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Memory and the Testimonial Mode

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For Mum

For Dad

For Danny

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Declaration of Authenticity

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been previously submitted to any other university for a higher degree. I also declare that the publications cited in this work have been personally consulted. Quotations from other authors are all clearly marked and acknowledged in the bibliographical references either in footnotes or within the text.

Hinweis

Diese Diplomarbeit hat nachgewiesen, dass die betreffende Kandidatin oder der betreffende Kandidat befähigt ist, wissenschaftliche Themen selbständig sowie inhaltlich und methodisch vertretbar zu bearbeiten. Da die Korrekturen der/des Beurteilenden nicht eingetragen sind und das Gutachten nicht beiliegt, ist daher nicht erkenntlich, mit welcher Note diese Arbeit abgeschlossen wurde. Das Spektrum reicht von sehr gut bis genügend. Es wird gebeten, diesen Hinweis bei der Lektüre zu beachten.

1. Introduction

> *The first duty of memory is to find words to bear testimony, the second is to try and explain what happened, then its time for cleansing, and finally for transforming words into oxygen.* (Krog *Tongue 148)*

South Africa's violent and atrocious apartheid era has become a memory– but a memory that still lingers in the continuously developing landscape of literature. Contemporary fiction mirrors the dramatic change that the country has gone through since the first democratic elections in 1994. Especially novels serve as mementos of a past that the country is still trying to come to terms with, in order to truly become the "rainbow nation" (Farred 179).[1]

According to Elie Wiesel a new literature has evolved from an era of testimony (qtd. in Felman and Laub 5) and also Ahmed and Stacey claim that the "desire to testify pervades contemporary culture" (Ahmed and Stacey 1). John Beverly describes the new genre in the context of the Latin American liberation movements in the 1960s. The historical and cultural backgrounds may be different, the reason for the testimonial mode to manifest itself in novels, however, can be traced back to identical roots: Testimonies arise from a need to capture and narrate crises of truth and witnessing. The first chapter will define testimony as a genre and trace it back to its historical roots both in Latin America and South Africa. The debate that ensued in the context of truthful testimony will also be examined: Can literature give testimony to the past and if so, can these accounts be accurate? The next question that is going to be addressed is whether accounts of witnesses have to reflect the truth or whether they might even serve the purpose of *not* representing the truth as it was known.

This leads to the notion of truth: How can it be defined and is there a universal truth or a multiplicity of personal truths and memories? If the latter is the case, does testimonial fiction speak from the realm of a distinct speaker or is the author a representative of a larger entity? How can personal memory and a society's *official* memory harmonise?

[1]The term 'Rainbow Nation' was coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu when he referred to South Africans as 'the Rainbow children of God' in the early 1990s (Farred, 175). The term refers to the concept of 'unity-within-racial-difference' (ibid).

In line with these questions the concept of the subaltern in connection with testimony will also be considered. Does testimony speak from and for the subaltern and – to say it in the words of Spivak – *can* the Subaltern speak at all?

In this context it is also crucial to mention that apartheid ideology can be seen as based on the dialectics of the Hegelian philosophy of a "we and an Other" (cf. Hegel 111). The government regarded natives as the Other, a group literally *apart* from whites, whose majority thought it justified to deprive them of equal rights and privileges. Hegel's definition reminds one of the typical master-slave relationship. This concept can be applied to South Africa, where racial separateness dates back to the time of colonialism in the 17th century. The first chapter will seek to examine how this issue is reflected in the testimonial mode of literature.

Furthermore, the Other is complimented by the Self, "the locus of moral choices and responsibility" (Kuper 764). The two entities presuppose each other, since the Self is no fixed identity but is defined by exterior influences, such as experiences or social interactions. In contemporary South African fiction, the Self is often at stake due to a traumatic past. It can be reconstructed by making itself heard and by speaking its own truth. Reclaiming one's identity is the first step to reposition oneself within a community. Readers can represent an audience, functioning as an Other that is needed to reclaim the Self. Another research item will assess the reader's role and what reading strategies the text asks for.

It will be determined whether narrative can reconstruct the self, and whether traumata can be healed by telling one's story. In this context the chapter will refer to Nicola King's work on memory, writing and identity and discuss how the past and present selves can be unified again. In a broader sense, the thesis will try to find answers to the question whether reading and writing literature can help in dealing with the past and, foremost, whether it can contribute to healing South Africa as a nation.

Thus, the first chapter seeks to de fine the intention and the possible outcome of giving testimony. Why *do* we or why do we *not* bear witness, how can memory be inaccessible and how can it nevertheless be accessed? Do we testify to the past in need of closure or in search for lost or unacknowledged memory? Do we need to come to terms with the past or can we just start a new?

In the second chapter the focus will be on how the "voice of the voiceless" (cf. Herman, Jahn and Ryan 594) can speak about a memory that is supposed to be

unspeakable. Testimony seeks to narrate a past that might not easily be put into words but Cathy Caruth is of the opinion that texts can "both speak about and through the profound story of traumatic experience" (Caruth, Experience 4). In addition to this, the concept of hot and cold memory will be discussed. The chapter will examine how testimony can reclaim the memory of a traumatic past and how Narrative Exposure Theory – NET – can turn traumatic memory into narrative memory which can then be accessed and narrated.

Finally, the third chapter analyses the above mentioned concepts on the basis of three novels, both in content and narrative structure. Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull* covers the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission from 1996 until 1998. It is a testimony in itself because the author was part of the political reporting team. Embedded in the narration are testimonial accounts of victims and perpetrators interviewed by the Commission. This novel lends itself very well to an analysis of how testimonies strive to come to terms with the past. It also deals with the often and heatedly debated question of whether South Africa chose truth at the cost of justice.

There is going to be a discussion on how subjective memories can represent the past within an official history that differs from individual truths. Furthermore, the focus will be on how the work seeks and presents unclaimed experience; how it testifies to a nation-wide process of working through memory towards reconciliation.

Mtutuzeli Nyoka's *I Speak to the Silent* confronts the reader with the fictional testimony of the prisoner Kondile. His world is dominated by his daughter who is an activist and fights against being seen as the Other. The father's quest to find his daughter's dead body in exile finally becomes a quest of finding his own Self. Testimonies may also speak through what they are *not* narrating – through a void or silence – often represented in the structure of the novel. Nyoka's novel focuses on this silence, the silence of the subaltern that is broken because the first-person narrator tells his story, encouraging the silent to tell theirs. Speaking out to his people changes and heals Kondile. It will be discussed how and why the main character finally decides to narrate what he memorises, his truth, which is distinctly different from its legal version at the court trial. To the silent, even to his own community, Kondile is a murderer. However, his past – which drives him to commit such a crime – has not been taken into account – neither by his people nor by the judge.

Mother to Mother by Sindiwe Magona was published in 1998 and is about a black mother whose son has killed a white woman. The author holds up the fiction that the

perpetrator's mother writes a letter to the victim’s mother. In this she tries to explain to her why her son has become a murderer. She seeks the other mother's understanding and refers to their similar fate, two mothers united in grief for their children. This novel is based on a true story and impressively shows how the need for being heard, for making one's own memory public, established a new genre. It is a fictional but very personal testimonial account that tries to find a path between keeping the memory of the past and at the same time paving the way for a new beginning.

These three novels will complement the theoretical part of this thesis and will be analyzed in terms of a cultural studies approach. The thesis seeks to provide insight into how South Africa's past is presented in testimonial fiction; how a country torn between past and present, truth and justice, memory and forgetting can find its way from vengeance to reconciliation.

2. Testimony

> *As a relation to events, testimony seems to be composed of bits and pieces of a memory that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrance, acts that cannot be constructed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition, events in excess of our frames of reference.* (Felman 5)

2.1. Defining Testimony

The Oxford Dictionary of English describes testimony as a formal written or spoken statement, especially given in a court of law. The word originates from Latin *testimonium*. Felman and Laub explain the term in its legal context: Testimony is provided in a courtroom in a "crisis of truth" when "historical accuracy is in doubt and when both the truth and its supporting elements of evidence are called into question" (Felman and Laub 6). Testimony can be defined as the "account of a witness" (Beverly 80). The literary genre is based on this original meaning. However, why it is regarded as antiliterature (cf. ibid. 68) can only be understood in its historical context.

According to John Beverly, the testimonial narrative is the English equivalent to the Latin American testimonio (cf. Beverly ix) that emerged in the context of liberation movements in the 1960s (cf. Gallagher 18). Beverly refers to testimonio as:

> […] a novel or novella-length narrative […], told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events […]. Testimonio may include, but is not subsumed under, any of the following textual categories, some of which are conventionally considered literature, others not: autobiography, autobiographical novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview, eyewitness report, life history, *novela-testimonio*, nonfiction novel, or 'factographic' literature. (ibid., 31)

The *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* defines testimonio as non-fiction depicting the living conditions and political struggles of subaltern groups in Latin America (cf. 594). The term "subaltern" denotes "non-hegemonic groups or classes" (Gramsci xiv).[2] The concept of subalternity has gained currency through Gayatri

[2] According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English* the term "subaltern" derives from the late 16th century Latin word "subalternus"; from Latin sub- "'next below" and alternus "every other". It can either refer to a lower-ranking officer in the army or to someone of "lower status". Chapter 3 will discuss

Spivak (cf. Cashmore 415) who refers to it as "the position without identity" (Spivak 263).[3]

Therefore, the narrator of testimonio is often a representative of a mostly illiterate social group or class that is marginalized by its society. This means that the testimonial narrative usually has to be written by an interlocutor who transcribes the narrator's oral account.

Beverly points out that "testimonio has to involve an urgency to communicate, a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, implicated in the act of narration itself" (Beverly 32).

Simon and Schuster's International Dictionary explains that "dar testimonio", "ser testigo", "testimoniar" and "testificar" all mean "to testify", "to attest" and "to bear witness to" and that the two terms "testimonio" and "testimony" are equal in meaning.

They both belong to the genre of testimonial accounts that arises from situations where subaltern groups feel the need to change a current situation by raising public awareness through writing. This connection between an individual subject and a group or class marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle, is what distinguishes testimony from autobiography (cf. Beverly 41). Contrary to autobiographical writing, testimonies always carry an underlying message and are told by someone who is part of a group that is struggling for recognition and better living circumstances. Readers of testimony should be called to action and should get the impression that the narrator has directly [him- or herself], or indirectly [through friends or family], lived through the events he or she narrates (cf. Beverly 3).

The genre must, however, not be confused with "confession", which the *Oxford Dictionary of English* refers to as "formal statement acknowledging that one has done something about which one is ashamed or that one is guilty of a crime". Confessional writing can also take many different generic forms, including fiction, poetry, drama, and autobiography (cf. Gallagher 17). Gallagher describes testimonio as "an intriguing correspondent" to the confessional mode "where guilt and admissions about the mistakes of the self play no role" (ibid. 19). The difference between testimonial and confessional mode becomes apparent when reading *Truth and Reconciliation*. *The Confessional Mode in South African Literature:*

testimony in connection with the featured in contemporary South African fiction.

[3] Testimony and the subaltern will be addressed in chapter 1.4.

> [T]he confessional mode is a narrative first-person account by either a fictional or a historical speaker who expresses the need to testify and to admit guilt about certain events in the speaker's life story in order to construct, or reconstruct, a 'self' within a particular community (cf. ibid.).

Therefore, a confession testifies to one's own indebtedness (cf. Gallagher xvi), faults and shortcomings, whereas testimony refers to the wrongdoing of others.

South African testimony shares many characteristics with Latin American testimonio, although authors do not often draw on interlocutors to write their stories. In a way, the writers themselves are the interlocutors because they tell their stories on behalf of a subaltern group, which they can be but need not be part of. They speak through the narrator of their fiction. Consequently, South African testimonies are not necessarily – or only partly – autobiographical. Usually they combine the genres of fiction and non-fiction.[4] Especially South African *novelists* have discovered the genre of the testimonial mode to narrate the past.

Susan Gallagher claims that the South African form cannot be integrated into a literary canon because "authors reject the purely aesthetic status of 'literature' out of a political concern to testify about South African realities" (Gallagher 88).

2.2. Historical Roots of Testimony

The social and political changes achieved by liberation struggles all over the world were often apparent in the rise of new literary forms such as the African-American slave narrative, the Palestinian communiqué, or the above mentioned testimonio (cf. Gallagher xx). This form developed as a narrative genre in the 1960s in relation to national liberation movements in Latin America (ibid. 31).

In South Africa's apartheid era (cf. Gallagher xx)[5] the "protest poem, the contemporary praise-song, the township drama, and the South African prison memoir" emerged as new popular genres (ibid.).

According to Gallagher, the first South African form of the Latin American testimonio is "the worker testimonial, a life story of a semiliterate or illiterate worker that is elicited, compiled, and often translated by a researcher, most closely resembles the Latin American testimonio" (cf. ibid. 19).

[4] The question of authenticity in fictional testimonies will be addressed in chapter 1.6.

[5] Gallagher defines the time span of 1948-1990 as the apartheid era. Also see Beinart who claims that the time from 1948-1994 was that of Afrikaner Power and of the rise of mass opposition and defines the years 1948-1961 as the core Apartheid era (cf. Beinart 143-289).

South African apartheid but especially the post-apartheid era, has witnessed the rise of yet another new form, the testimony or the testimonial mode in novels, which is derived from the Latin American genre of testimonio and developed from the South African worker testimonial. The 1990s with their Truth and Reconciliation hearings[6] proved to be a particular fertile ground for the development of testimonial accounts. Some of them are written in a testimonial mode like Mtutuzeli Nyoka's *I Speak to the Silent*. Others, like Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust,* deal with testimony in their plots and some even incorporate real or fictional testimonial documents like Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull* or Carel van der Merwe's *No Man's Land*.[7]

2.3. The Testimonio Debate

For his essays in *Testimonio*. *The Politics of Truth* Beverly chose *I, Rigoberta Menchú* narrated by a Guatemalan woman and written as well as edited by Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, as *the* representative testimonio. It is a testimonial account about Menchú's life focusing on her and her family's involvement in the armed liberation struggle in Guatemala. The book was published in 1984 and caused political unrest because of its explicit descriptions of the brutality of the Guatemalan regime and military. The passage that is probably quoted most often in this context is the one in which Menchú's brother Petrocinio is tortured and killed in a public plaza by the Guatemalan army (cf. ibid. 178-179).

Beverly often quotes Menchú's testimonio in his collection of essays: *Testimonio. On the Politics of Truth.* The first essay *The Margin at the Center: On Testimonio* was

[6] The central formal vehicle for national reconciliation and "the pursuit of national unity", the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC], was a raw experience for whites and blacks. Established by legislation in 1995 [with the final report being presented to Nelson Mandela, president of South Africa 1994-1999, in October 1998], and chaired by [Archbishop Desmond] Tutu, the purpose of the Commission was to elicit in public hearings evidence and confessions about the myriad acts of political violence and violations of human rights during the apartheid era. Minister of Justice Dullah Omar emphasized "a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not retaliation, a need for ubuntu [humanity] but not for victimization" (1995). Tutu explained his mission as a contribution to healing the wounds of the past by laying open the cause and nature of the injuries (cf. Beinart 342).

