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Liberalism, Trauma, and Identity in South African Novels
by Nadine Gordimer and André Brink“

verfasst von / submitted by

Anna Lichtenegger

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
1. Introduction	2
2. Historical Context: South African Apartheid	3
3. Liberalism.....	24
3.1 Anti-Apartheid Movements.....	27
3.2 White Liberalism and Dissidence	30
4. Identity in South Africa.....	40
4.1. Individual and Collective Identity	40
4.2. National Identity.....	46
5. Identity and Trauma	47
6. Liberalism & Identity in South African Novels	54
6.1 The Authors.....	54
6.2 A Dry White Season by André Brink.....	57
6.2.1 Plot & Context.....	57
6.2.2 The Portrayal of Liberalism	59
6.2.3 Inter-racial Relationships	64
6.2.4 Liberalism & Identity	66
6.2.5 Possibilities, Consequences and Limits of White Liberalism	67
6.3 An Act of Terror by André Brink.....	75
6.3.1 Plot & Context.....	75
6.3.2 The Portrayal of Liberalism	76
6.3.3 Inter-racial Relationships	84
6.3.4 Liberalism & Identity	86
6.3.5 Possibilities, Consequences and Limits of White Liberalism	90
6.4 The Late Bourgeoise World by Nadine Gordimer	95

6.4.1 Plot & Context.....	95
6.4.2 The Portrayal of Liberalism	96
6.4.3 Inter-racial Relationships	102
6.4.4 Liberalism & Identity	104
6.4.5 Possibilities, Consequences and Limits of White Liberalism	106
6.5 Burger’s Daughter by Nadine Gordimer	111
6.5.1 Plot & Context.....	111
6.5.2 The Portrayal of Liberalism	113
6.5.3 Inter-racial Relationships	118
6.5.4 Liberalism & Identity	120
6.5.5 Possibilities, Consequences and Limits of White Liberalism	125
7. Conclusion.....	131
References	134
List of Figures & Tables.....	138
Index.....	139
Declaration of Authorship.....	141
Abstract	142

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1. Introduction

From 1948 to 1994 South Africa was a split nation. Demanding the separate development of the four racial groups, white, black, coloured, and Indian, and discriminating all non-whites, Apartheid and the crimes committed in the name of its racist ideology left the country deeply traumatized and in crisis (South African History Online; Eagle & Kaminer). While a strong resistance movement developed already in the early years of apartheid, white dissidents were rare and often isolated. As the majority of the hegemonic white group supported South Africa's racist National Party (NP) government (Zalusky 83), several white dissidents felt excluded from their social group(s) due to their liberal attitude. The term 'liberalism' itself denotes the fight for the global values of freedom of choice, human dignity, and equality of the law (MacDonald 25); liberals thus strived for the right of all individuals to realise their liberty, aims, and preference without limiting the liberty of their fellow human beings. Apartheid, however, contradicts this principle, as it forces the scarification of "the good of some to the greater good of others" (Hudson 95). Despite white liberals' high aspirations, their ideology was at times considered problematic by both whites and non-whites due to various reasons (cf. Woods 184-185, MacDonald 24-25, Lazerson 4). Their resulting outsider position in society (Louw-Potgieter 32-33) raises several interesting questions with regard to their feeling of belonging, identity (or identities), as well as to the psychological and sociological effects of their activities. Here, literature provides one of the few possibilities to gain access to the world of white liberals (F. Welsh 472-473), who frequently risked their life supporting the freedom struggle of others.

Therefore, the aim of this diploma thesis is to answer the following research questions by analysing four selected novels by André Brink and Nadine Gordimer:

- How are the experiences of white liberals presented in the novels?
- What possibilities and consequences of political opposition by Afrikaners are represented?
- Where are the limits of the character's liberalism?
- How is the identity of the liberals, as well as their close relations affected by their liberalism?
- What image of inter-racial relationships is provided?
- In how far is liberalism presented as traumatizing (for liberals and/or close friends, family, etc.)?

In order to provide answers to these questions, first, the historical context of South African apartheid will be reviewed. Afterwards, an overview of South African anti-apartheid movements shall be given, with particular focus on the aims, movements, and limits of white liberalism. The next section explores identity and identity formation in the context of South

Africa with regard to individual, collective, and national identity. Then, identity will be linked to trauma, and its effects on individuals and the South African nation will be discussed. The final section comprises the literary analysis of the following novels:

- André Brink *A Dry White Season* (1979)
- André Brink *An Act of Terror* (1991)
- Nadine Gordimer *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966)
- Nadine Gordimer *Burger's Daughter* (1979)

This final section will include information on the authors, as well as an analysis of the white main characters, their liberal attitude and actions, their suffering, problems, as well as of the limits of their liberal behaviour. For each novel, first, a short plot summary and information on its historical context will be given. Afterwards, it will be shown how liberalism is portrayed in the respective novel. As the nature of inter-racial relationships might be used to determine the nature of the main characters' liberalism, the next section will be dedicated to this issue. Further, the identity-changing effects of white dissidence shall be explored, before the potentials, limits, and problems of white liberalism are evaluated.

It will be shown that liberalism is presented as an (almost) traumatising, dangerous and even controversial pursuit, which raises personal questions of identity; Afrikaner dissidents are represented as being 'in-between', being neither part of Afrikaner nor black African society. Understanding these problematic notions of dissidence of members of the hegemonic group shall contribute to develop greater awareness of the consequences of political opposition on questions of identity, in the context of Apartheid and in general. Opposing one's own group in order to fight for one's beliefs constitutes an extreme and, in some cases, even traumatic experience, which may not only be encountered in South Africa but also in other regions of the world. By gaining insights into the world of white liberals in South Africa we might be able to develop a better understanding of dissidence in present times.

2. Historical Context: South African Apartheid

In order to gain a more profound understanding of the themes and settings of those South African novels that will be discussed in *section 6*, this chapter aims to provide a chronological overview of the history of apartheid, as well as a philosophical and historical analysis of the development of Afrikaner nationalism, the root of South African apartheid.

Opinions about the origins of apartheid ideology vary considerably among scholars. While some argue that white business owners favoured a system that would separate whites

from non-whites due to economic concerns or, in particular, in order to guarantee the use of Africans as a low-paid workforce for more profits, other scholars believe that also relatively poor white workers and farmers benefited economically from discriminating policies that protected whites from black competition (Clark & Worger 38). As the favour of these people was crucial for the successful implementation of segregated development, the latter argument seems highly plausible. Nevertheless, historians should not stop in the 20th century when tracing the tracks of apartheid. Noller, for instance, locates its origins in colonial times and colonialists' attitudes by arguing that, even in the early days of the British colony in South Africa, measures of racial segregation were implemented, which can be interpreted as an expression of a developing group identity of economically dominant white colonizers in the 17th century. According to Noller, these measures, combined with religious differences, social and economic white dominance, and ongoing conflicts with natives, might have resulted in the development of an exclusive Afrikaner group identity (Noller 68). Holiday certainly agrees with Noller when locating the development of Afrikaaners' feeling of isolation in times of first settlements and the subsequent conflicts with natives and the British (Holiday 79). According to Holiday, these incidents "excited feelings of estrangement from Europe in the breasts of not only Afrikaners, but also among many of the English settlers who had begun to arrive en masse in the 1820s" (Holiday 79). The following British annexation of the Cape in 1795 and the resultant 'Great Trek' by Dutch settlers in the 1830s furthered these feelings and strengthened a sense of isolation from Europe (Holiday 79). In these developments, Holiday locates an interesting contradiction of white South Africans' way of thinking: On the one hand, Afrikaners claimed African roots, which provided the basis for their claim of the land, but on the other hand, western culture was clearly favoured, with African culture being considered inferior to European traditions (Holiday 82). Beyond doubt, cutting the umbilical cord between Europe and South Africa influenced Afrikaner's group identity.

The Boer War against the British in 1899 further consolidated nationalist sentiments among Afrikaners and finally, in 1910, South Africa achieved independence from the British Empire (Holiday 80). Thus, Holiday and Noller certainly agree in defining Afrikaner nationalism, the ideological basis of apartheid, as an answer to British imperialism and liberal race policy, as poor Afrikaners' fear of losing their social position strengthened their group identity. The Afrikaner in-group was primarily defined via nation, or national heritage (their historical origin), while other decisive factors, such as ethnicity, race, language, religion, and culture, essentially but not always overlapped with nationality (Noller 71). On the other hand, nationhood was determined via birth, as it was clearly understood to concern a certain 'volk',

not residents of a defined territory (F. Welsh 417). Consequently, group membership was per definition determined via hereditary, biological characteristics (Noller 83), thus rendering it impossible for non-Afrikaners to acquire the necessary qualities to belong to the hegemonic group.

Noller understands nationalism to involve giving highest priority to the in-group, while understanding all out-groups as enemies of the self, especially if these groups appear to question or threaten the in-group's dominance (Noller 71). If we follow Noller's very general definition, Afrikaner nationalism can be understood as a means of cultural and racial resistance against British, Africans, Indians, and other non-Afrikaner groups. On a socio-economic level, for instance, it was widely feared that poor white (Afrikaner) workers would soon be surpassed by black competitors (Noller 73). As Posel pointedly states:

the apartheid project was an attempt to sustain white political supremacy in ways that simultaneously promoted the cause of white economic prosperity. Interventions to buttress the white racist regime, and the attendant political divisions and contestations, were therefore inseparable from efforts to sustain and regulate practices of capital accumulation and economic growth, along with the class interests and conflicts associated with those.

(Posel 321-322)

In 1946, for instance, blacks accounted for approximately 79% of South Africa's population, a majority that was to increase over the following decades (Posel 322). In this sense, the fact of overwhelming black majority represented the most dangerous out-group to Afrikaners. Thus, even if Apartheid laws deeply violated Africans' personal freedom, its basis, Afrikaner nationalism, should be considered a defensive, rather than an offensive ideology (Noller 72). This is illustrated by the approach nationalists adopted with regard to international criticism of apartheid: The United Nations, who had verbally attacked South African measures of segregation, were portrayed as a young, inexperienced organisation of nations with an inferiority complex, who were struggling with their own problems, or as F. Welsh puts it: "At any given time it was easy for South African government spokesmen to find examples of corruption, poverty, inefficiency and sheer horror elsewhere in the continent, by comparison with which the lot of South African blacks was idyllic" (F. Welsh 457).

Religious beliefs further intensified Afrikaners' exclusive group-identity. In the context of the probably most fundamental idea of Calvinism, predestination, Afrikaners can be understood to believe that their dominant social position was predestined by God himself (Noller 75), carrying the responsibility of "the white races to govern, a duty which English-speakers had betrayed by thrusting political rights on unprepared blacks" (F. Welsh 415). Although it might be argued that not all Afrikaners were consciously aware of this attitude, or

not even religious, historical events in the 19th and 20th century are certainly not sufficient to explain the particularity of later political developments in South Africa; socio-economic, ideological, and religious developments of earlier centuries certainly furthered the enhancement of Afrikaner nationalism. At the same time, as David Welsh states, “Afrikaner unity was not automatic, despite a substantial cultural commonality, a sense of racial identity, and, to some extent, a shared historical experience. Unity had to be forged, and it was no easy task” (D. Welsh 2). Albeit British imperialism and the Boer War certainly kindled first stirrings of a sense of Afrikaner nationalism, it was the way thinkers and politicians turned people’s fury through writings and speeches (e.g. Smuts in 1886) into concrete election results that allowed apartheid to flourish (D. Welsh 2).

Citizens of British descent, however, posed a problem for Afrikaner nationalists. As a ‘white’ nation would not only include Afrikaners but also Brits, different opinions evolved. Holiday maintains that white nationalists can be categorised into ‘Inclusivists’ and ‘Exclusivists’: While Exclusivists referred to forms of *Volkist* ideology, defining national origin as the determining factor and, thus, favouring the exclusion of all English speakers as ‘foreign elements’, the “Inclusivist trend is typified by Hertzog’s willingness to include in his concept of the nation all white South Africans, who accepted absolute equality between the English and Afrikaans languages and the principle of ‘South Africa first’” (Holiday 81). As outward characteristics, such as skin colour, posed insufficient differentiating criteria for English speakers and Afrikaners, language became one of the most essential defining features of Afrikaner national identity. Especially the translation of the Bible into Afrikaans first published in 1933 “had made a powerful impact” (F. Welsh 415). Hertzog, the founder of the National Party (in 1914), the political organization that was going to implement apartheid, was the first to turn Afrikaner nationalism into “a single nationwide organised political movement” by appealing to the common cultural group-identity of Afrikaners (Omer-Cooper 160). By reviving Afrikaner’s suffering in the past, the party successfully mobilized a broad constituent body mainly consisting of farmers, who hoped for a solution to their labour problem, as well as of “white-collar and professional people frustrated by the predominance of English and English-speakers at the higher levels of commerce, administration and the professions” (Omer-Cooper 160). As Omer-Cooper opines, at this point Herzog’s view certainly included both Afrikaners and English-speakers “who put South Africa first” (Omer-Cooper 160).

In the early 20th century, Afrikaner nationalism awakened another national movement: The Land Act passed in 1913 laid the foundation for the separation of African ethnic groups by disabling blacks to acquire land in most parts of South Africa. As a response, the African

National Congress was founded in 1912, whereby not only the colonizing minority, but also the colonized majority internalised a certain nationalist pathos (Holiday 80). Although these two national movements – Afrikaner and African – differed with regard to method, scale, and ideology, Dubow identifies several commonalities by stating that “both drew support from farming and religious organisations; both were shaped by their respective constituency’s varied experiences of political incorporation in, as well as marginalisation from, the centres of power; and both found outlets in journalism and in cultural and language movements“ (Dubow 29). African nationalism and anti-apartheid movements will be discussed in more detail in *section 5*.

During World War II South Africa’s economy grew considerably, drawing white, but most importantly large masses of black workers into towns, so that “[b]y the end of the war, Africans constituted over 50 per cent of the industrial workforce outside the mining industry for the first time in the country’s history” (Clark & Worger 39). Naturally, these fast changes caused several problems in South African cities and led to the development of serious concerns for white workers, especially as dissent and protest by African unions, political parties, and squatters increased (Clark & Worger 39 & 42). When the war ended, South Africa’s two major political parties representing white voters, the National Party (NP) and the United Party (UP), both “began to address what whites viewed as a growing crisis” (Clark & Worger 42).

The election on the 26th May 1948 resulted in a victory for the National Party under Dr. D.F. Malan, who formed a government in alliance with the ideologically similar Afrikaner Party. Together they achieved seventy-nine seats in parliament, while the United Party won sixty-five and the Labour Party only six (Ross 114). These election results reflected a shift in public political opinion on the national level, and especially among key groups of voters: Generally, the NP’s success can be attributed to a general revival of Afrikaner nationalism but, more specifically, to the vote of the maize farmers of the Transvaal, which was crucial for the party’s success. This population group, who had found it increasingly difficult to keep hold of their black labour “in face of competition from the burgeoning industry of the Witwatersrand”, had lost their trust in the previous government and was, thus, inclined to vote for the NP (Ross 115). According to Ross, “it was the swing of the rural Transvaal and a number of the urban seats, notably on the Witwatersrand and in Pretoria, which put the National Party into power” (Ross 115). Moreover, Giliomee and Mbenga suggest that a considerable number of Afrikaners might have “felt victimised by the way in which the wartime measures had been applied” (310). Their analysis of letter columns in the Afrikaans papers, *Die Burger* and *Die Transvaler*,

revealed the most common reasons for voters' decisions, including the belief "that the UP government had discriminated against Afrikaners in the previous eight years; next were food shortages and rationing and the treatment of ex-servicemen" (Giliomee & Mbenga 310). If the authors of these letters could already surmise the consequences of their votes is highly questionable.

Segregation had already emerged in political discourse in the previous century (Dubow 35) but it was the NP's election campaign which first used the slogan 'apartheid' to entitle a system of separateness and to create a term "which was to become the watchword of the government and a world-wide term of abuse among its opponents" (Ross 115). The National Party's apartheid programme aimed at establishing 'total apartheid' and separate development on a long term basis. Their major demands mainly targeted all non-white groups and included the following points:

With regard to Africans (Bantu):

- territorial segregation
- developing reserves as "true" home of Bantus
- stronger influx control in urban areas
- deportation of "superfluous" Bantus in rural areas or reserves
- stopping de-liberalisation
- abolishing African representatives in parliament
- local self-government in reserves under maintenance of chieftainship
- central controlling of job placement

With regard to Coloureds:

- abolition of common-roll electoral right in the Cape province
- extension of apartheid to include coloureds
- prohibition of mixed-marriages with whites

With regard to Indians:

- repeal of their parliamentary representation according to a law of 1946
- considering Indians as non-assimilable "foreign element"

With regard to all groups:

- Economic advantages and protection of white workers from non-white competition

(Noller 51)

Most of these demands were already addressed within the first years of the NP government and until the late 1960s almost all objectives had been reached on a formal level.

Omer-Cooper suggests 3 definable phases of South African apartheid between 1948 and 1984: The first phase, which he calls "classical or *baaskap* (white supremacy) apartheid, stretches from 1948 to the late 1950s and is characterised by the legislation of the NP's electoral programme" (Omer-Cooper 193). The doctrine of *baaskap*, or mastership, is essentially expressed through the following words of JG Strijdom: "In every sphere the European must be master, the European must retain the right to rule the country and to keep it a white man's

country.” (JG Strijdom 1948, cited in D. Welsh 24). The second phase, named “separate development”, begins with the decolonisation movement spreading across Africa and South Africa’s changing economy. It ends in 1973/74, when new developments, including changes in the country’s economy, African strike action, violent protests, and external affairs, such as the liberation of Mozambique and Angola caused considerable changes at the political level, marked the beginning of phase three: “multiracial co-option” (Omer-Cooper 193). Another relatively similar periodization of apartheid is provided by David Welsh, who distinguishes 3 phases (52):

- 1) 1948 – 1959: Entrenchment of NP power and extension of discrimination
- 2) 1959 – 1966: ‘Separate development’, a term indicating that a more positive version of apartheid was introduced as an answer to international criticism; ‘homelands’/bantustans were erected for self-government
- 3) 1966 – 1994: Increasing eroding of apartheid and decline of Afrikaner nationalism

In the first phase, most objectives listed above were transformed into legislative measures. While other forms of segregation had been existent before the NP’s rule, the most outstanding characteristic of South African apartheid “lies in the fact that racial segregation was anchored in law, i.e. racial laws” (Lichtenegger, *Living and Feeling Apart* 4). These laws were about to transform South African society in accordance with apartheid principles, while at the same time conforming to expectations of the white population in general and, in particular, of those sections of white voters from whom the party derived its main political support, including Afrikaner farmers, workers, and businessmen (Omer-Cooper 196).

The idea of race purity was fundamental to the ideology of apartheid. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that one of the earliest laws introduced by the NP government, the Population Registration Act of 1950, classified all citizens according to their race into whites, blacks, Indians, and coloureds. All South African citizens were registered, receiving ID-papers, on which their personal data and physical characteristics, including skin colour, were noted (see South African History Online). In borderline cases, people’s race had to be determined through special, ‘scientifically’ established measurements, so-called ‘classifications’ (Noller 52). Soon after, each ‘population group’ would be allocated a certain area and, in addition, schools and other facilities were about to be separated according to race (Giliomee & Mbenga 316). Although this registration was obligatory for all South Africans, regardless of their ethnicity, “it meant a considerable restriction of movement for coloured and black South Africans because at any time police officers could demand to be shown their ID-papers and, in addition, in combination with other acts, their personal freedom decreased considerably” (Lichtenegger,

Living and Feeling Apart 4). As Ross argues, however, the early criteria by which specific groups were demarcated and separated were not racist in the formal sense of the word: “There was of course an undertone of intense racism within apartheid, but in strict theory, the National Party ideologues always emphasised the importance of ethnicity, seeing the various nations of South Africa as God-created entities, on the model of their own self-image of Afrikanerdom. These had to be preserved in all their purity” (Ross 116). Despite this illusive focus on preservation of ethnicities, followers of NP ideology certainly perceived whites as the superior race, “obviously and self-evidently superior in their degree of ‘civilisation’, expressed in both cultural and bodily ways”, while black people were considered less advanced, with their physiological characteristics serving as supposed markers of cultural inferiority (Posel 333-334). Vice versa, skin colour, tight curly hair and similar physiological features were considered “evidence of the cultural and status hierarchies that informed the ways that the racialized body was read” (Posel 334).

Based on this classification, the separation of races was deepened through additional laws, including the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, passed in 1949, which banned marriages between whites and non-whites, and the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950, outlawing “carnal intercourse between a white person and one who was not white” (Giliomee & Mbenga 316). To prosecute offenders of these acts the police would penetrate people’s most private territories, using binoculars, tape recorders and cameras, entering bedrooms, and even instructing “surgeons to examine the genitals of suspects” (Giliomee & Mbenga 316). These measures had severe consequences, as whole families could be separated if relatives were assigned to different racial statuses (Ross 116).

As already indicated above, economic issues provided a crucial motivation for implementing segregating measures. In this respect, the National Party was divided with regard to interpretations of their prime principles of apartheid ideology: while some hoped to “reverse the process whereby South Africa had become an economically integrated country” by substituting black labour through increased mechanisation and the greater use of white labour, others, including farmers of the Transvaal supported the NP because they wanted to be able to rely on a black labour force that was disciplined and cheap (Ross 117). The laws introduced in the 1950s aimed to regulate and control this African labour force. The Bantu Builders Working Act (1951) introduced an economic racial barrier for Africans in the building sector, except for Bantu areas and African districts, where black bricklayers were needed (Noller 53). Moreover, with the Native Laws Amendment Act (Nr. 54/1952) an additional mechanism for regulating

the influx of black workers was established through labour bureaus with unregulated monopoly on job placement (Noller 53).

The living space of people of various ethnicities was defined via the Group Areas Act. In 1950, South Africa was split into separate districts, which were defined for particular racial groups. So-called 'homelands' were erected for all ethnic groups, except for Indians, coloureds, and whites, for whom no South African territory of origin could be determined (see *figure 1*). Through the Group Areas Act and the consequent resettlements 80% of the country were reserved exclusively for whites, coloureds and Indians, while the black majority was forced to live in the remaining areas covering only 20% of South African territory (F. Welsh 450). People living in other areas than those defined for their racial group were forced to leave their homes behind in order to resettle elsewhere (Noller 52). Many inhabitants were resettled in Bantustans, from where they had to commute to their places of employment – a journey which often involved a two or three hour bus trip:

People lived under the threat of being removed from where a family might have been living for several generations and dumped in their putative 'homeland' which they might never have visited, where they had little or no opportunity of earning a living and where, at least initially, they had little more than a tent in an insanitary settlement.

(Ross 136)

In some cases, forced resettlements and violence were needed to clear areas for their future inhabitants. One of the most notable city areas where Africans held on to landed property and furthered African culture was Sophiatown, located about seven kilometres north-west of Johannesburg's city centre. As this district was also known for black cultural life and political (especially communist) activity, the government ordered the clearance of the area in 1956, with the official argument of slum clearance, even though Sophiatown was hardly a slum. Its residents were displaced to new townships, which were later known as Soweto, whereby the government successfully rid itself of political opponents (Ross 119).

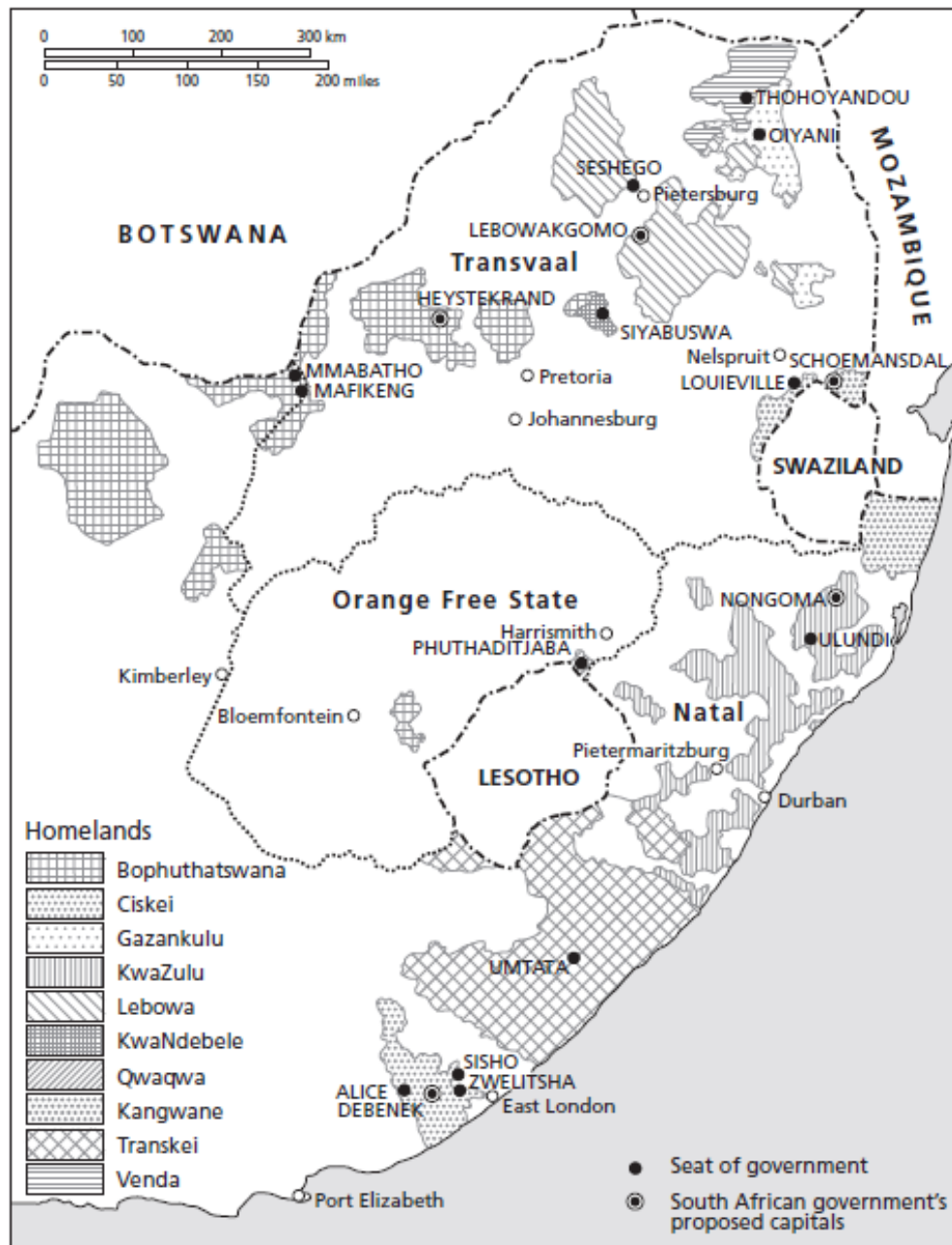


Figure 1: Homelands (Posel 349)

On the one hand, these drastic measures to implement separate development belonged to a “strategy of reinvigorating, refashioning and rewarding ‘traditional’ African notions of authority and political culture”, as within homelands certain power was placed in the hands of chiefs (Posel 350), but on the other hand, the mobility of people declined. Through the Group Areas Act “apartness was now also manifested in space” (Lichtenegger, *Living and Feeling Apart* 4). Pictures of the 1950s (see *figures 2 & 3*) illustrate how racial segregation was imprinted in the South African landscape:



Figure 2: Johannesburg.1956 (online: www.cvltnation.com/institutionalized-hatred-signs-of-apartheid-1950-1990)



Figure 3: Signs (English and Afrikaans) in Johannesburg.1957 (online: www.cvltnation.com/institutionalized-hatred-signs-of-apartheid-1950-1990)

Figure 2 shows signs warning people of other ethnicities that they were about to enter black areas, the dark sides of South Africa inhabiting natives, which were positioned at the entrance of townships or homelands, while figure 3 depicts multi-lingual signs, in the languages of the hegemonic groups, Afrikaans and English, allocating public facilities and areas of unequal quality to specific race groups. This ‘petty apartheid’ was introduced through the Separate Amenities Act (Nr.49) in 1953 (Noller 54).

Omer-Cooper convincingly opines that “[t]he measures taken to control urban influx limited and distorted the process of urbanisation encouraged by industrial expansion” by artificially holding back non-whites in rural areas of poverty and hampering the settlement of African families in more urban districts, whereby the number of single male migrant workers was significantly increased (Omer-Cooper 202). As a consequence, family life was disrupted and wives left behind with children for long periods “were forced to raise families without stable male support” (Omer-Cooper 202). Not only were relationships destabilised and traditional gender roles reverted, the labour migration control also affected professions in

varying degrees. House servants, for instance, could often continue living in white districts for they were considered indispensable for their white masters and mistresses (F. Welsh 450).

Apartheid legislation was not forgetful of the smallest members of society: children. Prior to the election victory of the NP, black education was primarily organised by the missions and the government had only provided teachers' salaries. Generally, the student toll of Africans was strikingly low, as in 1949, for instance, only about 30% of black children aged between 7 and 16 attended school (Ross 121). The Bantu Education Act brought African education under strict governmental control, explicitly using the school system to further apartheid ideology (Ross 121). Interestingly, despite the racist nature of the proposed changes, "[n]o mention was made of any theories of racial inferiority"; rather, it was claimed that African cultures could develop more dynamically if the peoples were not forced to imitate English culture but could teach their own history, customs, and habits in the respective mother-tongue (Giliomee & Mbenga 319). In reality, however, "[t]he ethos pervading educational policy, at least outside the Reserves, was that African education should be limited to those skills valuable for the maintenance of the white-run economy, and the emphasis was on the basic skills learnt in the first four years at school" (Ross 121). Nevertheless, the reforms triggered an increase in African students, with "an ever greater proportion of Africans acquir[ing] some degree of literacy and numeracy, and surprisingly large numbers [going] on to secondary school and, after the foundation of specifically Black universities, to higher education as well" (Ross 121). Ross estimates that from the introduction of apartheid to the early 1990s, the proportion of African children attending school had risen to 85 per cent (Ross 122).

Nevertheless, the Bantu Education Act soon became subject of severe critique, mainly from townships of the East Rand and in the Eastern Cape, those areas with the longest tradition of mission education (Ross 124). Also teachers expressed their discontentment with the new education. School teacher Ezekiel Mphahlele, for instance, articulated many African teachers' and students' frustration when he stated that he...

condemned the textbooks ordered by the Education Department for use in African schools: a history book with several distortions meant to glorify white colonization [...] and white rule; Afrikaans grammar books which abound with examples like: the Kaffir has stolen a knife; that is a lazy Kaffir [...] and a literature that teems with non-white characters who are savages or blundering idiots to be despised and laughed at; characters who are inevitably frustrated creatures of city life and decide to return 'home' – to the Reserves.

(Mphahlele 166)

Not only black people but also those of other political interests and opinions soon came under the attack of the NP's regime of "moral authoritarianism", which "peaked during the late 1960s,

in tandem with the ideological broadsides against ‘communism’, encompassing any aspect of anti-Christian politics and ways of life“ (Posel 335). Generally, the distribution of critical comments and images was hindered through strict media censorship and the government even went so far as to delay the introduction of television in order to avoid the contamination of “the nation’s morality with decadent and/or subversive programmes from abroad” (Posel: 335). As the majority of anti-apartheid movements was either openly communist or affiliated to communist organisations, the government, under leadership of Malan, introduced the Suppression of Communism Act to rid itself of political opponents, who were – contrary to the name of the new law – not always members of the Communist Party. In 1955, for example, 11 members of the ANC executive were affected (Ross 124). As David Welsh explains, classifying everyone remotely related to communist organisations as a communist “gave the Nationalists an excuse to suppress almost any activity of which they disapproved” (D. Welsh 445). Those who were ‘named’ as communists lost their right to appeal and suffered under several restrictions, as for instance, house arrest and the ban from any political participation (D. Welsh 445). Moreover, all persons considered communists were later disenfranchised and the law was frequently applied against individual liberals who were not even members of an organisation deemed communist (Noller 53). Thus, not only members of political or social organisations but everyone who was accused of promoting the objectives of communism could be ‘named’ and barred from holding office, practising as a lawyer, or participating in meetings and conferences (Giliomee & Mbenga 323; Noller 53).

In 1967, the Suppression of Communism Act was extended through the Internal Security Act, which “defined communism as any doctrine that aimed at bringing about ‘any political, industrial, social or economic change in the Union by the promotion of disturbance or disorder, by unlawful acts or omissions or by the threat of such acts and omission’” (Giliomee & Mbenga 323). It was especially this act that was often used by the state to rid itself of liberal opponents (Giliomee & Mbenga: 323). These Acts were further enforced by the Terrorism Act, introduced in the same year (1967), which rendered terrorism a criminal act that could be punished by death penalty (Noller 62). By the end of the 1960s, executive power to act against dissidents had been considerably enlarged: henceforward, the Minister of Justice could “place persons deemed a threat to the state under house arrest”, police officers could indefinitely detain persons without trial, and the death penalty became an option for severe threats to the NP government (D. Welsh 76). Hence, citizens were not only punished for transgressing laws, “they were also prevented from exercising free speech in opposition to these laws, and they were harassed, persecuted and incarcerated under increasingly repressive and arbitrary powers of the police

and the state” (Clark & Worger 48). Especially at the end of apartheid the country is often said to have resembled a police state, as its legal system entrusted more powers of surveillance and enforcement into the police than into the courts (Clark & Worger 49).

To sum up this brief discussion of apartheid legislation, it may be concluded that apartness between ethnicity was established on various levels, including physical space, economy, society, and family. Further, the government hoped to prevent liberal efforts by both whites and non-whites through severe punishments for transgressing laws related to racial segregation and communism, as well as by using homelands to “diffuse black South African nationalism by fostering loyalties to the tribal groups from which the Africans were supposed to have come”, in the hope that imposing nationalities on Africans would facilitate the acceptance of Afrikaner nationalism (Ross 126-127).

Beside these new laws, also other strategies were applied to secure white hegemony. In times of NP governance, Afrikaner nationalism was further enhanced by the removal of most British symbols, including British citizenship in 1950, ‘God Save the Queen’ as one of the national anthems, and the Union Jack as one of the national ensigns in 1957 (Giliomee & Mbenga 310). Moreover, under the Verwoerd government the pound sterling was replaced by a new, exclusively South African currency, the ‘rand’ (F. Welsh 456). The NP government’s authority should be finally sealed in a spectacular mass trial, which was to become known as the Treason Trials. Under the initiative of Oswald Pirow, a former Nazi and later South African Minister of Justice, the trials started in December 1956, when 150 prominent resisters of all races were arrested and should be investigated in “an expertly-arranged show trial, along the lines of those in Nazi Germany or communist Russia, demonstrating the abominable intentions of the vile accused” (F. Welsh 453). Despite the success of the 5-year trial as a public event, the hearings soon turned into a farce, when one accused after the other was discharged for want of evidence and in March 1961 all accused were finally found not guilty (F. Welsh 453).

The second phase of apartheid, ‘separate development’, however, was inaugurated with a far more brutal act of state power: the Sharpeville massacre and its aftermath. In 1960, the two largest African nationalist movements, the ANC and the PAC, both launched campaigns against the Pass Laws, a new law which forced all citizens to carry passes at any time (Omer-Cooper 218; Ross 128). Driven by a sense of competition, the PAC organized a huge march to local police stations, where people’s passes were publicly burned. On 21 March, about 5,000 had gathered in front of the Sharpeville police station, where “[f]aced with a melee which they could not control, the inexperienced police constables panicked and fired on the crowd, which

was armed, at most, with stones” (Ross 129). As a result, 69 people, including women and children, were killed and 180 were wounded (Ross 129). The Sharpeville massacre triggered further protest activities across the country, to which the government reacted with the introduction of state emergency. Moreover, it triggered the banning of both the ANC and the PAC. The response of these organisations was to continue their activities underground, as well as to launch military resistance: Military wings were founded, which carried out several acts of sabotage and even assassinations. “Quickly, though, both were crippled by government infiltration”, prompting its most prominent leaders (including Nelson Mandela) to flee abroad or go underground in order to avoid further arrests (Ross 131). Despite these severe consequences, David Welsh argues that Sharpeville never provided a real threat to white hegemony but certainly embodied a decisive crisis for the NP government (D. Welsh 73).

South Africa’s economic growth from the 1950s until the 1970s, on the contrary, was interpreted as a success of apartheid, but those who profited were only a small white minority (Ross 131). This was primarily possible because firms could rely on a large, cheap and pliable African workforce (Ross 132). In the long term, however, this mainly low-skilled labour force was not sufficient to maintain economic growth after the down-turn in the world economy after 1973. Although reforms, such as the Bantu Education Act, were implemented in the 70s, the quality of African education hardly increased, leaving South Africa in an inferior position on the global market (Ross 132-133; Omer-Cooper 223).

With regard to private matters, however, the NP was more successful. When Hendrik Verwoerd ascended to the leader position of the National Party in 1958, the government started “to pervade all aspects of South African life” (Ross 134), in particular the media:

Three objectives were paramount in this, namely the elimination of statements in opposition to the government, the prevention of infection by liberal and socialist ideas from abroad and the preservation of moral purity. To do this, books, periodicals, music and films were checked, and frequently banned, with the Publications Control Board, set up in 1963 [...] The government controlled the radio and refused to allow the establishment of a television service, considering, undoubtedly correctly, that it would not be able to prevent the imported programmes a television service would have had to show from rotting the fabric of South African society.

(Ross 134)

Further, already at the founding of the NP in 1914, the goal of establishing a South African Republic had been pronounced. Now, in May 1961, the idea was finally realised: the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republiek van Suid-Afrika) adopted most public institutions and laws of the Union, solely one significant change was made, namely the creation of the position of state president, who took over the functions of the former governor (Noller

58-59). After unrests and national crises, the NP recognized that new challenges required a white union that included Afrikaners, as well as English citizens. Hence, it fundamentally changed its policy from strict Afrikaner nationalism to 'White Unity', whereby the uniting factor was given by a common anti-communist attitude (Noller 60-61). It was in these times that laws turning South Africa into a police state were implemented. In 1961 John Vorster became Minister of Justice, whereafter state security was given highest priority: Not only could people be placed under house arrest, listed and banned from organisations, they could also be kept in detention and even solitary confinement for up to 12 days, a time-span which was repeatedly expanded, to 90, to 180, and finally to an unlimited period. In addition, newspapers were censored by a prohibition of publishing unauthorised articles on prison conditions (Giliomee & Mbenga 340).

