds on Don Foster’s, Paul Haupt’s, and Marésa De Beer’s work *The Theatre of Violence: Narratives of Protagonists in the South African Conflict* (2005). They analyse the representation of perpetrators in written narratives. According to them, representing the perpetrator is a “tricky endeavour” and they argue that various writers have had difficulties with the “complexities of understanding perpetrators” (42). The critics quote the South African professor of Trauma and Memory Studies Gobodo-Madikizela who said that “no language should be created to understand evil” (qtd. in Foster, Haupt and De Beer 42). Moreover, they summarise the South African professor A. Du Toit’s (1993) critical interpretation of the understanding process. He claims that the explanations for the committed crimes are often immediately available. Think about the amnesty trials for perpetrators which

resulted in an international media event; or the thorough research uncovering the violent history of apartheid in various reportages such as Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull* (1999). Interestingly, the critics ask the following question: “[w]hy, in the face of so many relevant explanations, do we need to know what else lurks behind it?” (42). This poignant question receives a very clear answer in the critics’ work based on Du Toit’s vision: related to the understanding of the perpetrators’ actions, there is the “need for a singular explanation to make sense of a complex, multi-determined reality; a need to stress the senselessness of the violence; the need for a conspiratorial explanation; [...] a need to distance oneself from the violence [...] depicting black people as ‘different’, as the ‘other’, as primitive, unreasonable and violent” (Foster, Haupt, and De Beer 42).

Magona and Boehmer subvert these different ‘needs’ for understanding by introducing other roads towards apprehension in their truth and reconciliation fictions. Both authors do not offer a singular explanation for the violence of the perpetrator-sons. They go beyond the distancing perception of the ‘racialised other’. More specifically, the authors challenge the social representation of the perpetrators (3.1.1.) through the mothers’ reminiscences (3.1.2.) and the sons’ self-representations (3.1.3.).

### **3.1.1 Social Representations of Perpetrators**

Foster, Haupt, and De Beer consider social representations of the perpetrator as both conventionalising and prescribing. They apply a specific role to the wrongdoers. The representations people encounter in their everyday life via the media, for example, establish a certain “frame of meaning” in order to relate to these ‘events’ i.e. Joseph’s bombing or Amy’s murder (Foster, Haupt and De Beer 28). Furthermore, the critics claim that the wrongdoers “are frequently differentiated along lines of salient group cleavages such as gender, class, ‘race’, ethnicity, religion or region” (28). More specifically, they argue that these social representations define groups as different (28). As a result of the apartheid period, notions such as gender, race, and ethnicity still dominated the narrative of the transitional period. Remarkably, the perpetrators in both novels are black men. In the context of apartheid, the discrimination of the black majority was mostly perpetrated by the white minority regime. During that period, the natives were considered inferior to the European non-natives who “collectively shared meanings and attributions within a particular social grouping” about the black population (Foster, Haupt and De Beer 28). In the transition period, these opposing

groups should normally be working on a unified nation-building project (chapter 2). However, Mxolisi's and Joseph's actions disrupt this unifying nationalistic symbolism.

In *Bloodlines*, it is very clear that the two different social groups are still present in the transitional context: "Even now that the [black liberation] leaders were free, the white state still was boss" (Boehmer 27). Also in *Mother to Mother*, the opposition between black and white in the transitional society still prevails. For instance, when Mandisa explains the context in which Mxolisi grew up: "our children grew up in our homes, where we called white people dogs as a matter of idiom [...] Based on bitter experience" (Magona 74-75). Noteworthy, in both novels the victims of the perpetrators are white: the casualties of the South Clacton bombing were "as it happened all of them white" (Boehmer 3); the murder of Amy Biehl formed a significant exception to the day to day violence that occurred in the township of Guguletu: "What was new was that this time, the victim was white. A white person killed in Guguletu, a black township" (Magona 69).

Moreover, Foster, Haupt, and De Beer claim that in certain narratives the perpetrators remain unidentified: the wrongdoers "are nameless, faceless groups" described as "'unidentified gunmen', 'a group', 'a mob' or 'an armed mob', 'youths', 'rival party supporters', 'a band of men', 'terrorists' or 'guerrillas'" (34). Appellations of perpetrators as unidentified subjects also occur in Magona's novel, for example when Mandisa describes the events that precede Amy's murder: "Like a gigantic, many-limbed millipede, the group swells as it moves up NY1" (Magona 11). In the preface, Magona describes the incident as follows: Amy was "killed by a mob of black youth in Guguletu" (v). Similarly in Boehmer's novel, before Joseph is identified as the perpetrator of the bombing, the wrongdoer is referred to as a "terrorist" and "the bomber" (7/14). Even when Anthea reflects on the incident, the perpetrator is not given a face: "People driven to extremity resorted to extreme measures to get their say said. [...] Once the oppressor blocks all avenues of non-violent resistance, the armed seizure of power by the people is justified" (Boehmer 18). Furthermore, Anthea does not know how to address the perpetrator: "*Terrorist*. [...] The word was used in police reports. *Activist*, *freedom fighter*, were what you said privately amongst colleagues, friends from university days. Freedom fighters, guerrillas, newspapers increasingly recognised, fought for a just cause" (Boehmer 44). The use of a 'group', a 'cohesive whole', 'terrorist', 'bomber', and even just 'people' exemplifies unidentified tags for the unknown perpetrators.