Also see the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report:

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa: *Report.* Volumes 1-5. London: Macmillan, 1999. Also see Fiona Ross. *Bearing Witness. Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.* London: Pluto, 2003. Also see for transcripts of amnesty hearings and decisions:

(cf. Truth and Reconciliation Commission, E-text).

[7] Mtutuzeli Nyoka: *I Speak to the Silent*. Scottsville, S.A.: University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2004; Gillian Slovo: *Red Dust.* London: Virago, 2002; Antije Krog: *Country of My Skull.* Johannesburg: Random House South Africa, 1998; Carel Van der Merwe: *No Man's Land.* Houghton: Umuzi: 2007.

already published in 1989. It was among the publications responsible for the beginning of a heated debate in the 1990s in the U.S. academy about the genre of testimony (ibid. xi).

In 1999 David Stoll published his book *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*[8] calling the objectivity of Menchú's account into question and claiming that she was only promoting a political agenda (cf. Beverly 5). In the collection of essays published in 2004 Beverly voices the criticism that Stoll's own account is far from objective and driven by a socially democratic agenda and that he [Stoll], as a lawyer, was trying to make the testimonio appear unreliable (cf. ibid. 4-5). Concerning reliability, Stoll questions the testimony of a traumatized individual who is likely to suffer from memory lapses. Felman and Laub's explanation of the unconscious testimony seems essential within this context:

> […] one does not have to *possess* or *own* the truth, in order to effectively *bear witness* to it; […] the speaking subject constantly bears witness to a truth that nonetheless continues to escape him, a truth, that is, essentially, *not available* to the speaker. (Felman and Laub 15)

In other words, Menchú might not necessarily be aware of the truth she has lived as it has been overshadowed by trauma and therefore is not available to her as a narrator.

2.4. Testimony and the Subaltern

Beverly's definition of testimonio states that the narrator's voice has to be designed to reach the reader from the place of "an [O]ther"[9] (Beverly 2), an Other that is repressed or even occluded by cultural and class related norms of society (cf. Beverly ibid.). The narrator's voice of testimonio has to speak from the subaltern.

In this context it is essential to mention Gayatri Spivak's essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* which draws on the concept of the voice that speaks from texts, a voice that is marked by the "desire not to be silenced or defeated, [by] a desire to impose oneself on an institution of power, such as literature, from the position of the excluded or the marginal" (Beverly 34). Spivak's essay "questions the credibility of

[8] For further reference also see Arias, Arturo: *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

[9] Both "the other" and "the Other" with a capital letter are in use. This thesis will refer to the above referred concept as "the Other" in order to prevent confusion.

the subaltern woman as a subject already represented as mute or ignored. Her speech is by definition non-speech" (Cashmore 415).

Thus, the trope often collocated with testimonio: "the voice of the voiceless" (Beverly 19; Herman, Jahn and Ryan 594). Spivak raises the question whether testimonio *can* feature an authentic subaltern voice like that of the Guatemalan woman Rigoberta Menchú, or whether it rather becomes a narrative told by a "domesticated Other" (ibid. xvi), in this case by the editor Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. The answer that Spivak provides seems paradoxical: "No, not as such, because if the subaltern could speak in a way that really mattered to us, that we would feel compelled to listen to and act upon, then it would not be subaltern" (Beverly xvi).

Spivak therefore implies that the subaltern voice cannot speak – which Beverly opposes. He claims that testimonio is not only concerned with the representation of the subaltern but that the voice from the subaltern aims at interpreting the world and foremost longs to *change* it with his or her account (cf. ibid.) [emphasis added]. Felman and Laub also speak of witnesses reaching out from their silence in hope of a listener who is willing to "*meet* the victim's silence" (Felman and Laub 64) [italics in original] in order to overcome it and to be able to deal with the past: "[T]he impossibility of speaking and, in fact, of listening, otherwise than through this silence, otherwise than through this black hole both of knowledge and of words, corresponds to the impossibility of remembering and of forgetting" (ibid. 65).

When a subaltern voice speaks up, the silence of the Other, the reader that is not part of the subaltern group, is also disrupted as testimony calls its readers to action. Mtutuzeli Nyoka titled her testimonial novel *I Speak to the Silent*: "Gradually but steadily, the yearning to speak strengthened. It was a desire to speak to the silent. To awaken them to the simple but salient fact that iniquity is not only the work of the evil among us, but also the product of the silence of those who bear witness to it" (*Silent* 8).

Nyoka criticizes both victims and witnesses of victimisation for remaining silent because, to say it in the words of Gallagher, "breaking the silence, enabling new narratives to emerge and new voices to speak, will create a new South African identity" (Gallagher 160).

2.5. The Other and Othering

Apartheid ideology was based on the dialectics of Hegelian philosophy of a "we and an Other" (cf. Hegel 111). Therefore, the relationship between two beings is dominated by the struggle for acknowledgment. A person needs to define itself in relation to another person and has to "supersede the other independent being in order thereby to become certain of itself as the essential being" (Hegel 111) [italics in original].

Gallagher elaborates on this model and explains how human relationships were classified during apartheid in South Africa:

> […] one is a self or an Other, a master or a slave, a colonizer or the colonized. South African identity, as established by the Afrikaners and the state, emerged through opposition to another group, an Other, categorically established through the racial classification system and reinforced through apartheid legislation. (Gallagher 37)

The traditionally pious and patriarchal Afrikaners – or Boers – saw themselves as a chosen people and differentiated between *us* and all others as *them*. Historically speaking they first defined their identities in opposition to "the British, next to the indigenous Africans and then to the international liberal community" (Gallagher 146). Their nationalistic views were based on 'the mythology of the Great Trek and the Battle of Blood River', where in their view, they had endured hardship and brutality from both British and Africans. They were convinced that they had earned the land they took away from the indigenous Africans and that it was rightfully theirs (cf. ibid 145). A passage from Mark Behr's *Smell of Apples* serves as a good literary example for this belief. Young Marnus, the narrator, stands on top of the Sir Lowries Pass looking down on the whole of False Bay. Next to him is his father who proudly shows him "their land":

> While Dad and I stood up there watching the red sky, Dad said that that was why we can never go back. The blacks drove the whites away and all we have left is here, Dad said, sweeping the air with his arm. "And this country was empty before our people arrived. Everything, everything you see, we built up from nothing. This is our place, given to us by God and we will look after it. Whatever the cost. (Behr 124)

When the Afrikaner myth slowly but surely began to crumble during the 1980s and the transformations of the 1990s the Afrikaner identity also suffered as literature

from this period shows: "Afrikaner writing […] is characterized by a sense of guilt and apocalypse, a foreboding that the end is near, even among those writers who were opposed to apartheid" (Gallagher 146).

Those who had first *othered* all non-Africans were now *being othered* not only by their own country but also internationally. Still, their racial beliefs in connection with the apartheid system had deconstructed many identities before they themselves got a taste of what it was like to be on the other side.[10] During apartheid, Africans were othered whenever they were discriminated against and excluded from society, for example in public institutions such as schools or parks. Africans were objectified, for example every time that they were not treated as human beings and not addressed by their birth names but by derogatory terms or even by numbers, for example in prison. Africans were objectified and pushed into the role of the Other, every time they were tortured and forced to give false testimonies in law courts. Gallagher refers to torture and [forced] confession as the "dark twins" (Gallagher 42) who are responsible for deconstructing identity. Naturally, victims with shattered selves who have been objectified will face difficulty in speaking out and articulating their individual truths. One way of remaking their selves is by giving testimony.

2.6. Reconstructing the Self

Deconstructed identities need to make themselves heard and articulate their own truths as they have been "written out of history" (ibid. 32) and have to re-claim their subject position for themselves and within society. Furthermore, they have to be re-integrated into society in order to end the status of objectification.

By giving testimony both can be achieved. Confessions as well as testimonies are both for reconstituting a self and for reaching a community as the 'dependency on the other for the creation of self" (ibid. 90) is of crucial importance. Thus, testimony is both a communicative and a performative speech act. It does not make a difference whether the testimony is directed towards a group or an individual as the individual reader represents readership in the same way that the narrator is the identification figure for all those who have had similar experiences or life stories (cf. Gallagher 90; 18).[11] By giving testimony, narrators are able to deal with their past and re-affirm

[10] Although this can of course not be compared to the othering they themselves did to non-Africans.

[11] Gallagher mentions the same reasons for making confessions. In this thesis they are applied to testimony as well because according to Gallagher, testimony is part of a confession. (cf. 29).

their subjectivity in order to be incorporated back into community. Thus, the rise of testimony from 1994 is not surprising as new identities had to be constructed in the light of a better and democratic South Africa. According to King, memory is the prerequisite for constructing or reconstructing identities. The "insistence on the role of memory" (King 11) proves "the desire to secure a sense of self in the wake of postmodern theories of the decentred human subject" (ibid.).

Novels written in a testimonial mode "propose a rhetorical contract: they offer themselves as testimonies but simultaneously 'present the reader with the voice of a narrator engaged in the ontological task of defining and creating an identity through testimony and admission" (Gallagher 53). This identity or "sense of self" is created by and through narrative based on memory:

> All narrative accounts of life stories, whether they be the ongoing stories which we tell ourselves and each other as part of the construction of identity, or the more shaped and literary narratives of autobiography or first-person fictions, are made possible by memory; they also reconstruct memory according to certain assumptions about the way it functions and the kind of access it gives to the past. (King 2)

Still, we have to be aware that neither memory nor testimony in itself can present us with satisfying closure. Referring to Krog, Gallagher explains that it is the remembering and "the value of the experience of telling"; and that this *experience* of giving testimony leads to new personal identities (cf. Gallagher 160) [italics in original].Bearing witness or giving testimony with regard to traumatic experiences is a "noninterchangeable burden" (Felman and Laub 3) because it involves dealing with the past and remembering what one has consciously or unconsciously repressed. A testimony cannot simply be "relayed, repeated or reported by another without thereby losing its function as a testimony" (ibid.) or, as Paul Celan puts it in his poem *Ashglory* "Noone bears witness for the witness" (Celan 105). Witnesses have to break their silence themselves and turn towards an audience: "By virtue of the fact that the testimony is *addressed* to others, the witness, from within the solitude of his own stance, is the vehicle of an occurrence, a reality, a stance or a dimension *beyond himself*" (Felman and Laub 3).

If we look at giving testimony as a burden that no one can take away from us, and still "neither complete self-knowledge nor complete revelation is possible" – why should we testify? Why have victims and perpetrators been encouraged to testify at the TRC and why have these testimonies been made public world-wide?

If testimony does not "capture the full reality of the self" it also does not deny "the existence of the real world or a real self" (Gallagher 92). Thus, witnesses may find relief by giving testimony because it might enable them to reposition themselves in the real world and start a healing process for the wounds inflicted upon the soul. According to King, "the ability to tell a coherent story of our life – obviously based on our memories of it – seems synonymous with our concept of identity" (King, 23). Another reason for giving testimony is the desire of "summoning the truth" and also of "setting aright […] official history" (Beverly 44), so that justice is done to those who were wronged and the public is conscious of what really happened in the past.

In addition to this, testimonial accounts have been written both by men and women from townships or academic backgrounds alike. This means that at first new identities and then new communities can be created, communities that "bridge ethnic and cultural boundaries" (Gallagher 45).

When reading testimonial accounts or novels, readers take the positions of witnesses and form a new community. Similar to the testifying, the readers might in turn feel the need to bear witness to others. So the testimony spreads and creates a new consciousness and self-awareness – as it did for Felman's students. In the context of a project on testimony, they were shown visual testimonies by Holocaust survivors and were completely disoriented afterwards, not being able to talk about or concentrate on any other subject. The visual testimonial life accounts of Holocaust survivors had such an impact on the students that they felt the urge to testify to them in order to process them (cf. Felman and Laub 1-57). According to Felman, teaching that goes beyond passing on some facts only takes place through such a crisis of witnessing (cf. ibid. 53).

Thus, not only the victims but also the ones who witness the testimonies deal with the past. Facing the past and then dealing with it are the preliminaries to eventually overcoming it. This was the concept of the Truth and Reconciliation commission in South Africa and although the institution was also criticised, "South Africans continue to insist on the value of testimony and admission as a possible means to reconciliation" (Gallagher 33) in their autobiographies, fiction, and personal lives because "[w]ithin the testimony, the victim attempts to reconstruct herself or himself in the very act of testifying or remembering and [attempts] to rebuild a community, a world, in which the unthinkable will never again occur" (ibid. 20).

Beverly even speaks of testimony as a "model for a new form of politics" (xvii) which for him implies "a new way of imagining the identity of a nation" (ibid.) and can therefore not only be a tool for interpreting but also for eventually *changing* [emphasis added] the world (ibid. xvi).

Thus, according to Beverly, testimonio [as well as testimony][12] asks something of us, the readers: an authority that "resides in the voice of others" (ibid. 24) has to be recognized so that communities can be constructed:

> If testimonio [or testimony] is an art of memory, it is an art directed not only towards the memorialization of the past but also to the constitution of […] democratic nation-states, as well as forms of community, solidarity and affinity that extend beyond or between nation-states. (ibid.)

Hence, testimonies can restore testifiers in reality and may result in relief from psychological wounds. Justice can be done by bearing witness to a different version of history which in its best case leads to the creation of a new consciousness and the constitution of a new community, perhaps even on a national level. Both visible and invisible damage can be acknowledged and kept in mind in order never to be repeated again.

In the light of testimony as a means of reconciliation, bearing witness can be considered a tool for restructuring a nation and building a new South African identity. This is where the notion of truth comes in: How can the basis for a new nation that is conscious of its past, be constituted from subjective accounts? How do we know whether testimonies given are true and how can the truth of individuals become the truth of a whole nation? These questions will be explored further in the next chapter.

[12] Beverly refers to the Latin American testimonio (cf. 1) but as this was the predecessor for the South African testimony, what she says about testimonio can be held true for testimony as well.

2.7. Truthfulness of Testimony

The testimonial mode has always triggered debates about realistic, truthful and accurate accounts in literary theory. The often quoted testimony of an eyewitness at the Auschwitz uprising serves as an example: The woman testified having seen four chimneys going up in flames and exploding, which was reason enough for some historians to consider discounting her whole testimony as only *one* chimney had exploded, not four. A psychoanalyst disagreed with them and replied that the woman was testifying to something even more crucial: to "the reality of an unimaginable occurrence" (Felman and Laub 60), to the reality of "Jewish resistance at Auschwitz […] and to the historical truth of Jewish resistance" (Oliver 1). The author elaborates that "witnessing"[13] has a double meaning in this context: on the one hand, it refers to eyewitness testimony and on the other to bearing witness to something beyond recognition, something that cannot be seen (cf. Oliver 16). When the eyewitness testifies, the burning chimney functions as the symbol of something abstract: the symbol for Jewish resistance and the struggle for survival. The accuracy of the testimony is not decisive since it is not about facts but about the subject position of the witness. According to Oliver, "subject positions, although mobile, are constituted in our social interactions and our positions within our culture and context" and are therefore "determined by history and circumstance" (ibid. 17). Oliver agrees with Felman and Laub who are of the opinion that accurate facts are not essential for giving testimony: “What ultimately matters in all processes of witnessing […] is not simply the information, the establishment of the facts, but the experience itself of living through testimony, of giving testimony” (Felman and Laub 85).