When Vorster became new head of the state in 1966, a new security organisation was founded: "The security services, which had always proliferated, were united into a new Bureau of State Security, the notorious BOSS, the head of which reported directly to the Prime Minister and to which a rapidly-growing unaccountable budget was allocated" (F. Welsh 465). Consequently, the South Africa of the 1960s and 70s is often described as a 'police state', crowded with spies and informers and other people who preferred to keep their liberal ideas in secret, as "[f]rom the police cells disturbing information emerged of torture ending in death of inmates while being questioned, driving people to suicide or causing nervous breakdowns" (Giliomee & Mbenga 341). The situation was further aggravated by the fact that due to the increasing Afrikanerization of society most police officers were now Afrikaners and, thus, more likely "visible enforcers of a tyrannical rule" (F. Welsh 476).

Nevertheless, not all aspects of South African society could be censored. Not only could people listen to radio stations abroad, whites in certain professions, including churchmen, lawyers and politicians of the opposition, could claim a degree of freedom of speech, and some journalists and academics were even able to expose the injustice of apartheid (Ross 134-135). Similarly, Giliomee and Mbenga argue against considering South Africa as a police state:

As for the draconian security legislation, influx control and other curbs on the movement of blacks, and the lack of black freedom, the statement was true. On the other hand, many features of the classic police state were absent. South Africa was, in fact, a remarkably under-policed state. As late as 1984, after serious unrest, it was reported that there were only 1.4 policemen per 1000 of the population, compared to roughly 2.4 for the United Kingdom, 4.4 in Ulster, 5.7 in Algeria, and 16 for the Soviet Union. So, too, the number of political dissidents suffering persecution was small for a country whose population by 1970 stood at 22.5 million.

(Giliomee & Mbenga 349)

Even if some ways to express critique remained, from the 1960s onwards the government succeeded in imposing their vision of society on South Africa. Non-whites were grouped according to their ethnicity and even though administrations were set up in homelands and elections held, in reality, no opposition could evolve and act through representatives of these areas (Ross 135-136). In the election of 1961 the National Party had gained a majority of the white vote for the first time. Thereafter, the South African Republic left the British Commonwealth and developed independently and, according to Ross, “increasingly anomalous” in comparison to other parts of the world (Ross 139).

Despite these victories for the NP, the 1960s also marked the beginning decline of Afrikaner nationalism and bore new threats to white hegemony (D. Welsh 172). When new economic challenges demanded an increased number of skilled workers, the dependence of companies on black and coloured workers to carry out skilled operations led to a higher “bargaining power of these workers [...] in spite of a legal prohibition on all strike action by blacks” (Omer-Cooper 223-224). In 1973 strikes in Natal and on the Rand led to a reconsideration of apartheid policy; the government publicly recognised the dependence of South Africa’s economy on non-white labours in skilled professions, whereby one of the most crucial principles of *baaskap* apartheid was abandoned (Omer-Cooper 224).

In the following years, the revolution in Portugal and its territories and the subsequent strategic transformation of the central African region highly influenced South African internal affairs:

The segregated African townships outside the white urban areas had long seethed with pent-up anger and frustration. Nowhere was this more tense or more dangerous than in the huge agglomeration of government-planned African townships to the south west of Johannesburg known as Soweto.

(Omer-Cooper: 225)

In June 1976, this anger erupted in form of black high-school students’ protest against Afrikaans as main medium of instruction, through which other subjects were learned. Although the police used force to disperse the demonstrations, the youths’ motivation even increased and developed into serious rioting that soon spread from Soweto to other towns across the country, affecting not only blacks but also Indians and coloured students. Their bitterness and frustration sufficed to motivate continuing protest throughout the rest of the year (Omer-Cooper 226; F. Welsh 474). Eager to suppress these unrests, the security forces killed, wounded and arrested numerous young blacks (Omer-Cooper 226). One case became particularly famous, arousing critical discussions of apartheid on an international level: photographs of the dead 13-year-old Hector

Peterson being carried in the arms of a friend and accompanied by his screaming sister turned into iconic images, representative of all the violence caused by apartheid (see *figure 4*). Even the UN Security Council reacted by condemning the NP government and demanding the end of apartheid (F. Welsh 474-475).



Figure 4: Hector Peterson, shot by the police (online: www.worldschildrengprize.org/hector-pieterseon)

In the 1980s, violence continued. According to Ross, “over a quarter of all black deaths in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pietermaritzburg, at least, were not natural, and over half of these were the result of homicide. The rest were the consequence of accidents, on the roads (the majority), at work or at home” (Ross 151). Youngsters blaming their parents for their passiveness became politically active and soon “the boundaries between criminality and political action became blurred” (Ross 154). President Malan reacted by implementing his so-called ‘total strategy’, an attempt to reform South Africa without changing its essential characteristics (F. Welsh 480). These reforms involved “the recognition of black trade unions, the abolition of the statutory job colour bar and the opening of apprenticeships to Africans” (Ross 168). As a result, in the 1980s numerous black unions evolved, which initially only limited their demands to industrial matters. Further, the privileges of Africans with the right to live in one of the cities were widened (Ross 168-169) and more power was placed in the hands of Indians and Coloureds, who received their own separate assemblies, the Coloured House and the Indian House of Delegates, organisations which were handed the allowance to deal with “the ‘own affairs’ [sic] of its community” (F. Welsh 482). Nevertheless, Welsh is certainly correct in stating that real power largely remained in white hands:

It was constitutional madness, born of the absurd fantasy that South Africa was a congeries of different races condemned to separate existences, and that by some sleight of hand the white

minority had to maintain absolute power while conceding the appearance of equality. The fiction that blacks could be regarded as visiting foreigners, citizens of their own homelands, was every day more clearly seen to be a fiction.

(F. Welsh 482)

Malan's half-hearted reforms were accepted by the majority of white voters but triggered vehement protests from left-wing liberals. Especially the Koornhof bills, named after Piet Koornhof, minister for Co-operation and Development, which attempted to implement measures to further the racial division, led to protests, as well as to the foundation of the United Democratic Front, "which was to prove the largest and most effective movement of opposition to apartheid" (Ross 170). Taking the ANC Freedom Charter as its basis, the UDF was largely led by veterans of the Congress Alliance and united various affiliated organisations, which continued their local, as well as national activities even when UDF leaders were under arrest. In 1984, UDF protests erupted into open revolt and by early 1986, 27 townships were said to be under UDF or ANC control. These open revolts, which were mainly carried by young men, were retrospectively legitimated by the ANC leadership in Lusaka, "calling for the country to be made ungovernable" (Ross 170-171).

Although the protest movements could mobilize the masses, the revolt was crushed by early 1988. As Ross opines, "this victory for the forces of repression was only possible because the government was able to recruit considerable numbers of blacks to do part of its dirty work for it. Auxiliary police [...] were deployed widely. Less officially, squads of vigilantes under the control of local warlords took it upon themselves to smash the 'comrades' movement in many black townships" (Ross 178). Nevertheless, actions taken by the UDF also gave new prominence to the ANC and its leadership, whose influence on internal political developments increased considerably: "For the first time, prominent white intellectuals and businessmen began to make their way to Lusaka or elsewhere, for discussions with the ANC top" (Ross 181). Although the government officially condemned such meetings, first clandestine negotiations between members of the ANC, including Nelson Mandela, and South Africa's government were held (Ross 181). "Showing the realism of which he was sometimes capable, but following his policy of not telling his colleagues what he was up to, [president] Botha authorized an officially unofficial approach to the ANC in November 1987", when a secret meeting was held at Mells Park House in England. Although no concrete results were achieved, the ANC could successfully establish itself as "reasonable, tolerant – and highly educated – people with whom constructive negotiations could be pursued" (F. Welsh 495).

The reasons for reforms and social alterations were impending and numerous. In the 1980s South Africa had experienced a severe financial crisis caused by foreign debts: "Only

after much negotiation had the South African Finance Ministry squeezed their way out of a foreign debt crisis in 1986-87 by postponing repayments to 1990” but in 1988 the country’s debts had even increased (F. Welsh 496). Financial crisis combined with social unrest unsettled South African citizens (F. Welsh 496), with the result of another harsh blow that struck the NP government in the elections of 1989. After F.W. De Klerk had become the new leader of the National Party in January 1989, the party lost some of its support: In the elections of the same year, the NP retained parliamentary power but lost seats to the far right (Ross 181-182). Frank Welsh convincingly suggests that the loss of voters combined with a slight move of several whites towards more liberal parties indicates the disintegration of Afrikanerdom within the last 10 to 15 years of South African apartheid, when several organisations, including the Dutch Churches, ceased to promote a nationalist ideology and with this “rebuttal coming from the mother Church itself, the end of the volk was in sight” (F. Welsh 485).

At this point, Afrikaners, on average, were far more educated and, consequently, more sceptical than they had been in the 1960s and 70s (D. Welsh 173). By the mid-1980s the wealth of Afrikaners had risen considerably, leading to a more considerate attitude and behaviour towards other peoples and probably even awakening feelings of guilt and a sense of the moral costs of apartheid politics. Especially younger Afrikaners, who had not experienced the hardships of the Afrikaner people, expressed their rebellion against their parents’ ideology through critical rock-music and alternative journalism (D. Welsh 203-204). Further, increasingly more Afrikaners realized that “white soldiers on the borders and in the townships were not fighting foreign communists and agitators, as the government insisted, but were instead being drafted into a civil war against their black South African fellow citizens” (Dubow 63). Consequently, liberalism and anti-apartheid aspirations were free to flourish.

In 1986, the Urban Areas Act was repealed and influx control abandoned. “With that action the principle of influx control, the foundation of all apartheid, was abandoned”, as Frank Welsh states (491). Shortly thereafter also the Mixed Marriages Act, the Immorality Act and the Prohibition of Political Interference Act were repealed and mixed-race sport introduced, thus preludeing the end of apartheid (F. Welsh 491). DeKlerk promised “to dismantle apartheid and bring about full democracy through negotiations as soon as possible” (cited in F. Welsh 497) but initially faced the problem of finding an acceptable negotiating partner qualified to speak for all disenfranchised blacks with real authority. Finally, it was determined that “Nelson Mandela was the only man of sufficient stature to unite enough of the country behind him” (F. Welsh 497). In October 1990, all remaining ANC prisoners were released, first talks with Mandela initiated and less than one month later, at the opening of parliament on 2 November

1990, DeKlerk surprisingly announced that the banning of anti-apartheid organisations, including the PAC, the ANC, and the Communist Party, would be finally lifted and all remaining apartheid laws repealed (F. Welsh 499). Moreover, to the surprise of most South-Africans, he declared his intentions “to enter into negotiations with a view to the development and introduction of a new constitution based on universal suffrage” (Omer-Cooper 242).

According to Ross, the main reason for this significant decision by De Klerk and his government may lie in the fact that the “original impetus of Afrikaner nationalism had dispersed”, as the British no longer represented an unequally wealthy or powerful group within South Africa and, moreover, political reforms promised a solution for South Africa’s declining economy (Ross 183). In addition, “[t]he moral crusade against South Africa was beginning to strike home, and the theological certainties which had sustained apartheid were giving way to criticism” (Ross 183). At last, also the fall of Communist rule in the Soviet Union robbed ANC opponents of their main argument: their fight against communism (Ross 183). Nevertheless, Ross is certainly correct in stating that “there is no doubt that De Klerk and his fellows calculated that they could control the process of transition in such a way as to guarantee their own interests, and probably to maintain their rule” (Ross 185) – a severe mistake, as history has shown.

In December 1991, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) met for the first time to define South Africa’s future but initially little progress was made (Ross 189; South African History Online). As the negotiations continued, three important decisions on South Africa’s future were made: Firstly, “for the first years after the election there would be a Government of National Unity, in which all parties which had over 5 per cent of the vote would have ministerial office, and in which a two-thirds majority would be needed to write the constitutions. The assembly would have full legislative powers, subject to certain safeguards” (Ross 190). Secondly, as the 40% of employed Afrikaners working for the government feared for their jobs, it was agreed that “for ten years after the transfer of government state employees would be secure in their jobs” (Ross 190). Finally, South Africa was henceforward divided into nine provinces, which enjoyed a certain degree of freedom with regard to political decisions, similar to the Federal Republic of Germany (Ross 190-191). The results of these negotiations were recorded in an interim constitution in November 1993 “and adopted by the tricameral Parliament in the next month”, whereby “the transition from apartheid to democracy was achieved with constitutional continuity, something on which both Mandela and De Klerk [...] always insisted” (Ross 191).

In 1991, the Population Registration Act too was finally repealed. Consequently, race or ethnicity ceased to be legitimate bases for people's rights. Moreover, the Natives Land Acts was abolished and some sixty other pieces of racist legislation removed (Ross 185). The carefully constructed legislature of apartheid society was ultimately destroyed and democracy was on its way. In April 1994, South Africans of all ethnicities could vote in the founding elections of a new South Africa, free from segregating measures. Although the ANC gained a substantial majority, with more than 62% of the vote, this percentage was not sufficient for writing a constitution on its own. With the National Party receiving 20.04%, De Klerk was nominated as one of the vice-presidents and Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first president of African descent (Ross 195-196).

As this historical overview has shown, apartheid was no simple, racist concept but complex, changeable, and manifold, or in Posel's words:

The apartheid regime dominated South African society from 1948 to the early 1990s, but its durability should not be mistaken as a sign of internal stability or coherence. The terms of apartheid rule were never uncontested; the project was never implemented exactly according to plan. Even at the zenith of apartheid in the late 1960s, a blustering dogmatism and ideological certitude were always accompanied by a radical provisionality, manifest in attempts to redefine, rethink and reposition the apartheid regime, in response to shifting global political fields, as much as the fluidity of the internal milieu.

(Posel 319)

Apartheid was not only interpreted in various ways, it was also criticised and contested, an aspect that shall be further discussed in *section 5*. Regardless of one's position in this very particular society, living apart in closest proximity affected the identity of each and every South African and, in some cases, even left a deep footprint of traumatization on one's persona, aspects, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

3. Liberalism

Africans, Coloureds and Indians were all as adamantly opposed to apartheid as they had been to segregation. [...] Each action taken by anti-apartheid forces was brutally suppressed and answered with increasingly repressive legislation. The government outlawed all forms of dissent, to no avail finally empowering police to detain anyone without charging them with a crime.

(Clark & Worger 57)

The quote above states the obvious: all discriminated groups favoured the abolition of apartheid and were in some way involved in the South African liberation struggle. Yet, not only

subordinate groups but also whites supported the resistance. As Zalusky outlines in his diploma thesis on white dissidents, opposition could take the form of political activism, journalism, violent or non-violent protest, terrorism, or conscientious objection and was carried by political, economic and church organisations, as well as by individuals. Hence, South African liberalism was no uniform movement but involved individuals and organisation which differed in their degree of radicalism (Zalusky 60). Moreover, as will be shown later on, the boundaries between liberalism and other ideologies of anti-apartheid movements were at times fluent and in case of individual liberals often not clear-cut.

The term ‘liberalism’ itself denotes the fight for the global values of freedom of choice, human dignity, and equality of the law (MacDonald 25) and might be interpreted as “a rallying cry for individuals desiring space to be free from unjustifiable limitations, and as a set of fundamental institutional arrangements meant to legitimate and civilize the practices of politics” (Freedman 1). From this follows a conception of individual, negative and pluralist liberty in the sense that every person constitutes a moral agent who pursues individual “conceptions of the good” (Hudson 94). While doing so, everyone should strive to realise his/her liberty, aims, and preferences but without limiting the liberty of their fellow human beings. Apartheid contradicts this principle of liberty, as it forces the sacrifice of “the good of some to the greater good of others” (Hudson 95). According to the liberal view, however, society is best arranged when it is governed by principles that do not presuppose any particular conception of the good, for any other arrangement would fail to respect humans as moral persons capable of autonomously choosing and practising their own conceptions of the good (Hudson 95).

As in other parts of the world, most South African liberals were “[c]ommitted to conventional liberal values – the rule of law, toleration, and private property” (MacDonald 24). Several dissidents, however, were Communists – or at least considered Communists by the government. Hence, the latter value, private property, might be considered less universally valid and more dependent on the individual than other characteristics. What all white dissidents share is clearly the ideal of toleration, which should be implemented through the promotion of human rights and the acceptance of equality between all races (MacDonald 24). Hence, hierarchies based on race were clearly rejected; South African apartheid had to be abolished and all individual’s access to economic freedom, political rights and the right of free speech should be accomplished (Lazerson 6).

In the context of South Africa, two other terms are crucial to our understanding of dissidence and closely connected to liberalism: First, the term *multiculturalism* denotes the renunciation of the idea that one’s own nation “possesses special rights and that is uniquely

deserving”, while at the same time adopting the “claim of ethno-cultural nationalism that groups center personal identities and political loyalties” (MacDonald 20-21). Consequently, multiculturalists differ from liberals in so far as they deny the liberal claim that states could be “neutral in the face of competing ethno-cultural identities” (MacDonald 21). Further, whereas in the classic liberal tradition the individual enjoys priority status, multiculturalist thinking focuses on cultures (MacDonald 21). Nevertheless, representatives of both traditions, multiculturalism and liberalism, supported the abolition of racial segregation.

Another important concept is *non-racialism*, the negation of racialism, which connotes “the complete absence of barriers predicated upon race or ethnicity, whether in the context of an organization, a community or a society” (Lazerson 1). MacDonald suggests that two different interpretations of the term *racialism* are possible in the context of South Africa: First, similar to the American use of the term it may stand for “racially motivated bigotry, inequality, and oppression”, thus, being coterminous with ‘racism’ (MacDonald 93). On the other hand, it may also define race “as a defining human attribute, a central axis of human society and political organization, a fulcrum of political representation and participation” (MacDonald 93). Non-racialism too enjoys various interpretations, which share the feature of renunciation of racism but range from the general rejection of the existence of race to early demands of the ANC with regard to the elimination of race as the basis of inequalities but clearly without “defining quality racially” (MacDonald 97). Or in other words, it was thought that “Africans who met standards set by whites ought to be extended the right and privileges due whites” (MacDonald 97). While the usage of the term changed over the 20th century and certainly also varied among different anti-apartheid movements, it is crucial that all interpretations of non-racialism generally “affirm[...] liberal democratic ideals” (MacDonald 106).

Liberation movements differed widely regarding their interpretation of such ideals, and so did their ideology, terminology and beliefs. In *Lessons of Struggle* Anthony W. Marx pinpoints the interesting aspect that “[t]he terms of and discourse through which each opposition movement might interpret its oppression and define its options in specific contexts” are not only of abstract, philosophical relevance but also determines its “potential constituency” (what is understood as ‘us’ and ‘them’) and, further, the actions taken by the group in order to oppose the hegemonic group (Marx 6). Nowhere else in Africa existed such a strong cooperation between hegemonic and oppressed groups “joined to wrest state power from a white minority ruling class with a goal of redefining the nation without reference to racial or ethnic division” (Lazerson 1); but not all liberation movements were in favour of white support. Depending on the degree of cooperation between members of different race-groups within anti-

apartheid movements, race relations and group identities developed differently. As the following presentation of the most prominent movements will show, South African dissidents differed with regard to their aims, members, and ideologies.

3.1 Anti-Apartheid Movements

In South Africa, the tradition of liberalism developed primarily from the works of the London Missionary Society of the 1920s and 1930s, when the term liberal was understood to mean “friend of the native” (Lazerson 7). As will be shown in this chapter, anti-apartheid movements took various forms, including political, social and church organisations, journalism but also individual protest. Due to lack of space not all movements which developed out of liberal traditions can be discussed. This chapter aims to provide a concise overview of the most prominent movements, in particular of those in which whites were able to participate.

The most famous and powerful liberation movements were clearly the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC); yet both opposed the membership of whites. As Wolpe points out, the ANC even portrayed South African Apartheid as a special form of Western colonialism:

On one level, that of ‘white South Africa’, there are all the features of an advanced capitalist state in its final stage of industrial monopolies and the merging of industrial and finance capital ... But on another level, that of ‘Non-White South Africa’, there are all the features of a colony. The indigenous population is subjected to extreme national oppression, poverty and exploitation, lack of all democratic rights and political domination... Non-white South Africa is the colony of white South Africa itself.

(ANC, ‘Strategy and Tactics in the South African Revolution’, cited in: Wolpe 62)

Holiday too defines South Africa’s special colonialism as “a system wherein the white colonizers must live in [...]. The ‘colony’ is their home. The colonized are their countrymen.” (Holiday 81). He might be right that, to a certain degree, the colonizers oppress themselves by supporting apartheid, for “the battery of security laws, emergency regulations, detentions without trial, censorship and proscription of so many political groupings, affect Whites as they do Blacks” (Holiday 81). Thus, the apartheid system was not only limiting the freedom of non-whites but also of white dissidents.

Despite their portrayal of apartheid as white colonialism and their consequent rejection of direct white membership, both organisations, the ANC and the PAC, were members of the Congress Alliance, an organisation which served to unite and to funnel the efforts of various anti-apartheid organisations. Non-African sympathisers could thus participate in the liberation struggle by becoming a member of a cooperating organisation; the Congress Alliance

comprised, for instance, the South African Indian Congress, the Coloured Peoples Congress and the (white) South African Congress of Democrats – groups which often cooperated with the ANC and other exclusively non-white organisations (Ross 122). Several campaigns and petitions were, for example, launched in cooperation with multiple organisations and inspired by similar movements abroad. The ANC's Defiance Campaign of 1952, for instance, was highly influenced by "Gandhi's ideas of self-sacrifice as a way to political success" and involved "[s]elected men and women [who] gave themselves up to political martyrdom, by ostentatiously breaking the laws" (Ross 123). The goal of the Defiance Campaign was the abolition of five apartheid laws, which "elaborated urban segregation, imposed passes on black women, banned the Communist Party, removed mixed-race-coloureds from the common voters' roll and gave to rural chiefs new authoritarian powers to implement highly unpopular land conservation measures" (Giliomee & Mbenga 327). In course of the campaign, first white political prisoners were taken for civil disobedience against the NP government. Among a group of 40 volunteers who entered the black township Germiston without the necessary permits, for example, were seven whites, who carried the consequences of their liberal actions by serving prison sentences. Apart from individual English-language newspapers, which expressed their sympathy, "the campaign elicited either hostility or indifference within most of the white community" (Giliomee & Mbenga 328). As a further consequence, most ANC leaders were banned; ANC membership, however, increased considerable until the end of 1952 (Clark & Worger 59).

Another major step in the liberation struggle was made during the Congress of People in June 1955, an event sponsored by the African and Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Organization and the non-racial South African Congress of Trades Unions (SACTU). At the congress the ANC was established as "first among equals within a liberation movement structured as a parallel organisational alliance, comprising interest groups (trade unionists and women) and peoples (African, coloured, Indian, and white)" (Dubow 55). Further, this significant event brought the Freedom Charter – one of the most famous documents of resistance – into life. The document, composed in April 1955, evoked critique, which was partly based on a general distrust of white involvement in the liberation struggle, "whether from liberal missionaries and their adherents or from the largely communist members of the Congress of Democrats" (Ross 125). Already in the early 1940s certain groups had started to question the validity of interracial cooperation in the freedom struggle: "Africanists believed that the struggle for African liberation would be sidetracked and possibly hijacked were Africans to work with Indians, Coloureds, and whites" (Lazerson 5). Ultimately, this led to some ANC members breaking away from the organisation to form the Pan-Africanist Congress (Ross 125).

After their banning, the ANC and the PAC continued their struggles underground, with special military wings committing serious acts of crimes. While the militant wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) reduced its actions to strategic targets, such as police stations and power plants, where human victims could be avoided, Poqo (Pure), the wing of the PAC, “engaged in a campaign of terror, targeting in particular African chiefs and headmen believed to be collaborators with the government and killing them” (Clark & Worger 62).

Criticism of white liberalism not only came from whites but also from the Black Consciousness Movement, an organisation inspired by Steve Biko, a student of medicine in Natal. With its roots lying in South African universities, the group’s prime concerns were, firstly, “a great stress on individuals’ responsibility for liberation, almost as salvation”, which involved the rejection of white liberalist help, and, secondly, the importance of “not to be too hasty in seeking confrontations with the government”, as the failure of the PAC in the 1960s was attributed to hastiness (Ross 141). Their leader Biko pointedly stressed the white liberal dilemma:

the liberal is in fact appeasing his own conscience... Being white, he possesses the natural passport to the exclusive pool of white privilege... Yet, since he identifies with the blacks, he moves around his white circles...with a lighter load, feeling he is not like the rest. However, at the back of his mind is the constant reminder that he is quite comfortable as things stand... Although he does not vote for the Nationalists...he feels secure under the protection offered by the Nationalists and subconsciously shuns the idea of change.

(Biko qtd. in F. Welsh 475)

Due to the privileges white liberals enjoyed as members of the hegemonic group, Biko insisted on the necessity for non-whites to act for themselves and to reject white support:

Our belief is that white society will not listen to preaching. They will not listen to their liberals. Liberalism has not grown within white society, and we blacks cannot stand idly by watching the situation. We can only generate a response from white society when we, as blacks, speak with a black voice and say what we want. The age of the liberal was such that the black voice was not very much heard except in echoing what was said by liberals. Now has come the time when we, as blacks, must articulate what we want, and put it across to the white man, and from a position of strength.

(published in Woods, 184-185)

Consequently, Biko rejected a single body for students of multiple races and thus non-racialism. Despite his rejection of white membership, Biko “Biko never sought to rid South Africa of whites, accepting that they were part of the reality of South Africa. Their role should focus on convincing their community to stop apartheid, he argued” (Shubane 353). The impact of Biko’s ideology and the Black Consciousness Movements should not be underestimated. On the one hand, it spread the conviction that only blacks themselves could end racial oppression (Shubane

354). On the other hand, according to Dubow, it had an almost traumatizing effect on young white liberals who identified with the liberation movement: “no longer could whites presume to speak on behalf of others or take their South Africanness for granted. Leaders in the National Union of South African Students duly began to consider the problem of ‘whiteness’” (Dubow 62).

Further, it should be noted that not all resistance movements rejected white liberals; other multiracial organisations which allowed for white membership included the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), the Springbok Legion, a veterans’ organization, which gained importance in the 1940s and 50s, and the South African Congress of Democrats (COD) (Lazerson 2). Further, some organisations endeavoured to improve the dripping white-black dialogue, as for example the South African Institute of Race Relations, a liberal organisation founded in 1929 in Johannesburg, or the Black Sash, a women’s movement, which will be discussed in *section 3.2*.

3.2 White Liberalism and Dissidence

As André Brink writes in his essay collection *Mapmakers*, in a society in which group loyalty was taken for granted the Afrikaner dissident found himself in an outsider position, as he was “accused of stabbing ‘his own people’ in the back” (Brink, *Mapmakers* 246). This theme of betrayal and dissidence is not only prominent in Brink’s works but also in academia. In his social psychological study on identity and dissidence Joha Louw-Potgieter applies Tajfel’s psychological theory on groups and social categories on the South African situation in times of Apartheid, grouping all members of society into a superior group (whites) and low status groups (blacks, coloured and Indians). Originally members of the superior or hegemonic group, Afrikaner dissidents would give up their superior position in society for their individual recognition of the fact that “their group’s present position is not the only one possible” (Louw-Potgieter 33) and “that the existing social reality is not the only possible one and that alternatives to it are conceivable and perhaps attainable” (Tajfel qtd. in Louw- Potgieter 32). As will be illustrated by the analysis of Brink’s *A Dry White Season* and *An Act of Terror*, such an awareness was often triggered by intergroup contact, which, according to Louw-Potgieter, “might lead to the discovery of similarities between members of different groups” (33).

This transition from the superior group into the boundaries of the dominated, lower-status group involved a redefinition of the dissident’s as well as of the Other’s identity (Sterrer 29). Louw-Potgieter supports this thesis by referring to an unknown Afrikaner dissident who stated that “[d]issidence does not only force one to abandon comfortable, established opinions

or standards and only to justify one's standards, but also to recreate an own life-world, also to redefine reality" (32). Consequently, this vision led the interviewee "to see myself in a new light, namely as an Afrikaner who is also an African" (32). A vision which – as will be shown in section 6 – is shared by Thomas Landman, the main character of Brink's *An Act of Terror*.

These questions of identity lead us to investigate into the social origins of white dissidents. Generally, white resistance within South Africa was primarily carried by the English middle class (Noller 123) and – as it was also the case for African resistance – by the far left (Cohen and Cobbett 6). Other white dissidents originated from Jewish families, who carried the memory of persecution, or from mineworkers and industrial laborers who had emigrated from Great Britain and were familiar with democratic organizations (Lazerson 3). It is important to stress that not all dissidents had internalised clear liberal values as explained above. With regard to ideology, Zalusky roughly differentiates between two groups of white Apartheid opponents: Marxists (or members of the far-left) and liberals (40). As my analysis of Apartheid novels will show, however, these boundaries were not always clear cut and ideals of both philosophies might at times be combined in one individuum and/or group.

Whites opposed the NP-regime in various ways. On the organisational level several groups already challenged the government in the infant years of Apartheid, including the Congress of Democrats, a left organisation already mentioned above, whose membership, however was always relatively small (Omer-Cooper 205), and several political parties, which shall be discussed in the following paragraphs. Neither of them, however, "was capable of electorally defeating the NP" (Welsh 52):

Other parties were more effective but in comparison to the NP still powerless. The Liberal Party (LP), which – as its name suggests – followed the liberal tradition (Zalusky 42), was formed "of liberal associations in the Transvaal, Cape, and Natal in 1953" and can be understood as a response to the enforcement of racist legislation around 1950 (Lazerson 7). Interestingly, despite its name and its aim "of working towards a non-racial South Africa" (Omer-Cooper 204), the role of the party remains somehow ambiguous: although it was the first legal organisation in times of apartheid whose membership was non-racial, it was "unable to commit to unqualified African suffrage" and "rabidly anti-communist", causing problematic relations to other anti-apartheid organisations (Lazerson 8). Frank Welsh pointedly describes the LP as "well meaning", "influential but in practice ineffective" (445). Indeed, its anti-communist agenda combined with the high number of liberal intellectuals among its ranks underlines its strict liberal ideology, which might have turned the party into an effective medium in the liberation struggle; its voter support, however, was tiny and party members

frequently suffered from repressive government measures. Finally, it was forced to end its activity when multiracial parties were officially forbidden by law (Omer-Cooper 204).

Another organisation which at least counted some liberal politicians among its ranks was the Progressive Party (PP), whose main objective was economic growth, a goal that was thought to be reached by expanding the labour productivity of non-whites through the abolition of apartheid (Noller 123). These demands, however, did not aim at abolishing all hierarchies but would rather substitute the crucial factor race with class. As the economic starting situation of most black South Africans was considerably inferior, white dominance would have probably remained largely unchanged. At the same time, it was hoped that such a relatively small transition would prevent a violent African revolution. As Noller points out, due to their economic power, members of the English middle class – the main electorate of the PP – could afford to be liberal; they did not share working class Afrikaner's fear of black competition (Noller 124). After the introduction of the 1966 legislation banning multiracial parties (and leading to the dissolution of the LP) Helen Suzman remained the lone representative of the PP and the sole real spokeswoman of the opposition in parliament (Omer-Cooper 219). Investigating the consequences of apartheid legislation and exposing its inhumanity in parliament, "she saw herself as an 'honorary ombudsman for all those people who have no vote and no Member of Parliament'" (Shain 3). Her main concerns included the endangerment of civil liberties, the rule of law, as well as the abolition of capital punishment and gender discrimination (Shain 3). Suzman remained in her lonely dissident position until 1974, proposing "a non-racial qualified vote and the constitutional protection of minorities" (Giliomee & Mbenga 373). South Africa's white voters, however, were initially hardly attracted by the PP's policy (Giliomee & Mbenga 373). Only in the 1970s the PP's popularity increased slightly (F. Welsh 477).

The policy of another oppositional party, the United Party (UP), seems more ambivalent with regard to liberalism. Like the PP, the UP favoured the abolition of all legal regulations which hindered a more efficient use of black labour but in contrast to the PP, they opinionated that not all racial barriers should be lifted. Although the NP's Bantustans regulations were disliked due to political and socio-economic reasons, the UP cannot be considered fully liberal for their adherence to white hegemony (Noller 124-125). Besides this, "[s]upport for the United Party declined throughout the period of baaskap apartheid and by the end of the 1950s it had become almost irrelevant to the political life of the country" (Omer-Cooper 204).

We may conclude that especially at the beginnings of the liberation struggle morals and ethics hardly played the major role in political considerations on the abolition of apartheid. This finding is supported by Zalusky, who argues that early white liberals were often primarily concerned with the negative consequences of Afrikaner nationalism and fascism; moral issues played a minor role. These rather self-centred interests can be found, for instance, in the Torch Commando, a veterans' organisation, which understood itself as anti-nationalist movement opposing the NP (Zalusky 61). The movement was founded in 1951 by a group of ex-servicemen, including A.G. Malan (an Afrikaner who had won the reputation of a hero when serving the British Royal Air Force during the Battle of Britain), with the aim to hinder nationalist attempts to violate the South African constitution. Soon its membership increased, as its policy attracted several English speaking white South Africans who feared for their own language and rights. The name of this organisation derives from demonstrations which often took the form of torchlight processions. Although "the movement was supposedly dedicated to the protection of Coloured voting rights, no agreement could be reached" and the rights of coloured people were seemingly not of high concern to the exclusively white membership of the Torch Commando. When the NP government's attempts to override the constitution directly were abandoned some month later, the Torch Commando soon ceased to represent a significant oppositional movement (Omer-Cooper 205).

Nevertheless, other white anti-apartheid movements were more interested into issues of racism, including a women's movement known as the Black Sash. The name derives from the women's clothing: a black sash was worn by the group of white demonstrators (F. Welsh 452) from 1955 onwards, when Strydom succeeded in overturning the clause in the constitution which protected the rights of Coloureds (Omer-Cooper 205). The women's movement was primarily concerned "with humanitarian and civil rights issues generally" (Omer-Cooper 205) and, as Omer-Cooper and Frank Welsh agree, it was effective over a long term.

While the Black Sash movement adhered to a classic liberal way of thought, other groups were openly communist. Probably one of the most famous white anti-apartheid fighters was Bram Fischer, an Afrikaner communist, supporter of the ANC and the SACP, and chair of the outlawed Communist Party:

Most who were influenced by Afrikaner nationalism in the early twentieth century became segregationist conservatives. But Fischer, from a leading Afrikaner family in the Free State, was driven to an anti-imperialist analysis of political and economic power in South Africa that led him to communism and identification with the black struggle against white minority domination [...] In the course of his exceptional life, Fischer was condemned as a traitor by many Afrikaners and other whites. Among blacks, however, he was greatly admired, achieving a remarkable status.
(Howard Barrell 342)

As will be shown in *section 4*, some characters of Brink's and Gordimer's novel share several experiences with Fischer, including exclusion from fellow whites. Fischer's end was quite tragic: he was caught and imprisoned in 1965 and died of cancer after 10 years of imprisonment (Howard Barrel 342).

One reason why communists were persecuted by the government lies in the fact that white communists not only supported anti-apartheid movements in demonstrations and other peaceful ways but through violent actions. John Harris, a member of the African Resistance Movement (ARM), which was "mostly composed of disillusioned liberals and young communists", for instance, planted a bomb in Johannesburg Central Station in 1964, causing the death of an old woman and the mutilation of a small girl – a crime, which according to Frank Welsh, "played into the hands of the government as a reason for ever-stricter suppression" (462). Although a member of a communist group, Harris was a member of the Liberal Party (F. Welsh 462) – a fact which perfectly illustrates the fuzziness of ideologies in the South African liberation movement. As an official political party, the Liberal Party was forced to adhere to laws and forms of non-violent protest; the ARM, on the other hand, provided dissidents – in this case, mainly lecturers and students – with the possibility to join a militant group, whose members "committed random acts of sabotage, hoping that this would force government to change course" (Giliomee & Mbenga 341). Especially those frustrated with the apparent failure of non-violent resistance felt attracted to more risky alternatives. The question if the abolition of apartheid justifies the use of violence is a major theme of Brink's novel *An Act of Terror*.

In addition to individual leftists and political parties, there were other institutions which brought about vehement and enduring resistance. Not only were there black student movements but also several white youths who were in favour of the abolition of apartheid (Cohen/Cobbett 6). Also churches, especially English-speaking communities, played an important part in the resistance. In the 1960s, it even seemed that Dutch churches would join the protest, condemning apartheid as "un-scriptural and un-Christian" but, in fact, they provided little fundamental criticism (F. Welsh 462). In December 1960 members of the World Council of Churches consulted at Cottesloe, a part of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, where several political resolutions – some of which contradicting apartheid ideology – were verbalised. For instance, it was found that there were no scriptural grounds for prohibiting mixed marriages, that several apartheid laws and principles violated universal human dignity and disrupted African family life, and, finally, that Afrikaner nationalism provided the immediate danger of "mak[ing]" the interests of a people an absolute value that took the place

of God” (D. Welsh 185). Verwoerd immediately reacted to such liberal opinions, in particular to the Cottesloe resolutions, by implicitly threatening and warning them that politics should remain in the government’s hands; further, “he recognised that their continuing support was vital, and that dangerous heresies committed by leading churchmen must be snuffed out immediately and vigorously lest their corrosive influence spread, with dangerous implications for Afrikaner nationalist society” (D. Welsh 186). Consequently, a ‘witch-hunt’ was inaugurated after Cottesloe, which whipped resistant churches into line in order to ensure their future support and promotion of apartheid ideology. Thereafter, “the perils of overt dissidence were considerable: an estimated 60 per cent of dominees and, in many congregations, some of the ouderlinge (elders) as well, were members of the Broederbond, and could be relied upon to keep a watchful eye out for doctrinal deviations” (D. Welsh 188). It was until the 1980s that resistance within churches enflamed anew, as many Afrikaners became increasingly dismayed and distrustful by the disagreements within the NP, placing their last hope to preserve an Afrikaner unity into their churches. In 1986 a policy document, named “Church and Society” was formulated, which condemned racism and the separation of peoples as non-conforming to principles promoted in the Bible. Further, attendance in services was opened to all races (D. Welsh 191). Although Welsh doubts that these denunciations of apartheid represented the opinion of the majority of white congregants, its significance is given by the fact that apartheid had been openly criticised by one of the Afrikaner’s most important non-governmental institutions: the church (Welsh 192).