Furthermore, Foster, Haupt, and De Beer claim that numerous stereotypical descriptions present apartheid state perpetrators predominantly as white and male. By contrast, the black liberation movement members are represented less specifically. These kind of perpetrators remain faceless and nameless as mentioned above. Often they are referred to as “a collective bloodthirsty, savage, primitive ‘other’” who uses the slogan “One Settler, One Bullet” during their protests (Foster, Haupt and De Beer 45). The critics argue that in cases in which “the perpetrators are identified by name, ‘othering’ or justifying discourses are used” in order to distance oneself from the perpetrator while trying to understand his actions (44). The concept of the ‘racialised other’ emerges. The clear distinction between the non-native white population and the black native majority still remains in post-apartheid South Africa. The novels both underline and challenge this kind of stereotypical othering. On the one hand, the perpetrators are recognised as “bloodthirsty monsters who committed senseless deeds for no good reason” (Foster, Haupt and De Beer 44). On the other hand, the mothers decode the violence of their sons as justified or simply necessary (3.1.2).

During the TRC’s proceedings, a lot of perpetrators remained unknown because of the Commission’s limited definition. However, sometimes those who were unidentified were “given a social identity. For instance, a label such as the ‘enemy of the people’[...]. Representations, in short, objectify through a process of reification” (Foster, Haupt, De Beer 28). The critics focus on Anderson’s (1983) saying ‘imagined communities’ (chapter 2) in relation to the construction of unified nations: “People can be motivated to kill in defence of this objectified ‘entity’: a nation” (29). This resonates with the perpetrator-sons: both were part of a liberation movement which fought for the black South African rights during the freedom struggle. Mxolisi was part of a student organisation. He was involved in boycotts and joined “Operation Barcelona, a campaign [...] in support of their teachers who are on strike. Students were urged to stay away from school, to burn cars and to drive reactionary elements out of the townships” (Magona 10). Mxolisi was thus motivated to kill because of this objectified notion of the freedom struggle that would lead to the natives’ social and political independence. Mandela’s wish for a unified nation would come true. Remarkably, Joseph claims that his act was not commissioned by a political movement: “these days I’m operating alone” (Boehmer 29). However, through Dora’s reflections, the reader learns that Joseph participated in actions of political liberation groups. Joseph even acknowledges this during his trial: “I was part of the successful operation some years back at the post office out at Elmtree [...] The land mine explosion at midnight, I was involved in that operation” (Boehmer 26).

Later on, he also agrees with the prosecutor's statement that the "Movement [liberation organisation] was directed against the repressive machinery of [the] state" (Boehmer 28).

Additionally, perpetrators are often represented as "evil and demonic" (Foster, Haupt and De Beer 49). The OED (2009) uses the term 'evil' to define the actions of a perpetrator. The critics also claim that they are depicted as "violent, cruel and brutal, to the point of not being human" (50). This, for example becomes specifically clear when the label of 'monster' or 'animal' is used in narratives surrounding depictions of perpetrators (Foster, Haupt, and De Beer 51). Mandisa realises that the people in her township glossed over the actions of their youth with regard to the school protests: "Just as we kept on calling, insisted on calling, the people who did the necklacing 'children' 'students' 'comrades', we called a barbaric act the necklace, protecting our ears from a reality too gruesome to hear; clothing satanic deeds with innocent apparel" (Magona 77). After Mxolisi's involvement in Amy's murder, the people of Guguletu direct their labelling towards the mother of the perpetrator, calling her "Mother of the beast. Mother of the serpent. [...] Satan's mother" (Magona 115). These references illustrate the depiction of the perpetrator as a demonic creature without human characteristics: "With impunity they broke with old tradition and crossed the boundary between that which separates human beings from beasts. Humaneness, ubuntu, took flight" (Magona 76). Dora's son similarly faces such labelling during his trial. For example, Joseph is referred to as a "[m]adman" (Boehmer 35).

In the TRC's discourse the perpetrator-sons "remain primitive, violent 'others'" and the narratives surrounding the popular black resistance desensitised, dehistoricised and decontextualised (Foster, Haupt, and De Beer 34). The critics even go as far as claiming that this implies "that the perpetrators are black" because of the fact that they are not given a definite 'face' (34). The perpetrators in both novels are indeed black men. However, by singling out one member of this 'faceless' group, the authors give a face to the perpetrator. Mandisa narrates heartfelt recollections of her son Mxolisi. Through Dora's exploration of her familial legacy, the reader gets an insight into Joseph's life.

### **3.1.2 Mother Representations of Perpetrators**

The authors portray Mxolisi and Joseph as 'identified' perpetrators. The mothers go beyond the stereotypical social depiction of the perpetrators. They stress that they do not agree with what their sons have done. However, in light of the systematic white-on-black violence, the mothers offer an insight into the lives of their sons and the circumstances that preceded their

actions. They highlight that their sons are essentially good at heart, but are transformed into murderers because of the continuous oppression of the black population during South African history.