According to Sklodowska, we would be "naïve to assume a direct homology between text and history" (qtd. in Beverly 39) because "[t]he discourse of a witness cannot be a reflection of his or her experience, but rather a refraction determined by the vicissitudes of memory, intention and ideology" (Beverly ibid.).

Beverly also engages in the debate about truthfulness of testimonies and adds that narrative cannot be "the Real" in Jacques Lacan's sense of "the domain of whatever exists outside symbolization" (Lacan, 66). As "[t]he Real is that which resists

[13] The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines witnessing as the act of bearing witness or giving testimony as being present and observing something as well as giving evidence of what one has seen with ones own eyes.

symbolization absolutely" (ibid.), it has to resist language or any other form of representation. Beverly claims that testimony rather has a "reality effect" (Beverly 3) that is created by textual conventions such as directly addressing the reader. Nevertheless, testimonio tells us what really happened: "truth versus lie – the Big Lie [sic] of racism, imperialism, inequality, class rule, genocide, torture, oppression – that is at stake in testimonio" (Beverly 3). Therefore, Beverly also criticises Stoll, both lawyer and author, who claims that Menchú is not able to be objective and thus should not have the authority to tell the story (cf. Beverly 5). Beverly retorts that "what is at stake in testimonio is not so much truth *from* or *about* the other as the truth *of* the other" (ibid. 7), or in other words: There is no universal truth and therefore we cannot get to know a truth *about* the subaltern or the Other (cf. ibid. 2) by reading testimony. But what we as readers can do, is actively listen to the truth of a South African who is crying out from a repressed society and asks us to see the world with his or her eyes in testimonial novels like Antije Krog's Country of My Skull.[14]

2.8. What is truth?

The debate about truthful testimony shows that truth[15] is not universal. For the historians listening to the woman giving testimony about the Jewish resistance at Ausschwitz, *truth* was equated with facts, in their case it was the exact number of chimneys that had exploded. For the woman who testified, *truth* represented a concept of something unimaginable and inexplicable, it was her *historical truth* of Jewish resistance. What she had experienced, the one chimney blowing up, was not the truth to her. *Her* truth was that more chimneys had blown up because that was the way she had *experienced* it. The description of mere facts seemed inadequate to her because facts could not capture what she had faced.

[14] Examples of South African testimonies that express views representative of a majority of South Africans today: Antije Krog: *Country of My Skull.* London: Vintage, 1999; Mandela Nelson: *Long Walk to Freedom. The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela.* Boston: Little, Brown, 1995; Gillian Slovo: *Every Secret Thing: My Family, My Country.* London: Little, Brown, 1997.

[15] For a more detailed discussion of truth and narrative theory see:
Simon Blackburn and Keith Simmons: *Truth.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999; Bernard Williams: *Truth and Truthfulness*. *An Essay in Genealogy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002; Peter Lamarque and Olsen Stein: . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994 and Hayden White: *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe:* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

If, however, there is no truth that is true to all, how can we ever objectively talk about truth? In reality, and in our case in South African reality, we cannot work with the Oxford Dictionary of English definition of truth: "[T]hat which is true or in accordance with fact or reality" because there is no clear definition for truth in real life, especially when it comes to traumatic experiences.

It seems that truth is subjective, depending on who speaks it in what context or as Beverly puts it: "[C]laims about truth are contextual: they have to do with how people construct different understandings of the world and historical memory from the same set of facts in situations of gender, ethnic, and class inequality, exploitation, and repression" (86).

This is reminiscent of the Foucaultian notion of truth that is *constituted* in discourse. Thus, truth is man-made, it is negotiated and finally produced but it is not something that exists in its real form from the outset of a situation or discourse. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided a place for discourse from which truth could emerge and be constituted as a new public truth of South Africa.

Gallagher also believes in this concept of truth and thus joins the ranks of the extreme postmodernists[16] who are of the opinion that the absolute truth does not exist. She claims that "if our conceptions of truth emerge only from human desire and manifestations of power, truth is always relative to one's standpoint" (Gallagher xv). Therefore, several kinds of truth exist and the one that "wins is that proclaimed by those with the most power" (ibid). Here one might interject that dictating truth by force does not mean that it also *is* the truth because different truths will, although repressed, still exist. Nevertheless, Gallagher is right about authorities *making* the truth because those who have power are likely to produce truth to reach their aims, even if it is by force or to the disadvantage of others. In Nyoka's *I Speak to the Silent* truth is produced by forcing a prisoner to make a false confession. This mirrors reality of prisoners' lives in the apartheid era.[17] The accepted truth was the truth of powerful whites in South Africa who had their own ways of creating *their* truth and making even those believe in it that were initially convinced of different truths. In *I Speak to the Silent*, Walter Hamile Kondile is imprisoned for murder but the narrator

[16] According to Peter Brooker's *A Glossary of* Cultural Theory, Postmodernism refers to a historical and cultural period in the 1950s and 1960s with its peak in the 1980s. The dates are, however, a matter of debate. Brooker describes Postmodernism as an aesthetic, a lifestyle and "an expression of a general scepticism towards previous distinctions and certainties, not only in artistic or media culture, but in intellectual, political and everyday life" (cf. Brooker 203).

[17] Cf. Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom.* The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela. London: Abacus, 2002. Or Sachs, Albie: *The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967.

presents the reader with different truths so that in the beginning we do not know what has really happened:

> The truth was known – no other truth was necessary or desired. The traitor's version of the truth could not be the truth. Perhaps his truth was too painful. Perhaps it showed us all to be human – black and white. That we were all of us fallible, and no race had a monopoly over righteousness. (*Silent* 6)

The explanation "no other truth was necessary" because the truth "was known" (ibid.) supports the existence of different truths from which the most convenient for those in power had been chosen. *Their* truth is chosen and presented to the public but it is a created one. The *prisoner's* truth is "too painful" and is therefore disregarded. But if "no race ha[s] a monopoly over righteousness", then it cannot be justified for any race to always *be* right, or in other words, nobody has a right to make his or her truth the *only* truth.

If, however, truth can be created, then it can be created by everyone, especially because power constellations can change over time as could be witnessed in South Africa. Today, different South Africans constitute their truths, victims have countered perpetrators' truths, a new kind of governmental truth has spread. South Africans in all fields are working on the project of creating a new truth for their country, one group of them being the writers. Njabulo Ndebele insists on the "need for the production of 'truth', to counter the lies that were associated with and produced by apartheid" (qtd. in Nuttall and Coetzee 3). Each author has his or her unique way of participating in this process of truth-making, some by writing fiction. Brink claims that fiction reaches beyond facts (Brink 30).

Another way of creating a new truth, probably the most prominent, was the establishment of the TRC. This Commission was set out to be "a process of national catharsis through the revelation of truth"[18] and literally aimed at establishing, as fully

[18] Visitors of the exhibition "Miscast"* wrote into the comment book that there needed to be "catharsis through truth" in order for nation building to take place.

*"Miscast", a controversial exhibition that was presented in Cape Town's National Gallery in association with the South African Museum (SAM) from April to September 1996 encountered criticisms of its casts of naked KhoiSan bodies. The casts, which were originally made in the early decades of the twentieth century from living persons [who were forced to model] for scientific study, were displayed in order to draw public attention to the dehumanization and objectification of KhoiSan bodies in the name of science. But they ended up being seen by some members of the public as yet another manifestation of this legacy of racist representation. Public responses to "Miscast" reveal that many visitors did in fact view the exhibition as a type of Truth Commission (Cf. Nuttall and Coetzee 112-120; 130-131; 132-137; 145; 158-160; 183; 197).

as possible, the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth; truth being equated with facts (qtd. in Robins 130).

In 1998 Ingrid de Kok did not believe that the TRC would or could produce "the full truth, in all its detail, for all time" and it definitely could not bring all perpetrators and victims to trial during its establishment. However, the aim to compose and recompose the multiplicity of partial versions and experiences within sight of each other so that truth would emerge may have been achieved" (cf. de Kok 61).

In conclusion this shows that a new South African truth is being created which would not have been accepted in public before. As already mentioned, writers play a crucial role in this process of *remaking truth*, perhaps writers of fiction even more than others because the distinguishing line between truth remade from facts and truth remade from fiction is only a thin one. In other words, a writer of testimonio, but not a writer of testimonial *fiction* is obliged to have experienced what he is writing about him- or herself in exactly the way he or she describes it. Because truth is made from *negotiating the past,* authors do not have to stick to *facts*; facts being subjective truths in a world where postmodernists think that the absolute truth does *not exist*. Writers do not have to tell us about their own lives but should speak with a voice for those who are unable to speak about what they have experienced. In this context, there are different versions but they all nevertheless represent realities.

Thus, writers do not *have* to have experienced what they are writing about but can identify with others and speak in a collective mode. Beverly believes that writers of testimonio can speak for all others belonging to their socially oppressed or disadvantaged subaltern group (cf. Beverly xvi). The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative states that testimonio, the genre that testimony has developed from, often "presented the informant as someone who could speak on behalf of a whole collectivity" (594). The voices of South African authors stand for the voices of all who suffered from apartheid and its consequences.

Thus, authors can speak the truth for others but can we *speak* about truth and reality at all? According to Derrida, truth cannot be talked about because language is always interpretation and hence "we are not able to speak about truth and reality in any absolute sense, from a point outside of history" (qtd. in Gallagher xxvi). So how can we work with truth after all, how can we talk about it or express it in literature? Gallagher suggests the following:

> Derrida's pronouncements on political issues, such as his condemnation of apartheid and his support of Amnesty International's campaign for human rights, demonstrate his belief that interpretations, while subjective, may also be true or false; one must take stands and make commitments on the basis of what appears to be the closest approximation of the truth at the time. (Gallagher xvii)

Therefore, truth – like the past and like memory – will always have to be negotiated. The best human kind and, in this case the South African nation, can ever achieve, is probably a close approximation to the truth that all can represent and live with.

3. Traumatic Memory - Speaking the Unspeakable[19]

Traumatic memory is wordless and static.
(Judith Herman 175)

The Greek word *trauma* originally referred to an injury inflicted on a body[20] but as early as 1922 Sigmund Freud described it as a wound of the mind in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (cf. Freud 12). Following Freud's concept of trauma, Anne Whitehead specifies trauma as "an extensive breach in the defensive wall surrounding the psyche" (Whitehead 119). Since the coining of the term the meaning has not changed and therefore trauma is usually used within a psychological context. To understand why trauma and testimony are irretrievably linked, the former often resulting in the latter, one has to understand the concept of traumatic memory. Schauer describes trauma as "the experience and psychological impact of events that are life-threatening or include a danger of injury so severe that the person is horrified, feels helpless, and experiences a psychophysiological alarm response during and shortly following the experience" (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 5).

Judith Herman explains that traumatic events "generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence or death. Human beings are confronted with terror and extreme helplessness in a situation where they actually need to respond to a catastrophe (cf. Herman 33). Naturally, most persons are overburdened with the situation and therefore a protective mechanism is activated. As a result, the affected cannot consciously take in what is happening to them.

Van der Merwe describes trauma as an overwhelming experience that "threaten[s] one's sense of emotional, physical, and social integrity" and leaves human beings bearing psychological scars of their experiences. Trama patients repress what has happened to them but as all memory needs to be structured in the mind they are under emotional and psychological pressure that can develop into a mental illness.

According to Caruth, Trauma does not only refer to the threat of life but to "the fact that the threat is recognized as such by the mind *one moment too late*. Because the threat is not recognized at precisely the moment it occurs, the survivor is forced to

[19] This is the title of an essay collection: Friedman, Jonathan: *Speaking the Unspeakable. Essays on Sexuality, Gender and Holocaust Survivor Memory.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002.
[20] Cf. *Oxford Dictionary of English*: Origin late 17th cent.: from Greek, literally 'wound'.

relive the traumatic situation again and again to claim her own survival" (Caruth, *Experience* 64) which can be *re*-traumatizing. This is the reason why many near-death-experiences can lead to suicide in the aftermath of the event (cf. ibid. 62-63) In any case living with the memory of a traumatic event can become a nightmare to the person affected, as the mind oscillates between a "crisis of death" and a "crisis of life" (ibid. 7). It is because the mind cannot confront the possibility of its death directly that survival becomes for the human being, paradoxically, an endless *testimony* to the impossibility of living (ibid. 62) [emphasis added].

This life-long impact that traumatic experiences can have on the victim usually necessitates psychological treatment as the mind is penetrated in the course of the traumatic event. Kai Erikson defines trauma as a "blow to the tissues of the mind" resulting in injury or other disturbances that breaks something inside of you: "smashing through whatever barriers your mind has set up as a line of defence. It invades you, takes you over, becomes a dominating feature of your interior landscape […] – and in the process threatens to drain you and leave you empty" (Erikson 183).

This emptiness can result in feelings ranging from "restlessness and agitation" to "numbness and bleakness" (ibid. 184). The multiple layers protecting the matrix of the ego have been ruptured, including the individual's basic assumptions about the world, such as belief systems and sense of trust in others, physical aspects of one's body and social networks, to name but a few (cf. van der Merwe 24). This rupture can result in flashbacks, nightmares and other re-experiences, emotional numbing, depression, guilt, autonomic arousal, explosive violence or tendency to hypervigilance (cf. Leys 2). These symptoms that victims of trauma have to live with are referred to by a collective term as post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD in short, including symptoms previously known as "shell shock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome, and traumatic neurosis" (Caruth, *Trauma* 3; cf. Caruth, *Expierence* 57-58) and referring to both human and natural catastrophes - depending on whether the force is that of nature or that of human beings, we speak of disasters or atrocities (cf. Herman 33). These symptoms are only mosaic pieces of broader concepts shattered by trauma:

> Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human

> experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis. (Herman 51)

To be able to overcome such an existential crisis it is inevitable to cope with traumatic experiences of the past. Paul Valéry claims that the consequences of a traumatic event are our memory repeating to us what we haven't yet come to terms with and what still haunts us (cf. qtd. in Felman and Laub 276). Referring to Herman, however, dealing with our memories might be difficult as "the ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness" (Herman 1). In the face of this dilemma questions such as – How does trauma affect memory?, How can memory be retrieved? and finally What role does testimony play in all of this? – arise.

3.1. Hot and Cold Memory

To understand the concept of memory and why it is the prerequisite to giving testimony, one has to know that there are different types of memories. According to Schauer, we can distinguish between declarative, also called explicit, and non-declarative, also called implicit memory. The first type stores personal events, such as a graduation, but also facts, for instance historical facts and knowledge of the world, such as world's geography. Schauer refers to this memory type which is verbally accessible also as "autobiographical context memory" or "cold memory" (Schauer 18).