Journalistic writing and literature constitute another major area, in which apartheid critique was partly possible. In the 1950s criticism through English language newspapers (e.g. the Rand Daily Mail) reached unprecedented heights with articles criticising government actions without at the same time affiliating to a specific party (Zalusky 66). In times of Apartheid, journalist liberalism was widely limited by strict government restrictions, as well as by economic interests of publishers, for running a liberal newspaper provided the risk of losing part of one’s readership (Zalusky 101). Despite this rather non-democratic situation newspapers and print media in general represented an important medium for internal opposition and critique, as electronical media was largely compliant to NP requirements and ideology (Zalusky 99-100). It should be noted, however, that while the Anglophone press represented an important mean of resistance, Afrikaans newspapers followed a predominantly pro-NP course (Zalusky 100). Moreover, as Zalusky (100) convincingly argues, even individual newspapers should not be considered liberal or critical in general; rather it was some liberal authors and editors who fought for equality and reform, always running the risk of severe consequences. The case of

publisher Donald Woods illustrates that the government's tolerance with liberal journalism was limited, for when Woods started to investigate into the death of Steve Biko in prison, he was forced to flee the country in 1978 (Zalusky 102). Clearly, journalistic investigations into police matters were not tolerated, as the publication of police violence would have evoked the risk of arousing a wide mass' critique. The issue of liberal journalism shall be further discussed and illustrated by the following literary analysis and is especially prominent in Brink's *A Dry White Season* (writing) and *An Act of Terror* (photography).

The analysed novels also illustrate the deeply political nature of South African writings: Literature first emerged as a strong new source of opposition during the Vorster years, when the Hertzog Prize for Prose was awarded to the controversial novel *Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins* (*Seven Days with the Silbersteins*) by Etienne Leroux, a highly-respected Afrikaner writer using his novel to parody contemporary politics (F. Welsh 471). Other critical novels soon followed, in both Afrikaans and English, whereof those in English enjoyed a wider readership and were thus more influential. As the government recognized this potential source for sparking international critique and resistance, several novels were banned, including works by André Brink and Nadine Gordimer (F. Welsh 472). The highly political, historically well-founded, and critical nature of their works turns them into ideal mirrors of the political and social situation in times of Apartheid.

Generally it can be said that while in the early years of apartheid liberal opposition was mainly provided in the form of political organisations, in the 1970s and 1980s resistance through individual liberals increased, with business men and journalists gaining more power and effective width (Zalusky 83). Business owners started to criticise racist barriers in the labour market anchored in South African laws. Although this criticism was primarily uttered for economic reasons and based on self-interest (Zalusky 94), its power should not be underestimated, as in other cases, economic depression has been a motor for political reforms.

Still, liberalism and criticism were rare among Afrikaners, whose majority was compliant to government measures. As was already indicated in the previous section, however, in the 1980s even Afrikaners developed a more critical perspective. Secularisation and economic crisis led more and more members of the hegemonic group to perceive the downside of a divided people (Zalusky 104 & 106). The majority of these Afrikaner dissidents originated from political, economic, intellectual and cultural elites, with liberalism being probably most fruitful among academics and intellectuals (Zalusky 104 & 106).

Another form of protest by individuals, even though on a smaller scale, is certainly inter-racial friendship, especially between whites and blacks. As Zalusky argues, antiracism and relationships between members of different anti-apartheid alliances also proved a considerable danger to white dissidents. Although it should be considered a form of personal resistance, it is at times considered somehow ambiguous, for the frequently encountered assumption that the South African conflict was one of political-moral principles rather than one between races might be considered simplistic and partly naïve (Zalusky 45).

White liberalism, in general, is often considered problematic due to various reasons. Firstly, as Biko argued in the quote above, even if white dissidents experienced exclusion, discrimination and even state violence, they continued to belong to the hegemonic group and, consequently, enjoyed certain privileges in comparison to their non-white comrades, including better housing and a generally superior financial situation. MacDonald convincingly lists the challenges of stepping out of one's group if one is used to a superior social position (25). As I have argued elsewhere, "[w]hite liberals in South Africa too might have found it extremely difficult to adopt another point of view" for "[t]hey saw Apartheid – even the downsides of the system – from a white perspective" and thought in white categories (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 1). Therefore, several liberals continued to adhere to political hierarchies based on the subject's level of westernization and judged black Africans according to the degree to which their life and manners fulfilled European – or western – standards; Blacks living a more traditional African lifestyle were often still considered to be inferior to whites (MacDonald 24).

Moreover, as was already outlined above, the motivation of several whites' for supporting the opposition might have been a certain feeling of injustice. Thus, the act of joining blacks in their struggle and attending their meetings might in some cases have been primarily conducted in order to calm their guilty conscience caused by their implicit complicity (Lazerson 4). This is supported by Straker's reflections on the influence of her youth in South Africa on her later life and work. Interestingly, she reports that for her as a white woman it felt easier to speak out in public in times of apartheid than it is now after its abolition:

I find it strange that, despite press censorship in apartheid, I felt freer to speak then than I do now. In reflecting on this, I realize that during the apartheid years, as a result of structural disempowerment of Black people, it was easy to feel authorized to speak on behalf of the Other. [...] [T]here was an experienced authorization to speak of the plight of the dispossessed, as White voices had more power. However, in speaking out, one also reinforced the power relations that were in existence, but it was the lesser of two evils. Furthermore, when speaking out against apartheid there was a sense of moral clarity that facilitated an inner confidence. Whites who spoke out were sure that that [sic] even if they were not heard by sections of the White South

African community, they would be heard almost everywhere else. Thus, during this time I did not question my right to have a voice.

(Straker 687)

As the quote shows, Straker's whiteness evoked a certain feeling of privilege of speech, which seemed natural to her. Further, it was mainly her bad conscience that moved her to support the anti-apartheid struggle. This also entails that the motivation of some white dissidents was not always as idealistic and political as it might seem but rather personal, intrinsic, and individualistic (as *section 6.1* will show, Ben serves as an example for a very personal and less political motivation).

Not only in the South African context but in general, the term 'liberalism' itself is often misinterpreted, or at least interpreted in various ways:

There is no single, unambiguous thing called liberalism. All the liberalisms that have existed, and that exist, select – deliberately or unconsciously – certain items from an accumulated and crowded liberal repertoire and leave others out, both because some elements are incompatible with others and because intellectual fashions and practices change.

(Freedon 1)

This also explains why in South Africa, communists and liberals were largely committed to the same mission, while in other contexts their ideals might seem contradictory. The historical tradition of philosophical liberalism or classic liberalism reaches as far back as the 6th century BC, the time when the first democracy was established in ancient Greece and since then it has developed in various directions and has hardly remained the same (In der Mauer 11). It should also be noted that for the purpose of this thesis, political liberalism is more relevant than economic or philosophical liberalism¹. Consequently, the deviating economic ideologies of liberalism and communism are considered less relevant than their shared goal of racial equality.

Liberalism as such, thus, denotes an abstract idea, which, "was never as pure as its philosophical nature proposes" (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 12). Politics, parties, and governments considered liberal failed to live up to philosophical ideas and hardly combined the majority of characteristics mentioned above. The same applies for several agents considered 'liberal' in times of Apartheid: as shown above, especially the 'liberal' ideology of certain political parties is open to doubt. Also in other nations, 'liberal' parliaments or institutions were often, for example, of an aristocratic nature, as they excluded those people unable to afford to pay regular taxes from the franchise (In der Mauer 37). Moreover, the late introduction of female suffrage, even by nations widely considered 'liberal', perfectly illustrates the problematic notion of the term; women were not considered equals for the longest time in human history. In other instances, the coalition of liberalist and nationalist values proved fatal,

¹ For the distinction between 3 different types of liberalism see In der Mauer, 9.

leading European liberals in the wrong direction and contaminating liberal ideas with radical propaganda (Rácz 15 and In der Mauer 51). Further, liberalisation not always ended inequality but rather paved the way for even greater gaps between rich and poor, as it happened in Manchester, where the liberal Manchester party advocated free trade without any legal barriers. This economic liberalism, however, opened the doors to full and open competition and consequently to mass poverty and dogmatic capitalism (In der Mauer 46-47).

Given the various different (mis)interpretations of liberalism, it is hardly surprising that white liberals, who arose from a small minority, failed “to establish durable liberal values in an impenetrable system like the Apartheid society of South Africa” (Lichtenegger, A Man Must Know 12). As a consequence, it appears even more crucial to determine our understanding of the concept ‘liberalism’ in more detail before applying it to the analysis of novels. Freeden’s suggestion of defining 5 layers of liberalism, of which some might sometimes disappear or be overshadowed, seems highly useful to account for different interpretations of liberalism. In the context of the South African freedom struggle two of these layers are clearly most prominent. Thus, with regard to apartheid liberalism defines...

- 1) A theory of restrained power aimed at protecting individual rights and securing the space in which people can live without governmental oppression.
- 2) A theory that recognizes the diversity of group life-styles and beliefs and aims for a plural and tolerant society

(Freeden 13)

With this clear-cut definition, the problems indicated in this section will be exemplified and examined in more detail in the analysis of liberalism in South African novels in *section 6*. Due to the diversity and various facets of white liberalism in times of South African Apartheid, white support brought both benefits and challenges. On the one hand, whites often brought in certain skills and traits which were clearly beneficial for anti-apartheid organisations. Especially printers, writers, lawyers, journalists and fund-raisers were of high value but also the general advantage of whites regarding wealth, formal education and mobility could be used to further national liberation (Lazerson 3). On the other hand, white dissidents not only challenged the apartheid system but also the ideology of several resistance movements by questioning the prevalent concept of collective identity based on race.

4. Identity in South Africa

Considering the various race conflicts in South African history, as well as the generally complex social structure, hardly any other country in the world seems more interesting for exploring issues of identity. Especially prevalent group dynamics and conflicts, with each group vouching for their respective interests on a political, social and individual level, turn collective and national identity into a highly thought-provoking subject. This section aims to answer but also to raise questions about the way *being South African* was experienced in times of apartheid.

4.1. Individual and Collective Identity

Following Stuart Hall's suggestions, the author of this thesis understands identity as manifold and at times contradictory. Individuals do not possess one identity but several, which are always "in the process of formation", for "identity means or connotes the process of identification, of saying that this here is the same as that, or we are the same together in this respect. [...] [S]tructure of identification is always constructed through ambivalence" (Hall 47). This statement has two central implications: First, identity is not conceived as a stable, inert, universal quality but constantly adapts to the individual's experience and environment; the subject is always in the process of change. Related to this point is the second implication: identity formation does not take place in the vacuum of an individual's mind but is constructed in relation to others, as we constantly compare ourselves to people and objects to establish differences and similarities. As a theorist of post-structuralism, Hall opines that all our thoughts, images, and experience of the world around us are in fact constructs of discursive practices, especially of language use. Moreover, post-structuralism is characterised by the following understanding of identity: "It accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (Hall 4). Thus, someone can, for instance, identify as lawyer, father, Afrikaner, liberal, and South African citizen at the same time, whereby some of these identities might at times be contradictory and antagonistic. An Afrikaner liberal might identify as an Afrikaner, while at the same time his political stance is clearly contradictory to main-stream opinion, as well as to the official policy of the NP (Afrikaner) government. Similar antagonistic identities can also be found in other racial groups, as for example, in black and coloured women's struggle for emancipation. Trying to combine the national liberation struggle with their female interest in gender equality and the right to vote for men and women of all races, these women were confronted with the male leadership of the

ANC, who was of the strong conviction that national liberation should be considered prior to women's emancipation (Lichtenegger, Repeal the Pass Laws). Female members of the ANC thus comprised contradictory identities, as they identified as both females and members of the national liberation struggle, and the objectives of their sub-organisation were at times incompatible with those of the ANC leadership. Each of those women, every South African, and, in general, every one of us is composed of multiple, diverse identities, which may ever so often be antagonistic.

Due to the complex social structure of South African society the impact of group dynamics on identity formation appears crucial to gain an understanding of individual but also of cultural and national identity. Antonio Gramsci's concept of the *subaltern*, which he first discussed in his article „Notes of Italian History“, written between 1929 and 1935 and later published in his famous *Prison Notebooks*, provides a useful concept for understanding social relations in a hegemonic society. Gramsci uses the term *subaltern classes* for socially lower-ranked people who are dominated by a ruling elite, which robs them of their right of participating in the creation of local history as individuals of the respective nation. In his text, Gramsci primarily refers to Italian farmers and workers suppressed by the Italian Fascist Party but his concept is applicable to hegemonic social power structures in general. He further opines that the subaltern classes are not allowed a history of their own in public social discourse and are denied access to cultural and social institutions. As I have argued elsewhere (Lichtenegger, Living and Feeling Apart 6), both points are true for non-whites in times of apartheid: Discriminating legal regulations strongly limited their room for action, while education focused on teaching the history of the hegemonic power group, for “Apartheid education in South Africa promoted race, class, gender and ethnic divisions and has emphasised separateness, rather than common citizenship and nationhood“ (Naicker). The only way to resolve such asymmetric power structures was, for Gramsci, the dismantlement of the master-slave pattern².

Gramsci's work has been discussed by various authors, with the Indian-American feminist and post-colonial critic Gayatri Spivak representing the probably most important re-thinker of his concept of the subaltern. In „Can the Subaltern Speak?“ Spivak not only discusses Gramsci's theory in the framework of new social developments, such as capitalism and globalisation, she also directly criticises the supposed autonomy of subaltern groups. Referring to Hindu women's situation under colonial rule, Spivak provides an answer to the question posed in the title of her text: Hindu women found themselves in a contradictory position, as

² For a more detailed discussion of Gramsci's concept see Louai 4-8.

they were torn between Hindu traditions on the one hand, and newly introduced British, humanist principles on the other hand. This position deprived them of their voice, for both (primarily male) parties lent them their voices and, thus, took them the chance to speak for themselves; or in Spivak's words: the subaltern cannot speak. El Habib Luoai provides two plausible interpretations for Spivak's central argument: It may either imply that the suppression of the hegemonic group hinders the voicing of resistance by subaltern groups, or that the only language available to the subaltern is the dominant language.

In South Africa, the linguistic situation is indeed complex: numerous languages and even more dialects exist. Today, eleven official languages and even more non-official, more local languages and dialects are recorded, including Xhosa, Zulu, English, and Afrikaans (Southafrica.net). Although the mother tongue of a small minority, Afrikaans was the dominant language of apartheid. Members of the subaltern classes, however, would have primarily spoken other languages than Afrikaans, namely African languages – and English. If one reviews texts of protest, as for instance by the ANC (see *figures 5 and 6*), or critical literature, most works were published in English. The most plausible explanation for this is the huge variety of languages spoken by members of the anti-apartheid movement, which required a common language of resistance. In the struggle against Afrikaner dominance, “[t]he choice of English instead of Afrikaans as the language of national liberation becomes obvious if the unpopularity of Afrikaners among non-whites is considered” (Lichtenegger, *Living and Feeling Apart* 8). Thus, although the subaltern groups rejected to use the mother tongue of the dominant power group, they chose another language of power, English, in order to facilitate communication. English served as a lingua franca, which would also be understood by foreigners. At the same time, if an African language had been chosen for the purpose of inter-organisational conversation, white liberals would have encountered a clear language barrier. Indeed, based on the comment on voice by Gilian Straker quoted in *section 4*, we might even argue that the use of English could have encouraged white liberals to speak on behalf of non-whites.



Figure 5: ANC poster announcing a meeting of women (archives.anc.org.za)



Figure 6: ANC poster demanding the release of political prisoners (archives.anc.org.za)

After having explored the relations of language and power structures, the discussed concepts may now be related to questions of identity and to the purposes these subaltern classes might serve for the identity formation of the hegemonic group. As one of the world's most important theorists of post-colonialism, Palestinian-American critic and author Edward Said provides a helpful theory for explaining identity and conflict in South African society: In his work *Orientalism* he compares the way colonial rulers presented North America and the Middle East in the 19th and 20th century. His results suggest that the Orient was portrayed as a negative inversion of the Occident, i.e. the western world, or in Said's words: "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (Said 1-2). This implies that the Orient is used by the West to establish a positive self-definition through a demarcation from the supposedly backward Other. Hence, the term Orientalism is used to denote "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made

between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’ (Said 3). By establishing absolute difference between two poles, this binary division creates hierarchies in the minds of all subjects involved and ascribes specific, evaluative qualities to the two opposing concepts, whereof some examples are provided in *table 1*.

WEST / OCCIDENT	EAST / ORIENT
positive/ presence	negative/ absence
rational	irrational
democratic	despotic
progressive	timeless

Table 1: Two opposing concepts – West and East (Said 1977)

As the table shows, positive values, such as democracy, progress, and rationality, are ascribed to the West, while the Orient is said to evoke images of a despotic, timeless, and irrational society. Clearly, it is an attribution of values, not factual reality. Through his analysis Said unbosoms the construction of the Orient or Orientalism by western powers. Although Said writes about the Orient, I would argue that

not only Occident and Orient but all hierarchical social structures based on racial theory do clearly involve the creation of mental concepts of the other group, which serve to define and legitimate the identity and power of the dominant group. South African Apartheid, for instance, is based on the assumption that Afrikaners (and maybe also British or other Europeans) are the class fit to rule, as they bring progress, democracy (which is highly questionable in a society of racial segregation), and rationality to the African peoples, who have up to then lived a deeply ‘primitive’ life. How else could have so many Afrikaners lived with a peaceful mind in a society of utmost inequality if the majority of them had not believed in the rightfulness of Apartheid and white superiority.

(Lichtenegger, *Living and Feeling Apart* 10)

I have used the term *Euroafricanism* to refer to a South African version of Orientalism, which may have served similar identity-defining purposes as Orientalism, namely the establishment of a positive self-image among Afrikaners through a clear separation from non-white cultures, which were seen as the negative pole to progressive European/Afrikaner culture (Lichtenegger, *Living and Feeling Apart* 10). Following Jacques Derrida’s ideas of binary categories, whites clearly represented the unmarked norm in South Africa, with blacks being constructed as the negative Other (with Indians and coloureds remaining somewhere in-between). Kathryn Woodward relates Derrida’s concept to power relations, maintaining that “[d]ifference can be constructed negatively as the exclusion and marginalization of those who are defined as ‘Other’ or as outsiders [...]” (Woodward 35). In times of apartheid, blacks can be clearly identified as the marginalized Other, who were excluded from political participation by law. Gilian Straker’s “Growing up in Conflict. The Personal and the Political” perfectly illustrates that this

marginalisation and binary opposition was not only felt by the subaltern groups but also by whites. Reflecting on the consequences of South African society on her personality and interests, she writes:

[A]ll around I sensed the irrationality of the society I inhabited. It seemed so blatantly driven by passions of the mind, including aggression and the ugly emotions (Ngai, 2003) of envy, rage, and greed.

(Straker 681)

Further, she notices the polarization of South African society. It was especially her extended stay in the US which enabled her to see her home once again in a new light:

On my return, I was again struck by the polarization in the society and how hard it was to not slip into the paranoid/schizoid position and to organize one's world into allies and enemies.

(Straker 683)

Straker thus refers to the two power groups of South African society, which were experienced by her as a binary opposition evoking schizoid feelings and a constant fear of the Other. Even though Straker's view might be described as liberal, or at least as tolerant, she opines that "if one grew up under apartheid, it is impossible not to be subject to a racialized mind" (Straker 688). For Straker, race is always present: "the issue of racism occupies my mind and I don't think its occupation would be as intense or as enduring had I not grown up in South Africa" (Straker 688).

The analysis of novels by Brink and Gordimer will provide several examples, which perfectly illustrate how the definition of the self by differentiation from other social, national, or racial groups contributed to South Africans' understanding of collective identities. It will be shown that "such identities are based on classificatory systems, resulting from perceptions of similarities and differences" (Lichtenegger, *Living and Feeling Apart* 11), whereby a subject may be classified according to his/her gender, profession, race, nation, religion, class, or any other category. Perceptible symbolic characteristics, such as language, fashion, age, skin colour but also behaviour might serve to identify someone as a member of a particular group. It should be noted, however, that "these cultural categories are contingent; they may change over time and space" (Lichtenegger, *Living and Feeling Apart* 12). The very particularity of South African collective identity lies in the fact that an individual's characterisation is always visible: "Race defines the most important category according to which collective identities are established; its most obvious characteristic in this context, i.e. skin colour, cannot be hidden" (Lichtenegger, *Living and Feeling Apart* 12). While this particularity of open group membership may evoke conflict and even trauma (Fanon), Catherine Woodward too seems correct in maintaining that "it can [also] be celebrated as a source of diversity, heterogeneity

and hybridity, where the recognition of change and difference is seen as enriching” (35). Unfortunately, this was seldom given in the era of apartheid but hope for South Africa’s future remains.

4.2. National Identity

Based on these ideas on personal and collective identity in a society with a clear hegemonic power structure, the question of national identity in South Africa seems of high interest. Mandler is certainly correct in stating that:

[W]hen we write about almost any kind of human cognition, behaviour or activity, we are (or should be) writing in part about ‘national identity’ – and vice versa; that is, almost any kind of human cognition, behaviour or activity also acts to construct our national identity.

(Mandler 273)

Hence, the question of national identity should also be raised with regard to South Africa: Is a feeling of unity possible in a world in which one group constantly suffers under the dominance of another?

A poll conducted by The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in 2015 (see BusinessTech.co.za) revealed that even 11 years after the end of apartheid national unity is far from being achieved. 61.4% of respondents (n=2.219) felt that race relations had not improved since 1994 and more than 60% had experienced racism at least occasionally. Moreover, relationships were still primarily established within one’s own race group, for the respondents mainly associated themselves to people who spoke the same language (31.6%) or belonged to the „same racial group“(23.7%). It can be assumed that during apartheid, the situation was similar or even worse and people felt primarily attached to people who shared their skin colour. Consequently, the existence of South African national identity in the sense of national unity seems very improbable. Then, on the other hand, the term *national identity* may be interpreted in two ways:

First, it may be understood as a kind of abstract affection to one’s fellow citizens, or, secondly, as a very subjective feeling of being South African, or, in other words, as a feeling of nationalist belonging. In both cases, similar to personal identity, national identity is constructed via difference or otherness in comparison to other human beings, or nations.

(Lichtenegger, Living and Feeling Apart 23)

The first interpretation can be best explained with Benedict Anderson’s work on nationalism, „Imagined Communities“, in which he states that “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 36). These communities are not necessarily nations but can also take much smaller forms, such as families or local groups. This

kind of belonging to a nation, of feeling attached, or connected to all fellow-members of the South African nation is highly unlikely to have been experienced under apartheid, for “the otherness within the country seems to dominate over the otherness in comparison to other nations” (Lichtenegger, Living and Feeling Apart 24).

Another way to consider national identity is to understand it as national pride, or a certain feeling of belonging to a country (or defined space and society), rather than to its citizens: “Even members of a split nation may feel that this is the country of their origin, their home, and the place where their friends and family live. For such a feeling no friendship among all sub-groups is needed” (Lichtenegger, Living and Feeling Apart 24). National pride based on sport events, economic success, and other international competitions and comparisons might additionally enhance this feeling of unity and the importance of national identity for individuals. A poll by Houston et al., which examined trends in national pride between 2003 and 2013, found that the majority of South African’s agreed with the statement “I would rather be a citizen of South Africa than of any other country in the world” (83%-91%) and most respondents opined that “South Africa is a better country than most other countries” (73%-84% since 2005). Important national events, such as the FIFA World Cup of 2010, triggered a significant increase in national pride (Houston et al.).

It can be therefore concluded that despite hegemonic power relation and the obvious lack of mutual inter-racial devotion, national belonging, the feeling of *being* South African might have indeed been experienced by South Africans. Nevertheless, collective identities were rather established via race or skin colour than via national belonging. This and other factors contributed to conflicts and traumatising experiences in every-day life.

5. Identity and Trauma

In South Africa, the level of exposure to trauma and violence was and still is relatively high:

South African citizens are widely and commonly confronted with anecdotal accounts of traumatic events, both in the course of their everyday lives and in the mass media, often articulated in the discourse of living in a dangerous and traumatised society.

(Eagle & Kaminer 1)

Due to South Africa's long endurance of police violence, combined with criminal violence, domestic abuse and injuries caused by accidents, the majority of the population has been in danger of being traumatised (Eager & Kaminer 2). According to the South Africa Stress and Health Study of 2007, 75% of respondents had experienced a traumatic event in their lifetime

and more than 50% had even gone through multiple traumas (Williams et al.). The study further revealed that several South Africans had not experienced a traumatic event personally but "have been indirectly traumatised through the sudden death of a loved one, hearing about a trauma that occurred to a person they are close to, or witnessing a traumatic incident" (Eagle & Kaminer 8). Consequently, "very few South Africans live lives completely untouched by trauma and, for many, exposure to potentially traumatic experiences is an inescapable part of daily life" (Eagle & Kaminer 8-9). It is thus crucial to not only explore the causes and symptoms of trauma but also its effects on a person's identity.

Psychological trauma is commonly understood as a form of psychological wounding, as the word is derived from a Greek word meaning 'to tear' or 'to puncture'. This wounding differs from usual grief or pain insofar that traumatic experiences are usually unexpected and "by definition place excessive demands on people's existing coping strategies", causing a subjective feeling of dread, as well as considerable disruptions to one's psychological functioning (Eagle & Kaminer 2). This dysfunction of the psyche may have various origins. South Africans were confronted with traumatic experiences in several different ways, including the following areas (Eagle & Kaminer 8-24):

1. Political violence: Violence originating from the formal state structure was one of the characteristics of the apartheid era (Eagle & Kaminer 8). Widely-spread forms of political violence included "the political detention and torture of those who were active in the anti-apartheid struggle, the abduction and murder of suspected political activists, stoning, shooting and beating of people engaged in political protests, and the intentional destruction of homes and property" (Eagle & Kaminer 10). The state usually denied such acts and lowered rates of state-perpetrated violence. Only after the abolition of apartheid the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) started to exhibit the degree to which state-violence had played a major part in the traumatising and death of numerous victims (Eagle & Kaminer 9):

As the TRC noted in its final report, these forms of political violence were carried out by members of the state security forces in an attempt to suppress anti-apartheid activity, and the victims of these forms of violence were primarily black South Africans.

(Eagle & Kaminer 10)

Further, Eagle and Kaminer note:

Detention without trial was the most pervasive form of repression carried out by the South African state during the apartheid years. Political detention could be an extremely traumatic experience, not only because the conditions in detention were very harsh, but also because apartheid security laws meant that detention

could go on indefinitely. Many South Africans were detained for up to three years without trial. In the SASH survey, 2.4 per cent of men and 0.3 per cent of women reported that they had been detained under apartheid security laws, indicating that, today, many tens of thousands of South Africans are exdetainees.

(Eagle & Kaminer 10)

In police custody torture was frequently administered for obtaining information and/or confessions, and as a form of punishment for opposing the government. TRC testimonies revealed that the security forces employed various forms of torture, including “beatings, electric shocks, suffocation, drowning, deprivation of food and sleep, exposure to the elements, forced posture and excessive physical exercise, attacks by dogs and sexual abuse”, in addition to psychological torture (e.g. humiliation, degradation, or falsely informing the detainee about the death of a relative or friend) (Eagle & Kaminer 11)

2. Criminal violence: Criminal violence includes acts, such as murder, armed robbery, inter-gang violence, and other non-sexual crimes. Today, South Africa still ranks relatively high in the world's league table for violent crime (Eagle & Kaminer 13).
3. Gender-based violence: Women faced an additional threat, for South African women and girls were and still are "at high risk of experiencing intimate partner abuse and sexual violence or coercion", including physical and sexual assaults by intimate partners (domestic violence) or non-partners (Eagle & Kaminer 16)
4. Childhood physical abuse
5. Non-intentional injury
6. Road traffic injuries
7. Burn injuries (primarily children)
8. Indirect traumatising: Eagle and Kaminer point out that one does not have to be directly affected by a traumatic event in order to develop posttraumatic symptoms, as, for instance, also indirect exposure "to a situation where someone else's physical safety is under threat can result in a similar response to that which is common after being directly traumatised" (23). In South Africa, indirect traumatising was caused by witnessing violence or injury to another person (as those listed above) but also hearing about a trauma of a second person, in particular of close friends and family members (Eagle & Kaminer 23).
9. Multiple traumatising: Given the various patterns of trauma exposure listed above it is hardly surprising that several South Africans might have been victims of multiple traumatic experiences (Eagle & Kaminer 24).

Nevertheless, despite these numerous potential causes for traumatisation it is important to note that most survivors of traumatic experiences only go through a short period of disequilibrium without developing long-term symptoms of distress and dysfunction. Only a minority will develop a trauma response that can be classified as a psychiatric disorder. Of those, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) constitutes "the most widely publicised trauma-related psychiatric disorder" (Eagle & Kaminer 28). In contrast to common normal trauma reactions, which include "feelings of anxiety and mild depression, having distressing thoughts and memories of the traumatic event, difficulty sleeping, and feeling hyper-alert to any signs of danger", persons showing PTSD syndromes fail to adapt to their traumatic experience and cannot "continue with their normal daily functioning", not even after a few weeks or month (Eagle & Kaminer 29). First introduced as a psychiatric disorder in 1980, PTSD is characterised by the symptoms described by the American Psychiatric Association in 2000 and shown in *figure 7*:

- A. The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:
 - (1) the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or threat to the physical integrity of self or others
 - (2) the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror
- B. The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in one (or more) of the following ways:
 - (1) recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts or perceptions
 - (2) recurrent distressing dreams of the event
 - (3) acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes)
 - (4) intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event
 - (5) physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event
- C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma), as indicated by three (or more) of the following:
 - (1) efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma
 - (2) efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma
 - (3) inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma
 - (4) markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities
 - (5) feelings of detachment or estrangement from others
 - (6) restricted range of affect (for example, unable to have loving feelings)
 - (7) sense of a foreshortened future (for example, does not expect to have a career, marriage, children, or a normal life span)
- D. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before the trauma), as indicated by two (or more) of the following:
 - (1) difficulty falling or staying asleep
 - (2) irritability or outbursts of anger
 - (3) difficulty concentrating
 - (4) hypervigilance
 - (5) exaggerated startle response
- E. Duration of the disturbance (symptoms in Criteria B, C, and D) is more than 1 month
- F. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning

Figure 7: PTSD symptoms according to the American Psychiatric Association (Eagle & Kaminer 30)

Although the first criterion for diagnosing PTSD "specifies that the person must have experienced an event perceived to be physically threatening", witnessing a traumatic event without being personally under threat is also understood to be a reasonable cause for being traumatised (Eagle & Kaminer 31). Hence, even if many white South Africans may not have experienced physical threat personally, their frequent encounters with violence against blacks, coloureds and Indians might have sufficed to generate symptoms of PTSD.

The symptoms of PTSD can be categorised into three clusters. Firstly, the patient usually re-experiences the trauma "in a manner that the trauma survivor is unable to voluntarily control", for example, in the form of nightmares or day images intruding into his/her consciousness. Further, the person will feel "intense distress and fear, and experience physical symptoms associated with the body's natural response to danger" when being confronted with a so-called 'traumatic trigger', a thing, person, or situation which reminds the patient of the traumatic situation. Also included in the first cluster are flashbacks about the trauma (in particular when encountering a traumatic trigger), which involve "intense sensory re-experiencing of the trauma [...] rather than just an image or thought about the event" (Eagle & Kaminer 31).

The second symptom cluster comprises several avoidance symptoms: the traumatised person is prone to avoid places or situations which remind him/her of the traumatic event. As Eagle and Kaminer point out, "[t]his avoidance may not be restricted to the trauma-specific situation, but may also generalise to the point where the person avoids leaving their home at all, or only goes out when absolutely necessary, and this may substantially restrict their participation in their usual activities" (32). Moreover, survivors frequently try to block out intrusive memories of the traumatic event and to numb themselves emotionally. It is often also avoided to speak about the trauma, even to close relatives, as remembering the event provokes anxiety similar to the one experienced in the traumatic situation - a symptom which is especially difficult for the patient's family and friends (Eagle & Kaminer 32). This may also explain why white dissidents often felt doubly isolated: They were not only excluded due to their political opinion but were probably also unable to share their feelings with uninvolved family members or close friends.

The third cluster of PTSD syndromes involves hyperarousal, an increased level of physical arousal in comparison to the time prior to the trauma. It "entails an ongoing state of the body's 'fight, flight or freeze' response, and involves difficulty sleeping, difficulty concentrating on daily activities, being constantly on the look out for signs of threat and danger (known as hypervigilance), being startled

very easily at loud noises or sudden movements, and becoming easily irritable or angry in response to minor frustrations or perceived hostility from others" (Eagle & Kaminer 33).

The following analysis will show in how far characters have symptoms of PTSD. We must note, however, that in order to classify a psychological condition as PTSD, the person does not only have to show symptoms of every cluster but these symptoms must also "cause the person extreme distress or interfere significantly with their ability to function at work or in their social roles" (Eagle & Kaminer 33). Consequently, a character may show some symptoms of those described above without fulfilling all criteria for PTSD. Apart from that, trauma survivors showing symptoms of PTSD might also develop other disorders, including phobias and mood disorders, such as depression.

Access to psychological services, however, was very limited for non-whites (Straker 684). Some services providing psychological support were, for instance, the detainees counselling services by the South African Council of Churches or the Sanctuaries Counselling Team (Straker 684). Researchers and psychologists of the latter organization soon realized that the commonly used term for traumatized individuals, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, "was a misnomer in the South African context", and who suggested to speak of "continuous traumatic stress" instead (Straker, Moosa, and Sanctuaries Counselling Team). Continuous traumatic stress differs from other forms of trauma insofar that "traumatic stress occurs in less intimate and more political settings, where one's attackers are less likely to be known to one, and where the stress is also more likely to be collective and shared (Straker 684). In this respect, South Africa constitutes a very peculiar environment, as repeated exposure to community violence on a daily basis (e.g. gang violence, school violence, sexual assaults) may cause a feeling of physical threat and insecurity, in public or even at home, in the majority of citizens. Especially for economically disadvantaged individuals "[t]he occurrence of violence is [...] common yet unpredictable with regard to where it may happen, what form it might take and who the perpetrator might be" (Eagle & Kaminer 48).

It may be argued that not only unprivileged non-white groups but also white dissidents (who left the hegemonic group to a certain degree due to their non-conformance to apartheid ideology) might have experienced this ongoing sense of physical threat (for an example see *section 6*). This is due to two main reasons: Firstly, dissidents too bear witness to assaults happening to others and hear "about the violence experienced by [...] friends" (Eagle & Kaminer 48). Secondly, if they are named communists by the government or reside in townships and similar more violent areas, they might feel physically threatened themselves. As the situation

of individuals who find themselves under prolonged stress differs considerably from 'classic' PTSD patients, Eagle and Kaminer convincingly argue for a new form of trauma: continuous traumatic stress, as for these individuals "danger was not past (or 'post') and [...] they faced ongoing risk of further traumatisation" (49). We must note, however, that 'continuous traumatic stress' has not been formally characterised yet, wherefore the differences of its psychological impact in comparison to single traumas have not been scientifically established so far (Eagle & Kaminer 49).

Trauma in South Africa, however, is not only special on the individual level but also on a social one, in the sense that not only a small minority but the majority of South African citizens was most probably traumatised in times of apartheid. Therefore, for describing the psychological consequences of apartheid on a social level, Alexander's definition of cultural trauma seems most appropriate:

Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.

(Alexander 1)

According to Alexander, cultural trauma often involves the acceptance of a certain moral responsibility for the source of human suffering and, thus, the establishment of a solidarity relationship between members of a society who share the suffering of others. Nevertheless, in other cases some members might diffuse their own responsibility or even project the responsibility for their own suffering on others, or in Alexander's words: "by refusing to participate in [...] the process of trauma creation, social groups restrict solidarity, leaving others to suffer alone." (Alexander 1). Especially in times of apartheid – in a society that lived apart – several members of its different racial groups might have tended to shift the blame for their sufferings on the other group(s), even though all groups were part of the same cultural trauma(s).

Further, we must note from Alexander's text that not all social problems - even if they take the form of serious crisis - must necessarily lead to the emergence of collective trauma, as "[f]or traumas to emerge at the level of the collectively, social crisis must become cultural crisis" (Alexander 10). It is an incorrect assumption that potential traumatic events naturally cause traumatization; trauma is not the result of the experience of pain but of the representation of social pain as a fundamental threat to their identity (Alexander 10). Hence, cultural trauma is clearly not natural or automatic but constructed by individuals of a collective: it is a "trauma process" (Alexander 11), as the sociological process of experiencing trauma involves a significant revision of the collective's identity, including "a searching re-remembering of the

collective past" (Alexander 22). As traumatic events influence one's individual identity – or identities – traumatising events which effect a whole nation effect the way its society is perceived; collective and national identities are shaped accordingly. Consequently, it should not come as a surprise that, in the analysed South African novels, most main characters undergo an immense development throughout the story; their experiences lead them to see the world with new eyes, their trauma changes their identity. This aspect, however, shall be discussed in more detail in *section 6*.

6. Liberalism & Identity in South African Novels

After having established the theoretical ground for the following literary analysis, this chapter comprises the analysis of four novels by the South African authors André Brink and Nadine Gordimer. For each novel, the following research questions will be answered:

- How are the experiences of white liberals presented in the novels?
- What image of inter-racial relationships is provided?
- How is the life and identity of liberals, as well as of their close relations affected by their liberalism?
- What possibilities and consequences of political opposition by Afrikaners are represented?
- Where are the limits of the characters' liberalism?
- In how far is liberalism presented as traumatizing (for liberals and/or close friends, family, etc.)?

In order to answer these questions, the focus of the analysis will be placed on the white main characters. Their actions, general behaviour, and language (speech/writings/way of narrating) will be explored with regard to their liberalism, attitude towards members of other racial groups, and their psychological condition. Although, naturally, the novels differ considerably on the story level, they share the common feature of including liberal persons who struggle with their role in South African society. Apart from that, their story, too, was devised by liberals, namely by André Brink and Nadine Gordimer – authors, whose lives partly resemble those of their characters.

6.1 The Authors

André Philippus Brink, born May 29, 1935, in Vrede (Orange Free State), is frequently described as “one of the most recognizable figures in South African literary circles” (AfricanSuccess.org), “whose novels, which he wrote in Afrikaans and English versions, often criticized the South African government” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Brink). Brink grew up in

an Afrikaner family, who lived “in a succession of ‘small dun-coloured villages’” (Tyler). Interestingly, Brink’s parents did not share his later critical attitude but were Afrikaner nationalists, “with all the beliefs that went with it”, including a strict anti-British attitude (Tyler). Consequently, in his early years Brink was not only constantly confronted with white-on-black violence but also with nationalist ideology and preaching (Tyler). After his studies at Potchefstroom University in South Africa and at the Sorbonne in France (Comparative Literature), he became professor of Afrikaans and Dutch literature at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa, and of English literature at the University of Cape Town, where he remained Emeritus Professor of English until his death on February 6, 2015, at the age of 79 (AfricanSuccess.org; Encyclopaedia Britannica, Brink).