Importantly, in both novels the mothers do not agree with the actions of their sons. Mandisa disapproves of what her son has done. After she has acknowledged that she was not surprised that Mxolisi killed Amy, she exclaims: “That is not to say I was pleased. It is not right to kill” (Magona 1). Moreover, Mandisa even realises that her son had “[n]o sense at all in that big head [...] hasn’t he learnt anything at all? Did he not know they would crucify him for killing a white person?” (Magona 3). At the end of Magona’s novel, Mandisa meets her son and cries out to him: “Oh, you fool [...] Don’t you see what you have done?” (Magona 197). Dora also acknowledges that Joseph’s bombing was wrong. More specifically, when Anthea wants to make arrangements for a meeting, she quickly asks Dora: “Isn’t it terrible, this thing that your son’s done?” (Boehmer 36). Dora gives an ambiguous answer: “It’s wrong, it’s not wrong” (Boehmer 36). On the one hand, she disapproves of the bombing because it killed people, but on the other hand she understands why her son has committed the crime. She tells the story of her grandmother in order to explore the circumstances that preceded Joseph’s actions and consequently triggered his crime.

Magona explores the notion of ‘racial othering’ and describes in detail the events that led up to Amy’s murder. Mandisa refers to the slogan ‘One Settler, One Bullet’, used during the toyi-toying in the streets of Guguletu. White people are called ‘dogs’ or ‘mlungu’, meanwhile the white government thought “[t]here were just too many Natives” (Magona 30). Furthermore, at the very beginning of the novel, Mandisa describes the different morning rituals of the white American student in contrast with the customary chores her black family performs. Amy washes herself in a “big, white bathtub” and afterwards wraps a “big fluffy towel” around her (Magona 5). Meanwhile Mandisa narrates that her “boys sleep in the tin shack, the *hokkie*” and has to insist that her sons should get up ‘before the water I’ve heated for you gets cold’ (Magona 6-7). These descriptions illustrate the apparent differences in luxury and highlight the concept of ‘racial othering’. Boehmer challenges the idea of the ‘racialised other’ by the repetitive use of skin imagery that surfaces during Anthea’s and Dora’s conversations. At first, Dora seems to accept the labelling of ‘othering’ when she first meets Anthea: “My sorrow is not your sorrow. Justice in this country has always been white justice. [...] He’s [Joseph] paying the price for being black in this system” (Boehmer 68). Dora differentiates the sorrow of herself and her son as distinct from the journalist’s white

grief. Anthea also reflects on Dora's skin colour: "Before, of course, she'd have tried to see Dora free of race [...]. She'd have worked to strip away her colour, see her as some kind of inner self or core person. But because of the bomb – the black bomber versus his white victims – this has become impossible" (Boehmer 69). Although Anthea at first perceives this task as unimaginable, she is nevertheless able to confront the concept of 'race' and 'othering' by looking beyond Dora's skin colour and help the mother with addressing her family history.

Foster, Haupt, and De Beer claim that perpetrators are frequently "portrayed as essentially good people" (46). Noteworthy, the mothers challenge the 'othering' and the depiction of their sons as monsters by representing them as essentially kind persons. Mandisa states that: "I am not saying my child shouldn't be punished for his sin. But I am a mother, with a mother's heart" (Magona 4 ). She disapproves of his actions but does not reject him. When Mandisa wakes up at night, she worries about Mxolisi's whereabouts and contemplates her son's attitude: "But Mxolisi is not a bad boy. [...] Just a young person taken up with this business of politics" (Magona 80). A specific example of Mxolisi's virtue is given when his mother narrates the story of how her son rescued a girl from being raped. Mandisa remembers that "[t]o everyone, he was a hero" and people told her that she should be proud of her decent son, a boy "with a good heart" (Magona 162). Dora is similarly convinced of her son's goodness. She recollects his childhood: when he was little, Joseph was a "clever boy", magically fixing broken light bulbs (Boehmer 34). At Christmas, he pretends not to have bought his mother a present, however surprising her later on with the "biggest box of chocolates" (Boehmer 34). Dora also claims that the act of her son "had no personal motive" (Boehmer 66). Both mothers offer warm memories that demonstrate genuine and heartfelt pictures of the good that is essentially in the heart of their sons.

Finally, both mothers contextualise the crimes of their sons in order to offer some sense of understanding. They address their familial history and describe the post-apartheid transitional context as one that is still harboured by apartheid's discriminative features. Dora acknowledges that what her son has done was wrong, but she also highlights that her son's actions were branded by apartheid's legacy and its atrocities: "He believes the race war here isn't won yet [...] Black people have died and still die every day in this country for demanding no more than what the whites have" (Boehmer 66). She did not reject him: "He has been so brave, he has come straight out and said, I'm a soldier, I did it. She respects how he has always felt his people's trouble" (Boehmer 34). Dora contextualises the bombing of her son by saying that "Joseph stands with all oppressed people in brotherhood", referring

to the hardships the black majority endured before, during and after apartheid (Boehmer 87). Similarly, Mandisa concludes that her son was “only an agent, executing the long-simmering dark desires of his race” (Magona 210). She narrates and remembers her own childhood and that of Mxolisi’s, she contextualises his actions as a result of the apartheid state that inevitably gave birth to such violence. She acknowledges the crime of her son as “[t]he enactment of the deep, dark, private yearnings of a subjugated race” (Magona 210). Mandisa similarly cannot reject her son: “Never any bad feeling towards him” (Magona 36).