The second type memorizes skills, habits, emotional associations and conditioned responses. The skill how to ride a bike or how to write is covered by the non-declarative memory. Declarative memory can be retrieved anytime, whereas non-declarative memory needs to be consciously recollected and is not deliberately accessible. There is no need to recall it as it is automatically activated and there is no need to know how or when, for example, opening a door was learned if a door needs to be opened. The unconscious activation of the skill is sufficient. According to Squire, non-declarative memory is activated through environmental cues such as smells, sounds or sights but in contrast to declarative memory, without a human being consciously activating it (qtd. in Schauer 15). Schauer calls this type sensory-perception-emotional representation of memory or hot memory and defines it as "situationally accessible" (Schauer 18).

We do not only use abstract knowledge when we think of past life events but we also link facts such as "I was in South Africa for research and arrived on a rainy day" to perceptions such as "I can feel the rain on my skin and hear the airport noise". The connection of fact and perception happens in our minds when thinking about the event and makes us imagine we can feel or hear again what we experienced at that time. This combination of different kinds of memories is called "recollective experience" (ibid.) and establishes a connection between hot and cold memory. Non-traumatized persons who can verbally access their connected memories, hence can also narrate them. Pierre Janet describes memory as "the action of telling a story" (qtd. in Herman 175). He was the first to differentiate between narrative memory which "narrates the past as past", and traumatic memory, which "unconsciously repeats the past". Janet also coined the word "subconscious" referring to "the collection of automatically stored memories that form the map that guides subsequent interaction with the environment" (qtd. in van der Kolk and van der Hart 159). Thus, when non-traumatized persons respond to new challenges appropriately they automatically memorize new information but are not even conscious of this processs (cf. ibid.).

3.2. Traumatic Memory

Traumatic memory, the opposite of narrative memory, cannot be accessed and narrated. It denotes memory of a traumatic event which is not stored the same way as a non-traumatic experience. In the moment of experiencing trauma, memory is only stored partly: mainly sensory or perceptual information such as sounds or smells are covered by memory. Emotional information, what the person feels at that moment, how he or she reacts physically, e.g. sweating or trembling, is recorded in a different part of the brain. Janet explains that memory is stored differently under ordinary conditions and thus "becomes dissociated from conscious awareness and voluntary control" (van der Kolk and van der Hart 60). Thus, feelings are memorized separately from the content of the experience and stored in another neural network from where a "fear network" is established. This network includes sensory, cognitive, emotional and physiological elements and can be activated by triggers like environmental stimuli, for example, by sounds, smells, sights or situations similar to the traumatic experience. The person then involuntarily has a flashback and believes to re-

experience the fearful event. According to Janet, this mechanism of the "fear network" means that "when one element of a traumatic experience is evoked, all other elements follow automatically" (qtd. in Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 163). Depending on how intensively someone suffers from PTSD this happens more or less consciously, in the worst case the patient does not remember anything at all in the aftermath of the re-enactment: Some patients may even behave as if they were reliving the traumatic situation again, long after it has happened. This happens unconsciously and cannot be recalled afterwards (cf. Caruth, *Trauma* 160-162).

Thus, subconscious memories take control of behaviour. In the most extreme case, this can result in multiple personality disorder, where a person then lives separate identities (cf. Caruth, *Trauma* 164). Naturally, persons suffering from PTSD in the form of flashbacks attempt to prevent them from happening and thus try to avoid all situations which could trigger this painful activation of the fear network. For this reason, traumatic events are *unspeakable* because their memory is distorted and painful. Caruth describes the difference between narrative and traumatic memory as follows: "Thus, in contrast to narrative memory, which is a social act, traumatic memory has no social component: it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody; it is a solitary activity" (Caruth, *Trauma* 163).

Caruth describes narrative memory as "serving a social function" (ibid.) because non-traumatized persons feel the *need* to talk about events and narrate them, but for someone who is traumatized the recall of memories is unbearable, hence un-narratable and can therefore only result in solitary activity.

Trying not to remember leads to avoidance which manifests itself in different forms. Someone who does not want to remember might not go near the place where the trauma was experienced. Traumatised persons often also avoid seeing people in any way connected with situations resembling the traumatic one in sound, smell or appearance. If a situation cannot be avoided in advance and the person has to face it, then the need to flee can be part of the PTSD behaviour (cf. Schauer 17;18). According to Janet, trauma can even lead to amnesia (qtd. in Caruth *Trauma*, 173).

Traumatized persons can try hard *not* to remember to such an extent, that all kinds of emotional arousal, even positive emotions, are avoided, which renders the person emotionally numb (cf. Schauer 17). [emphasis added]. Freud already realized that his patients did not think much about their traumatizing experiences but "perhaps were more concerned with *not* thinking of it" (cf. Freud 13). This renders the dialectic of

trauma self-perpetuating because a traumatized person is caught between two extreme states, amnesia or reliving trauma, "between floods of intense, overwhelming feeling and arid states of no feeling at all" (Herman 47). Trauma can, however, not be entirely repressed, as the patient in the words of Freud is "fixated to his trauma" (Freud 13). Janet also describes his hysterical patients as controlled by "fixed ideas" that also went under the name of obsessions, impulsions and phobias (cf. Janet 278). In addition to this,

> [p]atients who suffer from PTSD have difficulties with autobiographical memory; that is, they are unable to place the fear of the events appropriately in time and space and to clearly position them in a lifetime period. This, and the avoidance of activating the fear structure, makes it difficult for PTSD patients to narrate traumatic experience. (Schauer, 18)

Why should traumatized victims now narrate their stories if it is so painful for them and they do everything to avoid remembering? To answer this question one has to be aware that all human beings organize their stored memories. At the top of the hierarchically organized autobiographical memory are lifetime periods representing "general knowledge of persons, places, actions, activities, plans, or goals that characterize a special period". All memories are arranged into the one or the other lifetime period and these periods can also overlap. Traumatized memories cannot be positioned in time and space and leave a person with a distorted memory, fearful, helpless and disoriented. Trauma can only be overcome - and thus a normal life can only be made possible - if the past is faced and not only remembered but verbally positioned into an existing memory continuum. If this can be achieved, then hot memory in form of emotional and sensory memories can be reconnected to cold memory, which designates knowledge about periods of our lives and specific events. This connection between hot and cold memory, which has been cut by the traumatic experience, can be revived and thus the victim will be able to position the flashbacks in time and space of narrative memory (cf. Elber and Schauer 883). One way to recover from traumatic memory is by telling one's story, by finding the courage to talk about what has happened. The psychological treatment for healing a trauma patient is based on the Narrative Exposure Theory, NET in short.

3.3. Narrative Exposure Theory

> *[I]t is in and through writing that memory constructs itself as inevitably 'belated', but it is through writing that its 'immediacy' is also re-created. (King 9)*

NET was developed for the treatment of patients suffering from PTSD. It is based on cognitive behavioural exposure theory and testimony therapy. To be cured, patients repeatedly need to talk about their worst traumatic events in detail. Soon they should be enabled to talk about what happened to them, to face the past and deal with it, to be able to verbalise it, give testimony to it and thus overcome it. While talking about what has happened, it is of crucial importance that the narrator re-experiences the emotions associated with the event and that he "actually triggers his or her own fear network in the telling by narrating the fragments throughout the course of therapy and he or she is able to reweave the events back into a *cool-system framework* controlling the triggers present with the hot memories" (cf. Schauer 25).

The experienced events are consciously remembered as well as located in time and space through a meaningful and consistent narrative. The traumatic past is revisited in a safe environment and after telling the experiences again and again, habituation takes place and the memory loses its horrifying impact. Only then completion and closure can be achieved: The essence of NET is to connect the hot memory, e.g., sensations, feelings, and thoughts to the corresponding sequences in the autobiography by putting all memory fragments into words and thus into declarative memory (Schauer 34).

Herman also describes recovery as a process in which the survivor tells the story of the trauma, completely and in depth. According to her, "this work of reconstruction actually transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor's life story" (Herman 175).

The narrator of a story remembers his or her past and gives testimony in front of a witness so that recovery from trauma and closure of the past can take place. Therefore, NET is based on Testimonial Therapy, TT in short: Many patients have difficulties in defining the most horrible event, as several traumatic experiences have to be endured. In this case, the narration covers the patient's "whole life, following the timeline of his life from birth to the present while focusing on the detailed report of the traumatic experiences" (ibid. 24). In the therapeutic approach of NET, the

witness (in this case the therapist) writes down a summary of the given testimony. This written document is then read out to the patient who has the opportunity to correct it or add information. The final document is then given to the patient to keep, and is signed both by the witness and the narrator. If it is the narrator's wish, the written testimony can also [anonymously] be published or used by third parties, usually human rights organizations. The patient might also feel the need to share his or her traumatic experiences with a wider community in order to reconstitute a sense of a meaningful world (cf. Herman 70). Because this opportunity exists, testimony therapy serves the individual needs of the patient and perhaps even political aims: "[O]n the one hand, it [testimony] serves as a method for facilitating the emotional processing of the victim's traumatic event, resulting in improved mental health, and, at the same time, it acts as a document which can be directly used for political purposes" (Schauer 23).

Furthermore, the survivor who has told his or her story, regains his or her "dignity by the satisfaction of the need for acknowledgement through the explicit human rights orientation of 'testifying' " (ibid. 25).

Schauer nevertheless warns not to confuse exposure with closure. Exposure means to relive the events of the traumatic event until the negative feelings subside which ideally leads to a submission of PTSD. Closure, in contrast, means to end the narrative and the act of remembering. The desired outcome is that the narrator has completed his mental journey into the past, can concentrate on the present and sees the past for what it is, a time that has *passed* (cf. ibid. 43). The distorted memory has been recollected and located in time and space so the narrator is able to see the whole picture of his past. The therapist has played the role of a witness in whose presence the patient could "speak of the unspeakable" (cf. Herman 175). Thus, traumatic memory has been turned into narrative memory and can therefore be now accessed any time. Having embedded it into the mind's structure by giving testimony means that a person has come to terms with what has happened.

In the context of trauma theory in South Africa, I believe that helping traumatised patients to re-link their memories will not only change individuals' lives for the better but in the long run also contribute to South Africa's healing. Only when the country has come to terms with its past it will be able to use it as a foundation for the future.

3.4. Traumatic Memory and the Testimonial Mode in Contemporary South African Fiction

Nightmare of A Samuel Born Krog

> *My hand falls on the white breath of the page an animal with fur on its back the pen becomes a soft hairy nicotine-stained finger the letters it writes listlessly start decomposing at once books swell with indignation the typewriter grinds its Olivetti teeth. I write because I am furious.* (Krog, *Skin* 49)

Like Krog, all South African writers of contemporary political novels face difficulties when it comes to translating their thoughts into ink as many are traumatized themselves. In psychoanalytical terms they turn their experienced past into narrative memory by writing political novels or poetry (cf. Leys 105). This way, their own memory can be reconstructed and subconscious memories emerge by going over the experienced again and again in the course of writing a novel.

South African novels tell stories about traumatized characters and the traumatic experiences they had and still have to cope with, which contradicts the assumption that trauma is unspeakable and cannot be narrated. The South African novel, however, only represents the paradox existing in *trauma theory* "between the claim that the meaning of a traumatic event is forever postponed […] and the conviction that there is a possibility of healing by the retelling of one's story, by narration" (Mengel 5). Thus, this conflict in a psychological field is also mirrored in literary theory as post-modern literature is marked by "[…] the paradoxical tensions between the impossibility of representing reality, of getting hold of the truth, on the one hand, and the ongoing attempts to do it nevertheless, on the other" (ibid).

The characters portrayed in the novels are usually traumatized victims of violence of different forms[21]. As a result of these experiences they suffer from nightmares or flashbacks that invade their everyday lives, paranoia, fear, and lack of trust in other human beings. Parts of their past often have been both so physically and psychologically unbearable that they unconsciously have repressed their worst

[21] In this context, violence is used as both physical as well as psychological violence.

memories and therefore, in medical terms, suffer from amnesia. They cannot recall certain incidents as it seems that there is a black hole[22] within their memory. Even if they are able to recall what happened, they dare not speak it, which renders interpreting silence even more meaningful than speech: "The historian could not hear, I thought, the way in which her silence was itself part of the testimony, an essential part of the historical truth she was precisely bearing witness to" (Felman and Laub 62). Therefore, as paradoxical as this may sound, silence can speak out; it speaks without words and without voice but it nevertheless carries meaning.

In *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth deals with the phenomenon of the voice that "cries out" after someone has had a traumatic experience, "a voice that is paradoxically released through the wound" (Caruth, *Experience* 2). According to Caruth, trauma is always about a voice that comes from within a wound, "that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" and 'remains unknown in our actions and our language" (ibid. 4). The novels discussed in this thesis all tell stories of psychologically wounded characters [and authors] and therefore also feature a cry in form of a "plea by an [O]ther who is asking to be seen and heard" (ibid. 9), a call that orders us, the readers, to awaken (cf. ibid.). Therefore, these novels all require an emphatic reader and a "new mode of reading and of listening that both the language of trauma, and the silence of its mute repetition of suffering, profoundly and imperatively demand" (ibid.). It is crucial that readers listen and respond to traumatic stories in a way that does not force them to lose their impact and does not reduce them to mere clichés (cf. Caruth, *Trauma* vii).

[22] "Trauma – A Black Hole" is the translation for the German title of an article in Van der Kolk, Bessel A. Alexander, C. McFarlane and Lars Weisath. "Trauma – Ein Schwarzes Loch". ["Trauma – A Black Hole"]. *Traumatic Stress: Grundlagen und Behandlungsansätze. Theorie, Praxis und Forschung zu posttraumatischem Stress sowie Traumatherapie.* [Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body and Society]. Paderborn, Jungfermann, 2000. p. 27-47.

4. *Country of My Skull* (Antjie Krog, 1999)

Starting in 1996, South African poet, writer and journalist Antjie Krog has been involved in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC] for more than two years. The former head of SABC radio[23] Pippa Green asked Krog to become part of her political reporting team and later even insisted that she had to become parliamentary editor for the radio team to report on the Truth Commission. Today Antjie Krog is professor at the University of the Western Cape and is probably best known for *Country of My Skull* which covers her experiences of working with the Commission and was published in 1998.

It is a very personal narrative quilting together reports of first meetings before the Commission was launched, the Commission's work itself and the author's own thoughts and beliefs. Thus, *Country of my Skull* can be described as autobiographic account but rather blends different genres such as journalistic writing, reportage, testimony and poetry. The reader gains insight into the social structure and the network of participants. Descriptions of hearings, Krog's own reflections, testimonial accounts of victims and perpetrators, letters, transcripts, interviews, discussions with colleagues and the author's poetry "lur[e] the reader actively and inventively through a mosaic of insights, impressions, and secret themes"[24] and make *Country of My Skull* a unique work capturing Krog's testimony. Michiel Heyns[25] describes Krog's work as

> an intensely personal account of these [TRC] hearings: the sufferings inflicted by one group of people (for the most part Krog's own people, the Afrikaners) on another are, for Krog, testimony to something in that country which is an inalienable part of her. (Heyns, 43)

[23] South African Broadcast [SABC].
[24] Krog, blurb of *Country of My Skull*.
[25] Michiel Heyns graduated from the Universities of Stellenbosch and Cambridge. Before he took to writing full-time, he was an academic, lecturing in English at the University of Stellenbosch. His first publication was *The Children's Day* in 2002. *The Reluctant Passenger* and *The Typewriter's Tale* followed in 2003 and in 2005. His latest novel, *Bodies Politic*, was recently published by Jonathan Ball [2008]. Heyns also won the English Academy's Sol Plaatje Award for Translating (2008) for his translation of Marlene van Niekerk's *Agaat*. For more information about his life and work see his homepage (cf. Heyns, Michiel, E-text).