Brink was first noticed for his literary skills when his novel *Lobola vir die lewe* was published in 1962. Consequently, he came into contact with other leading Afrikaans writers of the 1960s and “played a major role in their struggle against the harsh censorship system of the apartheid regime” (AfricanSuccess.org). From thereon, Brink belonged to a group of Afrikaans writers known as *Die Sestigers*, or the *Sixtyers*, whose aim was “to broaden the rather too parochial limits of Afrikaner fiction”, or in other words, “depicting sexual and moral matters and examining the political system in a way that rapidly antagonized the traditional Afrikaner reader” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Brink). Brink’s critical stance on Apartheid turned him into the author of the first novel in Afrikaans that was banned under apartheid-era legislation (title: *Kennis van die Aand* (1973)) (AfricanSuccess.org; Tyler). As he stated in an interview with Christopher Tyler, it was the authorship of this critical novel that turned him into a dissident:

Until that time [...] however much I had presented myself as an antagonist to the regime, I was still regarded – because of my language and the colour of my skin – as one of the family. It was a kind of benign tolerance: I was allowed to say and do certain things, because I was Afrikaans, until I’d overstepped an imaginary line. (Brink qtd. in Tyler)

Like many of his characters, Brink was now considered to be a liberal and dissident and was consequently forced to switch to English in order to be able to publish his works outside South Africa (Tyler). As author of 16 novels, Brink was twice nominated for the Booker Award (1976 and 1978), was shortlisted for the Nobel Prize several times since 1979 and won several South African and international awards. His novels have been translated into more than 26 languages and enjoy a world-wide readership (AfricanSuccess.org). In his lifetime Brink also met several ANC leaders in exile and had “high-profile admirers in the organisation – among them Nelson Mandela, who once told him: ‘When I was in prison, you changed the way I saw the world.’” (Tyler).

While Brink repeatedly stressed the political function of his writing, Nadine Gordimer once said that “she is not a political person” per se (qtd. in Bazin) but rather exploring the meaning of life. In an interview with Bazin the author stated:

I wouldn't agree that my novels have arisen from the political context. I happen to have lived in a politically charged atmosphere and milieu all my life; but I was writing long before I was aware of what politics was, so I don't really write out of motivation of politics. I began to write looking for explanations for life. I continue to write out of my sense of the mystery of life, exploring it through my characters.

(Bazin)

Indeed, several of Gordimer's novels portray how politics shape personal lives by exemplifying “what an increasingly radical white South African woman felt, thought, and imagined during the rise and fall of apartheid” (Bazin). At the same time, Gordimer is aware of the consequences of writing about South African politics. In her essay “A Writer's Freedom” she reflects:

Living when we do, where we do, as we do, "freedom" leaps to mind as a political concept exclusively - and when people think of freedom for writers they visualize at once the great mound of burnt, banned and proscribed books our civilisation has piled up; a pyre to which our own country has added and is adding its contribution. The right to be left alone to write what one pleases is not an academic issue to those of us who live and work in South Africa. The private view always has been and always will be a source of fear and anger to proponents of a way of life, such as the white man's in South Africa, that does not bear looking at except in the light of a special self-justificatory doctrine.

All that the writer can do, as a writer, is to go on writing the *truth as he sees it*. That is what I mean by his "private view" of events, whether they be the great public ones of wars and revolutions, or the individual and intimate ones of daily, personal life.

(Gordimer, A Writer's Freedom 45).

In Gordimer's case, this life-long urge to reveal a very personal perception of apartheid had been preceded by non-political writing, as Gordimer commenced her artist activity at a very young age. Born in Springs, Transvaal, on November 11, 1923, Gordimer grew up in a small mining town as the daughter of a privileged white middle-class family (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Gordimer). Her love for reading already developed as a child and was enhanced by the unavoidable isolation and lack of physical activity due to a minor heart ailment, which was diagnosed when she was only ten. Spending all her time reading, Gordimer rapidly possessed an “extraordinary command of the English language” that was soon recognized (Bazin). Having started writing at the age of 9, she published her first story in a magazine when she was only 15. Reading had also revealed to her the world outside of the apartheid system and soon Gordimer became a strong opponent of the policy of the South African government (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Gordimer). Like her first published book, *Face to Face* (1949), a collection of short stories, and her first novel, *The Lying Days* (1953), her other works too thematise the devastating impact of South African apartheid on the lives of individuals: “the

constant tension between personal isolation and the commitment to social justice, the numbness caused by the unwillingness to accept apartheid, the inability to change it, and the refusal of exile” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Gordimer).

Gordimer’s unique style and critical stance won her international fame, as well as several prizes, including the Booker Prize (*The Conservationist*), the Grand Aigle d’Or, several CNA prizes in South Africa, the Common Wealth, Bennett, and Modern Language Association awards, and in 1991 the Nobel Prize for literature (Bazin; The Nobel Foundation). In addition to writing numerous novels, short stories, and essays, Gordimer also lectured and taught at several universities in the United States during the 1960s and 70s. She received honorary degrees from American, British and South African universities. Moreover, Nadine Gordimer was awarded the French Legion of Honour in 2007 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Gordimer) and was (honorary) member of several societies and orders (The Nobel Foundation). The author died July 13, 2014, in Johannesburg, as one of the most celebrated anti-apartheid authors of South Africa.

Today, more than a decade after the abolishment of apartheid, Gordimer’s and Brink’s novels still enjoy world-wide interest and have certainly not lost their relevance as texts documenting the time of South African apartheid.

6.2 *A Dry White Season* by André Brink

After having introduced the authors, this section illustrates how André Brink presents white liberalism in his novel *A Dry White Season*.

6.2.1 Plot & Context

Like the other novels chosen for analysis, *A Dry White Season* (ADWS) was published during apartheid, in 1979. Focusing on the white Johannesburg school teacher Ben Du Toit, it portrays his liberalist attempts leading to his entanglement in the violent conflict between black South Africans and the merciless police forces. Ben is living a normal Afrikaner’s life, “as an ordinary, good-natured, harmless, unremarkable man” (Brink, ADWS 9), when his world starts to fall apart and to change for ever: One day Ben learns of the disappearance of Gordon Ngubene’s son Jonathan during the Soweto riots of June 1976. Gordon, Ben’s gardener and a janitor at his school, is increasingly convinced that his son died in police custody and becomes obsessed with the search for his son’s body. Consequently, he is detained in the central Johannesburg police office at John Vorster Square, originally for additional investigation but he never returns. Ben is highly concerned about his black gardener’s mysterious death and feels responsible for

revealing the truth. Gordon's Zulu friend and extrovert taxi driver Stanley offers him his help and support. On his quest Ben experiences betrayal and violence in various forms and from various parties. Gradually, he loses his belief in the rights of the Apartheid system and turns into an Afrikaner dissident and outsider. Unsupported by family and long-standing friends, he remains more and more isolated in a tightly knit web of docile white citizens. In the end he pays a high price for intruding into the Kafkaesque system of the South African police and his mission ends in his death.

A Dry White Season not only portrays the personal struggle of an individual with liberal aspirations but also mirrors the historical situation of South Africa in the 1970s in general. As an answer to the Sharpeville massacre, the government had gradually strengthened the powers and competences of the state police over the 1960s: 1963 General Laws Amendment Act expanded "detention of individuals without charge, trial or legal representation" first to 90 days, later to 180 and finally to an indefinite number of days (Clark & Worger 84). Thereby it was possible that Gordon and his son could be detained without having committed a real crime. Further, the reaction of the secret police to Gordon's and Ben's inquiries shows the state's increased power over South African citizens, regardless of their race. As Clark and Worger state, by the 1970s, "the state had the intelligence network to uncover resistance and the legal tools to prosecute all who opposed the state" (Clark & Worger 85), including the Security Branch of the police, which kept its activities secret and even reported directly to the prime minister (Clark & Worger 84).

Although numerous similar cases of torture by police forces are documented in Amnesty International reports (see Amnesty International 84-90), it seems plausible that Brink was mainly inspired by the case of Steve Biko, who died in police custody in 1977 after being detained in course of the Soweto Uprising. Biko found himself in indefinite detention, in which he finally died from "massive head injuries sustained during police interrogation" (Clark & Worger 85). His death raised public interest on an international level, wherefore an inquest was held into his death. The police, however, claimed that Biko's death had been an accident caused by Biko's resisting behaviour during an interrogation (Clark & Worger 85). The officer in charge of the security police in Port Elizabeth replied to the question where he "got the authority to keep an injured man naked and in chains in his cell for 48 hours": "We have full authority. It is left to my sound discretion... We don't work under statutory authority" (qtd. in Giliomee & Mbenga 342). It was years later, in the TRC hearings, that Major Harold Snyman, then officer in charge of Biko's interrogation, admitted that his supervisor Col. Goosen had called all officers to a meeting to remind them of the negative consequences the truth would have for

their department. Instructions had been given “that the true facts with regard to this incident had to be adapted or simply not mentioned” (TRC, Amnesty Hearings. Case Number 3918/96). Steve Biko was not the only black South African to die in police custody; within the year of the Soweto Uprising, for instance, “a total of 21 Africans died while being held in police custody” and many more were tortured while imprisoned (Clark & Worger 85). In the cases of the Amnesty International reports, too, involved officers later often denied that the police had taken an active part in the detainee’s death, and in many cases contradictory versions of their death circumstances were stated (see Amnesty International 84-90). This is the fate that André Brink’s characters, Jonathan and Gordon Ngubene share with their real-life comrades.

As the inconsequential trial around Gordon Ngubene’s death in police custody shows, also the legal system and most judges’ decisions supported the status quo; as members of white society they were certainly biased towards maintaining white hegemony. From the 1960s onwards, only conservative judges were appointed to critical cases, whereby it was ensured that law could be used as “the principal instrument for the enforcement of policies that rode roughshod over civil liberties” (D. Welsh 75). Liberal advocates, moreover, increasingly declined appointments in order to avoid acting as an enforcer of laws they found abhorrent (D. Welsh 75). Thus, it is hardly surprising that Ben’s attempts to inquire into Gordon’s death with the help of a white advocate were unsuccessful and inspired him to question a system, in which the personal rights and freedom of individuals were hardly valued.

6.2.2 The Portrayal of Liberalism

It is crucial to understand that a liberal attitude does not simply exist from one moment to another; it develops in an ongoing process and grows out of relationships and experiences. *A Dry White Season* perfectly portrays this process of developing political awareness. Ben Du Toit, the main character and second narrator of his story (large parts of the story are narrated by an anonymous friend of Ben, here referred to as ‘writer-narrator’) is not opposed to apartheid from the start. He is described by the writer-narrator as “an ordinary, good-natured, harmless, unremarkable” Afrikaner (Brink, ADWS 9), who seems “to derive an indispensable sense of security from his routine” and tries to improve the world by “doing quietly what your hand finds to do in your own little corner” (Brink, ADWS 28) – in his case, by inspiring his pupils. Living in one of the white parts of Johannesburg, Ben is a “typical suburban family man – a model citizen with a wife and three children” (Watkins). Although Ben has always supported his black gardener financially in the past few years, his political awareness is first triggered when Gordon approaches him for help in his search for his son Jonathan. Ben decides to offer

his support, not because of any interest in opposing apartheid but because he seems to feel concerned for his fellow beings, regardless of their skin colour. When Ben and his wife Susan have some friends over for dinner Ben explains:

I'm not talking about the system [...] I know we're living in an emergency and that one has to make allowances. I'm also prepared to accept that the Security Police often knows more than we do. I'm not questioning that. I'm only concerned with a couple of people I happen to know personally.

(Brink, ADWS 71)

As I have outlined in "A Man Must Know" (Lichtenegger 2), Ben's engagement in the search of Jonathan and his subsequent investigations into Gordon's death characterize him as a white liberal. He shows one of the main characteristics of liberalism: tolerance. Ben accepts black South Africans as equals who are worth his support and even risking his own life. Thus, he seems to favour "the idea of fair treatment of all citizens" (Lichtenegger, A Man Must Know 2). His commitment to liberal values even pushes him to the boundaries of white freedom, when his attempts to communicate with members of the Special Branch in order to learn more about Gordon's detention start to entangle him in a dangerous cat-and-mouse-game in an almost Kafkaesque system.

Ben's process of developing political awareness is not only furthered by the futility of achieving his goals in official, legal ways, but mainly through his explorations of the dark side of the apartheid system. When Ben has learned of his gardener's death under mysterious circumstances, he is unable to grasp this new reality without seeing it with his own eyes. Therefore, he asks Stanley, Gordon's Zulu friend, to drive him into the township Soweto, where he intends to see his friend's corpse. Unlike Ben, Stanley is aware of the dangers that linger in a black township, especially for a white Afrikaner. He is reluctant to take Ben to Soweto; warns him: "I told you it's no use, man. There were riots all over the place, you forgot? Don't look for trouble. You're out of it so why don't you stay out?" (Brink, ADWS 88). Probably Ben would have really continued to live his average Afrikaner life if it was not for his persistency and eagerness to learn the truth: "Don't you understand I've got to go?", he answers to Stanley's legitimate concerns (Brink, ADWS 88). The following visit to Soweto shows Ben how far away his reality lies from this part of South Africa which awakens a "sensation of total strangeness". Suddenly, he finds himself in "[n]ot just another city, but another country, another dimension, a wholly different world" (Brink, ADWS 89). In the funeral parlour Ben Du Toit finally starts to believe in the death of Gordon Ngubene, but, still, it remains mysterious to him how this could happen:

Now he had to believe it. Now he'd seen it with his own eyes. But it remained ungraspable. He had to force himself, even as he stood there looking down into the coffin, to accept that this was indeed Gordon.

(Brink, ADWS 91)

A little later Ben starts to realize that until he saw Soweto and his friend's dead body *with his own eyes*, he had been blind to the downsides of apartheid:

"I don't think I ever really knew before. Or if I did, it didn't seem to directly concern me. It was – well, like the dark side of the moon. Even if one acknowledged its existence it wasn't really necessary to live with it." A brief moment, the suggestion of a smile. "Now people have landed there."

(Brink, ADWS 96)

The simile shows Ben's sudden shock when he realizes that everything he has been told about Gordon's death is a lie. As I have argued elsewhere, his understanding of the townships as the dark side of the moon reminds the reader of the *Abject*, a concept of Julia Kristeva (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 4). For whites, townships are an unfamiliar place situated at the margins of South African society. They seem to be suppressed from their consciousness, or are at least far away from their daily reality: "It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects" (Kristeva 1). The townships are the *abject*, in the sense that they are not a definable object but "opposed to I" (1). At the same time, the *abject* is closely linked to the self and even if one wishes to expel it, to rid oneself of it, it cannot be abandoned; it is not an *Other*, it is part of ourselves and we would spit ourselves out too: "I abject myself within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish myself" (Kristeva 2). As the *abject* of South African society, the townships are a central part of it and even though the majority of white citizens tries to avoid thinking of these ugly, unfavourable parts of South Africa, they cannot live without them, as they are part of their identity, too. Therefore, townships remain the "in-between, the ambiguous", "something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object" (Kristeva 3). Like the dark side of the moon, these places are hardly consciously acknowledged as part of a white South African's life and, nevertheless, they contribute to his/her identity. Even though their ugliness represents "a burden both repellent and repelled" (Kristeva 4), they cannot be fully rejected without losing one's *self* (cf. Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 4; Lichtenegger, *Living and Feeling Apart* 14-15). The same is true for Ben. His visit to the dark side of the moon even increases his involvement and entanglement in the sorrows of Gordon's family. He wishes to help Emily and Stanley but his blindness only

disappears gradually through Stanley's guidance and several traumatising experiences. Even Dr Hassiem's arrest – the doctor who examined the corpse of Gordon on behalf of his family – fails to awake Ben's suspicion.

Still, as a liberal, Ben continues to believe in the power of law and initiates a court case (financed by Ben) to clarify the circumstances of Gordon's death in the police headquarter at John Vorster Square. Ben assigns his lawyer Dan Levinson with employing the best advocate in Johannesburg but soon his trust in the juridical system is shattered: Present at all court sessions, Ben witnesses the vague, inconsistent, and at times even contradictory testimonies of Dr Herzog and several police officers. After several emotional sessions and unexpected turns the case is surprisingly concluded with the statement that "no conclusive evidence had been offered to prove beyond doubt that members of the Security Police had been guilty of assault or of any other irregularity" and "that Gordon Ngubene had committed suicide by hanging himself" (Brink, ADWS 114). Like the reader, Ben is aware that there is every reason to doubt the rightness of the verdict. He now realises how naïve he has been up to this point; for him, the verdict comes as a shock and sudden disillusion, when he realizes that the law, the fundament of the state, which he believed to be an instrument of truth, is misused to maintain a system based on suppression and inequality (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 5).

This gradual development of political awareness, which is enhanced through specific events, is not unique to the character of Ben Du Toit. Gillian Straker, too, reports of her increasing political interest: "the development of my political awareness has been a life-long process beginning with glimpses of the iniquity of apartheid in childhood, and continuing into the present time" (Straker 680). As readers who are not familiar with the implications of what it means to grow up in a system like South African apartheid, it is important to recognize the fact that as a member of the hegemonic power group it may be difficult to see beyond the ideology and discourse of one's own social group and to understand the inequality of the system.

In *A Dry White Season*, reading and writing are crucial processes for developing political awareness. Ben Du Toit's story is largely narrated by an anonymous writer-narrator, Ben's former university colleague and old friend of the family, whom Ben sends his notes in order to relate his story, so "that it will not be possible for any man ever to say again: *I knew nothing about it*" (Brink, ADWS 316). He is referred to as the 'writer-narrator' because he turns Ben's story into a novel. At the beginning we learn that as an author of romantic fiction he is suddenly confronted with "the litter of another man's life", Ben's life, as Du Toit has chosen him to be the inheritor of his knowledge, writing him that he "may even turn it into a bloody novel" if he

chooses, “[a]s long as it doesn’t end here” (Brink, ADWS 13). Like Ben, the writer-narrator too is blind to the downsides of apartheid and is hardly concerned with political, or social issues; he even explicitly states that “politics isn’t [his] line” (Brink, ADWS 15). Nevertheless, his journalist instincts lead him to be “curious to find out more about the whole baffling affair” around Ben’s sudden death (Brink, ADWS 14), while at the same time the thought of reading Ben’s notes, diary entries and other disconnected documents makes him feel uncomfortable and raises “a feeling of resentment, almost nausea” (Brink, ADWS 9); he does not want to intrude into his friend’s private life but, like Ben, he feels committed to his fellow human being and decides to write down the story that ends in Ben’s death in a hit-and-run accident. This has two important implications: First, readers should bear in mind that both the writer-narrator and Ben (depending on the part of the novel) decide what is told, what is left out, and how the events are presented. The writer-narrator not only uses Ben’s notes but also newspaper articles, Gordon’s letter from jail, and other materials and the reader is unable to know if there was additional information the writer did not include (Sterrer 37). Hence, Ben’s story is certainly told in a biased way. Second, by turning Ben’s heritage into fiction the writer-narrator, too, becomes a “witness to the truth” (Jolly 25); he is entangled as Ben was earlier, as both have become “involved in the life of the Other (represented by black South Africans), breaking down the carefully constructed barriers which apartheid has constructed” (Kossew 86). Like Ben, the narrator is initially an apolitical person but witnessing the downsides of Apartheid clearly affects his attitude (Kossew 100).

The theme of witnessing can be found on three levels: On the story level Ben hands his knowledge to the writer-narrator, who bears witness to the liberal’s experience. It is the writer-narrator, then, who on a second fictional level conveys this information to a fictional reader, who thereby also becomes a witness to the crimes committed under apartheid. Rovit suggests that the reader of any artistic representation of a traumatic event can be considered a “belated witness”, with the witness-artist himself providing a special kind of testimony of a past event, which carries his/her emplotment of the respective event with a specific audience in mind (Rovit 46). Also Felman highlights the usefulness of literature to relive and, thus, to gain a more profound understanding of the past, since the reception of literary testimonies “open[s] up in that belated witness, which the reader now historically becomes, the imaginative capability of perceiving history - what is happening to others - in one’s own body” (Felman 108). Thus, on the third, real-life level, we as readers are belated witnesses too, as we consume Brink’s testimony.

Kossew convincingly opines that it is the final paragraph of *A Dry White Season* which “sum[s] up the circular nature [...] of this political knowledge or involvement” (Kossew 106).

The writer-narrator reflects:

Perhaps all one can really hope for, all I am entitled to, is no more than this: to write it down. To report what I know. So that it will not be possible for any man ever to say again: I knew nothing about it.

(Brink, ADWS 316)

Although Ben’s mission seems to have failed, he was successful in “passing his knowledge on to a next generation of liberals” by writing down his personal experiences of the South African system with its bureaucratic duplicity, manipulation, and violence (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 17). Thus, writing takes the form of a political activity (Kossew 98) that turns Ben a white liberal, not only in the philosophical but also in the political sense. Writing is the central liberal achievement in the novel, since not only Ben but also the writer-narrator and Brink write to provoke change (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 17). Thereby, Brink follows the conventions of a “politically committed documentary novel”: his text “engages directly with the contemporary socio-political situation of the country” and can be seen as a means to oppose the outrageous misuse of power (Iannaccaro 71). Ultimately, Ben, the writer-narrator, and Brink seem indeed very similar: the boundaries between their aims, their liberal actions and their story start to blur, wherefore one might even argue that the writer-narrator may be identified as a mask/persona of the author himself, who once mentioned in an interview that the his reason for writing the novel was “a matter of making sure the people knew about it, and were forced never to allow themselves to forget it” (Davidson 27). Thus, the circle closes, “the political knowledge is passed on to Brink’s readers” (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 18).

6.2.3 Inter-racial Relationships

The personal development of the writer-narrator but also of Ben is strongly influenced by their acquaintances. As Sterrer convincingly argues, it is not only the verdict itself but also his wife’s reaction and lack of understanding which trigger Ben’s development into a real dissident, as he is now determined to find other ways to clear Gordon’s name (Sterrer 87). In general, the development of Ben’s interpersonal relationships both furthers and reflects his development into an outsider, as he moves away from his in-group (the hegemonic group) and towards the Other.

It is especially through Ben’s friendship with the black taxi-driver Stanley that “Ben crosses the ‘frontier’ into the world of black South Africans” (Kossew 100). Prior to Jonathan’s disappearance, Ben’s contact to the Other is limited to work-relationships and occasional

encounters in the white areas of South Africa. He knew Gordon and his family but had no knowledge of their living conditions and every-day sorrows. Through their shared goals Stanley and Ben become companions and it is through Stanley that “Ben suddenly and unexpectedly comes into contact with the underside of the white South African state” (Kossew 100). Thereby, he realizes “that the existing social reality is not the only possible one and that alternatives to it are conceivable and perhaps attainable” (Tajfel in Louw-Potgieter 32) and, moreover, also starts to recognize several intergroup similarities (Louw-Potgieter 33). Stanley introduces him to the Other: the black community. Although this differentiation between one’s own group and the Other is present throughout Brink’s entire novel, it takes time until Ben, too, understands the far-reaching consequences of living apart. In this process Stanley functions as Ben’s guide and teacher (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 6). When he and Ben discuss Gordon’s death, their reactions reveal how different their experiences with death and suffering have been so far:

Ben was shocked by Stanley’s nonchalance. ‘How can you say that? I was hoping all the time – ‘You’re white.’ As if that summarised everything. ‘Hope comes easy to you. You’re used to it.’ ‘Surely that’s got nothing to do with black or white!’ ‘Don’t be so sure.’

(Brink, ADWS 83)

While Stanley is obviously aware that under the Apartheid regime black South Africans would always represent the marginalized Other and that whites constitute the Self or the norm, Ben is quite naïve and only realizes “this dichotomy when the clear boundaries start to blur” (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 6). Ben’s search for truth deracinates him from his family and leads him further and further apart from his own people. His investigations increasingly turn him into an outsider himself and move him to question his identity based on the difference between whites and non-whites:

And so it is beside the point to ask: what will become of me? Or: how can I act against my own people?

Perhaps that is part of the very choice involved: the fact that I’ve always taken ‘my own people’ so much for granted that I now have to start thinking from scratch. It has never been a problem before. ‘My own people’ have always been around me and with me. [...]

‘My people’. And then there were the ‘others’. The Jewish shopkeeper, the English chemist; those who found a natural habitat in the city. And the blacks.

[...] We lived in a house, they in mud huts with rocks on the roof. [...] They laid our table, brought up our children, emptied our chamber pots, called us Baas and Miesies. [...] It was a good and comfortable division. [...] That was the way it had always had been.

(Brink, ADWS 162)

Ben admits that previously he could enjoy the advantages of living his privileged life in blindness and of ignoring the dichotomy and marginalization in South African society. Gordon’s unexpected and mysterious death suddenly opened his eyes for the miseries of the

Other. Thus, the friendship between Ben and Gordon perfectly underlines Posel's words, when he writes that:

For the most part, apartheid institutionalised the intimacy of strangers, and the uncertainty, ignorance, fear, threat and temptation associated with it. But the everyday racial crossings also opened (dangerous and vulnerable) spaces for political allegiances, solidarity and friendships that would ultimately contribute critically to the regime's demise.

(Posel 329)

Further, Brink perfectly illustrates that "[t]he most obvious aspect of apartheid's hybrid of racial distance and racial proximity was the case of those who actively pursued illicit friendships, relationships, business partnerships, and political alliances across racial boundaries" (Posel 357). Despite their promising potential, relationships between whites and blacks were charged, for both parties brought different experiences and expectations with them:

Whites brought their idealism, their guilt, and a desire to be recognized as decent human beings freed from association with a bankrupt system. Blacks brought their own visions, burdens of generations of anger and frustration, perhaps a generalized deference to whites and in some instances an appreciation, undoubtedly mixed with a measure of distrust and wonder, for whites who would willingly seek comradeship and a new identity across the divides of race and class.

(Lazerson 3)

Also Ben experiences this scepticism by blacks, when he is confronted with the mistrust of Julius Nqakula and Emily and Gordon's son Robert. Thereby Brink successfully illustrates the variety of black South African's reactions to white liberals: Unlike Stanley, not all of Ben's black acquaintances were prepared to accept his efforts for the Other.

6.2.4 Liberalism & Identity

Through his investigations and support of blacks Ben loses his ties within Afrikaner society. His quest alienates him from the ones with whom he has identified his whole life and leads him to question his affiliation: "But who are 'my people' today? To whom do I owe my loyalty? There must be someone, something. Or is one totally alone on that bare veld beside the name of a non-existing station?" (Brink, ADWS 163). Henceforward, he is neither one of those who used to be his people, nor can he become a real member of the black community (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 7). He is stranded in-between. Continuing to live a normal white life seems impossible to him, even though, as Biko argues (see section 3), officially, he still seems to have the same rights and privileges as every other Afrikaner.

When Ben obviously suffers under this increasing isolation and confusion of identity Stanley once again points out the grave difference between being part of the hegemonic group or the Other: "Lanie, what you suffering now is what chaps like me suffer all our fucking lives, from the day we give our first shout to the day they dig us into the ground" (Brink, ADWS

238). Thereby Stanley indirectly also refers to the main character's marginalisation as an outsider in the anti-apartheid struggle, which brings him closer to the marginalized non-whites. Ben's despair caused by this new experience of Otherness inspires him to recall the drought he experienced when growing up on a sheep farm with his family:

[T]hat was where I first discovered myself and the world. And it seems to me I'm finding myself on the edge of yet another dry white season, perhaps worse than the one I knew as a child.
(Brink, ADWS 163)

Brink took this imagery of a "dry white season", which also represents the title of the novel, from a poem by the black South African activist and writer Mongane Wally Serote. Her poem is reprinted in the preface of the novel and "describes an arid landscape that functions as a metaphor for the political condition of South Africa" (Jolly 21). In addition, it could also serve as a metaphor for Ben's identity: he finds himself in a dry season, where no way out, no solution, and no definite definition of his identity is in prospect.

6.2.5 Possibilities, Consequences and Limits of White Liberalism

In a world controlled by state power an individual white liberal like Ben finds his possibilities highly limited. Although the Afrikaner is able to support various black South Africans by referring them to Melanie or his lawyer and to collect enough clues to surmise the circumstances of Gordon's death, he only scratches the surface of the Apartheid system and is unable to make any improvement on a bigger scale. Instead, in the course of his investigations several people are even detained, exiled, or killed. The only valuable good Ben DuToit, the writer-narrator and also Brink can offer is political knowledge – "an awareness of the social and political peculiarities of this fragmented nation" (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 18). Thus, their political contribution takes the form of writing, of turning experience into knowledge.

With the conveyance of knowledge as Ben's only success, Brink perfectly portrays the limits of white liberalism. Moreover, even though Ben's attitude towards the Other is quite liberal, some aspects of his behaviour show that his liberalism might be limited and problematic (cf. Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 7-8). One of these problematic instances occurs when Stanley, a large black and in this scene drunken Zulu, unexpectedly visits Ben when he is enjoying Christmas dinner with his extended family. When Ben's father-in-law calls Stanley a *kaffir*, and the latter in return calls him a *boer* – both are terms that were considered inappropriate and humiliating – the whole situation suddenly escalates. Shocked by Stanley's appearance, everybody starts to quarrel, Susan's parents decide to leave, and the party ends in a huge tumult. Finally, Ben and Stanley remain alone in the living room and the Zulu realizes

the effect of his visit on Ben's life. He apologizes, whereafter Ben offers him to have dinner, now that everyone else has left, but despite his good intention, Stanley seems offended:

'Would you like something to eat?'

'You kept the scraps for me?'

That really made me angry. 'Now pull yourself together, Stanley! Say what you've come to say. Otherwise go to hell.'

[...] 'Right,' he said. 'Dead right. Put the kaffir in his place.'

(Brink, ADWS 258)

Even though Ben is a liberal, he has automatically assumed that the Zulu's only reason for visiting a white man on Christmas Day is to deliver some kind of information. For him, he is still (unconsciously) primarily one of the others, one of those who are there to serve, not to be his friends:

'Did you come here to tell me something or to shout at me?'

'What makes you think there's anything I'd like to tell you?'

(Brink, ADWS 259)

Indeed, Ben's assumptions are affirmed, since Stanley tells him about Emily's suicide.

There are a few other situations which reveal Ben's uncertainty concerning Stanley's position, as for instance, when the Zulu visits him to discuss Gordon's death and Ben is forced to choose between the new coffee cups, normally offered to white guests, or old ones that the Du Toits usually only use for themselves. In these times it was unusual for whites to have black people visit one's house as guests and Stanley is probably Ben's first black acquaintance who enjoys this status. Finally, Ben chooses the old cups – an action which indicates "Ben's ambiguous attitude towards Stanley"; on the one hand, he is his comrade, maybe even his friend, but "on the other hand, he does not consider the black man as a full equal" (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 8).

Another indication of the limitedness of Ben's liberalism is his instantaneous acceptance of the role of the leader without any reflections. As Steve Biko sees it, white liberals often even "dictated how their victims should respond to [the] indignities" they suffered from (MacDonald 121) and seldom confined themselves to simply being one of many in the resistance movement. Rather, they automatically claimed the leading role. Beyond doubt, Ben does not really dictate; nevertheless, it is he who manages the whole process of revealing the truth, even when it involves the direct rejection of Stanley's suggestions (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 8). Moreover, Ben fails to question the typical language of racial inequality, for he accepts that Emily and other black South Africans frequently call him "baas" (cf. for example Brink, ADWS 174). This not only shows the deep engraining of the Afrikaner way of thinking, it also

illustrates one of the greatest problems of white liberalism, that is to say that “the rhetoric of white liberalism mirrors the rhetoric of the security forces” (Jolly 26).

Interestingly, regardless of his predominantly liberal behaviour, Ben does not consider himself a liberal and refuses this titling in two situations: When he tries to gain Dr Herzog’s support, Ben seems displeased to be called a liberal: “I’m not a Liberal, Dr Herzog. I’m a very ordinary man who’s had it up to here” (Brink, ADWS 150). Later, Julius Nquakula, the black lawyer who took the first affidavits on Jonathan, too, calls Ben a White Liberal but the latter answers: “I’m not a bloody Liberal [...] I’m an Afrikaner” (Brink, ADWS 181), apparently exasperated by this characterization. Thus, Du Toit’s self-image is not one “of a man with a political mission but one of an average Afrikaner” who is primarily interested in the fate of his friends (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 9).

The limitedness of Ben’s liberal ambitions is underlined by the fact that as soon as more and more black people arrive to ask him for financial, social and political help and guidance, he feels overstrained: “It was getting boring. He couldn’t go on with it. But he was overrun by their collective agony. [...] Sometimes he lost his temper” (Brink, ADWS 286). Ben is eager to help his friends, the Ngubene family, but his aims do not reach further; he is not one of those fighting for the rights of black South Africans in general. When he is confronted with injustice, Ben DuToit often “seems too powerless, too despondent” to help (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 9). Yet, in course of the novel he experiences a conversion “from ignorance to political awareness and involvement” (Jolly 25). After some time, Ben becomes aware of the dangers and the hopelessness of his quest; he acknowledges his enemy’s strength, the Apartheid ideology: “Little by little he comes to the distressing conclusion that an outright fight against the state apparatus is not possible; much worse than losing the battle, it is the impossibility of identifying the enemy that disheartens him” (Iannaccaro 76).

This disheartening futility of Ben’s liberal attempts raises the question of their consequences for his psyche: Was Ben traumatised, and if yes, how is this trauma represented? Certainly, the ineffectiveness and negative consequences of his investigations seem to dishearten Ben and lead him to doubt if his attempts to reveal the truth were the right choice:

I wanted to help. Right. I meant it very sincerely. But I wanted to do it on my terms. And I am white, they are black. I thought it was still possible to reach beyond our whiteness and blackness. I thought that to reach out and touch hands across the gulf would be sufficient in itself. But I grasped so little really: as if good intentions from my side could solve it all. It was presumptuous of me. In an ordinary world, in a natural one, I might have succeeded. But not in this deranged, divided age. I can do all I can for Gordon or the scores of others who have come to me; I can imagine myself in their shoes, I can project myself into their suffering. But I cannot, ever, live their lives for them. So what else could come of it but failure?

Whether I like it or not, whether I feel like cursing my own condition or not – and that would only serve to confirm my impotence – I am white. This is the small, final, terrifying truth of my broken world. I am white. And because I'm white I am born into a state of privilege. Even if I fight the system that has reduced us to this I remain white, and favoured by the very circumstance I abhor. Even if I'm hated, and ostracised, and persecuted, and in the end destroyed, nothing can make me black. And so those who are cannot but remain suspicious of me. In their eyes my very efforts to identify myself with Gordon, with all the Gordons, would be obscene.

(Brink, ADWS 304)

The quote provides strong evidence for Ben's despair and feeling of isolation from black and white South African society. As Cohen and Cobbett point out, white liberals were frequently considered traitors by their fellow whites (6), for they were felt to threaten the "hegemony of Afrikaner power" (Louw-Potgieter 48). Consequently, loyalty was highly important and white dissidents were usually "accused of stabbing 'his own people' in the back" (Brink, *Mapmakers* 246). In the social net of Afrikaners "subscrib[ing] to the specific values of Afrikanerdom was nothing less than a prerequisite for being acknowledged as a person" and family ties were "very important in helping to define you, and in sustaining your whole sense of self" (Brink qtd. in Higgins 9-10). Hence, liberals might be seen as prisoners themselves, because they are silenced by a system of docile citizens that impedes any form of resistance (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 11). In Brink's novel, Ben too experiences these hinderances and hostility by his own family and friends.

Ben's wife Susan might have no black servants and initially bemoans Gordon's and Jonathan's deaths; nevertheless, she condemns Ben's investigations. After the verdict is stated, Susan hopes to return to their normal family life, not because she naively believes that the law must have revealed the truth but because she is aware that Ben's actions could pose a threat to the safety and good reputation of their family. Therefore, she repeatedly warns her husband of the consequences his investigations might have, and when a photograph showing Ben embracing the black woman Emily Ngubene is published in a newspaper, she is seemingly upset and blames Ben for bringing shame on their family. Indeed, Susan is correct in assuming that her husband's interests will damage her life as well as his; It is a major disappointment for Susan when she learns that her contract with the South African Broadcasting Corporation is revoked, as she "becoming an embarrassment to them", because her husband's "name might be linked to some scandal" (Brink, ADWS 263).

Susan is not the only one in Ben's family who opposes his liberal efforts. His eldest daughter Suzette also hardly shows any tolerance for his ideas and goals and is more loyal to the government than to her own father; It is Suzette who ultimately causes Ben's death by

betraying him to the government. She worms herself into his confidence, hoping that he could be seduced to provide her with secret information, which Ben – naïve as he is – finally does: he reveals the hiding place of his secret notes and documents. His daughter, determined to maintain the superior position of Afrikaners, is prepared to coldly betray her own father and even to risk his life for her privileges (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 14).

Although Ben's other two children show more understanding, their liberalism is limited due to different reasons. Linda, his favourite daughter, is neither intolerant nor naïve but values the security of her family higher than the achievement of liberal goals. She encourages Ben to carry on but provides no actual help in his quest for truth. Johan, his youngest child, on the other hand, represents the only family member who truly shows a liberal attitude similar to his father. Yet, it is hard to tell if his motivation for defending Ben's deeds and values really lies in his liberal attitude, or is rather based on his admiration of his father (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 15).

Beyond Ben's family, Melanie Bruwer, a young journalist with English ancestry, to whom Ben develops a strong affection, and her elderly father, Dr Bruwer, are the only other truly liberal characters in *A Dry White Season*. Melanie uses her job at a British newspaper to uncover the unpleasant truth about the Apartheid government. In contrast to Ben, Melanie is more realistic and generally "keeps a cool head", even when their situation continues to deteriorate (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 15). She states that she will "never stop believing in justice" but has learned that "it's pointless to look for it in certain situations" (Brink, ADWS 122). Melanie Bruwer's opinion and support of Ben are indicative of her belief in liberal values, including tolerance and equality before law. She not only helps Ben in various situations but also supports him emotionally, since apart from Stanley, Melanie is the only other person who encourages Ben to join the political opposition and who rescues him from his naivety (Sterrer 47). Melanie's father, Dr Bruwer, shares her liberal world view and animates Ben to become more sceptical of the government and its henchmen, the Special Branch.