### **3.1.3 Self-Representations of Perpetrators**

Foster, Haupt, and De Beer declare that “[t]he liberation movement members maintain that they were fighting a just war against a dehumanising evil system, and should therefore not be considered to be perpetrators” (43). Mxolisi and Joseph describe their actions as those which are not committed by a perpetrator. However, there is a difference between the sons’ self-representations. Mxolisi does not acknowledge that he was responsible for Amy’s death. When his mother meets her son a day after the incident, he explains to her that he “was not the only one there” (Magona 197). He adds that he “was just one of a hundred people who threw stones at her car” (Magona 195). When his mother asks him why he did it, he repeatedly says that he did not kill Amy: “I didn’t do it, Mama. I swear, I didn’t do it” (Magona 196). Mxolisi denies his direct involvement. However, he does regret what has happened: “Great, heart-wrenching sobs tearing at his guts” (Magona 196). By contrast, Joseph proudly acknowledges his crime. Moreover, he suggests that this act was not commissioned by a liberation movement. He claims to have acted alone. He compares himself to Mandela: “Like Mandela, I want to give my own speech in self-defence. I am a soldier, a prisoner of war’ (Boehmer 79). Like Mxolisi, Joseph shows remorse for his crime. He openly declares he feels sorry for the grief he has caused: “I did not flee the country because I want just to tell everyone, I am sorry I placed that bomb” (Boehmer 80).

Moreover, the sons were members of student organisations who participated in the black freedom struggle. Mxolisi, as an individual disappeared within the movement: “The group opens up and swallows him. In their midst, he is lost. You couldn’t tell him from the others now”, a group where “[...] the common purpose that binds the group together, cements the members into one cohesive whole” (Magona 11). Joseph was also a part of a liberation organisation and he received a military training in order to commit to the freedom struggle: “I will not betray my military training. When I became a soldier I was not any more a kaffir,

a half-breed, a thing” (Boehmer 80). Dora adds to his portrayal that “[h]e was a soldier, a prisoner of war, if only they [court, media, victims] could see it” (Boehmer 29). Within the movement, Joseph feels he is no longer the ‘other’, he experiences that he was a valuable part of the liberation process. Both sons feel it is their duty to participate in the freedom struggle.

### **3.2 Perpetrators and Trauma**

#### **3.2.1 Trauma and the TRC**

The TRC wanted “to provide the space within which victims could share the story of their trauma with the nation” (TRC Report Volume 1: 2). One of the Commission’s objectives was to lead “the crucial process of attempting to heal a traumatised and deeply divided people” (TRC Report Volume 1:19). Moreover, many testifiers had “to risk opening wounds that were perhaps in the process of healing, by sharing the often traumatic experiences of themselves or their loved ones as victims of gross violations of human rights” (TRC Report Volume 1: 20). In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth defines trauma as “a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind” (3). She states that “trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature - the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance - returns to haunt the survivor later on” (4). More specifically, negative aspects accompany trauma, such as repetitive experiences of the traumatic event. Through flashbacks, Mandisa reflects on the hardships of her childhood and the early years of her adulthood. Dora’s recollections of her family’s history serve as flashbacks of the past. They highlight Dollie’s struggles and the violations during the Boer Wars.

Furthermore, in his article “Trauma, Absence, Loss” (1999), trauma theorist Dominick LaCapra highlights the concept of ‘working through’ as an important element of the healing process concerning traumatic experiences: “Through memory-work, especially the socially engaged memory-work involved in working-through, one is able to distinguish between past and present” (713). The notion of ‘working through’ corresponds with the primary considerations of the TRC’s hearings. Moreover, in his book *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (2013), Prof. Dr. Stef Craps links LaCapra’s process of ‘working through’ to the TRC’s mechanisms. Craps quotes LaCapra’s observation that the Commission “was in its own way a trauma recovery cent[re]” (51). Craps explains that: “[t]he TRC attempted to uncover the truth about the gross human rights violations committed during apartheid and to promote national unity and reconciliation through a collective process of

working through the past” (Craps 44). Boehmer’s and Magona’s novels exemplify alternative literary responses to the TRC’s process of healing trauma.