In the beginning, however, Krog did *not* want to write a book about the Commission. According to Nance, testimony's potential to provoke change threatens not only governments but also collaborating writers, critics and readers themselves (cf. Nance, 570). However, Krog's attitude towards writing about her experiences changed over time. If she had at first said that she *could not* write a book, she ended up by thanking her publisher in the envoi that he "was still there when I came round to saying, 'I *have* to write a book, otherwise I'll go crazy" (Country, 280). In the course of writing, Krog breaks out of "the old governmental containment strategies" and together with her, many voices that have long been silenced enter the public discourse (Nance, 570). The work does not only constitute Krog's own testimonial account but presents the reader with numerous testimonies of victims as well as perpetrators.

The Commission was chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and consisted of three committees. The first was the Human Rights Violations Committee whose task it was to listen to victims at hearings and to further investigate their cases. The second was the Amnesty Committee which received and processed amnesty applications from perpetrators. If amnesty was granted, perpetrators were free from prosecution. If perpetrators did not apply for amnesty or if they did not react to the Commission's subpoena to attend a hearing they could be put on trial. For many cases there was, however, not enough evidence so that a lot of perpetrators could go free and neither had to submit their amnesty application nor face a court trial. Even more perpetrators could not be tracked down due to the time limit and to staff constraints. Only about 200 applications were expected but over 7000 were received. Just before midnight, when the deadline for applications expired, six black youths walked into the Truth Commission offices in Cape Town for "amnesty for apathy" ((cf. Country, 122), claiming that they were representative of millions of people who did not take part in the liberation struggle. Krog believes that this application shows that the Commission's amnesty process "has become more than what was required by law" (cf. ibid.).

The third committee was the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee which was responsible for formulating a policy to restore and rehabilitate the lives of survivors of the apartheid era ((cf. Country, vii). The first hearings were held in April 1996 and over a period of two years human rights violations between 1960 and 1994 were investigated. The final report which has partly been made available on the official TRC homepage, was presented to former President Nelson Mandela on the 29th of

October 1998 and was published in five volumes, although the work of the Amnesty Committee was not done until the year 2000.

To this day, the South African TRC remains a highly controversial topic and it is still being debated whether it was a successful undertaking or not. The Commission's stance was to reject "vengeance or retribution but to create a mechanism for the granting of amnesty for politically motivated actions, providing full individual disclosure was made" (TRC report, Volume 5, 196). Krog tells her readers how the possibility of granting amnesty became pivotal for the commission. She describes how Tutu explained: "*We* did not decide on amnesty. The political parties decided on amnesty" and how he added "it was only when *that* [the fact that amnesty can be granted] was put in, that the *boere* signed the negotiations" (Country, 23). The public opinion about the granting of amnesty was biased, victims in particular could often not understand why there were no legal consequences for those who had severely tortured them or killed their friends and family. The Commission was expected to miraculously heal South Africa within two years. The legislation to establish the Truth Commission was seen as "the Mother of all Laws" (Country, 9) and was described as patchwork of all the viewpoints of the country, "a real *lappieskombers"* (Country, 10). Its aims were

> […] to return to victims their civil and human rights; to restore the moral order of the society, to seek the truth, record it, and make it known to the public; to create a culture of human rights and respect for the rule of law; and to prevent the shameful events of the past from happening again'. (Country, vii)

The Commission aimed high but could in the end only investigate "window cases" that were "representative of a larger number of violations of a similar type and involving the same perpetrator groupings" (TRC report, Volume 5, 207). Findings but also shortcomings are listed in the report: The Commission pleads that it "entered uncharted waters" and could hold on to only "few international role models" such as commissions established in Argentina [1983], Guatemala [1997] and Chile [1990]. The first Truth Commission was held in Uganda in 1974.[26] There had been seventeen previous Truth Commissions in the world but South Africa was the first one with participation and submissions from politicians ((cf. Country, 101). This was remarkable but also resulted in criticism: Because the Commission was set up by the

[26] *The Beyond Intractability Knowledge Base Project*. (Brahm, E-text).

African National Congress [ANC], some[27] saw it as a "mechanism created by a centralized ANC in an effort to portray themselves as the only righteous anti-apartheid force in the country" (Country 102).

The Commission also criticised the indifferent or hostile attitude, the lack of understanding for the victims' pain and suffering as well as the lack of remorse they had to face mainly from the white community: “With rare individual exceptions, the response of the former state, its leaders, institutions and the predominant organs of civil society of that era, was to hedge and obfuscate. Few grasped the olive branch of full disclosure” (TRC report, Volume 5 196).

The Commission was also opposed by blacks: The family of Steve Biko, for example, rather chose to take the Commission to the Constitutional Court so that "his story is the only famous one that has not been put before the Truth Commission" (Country, 277). Krog describes the TRC as a microcosm of South African society in transition to democracy and it becomes obvious that many paid a great price for this change and that some still hold on to their old beliefs ((cf. Country, vii).[28] But despite all the pain, guilt, shame and suffering South Africa had to go through, it is, in Krog's eyes, because of the Commission that

> it breathes becalmed […]
> in the cradle of my skull
> it sings, it ignites […]
> of my soul the retina learns to expand
> daily because by a thousand stories
> I was scorched
> a new skin (Krog, *Skin* 279).

Krog believes that the TRC not only changed South Africa forever but also marked the beginning of a new era of peace and justice.

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[27] For instance, the Inkatha Freedom Party [IFP] handed a memo to the media which criticised the Commission severely during their hearing (cf. *Country*, 102).

[28] It has been widely published on this topic. For further reference see:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (E-text) for transcripts of amnesty hearings and decisions online, or in print in *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa: Report.* Volumes 1-5. London: Macmillan Reference, 1999; Martin Meredith: *Coming To Terms. South Africa's Search for Truth.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999; Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd: *Looking Back. Reaching Forward. Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa.* Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000 [especially chapters 6,7 and 16]; Richard Wilson: *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa. Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; Alex Boraine: *A Country Unmasked. Inside South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2000.

4.1. Testimonies in Country of My Skull

The testimonies which make up the main part of the novel were given to the Commission usually in the form of public hearings. The audience consisted of family members, friends of those testifying but also of those who just wanted to listen. Testimonies were recorded and transcribed to make up the record that the Commission could base its decisions on. During the hearings psychological treatment for debriefing and support was available.

Each hearing had a "leader of testimony" who was entrusted to fulfil two tasks: to ensure that the person testifying revealed enough facts that the Commission could base its decision on, and to enable healing and self-respect by letting the victim's or perpetrator's story unfold as spontaneously as possible ((cf. Country 217). To achieve this, the person telling his or her story had to feel comfortable and safe, thus the hearing usually started with the request to tell the Commission something about the speaker's family and social background. This way, the victims as well as the applicants for amnesty were placed within the social community and felt assured that someone was backing them.

Among the most prominent hearings was that of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela[29] since 1996 divorced from former President Nelson Mandela. The official title for the *Winnie hearing* was "A Human Rights Violation Hearing into the Activities of the Mandela United Football Club" (Country 243) which took place in November 2007. There were 34 witnesses to testify in favour of and against Winnie. Krog describes her as "chameleon" (ibid. 244) because she moved across boundaries in an astonishing way. She did not demand amnesty but a public hearing instead of a private one to clear her name. She was accused of having tortured and killed people, especially youths with the help and under the cover of the so-called "football club" (cf. ibid.). The latter was "never a bona fide soccer club, [but] its members acted as bodyguards and constantly accompanied her" (Boraine 225). They were involved in several incidents of abuse, rape and assault. [30]

[29] Njabulo Ndebele is the author of the novel *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* which tells the stories of women living during a period in the history of Southern Africa when their family life was under pressure of apartheid. These private stories are anchored to the stories of Penelope in ancient Greek mythology. Penelope waited for eighteen years for her husband Odysseus to return home whereas Winnie waited for twenty-seven years while Mandela was imprisoned on Robben Island.

Cf. blurb of Njabulo Ndebele: *The Cry of Winnie Mandela.* Oxfordshire: Ayebia Clarke, 2003.

[30] Cf. BBC News Special Report 1998 (E-text): "TRC Findings: Winnie".

The part of the hearing described in *Country of My Skull* focuses mainly on the kidnapping, torture and murder of fourteen-year-old Stompie Seipei, a child activist. Winnie remains a very controversial figure until today. On the one hand, she was known in the black world as fighter for justice, suffered in prisons (including solitary confinement for seventeen months) as well as from torture and bannings for her involvement in the struggle against apartheid. South Africa even called her "Mother of the Nation" (cf. 244). On the other hand, the TRC found her to have "participated in assaults, abduction, committed perjury, and [to have been] […] aware of several killings"[31]. Winnie let down many of her supporters, especially by showing no remorse at her TRC hearing: Finally, Tutu pleaded with her to say "I'm sorry…things went wrong. Forgive me" (Country, 259). When she more or less repeated after him, Krog felt that "for one brief, shimmering moment this country, this country is also truly mine" (Country, 259).[32] Winnie was fined for R15 000 plus another R15 000[33] compensation to the three surviving victims of a kidnapping which had taken place at her home. She was also sentenced to six years' imprisonment but was granted leave to appeal (cf. Boraine, 225).

Other testimonies were not at all encouraging for the Commission. Pieter Willem Botha (1916-2006), Prime Minister of South Africa from 1978 to 1984 and President from 1984 to 1989, refused to testify to the Truth Commission at all. PW Botha, also known as "The Great Crocodile" for his "ability to charm, outwit and crush his opponents"[34], was at the peak of his power in the mid-1980s. According to Krog it was then that "Apartheid rule acquired its coldest, its most brutal and murderous edge" and "the taxpayer paid for the era of hit squads, vigilantes, disinformation campaigns, cross-border raids, chemical warfare and states of emergency" (Country 267).

From Pik Botha's testimony[35] we know that although the restrictions of the apartheid laws were finally eased, PW Botha did not read out the part of his infamous 'Rubicon speech' that preceded these words: 'Today we have crossed the Rubicon"[36]. This is

[31] Cf. South African Press Association: "TRC makes damaging findings against Winnie" (E-text).

[32] For more details to the "Winnie hearing" see Antjie Krog: *Country of My Skull.* Cape Town: Random House, 1998. p. 243-260; Alex Boraine: *A Country Unmasked. Inside South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. p. 221-257.

[33] 15 000 South African Rand [ZAR] equals approximately between 1150 and 1170 Euros

[34] The New York Times: "PW Botha, Defender of Apartheid, Is Dead at 90" (cf. Gregory, E-text); also see: BBC News: "TRC Findings: PW Botha" (cf. E-text).

[35] Former Foreign Minister, a National Party [NP] leader, submitted responses to the Commission's questions that were rich in detail – contrary to former State President PW Botha who, so the Commission claims, obstructed its work (cf. TRC Report, Volume 5, 197).

[36] Cf. "PW Botha gives the Rubicon Speech in Durban" (cf. E-text).

where it said that the ANC was to be unbanned and that Nelson Mandela was to be released from Robben Island.[37] South Africa had to wait for these events until the presidency of Botha's successor Frederik Willem de Klerk[38]. Krog describes how Tutu personally went to speak with PW Botha and attended his wife's funeral but Botha only stated: "I have nothing to apologize for [and] I will never ask for amnesty. Not now, not tomorrow, not after tomorrow"[39]. When Krog's novel went to print she knew that Botha would have to appear in court before a black magistrate but she did not know then that his conviction would be overturned and that he would never be imprisoned.[40]

Alex Boraine, Vice-Chairperson of the TRC, states that Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and PW Botha are different people but that both played key roles in "the South African tragedy" (Boraine 257). Because both continued to claim that they were right and both did not show genuine remorse: "they sum up the sickness of the soul of South Africa during the years of racial conflict" (ibid.).

Another shattering testimony came from the former commander of the organisation Vlakplaas, Eugene de Kock, who - known as "Prime Evil" - is serving a "212-years-sentence in Pretoria's Maximum Security Prison after being found guilty in 1996 on 89 charges - mostly of human-rights abuses"[41].

The headquarters of Vlakplaas were a farm near Pretoria that gave the organisation its name. The trope of the idyllic, rural farm that evokes nostalgic childhood memories is very common in contemporary South African literature but in reality many of these farms were ghastly burying grounds for blacks (cf. Heyns, 56). Vlakplaas is the most notorious among them and constituted the basis for police hit squads. It is one of several farms where political activists were tortured, burnt and buried during the apartheid era. When de Kock admitted to these crimes that were

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According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (E-text) "to cross or pass the Rubicon means "to take a decisive or final step, esp. at the outset of some undertaking or enterprise".

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (E-text) it stands for "the point at which a decision has been taken which can no longer be changed: Today we cross the Rubicon. There is no going back" and originates from "the stream which formed the border between Italy and Gaul. When Julius Ceasar broke the law by crossing it with his army in 49 BC, it led inevitably to war".

[37] Roelof Frederik Pik Botha [born 1932], the former Minister of Foreign Affairs was not related to PW Botha. For his biography: Roelof Frederik Pik Botha (E-text).

[38] F. W. de Klerk was one of the main architects of South Africa's constitutional democracy. During his presidency [1989-1994] he played a central role in initiating and managing the transformation to democracy. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 (cf. *FW de Klerk Foundation*, E-text).

[39] The New York Times: "PW Botha, Defender of Apartheid, Is Dead at 90" (cf. Donna Bryson, E-text).

[40] Cf. ibid.

[41] "Prime Evil takes on FW" (cf. Jannie Momberg, E-text).

committed at his command he was applauded by a black audience for being the only minister who had sought amnesty in "a community of denial"[42].

Today, a family lives on the farm and tours are offered to show people the hooks where activists were hanged and the "braaing area" where bodies were burnt. The Indigenous Knowledge System of South Africa (IKSSA) has a project running to turn the farm into a National Centre for Traditional Healing and Reconciliation.[43]

De Kock was one of the last applicants for amnesty before the deadline expired ((cf. Country, 121). Most candidates initially opposed the Commission, but the long court case of Eugene de Kock made them change their minds:

They realised that a Commission could provide more answers to more people at a lower cost – and arrive at a fuller picture of what happened in the past as a bonus (Country, 18).

4.2. Krog's Testimony

Having listened to and reported on numerous of similar testimonies, Krog wonders whether the basis for transformation from a liberation movement to a government lies in the move "from a culture of guilt to one of shame" (Country 263). In her novel Krog includes a discussion with a colleague. She believes that the essence of shame is the honour of a group whereas the essence of guilt is the responsibility of the individual towards a specific morality. The basis of shame is honour and to protect the latter, the Afrikaner was willing to do anything. The difference between guilt and shame is illustrated with the following example: "Botha and Afrikaners like him do not feel guilty because they have done something wrong – they feel ashamed because they have been caught out" (Krog 262).