Ben's other white acquaintances are less open for apartheid critique. Apart from Viviers, one of Susan's young colleagues, whose comments reveal a quite liberal attitude, other Afrikaners condemn or try to ignore Ben's liberal opinion. When the photograph of him and Emily is published they either react with amusement, avoidance, or open hostility and Susan's father even provocatively asks Ben how he "can [...] side with the enemies of [his] own people" (Brink, ADWS 211). At one point Melanie explains to a desperate and confused Ben that treason by one of the in-group is considered the worst crime by Afrikaners: "Remember, you're an Afrikaner, you're one of them. In their eyes that's just about the worst kind of treason

imaginable” (Brink, ADWS 195). Louw-Potgieter expands Melanie’s argument by explaining that ingroup members of a high-status group with a threatened social identity naturally react strongly against criticism and dissidence (43). Respondents to a questionnaire issued by Louw-Potgieter too shared the experience

that parents, family or friends treated them simply as outsiders from the ingroup and rejected them despite former intimate ties. This [...] experience has proved to be difficult and upsetting for both parties and it would seem that when intimate interpersonal relationships (child/parent, for instance) are unexpectedly redefined in terms of less intimate group membership (Afrikaner/non-Afrikaner), confusion and negative emotions (e.g. rejection, hurt, marginalization, distrust) inevitably result.
(Louw-Potgieter 47)

These feelings are clearly evident in the novel. For want of support within his family Ben finally loses his ties within Afrikaner society. Further, as his doubts quoted above indicate, he also fails to identify with the Other, with those black South Africans for whom he fights. He cannot become a full member of their community because he remains different. This reflects Biko’s third axiom about blackness: “whites could not become black”, with which he expresses the fact that whites will never be able “to identify totally with the blacks” (MacDonald 120) as long as they live in a state of privilege, or in MacDonald’s words: “Whites, having been spared discrimination and protected by racism, could not become black, whatever choices they took as individuals” (120). This inability is, for example, reflected in the language of white liberals, which shares several characteristics with the language of the white suppressors and also by the fact that Ben hardly accepted by the Soweto people because of his privileged position (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know* 10). As Biko states, “‘Non-racialism’ was [simply] a dishonest way for white liberals to reinforce their control” and to silence rebellious blacks (MacDonald 121). As Ben was born in a state of privilege and continuous to live in this state until his death, he fights the system and at the same time feeds from it. Consequently, Ben is excluded by both parties, whites and blacks and his identity remains disturbingly ambiguous.

The exclusion of social groups would certainly be enough to leave an individual in personal crisis. Ben’s situation, however, is even worsened through his constant exposure to various forms of violence. Even though the only instance when Ben personally becomes a victim of direct physical violence is his death through the Special Branch, he experiences psychological and structural violence throughout the whole novel. Disrespect and withholding of information, for instance, constitute examples of psychological violence, while “mistrust, rejection, and betrayal by relatives or close friends are considered to be emotional violence” (Sterrer 80). Further, the Special Branch uses various techniques of intimidation, such as verbal threats, a bomb placed in Ben’s mailbox and another hurled in his study window, shots fired

through the windscreen of his car, etc.), which strongly resemble André Brink's own experiences:

A ban never simply meant silencing you, it meant that you were seen as an enemy of the state. There was an attempt to firebomb my house, to sabotage my car, to threaten my family . . . The house searches that I was subjected to, the interrogations – they were not pleasant to live through.

(Brink quoted by Tyler)

Ben clearly suffers from the violent acts against him, as well as from the traumatising experience of witnessing the trauma of others (see section 5). Even early in the novel, the main character experiences insomnia and is forced to repeatedly relive his traumatic experiences: “But after the light had been turned out he couldn't sleep, however exhausted he felt. He was remembering too much” (Brink, ADWS 75). These trauma symptoms of reliving the past reoccur throughout the novel. When Ben is visited by the Special Branch for the first time, his psychological state deteriorates further; he is so effected that he starts to write a diary as a form of catharsis: “Writing it out in full sentences is salutary, like breathing deeply. Will try. A frontier crossed. So definite that from now on I'll be able to divide my life in Before and After” (Brink, ADWS 158). Another fundamental change of Ben's life is the verdict on Gordon's case, after which he starts losing ground:

From a very early age one accepts, or believes, or is told, that certain things exist in a certain manner. For example: that society is based on order, on reason, on justice. And that, whenever anything goes wrong, one can appeal to an innate decency, or commonsense, or a notion of legality in people to rectify the error and offer redress. Then, without warning [...] you discover that what you accepted as premises and basic conditions – what you had no choice but to accept if you wanted to survive at all – simply does not exist. Where you expected something solid there turns out to be just nothing.

(Brink, ADWS 161)

As the story progresses, Ben shows more and more symptoms of various psychological disorders. The writer-narrator states that most of his notes of his last months “talk about depression, worry, doubt, uncertainty” (Brink, ADWS 223). Ben clearly starts to doubt his sanity, asking himself: “Is there anything I really know, anything I can be absolutely certain of? In weaker moments I fear that Susan might have been right: am I losing my mind?” (Brink, ADWS 266). His ‘losing his mind’ is mainly characterised by paranoid thoughts and a constant feeling of persecution by members of the Special Force:

And all the time, day by day, there was the awareness of being surveyed. Going shopping in a supermarket of a Saturday morning there would be the sudden recognition of a checkered sports jacket in the crowd: Lieutenant Venter with the friendly, boyish face and curly hair; or Vosloo, the squarely built man with the dark complexion; or Koch, the tall athletic one with the large hands. Usually it was no more than a glimpse, often too brief to feel really sure that it had in fact been one of them. Perhaps it was his imagination. One reached a stage where one was expecting them everywhere, even in church.

(Brink, ADWS 222)

In his writing process, the writer-narrator too starts to wonder if all of Ben's notes really reflect reality or if "[p]erhaps he'd imagined the whole persecution. Perhaps there was an illness in his brain, a tumour, a cancerous growth, a malignant accumulation of cells causing him to lose touch with what was really happening. What was 'real', what was pure paranoia? But if that were so, was it possible for a madman to be aware of his own madness?" (Brink, ADWS 285). Towards the end of the novel, Ben's notes are more concise, his style changes, and he repeatedly jumps from one thought to the next (Brink, ADWS 299). Further, he is unable to eat or sleep, feels "[c]ornered", "[c]laustrophobic", like a "bumblebee in a bottle" (Brink, ADWS 299), is confused and depressed:

For a long time, as I lay there trying to clear my mind, I couldn't think coherently at all, conscious only of a terrible, blind bitterness. Why had they singled me out? [...] What had happened to logic, meaning, sense?

(Brink, ADWS 303)

Shortly before his death Ben meets the writer-narrator, who seemingly worries about Ben's nerves, when he states: "There was something paranoid in his attitude, as if he'd lost his grasp on the world" (Brink, ADWS 14). All these symptoms undoubtedly illustrate the serious psychological consequences of Ben's traumatizing experiences as a white dissident.

It is not only Ben, however, who is mentally burdened due to his liberal efforts. The shots fired at the Du Toit's bedroom initiate Susan's gradual mental breakdown (Brink, ADWS 230). Soon, "Susan's nerves were giving in, leading to hysterical outbursts or bouts of crying that left both of them dismayed" (Brink, ADWS 223). Later, her outward appearance starts to reflect her shaky state of mind and Ben is obviously shocked "to see how old her eyes had grown" (Brink, ADWS 239). Susan's depression is even diagnosed, since her doctor instructs her to take sedatives and calls "Ben for a serious discussion of her condition" (Brink, ADWS 262). Like Ben, Susan loses her appetite – probably due to her nervous state of mind – and finally, after losing her job due to the consequences of Ben's liberalism, the only way to save her sanity is to leave Ben in order to save herself.

Other individuals in Ben's social environment suffer from his liberal actions but are not shown to bear psychological consequences. This includes his son Johan, who is mobbed at school (Brink, ADWS 223), his colleagues, who are questioned by the Special Branch (Brink, ADWS 225), and Melanie, who loses her South African citizenship (she possesses a double-citizenship) and is deported to London (Brink, ADWS 283). Even though no information on the state of mind of these side characters is provided, it is plausible that they too suffer emotionally from the respective consequences. However, the reader gets information about the state of mind of the writer-narrator: in the epilogue he starts wondering why the documents sent

by Ben arrived with one week delay and accuses the Special Branch of following Ben's legacy to the writer-narrator, with the motive "to keep [him] under surveillance; to follow the trail from here" (Brink, ADWS 315). He concludes that he "may be influenced by the same paranoia [Ben] had written about" (Brink, ADWS 313).

In conclusion, *A Dry White Season* not only entrusts its readers with the only valuable good liberals, such as Ben, the writer-narrator and Brink have to offer: political knowledge, or an awareness of the social and political peculiarities of this fragmented nation (Lichtenegger, *A Man Must Know*); it also portrays the limits and negative consequences of liberal actions, including mental illnesses, such as depression, paranoia, and trauma. For Brink's main character Ben, his liberalism was indeed a dry white season, "but seasons come to pass" (Wally Serote qtd. in Brink, ADWS 6).

6.3 *An Act of Terror* by André Brink

To further understand the role of white dissidents in the South African liberation struggle this chapter explores how Brink portrays more violent means of resistance in *An Act of Terror*.

6.3.1 Plot & Context

While *A Dry White Season* follows the way of an Afrikaner into non-violent resistance, *An Act of Terror* circles around an Afrikaner activist, Thomas Landman, who plans and commits an assault on no one less significant than South Africa's State President, together with his comrades of a resistance movement, called the "Organisation". Set in the 1980s, the third phase of Apartheid, and published in 1991, the lengthy novel thus focuses on recent developments of those times, including the higher reach and impact of critical journalism, the increase in violent opposition, and the State of Emergency gradually introduced from 1985 onwards (South African History Online). The plan of Thomas and his girlfriend Nina Jordaan to murder the State President, however, fails: The bomb explodes too far away and instead of the President a number of bystanders are killed. Thomas and Nina attempt to flee South Africa separately but Nina's identity is revealed before they can leave the country and she is shot before Thomas' eyes on Jan Smuts airport. Consequently forced to go underground, Thomas has to wait for an opportune moment to leave the country. He decides to seek shelter in the home of an acquaintance he met on a plane trip: Lisa Lombard. Soon, however, he is publicly named as a terrorist but surprisingly Lisa decides to join him in his hide-and-seek game with the Special Branch. Together they flee up the West Coast in the direction of the Botswana border. On the way, the couple not only meets several foreigners and family members who become significant

for their future, they also fall in love. Shortly before crossing the border Lisa dies in a confrontation with the security police, while Thomas loses his right arm but succeeds in escaping into Botswana, where he writes a family chronicle, which is included as ‘supplement’.

Similar to *A Dry White Season*, *An Act of Terror* combines fact and fiction by mixing fictional characters and a made-up assault on the President with references to factual historical events and figures. In reviews it has been pointed out, for instance, that Thomas Landmann, the Afrikaner terrorist, was probably inspired by Hein Grosskopf (Gultig 7), and Sipho and Noni, two black activists, show similarities to Thabo Mbeki and Barbara Masekela (Willemse 29, cited in Viljoen 507). As Kossew explains, the time when the novel was being written was crucial for its portrayal of Afrikaner dissidence, as it was a time, “when change was beginning to make itself felt in South Africa” (Kossew 125) – a fact, which Thomas experiences through his encounters with various types of South Africans, who all portray different opinions on violent forms of white liberalism.

6.3.2 The Portrayal of Liberalism

In contrast to *A Dry White Season*, *An Act of Terror* (AAOT) is concerned with intentional, planned, and – most importantly – violent forms of Afrikaner dissidence. One of the central questions the novel raises is how a privileged Afrikaner like Thomas comes to risk his life for the abolishment of apartheid. Through flashbacks, the reader learns that, like Ben, in his youth Thomas was not consciously aware of the Others around him:

All the images returning to him as he tried to recall it now, were concerned with his family, his few friends, a world inhabited exclusively by whites. As if the others simply had not existed. [...] Who were they? Only if he made a special effort could he introduce them into his memories of childhood: and yet they must always have been there, indispensable, ubiquitous. The accoutrements and trappings of a ‘normal’ youth.

(Brink, AAOT 147-148)

Again, Brink employs a journey to a township to open up the eyes of his main character. As a youngster Thomas accompanies his parents’ black servant “into the ‘location’, that mysterious forbidden world of black people where no white ever set foot”, which represents “an alien planet”, or (like in *A Dry White Season*) “the dark side of the moon” to him (Brink, AAOT 148-149; 234). This was his first conscious encounter with the abject (Kristeva), the other part of South Africa.

Thomas’ process of developing actual political awareness is primarily triggered and enhanced through photography. In particular, it is the famous photo of Hector Peterson that causes this “breakthrough into a layer of [his] mind where it *mattered*, where it touched a nerve and remained smouldering like red-hot coal” (Brink, AAOT 155): “It was that photograph

which made [him] realise what [he] wanted to do, what [he] had to be one day”, as it showed him “that [his] land was no longer the land [he] once thought [he] knew” (Brink, AAOT 156). In general, Thomas reflects, photographs have often marked turning points in his life and have changed him irredeemably. Similar as in *A Dry White Season*, Brink thus uses the creative profession of his main character to stress the importance for creative artists (whether as author, or photographer) “to document the state of society”, so that the whole world might learn what South Africa’s government tried to hide through news-censorship (Kossew 124). In Thomas’ case this responsibility involves photography, as well as writing in the form of his family chronicle.

As Viljoen points out, the function photography fulfils for Thomas changes over the course of his life (Viljoen 510). When he is a young student it simply represents a creative activity of (re)construction; it is “[n]ot a simple registering of whatever I have previously caught in the sensitive silver bromide, but a completely new world coming into being right here, now, before my eyes” (Brink, AAOT 10). Then, when Thomas is increasingly involved in the struggle he starts to consider photography as a means of documenting, or of direct representation, (almost naively) stating that a “camera doesn’t lie” (Brink, AAOT 110). For Thomas, photography is now a way of “registering” (178) or “recording” (386) events, of “gathering evidence” (368), of “assuring that people won’t forget” (501) and – at some point – “it has become a way of fighting” (Brink, ADWS 386). No longer afraid of the abject, he portrays the miseries of the Other in townships, captures the police using napalm, dogs, sjamboks, and other weapons against defenceless. Even as *white* journalist, Thomas has to risk his life for taking photographs of police raids in townships, like Crossroads. That white activists are under the risk of being killed or at least arrested already becomes clear when Thomas and Nina first meet when he saves her from the police. Clearly, taking the photographs represents an even more dangerous activity than writing, as Thomas remembers:

Many are the times when, in that untranslatable Afrikaans expression, I see my own hole. Cornered by police. Trampled by stampeding crowds. Caught in crossfire. Suffocated by teargas. On three occasions one of my cameras is demolished by boots or batons. Countless times my films are confiscated.

(Brink, AAOT 385)

Moreover, Brink shows the difficulty of disclosing such controversial pictures to a wider public and thereby criticises the censorship imposed by the Apartheid government. Several of Thomas’ attempts to publicly show his pictures in South Africa are hindered by authorities, such as the rector of his university, but in London and New York they are finally shown. A selection of his photographs is also published in an English newspaper (the Afrikaans newspaper rejects them),

whereafter Thomas is confronted with threats by the police and loses his job at a photographic studio. Interestingly, Thomas' is sceptical regarding the impact of his work and suspects that many people – especially those abroad – might only show interest in pictures of Apartheid to clear their guilty conscience. Regardless of these possibly shallow motives, his black friend Sipho points out, Thomas' photographs are crucial because they make “the world aware of what's happening. They make it impossible for people to say they didn't know” (Brink, AAOT 438). Like writing, visual art thus represents an invaluable tool for the anti-apartheid movement.

Before turning to violent action Thomas thus employs peaceful methods to support the resistance, including photography but also teaching in townships. There he first meets the old Khaya Ntshenge, who – in a sudden revelation, which Thomas compares in a photography-metaphor with positive/negative – changes his perception of the world into the opposite. Khaya tells Thomas to go out to see the misery of blacks for himself. When his friend Ntsiki consequently introduces him to life in townships Thomas “for the first time, [...] really immerse[s] [him]self in the world of the shadow people” (Brink, AAOT 239). Now able to see the *what*, he is prepared to learn the *why*. Confronted with this question, his black friend Ntsiki points out the difference between growing up as a privileged white, or as an oppressed black: “Thomas-my-bra, I was born with it. For you it's different” (Brink, AAOT 280). Also, it is Ntsiki who introduces Thomas to the famous Henry Bungane, a member of the UDF (United Democratic Front), who was imprisoned on Robben Island together with famous figures like Nelson Mandela and who now becomes Thomas' mentor. Like in *A Dry White Season*, blacks fulfil the role of being the white dissident's mentors and guides in their discovery of the true meaning of apartheid.

Through his new experiences the abject, “the other side of the moon”, is no longer rejected but acknowledged as part of his world. At the same time, Thomas becomes more and more estranged from his old world. He can no longer confide in other whites and turns into an outsider among his fellow students; he notices: “I no longer belong here” (Brink, AAOT 287). Thus, he turns to Henry and other blacks, leaving behind his “'first' life” and engaging himself fully in the struggle (Brink, AAOT 289). He even learns Xhosa, the language of the Other – another sign of his respect for oppressed people and their cultures. Then, however, Ntsiki is killed in custody (the police claiming he was found dead on the beach) and Thomas does not know how to live in his country any longer:

It has been evident, for quite some time now, that my first world can no longer accommodate me. Now it seems the second has also become precarious, a minefield, a Sperrgebiet. I can no longer cope with it. I lack the guts. I am too scared. I understand nothing any more. [...] The country I thought I knew has become alien to me.

(Brink, AAOT 293)

Thomas gives up his study and flees to Europe – a decisive decision because, there, he first meets his friend Sipho, an ANC member in exile, who grew up in the same town as Thomas but, as he reveals to his white friend, his experience had been completely different: “We grew up in the same town Thomas. But I was born at the wrong end, the shit end” (Brink, AAOT 440). Travelling with Sipho through Europe and Africa, Thomas learns what it means to live on the other side of town and finally realises that “thirteen generations of Landmans have laboriously [...] soaked themselves into Africa” and despite their efforts, his family is now “more isolated from Africa than three hundred years ago” because “we have become afraid of its people”. Sipho is not only significant for Thomas as he gives him “this gift of restoring [him] to [his] continent” (Brink, AAOT 445) but also because his death through the hands of the Special Branch triggers Thomas’ turn to violence.

The highly controversial question if violence is indeed necessary to overthrow apartheid arises over and over again throughout the novel. In theory, killing people for the sake of abolishing apartheid clearly contradicts the liberal principle of liberty for all individuals, as murder represents the probably most drastic way of violating the liberty of others. For Thomas and his accomplice Nina killing the state president, however, is significant for the destruction of the whole system, for even though he is “only a small, miserable cog in the whole machine”, he personifies the evil of apartheid (Brink, AAOT 11). When Nina first suggests this drastic measure, Thomas is the one arguing against violence – or in his words, “murder” – whereupon Nina counters: “Murder? They are the murderers. Didn’t you see it with your own eyes? He’s a murderer. To wipe out someone like that isn’t murder. It’s a favour to humanity” (Brink, AAOT 11). This argument of ending violence through violence is repeatedly discussed throughout the novel. Thomas tries to calm his emerging concerns by convincing himself that the bomb will bring success for the cause, whatever may happen, since even if their plan fails,

the impact of an attempt is in itself powerful and disconcerting enough to ensure devastating disruptions of the political situation. The mere knowledge, in the consciousness of the head of state and all his subjects, that an assault was planned, that the unthinkable has become manifest within the framework of the possible, [...] that his regime has been demonstrated to be vulnerable, can act like a destructive virus on the entire dispensation. For this is the heart of a totalitarian regime: that the despot forgets about, ignores, his own mortality. And the simple confrontation with this most basic of truths – the fact that he is mortal – signals the beginning of the dictator’s end. [...]

Hence ‘success’ – or what in the circumstances can be defined as ‘success’ – is guaranteed in advance.

(Brink, AAOT 18-19)

Hence, they plant the bomb to open up the eyes of a privileged white minority, “to shock them out of this syndrome of the ‘good life’ and to open their eyes, if not of this injustice, at least to its precariousness” (Brink, AAOT 50-51). For them, it is “[k]illing: so that the killing might stop” (Brink, AAOT 89); the cause justifies the means.

Thomas’ mentor Henry shares Nina’s attitude. For him, “the only choice, is whether we’re prepared only to suffer violence or to use it against others too”. When Thomas counters with the (liberal) argument of morality, Henry points out that, in contrast to whites, blacks do not possess effective, non-violent means: “I’m not talking about morality. Leave that to the people who have the vote. They have the luxury to opt for peace. I’m talking about us, here in the ghetto” (Brink, AAOT 387). For Thomas, violence is neither the only valid means against Apartheid, nor is it simply a way of ridding himself of anger. Rather it is “ubiquitous”, “a condition of – a prerequisite for – our existence”. Arguing that there are “different kinds of violence”, such as a question or physical love, Thomas philosophizes that violence may spend life but then “there are its other forms: those which threaten life, and destroy it, and cancel it. Can one always tell the difference?” (Brink, AAOT 426). It was probably his mentor Sipho who inspired these thoughts in Thomas, as he once called his exhibition of photographs a form of violence due to their effect of shaking people so deeply “that they decide to take up arms themselves to fight against that violence [Thomas] showed them” (Brink, AAOT 439). Therefore, it seems difficult to define which actions intrude too far into the freedom of others and thus contradict liberal moral principles.

Thomas engages in discussions on this topic with various other characters as well, whereas opinions of others, like his sister Maria, remain secret to him. For her, violence is no reasonable solution for South Africa’s problems, even though she seems quite liberal and feels guilty for oppressing non-whites. Maria, however, is passive and does not act. In her, Brink portrays one of the most prominent stereotypes in human history: the passiveness of women opposed to the (violent) activeness of her brother Thomas. This is particularly stressed through Maria’s condemnation of violence as “a man’s response” to injustice (Brink, AAOT 173). Maria, therefore, represents the complete opposite of the independent, energetic Nina, who negates most feminine stereotypes. At the same time, Maria envies Thomas for his ability to *do* something. The revelation of her brother’s actions finally tears Maria out of her passiveness:

That is what you have made me see. I’ve been wrong, all these years, to persist in thinking of myself as the victim of exploitation or oppression by others. [...] I was, I am, an accomplice. It was easy trying to persuade myself my life was hard. That is simply not enough. It can never be enough only to see, or to state, the truth. That can only be the beginning. It is only doing something about it that really matters. I think I am ready for it now.

(Brink, AAOT 175)

Also other characters are inspired by Thomas to take up the struggle themselves: Raymond, a black hitchhiker, decides to become a freedom fighter, Lisa's brother Erik joins the Organisation, and Thomas' father Christian, before dying, at least recognizes that Thomas has been right all the time to accept the African part of his heritage. Hennie, a young soldier, on the other hand, decides to continue his service at the boarder when he learns that Thomas is a terrorist, precisely because he wants to prevent further terrorist attacks. Through Brink's employment of multiple narrators the reader is served various different opinions on Thomas and his involvement in the attack, which represent a broad spectrum of South Africa's population. Although one might criticise the shallowness of these character types (e.g. the docile Afrikaner, the unscrupulous lawyer, the protective mother, the rebellious black who rejects white liberals, the good Christian), Kossew is certainly right in arguing that these different perspectives on the main plotline might also imply "that both history and narrative necessarily involve multiple and conflicting points of view which make it subjective and interpretative" (Kossew 120).

For the topic of white liberalism, Brink's contrasting of different types of Afrikaners seems most relevant, namely "the dissident in the true spirit (as Brink sees it) of Afrikanerdom, and the Afrikaner who staunchly defends and justifies the system of apartheid" (Kossew 111): Thomas and his brother Frans. Frans, a fully convinced Afrikaner, calls Thomas a "pale pink liberal" (Brink, AAOT 108), a "bloody disgrace" who betrays "his own people" (Brink, AAOT 110). Frans is openly racist (even though he claims he is not) and believes in a "fundamental difference between the races" (Brink, AAOT 112). As he attributes all negative qualities to non-whites, he automatically assumes that the terrorists must be blacks. Moreover, like all other relatives of the liberal protagonists, Frans is surprised, if not shocked by the fact that his brother is a terrorist and ultimately betrays him through telling Brigadier Bester about the false name on Thomas' suitcase – the crucial clue for identifying Thomas as one of the terrorists.

Thomas, on the other hand, has developed a political consciousness and liberal attitude. He decides to deviate from his fellow Afrikaners by joining the Organisation, an anti-apartheid movement, in which all members work in sub-groups, are specialised on one project, and only receive as much information as necessary (to prevent betrayal and to protect the individual members). Brink suggests that professionalism is crucial in such a huge organisation: "there is too much at stake, to rely on anything less than professionalism. It cannot be entrusted to amateurs. At the very outset this determines the selection of members of the core group" (Brink, AAOT 19). The members of Thomas' sub-group (Justin, Rashid, Christine, David, Thomas, and Nina) have joined the Organisation for different personal reasons and even though they

work for a common cause, their ideologies and motivations differ and comprise non-racialism, communism, and liberalism. Nina, for instance, has always striven for liberal ideas, including equal rights for all race-groups. She first engaged in opposition politics at the UCT – much to the disappointment of her bourgeoisie father – and has already worked for several other resistance movements, including the SRC, ECC, Black Sash, the UDF, NUSAS,

organising, collecting data and interpreting them, distributing food and clothing among refugees [...], conducting interviews in the embattled townships, taking affidavits from victims of unjust dismissal from domestic or factory employment, of persecution or exploitation, following up information, negotiating with police officers about the particulars of detainees and their conditions of detention, liaising with the families of prisoners.

(Brink, AAOT 36)

Yet, precisely because of her experience Nina can no longer believe in South Africa's judicial system (a liberal value). Lisa, who takes Nina's place at Thomas' side after her death, in contrast, is less experienced and still believes in peaceful ways of abolishing apartheid. She is the second character Brink uses for depicting the inner process of becoming a white dissident. When Thomas first meets her on a plane, Lisa admits that she has always been looking for a way "to shock them", all the docile Afrikaners around her, and "to prove that I was I, not one of them" (Brink, AAOT 85). Unhappy with her compliant lifestyle she has always been wondering: "What *can* one do?" (Brink, AAOT 86). When she was working for the Black Sash, she was soon disillusioned about her work because her interventions had only made life more difficult for the victims she had wanted to help through exposing the injustice done to them. Nevertheless, Lisa is highly aware that she has remained passive for such a long time, not because she believed in peaceful resistance but because it was easier to close her eyes to all the misery:

And so, in order to survive you learn to compromise again. You try to persuade yourself that the establishment can be reformed from inside. [...] Until one day one discovers that there are other reasons. The real reason is that it's simply easier not to rock the boat. Only problem is, once you realise it, how can you live with yourself any longer? How can you keep your self-respect? Because once you've lost that you've lost your freedom too. [...]

One keeps on working oneself up, but it's no use just talking-talking-talking. One reaches a point where you've got to break out and *do* something. But what?

(Brink, AAOT 341)

This question seems to remain open for Lisa. In her discussions with Thomas she argues vehemently against violence, as it fails to give hope to others but is rather threatening and destructive for the person committing violence, making one "as bad as your enemy" (Brink, AAOT 360). Nevertheless, Lisa respects Thomas for the liberal person he is and admires him for at least doing *something*, for having "the guts to say no to the system and to break out"

(Brink, AAOT 359), while Lisa, despite her liberal attitude, has always been at the brink of action: “I have this feeling that for a long time, for years, I’ve been preparing myself for something. I’m standing at the edge of a precipice, but I’m afraid to jump because I don’t know what’s on the other side” (Brink, AAOT 342). Her opinion on the source of all injustice is quite curious and exceptional: Lisa argues that the real problem is not “black and white, but men. They are the ones who have the power. It’s they who keep that kind of power going” (Brink, AAOT 473). Thus, it is hardly surprising that her whole life seems to be a rebellion against men (her father, ex-boyfriend, her boss...). Inspired by Thomas Lisa decides to quit her abhorred job (abhorred because of her dominating *male* boss) and becomes Thomas’ companion (and lover) on his exodus through South Africa but, notably, in fact, she still remains at the brink of *real* action, she continuous to do what a man – Thomas – tells her to do, and ultimately she dies without contributing positively to the struggle. Consequently, after having finally been brave enough to *do something*, Lisa has not had the time to define her personal *something*.

Through the characters of Thomas, Nina, and Lisa Brink wants to free the Afrikaners from their negative image and to find a space for them within Africa. In Kossew’s opinion, he “does so by situating the Afrikaner heritage as part of a culture of resistance to colonial authority (that of the British) and attempts to reposition the idea of the Afrikaner by separating it from apartheid” (109). In order to achieve this repositioning of the Afrikaner-image, Brink illustrates the different facets of white dissidence and their consequences. Thomas not only relies on violent means; in contrast to Ben, he also refuses to use the language of power (Afrikaans) by refusing to be called “baas”, and calls his brother’s servants by their real names (not the ones given to them by whites). In addition, Thomas treats blacks – regardless if they are friends or strangers – as equals, and, if needed, offers his help. He opines that the right to vote should be given to people of all colours, in order to provide them with an alternative to violence for expressing their political opinion – clearly, a liberal value.

In this context, Thomas’ concern with his ancestry is crucial for Brink’s aim of defining a place for white liberals within a new South Africa. In *Mapmakers*, the author explains his vision of liberating the Afrikaner from his current negative image:

The eventual destruction of apartheid *need* not automatically imply the disappearance of the Afrikaner himself: only the eradication of his negative side [...] In other words, it is not just a struggle aimed at the liberation of blacks from oppression by whites, but also a struggle for the liberation of the Afrikaner from the ideology in which he has come to negate his better self.

(Brink, *Mapmakers* 19-20)

Like Brink, Thomas has to find his place as a new kind of Afrikaner. As will be shown in section 6.2.4, he does not renounce his Afrikaner identity but adopts it to new challenges. This

presentation of the Afrikaner as a compatriot of the Other smoothes the way for an Afrikaner, “who *has* a place in Africa” (Kossew 110) and, moreover, justifies his role in the liberation struggle.

6.3.3 Inter-racial Relationships

Thomas Landman represents the new Afrikaner with his ability to acknowledge the African part of his heritage and identity, as well as “the reciprocity and mutuality of colonial power” (Kossew 121). He accepts, even appreciates his Khoi ancestry, which his father has always denied. By replacing the apartheid idea of racial purity with the notion of hybridity Brink tries to dissociate the word ‘Afrikaner’ from its racist and nationalistic connotations and, at the same time, establishes a place for Afrikaners in Africa (Kossew 122). Thomas clearly recognizes the significance of non-whites for the history of his family but also for himself:

When I surveyed Dad’s history [...] there is again that unnerving emptiness surrounding him: a landscape with no sign of a black figure anywhere in it. As if they didn’t exist, had never existed. While I know that the whole direction and texture of his life, as of all our lives, the deepest sense of it, was determined by those invisible black multitudes. Their presence has shaped us and defined us. He didn’t know. I do. And that has made all the difference.

(Brink, AAOT 825)

Indeed, encounters with blacks, representing the Other, have made all the difference for Thomas. Not only have men, like Henry and Ntsiki, who accepts him as “a blood relative” (Brink, AAOT 283) acted as his mentors; Thomas’ best friend, Siphon, is black too. Unlike for his brother by blood, Frans, Thomas feels truly brotherly love for Siphon: “I find it much easier, much more natural, to think of him as my brother. Does blood really bring a special responsibility with it?” (Brink, AAOT 169). Siphon, with his “serene presence”, represents Africa to Thomas. He pays attention to physical characteristics and states that to him, Siphon’s “body says ‘Africa’” (Brink, AAOT 53). Thomas admires his friend’s family, which is “archaic” but “beautiful” to him: “There’s something heraldic about the three of them: man, woman, child, a seamless statue hewn from gleaming dark wood, [...] something archaic, archetypal, timeless, beautiful” (Brink, AAOT 54). By Noni, Siphon’s wife, Thomas is clearly physically attracted too, calling her “the most beautiful woman” he has “ever seen in [his] life” (Brink, AAOT 443). It is her aura bringing home to him “a discovery of woman” that so fascinates him (Brink, AAOT 447). The attention Thomas dedicates to black bodies shows that even though he is a liberal no immediate escape from the discourse prevalent under apartheid is possible; in contrast to racists, however, Thomas *does* notice people’s skin colour but appreciates this diversity.

Africans offer him a feeling of warmth and comfort; often, he feels more at home in townships than in white suburbs and enjoys 'ubuntu', which is more to him than just African hospitality. Increasingly estranged from his own family, Thomas calls the elderly black Khanya Ntshenge his "grandpa" and commits that his death "is a blow as bad as that of [his] own grandfather's death" (Brink, AAOT 242). Khanya, who represents a father figure for Thomas, and Sipho, his 'brother', seem to replace exactly those members of Thomas' blood relatives with whom he is in open conflict due to his political activities: Frans and his father Christian.

Yet, not all of Thomas' relationships (or short encounters) with non-whites are unproblematic. Rashid, the 'coloured' member of his anti-apartheid group, reveals a general mistrust towards Thomas and doubts that a white can ever fully understand what it means to be oppressed. He is afraid that Thomas and his love-affairs could endanger the whole group because, as a white, Thomas will always act differently, also "because he can afford the luxury of a conscience" (Brink, AAOT 264). Whatever the white liberal does for their group, for Rashid he always remains one of the Others:

It's not the colour of his white skin I have against Thomas. It's because, even in the midst of the struggle, he's still conditioned to try and put right what 'his people' have fucked up. Least, that's the way I see it. Because deep down I know it's not black against white, it's haves against have-nots.

(Brink, AAOT 467)

Thereby, Rashid seems to follow the communist theory by suggesting that the struggle is a class-issue, not a race-issue. Interestingly, it is precisely Thomas who accuses moderate liberals to only want to replace separation based on race with separation based on money, or class – then, he argues, the same people, Afrikaners, would remain in power (Brink, AAOT 497). With this argument Thomas not only falsifies Rashid's accusations but also Biko's assumption that non-racialism was a dishonest way for liberals to maintain old power-structures.

Also one of the black men Thomas meets on the road reacts with mistrust and hostility to Thomas' help when his car has broken down. He clearly rejects what he considers charity by whites, and when he learns of Thomas' involvement in planting the bomb he becomes even angrier: "Why he doing such a thing? Throwing a bomb. Killing people. It is not good for nobody, it just make it more bad. For my people it bring more trouble and we got enough too much trouble. [...] We not needing whites to do this thing for us" (Brink, AAOT 525). A group of blacks who give Thomas a lift seem to be almost looking for conflict with the "whitey" and, when Thomas tries to demonstrate "his good will by addressing the man beside him Xhosa", they react with open hostility:

'What are you trying to prove, Whitey? You talk to kaffirs in Xhosa?'

Sorry, he apologised, he really hadn't meant to offend them; he just wanted to prove he was okay.

'What you mean okay? You show me a whitey that's okay. You haven't even got a car, you bumming lifts, you bloody poor-white, you trying to patronise us? That's shit man. That's pure shit.'

(Brink, AAOT 607-608)

Thomas had only tried to befriend them but it is berated, thrown out the car, robbed of all the few belongings left to him, beaten, and finally left behind on the road. Through these incidents Brink portrays the changing atmosphere towards the end of apartheid, when Black Consciousness spread a general mistrust in white liberals across the black population. Yet, Thomas is not afraid of black nationalism ("It is my experience that Africa is more patient and forgiving, more generous than us."; Brink, AAOT 498). Rather, he wants to abolish all nationalisms in general, as, in his opinion, they only produce conflicts.

Not only for Thomas but also for Lisa skin colour seems irrelevant for developing an affection for others. She too has replaced a family member who could not provide for her needs through a black person: Her surrogate mother Naomi is for Lisa "[s]omething Mother could never be even if she wanted to, she was always too busy being the dominee's wife" (Brink, AAOT 395). So, Naomi takes her place, calls Lisa "my child" and remains loyal to her until the very end, when she dies as a consequence of the brutal interrogation methods of the Special Branch. One is led to conclude that Brink might have wanted to illustrate the two worlds in which white liberals lived simultaneously: the increasingly alienated white bourgeoisie world and the "other side of the moon", a world, in which white liberals were at times welcomed, at times scolded and excluded.

6.3.4 Liberalism & Identity

While several minor characters of Brink's novel are reduced to mere types, his liberal white main character undergoes a continuous development. For a long time, Thomas' liberal activities seem to create antagonistic identities within Thomas, as he commutes between two worlds:

A dual existence, the parts of which become increasingly irreconcilable. What is a 'terrorist' in one part becomes 'hero' in the other; the 'law and order' of the one becomes the 'subversion' of the other. A bifocal view, an unsettling double vision: with one foot in a world that appears 'real' only while you are physically in it, its antithesis like a hallucination in the mind: and changing places all the time, each constantly challenging the validity of the other.

(Brink, AAOT 500-501)

This antithesis of two worlds also draws the reader's attention to what Thomas calls the Afrikaner's "'schizophrenia', living with one foot in Europe and the other in Africa", which causes a feeling of displacement in Thomas. Interestingly, of all things it is the bomb which

“marked in a strange way the acknowledgement of his final arrival in Africa” (Brink, AAOT 159). Thomas finds that his motivation for dissidence is his way of contemplating with his Afrikaner heritage. In his understanding of history, one is shaped, or influenced by one’s past and future but never fully defined by it:

the point is, surely, that one is not simply the result of one’s history. One is also a reaction to it, a rebellion against it; in the process of amplifying or testing it, trying to corroborate it, one also rejects and replaces it. Everything is so much more complicated than I at first believed [...]

All those generations who, each one of them, had to define in terms of his, her, own life a reaction to violence – a reply to Africa – a redefinition of Adamastor. I, too, cannot avoid this. But in my choices I can neither deny my history nor merely become its victim. There is no new beginning, no clean break, no wiped slate [...] I have still had to make my own choices.