### 3.2.2 The Trope of Perpetrator Trauma

In her 2013 article “Exploring the Fictions of Perpetrator Suffering”, Sue Vice claims that trauma is not a moral concept but rather a diagnostic feature (17). This signifies that the person’s psychological inner world is neglected in favour of behavioural descriptions. Based on their actions, perpetrators are described as ‘monsters’, ‘villains’, ‘evil’, ‘terrorists’, and ‘criminals’. Magona and Boehmer go beyond these references occurring in the TRC’s discourse. They offer a representation of the perpetrator “suggesting variously a suppressed moral or emotional awareness” (Vice 17). This “psychological burden” relates to the presence of sensitivity. The opposition between “face-to-face killings” and “impersonal methods of killing” highlights the significance of the killing’s nature (Vice 18-19). Both sons used impersonal methods of killing. On the one hand, Joseph’s decision to place a bomb serves as a clear illustration. He did not directly kill these white people in a face-to-face context. He did not plan to kill these particular victims. On the other hand, Mxolisi’s participation in Amy’s murder is rather dubious. More ‘personal methods’ of killing were used, such as stabbing her with a knife. Nevertheless, Mxolisi himself claims it was a group act.

Additionally, the authors explore the son’s own experiences with a traumatic event. This might have triggered their current actions of violence. Mxolisi witnessed the death of his two friends who were shot by the police. As a result, he became temporarily mute. Joseph was horrified when he learned about the death of children in a crèche due to operations by the government to “preserve law and order” (Boehmer 29). Joseph saw a photo of a wounded baby in a newspaper: “That photo especially derailed me. That photo said to me, we’re still at war” (Boehmer 29). These incidents correspond with apartheid’s systematic violence which traumatised the natives (3.3.).

Furthermore, Alan Gibbs’ *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives* (2014) offers an explanation of the notion ‘trauma kitsch’ that can be linked to the trope of trauma in both narratives. It figures as a recurrent theme in the TRC’s discourse. Gibbs explains Anne Rothe’s ‘trauma kitsch’ as the omission of “‘the socio-economic contexts of oppression, victimization, and violence by representing these quintessentially political subjects as individual tragedies,’ and as a result encouraging a ‘teary-eyed sentimentality’ which ‘covertly reinforces the power structures that have created the represented injustices’” (22).

Both novels subvert the omission of the continuous oppression of the black population. The authors highlight the systematic and structural white-on-black violence. The mothers take into account the entire South African history in order to explain the crimes of their sons. The following part examines the significance of the systematic violence with regard to the representation of the perpetrators.

### **3.3 The Banality of Evil and Victimhood**

#### **3.3.1 Systematic White-on-Black Violence**

The notion of ‘the banality of evil’ derives from Hannah Arendt’s work *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) in which she explores the actions of the Nazi Adolf Eichmann. This part of the dissertation builds on Arendt’s ‘banality of evil’ with regard to the systematic persecution and the annihilation of the Jews as enemies of the Third Reich during the Second World War. It draws a parallel with the structural oppression of the black population during South African history. The ‘banality of evil thesis’ is not limited to references of the Holocaust atrocities. It can also be relevant in a study of the apartheid system. More specifically, Foster, Haupt, and De Beer focus on the Polish philosopher Zygmunt Bauman’s (1989) perceptions of modernity as *the* factor that bred the horrible violence. This signifies that apartheid could be seen as a civilisation project which was a part of the country’s road towards modernisation. This “involved a shift in which ‘violence work’ has become sequestered, taken out of sight, enclosed and segregated into particular units”, for instance in police work (Foster, Haupt and De Beer 55). Violence became an integral part of everyday life. It was a prominent aspect and a necessary attribute during for example the forced removals. The apartheid system enforced the distinction between black and white communities and applied legal structures for its social, political, and educational segregation. Foster, Haupt, and De Beer describe Bauman’s idea that “mass atrocity is the outcome when there is a connection between two sets of factors: (i) an ideologically obsessed power elite” i.e. the white apartheid minority system; “and (ii) the bureaucratic and technological facilities, including specialised functional units, of the rational modern nation state”, i.e. the legalisation of apartheid (56). Separately, the two factors are commonplace. However, in unusual occasions, the two factors collide and result in human rights violations. More specifically, during apartheid, the black majority and white minority were “ordinary people, compartmentalised in a [...] division of labour, a chain of orders, just doing their duty in proper fashion” (Foster, Haupt and De Beer 56).

Boehmer and Magona highlight the structural systematic white-on-black violence during the period of colonialism, apartheid, and South Africa's transition. When Mandisa remembers the circumstances that precede the actions of her son, she argues that "[yes], till then, it had been an ordinary day – ordinary, in the context of our lives that have become quite complex and far from ordinary" (Magona 73). Anthea writes down the following remark in her notebook when she learns about Dora and Joseph: "*When shock cracked open an ordinary day*" (Boehmer 51). Later on she evaluates the bombing incident: "This bomb blast on what was going to be an ordinary day, the random deaths, the violent transformation of people's lives, and at a time of real change" (Boehmer 67). Furthermore, the mothers realise that it is the continuous white-on-black violence that has triggered the crimes of their sons. Dora reflects: "Wouldn't it have to be something huge that would drive a son of hers to take lives? A huge, life-long wrong?" (Boehmer 60). Mandisa also highlights that the actions of her son were an "enactment of the deep, dark, private yearnings of a subjugated race" (Magona 210). The continuous oppression of the black population provoked Mxolisi's crime.