In the course of the novel, Krog admits to her own shame at having been involved in apartheid, at least as a passive by-stander, guilty of apathy. At the end of the novel she says: "I want to say forgive me […] You whom I have wronged, please […]" (Country 279). She applies for amnesty, not to the Commission, but to South Africa.

[42] Greg Barrow (cf. E-text): "The voice of Prime Evil".

[43] See the following sources:

"Vlakplaas proposed as museum" (cf. Daily Dispatch, E-text), "Hot Spot Alexandra" (The Times, E-text), "Vlakplaas to become centre of healing" (cf. The Times, E-text), "Vlakplaas to heal people" (cf. Jannie Momberg, E-text), Rogini Govender: *The Freedom Park News.*(cf. E-text), "Transformation of Vlakplaas Farm to National Centre for Traditional Healing and Reconciliation (NCTHR)" (cf. E-text),

Greg Barrow (cf. E-text): "The voice of prime evil".

Asked, whether the affair described in her book is true, she replies: "No, but I had to bring a relationship into the story so that I could verbalize certain personal reactions to hearings" (Country 171). The author wanted to create a new character who could bring in new information and also express the psychological underpinning of the Commission" (Country 171). But apart from that, the affair is not only a narrative technique. Mark Sanders proposes reading references to a "relationship" (Sanders 29) as an allegory for the hearings. Testimony requires an address to "a you, an other" but Krog's husband Samuel cannot be this person at this time (ibid.). Outside of fictionality this Other is the audience, namely the readers.

The narrator does what the Commission's psychologist advises its members to do: in order not to "contaminate" their families and friends with their experiences from hearings, they should create substitutes for their personal relationships, find people within their working environment, people who are going through the same pain ((cf. Country 10).

Presumably, Krog also wants to express the unspeakability of trauma because she has "no framework to address him" [her husband Samuel], she lacks "the words for why something so right is so wrong" and "definitions leak like sieves" (Country, 197). The affair she has is marked by violence (cf. Sanders, 28), as is the relationship between perpetrator and victim: He "devours" her face and she in turn, realises "only when he cries out, that she has sunk her teeth deep into his left shoulder" (Country, 165).

4.3. Is there a South African Truth?

Pragmatic truth theorists claim "that we literally should not care whether our beliefs or stories are true or false, but rather whether they enable us to achieve happiness and well-being" (Country 197). This attitude can be problematic because it can contradict ethical beliefs that we should honestly seek the truth, no matter whether that is convenient or not.

In the course of reporting Krog shapes other people's narratives by adding information and telling them from her perspective, she is accumulating her own truth but she does not seek the easiest truth. This shows when she struggles with the word "truth" and angers the technical assistant: "Your voice tightens up when you

approach the word 'truth' […] 'Repeat it twenty times so that you become familiar with it. Truth is your job, after all!" (Country, 36).

According to Heyns, "the teller necessarily shapes the tale" (Heyns 44). Krog deliberately tells readers about her *own* truth because in her opinion what makes up the country's truth, is the ensemble of all the different truths as well as all the lies.

> I am busy with the truth…*my* truth. Of course, it's quilted together from hundreds of stories that we've experienced or heard about in the past two years. Seen from my perspective, shaped by my state of mind at the time and now also by the audience I'm telling the story to. In every story there is hearsay, there is a grouping together of things that didn't necessarily happen together, there are assumptions, there are exaggerations to bring home the enormities of situations, there is downplaying to confirm innocence. And all this together makes up the whole country's truth. So also the lies. (Country, 170-171)

Concerning truthfulness of testimony, Krog differentiates between reporting and telling: "I"m telling. If I have to say every time that so-and-so said this, and then another time so-and-so said that, it gets boring". Apart from this, Krog also changes people's names "when I think they might be annoyed or might not understand the distortions" (Country170). Thus, Krog represents reality as she sees it, her truth might not be identical with someone else's truth or with historical truth – which, in the end, is also only a subjective truth.

In this context, André Brink agrees that "in the process of textualizing the event it is also narrativized". He adds that "the representations of history repeat, in almost every detail, the processes of fiction" (Brink 32). In other words, he claims that history is governed by processes of fiction and that the latter, by narrativizing reality, can go beyond facts.

Telling the truth, reporting on the commission and especially on the hearings, though often seems impossible. Like the testifying victims the author herself struggles with language and cannot formulate meaningful words, she is "without language" (Country 37). She regards the word "reconciliation" (cf. ibid.) as her daily bread instead. Although she perceives the process of dealing with the violent past as dying -"piece by piece we die into reconciliation"- she cannot pronounce the word truth, hence not *face* the truth:

> The word 'Truth' makes me uncomfortable. The word 'truth' still trips the tongue […] I hesitate at the word. I am not used to using it. Even when I type it, it ends up as either *turth* or *trth.* I have never bedded that word in

> a poem. I prefer the word 'lie'. The moment the lie raises its head, I smell blood. Because it is there…where the truth is closest. (Country, 36)

Truth and lies are intertwined and often cannot be separated in the Commission's dealing with hearings, victims, perpetrators, the media, suicide threats to commissioners and emotional breakdowns. According to the Commission's psychologist, "there are, in a sense, no lies – all of it ties in, reacts to, plays upon the truth" (Country 78). At the end of the novel, Krog says: "I have told many lies in this book about the truth […] I hope you will understand" (Country 281).
Thus, telling is never neutral and involves telling lies about the truth or telling an altered truth, which can be true for oneself. Therefore, "every listener decodes the story in terms of truth" (Country 85) – the truth that he or she wants to hear or can bear to hear:

> The truth is validated by the majority, they say. Or you bring your own version of the truth to the merciless arena of the past – only in this way does the past become thinkable, the world become habitable […] Eventually it is not the lie that matters, but that mechanism in yourself that allows you to accept distortions. (Country 89)

The Commission's slogan *the truth will set you free* reflects its belief that it is possible to heal and reconcile South Africans by digging up the truth and confronting the public with it.

4.3.1. Truth versus Justice?

> *Even visual memory does not stay 'pure' […] it can be painted and polished into a satisfying image which can then produce a story, turning visual memory into narrative. (King, 26)*

According to the author, the Commission's main task was to find the truth (Country, 121). Therefore, the "litmus test", developed as a result of several weeks of interviewing possible judges for the Commission, came into being: "What will you do if you discover information that concerns the highest positions in the new Government?" (Country 18). If the information is kept secret the applicant cannot become a judge because all truth has to come out. That did also apply to the highest political positions:

Even Thabo Mbeki, former South African president succeeding former President Nelson Mandela, testified and applied for amnesty as an ANC leader[44].

The Chilean philosopher and activist José Zalaquett, who worked for the Chilean Truth Commission, tells Krog that "it will sometimes be necessary to choose between truth and justice" (Country 23). He also believes they should choose truth because although that does not bring back the dead, "it releases them from silence" ((cf. Country 24). The author herself thinks that truth has to be the preferred outcome of the hearings because it will make South Africa human again:

> If its [the Commission's] interest in truth is linked only to amnesty and compensation, then it will have chosen not truth, but justice. If it sees truth as the widest possible compilation of people's perceptions, stories, myths and experiences, it will have chosen to restore memory and foster a new humanity, and perhaps that is justice in its deepest sense. (Country 16)

Luc Huyse suggests that memory is the ultimate form of justice. He claims that a "thick memory" (qtd. in Villa-Vicensio and Verwoerd 71) one that is rich and inclusive, can justify a focus on victim testimony and provoke more story-telling. When memory is allowed to flow where it will, it can express bitterness and anger but also life and hope (cf. ibid.). Villa-Vicencio and Verwoerd state that memory can promote justice and healing:

> Memory as justice, and, not least, as healing is at the same time often about victims working through their anger and hatred as a means of rising above their suffering – of getting on with life with dignity. (qtd. in Villa-Vicensio and Verwoerd 72)

During hearings, some victims felt deprived of their right to see the perpetrators punished. It was only long after the hearings that amnesty applications were granted and consequently, some of the victims would not forgive.

Mrs Kondile, whose son was not only killed but *barbecued*, denied former Vlakplaas commander named Dirk Coetzee to look her in the eye. She sent someone on her behalf and asked him to tell the murderer of her son that he did not deserve it and

[44] Mbeki was applying as a member of the ANC's national executive committee (NEC) within the broad principle of collective responsibility. (cf. South African Press Association: "Mbeki's amnesty application on its way to TRC", E-text) and the TRC Amnesty committee stated that "insofar as the applicants seek to apply for amnesty for acts committed by their members in the various institutions and structures on the basis of collective political and moral responsibility, their applications fall outside the ambit of the act and accordingly they do not require to apply for amnesty" No amnesty was granted because ANC members committed no offence or delict in terms of the Act and their applications also do not relate to any specific act. TRC: "Amnesty Decisions 1999" (cf. Amnesty Decisions: AC/99/0046, E-text).

that he would stand trial if he was really remorseful (cf. Country, 61). She added that it was not as easy for her as for Mandela and Tutu to forgive because in comparison nothing had changed in her life since her son had been murdered (cf. Country, 109). Dirk Coetzee was finally granted amnesty but was not forgiven by Mrs Kondile.[45] In Tutu's view, reconciliation has to be the starting point for transformation but in Mbeki's view, reconciliation follows only *after* total transformation has taken place. Mrs Kondile held the same opinion: Because she had no proof that anything would change, she could not reconcile (cf. Country 110).

The Inkatha Freedom Party [IFP] believed that the combination of amnesty, compensation and truth-finding was a recipe for "great evil" because people "will say anything to get money and amnesty" (Country 102). Although the Truth Commission was initiated, promoted and set up by the ANC, the same party believed that it could grant itself amnesty because the war against Apartheid had been just. The Commission's deputy chief Alex Boraine countered that unjust acts could be committed in a just war and Tutu said that he would resign if the ANC did not accept equal treatment before the Commission (Country, 115-116). Krog remained critical towards the ANC and its justification for the struggle: When the Commission says, "Tell the truth as you have experienced it" – is the ANC adding, "The truth as approved by us?" (Country 116).

But what *is* justice? Defending themselves, the ANC claimed that "[b]ecause the war was just, the battles were just" (Country 106). In other words, the end justified the means but as a war can never be just, the battles can neither be just nor justified.

It is due to statements like the one just mentioned from the ANC that Krog and the other members, after carefully piecing the truth together, felt like giving up on the hope for catharsis and the ideal of reconciliation. But then again, perhaps the fact that she and her child know about Vlakplaas and Mamasela,[46] is the only thing that is important (cf. Country, 131). The author believes that the TRC has helped South Africa to finally dig up the truth. That is what is crucial, that the truth is out in the open and has been made known to all South Africans because to remember is their only hope that history will not repeat itself.

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[45] Cf. "Statement by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (E-text).

[46] December, 3rd 1996 the South African Press Association (SAPA) reported the following: Former Vlakplaas police operative Joe Mamasela has given the Truth and Reconciliation Commission details of more than 25 gross human rights violations by himself and his former colleagues. SAPA: "Mamasela tells TRC of Human Rights Violations". (cf. South African Press Association, E-text).

When Commissioners were told about the legislation for the first time, some of them started crying because remorse was no prerequisite for amnesty (cf. Country 165). On the other hand, those who were remorseful could usually not simultaneously rid themselves of guilt and shame when granted amnesty. One perpetrator said "they can give me amnesty a thousand times. Even if God and everyone else forgives me a thousand times – I have to live with this hell" (Country 147). His "hell" (ibid.) is his bad conscience that makes life unbearable and to him is far worse than imprisonment.

4.4. Reconstructing the Self in Country of My Skull

Truth is closely related to identity because "what you believe to be true depends on who you believe yourself to be" (Country 99). Identity refers to who or what one is, and is constituted from various meanings attached to oneself by self and others (cf. Kuper 764).

In philosophical and theological terms, the self is the locus of moral choices and responsibility. From a clinical or humanistic approach, the self is the basis of individual uniqueness and in the realms of society, the self-concept relies on social interaction as well as on its prerequisite, language – which is why putting trauma into words helps victims (cf. Kuper 764). Krog states that "South Africans are struggling to find identity for themselves, individually and collectively" (Country viii).

The need to find out about themselves and the country's truth, springs from living a lie, the big lie of the justification of apartheid. On the one hand this lie shatters the perpetrator's world because "it is almost impossible to acknowledge that the central truth around which your life has been built is a lie" (Country 95). This destroys your values, your beliefs and your self. Victims, on the other hand, also suffer from the same effects and are killed twice: "After you' ve killed you must recognize that the one you've killed is also yourself. He is also a son, a father, a brother" (Country 220). Therefore, a person can be killed spiritually because his dignity has been destroyed, his or her worth as a father or a daughter, for instance. As human beings can hardly live with this negation or extermination of their selves, they need to be killed twice, the second time it needs to be physically. From this point of view, the shocking appeal of one of the victims becomes clear:

"If one of these policemen is around here, I'll be happy if one of them comes to the stage and kills me immediately" (Country, 219). Tutu explains that "[i]n the African *Weltanschauung* a person is not basically an independent, solitary identity. A person is human precisely in being enveloped in the community of other human beings" (Country 110).

If this community is threatened or destroyed it affects the self that is dependent on it. This can even lead to the severe consequences of a rupture of the self. Only when the self can be repositioned within society, can healing take place.

Krog knows that there won't be a grand release because every individual has to work out his or her own method to find closure for the past (cf. Country, 129). The Truth Commission could only be a beginning and helped South Africans to talk about the past, even if they started out with denial. This was the first step towards acceptance: The first phase is always denial of the truth. The second phase is anger either with God, the new Government or anyone else who is responsible for what happens to you. In the third phase people start arguing and bargaining, like those applying for amnesty. It is only after a deep depression that acceptance can follow (cf. Country, 130; 164). Krog goes through these phases as well and knows that this is the only way to find her self and reposition herself in the new community: "if you cut yourself off from the process, you will wake up in a foreign country – a country that you don't know and will never understand" (Country 131).

This is the reason why the majority of South Africans decided to deal with what had happened, despite the pain and despite the "breaking down and freaking out" (Country 168). At a "debriefing" it turns out that the Commission's work does not affect black journalists so much as "they grew up with human rights abuses all around them" (Country 168). White journalists experience difficulties dealing with the hearings, the psychological strain results in breaking out in tears and uncontrollable anger and violence, for instance against their own children. In psychological treatment they are therefore advised to "find a mother, a father, a sister, a beloved, a son" – they should build up a substitute family to gain the strength to stay sane (Country 170). They need to distance themselves because by empathizing too much with the victim the situation becomes unbearable. This suffering turns them into perpetrators instead and as a consequence, *they* will start objectifying others.

Joe Mamasela, whose lips -according to the author- have become the mouth of "black evil" (Country 171), did not apply for amnesty. He told the Commission how

he, though black, became a Vlakplaas askari[47]. He managed to make the African security police believe that he was one of them because he insulted himself by calling himself "kaffer". At the same time he would say "I am a Boer" to become part of their group: "Because I wanted them, I wanted them to believe me, to love me, to make me one of them" (Country 175). Mamasela negated everything he himself was, his self, in order to let the security police shape his identity.

In trying to come to terms with apartheid he is simultaneously yearning to find his self again.