(Brink, AAOT 826-827)

Thomas’ choices, his liberal activities, it seems have solved his issue of antagonistic identities and have reconciled him with Africa but, at the same time, have turned him into an outsider among other Afrikaners. Often, he feels lonely without the support or at least understanding of fellow Afrikaners for his actions. On his last day with Nina, shortly before planting the bomb, he feels that the two of them are astronauts drifting away from the majority of compliant Afrikaners:

He felt her body against his, the pressure of her ribcage and her hips. And below them the world receded: that must be how astronauts saw it. To drift away like that, surrounded by nothing, by space, and nothing to refer to, to depend on, but oneself, this small fierce urge to survive, this irrational angry faith that you’re doing what you must do, that you must do what you’re doing.

(Brink, AAOT 27)

The isolation which this astronauts-metaphor suggests is even increased by Nina’s death, when Thomas commences his journey through South Africa. Even in company he often feels lonely and unable to express his grief. The necessity of constantly having to change his identity to escape from the police confuses Thomas and leaves him to wonder if he will “ever find his way back through so many different selves” (Brink, AAOT 118). Moreover, several encounters with strangers and old acquaintances mark Thomas’ journey; their history, he knows, will from now on be interwoven with his own: “It’s not only the dead who enter your existence and become part of you; it’s every single person who travels a part of the journey with you: each one rubs off on you, you on them. You are never on your own; there are always others” (Brink, AAOT 257). While some of the travellers Thomas encounters are “conscientized”, others are driven “back into the laager” (Kossew 125), which illustrates Stuart Hall’s theory that identity is never stable but influenced by others around us. Thomas, who is highly self-reflexive, even wonders how others would report on him and if he would be remembered, whereby he seems to

unknowingly connect his narration with all the other narrators, who do exactly this: to report on him.

The multitude of narrators has two important implications: First, it gives a voice to the subaltern, as not only whites but also blacks give their account of Thomas. Even if one might encounter (in the tradition of Black Consciousness) that a white author cannot be qualified to speak for blacks (but then one would also have to argue against male writers imagining the thoughts of women), it is certainly positive that also Brink's black characters show a high variety of opinions on white liberalism. The second implication concerns Brink's idea of historiography: by providing various accounts of Thomas' doings it is suggested that history is always subjective and not universally true. The plot around the Landman chronicle takes up the same aspect, as Christiaan's version differs considerably from Thomas'. Like Brink, Thomas wants to rewrite his family history, the history of an Afrikaner family, and through this process acknowledges his African identity. While his father has always portrayed their ancestors as heroes of Afrikanerdom and has wiped out everything African about their past, Thomas chooses to include all aspects of his forefathers' lives – no matter if they may be embarrassing or controversial. Playing with the Greek word 'Aletheia', he finds that the opposite of the truth is not the lie but forgetting, wherefore no part of life should be repressed: "Perhaps the whole reason for the chronicle I have been driven for so long to write and which I am now ready, at last, to embark on, is this very need to record, to thwart forgetfulness, to grasp at that truth which is not so much the opposite of the lie as of forgetting. *A-letheia*" (Brink, AAOT 625).

Thomas attempt to rewrite his family history is much more than just a try to grasp the truth behind the dark lies of his father. It is also a way of coping with the present, or – to be more precisely – with the responsibility Thomas has to accept as a dissident. He repeatedly asks himself, at what point in history apartheid and, thereby, also its antithesis, the anti-apartheid movement, and, finally, also the bomb originated:

What was the meaning of 'beginning'? Where were the roots of what was to happen at fifteen minutes to eleven tomorrow morning? Were they already there, obscure, in the arrival of the very first Landman, the first Jordaan, at this Cape of Storms?

Or is this, he wondered in anguish, the most terrifying loneliness of all? – this solitary confrontation with one's own history, with everything that has made you what you are, brought you to where you happen to be? Knowing that the present is pervaded by yesterday and the day before; and that today is coloured in advance by tomorrow's solitude?

(Brink, AAOT 27)

For Thomas, Kossew points out, history is continuous and teleological, "a vital and ongoing part of the notion of identity, and is inevitably linked with the present, a chain made up of 'a single insignificant link in a human fuse running through the ages'" (Kossew 120). Thomas feels

deeply connected with his ancestors and is constantly looking for parallels between his life and the life of his forefathers. This connectedness and continuity of history also implies that Thomas accepts the responsibility of sharing his ancestors' guilt and "must pay for the sins of the fathers" (Viljoen 509). The hunting scene, when Thomas has to kill and carry a bleeding buck wounded by someone else, symbolises the heavy burden he has inherited. The Afrikaner feels the need to compensate his ancestors' deeds by striving for a "world more worthy and free than the one we have" (Brink, AAOT 826). Thomas' hope in the possibility of progress is underlined by his final appeal to the reader not to believe that there is an ultimate, fixed, and universally true history: "Do not believe it. Not yet" (Brink, AAOT 827).

Although Thomas Landman definitely intends to deviate from his Afrikaner ancestors, to act differently than they did, and, thereby, to redeem the image of Afrikaners, he does not renounce his ancestry. His identity has grown, expanded, not shifted:

'My' people are not the ones who speak my language or whose colour I share (give or take a shade). From now on 'my people' include all those I feel at home with, those who share my way of thinking, who believe in the same things as I do. Henry's people, the people of the UDF: they are mine.

(And yet I cannot – will not – stop thinking of myself as an Afrikaner! [...] I shall never feel the need to deny or renounce the fact that I'm an Afrikaner. The shift inside myself has not severed me from anything; has, on the contrary, extended my boundaries.

(Brink, AAOT 390)

Thomas Afrikaner identity is simply augmented with his dissident-identity, which unites him with the Other. Brink thus suggests that, by making the right choices, an Afrikaner might at last be able to find his place in South Africa and "these choices neither merely deny nor confirm history, but imply both a remembering and a forgetting, and acknowledgement and even an embracing of the paradoxes of Afrikaner identity" (Kossew 126).

Nina, in contrast, is unable to reconcile her liberal activities with her ancestry and rejects her Afrikaner identity by stating: "I'm not an Afrikaner" (Brink, AAOT 68). For her, Afrikaners represent an "anachronism", a "wretched species" (Brink, AAOT 17). Nina's eagerness to rid herself of the burden of her ancestry is also reflected in her attitude about giving away her personal belongings (to hide her true identity): While Thomas seems reluctant to cart off "two whole lives", Nina experiences it as "a relief to be rid of the stuff" (Brink, AAOT 71) and abhors her parents' bourgeoisie and ignorant lifestyle. In this sense, Nina is even more radical than Thomas but shares his ideas about the subjectivity of history: She is aware that, for the majority of Afrikaners, radicals, like she and Thomas, will be traitors like Judas, since history is always written by those in power. Nina's attitude (and Brink's novel as a whole) does not stimulate much hope for the development of a feeling of national identity in the sense of

Benedict Anderson: although liberal characters of all race-groups are shown to cooperate, they remain sceptical about the intentions and methods of their comrades and/or of other Afrikaners. Yet, their eagerness to improve South Africa – their home – undoubtedly shows their strong feeling of *belonging* to South Africa.

6.3.5 Possibilities, Consequences and Limits of White Liberalism

Thomas and his comrade's expression of dissidence is far more drastic than Ben's in *A Dry White Season*, which implicates that, on the one hand, their impact on South Africa's society might be more considerate but, on the other hand, it also claimed far more victims. Curiously, the end of the novel leaves it open if their attack was successful in shocking whites out of their blind compliance, wherefore it is hard to determine the effectivity of this violent form of resistance. Yet, the drastic consequences of Thomas' liberalism are evident.

When Thomas commenced with his non-violent liberalist activities, using photography as his means to reveal the truth, he experiences similar consequences like Ben DuToit: "My front door is daubed with slogans; the tyres of my motorcycle are slashed, the brakes 'tampered with', a cable cut through; a dead cat is deposited on my doormat. Some of my past comrades from Stellenbosch [...] give me the cold shoulder. In my own family tensions develop" (Brink, AAOT 386). For Thomas' family, the task of having to reconcile their image of him with the terrorist presented in the news is even more difficult than accepting his photo motifs. His sister Maria, for instance, has troubles acknowledging that her little brother and the murderer he is said to be "are one and the same" (Brink, AAOT 172) and his father is even so shocked that he suffers a stroke. Lisa's family is equally disturbed by her sudden change of character and, in the end, it is her own father who reports them to the police. In *Mapmakers*, Brink has commented on the difficult role of the Afrikaner dissident:

If the Afrikaner dissident today encounters such a vicious reaction from the Establishment, it is because he is regarded as a traitor to everything Afrikanerdom stands for (since apartheid has usurped for itself that definition) – whereas, in fact, the dissident is fighting to assert the most positive and creative aspects of his heritage, which are involved with that experience of Africa he shares with other Africans.

(Brink, *Mapmakers* 19)

While Thomas seems to have understood the advantages such a reconciliation with the African part of his identity involves, his family is only concerned with the negative consequences of his dissidence. His brother Frans, for example, fears for his job at Armscor and doubts that he "can ever lift [his] head in this country again"; According to him, Thomas' action is a "blot on [their] family name" (Brink, AAOT 128).

Luckily, other family members rank family ties higher than loyalty to the government. Maria and Thomas' mother try to protect him from the police and refuse to betray him, even though they both reject violence as a solution; their sense for keeping the family together is stronger. Nina's father, too, is loyal to his daughter but tries to keep her involvement confidential and blames her secretly for having sabotaged his future. Unable to grasp Nina's death through the hands of the police, he is convinced that she was "used ruthlessly as a tool of destruction" (Brink, AAOT 414) and concludes that it must have been others who had manipulated her to "drive a young woman as strong-willed as Nina to a deed of such desperation" (Brink, AAOT 411).

Prior to the bomb, Nina's father used his influence as one of South Africa's top layers already twice to get her and Thomas out of custody. Nina had been detained and interrogated by the SB after having been arrested at a peaceful student demonstration. Her account demonstrates the harsh methods of the police. To her luck, she was released after only one night but the deep impression of the experience remained and opened Nina's eyes: "Perhaps one needs to experience a thing like that oneself, physically, before you can truly acknowledge it" (Brink, AAOT 42). Hence, Nina and Thomas are already used to violence when they plan the attack, but committing violence themselves seems deeply unsettling for both. Shortly after the bomb went off, Thomas seems confused and nervous and even the tough Nina confesses that she is deeply scared. At this point it is Thomas who tries to encourage her, stating that "*it was worth it*" (Brink, AAOT 79). Later, Thomas compulsively rethinks the attack with all its consequences but in conversations with Lisa he admits that he does not consider himself a murderer; he simply did what had to be done. Lisa, however, provocatively replies: "And yet you *are*." (Brink, AAOT 395) – and the victims of the bomb were, indeed, numerous. In addition to the lives the bomb claimed directly, hundreds are arrested and probably tortured, only because they are supposed to be somehow involved in oppositional activities. Moreover, step by step, the real identities of various members of the Organisation are revealed, they are being followed by the police and, in some cases, arrested. David's account of being 'interrogated' by Brigadier Bester perfectly illustrates the harshness with which even white detainees were treated by the Special Branch. Bester himself points out:

Don't want you to have any illusions about this, Blumer. Think because you got a white skin you're safe? You'll soon find out in this place you're less than a kaffir. What happened to people like Biko or Aggett can happen to you too. Do we understand each other? We don't like communists.

(Brink, AAOT 347)

As a terrorist, David is automatically (and falsely) categorized as a communist and considered a traitor of his own people. In custody he is kept in pitch black darkness, naked, and brutally beaten or tortured with cold water, and finally dies at the hands of the police – but he was prepared to do so for the sake of their cause: “And if they kill me, at least I’ll have the satisfaction of knowing what it is I die for” (Brink, AAOT 352). Christine, another member of their group, was shot in the head in a police raid even before their plan was acted out. Ultimately, also the death of Thomas’ father can be attributed to their attack, as he died after suffering a stroke because the police interrogated and raided them to find his son. It is hard for Thomas to accept the constantly growing number of victims his ‘terror’ has caused, while he is still alive: “And then it is someone else’s life that’s sacrificed. Nina’s. And others’ too. Those who just happen to ‘get in the way’. And Christine, and David. And now, Dad. This isn’t the end yet, the stream flows on: it began before me, it will continue after me, blood, blood. Always others” (Brink, AAOT 573). It is especially the loss of Nina that leads Thomas to question the success of their whole plan. Even though both of them were prepared to die for the cause, Nina’s death represents a traumatic event and keeps haunting him throughout the novel:

[He] could not really face people tonight, he felt the need to hide, to curl up somewhere out of sight and allow this unbearable pain to heal, to try and understand something about it. (At the moment all he could do, over and over, was obtusely to think her name – Nina, Nina, Nina – but it was like the title of a poem whose words one has forgotten.)

(Brink, AAOT 105)

Nina’s death places excessive demands on Thomas’ coping strategies, so that he even shows various symptoms of PTSD. Haunted by Nina’s image, Thomas is often “too exhausted to sleep” (Brink AAOT 119), since he blames himself for her death (calling her by her real name when she lost her wig had probably revealed her identity). Thomas’ pain is even increased by the fact that he is unable to share his pain with others without revealing his involvement in the terror attack. He almost seems traumatized by the event and reports of insomnia (PTSD cluster 3) and the compulsion to rethink the traumatic event of watching Nina die before his eyes (PTSD cluster 1). His world is changed by this one instance. Sitting in his mother’s garden Thomas is said to feel

his heart break inside him. Because whatever he looked at was crumbling to pieces in his mind. All objects became transparent; holes appeared in whatever had seemed so solid. And through the holes he stared into a blank space where children were being killed, funerals disrupted by teargas, [...] where bombs exploded and people died; a space in which, over and over again, Nina came crawling forward on hands and knees to collapse in a black pool of her own blood.

(Brink, AAOT 215)

Later, when he thinks about attending Nina's funeral (of course, secretly), he feels nausea and, at the same time, the urge "to be there, a ritual of purgation, in its own way harder to get through than all the preparations for the assault" (Brink, AAOT 229). It is only half-way through the novel, when Thomas has returned to Cape Town, that he slowly starts to cope with his traumatic experience. For the first time, he has not "resisted or tried to avoid" thinking about Nina's death: "I've begun to make my peace with her. The scar of her death will remain in me for ever: but a scar, no longer a bleeding wound" (Brink, AAOT 269). Thus, Thomas' traumatic experience does not turn into a permanent trauma; his wound, it seems, will heal.

Towards the end, however, he develops new anxieties: He is afraid of losing Lisa like he once lost Nina. When they are separated for a night Thomas reflects that "nothing seemed quite real any more; he was unable to connect with his own emotions" (Brink, AAOT 616). His traumatic experience of being guilty of his own lover's death is indeed repeated at the end of the novel when Thomas shoots Lisa to save her from the Special Branch. In Thomas' understanding of linear history, Lisa's death represents the ultimate consequence of his turn to violence:

It is I who killed her. [...] I did it. I shall bear it to my own grave; it is the inevitable consequence of that very first decision I took, the day Sipho and Noni were killed, to take up arms myself. A fearful symmetry.

I have, they say, 'survived'. Minus the hand, minus some other bits and pieces. But such things have happened to others before; will happen; and worse, infinitely worse. I have survived, and that is, I know – I *must* believe in it – a kind of victory. Not only for us, but for the others too; for those who dreadfully accept that all who dare resist the regime must inevitably become its victim. I have crossed that border, and others.

(Brink, AAOT 623-624)

Thomas tries to justify all the losses to calm his conscience, as he seems already at the brink of losing his mind. Sitting in Sipho's office, he writes down what happened "not because it will serve any great purpose in itself: merely to impose again a discipline on my mind; to occupy myself; not to go to pieces" (Brink, AAOT 623). Like for Ben, for Thomas writing represents an act of catharsis. Strained he tries to finally solve the question, which has always haunted him: if the attack was – in hindsight – successful, or at least, meaningful, or a waste of lives. Throughout the novel, Thomas' opinion about his own deeds has constantly developed. With certainty, he rejects the notion of "the raving media extolling [his] virtues as a 'dissident Boer' as if [...] taking a stand against apartheid were an act of heroism instead of a sign of normality" (Brink, AAOT 432). Then, however, there are also moments when he seems forced to defend his position, even against liberals. Among other characters, it is especially Lisa who repeatedly confronts Thomas with her doubts concerning the effectiveness of the attack. For her it is clear

that violence will not win new supporters for anti-apartheid movements: “Don’t you think the lives you took would have the effect of alienating people rather than attracting them? Surely you’re trying to win supporters for your cause: instead of doing that you’ve killed several people” (Brink, AAOT 481). Moreover, not to reject violence, she argues, would force humans “to renounce whatever it is [...] that makes us different from the animals” (Brink, AAOT 582-583). In the end, what matters for Thomas is what account you can give of yourself the moment you die, or – to retort to historiography – the post-mortem report his ancestors will provide of him for their family chronicle:

Suppose that at the time, in that Dark Hole of our modern history, we – and the innumerable others had elected instead to stay out of the fray to renounce violence ourselves, leaving it to others to kill and be killed [...] would the changes that have happened in the world since then have been even remotely possible?

(Brink, AAOT 625)

Thomas’ final answer is, therefore, closely linked to his urge to rethink his Afrikaner heritage:

Only by knowing, knowing without compromise, only by trying to understand, only by swallowing every bitter bloody morsel of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, can we hope to free ourselves from that madness. Without this understanding of the darkness that has preceded what now looks so much like dawn all that turbulence would have served no purpose. To know how it *was* is the only precarious certainty we can hope to attain about knowing how it *is*: how it may yet be. [...]

This is why it had to be done. This is why it has to be remembered. And in this way, not any other.

(Brink, AAOT 625)

Without putting everything at risk, Thomas seems to argue, no change, no progress would have been possible in human history – and this knowledge, the knowledge that something *can* be done suffices to sacrifice everything for the abolishment of Apartheid.

Nevertheless, the balance between the (seemingly) small impact of the attack and the high price Thomas’ had to pay – the loss of friends, family members, and two women he loved – illustrate the limitedness of (white) liberalism, even, or maybe especially in its violent form. Another incident – less important for the plot line but equally significant for this argument – is the butchery scene, where Lisa watches an elderly black man who is unable to buy even the cheapest piece of meat. The whole incident symbolises the helplessness of white liberals: Lisa would like to help but every possible action she could choose would feel wrong:

God knows, there was nothing at all I could do about the whole miserable little incident. I could have offered the old man money – and humiliated him for good. Yet not having done it was even worse. I could have declined to take my own meat. I could have berated the butcher. For what? Was it his fault? Was it mine? Suddenly the whole concept of ‘guilt’ was no longer adequate to contain what I felt, what had happened, what happens every day.

The helplessness – and the futility – of my entire white existence in this country had been stripped bare in an instant.

(Brink, AAOT 364)

In the complicated situation in which Brink's characters find themselves, in a South Africa, in which even compatriots in the struggle against apartheid are increasingly separated through their different ideologies and opinions (e.g. Black Consciousness, or moderate and radical liberals), it seems increasingly difficult for white liberals to define their place in society, as well as to find the right means to fight for their ideals and dreams. Brink's *An Act of Terror* may not offer ready-made solutions to overcome these difficulties, but the novel is certainly successful in observing and documenting in order to provide an account of white liberals' activities, so that future generations may not forget the sins of the past.

6.4 *The Late Bourgeoisie World* by Nadine Gordimer

After having discussed how white liberalism is portrayed by André Brink, the next two sections provide an analysis of Nadine Gordimer's novels *The Late Bourgeoisie World* and *Burger's Daughter*.

6.4.1 Plot & Context

In contrast to Brink's works, Nadine Gordimer's novels offer a less thrilling, yet, more individualistic, personal, and philosophical account of white liberal's lives and thoughts during Apartheid. Set in Johannesburg in the 1960s, *The Late Bourgeoisie World* follows Elisabeth (Liz) Van Den Sandt, a white South African woman, through a not entirely normal Saturday of her life. Liz starts her day with her lover Graham, with whom she occasionally shares her bed but not her home. While having coffee she receives news that her ex-husband Max has committed suicide. This requires Liz to visit their son's boarding school in order to inform him about his father's death. After a short excursion with her son, Liz visits her grandmother in hospital. Later in the same day, Luke, an old friend and black member of the PAC, surprises Liz with a visit to her home. She cooks a meal for both, they chat and flirt, and Luke reveals the actual purpose of his visit: to persuade Liz to help the nationalist cause by finding someone whose bank account can be used to move money. The novel ends with Liz thinking about the possible hazards of using her elderly grandmother's bank account for supporting the black nationalist movements, about once again becoming an active liberal, but also about the possible dangers of returning to her liberal past.

Although the plot of this short novella does not involve numerous liberal actions, such as Brink's novels discussed in the previous sections, *The Late Bourgeoisie World* (TLBW)

provides interesting insights into the mind of a woman who experienced various forms of resistance against apartheid. Most of these experiences are presented in the form of flashbacks, which chart Liz and Max's relationship and their involvement with both sides of the struggle: (upper) white society and the nationalist movement. Max was a member of more than one (more or less) communist movement, including a Communist cell at university, the Liberal Party, the Congress of Democrats, the PAC, and 'Umanyano Ngamandla', "which meant something like 'Let's pull together', as a colloquial name for an African socialist movement" (Gordimer, TLBW 66). Further, he participated in Trade Union conferences. Max frequent change from one political movement not only reflects his tendency not to stay in one job for very long, it also indicates that although communism often served as an umbrella term for describing anti-apartheid movements, the personal interpretation of this term differed considerably between organisations and their members. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that conflicts on the aims and methods of liberation movements arose. For this reason and because critical organisations were mostly banned after some time, liberals, like Max, supported more than one movement over the course of their lifetime. Moreover, "there [even] never was, nor has there ever been, a unity of opinion on the part of Africans and other blacks as to the efficacy of communism and socialism or their organizational incarnations" (Lazerson 5). Nevertheless, as stated in section 3, most dissidents were considered communists by the government and could therefore be punished through the Communist Act. Also in *The Late Bourgeoise World*, *being liberal* is frequently coterminous with *sharing the objectives of communism*, with Max and Liz representing typical examples of this tradition of thought. An article on Max's death in one of the evening papers, for instance, mentions that Max was a named Communist but the reader learns from Liz's comment that he was never actually named.

6.4.2 The Portrayal of Liberalism

In *A Late Bourgeoise World*, the themes prevalent in Brink's works, as, for instance, whites' motivation and way into dissidence and terrorism, are explored too but in a less immediate and more reflective narrative style. All thoughts and views on liberalism are provided by Liz, who serves as female narrator and main character of the novel. Therefore, the reader should bear in mind that he/she gets a highly opinionated glimpse at all other characters, especially of Liz's ex-husband Max, who, as can be argued, stands in the centre of the novel, even though his liberal deeds and his death precede the beginning of Liz's narration. Liz learns about Max's death through a telegram sent to her while she is having breakfast with her lover Graham "by the friend with whom probably he had been staying" after not having heard of her ex-husband

for more than a year (Gordimer, TLBW 1). It is only later, that Liz finds out more about his suicide. Although her ex-husband's death does not come as a surprise or shock for Liz, it awakens memories of their shared past.

The story of Liz and Max's way into dissidence is provided through Liz' flashbacks and already starts in their childhood, even though the lifestyle of Max's social environment was very much contradictory to this philosophy. Max Van Den Sandt grew up on a country estate on the edge of the city. Obviously, he originated from a wealthy family; his father was a member of parliament and, in Liz opinion, his mother embodies all attributes of a bourgeoisie lady. Liz recalls first meeting his parents when she was 17 and quite impressed by his mother's charming attitude and by the pretty and pleasant life on their estate: the Van Den Sandts had menservants "in starched white with red sashes [...] and a Cape Coloured cook", whom they treated with respect but nevertheless regarded as their property: "I know these people as if they were my own", as Mrs Van Den Sandt would say (Gordimer, TLBW 25). Generally, Max's mother represents a perfect example of the bourgeoisie world and the respective tradition of thinking in the binary opposition of white and black, us and them:

[W]hen Mrs Van Den Sandt spoke of 'we South Africans' she meant the Afrikaans- and English-speaking white people, and when Theo Van Den Sandt called for 'a united South Africa, going forward to an era of progress and prosperity for all' he meant the unity of the same two white groups, and higher wages and bigger cars for them. For the rest – the ten or eleven million 'natives' – their labour was directed in various Acts of no interest outside Parliament, and their lives were incidental to their labour, since until the white man came they knew nothing better than a mud hut in the veld.

(Gordimer, TLBW 31)

Moreover, Liz's flashbacks to their childhood give the impression that Max's parents were far more interested in giving parties or bridge evening than in their child Max. This is crucial, as it may constitute one, if not the main reason why Max already showed forms of attention-seeking behaviour prior to his activities as a white liberal, or terrorist, as for instance, when he once burned his father's clothes because his father had been too busy to discuss his troubles at school. Max continued his rebellious behaviour in his student years and displeased his parents by becoming a member of the United Party Youth. Liz, then his girlfriend, observed his parent's initial naiveté, since they assumed that he was just going through a phase of open rebellion and continued to belittle him like a child who has not yet found his place in the world:

When Max was a student they didn't take him very seriously, of course, and regarded what they knew of his activities in student politics, along with his pointed non-appearance at dinner parties and his shabby clothes, as youthful Bohemianism. I don't know whether they knew that he was a member of a Communist cell, probably not. To them it was all a game, a fancy dress ball like the ones they used to go to in the thirties. Soon he would put away the costume, wear a suit, join one

of his father's companies, invest in the share market and build a nice home for the little girl he would marry [as a shopkeeper's daughter, Liz is referred to as 'little girl' by Mrs Van Der Sandt].
(Gordimer, TLBW 31)

Liz already got pregnant when she was only 18, in 1952, the year when the Defiance Campaign started. Now her husband, Max supported the campaign by marching into an African area prohibited to whites, as well as by going to Durban to camp with Africans and Indians on a public square in protest against segregation. Like most of Max's liberalist attempts, his actions were unsuccessful: The central idea of the Defiance Campaign was being arrested for one's dissidence. The charges against Max, however, were dropped, most probably, as Liz suspects, because his father used his influence to keep his son out of prison to preserve the family's good image (Gordimer, TLBW 33).

Despite – or maybe due to – his parents' conservative manner, Max became a liberal through and through. His liberal attitude was always present and publicly presented, as for instance, when he was asked to propose a toast at his sister's wedding. After a clumsy start, Max preached about the dangers of "moral sclerosis", a term that he uses for referring to the hardening of the heart and narrowing of the mind by excluding all non-white and non-posh people out of one's considerations. Through the reaction of the audience Gordimer illustrates the repression of liberal morality in Afrikaner society: As Liz remembers, the listening crowd of about 400 wedding guests reacted with polite attention, "smiling faces", and applause to his speech, despite his open condemnation of their white lifestyle and his strong appeal to them to remain thinking and feeling beings (Gordimer, TLBW 40). For a moment, the whole speech is even taken as a joke and after some minutes, Max's verbal escapade was already forgotten (Gordimer, TLBW 41). While Max was ashamed by the ineffectiveness of his speech, Liz reacts with pity and amusement:

Poor Max – moral scleroses! The way he fell in love with that prig's phrase and kept repeating it: moral sclerosis. Where on earth had he got it from? And all the analogies he kept raking up to go with it. [...] What sort of show could his awkward honesty make against the sheer rudeness of him? They were all in the right, again, and he was wrong; and I could have kicked him for it. We did not leave the wedding [...] but I couldn't say a word to him about the speech, it was so horribly funny.

(Gordimer, TLBW 41)

Liz retrospective comments suggest that Max's liberalism reached its climax when he started building a bomb, but already immediately after their marriage pursued various liberal and dissident activities, such as discussion and study groups, open-air meetings and demonstrations. In course of their liberalist pursuits, Liz and Max also were frequent visitors to townships, where they met with Africans and whites, Indians and coloureds, with "the whole rainbow from

politically conservative do-gooders to the radical left-wing” (Gordimer, TLBW 54), thus, showing the liberal value of tolerance. It was a time in which both Liz and Max were full of hope and good intentions, for Liz thought that “[t]he future was already there; it was a matter of having the courage to announce it” (Gordimer, TLBW 55). Max’s activities were manifold, from teaching economics to a group of politically ambitious Africans to philosophical writings and demonstrations.

Despite his membership in various communist organizations, Max “did not take a strictly Marxist line” and refused to join the Communist Party in its underground activities (Gordimer, TLBW 57). Instead he chose to become a member of the Liberal Party and, because it was not taken seriously by most people, later of the radical Congress of Democrats (COD). As Max’s example illustrates, the boundary between liberalist and communist ideas was fuzzy and arbitrary and white dissidents would often join the organisation which seemed most effective at a certain point of time. Liz too worked for the COD, “not exactly with Max, but mostly on backroom stuff, printing propaganda for the African National Congress, and so on” (Gordimer, TLBW 58). Like Max, she “believed in what [she] was doing and in the people [she] was doing it with” (Gordimer, TLBW 58). While she, however, knew when to stop – when Bobo required her attendance – Max went too far. According to Liz, he “would have done anything. That was somehow the trouble. When he was given a job he would always take it a stage beyond what he had been told was its intended limit” (Gordimer, TLBW 61), with his eagerness and exaggeration displeasing older and more experienced members of the organisations in which he worked. Liz opines that Max could even have become a good revolutionary if he had had more time “to acquire political discipline”, or a politician, “if political ambitions outside the maintenance of white power had been recognized” (Gordimer, TLBW 62).

It was his black comrade, Spears Qwabe, then, who lured the willing but inexperienced Max away from well-known organisations by introducing him to the idea that a future South Africa would have to “break out of the Capitalist-Communist pattern”; Spears does not want to take over institutions of the East or the West but to further the idea “Socialism from Africa and for Africa” (Gordimer, TLBW 64). These thoughts inflamed Max’s eagerness to join Spear’s movement called ‘Umanyano Ngamandla’ (‘Let’s pull together’) and to abandon the COD, for which Liz continued to work until she too began to see the limitations of the latter organisation, or rather because she “needed Max to be right” (Gordimer, TLBW 67). For the new organisation, Spears and Max “were formulating [the] methodology of African socialism”, a kind of “handbook [...] of the African revolution” (Gordimer, TLBW 67). When the State of Emergency was called out in 1960, however, Spears decided to join the ANC, now an

underground movement. Liz also recalls the subsequent security raids on their cottage but, unlike Ben in *A Dry White Season*, she does not seem shocked or in any way affected by such examples of structural violence.

Gordimer's focus on the effect of apartheid on the individual does not impede her from including recent historical developments. The Van Den Sandts' work as liberalist white supporters of the nationalist movement changed completely due to the State of Emergency. From now on, African nationalism gained in importance and, as Liz narrates, blacks in the liberation struggle kept out of white liberals' homes: "There was a move among politically active Africans to keep out of white houses, no matter whose they were, and to reject friendship and even intimacy with whites as part of white privilege" (Gordimer, TLBW 77). This reflects Biko's opinion and his criticism on white liberalist support. As a consequence of this change in attitude, Max remained alone with his liberalist goals and, interestingly, it was even Liz who may have inspired him to his terrorist attack by giving him following recommendation (although she does not seem to be aware of it): "Maybe if you're ever going to achieve something, you'll have to do it quite alone" (Gordimer, TLBW 78).

Shortly thereafter, Liz and Max were divorced and her knowledge about her ex-husband's location and activities were reduced to almost zero – and yet, he phoned her in the night before he set the bomb to tell her that something big will be in the morning paper; once again, Liz was asked to watch, to observe when Max was supposedly performing his biggest liberalist action. Once again, he failed. The bomb summarises the whole futility of his white liberalism: "Max's bomb, described in court as being made of a tin filled with a mixture of sulphur, saltpetre and charcoal, was found before it exploded and he was arrested within twenty-four hours" (Gordimer, TLBW 79). Max was sentenced to five years imprisonment but after serving fifteen months he received an offer to become a State witness and he agreed:

He was beaten when he was first arrested, that we know, but what else he was confronted with later, what else they showed him in himself, we do not know – but he spoke. He spoke of Solly and Eve King and the man who was arrested with him, he spoke of William Xaba and other friends with whom we had lived and worked for years.

(Gordimer, TLBW 80)

Even though all of Max's liberal attempts to support the liberation struggle ended in failure, Liz constantly seems to try to portray her late ex-husband as an anti-hero:

He didn't die for them – the people, but perhaps he did more than that. In his attempts to love he lost even his self-respect, in betrayal. He risked everything for them and lost everything. He gave his life in every way there is; and going down to the bed of the sea is the last.

(Gordimer, TLBW 80)

As will be shown in section 6.3.4, however, Liz is not only highly critical of the Van Den Sandt's but also finds numerous mistakes in Max. Nonetheless, Liz wants their son Bobo to know about his father's past, so that he "knows there is always the possibility of trouble" (Gordimer, TLBW 15). When Liz informs him about his father's suicide, Bobo is apparently far more shocked than Liz – not because he loved him so dearly but because it is the first time that the boy is personally affected by violence: "What came to him in that moment must have been the reality of all the things he had read about, happening to other people" (Gordimer, TLBW 15-16). Like Ben in *A Dry White Season*, Bobo in his innocent ignorance knew about the horrible things happening in his country but he has never experienced them himself. They have never affected someone he knew personally, even though the boy has not had a close relationship to his father. Liz seems proud to have taught Bobo the liberal way of his parents, namely to "recognize and alleviate suffering", no matter who (or what) the suffering being was (Gordimer, TLBW 18). Furthermore, when Liz and the boy talk about his friends at school, Bobo reveals that Weldon is no longer his friend because he cannot understand that Bobo does not want him to offend blacks by calling them "kaffirs" or "munts" (Gordimer, TLBW 21-22), a pejorative offensive slang word usually used for black men (Wiktionary). Bobo opposes prejudices and insulting comments about blacks but, at the same time, regrets the non-reflective behaviour of his friends. The child's wish *to belong somewhere* is revealed when he commits that he sometimes wishes he and his family were like other people, who do not care about racism (Gordimer, TLBW 22).

Another liberal person in Liz's life is Graham, her lover, whom she met when she was already divorced from Max and needed help in her ex-husband's trial. Although Graham "couldn't take the brief", he "remained interested" – in Max's case and in Liz – and later, when her ex-husband was in prison, Graham arranged visits and supported Liz in making "various applications on Max's behalf" (Gordimer, TLBW 49). Moreover, when Liz had been refused a passport for years, it was Graham who made a successful application for her. Graham's support of liberal detainees, however, is not limited to the Van Den Sandts; Liz proudly narrates that "Graham defends many people on political charges and is one of a handful of advocates who ignore the possible consequences of getting a reputation for being willing to take such cases" (Gordimer, TLBW 49). Therefore, Graham is clearly a liberal but, in contrast to Max, he follows his conviction in legal and non-violent ways. Liz points out the advantages of Graham's liberalism, which is far safer than Max's lifestyle: Graham "doesn't act, that's true; but he doesn't give way, and that's not bad, in a deadlock. He lives white, but what's the point of a gesture of living any other way? He will survive his own convictions, he will do what he sets

out to do, he will keep whatever promises he makes” (Gordimer, TLBW 50). One might argue that, here, Liz deals with Graham unjustly, for he *does* act by working for black and white liberals – Liz, however, seems to be used to more direct, more violent actions and apparently disregards Graham’s efforts as natural parts of his job that can be taken for granted. Gordimer thereby contrasts and – through the character of Liz – evaluates moderate and violent liberalism; Liz’ evaluation, however, seems to suggest that both are ineffective, either due to the small effectivity of moderate liberalism, or the self-destructiveness of terrorism.

With regard to her own life-style, Liz is seemingly content to report that she and Graham both “keep [their] hands clean” (Gordimer, TLBW 49). While Graham pursues his career as a lawyer of dissidents, Liz, who works at the laboratory of the Institute for Medical Research, analysis stools and blood of *all* people. Consequently, neither of them “makes money out of cheap labour or performs a service confined to people of a particular colour” (Gordimer, TLBW 49). Liz concludes her thoughts on this topic with a blunt statement that is so typical of her critical, liberalist, but also very direct character: “For myself, thank God shit and blood are all the same, no matter whom they came from” (Gordimer, TLBW 49).

6.4.3 Inter-racial Relationships

Interestingly, Gordimer’s novel involves a very limited number of black characters. Following Liz’s Saturday in Johannesburg, the reader observes all the black workers the female narrator notices on her way, be it at Bobo’s school, or the “black men with their delivery bicycles, or in working overalls” that Liz watches from her home (Gordimer, TLBW 51). None of these minor characters are given a voice, nor are they described as looking unhappy or discontent. Gordimer’s style, however, does not require such an open negative depiction; as mentioned above, her aim is to give an individualistic picture of apartheid and Liz’s thoughts act as a channel for the author’s liberalist criticism. The image of black workers in the sun, for instance, is used to stress the liberal ideal of the equality of all people through Liz comment that “[w]e were all in the sun” (Gordimer, TLBW 52), and thus, all the same, all South Africans. Even from a distance, Liz feels at home with these black strangers:

There is a way of being with people that comes only by not knowing names. If you have no particular need of anyone, you find yourself belonging to a company you hadn’t been admitted to before; I didn’t need anybody because I had these people who, like myself, would get up and go away in a little while. Without any reason, I felt very much at home.

(Gordimer, TLBW 52)

Like this image of black workers in various professions, other black characters, who are described in more detail, are also primarily used to illustrate the attitude of white liberals, like

Liz and Max, towards the Other. One of these characters is Spears, the man who used to work with Max. Liz likes Spears despite his habit of drinking alcohol and calling her “Honey; she thinks of him as a tender person, who had a calming effect on her family (Gordimer, TLBW 68). While Spears and other black characters play only a minor role in Gordimer’s novel, Luke Fokase, a black PAC member whom Liz invites to have dinner at her home the evening after Max’s suicide, plays a crucial part in her character development. Although Liz is not happy about the arranged visit, she commits that she “miss[es] their black faces” (Gordimer, TLBW 104) and the “taste” of spending time with the black comrades of her past with Max (Gordimer, TLBW 105). At the same time, she is aware that “friendship for its own sake is something only whites can afford” (Gordimer, TLBW 105) and thereby hints at the increasing tensions between black and white liberals.