### **3.3.2 Perpetrators as Victims**

The grey area of perpetrators as victims has been largely discussed, for example in Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved* (1989). Foster, Haupt, and De Beer study the representation of perpetrators as victims in the TRC's discourse and fiction (47). LaCapra even suggests that "one encounters the dubious ideas that everyone (including perpetrators and collaborators) is a victim, that all history is trauma" (64). Vice has quoted Eva Hoffman who claims that "perpetrators cannot suffer from trauma but should be seen instead in the context of the tragic" (qtd. in Vice 22). The notion of a moral awareness or 'strain', used by perpetrators themselves, expresses the "danger of traumatic symptoms and the psychological necessity on the executioners' part of seeing themselves as victims" (Vice 20). Through Mxolisi's and Joseph's depictions as perpetrators, the authors explore the colonial period, patriarchy, and apartheid as the ineradicable history that bred such acts of violence. Consequently, both sons can be seen as victims of the South African social and political mechanisms. Importantly, this idea of perpetrators as victims does not extend to all perpetrators of violence under apartheid, it especially does not include those who served the white oppressive government. The novels emphasise the 'ordinariness' of the oppressive system and the structural discrimination which triggered the actions of the perpetrator-sons. The mothers consider their sons' crimes within a larger unequal social, political, and historical context. The sons are transformed into murderers "by particular practices in their routine work

environments” because they were members of liberation groups who gave up passive resistance and violently fought for their freedom (Foster, Haupt and De Beer 56).

Boehmer does not explicitly refer to Joseph as a victim. However through Dora’s recollections, it becomes painstakingly clear that her family suffered from the white oppression during the colonial and apartheid period. Dora’s testimony includes Joseph’s clarification for his actions. It leads to the understanding of the fact that the natives were victims of apartheid: “for generations, we blacks and tyrannised cannot make things happen. [...] The situation happens to us. I tried to help make things happen. The deaths caused were needless but not the action itself. [...] Until all race suffering is lifted, we have to go on resisting the system with every day that goes” (Boehmer 119). Dora reflects on the actions of her son and recognised that the victims of his bombing were all white. However, she elaborates: “usually the victims are black” (Boehmer 60). She refers to black people who are normally the victims of the oppressive apartheid system and the structural systematic white-on-black violence. Mandisa similarly explores the continuous effects that apartheid had on her family through her childhood memories. In her preface, Magona describes the influence of the country’s history on the present violence: “And here I am back in the legacy of apartheid – a system repressive and brutal, that bred senseless inter- and intra-racial violence as well as other nefarious happenings” (Magona v). This introduces the following part about everyday black-on-black violence in the South African townships.

### **3.3.3 Black-on-Black Violence**

The establishment of an oppressive society full of social, political, and racial discrimination sparked the occurrence of black-on-black violence. Apart from the white oppression, other forms of violence in the townships occurred. Violent incidents not only took place during the apartheid era, but also especially during the transition period. Foster, Haupt, and De Beer explain the particular violence in the townships as follows: “South Africa’s brutal history extended to so-called ‘black-on-black’ violence, a euphemism for large-scale horizontal violence within black communities” (253). This specific violence resulted for example in conflicts between the ANC and other liberation organisations between 1990 and 1994, such as clashes with the SDU (Self Defence Units) and the IFP (Foster, Haupt and De Beer 253).

Although the plot of both novels revolves around black-on-white violence, important references of black-on-black violence are present. Specifically in *Mother to Mother*, Mandisa hints several times to the everyday violence committed by members of her own race in the

name of the so-called 'freedom struggle': "I had not known that it was our own people who stood in the way of the freedom we all said we desired" (Magona 77). Her lament explains to Amy's mother that she is not surprised that Mxolisi was involved in the murder of her daughter: "We live here, fight and kill each other. That is our business" (Magona 3). She declares that the township was "a violent place. [...] Every day – rape, robbery, armed assault and other, more subtle forms of violence" (Magona 44). Mandisa explains why these criminal activities committed by black people targeted black victims: "Now, they started stoning black people's cars. And burning black people's houses. We reasoned that those black people to whom such a thing happened deserved what they got [...] *Iimpimpi*, informers, we labelled the whole miserable lot" (Magona 75). Black people were called 'iimpimpi' when they provided information to members who worked together with the apartheid system, such as the Security Police. Members of liberation groups or student movements punished these iimpimpi because they "collaborated with the repressive apartheid government" (Magona 75).

The notion of black-on-black violence is a politically charged issue in South Africa. Who is responsible for the creation of this particular violence? The liberation movements and student organisations themselves, who cast passive resistance aside and committed criminal activities such as necklacing? Or was the white apartheid regime irrevocably responsible for the atrocities that occurred in the townships because of their oppressive legalised policies? In her article "'Black-on-Black': Race, Space and News of Africans and African Americans" (1994) American professor of African Cultural Studies Jo Ellen Fair summarises the discussion above very precisely: "'Black-on-black,' then, acts not so much as a racial category, identifying perpetrators and victims of crime, but as a cognitive map organising routes around and through past, contemporary and perhaps future social relations" (39). This means that 'black-on-black' not only indicates the racial identity of the perpetrators and their victims but it also highlights the violence and discrimination that occurred within the black communities. It refers to the inequality based on patriarchy within the black tribes. Perhaps this observation can be analysed further in future research with regard to South African truth and reconciliation fictions which deal with the representation of black perpetrators.