Ezekiel Es'kia Mphahlele (1919-2008), author, social activist and African literature professor at the University of the Witwatersrand, could not find his self in South Africa because of what apartheid had done to his family and himself. When his frustration and anger became unbearable he went into exile (cf. Gallagher 56): "Mphalele's own text [*Down Second Avenue*] serves as a means of creating himself, sorting through his life in search of meaning through the act of writing, […] [the text represents] instances of deliberate re-creations of past selves, attempts to locate a self in memory or history" (Gallagher 60).[48]

Krog's (semi-) autobiographical writing is her way of slowly healing the wounds of the apartheid past. Like Krog, all South African writers of contemporary political novels face difficulties when it comes to translating their thoughts into ink as many are traumatized themselves. In psychoanalytical terms they turn their experienced past into narrative memory (cf. Leys 105) by writing political novels or poetry. This way, their own memory can be reconstructed and subconscious memories emerge by going over what they have experienced again and again in the course of writing a novel.

[47] askari: former guerrilla recruited by the security forces *(Country*, 282).
Cf. Es'kia Institute, E-text.

[48] Es'kia Mphalele: *Down Second Avenue.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971.
For further information on Mphalele refer to the following homepages:
SAPA: "Acclaimed teacher, author Mphalele dies" (cf. Mail&Guardian, E-text), Es'kia Institute (cf. E-text), MediaClubSouthAfrica.com (cf. E-text).

4.5. Traumatic Memories in Country of My Skull

How can one report on unspeakable realities? Krog and her fellow journalists often struggle because what they witness at the hearings often seems too much to bear: “And it wipes us out. Like a fire. Or a flood. Tears are not what we call it. Water covers our cheeks and we cannot type. Or think” (Country, 29).

A Belgian journalist complains that South African journalists are incapable of reporting on anything because "they keep bursting into tears all around me" (Country 33). The author herself can hardly come to terms with what she is experiencing, after four months she and most of those travelling with her frequently become ill. Some ask to be deployed elsewhere, some lose their friends and others start drinking to overcome the pain. Once, Krog cannot find the lightswitch in the kitchen and stands in the dark for a long time because "everything has become unconnected and unfamiliar" (cf. Country 47). When she collapses laughing after a testimony of a bomb explosion victim she has to take two weeks leave (cf. ibid).

A victim tries to explain why she cannot narrate her trauma: "This inside me…fights my tongue. It is…unshareable. It destroys…words" (Country, 27). According to Herman, traumatic memories resemble memories of young children – predominated by imagery and bodily sensation but in absence of verbal narrative (cf. Herman, 38). The psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk claims that in states of a high sympathetic nervous system arousal, the linguistic encoding of memory is inactivated. The memory changes into traumatic memory and is only available in sensory and iconic forms (cf. Bessel van der Kolk, quoted in Herman, 39). Krog claims that trauma throws you back into a time before language but that once you capture your memory in words, it "can no longer haunt you, push you around, bewilder you, because you have taken control of it" (Country 42).

Because traumatic memory is not available in linguistic form, it is very difficult to narrativize it. Tim O'Brien, a combat veteran of the Vietnam War tries to describe his own traumatic memories:

> I remember the white bone of an arm. I remember the pieces of skin and something wet and yellow that must've been the intestines. The gore was horrible, and stays with me. But what wakes me up twenty years later is

> Dave Jensen singing 'Lemon Tree' as we threw down the parts. (qtd. in Herman 38)

In addition to the alteration of memory, one can suffer from memory loss. The Commissioners find it hard to distinguish between those who do not *want* to tell their stories and those who *cannot* tell them due to memory loss. When they are uncertain which of the cases applies, the victims' advocate claims that post-traumatic stress can only be experienced by a victim and is characterized by feelings of helplessness, intense fear and powerlessness. The report states that the above description did not apply to the majority of perpetrators who did not grasp the enormity of the violations and how much pain their actions had caused (cf. TRC report, Volume 5 196). According to the psychiatrist, there are three types of memory loss. The first is voluntary and makes one change ones memory when one is under threat and cannot bear living with reality. The second is involuntary and occurs "when something is so traumatic that it rips a hole in your memory" (Country 78). This is what one of the perpetrators who killed three men by electrocution suffers from: "but the really…the worse deeds…those I do not remember…" (Country 94). The third kind of memory loss can appear when one testifies in public. The stress level rises so high that one might remember even less than usual. (cf. Country 78) Another effect of trauma can be survivors' guilt which makes you feel guilty for having outlived someone, for example siblings or friends (Country, 229). One of the severest symptoms, however, is the loss of your sense of invulnerability that allows you to lead a normal life (Country, 230).

According to the Narrative Exposure Theory, testifying can result in healing. Krog knows that she needs to write to overcome trauma, she was born to write. Writing about the Commission and the hearings is her way of re-establishing an order, of remaking her self:

> We make sense of things by fitting them into stories. When events fall into a pattern which we can describe in a way that is satisfying as narrative then we think that we have some grasp of why they occurred. (Country, 196-197)

Mark Freeman claims in *Rewriting the Self* that this embedding of memory into narrative can – rather than falsifying the past – serve the truth:

> [as] there is now a greater consciousness of one's previous experience and a greater capacity to see the way in which all of the different parts of

> one's life have become orchestrated into a whole pattern, episodes in a still-evolving narrative. (Freeman 109)

In agreement with public opinion in Germany after the Second World War, Krog at first believes that "no poetry should come forth from this" (Country 49). She even says "May my hand fall off if I write this" (ibid.). Finally she realises that she has to write about everything nevertheless: "If I write this, I exploit and betray. If I don't I die" (Country 49). She also includes verses of Paul Celan's *Fugue of Death*, which was highly criticized because the horrible is expressed by beautiful lyrics (cf. Country, 237). When Krog talks to Ariel Dorfman[49], who says his work is partly what he has heard and partly what he has invented, she wants to know how one can use someone else's story, a story that someone paid for with his life. He replies: ">>How else would the story be told?<<" (Country 238). In this point they agree because, for Krog, the purpose of the TRC is to end the silence so that South Africa can "wake up from a long, bad nightmare" (Country 145).

4.6. The Other in Country of My Skull

For a long time, whites had othered blacks but in the face of the commission, most whites feel inferior and vulnerable. They try to explain why they acted how they did and one can clearly hear their fear of the Other: "We believed black people were not human; they were a threat, they were going to kill us all" (Country 93).

After six months of listening to the voices of victims, the commission finally starts the perpetrator hearings. Consequently the commissioners feel the need to hear the other side of the story, the 'second narrative' as Krog calls it, they are waiting for "the Other. The Counter. The Perpetrator" and the second narrative "had better be good (Country 56).

The author tries to find signs for this *Otherness* in the perpetrators' faces, seeks visual proof to verify that they are different from her: "[t]o look for signs – their hands, their fingernails, in their eyes, on their lips – signs that these are the faces of killers, of the Other. For future reference: the Face of Evil" (Country 90). She is shocked at what they did and appalled by them as persons but nevertheless wants to find out what she has in common with them (cf. Country 92). Trying to "give evil a

[49] Chilean novelist, playwright, essayist, journalist and human rights activist. He has written powerful fiction, often dealing with the horrors of tyranny and exile. Cf. Ariel Dorfman (E-text).

human face" (Country 97) she finally finds out that they are as familiar to her as her own brothers and that she has a culture in common with them. Thus, Krog infers that it is a whole culture that is asking for amnesty (cf. Country 96). Not only them, but she has to ask for amnesty too, it is a collective guilt and thus she feels she has more in common with them than with the Afrikaner leader:

> Because they have walked a road, and through them some of us have walked a road. And hundreds of Afrikaners are walking this road – on their own with their own fears and shame and guilt. And some say it, most just live it. We are so utterly sorry. We are deeply ashamed and gripped with remorse. But hear us, we are from here. We will live it right – here – with you, for you. (Country 99)

Krog feels ashamed and although she has not committed a human rights violation identifies with the perpetrators because through them she is walking the same road, together with "hundreds of Afrikaners" (ibid.). She knows that each and everyone is guilty of what happened in the past. She speaks in the first person plural, the collective "we" (ibid.) indicates that she does not exempt herself from guilt. She apologizes and promises to "live it right" (ibid.) to those who have been wronged.

> And behind me sinks the country of my skull like a sheet in the dark – and I hear a thin song, hooves, hedges from venom, fever and destruction fermenting and hissing underwater. I shrink and prickle. Against. Against my blood and the heritage thereof. Will I for ever be them – recognizing them as I do daily in my nostrils? Yes. And what we have done will never be undone. (Country 130)

For the author, South Africa is the country she grew up in – it is her home. She – like many Afrikaners – has been living a lie, has passively contributed to apartheid by apathy. She carries the weight of shame of her heritage on her shoulders and she believes she is as much to blame as the perpetrators because she will "for ever be them" (Country 130).

Realising she cannot undo what happened, she tries to at least come to terms with it. At the end of the day, each South African will have to realise that the Truth Commission can only be the place where it all started because "if you live in this country, if you want your children to have a future, you will have to devise a method for yourself" (Country 163).

4.7. The Testimonial Form in Country of My Skull

> *[T]he moment something is transferred into language it has already become a condensed, formalized, and subjective manifestation of the truth. Isn't everything actually fiction? Or isn't everybody's fiction their own truths?* (Krog, *Fact* 36)

The newly emerging genre that Krog refers to as "autobiographical fiction" (Krog, *Fact* 41) calls for the testimonial mode. All of the author's writing can be allocated to this genre which is in itself an oxymoron because Krog does not believe in "compartmentalizing lives and art" (ibid.). She blends different types of texts into something different and new. Her work *Country of My Skull* is a patchwork of journalistic writing, poetry, autobiography and non-fiction, interspersed with dialogues and testimonies of amnesty applicants as well as of victims. In her article *Fact Bordering Fiction and the Honesty of I* the ironic undertone with which the writer comments on the scrutinizing classification of books into fiction and non-fiction cannot be missed.

Elleke Boehmer also hopes for the South African novel that it "will not remain so painfully impaled on that two-pronged fork which is history versus discourse, or reality versus fantasy" (Boehmer 53).

Most authors do not want to see their work categorized this way and so Krog does not hold back with criticism when she is interviewed about her work on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

"Before the state visit of the queen, you wrote: 'The red carpet is bleeding down the steps of parliament.' Bleeding? Isn't this the realm of fiction?" (Krog, *Fact* 36).

Krog wonders: "Was a carpet 'bleeding' for the queen fiction, and a carpet 'rolled out' for the queen fact?" (ibid.). Finally, she decides that she does not have to explain her style because "[i]f the carpet looks like it's bleeding down the steps *for me*, there is nothing *you* can say that can undo that for me" (ibid.) [emphasis added].

There is, however, also a more serious reason why particularly South African writers cannot be pinned down to one genre or style. The lack of information and the whole truth-finding process deprive writers of accurate and neat facts they can present in their works. Krog herself admits that South Africans often do not know what the truth is about themselves and others (cf. Krog, *Fact*, 35).

The fact that her testimonial account is told from the view of a first-person narrator can lead readers to falsely believe that the narrating I is on the same level as the author. However, this is a mere stylistic device to enhance closeness and to render the reader more involved but still the author distances herself from the narrator. She refers to it as "fictionalized I" that enables her 'to lie' because it is not identical with her own self (cf. Krog, *Fact*, 40).

Krog enjoys keeping her form open to all genres but there are restrictions. Precisely because she is writing about facts she has to fictionalize her testimonial account as she needs to protect herself and others. Nevertheless she often decides to write her truth and consequently "[e]very book of mine is like a deserted battlefield. Just before I send it to the publishers, I turn around and see the friendships killed, the rapes allowed, the trusts betrayed, the manipulations committed" (Krog, *Fact* 36). Despite that she continues writing – for the sake of the stories she needs to tell.

Krog addresses her testimony to a "you" – assisting the reader by offering him the possibility of immersion in the narrated events. Proofreaders of the work's early versions gave the writer the feedback that they had often skipped the testimonies included in the book. Therefore, the current publication does not have changes in font so that the reader unconsciously reads through testimonies and narrative alike. There were also revisions done concerning the punctuation in order to improve readability.

Finally, the narrative frame was changed in order to guide readers through the various types of texts. The narrator's pauses and reflections, when she tries to come to terms with what she has experienced, are intended to help the reader catch up with the narration. Krog adds that she wanted to keep the reader comfortable and

safe in the knowledge that the 'I' would not simply leave like the reporters of a newspaper or radio. The 'I' would stop halfway and say: what do I do with what I have just heard? What is it that so particularly upsets me? What does this say? With the 'I' the reader can ask a psychologist, a historian, and so forth and go somewhere with the pain of witnessing. The 'I' made it possible for me to have those readers, who avoided reading the testimonies in newspapers or listening to it over the radio, to read many of the testimonies (Krog, *Fact* 39).

To capture the difficulties she had narrating the unspeakable, Krog includes thoughts about language and how it slips away from her, for instance when she cannot type the word "truth" without a mistake and is "not used to using it" (*Country* 36).

In *A Change of Tongue*, the author even deliberately prints meaningless combinations of letters, numbers and symbols throughout the book to convey the impossibility of narration. She tries to depict the consequences of trying to retrieve hot memory which is stored in the subconscious in order *not* to be accessed as it refers to traumatic experiences. Radstone claims that "whether this witnesser is understood as reader/listener/spectator or as a construct internal to testimonial texts or discourses, it is witnessing that enables testimony, though what is witnessed may be the sheer impossibility of representing that which struggles towards, but refuses representation" (Radstone 62).

As David Attwell has already observed, "it is time to get beyond the survey to a more heuristic mode of reading" (Attwell 9) by refusing the reader his defenses when it comes to testimony. According to Nance, some readers read testimonies as if they were not addressed to them. If testimonies are read this way the intention of the writing as a wake-up call, rousing its readers from their apathy, will be sabotaged. Nance divides resisting readers into two groups – "the sensitive readers, who find it just too uncomfortable to read about pain, and the 'oppositional readers' who are convinced that the speakers must be either misguided or outright liars" (Nance 573).

To disarm their strategies of forwarding, fusion, abjection and absence, authors have to think of disarming strategies. Forwarding means that the reader defines an Other as the addressee and thus shifts responsibility off to someone else. Therefore, all three testimonial novels discussed in this thesis are first-person narratives in order to confront the reader with a direct address.

Other readers use the strategy of fusion which allows them to move from the addressee to a shared subject position. Consequently, they for instance claim the writer's suffering as their own and therefore absent themselves from the responsibility to act. Hence, Bakhtin emphasizes that the projection of himself into the writer "must be followed by a return into myself" (Bakhtin, 25).

To prevent the reader's abdication from responsibility, a narrator can speak of a collective 'we' or speak in a communal voice. Sindiwe Magona, for instance, addresses the implied reader, the other mother, but on a different level speaks to the real reader.[50] Readers tend to identify only with the *good ones*:

> If the speaker is addressing the enemy, we would prefer not to stand in the field of address. So we hasten to line up on the other side […] with

[50] This issue will be addressed in detail in chapter 3.3.