Luke is a friend of Reba, who uses his building and cartage contracting business to provide a “bus service for politicals on the run” (Gordimer, TLBW 105). Liz’s flashbacks inform the reader that she once helped him and Luke out with money for the repair of his truck when it had broken down on a mission to transport two fleeing Africans over the border. Since then, Luke has visited her from time to time. Even though his behaviour on such visits certainly resembles one of a lover (“the compliment of suggesting that he would like to make love to you, if time and place and the demands of two lives were different”; Gordimer, TLBW 122), Liz is perfectly aware that “he doesn’t come to see [her] for nothing. There’s always a reason” (Gordimer, TLBW 115). More than once, Luke has come to borrowed money from her and also this time he requires Liz’s help. Their relationship is burdened with prejudices and expectations of the other race-group: Luke calculates that Liz will act like a typical white and hopes to use her privileges for his advantage. First, he kindly asks her, then, presses her and appeals to her conscience as a liberal in order to achieve his goal: Liz is given the task to find a person willing to offer his/her bank account for illegal money transfers from abroad for the PAC. Her experience and knowledge about the risks lead Liz to react with evasive comments and excuses. Suddenly realising that she herself would be able to help by using her own grandmother’s account, she remains silent and dishonest; she sends Luke away but the subliminal message he sent, the deal he offered, keep spinning in her head after she went to bed.

All Liz has to offer are the privileges she enjoys as a white woman but the only thing Luke has for her in return is his flirting and the promising hint at the possibility of having sex with Liz. Before falling asleep, at the end of the novel, Liz is wondering what to do and comes closer to accepting Luke’s deal:

Luke knows what he wants, and he knows who it is he must get it from. Of course he's right. A sympathetic white woman hasn't got anything to offer him – except the footing she keeps in the good old white Reserve of banks and privileges. And in return he comes with the smell of the smoke of braziers in his clothes. Oh yes, and it's quite possible he'll make love to me, next time or some time. That's part of the bargain. It's honest, too, like his vanity, his lies, the loans he doesn't pay back: it's all he's got to offer me. It would be better if I accepted gratefully, because then we shan't owe each other anything, each will have given what he has, and neither is to blame if one has more to give than the other. And in any case, perhaps I want it. I don't know. Perhaps it would be better than what I've had – or got. Suit me better, now. Who's to say it shouldn't be called love? You can't do more than give what you have.

(Gordimer, TLBW 141-142)

Apparently, Liz really seems to consider betraying her white lover Graham for a love affair with Luke. As a side-line that can easily be overread, she notes that she even had a black lover some years ago. Nevertheless, it is not the possible sexual affair but the chance to return to her exciting life as an active liberal which keeps her awake.

Unlike Brink's character Ben, Liz may be self-centred but, nevertheless, idealistic. For her, the only reason to help the Other is her ability to do so:

Why on earth should I do such a thing? It seems to me that the answer is simply the bank account. I can't explain; but there is the bank account. That's good enough; as when Bobo used to answer a question about his behaviour with the single word: 'Because'.

(Gordimer, TLBW 141)

In the end, the reader does not know what path Liz will follow: the one of liberalism or of her secure, normal life. She remains sleepless; on the one hand, she is afraid of the possible perils of supporting Luke and the anti-apartheid struggle (he has told her about the fate of her predecessors: house arrest, flight abroad), on the other hand she cannot afford not to help:

I've been lying awake a long time, now. There is no clock in the room since the red travelling clock that Bobo gave me went out of order, but the slow, even beats of my heart repeat to me, like a clock; afraid, alive, afraid, alive, afraid, alive ...

(Gordimer, TLBW 142)

Unlike her late husband Max Liz is aware that she is still alive and able to offer help; at the same time, she is afraid that she could share Max's fate if she crosses the boarder by becoming a white dissident – one of the marginalized others. Thus, she remains at the brink of liberal action.

6.4.4 Liberalism & Identity

As the main character of *The Late Bourgeois World*, Liz perfectly illustrates that identities are manifold and at times contradictory. She is shown as a wife (in flashback), mother, lover (of Graham), white South African, and as a liberal. She incarnates all these roles but is forced to

find a solution for making them compatible. To protect her new-born son, Liz had to abandon her active role in the COD, for she “limited [her] activities only because of Bobo” (Gordimer, TLBW 58), because there was the risk of Bobo growing up without his parents in the case that Max and Liz both would have been arrested. As Max continued to participate in terrorist acts and similar dangerous tasks, Liz was dragooned to abandon her role as wife. In her life, there is always an identity which is incompatible with her other identities, wherefore Liz is constantly confronted with the decision which identity she should adopt: the one of a quiet white woman, with her half-hearted love affair with Graham, her normal job and daily tasks, or the role of a liberal criminal, who constantly lives in fear of being detained, or even killed. The reader can sense Liz asking herself, if it is her obligation to fight apartheid, if it is worth the risk and, most importantly, what her role as a white South African woman is in this system, which, for Liz, is not as black and white as it might seem from the outside. Like other Afrikaners, she feels comfortable in her average life and, at one point, Liz even commits that she partly identifies with the passive mass of whites, who tries to lead a ‘normal’ life despite the racism surrounding them, when she states: “I too have my package of pork fillets and my chair in the sun; you would not know me from the others” (Gordimer, TLBW 34).

On the other hand, Liz seems to feel that the average life she is living now resembles a dead world in comparison with her exciting past with Max. She is safe, indeed, but she is also caught in the rhythm of a life that is ever the same. When Luke leaves her home, she compares him with Orpheus, who leaves his Eurydice behind in the underworld of death and shadows, to ascend to the world of the living. Thus, the novel provides the impression that Liz is torn between options – or identities – open to her: having left her exciting but dangerous life as an active liberal behind, she has chosen a secure life with a regular job, an all-risk policy, and Graham as a reliable, support-providing lover – but will her love affair with this type of life last for long?

Liz, in general, is an interesting character. Critical of most people in her closer social environment (the only real exception is probably her son Bobo), she finds mistakes in every way of life: in the bourgeoisie life-style of Max’s parents, Max’s ineffective and wild liberalism, and Graham and her current state of passive in-betweenness. Moreover, all of Liz love-affairs seem a little half-hearted. Probably because “love itself, in the climate surrounding her, has become infected with the common fear” (Mitchell), there is always a certain distance in her relationships, even in the one to her son Bobo. Graham may be her lover but they live separate lives and “make a point of not living in each other’s pocket” and “make it tacitly clear that [they]’re not to be regarded as a ‘couple’” (Gordimer, TLBW 44). She even states that she

doesn't need Graham, that it was more than a "sexual connection" but less than a love affair (Gordimer, TLBW 50). It seems plausible that Liz tries to protect herself by keeping distance, as Max seems to have disappointed her in every way: not only was he a horrible father for Bobo, also his political actions were ineffective but dangerous and always more important than his family. Liz and Max "have truly gone through every possibility by which attachment can survive, worn them all threadbare, until any kind of communication was no longer contained, but went like a fist through empty air" (Gordimer, TLBW 7). The form of her relationship Liz keeps with Graham, on the other hand, "harms nobody, not even [them]selves" (Gordimer, TLBW 50). Her emotional umbrella, designed for protecting Liz from future pain and disappointment, leaves her isolated. After abandoning her old life with Max, nothing seems to have touched her emotionally. Liz feels empty and torn between all the options open to her. Yet, unlike Max, she is still alive, still able to find the stone under which the right answer lies hidden.

6.4.5 Possibilities, Consequences and Limits of White Liberalism

Max's numerous failures as a liberal, despite his good intentions, reveal how limited his abilities and possibilities were as a white supporter of national liberation. Harshly, Liz opines that regardless of his liberal efforts, "Max wasn't anybody's hero" (Gordimer, TLBW 20), since he disappointed his parents by becoming a terrorist and betrayed his black and white comrades by turning State witness after his attack failed. Moreover, like other white liberals, he strived at becoming part of the marginalized Other, who represented the majority of those fighting for the liberation struggle – but while most whites excluded blacks from their privileged lives, white liberals too could never really "come close" to, or belong to the group of marginalized blacks. Liz describes this phenomenon when she remembers the time when Spears and Max tried to compose a handbook of African socialism:

There was Max standing urgently over him, protesting, arguing, pressing – it was not just the determination to get it all down that held Max there; he hovered irresistibly towards what could never be got down, what spears didn't need to get down because it was his – an identity with millions like him, an abundance chartered by the deprivation of all that Max had had heaped upon himself. Some of the white people I know want the black's innocence; that innocence, even in corruption of the status of victim; but not Max. And everyone knows those whites who want to be allowed to 'love' the blacks out of guilt; and those who want to be allowed to 'love' them as an aberration, a distinction. Max wasn't any of these. He wanted to come close; and in this country the people – with all the huddled warmth of the phrase – are black. Set aside with whites, even his own chosen kind, he was still left out, he experienced the isolation of his childhood become the isolation of his colour.

(Gordimer, TLBW 68-69)

As the passage illustrates, Max's wish to "come close" to the feeling of *being* black, of belonging to this group of dominated members of society, is denied on basis of his colour, as, in South African apartheid, collective identities – no matter in which context – were always primarily based on colour.

Over the course of the novel, the reader learns that one of Max's prime motivations was his need to gain the recognition of others, regardless of their colour. Liz is aware that "he wanted [her] approval, [her] admiration for whatever he did" (Gordimer, TLBW 69) and commits that "[w]hat [she] wanted was for him *to do the right things so that [she] could love him*" (Gordimer, TLBW 70). According to the narrator, it was also Max's need for approval by others which led him to sleep with Felicity Hare, "a big, red-faced girl just down from Cambridge who wanted to 'do something' in Africa", whom everyone simply used to call "Sunnybunny" (Gordimer, TLBW 71-72). Travelling from one African country to the next, Felicity ended up living with the Van Den Sandts and supported the freedom struggle by doing some typing for Max and "getting people out of what she called 'messes'" (Gordimer, TLBW 72). If not also for Max, then at least for Sunnybunny everything seems just a game and liberalism her hobby, which involved activities, such as midnight-slogan-painting or "parties where white liberals and black tarts and toughs went for what each could get out of the other" (Gordimer, TLBW 73). Felicity was constantly teased by her male comrades but when Max's teasing made her cry, Liz realised that her husband had betrayed her: the "only reason why Max made love to her", she thinks, was that "[h]e needed approval and admiration so much that he was prepared to throw in a good fuck as payment" (Gordimer, TLBW 75). Even though Liz might be correct in portraying Max as a self-centred, unsocial person, it must be kept in mind that all the reader can know is *Liz's* perspective and opinion – and Liz is apparently similarly convinced of her importance for Max's life.

Max's "horrible selfishness", how Liz's mother once called it (Gordimer, TLBW 59), also affected his family life, as it lead him to neglect his son, so that "there was no one responsible for Bobo except" Liz, who seems to be the only adult in their relationship (Gordimer, TLBW 59). Liz assumes that "it was the irreversible training of his background", that "he was ministered to like a prince in a tower", which robbed him of the knowledge about "what it was to live with others" (Gordimer, TLBW 59). One time, for instance, Liz came home to find Max yelling back at their screaming child, and it was more than once that Max left baby Bobo with some strangers in one of the townships because he went on one anti-apartheid mission or another. His ignorant behaviour finally obliged Liz to give up her work at the COD.

Therefore, Max's selfish immersion in his liberalist pursuit certainly caused his failure as husband and father.

Another motivation for Max's deeds seems to have derived from his scorn on the late bourgeoisie world, in which he was born, as he always wanted Liz and him to lead a simple life and to pursue targets that clearly opposed his parents' wishes for him. If their egocentrism and conservative world-view is considered, it is hardly surprising that Max's parents not only disapproved of his liberalism but also condemned his violent deed. Liz grimly remarks that, for them, "[t]heir son was [already] dead [...] the day he was arrested on a charge of sabotage", long before his suicide (Gordimer, TLBW 28). Max's parents also bore the consequences of his trial, as his father had to resign his seat in Parliament (Gordimer, TLBW 28).

As pointed out above, however, Max was unable to live with others, especially in poor conditions outside of his parents' bourgeoisie world. Moreover, his obsession to be acknowledged reveals Max's failure in ridding himself of his bourgeoisie background. While his parents measure their success in the amount of acknowledgement they receive for their economic and social status, Max longed for the celebration of his liberalist deeds: "Max shunned the Van Den Sandts' standards of success but in a way they triumphed in him, passing on, like a family nose or chin, the rage to succeed. He did not weigh in on their scale, but he retained the revengeful need to be acknowledged" (Gordimer, TLBW 75). His volatile and self-centred nature almost suggest that, for Max, the whole apartheid struggle, with all its perils, seemed to be something of a game, a serious game, but a game nonetheless. He exchanges one movement for the next, almost as fast as he changes his job, and does not seem to consider the possible consequences of his actions. For his black comrades, on the other hand, it is definitely a more serious task, as the outcome of the struggle will determine their whole life.

In addition to his failure as comrade, son, and father, Liz word choice ("poor little bomb") further reveals that, in her opinion, Max's political actions were of no earthly use, as all of them turned out to be failures and/or ineffective: "When he made his poor little bomb it was to help blow the blacks free" (Gordimer, TLBW 21). Thus, Liz approves of the ideas Max fought for but not of his methods. Speaking of white liberalists in general, Liz states: "The liberal-minded whites whose protests, petitions and outspokenness have achieved nothing remarked the inefficiency of the terrorists and the wasteful senselessness of their attempts" (Gordimer, TLBW 79). Speaking to Bobo about his father she additionally remarks: "[Y]ou know he went after the right things, even if perhaps it was in the wrong way. The things he tried didn't come off but at least he didn't just eat and sleep and pat himself on the back. He wasn't content to leave bad things the way they are. If he failed, well, that's better than making no attempt"

(Gordimer, TLBW 19). Hence, Liz clearly not only condemns Max's ineffective terrorism, but also all passive by-standers, who ignore the downsides of apartheid. Her portrayal of Max's liberalism is deeply arbitrary and she does not seem to have formulated a clear opinion on his actions yet: On the one hand, she misses their exciting past together; on the other hand, she condemns his unreliable behaviour as husband and father. She admires her husband for his engagement but, at the same time, thinks him crazy for risking everything for his forlorn mission. She feels that "[o]nly madmen do such things. But can any white man who wants change really be all there? It's a comforting thought" (Gordimer, TLBW 34).

Although Max's death is a crucial event for Liz, the reader cannot know if Max's death will affect Liz's life on the long term, or if she was in any way psychologically wounded by the event. It certainly reminds her of their shared past, led her to question her identity, and may even inspire her to support Luke by offering her grandmother's bank account for nationalist purposes. In addition, Liz might not be surprised by her ex-husband's death – clearly, he had always been in danger and his personality seemed to have been quite dependent on the opinion of others – nevertheless, it is Max's death that divides her life into before and after and awakes her from Eurydice's world of shadows: "I felt nothing directly about the fact except that I believed it. Yet it divided the morning before I had read the telegram from the morning after I had done so, and in the severance I was cut loose" (Gordimer, TLBW 7). The reader is only close to Liz for one day of her life but on this very day her thoughts revolve again and again around her ex-husband's demise, in the form of conscious flashbacks but also in her dreams, in which Liz relives, or imagines Max's suicide by drowning himself from his perspective; "the physical facts of it" even cause Liz to share some tears for her late ex-husband's pain (Gordimer, TLBW 53). This emotional reaction, however, is clearly a normal symptom of losing a close relation and not indicative of any form of mental breakdown.

At the end of the day, a newspaper article in the evening paper informs Liz that Max "took with him a suitcase of papers that could not be deciphered" (Gordimer, TLBW 53). While she judges his actions as a liberal as ineffective, she finally admits that Max had therefore at least "succeeded in dying" (Gordimer, TLBW 53). Therefore, in contrast to Brink's *A Dry White Season*, where the transfer of knowledge was Ben's only success, here it is the deliberate disappearance of information which constitutes Max's sole victory as a white liberal.

For Liz, "Max's death [itself] is a postscript. A postscript can be something trivial, scarcely pertinent, or it can be important and finally relevant" (Gordimer, TLBW 54). She does not attribute Max's death to political reasons only, saying to Bobo:

Well, we can't really blame this on politics. I mean, Max suffered a lot for his political views, but I don't suppose this – what he did now – is a direct result of something political. I mean – Max was in a mess, he somehow couldn't deal with what happened to him, largely, yes, because of his political actions, but also because ... in general, he wasn't equal to the demands he ... he took upon himself.

(Gordimer, TLBW 19)

Thereby, Liz clearly suggests that it was not one particular political incident that led her ex-husband to commit suicide but his final recognition of the fact that he was unable to live up to the ideal image he had painted of himself. This is supported by Liz's philosophical assumptions when discussing the same question with Luke later that day: "There are people who kill themselves because they can't bear not to live for ever. [...] I mean, they can't put up with the limitations of the time they're alive in. Saints and martyrs are the same sort" (Gordimer, TLBW 119). Later she explains further that "death is of this world, but only by death we shall enter eternal life" (Gordimer, TLBW 138). His suicide is Max's final attempt to win the attention of others that he was refused his whole life. For Liz, it is obvious that it was just the continuation of attention-seeking acts, or in her words:

Something to which my contemporary being said quietly: of course. Max had driven a car into the sea and gone down with it; as Max once burned his father's clothes, and, yes, as Max, three years ago, tried to blow up a post office. This time I wasn't looking, that's all. Oh will this child's game never end, between Max and me? That was what turned me cold with anger when the telegram came; the feeling that he was looking over the shoulder of his death to see... if I were looking?

(Gordimer, TLBW 6)

Max wanted attention, he wanted Liz to *watch* him for a last time: "Perhaps I was flattering myself [...] and there was someone else by now in whose eye he saw himself – friend, woman – it didn't matter whom. But I knew, when I read the telegram, it was *for me*" (Gordimer, TLBW 7). Yet, a side note by Liz reveals that Max has even been robbed this ultimate fame: Instead of reporting of his death, the late final edition of the newspaper dropped his story to report of astronauts in space (Gordimer, TLBW 135). The astronauts, Liz reflects, represent the mastering of death:

You can go down after love or up after the moon. But if you master something outside our physical environment, isn't it reasonable to believe you are reaching out beyond the fact of death? If you master that beyond, as those men up there have done, isn't that the closest we've ever got to mastering death? Won't I seem the prefiguration, the symbol of that mastery?

(Gordimer, TLBW 137)

If death is for Max the only way he can enter eternal life because it is not of this world, "[s]pace is not of this world, either, and yet you can walk about alive in it, up there. You don't need to be dead in order to enter." (Gordimer, TLBW 138). Liz believes that space exploration, going

“out of this world into infinity, eternity” probably represents the new religion of her age (Gordimer, TLBW 139).

Both Max’s and Liz’s stories hardly answer but rather raise questions on the possibilities, limits, and obligations of white liberals: What was the way, the right method to realize all these fantastic ideas and philosophies that liberal thinkers like Max developed in their studies? How far could one go? Was it their obligation to help, or was it just their selfishness motivating them to become immortal, unforgotten for all eternity? How could one break out of the vicious capsule of a privileged white world? – Or in Liz words: “*There were possibilities, but under what stone? Under what stone?*” (Gordimer, TLBW 79). Reliving her past with Max, all the wonderful and horrible experiences with him, Liz’s “intellect [is] fogged and bewildered by the gulf between the theory of reform and its imperfect performance”. She captures all of Max’s numerous failures for the reader but, at the same time, she seems unable to reveal the stone under which the perfect method, the ideal ways to national liberation is hidden, and, thus, remains with the question, if it is indeed better to do something ineffectual than to do nothing at all (Clark E. 243).

As Graham once answered to Liz asking: “Graham, what on earth do you think they’ll call it in history?”, he answers: “I’ve just read a book that refers to ours as the Late Bourgeois World. How does that appeal to you?” (Gordimer, TLBW 100). It is this world of transition in which Liz and her fellow liberals have to operate. A world which is not only characterised by the struggle between docile Afrikaners and freedom fighters, but also by the one between the old bourgeoisie world and a new generation of more critical whites, who sought to change the world into which they were born.

6.5 *Burger’s Daughter* by Nadine Gordimer

Another line of thought on the consequences of dissidence for the relatives of a white liberal is provided by Gordimer’s novel *Burger’s Daughter*, which is discussed in this final section.

6.5.1 Plot & Context

Of the analysed novels *Burger’s Daughter* presents the broadest perspective on white liberalism, as it is not only concerned with the lives and acts of individuals but also reflects on the future role of whites after revolution has restructured the South African power structure. As Stephen Clingman phrases it, Gordimer’s novel is “deeply concerned with the climatic historical moment that Gordimer’s fiction increasingly seems to be ‘waiting for’: the moment of revolution in South Africa” (171). Another contrast to the previously discussed novels is the

white main character of *Burger's Daughter*: the novel does not portray how Rosa Burger became a dissident but “considers the ethical dilemmas and choices of someone effectively born into a tradition of white political resistance; or, more precisely, of someone whose commitment has been, and continues to be, determined by a particular ideology” (Head 111), namely communism.

The story follows the development of Rosa Burger, daughter of the famous Afrikaner communist leader, Lionel Burger, and his wife, Cathy. After her parents' death – her mother died of multiple sclerosis, her father in prison – Rosa is free from her former duties as the daughter of two communists but is soon confronted with the high expectations of other dissidents, who expect her to accept her parents' legacy by taking their part in the freedom struggle. Through her lover Conrad Rosa is introduced to a more selfish lifestyle and bourgeois values and increasingly distances herself from the communist cell. In order to escape her legacy, Rosa flees to Europe, where she lives with her father's first wife, Colette Swann (also called Katya), and enjoys the new experience of having a private life of one's own. When it almost seems that her new love-affair with the French professor Bernard Chabalier might seduce Rosa to stay in Europe, she meets Baasie, her black ‘brother’, who reminds her of what is left behind. Consequently, Rosa returns to South Africa, where she works as a physiotherapist until her arrest in 1977. The novel ends with Rosa in solitary confinement.

Despite its meagre plot, *Burger's Daughter* offers interesting insights into South Africa's past. Historically, Gordimer's novel can be considered a response to the Soweto student riots of 1976, which started with about 15,000 schoolchildren gathering at the Orlando West Junior Secondary School in protest against the introduction of the obligatory use of Afrikaans as language of instruction in certain subjects in black schools and which ended with several black youths having died at the hands of the police (Clingman 180; see also section 2). Closely connected to this revolt is the Black Consciousness movement (see section 3), whose attitude is expressed by Baasie and Duma in Gordimer's novel. Moreover, Gordimer's characters not only discuss several historical organisations and original documents; historical persons are even quoted verbatim, such as Steve Biko, Joe Slovo, or Bram Fischer. While some verbatim accounts are implicit and hardly marked, other thinkers, including Marx and Lenin, are quoted regularly with reference to the source. As Clingman convincingly argues, the main function of such quotations is to “give voice to a certain social or historical presence, and this in its own authentic form” (Clingman 188). Even though these ideological perspectives are at times presented with complete dispassion or ironically, the readers are free to form their own opinion. When the novel was published, the inclusion of authentic documents fulfilled the

additional purpose of providing Gordimer's readers with documents which would otherwise hardly be available (Clingman 188). However, the novel, too, was soon banned after its publication in South Africa (Clingman 189), as it indeed represents a critical but celebrating reflection on white dissidence.

6.5.2 The Portrayal of Liberalism

Burger's Daughter (BD) involves several white characters, who reveal a liberal attitude on the question of racial equality and not all of them can be discussed in detail within this analysis.

Even though Rosa Burger definitely represents the main character of Gordimer's novel, it is her deceased father, Lionel Burger, who seems to define the ideal picture of a white revolutionary and each and every action taken by Rosa seems to be measured out in relation to her father's legacy. Not only friends, reporters, and the state expect Rosa to follow in Lionel's footsteps, also Rosa constantly reflects on the role imposed on her through being 'Burger's Daughter', the daughter of "a man with a significant, though fictional, personal history" (Clingman 171). As the son of nationalist Afrikaners, Lionel betrayed his own people by becoming a member of the Communist Party of South Africa in the 1920s. Lionel's "childhood awakening" took place when "he saw torn-up passbooks in the street after a demonstration and curiosity led him to realize for the first time that the 'natives' were people who had to carry these things while white people like himself didn't" (Gordimer, BD 112). In his last speech at court Lionel explains that he already grew aware of the "terrifying contradiction" in his country when he was a schoolboy and Marxism became the only solution for him:

I saw that white Marxists worked side by side with blacks in an equality that meant taking on the meanest of tasks – tasks that incurred loss of income and social prestige and the risk of arrest and imprisonment – as well as sharing policy-making and leadership. I saw whites prepared to work under blacks. Here was a possible solution to injustice to be sought outside the awful fallibility in any self-professed morality I knew.

(Gordimer, BD 20)

After participating in various campaigns, he became a member of the party's Central Committee. When the Suppression of Communist Act forced the Party to go underground, Lionel continued his activities and worked with prominent real-life figures, like Nelson Mandela, until his arrest in the mid-1960s, after which he was sentenced to imprisonment for life. Three years later, in the early 1970s, he died from nephritis while still in prison.

Respect for Lionel Burger as a person was not limited to radical revolutionaries. As Rosa's accounts reveal, he was also respected by other Afrikaners and was highly valued for his medical services:

She [Rosa] and her father and mother belonged with him even though they disowned the volk – nothing could change that, Lionel Burger who died an unrepentant Communist jail-bird also died an Afrikaner. [...] For the Afrikaner people, Lionel Burger was a tragedy rather than an outcast; that way, he still was theirs.

(Gordimer, BD 186)

Lionel is represented as fair and composed; even in court he never loses his temper and the whole court, including his Afrikaner family, the judge, the secret police and the uniformed police, all listen to his last speech for almost two hours, before he is sentenced to imprisonment for life. His deeds gained him international fame, a fact which is underlined by Rosa's sessions with a biographer, using the daughter to gain information about the father, and the character of 'Rosa's Swede', whose affair with 'Burger's daughter' enables him to collect material for a film about the famous Lionel.

As Clingman points out, the character of Lionel Burger is largely based on the real-life revolutionary Bram Fischer, a prominent leader of the Communist Party (171). Although there are slight differences between the two men (e.g. Lionel Burger is a doctor, whereas Fischer was a lawyer), they share several characteristics. For instance, both took a black child into their household, which they treated like their own child (Baasie in the novel). Also the Burger home, with its swimming pool that guests of all colours are free to use, and its social relevance as a meeting place closely resemble the Fischer household, with its own swimming pool and open-house policy (Clingman 171). Moreover, "in drawing in Lionel a charismatic figure – doctrinaire, but first and foremost full of what Rosa at the end of the novel considers to be his 'sublimity' – the figure of Fischer most of all appears" (Clingman 172). This 'sublimity' of Lionel becomes apparent in the several eulogies on his work and character, which stress his magnificent qualities as a human being, his dedication to his work as a doctor, his generosity as a friend, and his deeds as a revolutionary.

While the character of Lionel Burger and his resemblance to Bram Fischer establish the historic situation of the plot, it is through his daughter Rosa Burger that the implications of white dissidence are examined (Clingman 174). After her father's death Rosa is confronted with the burden of being 'Burger's daughter'. Her legacy, however, derives from both her parents, not only from Lionel: "he and Cathy – their marriage has a symbolic dimension as a 'mixed' marriage of a 'coloured' and a white – stand trial together twice, and their 'open' house [...] is reminiscent of the house kept by Bram and his wife Mollie" (Head 111). Indeed, Cathy, who died of multiple sclerosis prior to Lionel's last arrest, is identified as the real revolutionary by both Ivy Terblanche and Katya Bagnelli but it is her husband who receives the whole attention. Gordimer gives a definite reason for her decision to give more prominence to Lionel:

The question of who was the more important person in party work would very often be covered up, in the eyes of the world, with the façade of the marriage. So that one would conveniently make use – particularly in this country, particularly because the Burgers are an Afrikaner family – of the convention that Papa is the master; meantime, probably, it was the woman who was the more important member.

(qtd. in Gardner 29)

As Liscio remarks, Cathy's (childlike and familiar) and Lionel's (grand and heroic) surnames alone "convey the degree of public presence each one enjoys" (249). Although Cathy is mentioned various times, she remains largely invisible and anonymous; hardly any information on her life is provided but Rosa's criticism and her friend's remarks portray her as enthusiastic member of the Communist Party. Hence, unlike other female characters in *Burger's Daughter*, Cathy was clearly a radical. In an interview with Susan Gardner, Gordimer explains the roles women played in South African politics. On the one hand, there were women like Rosa's mother – real revolutionaries – who were, however, often denied the attention they deserved. In a patriarchal society their husbands found it more easily to be celebrated. On the other hand, middle-class ladies, like Flora Donaldson, devoted their leisure time to charitable activities related to social reform but their activities were frequently impeded and limited to less radical forms by their class status and protective husbands (32).

Both of Rosa's parents led exemplary lives of white radicals in the 1950s to 1970s and the name Burger itself serves as evidence for their sense of responsibility, with 'burghers' meaning 'citizens' (Head 112). Liscio has pointed out the interesting fact "that in the title, *Burger's Daughter*, Burger can apply equally to Cathy as to Lionel" (249). Consequently, Rosa's quest to find her own way of being such a responsible citizen, her gradual discovery of how to *be* Burger's daughter, may refer to both of her parents, not only to the famous Lionel. As Nadine Gordimer has phrased it: Rosa "has roles imposed upon her by her mother and father; underneath those roles there's her own" (Gardner 35).

Having grown up in the 'Burger house', Rosa has internalised the vocabulary of prison visits, anti-apartheid and communist doctrine. At an early age, Rosa is expected to sacrifice her own needs to her parents' liberal aims. Only 15-years old, she has to act as the fiancée of Noel de Witt, a communist comrade, with their 'engagement' serving as "a device to enable him to be kept in touch with when he was in prison", since "his fiancée had the same privileges as a prisoner's wife has – visits, letters and so on" (Gordimer, BD 61). Although little is conveyed about Rosa's other contributions to the liberation struggle, the reader can assume that she must have helped her parents in various ways. Through Rosa's thoughts on her black 'brother' Baasie

it is revealed that she was, for instance, used for delivering false passports to blacks; Rosa feels guilty because Baasie's father was captured soon after she delivered his papers.

Rosa's attitude changes after the death of her famous father; realising that she cannot escape her inheritance, Rosa is driven by the need "to refine and define what it means for her personally" (Head 111). Steadily she loosens her contacts to other dissidents and spends more and more time with her lover Conrad, who makes her think: "Now you are free" (Gordimer, BD 35), and introduces her to the carelessness of "the bourgeois fate, alternate to Lionel's: to eat without hunger, mate without desire" (Gordimer, BD 114). Conrad intensifies Rosa's experience of her parents' legacy as a burden. Feeling increasingly detached from the communist doctrine, Rosa is now more reluctant to support her former comrades. When Clare Terblanche asks her to duplicate a key for the copy room of Rosa's office for the use of the anti-apartheid movement, Rosa refuses to put herself at risk and to sacrifice her private life, like she used to do when her parents were still alive. Although Rosa continues to clandestinely attend political meetings on her visits of her parents' comrades, she can hardly be characterised as a radical activist and, thus, deviates from her parents' legacy.

This sense of children revolting against their parents, which Nadine Gordimer must have experienced in course of the Soweto riots of the 1970s, is, thus, also apparent in her novel; Rosa not only revolts against the role imposed on her, she also feels that "new forms of struggle are required for new circumstances, that the heritage of the fathers must be evaluated, modified and reformulated" (Clingman 182). Rosa increasingly feels that Lionel's ideology is nowadays inadequate to cope with the complex social structure of South Africa. The loss of this stable system which has always helped her to evaluate situations and to act accordingly leads her to abandon her home country, to flee abroad, not because she is haunted by the police but by the shadow of Lionel Burger. For her, he is both "Lionel Burger and her father" (Gordimer, BD 19), but it is his official status as celebrated radical that becomes her burden. The shadow of her father robs Rosa of her own voice; she is only perceived as his descendant, not as a person of her own: "since only my name – Lionel Burger's daughter, last of that line – can be reported, not my 'utterances'. That's how they perceive her, people who read the name. I am a presence. In this country, among them. I do not speak" (Gordimer, BD 202). In order to gain a voice of her own and to find the true Rosa, she opts for a flight to France to gain what has been denied her in South Africa: the experience of a private life. At the same time, this flight from her father's dominance may also be interpreted as an unconscious search for her mother, who is less prominent than her husband (Liscio 249).

Rosa's decision to go to Europe grew out of several experiences and conversations but one particular incident in one of the poor quarters between Soweto and Johannesburg tipped the scale. Sitting in her car, she witnesses a drunken and tired black man repeatedly whipping a donkey pulling a cart in which a woman and child sit with terrified faces. Overwhelmed by the violence and significance of the scene, Rosa feels powerless to act to end it:

I drove on because the horrible drunk was black, poor and brutalized. If somebody's going to be brought to account, I am accountable for him, to him, as he is for the donkey. Yet the suffering – while I saw it it was the sum of suffering to me. I didn't do anything. I let him beat the donkey. The man was black. So a kind of vanity counted for more than feeling; I couldn't bear to see myself – her – Rosa Burger – as one of those whites who can care more for animals than people.
(Gordimer, BD 212)

In this scene, the objective and subjective worlds coincide: Rosa's "awareness of the complex psychic, familial, and historical 'ecology' that defines her own identity is mirrored by her similar knowledge of the complex racial, economic, and political ecology that produces this specific objective instance of agony. Through her assumption of responsibility for the donkey's pain the two worlds coalesce" (JanMohamed 123). Rosa feels powerless to act because it appears that she could only stop the immediate cruelty of the black man by exploiting her position of white authority. In this case, however, she would only be one more white who cares more for animals than for human beings. Consequently, like Lisa in the butchery scene in *An Act of Terror*, Rosa feels completely powerless and helpless. For her, the scene represents "the sum of suffering" of South African apartheid – a context in which she no longer knows which role to act. Thus, she finally surrenders and decides to leave: "After the donkey I couldn't stop myself. I don't know how to live in Lionel's country" (Gordimer, BD 213). As Clingman states, this "is another way of saying that she is defecting from politics in search of other ways of understanding and living out her life" (178). She betrays her parents' legacy through visiting Brandt Vermeulen, a prominent Afrikaner, in order to get the official permission for going to Europe for a holiday. After one year of friendly visits, obvious surveillance, and promising the avoidance of press-contact and any form of political engagement, Rosa finally gains the allowance to go abroad. Her first passport is issued "counter to the express advice and instruction of BOSS", who classify her trip as a security risk (Gordimer, BD 191).

In Europa, Rosa enjoys the personal freedom of pursuing one's personal needs without accepting any responsibilities. It is only when she spends some time in London, that she resumes her political activities by attending meetings of anti-apartheid organisations in exile, for even abroad she feels the expectation that "[i]t was assumed [...], she would be carrying on the struggle in one way or another" (Gordimer, BD 320). After spending some time among

exiled revolutionaries, Rosa reexperiences the glorious shadow of her father: elegies are held about his work and also European journalists become increasingly attentive to ‘Burger’s daughter’. She is attending one of these London meetings, when Rosa is suddenly confronted with her black ‘brother’ Baasie, who too lives in exile. Late at night, when Rosa is back in her flat, ‘Baasie’ phones her to confront Rosa with their shared history. Through her argument with Baasie Rosa finally realizes the need to return to South Africa to continue her liberal activities (see *section 6.4.4*), a need which already took shape during her time in France, when a trip to Antibes showed her “that ordinary people are as tormented as she, or Baasie, or Lionel. Because no one is immune from pain, she sees no virtue in being an ordinary person: suffering for a particular cause seems better to her than suffering for no reason” (JanMohamed 125).

Upon her return to South Africa, Rosa takes up an appointment in the physiotherapy department of a black hospital, where she helps children who have been wounded in course of the Soweto Riots by teaching them to walk again. Finally, Rosa ends up in solitary confinement, after being detained without charges under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act in November 1977: “the State was expecting to gather evidence to bring her to Court in an important breakthrough for Security – a big trial – at last – of Kgosana’s wife”, Marisa (Gordimer, BD 366). If Rosa really used her time in London and her return to South Africa for revolutionary activities is kept in the dark; again, hardly any information on Rosa’s activities for the liberation movement is provided. The novel ends with Rosa taking her parents’ place in the struggle but also in prison. In contrast to Lionel, there is no special glory attached to her situation. After the events of 1976, support by whites is at best considered secondary and peripheral (Clingman 192). Yet, Rosa seems content and “somehow livelier than she used to be” (Gordimer, BD 373). At the end, Rosa now considers her father a man who was “motivated primarily by compassion and not by dogma” and, like Lionel, she “comes to accept a militant form of compassion as the overruling priority of her life and faces the consequences with equanimity” (JanMohamed 127). Through her encounters with Europe and the Other (Baasie) Rosa has grown into her role of an liber and radical dissident.

6.5.3 Inter-racial Relationships

It is interesting to observe that, even though she is categorised as a ‘white’ by the government, Rosa does not consider herself strictly white, for Baasie has always been her “little sibling” (Gordimer, BD 141). This is probably one of several reasons why Rosa feels out of place in white, bourgeoisie society: “my mother and father succeeded only in making me a kaffir-boetie” (Gordimer, BD 140). The presence of black comrades, on the other hand, feels comfortable for

Rosa: “The vanity of being loved by and belonging with them offered itself”. At the same time, she shows awareness that being loved “has its price”, in the sense that in the context of apartheid South Africa, for whites, the only possibility to be accepted by blacks is to offer some kind of support for the freedom struggle (Gordimer, BD 168).

In course of the novel, Rosa is shown in close contact with several black South Africans but there are two black characters with particular significance for her character development. First, there is Marisa Kgosana, wife of the famous co-prisoner of Nelson Mandela, to whom Rosa feels both spiritually and sensually attracted. Marisa’s charming charisma and her inviting African physique may serve as symbols for Rosa’s attachment to everything African in general. Even though she acknowledges this attraction, the white woman is aware that their skin colour separates them. Thus, “Rosa distinguishes in ways her father could not. She feels the complexities of racial problems in the closeness of her relationship with Marisa, whereas Lionel invited blacks into his white suburban home without realizing the contradictions they felt there” (Liscio 254). She feels Marisa’s Otherness and apprehends the social differences based on race, and is thereby even more motivated to end the system whereby this constantly present hierarchy was originally established.