## Conclusion

This comprehensive analysis compared Boehmer's *Bloodlines* and Magona's *Mother to Mother* with the TRC's discourse. This dissertation unravelled the Commission's constraints and investigated the authors' literary responses to the TRC's mechanisms by exploring their approach to the South African social and political structures, the representation of motherhood, and the depiction of perpetrators. Inspired by real incidents, the novels reveal and capture South African history. They offer an insight into the past events that anticipated the perpetrator-sons' violent actions through their mothers' testimonies.

This dissertation built on existing criticisms levelled at the TRC. It moved forward from previous academic studies which explore both novels as literary responses to the mechanisms and results of the Commission. This dissertation compared Boehmer's and Magona's novel with the TRC's nationalistic discourse in order to implicate that these truth and reconciliation fictions set out to do what Brink calls the most important task of the 'imaginings of literature': both novels subvert, complicate, and exceed the TRC's enquiries in order to come to terms with the country's past and to face its future (Brink 30). This dissertation contributed to the ongoing research of both novels by exploring the texts as 'imaginings of literature'. It highlighted significant differences between the TRC's mechanisms and the objectives of fiction with regard to the achievement of truth and reconciliation. The Commission was intent on establishing the truth about apartheid's violations through a limited investigation of historical and political facts. By contrast, these fictions were able to reach beyond facts. Boehmer and Magona intent to re-imagine the *real* and entire historical and social truth.

The first chapter discussed the ending of apartheid and the establishment of the TRC. Although the Commission figured as a prominent element in the process towards a unified nation, it nevertheless included some remarkable flaws. The criticism levelled at the TRC put forward five constraints and two debates within the Commission. Especially the TRC's definition of apartheid as a 'crime against humanity' resulted in the observation of three limitations: the individualisation of the victims, the neglect of the bifurcated nature of apartheid, and the impunity for most perpetrators. Concerning the individualisation of the victims, it became clear that the TRC neglected a substantial amount of South African history. The Commission decontextualised and dehistoricised the events that took place. Moreover, it did not recognise the institutionalised injustice. The TRC did not stress the political system that treated natives differently from non-natives. It did not take into account the violation of

subsistence rights and neglected the majority of apartheid's victims. The TRC used apartheid's legislation as a dividing line between the Commission's interpretation of what was acknowledged as legal and what was considered as illegal. The TRC furthered the polarisation of the nation and apartheid's bifurcated nature. It chose to only discuss violations perpetrated by the civil regime and not by the customary regime. The traditional tribalisation of the natives was one of the systems that kept apartheid intact. Finally, the TRC's unclear definition of victims enhanced its hazy representation of perpetrators and resulted in the impunity for most wrongdoers. The Commission only recognised individual victims of human rights violations and therefore neglected large communities of people who suffered under apartheid. As a result, it let a vast majority of perpetrators off the hook.

Chapter two explored the representation of motherhood in answer to the first research question: how do the mothers' narratives go beyond the TRC's constraints? The authors go beyond the Commission's limited investigations and thoroughly explore the country's history of colonisation, apartheid, and modernisation. Set during the transition period, both plots exhibit an approach to bearing witness and giving testimony outside the structures of the Commission. The authors challenge the TRC's nationalistic discourse and its representation of women as female bodies that produce national unity. The sons' violent actions disturb the period of transition and the recent celebration of Mandela's freedom. The mothers' fragmented bodies symbolise the collapse of the nationalistic discourse. The products of their wombs do not introduce national unity. Furthermore, the authors challenge the 'gendered subjectivity' in the TRC's discourse. The mothers are explicitly portrayed as subordinate mother-victims. Nevertheless, the authors destabilise this position by depicting their characters as active performers of motherhood. By giving the mothers a voice and thus locating them in a position of agency, both lay bare the contradictions of the mother-victim depiction. The authors subvert the position of mother-witness and reimagine the mothers in their roles as domestic servants and as wives. More specifically, the novels challenge the TRC's representation of women as secondary victims. The mothers subvert the position of mother-witness and mother-servant. Their portrayal goes beyond the depiction of suffering women, challenging the Christian imagery of the Mater Dolorosa. Mandisa is represented as the mother of Satan, instead of the Virgin Mary. Dora's performance destabilises the weeping Mater Dolorosa figure. Moreover, the TRC failed to address the loss of status and the everyday hardships of women. This chapter also discussed the loss of identity through the changing of the mothers' names as domestic servants. Furthermore, the authors stress the

emotional effects this employment had on the upbringing of their children. The mothers had to take care of white children and could not nurture their own sons. Especially Magona draws on her own experiences to illustrate the disruption of family life. A lot of Mandisa's experiences can be paralleled to the incidents the author describes in her memoir.

Moreover, the plots go beyond the narrow timeframe of the TRC's investigations. Both authors explore the broader history of systematic violence. The second chapter examined the link between the Xhosa Cattle Killing and Mxolisi's perpetration of Amy's murder. Nongqawuse and Mxolisi are young adults who were involved in movements that required sacrifices in order to find liberation from the white oppression. Boehmer explores the parallel between Dollie's story set during the Anglo-Boer Wars and Joseph's crime. Not only the human rights violations during apartheid, but also the hardships during the colonial period affected the lives of black women. Dollie was a domestic servant who worked for a white family. This link also explains the Irish blood that runs through Joseph's veins because his grandfather was an Irish freedom fighter. Magona's references to the forced removals demonstrate the TRC's failure to examine the violation of subsistence rights. The forced removals fragmented well-knit communities and predominantly affected family life.

Furthermore, the TRC neglected women who were subordinated by a set of racial laws *and* customary rules. By contrast, Boehmer and Magona do address the continuous discrimination of women by the customary regime through an exploration of the patriarchal system. This dissertation examined the double colonisation of the mother figure and the characters' wifhood performances. Specifically Magona investigates the lives of women who had to deal with gender inequality due to the patriarchal values which dominated the black tribes.

Ultimately, both novels evoke intergenerational transnational connections through the portrayal of the mothers, their sons, and their relationship with the white victims. They explore the familial history of the mothers and introduce parallels with previous generations. The narratives also literally transcend the national borders towards Ireland and the USA. Moreover, the novels evoke the possibility to overcome a breach between people of different racial and cultural backgrounds. Boehmer explores the newfound friendship between Dora and Anthea. Magona examines Mandisa's attempt to reach out to Linda Biehl. In doing so, both authors focus on individual forgiveness and understanding. Furthermore, Boehmer's novel provokes a cross-racial connection between the black mother and a white relative of the victim. Anthea even reaches out to Joseph. By contrast, Magona strays away from this cross-

racial connection and consequently does not provoke a bridge-building dialogue between the opposing sides of the apartheid spectrum. The mother of the perpetrator addresses the white *American* mother of the victim.

In the final chapter, a discussion of the representation of the perpetrator unravelled the TRC's limited definition of perpetrators in answer to the second research question: how do the authors regard the sons' actions in the light of the criticism levelled at the Commission? The novels explore apartheid as a system that affected both victims and perpetrators in the sense that Mxolisi and Joseph are shown to have been victims of a brutal oppressive system that bred violent atrocities. Importantly, not all perpetrators are victims, especially members of the white apartheid government who perpetrated human rights violations. Moreover, the mothers' reminiscences and the sons' self-depiction transcend the social representation of the perpetrators as depicted in the TRC's discourse. The authors single out one member of the unidentified mob and subvert unclear identifications. They give a face to the previously unknown perpetrator through a well-considered exploration of the social and historical context in order to offer understanding. The mothers challenge the stereotypical representations of their perpetrator-sons and present their children as essentially good and kind people. Both mothers go beyond descriptions of racial inequality. They look further than the obvious differences in skin colour. The mothers subvert the depiction of their perpetrator-sons as monsters and the 'other'. Interestingly, the sons do not represent themselves as perpetrators. Being members of liberation movements and student organisations, they do not see themselves as men who perpetrated violent crimes. They believe that their actions were necessary to support the freedom struggle. Joseph differs from Mxolisi in that he proudly acknowledges his crime. Mxolisi stresses that he did not murder Amy alone.

Furthermore, the TRC dealt with the collective process of working through traumas of the past. The Commission sensationalised the hardships of the oppressed people. It underlined the tearful suffering of apartheid's victims. The novels challenge the trope of trauma through the emotional awareness of both perpetrators. The sons regret their actions. Mxolisi is grief-stricken at the end of the novel. Joseph publically declares he feels sorry for the grief he has caused. The impersonal nature of the killings illustrates the sons' psychological burden with regard to their actions.

Moreover, a link with Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* reveals the systematic, structural white-on-black violence. Both novels explore the

apartheid regime as an integral part of South Africa's modernisation that harboured segregation and discrimination. The portrayals of Mxolisi and Joseph illustrate that the sons are victims of this continuous white-on-black violence. The novels investigate the perpetrators as victims of the changing oppressive systems that prevailed during South Africa's past and present. The TRC failed to address the structural white-on-black violence. The recollections of both mothers demonstrate the continuous white oppression of the black population.

Finally, this dissertation discussed the phenomenon of black-on-black violence. The TRC neglected to address the black-on-black violence that occurred in the townships during the transition period. This dissertation commenced a discussion about the question concerning who is responsible for the perpetration of this kind of violence within the black communities. Specifically Magona's novel indicates the abnormality of the death of a white girl in the black township Guguletu.

In conclusion, rather than merely reproducing historical and political facts concerning the apartheid period, the novels re-imagine the broader historical and social framework that preceded the actions of the perpetrators in order to offer reconciliation. The narratives highlight an oppressive legal system which influenced the social, educational, and political development of the black population. They explore the birth of non-violent resistance transforming into a violent freedom struggle.

Possible avenues for future research can look into literary approaches which address Chile's National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, an institution that was founded in the TRC's image. Furthermore, the 'banality of evil' thesis is not limited to the Holocaust atrocities, but it can also be relevant in a study of the apartheid system. Further research can look more into Arendt's report in relation to the perpetrator representations in South African truth and reconciliation fictions and the TRC's discourse.



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