Another crucial black figure is Rosa’s aforementioned childhood friend and ‘brother’ Baasie, who lived with the Burgers when Rosa and he were still children. Lionel seems to have treated the black boy like a son. Rosa and Baasie’s had been “an ‘infantile’ relationship, held forever in amber in Rosa’s mind, as it were, due to the fact that Baasie had been removed from the Burger ‘safe’ environment when his father took him away” (Clingman 175). As a child, Rosa was taught the meanings of trials, house arrest, and imprisonment, but was unable to grasp the reason why Baasie was treated differently than her biological brother Tony. For her, Baasie was not the Other. He remained a “childish construct” in Rosa’s mind, “something of an eternal playmate or plaything” (Clingman 175), but their argument in London changes everything for Rosa: “Repelled by him. Hating him so much! Wanting to be loved! – how I disfigured myself.” (Gordimer, BD 340). ‘Baasie’ reminds Rosa of his real name, Zwelinzima (meaning ‘suffering land’), which is representative for the suffering of his people. He refuses to be ‘Baasie’ any longer, who for him, was “[o]ne of Lionel Burger’s best tame blacks sent scuttling like a bloody cockroach everywhere” (Gordimer, BD 328): “I’m not your Baasie, just don’t go on thinking about that little kid who lived with you, don’t think of that black ‘brother’ that’s all” (Gordimer, BD 330). Moreover, Baasie criticises that Lionel Burger is celebrated as a hero, even though his suffering does not come near to the pain experienced by blacks, like Zwelinzima’s father, who died in prison:

Everyone in the world must be told what a great hero he was and how much he suffered for the blacks. Everyone must cry over him and show his life on television and write in the papers. Listen, there are dozens of our fathers sick and dying like dogs, kicked out of the locations when they can't work any more. Getting old and dying in prison. Killed in prison. It's nothing. I know plenty blacks like Burger. It's nothing, it's us, we must be used to it, it's not going to show on English television.

(Gordimer, BD 328)

Zwelinzima's criticism somehow forms the basis for Rosa's personal political development, or as Clingman puts it: "Whereas blacks had never been truly 'other' for her, by the end of the novel Rosa has reached the point where they are objects neither of mental projection nor of displacement, but exist fully in their own right. This allow her own authentic political re-engagement" (Clingman 176). Rosa has to challenge her historical category before she is able to recognize its necessity (Clingman 179).

6.5.4 Liberalism & Identity

Nadine Gordimer has defined the theme of her novel as "human conflict between the desire to live a personal, private life, and the rival claim of social responsibility to one's fellow men – human advancement" (Gordimer, *What the Book is About* 149). Thus, the novel is deeply concerned with issues of defining one's own identity or self, or more specifically with the question: "What is it like to be the daughter of a hero, in a country where social strife still produces the hero figure, that is, the man/woman who has no regard for his/her personal fate and will endanger his/her life for what he/she believes is the good of others?" (Gordimer, *What the Book is About* 149). Like other South African dissidents, Rosa's self is torn between roles: Responsible citizen (Burger) or ignorant Afrikaner girl? Revolutionary or ordinary person? The novel follows Rosa's path of finding her personal answer to this highly significant question of personal identity.

Rosa Burger's development from disillusionment with, withdrawal from and finally return to political activity is supported by the novel's narrative structure and Rosa's relationships. As the main character reflects, "without knowing the reason, at different stages in one's life, one is addressing this person or that all the time, even dreams are performed before an audience" (Gordimer, BD 11). In Gordimer's novel, Rosa's three addressees reveal symbolic meanings for the main character's development. In part 1, Rosa has a love affair with the rather egocentric dreamer and hippie Conrad, who, with his bourgeois values and experiences, stands in stark contrast to the selfless commitment of Rosa's parents. Conrad is also the addressee of those sections with Rosa as first-person narrator. Interestingly, however, Rosa believes that Conrad is already dead when she addresses him; she is talking to the Conrad she knew before

he died on a sailing trip. In part 2, Rosa flees from her parents' legacy to live with Katya, Lionel's first wife, in France. Like Rosa, Katya, who serves as the addressee of this section, once withdrew from the radical political activities pursued by Lionel and other members of the Communist Party. The final part is the shortest and provides a more distanced picture of Rosa's activities after her return to South Africa. Now, she addresses her father Lionel, who stands for the political commitment to which his daughter has returned. This sequence of addressees, each with their own character qualities, not only reflects but probably also facilitates Rosa's character development (Head 113). Hence, Rosa's relation to the role her father and history provided for her resembles a dialectical form: "In the first movement we have Rosa, together with her revolutionary inheritance; in the second she rejects this inheritance in favour of her personal life; in the third she re-unites with that inheritance, simultaneously finding her personal identity in becoming socially and historically committed" (Clingman 179). Head, however, is critical regarding this clear dialectical structure, arguing that "Rosa's career is not as programmatic as the thesis-antithesis-synthesis model might suggest", since she is often vacillating and uncertain and her final solution is an immediate response to the current political situation, rather than a fixed and universally valid answer to the question of the role of whites in the freedom struggle (113). Nevertheless, the three-fold structure appears useful to analyse Rosa's identity (trans)formation.

The main 'thesis' of part one is Rosa's repressed need for self-expression. The "alternative, self-centred way of engaging with the world" (Head 114) that her egocentric lover Conrad offers her leads Rosa to question "herself as others see her and whether they see is what she really is" (Gardner 36). Rosa has always been highly self-reflective: Already with 14, Rosa asks herself "When they saw me outside the prison, what did they see?" (Gordimer, BD 7) and she is aware of the differences between her self-perception and outside perception: "My version and theirs" (Gordimer, BD 10). Prior to her parents' death, Rosa's identity seems clear: she is the daughter of two revolutionaries. Waiting outside the prison, she feels a close bond to her mother and her fellow comrades in the liberation struggle, as she states that "we were connected" (Gordimer, BD 9). When her parents have died, Rosa's only friends are the former comrades of her parents, who expect her to accept her parents' legacy by becoming Burger's daughter and continuing the work of her father. The young woman, however, is increasingly growing apart from the communist tradition and feels the need to be more than just 'Burger's daughter', to find her true self. Her only other friend is Conrad, whom she has met at one of the Burger's famous Sunday swims, a "spectacle" at which Conrad loved to watch "revolutionaries at play" (Gordimer, BD 12). Conrad lives the life, Rosa has never tried and challenges her to

test “his word against hers all the time” (Gordimer in Gardner 36). In their lengthy conversations in Conrad’s old cottage her childhood and youth dominated by her parents’ discipline is turned into the subject of reflection and critique. Conrad is critical of Rosa’s upbringing (e.g. he observes that it is unnatural and a sign of brainwashing or conditioning to train a child not to cry when her father was sentenced). He thinks that, in a house like the Burgers’, Rosa must have taken in the ideas of Marx and Lenin “with [her] breakfast cornflakes” (Gordimer, BD 46). For her, surviving and being strong is only natural, or “animal survival” (Gordimer, BD 37). Rosa accuses her parents for requiring from her to visit her supposed fiancée, Noel de Witt, in prison in order to facilitate information exchange, but is at the same time unable to fully deny their legacy: “I accused her [...] I accused *him* – Lionel Burger, knowing as he did, without question, I would do what had to be done” (Gordimer, BD 62). In the Burger family such sacrifices which deeply intruded into Rosa’s private life were an axiomatic part of life: “We didn’t despise prostitutes in that house – our house – we saw them as victims of necessity while certain social orders lasted” (Gordimer, BD 65). Yet, Conrad’s individualism challenges the social environment and political commitment that Rosa has known from her parents. Although she defends the values of her family by arguing for their conception of genuine personal commitment and interaction, which is underlined by her parents’ warm hospitality and open-house policy, it is in Conrad’s presence that she recognizes the need to flee from her legacy to find her true self: “my silence hammered sullen, hysterical, repetitive without words: sick, sick of the maimed, the endangered, the fugitive, the stoic; sick of courts, sick of prisons, sick of institutions scrubbed bare for the regulation endurance of dread and pain” (Gordimer, BD 66).

Conrad’s self-absorption and fascination with others’ lives without feeling personally committed is unsettling to Rosa but leads her to reflect on the impossibility of explaining death with her father’s ideology and “opens her more fully to empathize with others” (Liscio 252). Unlike her lover, Rosa is deeply touched by the death and suffering of others. Her way of coming to politics through her emotional response to the pain of others, however, “requires a strong presence to self” (Liscio 253), which Rosa develops in course of the novel. Her exploration of her true self seems to centre around two repeated phrases: “now you are free” and the question “What else was I?”, both being immanent responses to her parents’ death (Gordimer, *Burger’s Daughter*, 40, 65). In her quest to define her true identity, now autonomous from the role imposed on her by her parents, Rosa tries to define herself through the perception of others but soon realizes that most of her relations do not see her as Rosa Burger but as Lionel Burger’s daughter, the daughter of a true revolutionary. Her final attempt to redefine her ‘self’

in South Africa is through an escape to the Other. Marisa, a dynamic and charismatic black leader, represents a strong source of attraction for Rosa; she represents a seducing symbol of the warmth of African culture. Nevertheless, Rosa is afraid of putting herself again in a kind of bondage (JanMohamed 123) and distrusts her own motives for working with blacks, since she knows that many whites use blackness as a way “of perceiving sensual redemption, as romantics do, or of perceiving fears, as racialists do” (Gordimer, BD 135). Not knowing how to live any longer in her father’s country and suffocated by the unrelenting attention given to her as the daughter of a martyred man, Rosa travels to France to learn how to ‘defect’ from Lionel and his legacy (Clingman 177). Thereby, Gordimer illustrates “the ravaging capacity of apartheid to break down people psychologically” (Tecucianu 160).

France provides Rosa with the entirely new experience of being able to lead a life free of political obligations, to be an ordinary person. Living with Colette/Katya, “Rosa finds herself in a withdrawn, cocoon-like environment in which she can explore her personal wants, pleasures and emotions” (Head 118) and is introduced to a more bourgeoisie way of life. Her activities and thoughts reflect her pursuit of a life outside her parents’ world: For instance, she praises the inheritance of her friend Michel Pistacchi and, thereby, opposes the Burgers’ lifestyle of obstinacy. The visceral pleasures Rosa experiences in Nice resemble the forgotten pleasures of infancy, such as the intensive experience of tasting new food or indulging in personal stories of Katya’s friends, who spend their free-time traveling, eating, and going to the beach without setting specific, accountable positions of responsibility (Liscio 255). Liscio convincingly argues that Rosa’s time in Europe “is an important stage of development because without pleasure and appetite, part of the self is still left unsatisfied and, therefore, is incapable of giving to others disinterestedly” (257). Katya, her father’s first wife, plays a crucial role in this development, in the sense that “Rosa thought to learn from Katya: how to defect? Because Katya has ‘defected’ from Lionel Burger” (Gordimer qtd. in Gardner 36): “I wanted to know how to defect from him. The former Katya has managed to be able to write to me that he was a great man, and yet decide ‘there’s a whole world’ outside what he lived for, what life with him would have been” (Gordimer, BD 272). For Rosa, living with Katya opens the possibility of measuring herself alongside other women, of comparing and “probing the commonality of their experience” (Liscio 257). The ordinariness of the life of others is highly intriguing and fascinating to Rosa and inspires her to reflect on her persona from a new perspective. Hence, her time in France constitutes “a crucial stage of [her] development in which attention to the self facilitates a growth that is preliminary to a successful return to the social world” (Head 118).

Also in the second part, Rosa's love-affair – now with the married Bernard Chabalier – supports her personal development, as Rosa grows through and beyond their relationship. Her admission that she feels Chabalier can make everything possible for her suggests “that their relationship has released the power of Rosa's emotional response that will be put to more productive use elsewhere” (Head 119). Accepting her new role as Chabalier's mistress in Paris would free Rosa of her old responsibilities: “Bernard Chabalier's mistress isn't Lionel Burger's daughter; she's certainly not accountable to the Future, she can go off and do good works in Cameroun or contemplate the unicorn in the tapestry forest” (Gordimer, BD 312). Yet, the unicorn symbolism already indicates that this imagined Rosa is not the real Rosa – it remains a comforting fantasy. Towards the end of part 2, when Rosa spends time in London, she finally reengages with the political but reinterprets political commitment: Triggered through her conversation with Baasie, Rosa develops a sense of the personal basis of political commitment and recognizes that her true self can only unfold in the liberation struggle, and so “she returns to South Africa because that is *where she believes she is most fully alive*” (Gordimer, *What the Book is About* 152).

At the end of the novel, Rosa realizes that she has been running from her parents' legacy in search of her own identity, while all the time her 'self' has always been tied to that of her country and the anti-apartheid struggle. Her character has developed but, at the same time, she is now truly Burger's daughter and reflects: “I am what I always was” (Gordimer, BD 361). At court Lionel once said that he would be guilty only if he were innocent of trying to destroy racism in South Africa (Gordimer, BD 22). Baasie has successfully reminded Rosa of this guilt by making her realise that by fleeing to Europe she has adopted an identity she did not want (Tecucianu 163). Both the identity imposed on Rosa by her parents and the self-centred personality she would have developed when staying in Europe feel inaccurate for Gordimer's protagonist. She had to refine and define her parents' legacy to become Rosa Burger.

In contrast to her father, however, Rosa does not become politically reengaged due to any question of ideology; for her it is the fact of suffering that is paramount: “I don't know the ideology. It's about suffering. How to end suffering” (Gordimer, BD 343-344). Thus, when contributing to the struggle against other people's suffering, Rosa acts “in her own name and her own identity, rather than the family tradition” (Gordimer, *What the Book is About* 152). Before, Rosa “lived in [her] father's presence without knowing its meaning” (Gordimer, BD 78); now, she has found meaning for her liberal activities. While all the time Rosa has been trying to become an ordinary person, she has now become an ordinary revolutionary, neither famous, nor compliant, and concludes: “Like anyone else, I do what I can” (Gordimer, BD 344).

Yet, a clear reading of Rosa's personal development is obscured by the novel's complicated mixture of different focalizers and switches between first-person and third-person narrative. As Head outlines (116), especially those parts told by Rosa as first-person narrator tend to juxtapose Rosa at different stages of her development. Consequently, she seems at times disillusioned and immediately after a phrase already hints at the novel's conclusion of personally motivated commitment. The novel, thus, not only plays with the dialectic of personal and political but also with past and present. On the other hand, the different views offered on Rosa's character by constantly changing the narrative perspective suggest that "Rosa's identity can be constructed in different ways – by her parents, by the security forces, by Zwelinzima, by herself at different stages of her life" (Head 122). For instance, when Rosa is described asking Brandt Vermeulen for a passport the narration sounds like a surveillance report and for the trial of Orde Greer a press style is adopted. Gordimer's essential conclusion, thus, seems to be that personal identity is always constructed in a particular historical context, and in relation to given discursive practices (Head 122). One of these crucial events in South African history coincides with Rosa's final recommitment to political activity and her consequent detention: the banning of the Soweto Students' Representative Council after the riots of 1976 and 1977, which inaugurated a new phase in the country's history. As Head concludes, the "new phase for Rosa is also a new phase for South African history: Black Consciousness, advocating the need for blacks to take responsibility for their own political advancement, is tacitly approved in Rosa's decision to take a subservient role in her political recommitment" (Head 122). Thus, Rosa's new personal identity might also coincide with a new feeling of being South African, or new experiences of South African national identity.

6.5.5 Possibilities, Consequences and Limits of White Liberalism

Although Burger's *Daughter* involves numerous liberal and communist characters, the novel hardly paints a promising picture of the activities of the anti-apartheid organisations Lionel, Rosa, and all the others support. Rather, the novel gives the impression of revolutionaries waiting for the future to come. Liberal characters do not appear to follow a concrete plan but wander between meetings, prison visits, protest marches, and small-scale radical enterprises.

To Rosa, their activities not only seem increasingly inappropriate for the current historical situation, in course of the novel she becomes more critical with regard to the role of whites. From a young age onwards, Rosa is aware of the ambivalent reactions to her father's activities. While even several people – white and black – praised him as "God's man", other letters sent to their house "said her father was a devil and a beast who wanted to rob and kill,

destroying Christian civilization” (Gordimer, BD 12-13). Moreover, Rosa reflects on the obligations and drawbacks of the activities of her father and his associates, who in the 1930s, accepted “the purges, liquidations, forced labor, and imprisonments in the Soviet Union, as contemporary South Africans are expected to accept the shooting at Sharpeville and in Soweto in 1976, the detentions without trial, and the forced removals of black communities under the Group Areas Act” (Gordimer, *What the Book is About* 151). After observing the death of a tramp in a park, Rosa also recognizes the inadequacy of her father’s philosophy to deal with issues like mortality. Besides, what even Rosa hardly reflects on is the limitedness of even the Burger’s liberalism by the customs of white society. For example, her parents, as well as Rosa employ black (or coloured) cleaning women. Even though they are treated with respect and enjoy fair employment, the hierarchy of white master and black servant, thus, remains.

Rosa Burger is not only used to criticism by whites and blacks but also to police raids and the feeling of being followed and observed. For her, the presence of the police is as usual as having friends over for a barbecue. As Rosa reflects, “[n]othing the secret police could do could more than interrupt. Life went on; Lionel Burger, in his swimming trunks, cooking steak and boerewors for his comrades and friends, was proof.” (Gordimer, BD 11). Yet, in other ways the Burgers’ family life was indeed defined by their political activity. The most drastic proof is certainly Rosa’s loss of her father after his death in prison, through which she becomes an orphan. Moreover, detentions and house-arrests limited the mobility of family members, and political achievements and releases from prison were celebrated with more intensity than birthdays or weddings. Rosa remembers all the people visiting their house, the meetings that took place, and the fact that their house hardly contained any personal documents, as they were always likely to be raided by the police.

Conrad is certainly correct in assuming that Rosa’s childhood must have been exceptional. Although “Rosa was a pretty thing as she grew up”, the girl never had a real love-affair; even though several boys were interested in her, Rosa had to act according to her parents’ interests and “was not for them” (Gordimer, BD 12). Her only childhood sweetheart remained the imprisoned Noel de Witt, to whom Rosa developed a real affection, stating in hindsight: “Those were my love letters. Those visits were my great wild times” (Gordimer, BD 65). In addition, Rosa has never experienced the exclusive love of her parents; she “does not occupy a privileged position in their affection” and, because she has failed to learn “the distinction between privileged love and a general sense of affection”, Rosa seems unable to discard of her own feeling of moral obligation, as “rejection of the generalized obligation would necessarily entail an equivalent rejection of her parents’ love for her as an individual” (JanMohamed 121).

Cathy and Lionel Burger always avoided to be imprisoned at the same time, so that one of them could take care of the children. Only once Rosa was left without parents, when both were detained in course of the Treason Trials of 1956. Then, the eight-year-old was sent to live with the Nels, her father's relatives, who provide her with an unfamiliar new life full of order and protection, which she seems to enjoy: "All this ordered life surrounded, coated, swaddled Rosa; the order of Saturday, the order of family hierarchy, the order of black people out in the street and white people in the shade of the hotel step" (Gordimer, BD 56). For the girl, however, choosing the Nels' order over the Burgers' order would be to betray everything her father has fought for.

Later, when she is older, Rosa is expected to act with commitment and responsibility, either to support her parents or to compensate her mother's absence, or in Cooke's words: "The household the child takes over is better described as a political institution than a family" (73), a political institution, which hardly acknowledges personal needs. For instance, when as a teenager Rosa is used to convey messages to her 'fiancée' in prison, she experiences menstrual cramps for the first time, a fact that is also indicated by the hot-water bottle she is carrying. Her mother, however, shows no apprehension of her daughter's gesture; "Her preoccupation with the Communist struggle leaves her oblivious to her daughter's private needs" (Cooke 74). As a consequence, in hindsight Rosa considers herself not as her mother's daughter but simply as "one of my mother's collection of the dispossessed, like Baasie or the old man who lived with us" (Gordimer, BD 84). Gordimer explains that the novel was inspired by children of South African communists, who were left with the responsibility of the whole household when their parents were recurrently on trial or in prison. The novelist was highly concerned with the fact that this unusual high responsibility "must have affected their lives tremendously; it must have been a great intrusion on the kind of secret treaties that you have when you're an adolescent" (Gardner 28). Rosa is one of these children, whose untroubled childhood has been replaced by political discipline. The main character's mother died early and when the fourteen-year-old Rosa is waiting outside a prison at the beginning of the novel, she is said to have already "taken on her mother's role in the household" (Gordimer, BD 12). Her acceptance of this immense responsibility has always been taken for granted by her parents: "Then when my brother and mother were gone, there was me. If my father were to be arrested, there would always be me" (Gordimer, BD 23). Rosa's life with Katya in France seems the only other time in her life when she is able to experience the liberty that she has been denied in her childhood. Once again comparing present with past, Rosa thinks:

I giggle with *their Katya* like the adolescent girls at school, who were in that phase while Sipho Mokema was showing Tony and me the bullet hole in his trouser-leg and I was running back and forth to visit prison, the first prison, where my mother was.

(Gordimer, BD 326)

Even in adulthood, as the child of famous white dissidents, Rosa experiences several limitations, which she seems to have ‘inherited’, simply through being ‘Burger’s daughter’. As a named person, her activities are not only monitored by the police (“If you are followed by policemen you get used to it”; Gordimer, BD 277), she is also denied the right to work and live in black homelands, to participate in political meetings “of associations and movements she would most desire” (Gordimer, BD 173), and prior to her arrangement with Brandt Vermeulen, she is also denied a passport and has never been abroad, as she finds: “I have no passport because I am my father’s daughter” (Gordimer, BD 59). Like other white characters in *Burger’s Daughter*, Rosa is not free to pursue any career she likes. The Terblanches, for instance, even work in cover jobs, which serve to hide their political activities. For Rosa, such limitations are only natural and necessary: “The course of action I have duly fulfilled, with consequences for me some of which were self-evident, foreseen and accepted, just as theirs were, is part of a continuing process” (Gordimer, BD 110). Another tragic consequence of her upbringing is the fact that Rosa has no friends of her own. This becomes obvious when her only associates after her father’s death are his comrades and Conrad, whom she has met at one of the Sunday meetings in the Burger house.

Although Rosa’s memories of her childhood in “that house – our house” are not entirely positive, she experiences the compulsion to recurrently think of the sense of community in their home, of the circle of friends and comrades who used to gather there on weekends. She misses the feeling of being connected but has to develop a sense of personal self before she is able to return ‘home’ to her parents’ communist vision of comradeship (Cooke 76). Only in the end, after becoming Rosa Burger, she is finally free of her haunting past full of discipline and her father’s dominance. The future now lies in her hands, a notion which is supported by the simultaneous event of the Soweto uprising, on which Rosa reflects: “The sins of the fathers; at last the children avenge on the fathers the sins of the fathers. Their children and children’s children; that was the Future, father, in hands not foreseen” (Gordimer, BD 348). Unlike her past, Rosa’s present and future is no longer defined by her parents but by herself.

The Soweto student riots of 1976 are also significant in another way. This moment, when black children started to re-educate their parents, seems the beginning of the end of cooperation between whites and blacks in the Liberation Struggle:

if Black Consciousness was the challenge [to white liberalism] in theory, then the Soweto Revolt was that challenge in practice. Moreover, it was a challenge not just to liberalism but also to white radicalism. Black children were being shot while white liberals and radicals could at most only look on in horror. Now mountains of words spoken in the past could only seem sickeningly shameful in view of the blood of children running in the streets. If anything seemed to demonstrate the irrelevance of white dissidents on the periphery of the democratic struggle, then that event was the Soweto Revolt

(Clingman 182)

Burger's Daughter represents “a grave examination of what can remain of white ‘action’ when it has been so fundamentally called into question, and in what terms such action can be revived” (Clingman 183). The question of the extent to which unity between black and white dissidents might be possible is raised in two particular situations. First, when Rosa listens to the confrontational exchange between Duma Dhladhla, a black radical thinking in the new Black Consciousness ideology, and Orde Greer, a white press photographer and communist. Duma is highly sceptical of any form of white support and refuses to differentiate between different forms of white dissidence: “Whites, whatever you are, it doesn’t matter. It’s no difference. You can tell them – Afrikaners, liberals, Communists. We don’t accept anything from anybody. We take. D’you understand? We take for ourselves” (Gordimer, BD 155). He rejects to work with whites because, according to him, “[a]ll collaboration with whites has always ended in exploitation of blacks” (Gordimer, BD 157) and, as white dissidents nevertheless enjoy several advantages, they would not be able to understand the needs of the oppressed. Dhladhla does not want whites, like Lionel, to go to prison “for his ideas about” him – in this case, whites would always continue to define the identity of blacks. Liberals are accused of providing fixed solutions for blacks, or as Duma argues: “Whites don’t credit us with the intelligence to know what we want!” (Gordimer, BD 162). Duma’s attitude is clearly not representative of all black characters in Gordimer’s novel but expresses a new tendency among blacks. Others, who belong to Lionel’s generation of dissidents, seem to scorn Duma’s radicalism and to accept radical whites, like Rosa, while for his generation not even such radical communists are able to overcome their alienness to the suffering of blacks (Powell 9).

The second instance of Black Consciousness ideology can be found in Baasie’s critique. For him, too, there is no difference between white racists, liberals, and radicals, and he is similarly opposed to white support. Baasie “bitterly rejects the false brotherhood he had with Rosa and the (almost literal) paternalism of Lionel, which both set him aside from the rest of his people in privilege and, at the same time, he feels, belittled him; the name he was given (‘Baasie’ – ‘Little Boss’) says it all” (Clingman 183). It is significant that Rosa, who has always thought of him as ‘Baasie’, is now unable to pronounce his real name correctly, as this suggests

“her estrangement from her past; she has forgotten her suffering land along with her brother” (Tecucianu 162). Moreover, Baasie clearly condemns Lionel’s celebration as a hero only due to his skin colour, which distinguishes him from all the blacks who suffered the same fate. Clingman emphasises the symbolic significance of this scene:

Here the accusation of Black Consciousness are clearly hitting home. Actions taken with the best of intentions and out of genuine care are rejected as compromised and hypocritical. If a previous generation of whites devoted their best energies and talents to the liberation struggle, they should not expect any gratitude. The allegorical setting of the multi-racial ‘family’ gives a perfect and exact sense of earlier assumptions of inter-racial harmony and solidarity that were now being ripped apart, as well as the intimate violence aroused by the passions surrounding Black Consciousness.

(Clingman 184)

Rosa and Zwelinzima grew up in the same house, with the same ideology but now that the historical context has changed, they are “in a sense divided by the history uniting them” (Clingman 184). While throughout the novel, Rosa has considered Baasie as her brother, as part of her family, at the end Zwelinzima is seen as the Other – not because Rosa has adopted a racist attitude but because through his words he has forced her to do so.

On the other hand, Baasie’s criticism also has positive effects on Rosa, since it leads her to reassess her role as white dissident and, thus, evokes a new dedication to the struggle, which originates in her own experience and not only out of her parents’ legacy. Although Rosa reacts with childish and almost racist hostility to Zwelinzima’s accusations, she is obviously deeply distressed (vomits after their conversation) and earlier passages in the novel reveal that she, too, is perfectly aware of the privileges of white dissidents: “Our kind has never been dirty or hungry although prison and exile are commonplaces of family life to us. Being white constitutes a counter-definition whose existence my father and her mother [i.e. Ivy Terblanche] were already arguing between dancing to the gramophone at the workers’ club” (Gordimer, BD 120). Moreover, she is aware that “back home he [i.e. Baasie] is a kaffir carrying a pass and even I [i.e. Rosa] could live the life of a white lady” and regrets that in their fight they “succeeded in manoeuvring ourselves into the position their history books back home have had ready for us – him bitter; me guilty” (Gordimer, BD 341). At the same time, Rosa clearly recognizes the necessity of blacks to free themselves but locates a place for white liberals in their struggle:

The future he [Lionel] was living for until the day he died can be achieved only by black revolutionaries who have solved the contradiction between black consciousness and class consciousness, and qualify to make unconditional common cause with the struggle for full liberation, e.g., a national and social revolution.

(Gordimer, BD 123)

This revolution would require whites to step out of “one’s historically-determined role” to become “the instruments of struggle appropriate to this phase” (Gordimer, BD 124). Rosa has been taught that

[w]hites, not blacks, are ultimately responsible for everything blacks suffer and hate, even at the hands of their own people; a white must accept this if he concedes any responsibility at all. If he feels guilty, he is a liberal; in that house where I grew up there was no guilt because it was believed it was as a ruling class and not a colour that whites assumed responsibility. It wasn’t something bleached into the flesh.

(Gordimer, BD 159-160)

Gordimer’s portrayal of Rosa’s development as a white liberal, who was already born into the communist circle, offers new insights into the question of liberals’ personal identity and role in the freedom struggle. First, it is shown that identities are manifold and in constant development: Rosa has to *become* Burger’s daughter. Her personal development further illustrates that political commitment “cannot be accepted as a matter of unquestioned doctrine, but rather need to be rationalized and fitted to the individual’s personal and historical circumstances” (Head 111). Secondly, the fact that significant events in Rosa’s private life coincide with key political events, such as the election victory of the NP (her birth), the Treason Trial (detention of both parents), and the Soweto uprising (her detention), implicitly indicates that “such a rationalization is required of each white South African, since much of Rosa Burger’s story shows her to be representative of a people” (Head 111). As Head convincingly argues, this “gives the novel an almost allegorical structure in which a single life of opposition is meant to stand for the ethically correct stance of a whole people” (112).

7. Conclusion

All in all, it can be concluded that André Brink’s and Nadine Gordimer’s works perfectly illustrate the situation of white liberals during South African Apartheid. They even go beyond historiographical literature, since literature allows the readers to enter the world of white dissidents, to perceive the South African society as it was in their eyes, and, thus, it opens up entirely new conceptual worlds and insights.

As the novels show, the experiences of white liberals are as manifold as their activities, which range from creative forms of criticism (photography, writing) to violent means of resistance against a repressive regime (terrorism). However, even peaceful ways of opposing Apartheid could evoke severe punishments. Further, the four novels illustrate the spectrum of forms of organising political opposition: it evolves from individual whites (e.g. Max in *The*

Late Bourgeoise World), or is, in other instances, organised by (multi-racial) liberation movements (e.g. the *Organisation in An Act of Terror*). It is interesting to observe that Brink and Gordimer both consider inter-racial contacts as crucial for the development of a political conscience by whites. In all four novels, the white main characters' liberal attitude is inspired through confrontations with the Other, through entering their world (i.e. townships) and through co-experiencing their exclusion and marginalization in society. Moreover, although one could remark critically that black characters are hardly in the focus of the analysed novels, they are highly important for the white characters' personal development, as they act as their guides and mentors. Immersing themselves in the dark side of the moon turns all discussed main characters into more responsible citizens but also into outsiders in their former social environment; they become the Other in Afrikaner/white society. At the same time, the wide-spread rejection of white support by blacks, which increased in the third phase of Apartheid, created the situation that white liberals remained in-between and excluded from two worlds: black and white. Coupled with continuous traumatic stress (physical and psychological violence caused by, for example, the loss of family members, police violence, etc.), this outsider position in society (Louw-Potgieter 32-33) seems to have led white dissidents, such as Ben DuToit, Thomas Landman, Liz Van Den Sandt, or Rosa Burger, to question their identity and role in society. The destructive nature of their liberal deeds, committed with good intentions but, in practice, devastating for their personal future, as well as for their family and friends, awakens serious doubts in all of these main characters.

Thus, the consequences of political opposition by whites were indeed irreversibly grave. Their privileged social position might have brought several advantages for the liberation struggle (e.g. greater mobility, financial support, advantages of certain professions) but, in another way, also limited their possibilities. Rightly or wrongly, whites were suspected not to be able to fully understand the situation of the oppressed groups and their ideology was frequently regarded with skepticism (cf. Woods 184-185, MacDonald 24-25, Lazerson 4). Besides, they were in constant danger of being betrayed by those closest to them, since fellow whites perceived them as traitors and criminals (e.g. *An Act of Terror*, *A Dry White Season*), and, in most cases, they could expect no milder treatment by Special Branch members than their black comrades.

Regardless of these numerous limits and setbacks, the analysis of novels by André Brink and Nadine Gordimer has also shown the significance of white liberalism on multiple levels: First, on the level of fiction it has become clear that the white dissidents might not have been successful in executing their actual plans (Ben DuToit, Thomas Landman, Max Van Den Sandt,

etc.) or have even remained at the brink of action (e.g. Liz Van Den Sandt or Lisa Lombard), but, nevertheless, they have succeeded in raising awareness among their fellow citizens and in handing their knowledge over to others (through writing, photography, and – most importantly – through conversations). The same applies, on a second level, to the authors: By turning their personal experiences of Apartheid into fiction, Brink and Gordimer, too, offered a new perspective on the atrocities committed in a society of racial discrimination and thereby turned into white dissidents too. Hence, Frank Welsh's idea of literature as a portal into another world, the world of white, liberal South Africans (472-473), is highly relevant, precisely because writing constitutes one of the most important contributions of whites to the liberation struggle, as it carried the knowledge about the dark sides of Apartheid out into an increasingly interested international world.

It is the power of literature to communicate what cannot be expressed through history books or newspapers. It is its power to let readers see the world through the eyes of another person, to let them live in another place, in another time, and, finally, to offer the possibility not only to *understand*, but to *feel* what it means to step out of one's safe comfort zone, to fight for the right of others, to *become* the Other and – just once in one's life – to find something for which one is prepared to risk everything. South African Apartheid was a dark era in human history but not the only one. For this reason, the novels discussed in this thesis have not lost their relevance and it is hard to believe that they ever will: Time and time again situations require us to step out of a compliant mass, to recognize the peril of hidden injustice, and to be brave enough to face one's contemporary Goliath. It is then, that people like Gordimer, Brink and their characters may inspire us to battle the shadows of our times.

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List of Figures & Tables

Figures

Figure 1: Homelands (Posel 349).....	12
Figure 2: Johannesburg, 1956 (online: www.cvltnation.com/institutionalized-hatred-signs-of-apartheid-1950-1990)	13
Figure 3: Signs (English and Afrikaans) in Johannesburg, 1957 (online: www.cvltnation.com/institutionalized-hatred-signs-of-apartheid-1950-1990).....	13
Figure 4: Hector Peterson, shot by the police (online: www.worldschildrensprize.org/hector-pieterse)	20
Figure 5: ANC poster announcing a meeting of women (archives.anc.org.za)	43
Figure 6: ANC poster demanding the release of political prisoners (archives.anc.org.za)	43
Figure 7: PTSD symptoms according to the American Psychiatric Association (Eagle & Kaminer 30).....	50

Tables

Table 1 (Said 1977)	44
---------------------------	----

Index

A

A Dry White Season	60
African National Congress (ANC)	10, 30
An Act of Terror	78
André Brink	57
Anti-Apartheid Movements	30

B

Bantu Education Act	17
Black Consciousness Movement.....	32
Boer War	7
Bureau of State Security.....	21
Burger's Daughter	114

C

Communism	28, 36
Communist Party of South Africa	31, 33
Congress Alliance	30
Congress of People.....	31
Continuous traumatic stress	56
Convention for a Democratic South Africa.....	26

D

De Klerk.....	26
---------------	----

E

Euroafricanism	47
----------------------	----

F

Freedom Charter	24
-----------------------	----

G

Great Trek	7
Group Areas Act	14

H

Hector Peterson.....	23
----------------------	----

Hendrik Verwoerd	20
------------------------	----

I

Identity	43; Collective Identity
.....	43; Individual Identity
.....	43; National Identity
.....	49
Immorality Act.....	25
Immorality Amendment Act	13
Internal Security Act	18

J

John Vorster	21
--------------------	----

K

Koornhof bills	24
----------------------	----

L

Land Act	9
Liberal Party	34
Liberalism	27

M

Mixed Marriages Act	25
Multiculturalism.....	28

N

Nadine Gordimer	59
National Party	10, 22
Nationalism	8
Nelson Mandela	25
Non-racialism.....	29

P

Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)	19, 30
Pass Laws.....	19
Population Registration Act	12

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder	53
Progressive Party.....	35
Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act	13
Prohibition of Political Interference Act	25

R

Republic of South Africa	20
--------------------------------	----

S

Separate Amenities Act.....	16
Sharpeville massacre.....	19
Steve Biko.....	32
Suppression of Communism Act.....	18

T

The Late Bourgeoise World.....	98
Torch Commando	36
Trauma	50
Treason Trials	19

U

United Party	35
Urban Areas Act	25

W

White liberalism.....	33, 40
-----------------------	--------

Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted is my own unaided work. All direct or indirect sources used are acknowledged as references.

This paper was not previously presented to another examination board (or handed in at any courses) and has not been published.

City, Date

Anna Lichtenegger

Abstract

The separate-development policy of South African Apartheid (1948-1994) created a hegemonic power structure by splitting the population into privileged whites and oppressed non-whites. Although a strong resistance movement already developed in the early years of apartheid, white dissidents were rare and often isolated. Literature not only constituted one of the most important means of white opposition but also provides insights into the world of white dissidents. Therefore, this study has two major purposes: (1) to review the role of white liberals in the larger historical context of Apartheid, and (2) to analyse how white liberalism is presented in South African literature. A literary analysis was applied to four novels: *A Dry White Season* (1979) and *An Act of Terror* (1991) by André Brink, and *The Late Bourgeoise World* (1966) and *Burger's Daughter* (1979) by Nadine Gordimer. It is shown that, despite their privileges and good intentions, the possibilities of white liberals were highly limited by various factors, including the strong net of compliant Afrikaners and their outsider position in both white and black society. Further, their traumatic experiences often evoked questions of identity and belonging.

Keywords: South Africa, apartheid, André Brink, Nadine Gordimer, liberalism, South African literature, identity

Zusammenfassung

Die unter der südafrikanischen Apartheid (1948-1994) vorherrschende Politik der rassistisch getrennten Entwicklung schuf eine tiefe Kluft zwischen der privilegierten weißen und der unterdrückten nicht-weißen Bevölkerung. Obwohl dieses System schon früh Widerstand hervorrief waren weiße Dissidenten selten und häufig gesellschaftlich isoliert. Der Prozess des Schreibens stellte für Weiße nicht nur eine effektive Widerstandstätigkeit dar, sondern liefert auch heute noch tiefgehende Einblicke in die Welt weißer Regierungsgegner. Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, (1) die Rolle weißer Liberalisten im historischen Kontext der Apartheid darzustellen und (2) zu analysieren, wie weißer Liberalismus in südafrikanischer Literatur dargestellt wird. Zu diesem Zweck wurden vier Romane analysiert: *A Dry White Season* (1979) und *An Act of Terror* (1991) von André Brink, und *The Late Bourgeoise World* (1966) und *Burger's Daughter* (1979) von Nadine Gordimer. Trotz der Vorteile und guten Intentionen weißer Liberalisten waren ihre Möglichkeiten durch den Zusammenhalt regimetreuer Afrikaner und ihre Außenseiterrolle in beiden Bevölkerungsgruppen stark limitiert, und ihre Erlebnisse oft traumatisch.

Keywords: Südafrika, Apartheid, André Brink, Nadine Gordimer, Liberalismus, südafrikanische Literatur, Identität