> the speaker. We read […] as if we were only looking over the shoulder of those who should really be reading it, because they are the bad ones, and we' re on the side of the good, the pure, the true. (Nance 576)

Reader abjection finally refers to those who define themselves as too incompetent or undeserving of address. This attitude usually goes hand in hand with magnifying the reader because the more out of reach the addressor is, the easier the reader can justify his own powerlessness. The next stage after abjection often is absence, referring to a reader who absents himself from being addressed and thus denies the obligation to take action.

Testimony, however, is a call to action for its readers and always speaks to a large audience. To prevent her readers from using defence strategies, Krog combats fusion but also makes identification possible. An example for the latter would be the inclusion of letters she received as reply to her coverage of the Commission's proceedings on the radio. The positive reader responses refer to the attitude that she wishes all of her readers to have (cf. Nance 578).

She wants them to emphasize with her: she doesn't want to be superhuman or saintly – hence the affair that is mentioned in the book – she must undermine her "saintliness by providing pictures of her own prosaic desires and pleasures" (cf. Nance 580): "A testimonial speaker may resist her readers' relative self-abasement by insisting on her own humanity, a delicate balancing act since she must remain "good enough" to merit help without being 'too good' to need it" (Nance 580).

This is why Antjie Krog lets us take part in her moments of discouragement, enragement and self-consciousness but at the same time shares her belief in and hope for the Commission and a positive future for South Africa.

5. *I Speak to the Silent* (Mtutuzeli Nyoka 2004)

Mtutuzeli Nyoka, the author of *I Speak to the Silent,* was born in 1960 in the Eastern Cape. His father was a medical practitioner and his mother worked as a nurse. Nyoka matriculated in Port Elizabeth in 1978. When he graduated from the University of Natal in 1984 his career as a medical doctor began.

In 1985 Dr. Nyoka did his internship at Livingstone Hospital in Port Elizabeth. He took care of victims of political struggles and often had to accept that nothing could be done for his patients. Although he succeeded in saving some lives he also often had to deal with feelings of failure because many he knew died that year as a result of political rallies and unrests.

In 1998 he started writing his first novel *I Speak to the Silent* in which he wanted to give testimony to everything he had witnessed during that year and during the late 1970's and 1980's.[51]

The setting he chose for his testimonial novel is the town of Alice because of his own family ties to it and because of its rich history in the political struggle for the transition to South African democracy: Many South African political leaders were educated at one of two colleges: either at Lovedale College[52] or – as it was then called – at the Native or "Bantu" College of Fort Hare. The former presidents Nelson Mandela[53] and Thabo Mbeki[54] as well as black consciousness leader Stephen Biko[55] pursued their university careers there. Today the University of Fort Hare serves as one of the archives for the African National Congress documents.[56]

Walter Hambile Kondile, 'a simple man, a Xhosa and an African', is the narrator of the novel. He has always been obedient towards his young white master Simon

[51] For more information on Mtutuzeli's biography see "Nyoka, Mtutuzeli" (E-text).
[52] Cf. Franco Frescura (E-text).
[53] In the *Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa* which was published in 1961, Lovedale is described as follows: "Lovedale Missionary Institution: Large educational institution for Bantu at Alice, Cape Province, founded in 1826 under the name of Incehra and later renamed Lovedale in honor of Dr. John Love, Secretary of the Glasgow Missionary Society […] its chief distinction was gained as a training centre in trades for the Bantu. With the development of the neighbouring University College of Fort Hare, Lovedale's activities on that side have been reduced" (*Encyclopedia of Southern Africa*, 319-320). The term "Bantu" originally referred to an ethnolinguistic group in Africa who spoke a particular type of language (Cf. *Encyclopedia of Southern Africa*, 39-40). During the Apartheid era it was used as a general term for "black person". Cf. Chloe Melissa Rothstein (E-text), cf. "Nelson Rohlilahla Mandela" (E-text).
[54] Cf. "Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki" (E-text).
[55] Cf. Stephen Bantu Biko (E-text).
[56] Cf. Archives of the African National Congress (E-text).

Blithedale. One day his daughter Sindiswa, a young student activist is missing. Her parents do not know that she has gone underground and that she finally flees to Lesotho into exile. There, she struggles to survive and with nowhere else to turn to she stays at the International Centre for Displaced Youths. That is what she is – a displaced youth because of her political engagement against the South African government. Mr Raymond Mbete, the man in charge, invites her into his house to stay. This is the start of a vicious circle: Mbete repeatedly rapes her but as she is dependent on his financial support she stays with him and his wife. Then she tries hard to start a new life and marries Fikile, another South African living in exile. Sindiswa gives birth to a girl they name Vuyelwa, meaning 'joy', but as the young mother desperately wants to finish her schooling in order to start a better life, the young couple is again financially dependent on Mbete: "Education to her was like a drug. Alice did this to you. Lovedale did this to you" (*Silent* 144)[57]. As a consequence of giving in to Mbete, who makes Sindiswa his mistress, she gets pregnant several times. She cannot afford proper medical treatment in a hospital and thus she dies from complications of one of her abortions.

The young woman's parents are informed of her death and her father's world is shattered beyond repair. He goes on a quest for her dead body in order to bury it at home and to find out the truth. When he finds out how his daughter must have suffered he takes matters into his own hands and kills Mbete. At the court trial, Kondile does not want to defend himself but meets his fate calmly and believes it to be unavoidable.

The novel is written in the style of a detective story and starts with Kondile in prison receiving a note from John Smith who urges him to come forward with his testimony. As the story unfolds the reader only gradually finds out what has happened to Sindiswa and why Kondile was imprisoned. Only after about two thirds of the book does it become clear that Kondile is guilty of murder. In the end Mrs Mbete testifies to the TRC that her husband is guilty of raping Sindiswa and many other young girls whom he deceived. They were all hoping in vain that he would give them a new chance to live a better life. Sindiswa's body is brought home and brings closure to her parents' lives. When they find out that Sindiswa has left a daughter, they let her stay with them and cherish the joys of grandparenthood. In the end the narrator knows

[57] "Mtutuzeli, Nyoka: *I Speak to the Silent*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004. page number" will in the following be referred to as (*Silent*, page number).

that his daughter was one of 'the young heroes who […] paved the way for our nation's liberation' (*Silent* 105).

5.1. Traumatic Memories in I Speak to the Silent

> *'[R]ememory' cannot be the literal repetition that traps us in the past, but a 'retranslation' that allows a movement forward and the recognition of the past as past. (King, 31-32)*

Kondile suffers from numerous traumatic memories. While he is in prison he has a lot of spare time to ponder over them. He remembers how -while Sindiswa was in exile- the Special Branch of the Security Police was harassing him and his wife, how their friends deserted them and how their house was under constant watch so that no letter from their daughter could have reached them. Having been sentenced for life, Kondile spends his time reliving the past:

After having been informed about their daughter's death, the couple gets caught up in a whirl of events. Depression precedes alcohol abuse which then leads to violent action.

Kondile escapes from this situation he cannot handle by altering his state of consciousness. This is the only system of self-defense he has left in the face of trauma. Alcohol induces a state of "detached calm, in which terror, rage and pain dissolve" – similar to hypnotic trance (Herman 42-43). Such an alteration of consciousness can –according to Herman- also take place without any drug abuse, it is the last resort, 'one of nature's small mercies' as a protection against unbearable pain. Rape survivors often describe having been in such a detached state as if they had left their body and were only an uninvolved person watching from above or from the side (cf. Herman 43).

Kondile needs alcohol to "freeze" his brain and disconnect events from their meanings (Herman 42). Once addicted, he cannot break out from this vicious circle: Whenever he hits his wife he feels remorse but this leads to even more drinking, which is again followed by increased abuse. His beloved wife Nomsa finally leaves Kondile to let him wallow alone in his self-loathing. They reconcile after a short separation, but the grief and pain they both suffered from their child's death almost

destroys not only their marriage but also themselves. When Kondile is imprisoned Nomsa is devastated.

Apart from dealing voluntarily with his past, Kondile suffers from traumatic flashbacks which haunt him and which he cannot suppress: "Time had, unfortunately, not worn out my memory" (*Silent* 6). It is only when he is allowed to go back home that he can forget about the harassment and the threats of his tormentors for at least a moment.

The narrator, however, becomes aware of how lucky his circumstances are when he remembers tracing back Sindiswa's steps to an Anglican Mission in Lesotho, which she often visited for solace: The narrator hears 'a strange kind of cry, human, yet hard to pin down, as if from a child who had no speech' (*Silent,* 115). It is Zola, a young African boy, about eighteen years old, who is bound to a wheelchair. The story of this exile is that he was hiding in a house when it was raided. South African forces shot him in the head but he survived. The Mission took care of him as nobody knew his family or friends. He is a victim of the cruel system, "his life over and yet not over", a voice that cries out about injustice but cannot be understood (*Silent* 121).

Other haunting images that Kondile has to deal with in prison are the violent scenes at a funeral in his village where peaceful mourners are attacked by the police:

Trying to form at least some kind of resistance, natives meet at Reverend Siwisa's house. Since the political has always been personal for them, gatherings are thus "overtly political" and under the constant threat of being raided (cf. *Silent* 90).

At the end of the novel, many years after Sindiswa's death, Kondile finally meets the realization of one of his most traumatic memories: Mbete, his daughter's murderer, who happens not to be present in Lesotho when the devastated father comes seeking answers. The rapist's face dominates Kondile's thoughts for a very long time, although he has only seen his picture in his office once: "I had never seen that face in the flesh but it lived in my memory as if it had been branded there" (*Silent* 149). One day he sees him in Alice by mere accident. He is shocked and confused because the person he is having constant nightmares about and whom he has thought about incessantly, finally stands before him: "The memory of what he had done to my daughter was like a festering sore that would not heal" (*Silent* 149). The only thing he knows at that moment is that he has to avenge his daughter. When Kondile mentions that she made a suicide attempt, Mbete replies: "Exile does that to you" (*Silent* 155). When Kondile asks him directly whether he raped Sindiswa, he lectures

him and finally replies that maybe Sindiswe was a whore and died of the consequences. Had Mbete denied the rape, Kondile might have left him alone. It is at that highly emotional moment that Mrs Mbete comes in and apologizes to Kondile in tears. Kondile still kills Mr Mbete because he -in contrast to his wife- neither shows remorse nor apologises.

Thus, the main character's testimony is in a sense also a confession because he admits his guilt of having murdered the Other. Features of testimony, however, still prevail this confession because his story is actually not about confessing a crime but about bearing witness to all the events that finally lead to it. Therefore, the narrative is structured so that the reader only finds out near the end of the novel, that Kondile is a murderer. The events that happened beforehand, especially the death of his beloved daughter, are more crucial and therefore their centrality is also reflected in the form of the novel.

Testimony features the voice of the Other, of the victim that has been silenced. For this reason, Mrs Mbete's testimony, the side of the Other, is also only revealed towards the reader at the end because her and her husbands stories do not need to be told, the judge holds their view anyway and makes it into an official truth.

Hence, the written account of his testimony is Kondile's way out of silence, his way to speak to the public and make himself heard. Although the narrator knows the outcome at the beginning, he leaves his readers in doubt of whether he killed Mbete. The narrative frame for Kondile's memories and Sindiswa's story starts with the protagonist in prison. After his testimony has been requested several times by John Smith, Kondile starts telling it to him, the implied reader, and thus also to the real reader. For both addressees this is a request for action in relation to South African reality.

In the end, the memories that Kondile continuously dwells on during the narration, are put into perspective and are substituted by the present – Kondile's new life together with his wife and granddaughter. The form of the novel represents the narrator's coming to terms with the past.

5.2. Testimony of a Prisoner

The TRC held an institutional hearing on political prisoners as their imprisonment represented an "integral part of the chain of oppression" (TRC report, Volume 4 199). Cells were especially frequented during the 1960s and 1970s by pass law offenders. Interrogation sessions were usually accompanied by torture and in many cases even death. These brutal interrogations put the detainee at complete mercy for 2the purpose of extracting information, statements and confessions, often regardless of whether true or not, in order to secure a successful prosecution and neutralisation of yet another opponent of the apartheid system" (TRC report, Volume 4 201).

The notorious farm prisons ensured that farmers were never short of cheap labour: Pass law offenders – and there were many – were sent to farms to work there as a punishment.

Political prisoners had fewer privileges than criminal prisoners who had been for instance arrested for murder. Being a political prisoner meant getting only one letter and only one visit of thirty minutes in six months. Many died from starvation, ill-treatment or insufficient medical treatment (cf. TRC report, Volume 4 199-211).

In one of the hearings Mrs Zahrah Narkedien tried to describe the effects of solitary confinement: "I had to go down and live in the basement in isolation for seven months. That was very very painful. I don't even want to describe psychologically what I had to do to survive down there. I will write it one day, but I could never tell you" (TRC report, Volume 4, 211).

After a TRC hearing a remarkable meeting took place between two former death row prisoners and the man who would have led them to their execution – had they not been reprieved: All three of them shook hands and joked around (cf. TRC report, Volume 4, 215).

For killing Mbete, Kondile is imprisoned in Port Elizabeth Central prison where he ironically has a splendid view over the Indian Ocean. Like all prisoners his life is characterized by monotony which is rarely interrupted by visitors who come to see "the infamous murderer of Raymond Mbete"; "Comrade Ray", as many called him (*Silent* 2). Thus, the narrator is often left to himself, treasuring the freedom of the mind as one of the few freedoms he can enjoy: "[t]he present is often too painful and

hard to acknowledge; thus your mind is constantly occupied with the past as it circles by, like chapters of a sad and depressing book" (*Silent* 37).

The warders treat their prisoners like animals "No talk. No talk. You stopped being human the moment you came through the prison gates" (*Silent* 38). What shocks the narrator most during his imprisonment is that the worst cruelties come from the black warders, "perhaps they had been affected by the inhuman conditions" (*Silent* 38).

It is Kondile who asks for the permission to start a reading group that finally gives him "the strength to face even the worst horrors and challenges of prison life" (*Silent* 39). However, it at the same time makes him understand for the first time that knowledge can bring about torment as it did for his daughter. Kondile wants to pass on his knowledge and starts teaching his cell mate "Mountain"', who is himself a convicted murderer, how to read. Sindiswa has inherited this desire to pass on knowledge and passion for reading and education. Already as a child she admires her uncle Boysie, Kondile's brother, for his intelligence and is devastated when she finds out that he is illiterate.

The circumstances in prison are humiliating. Those who can lay hands on alcohol or drugs use them to forget. Gang rapes are common, and the interrogation methods brutal. Kondile is also put in solitary confinement, in a cold and dark cell, deprived of proper food and water.

When the warders are trying to force Kondile to confess, they not only insult and beat him but also show him a cut-off finger in a jar and threaten him by saying he could meet the same fate. According to Scarry, torture is "itself a language, an objectification" (Scarry 27) because "in confession, one betrays oneself and all those aspects of the world – friend, family, country, cause – that the self is made up of" (ibid, 29).

Prisoners are tantalised in every way possible. They are given no privacy and all their mail is opened. They are not allowed visits from family or friends and prison staff continually try to break them psychologically. For example Kondile is once told: "I slept with your wife last night" (*Silent,* 96). During Kondile's first prison experience, he is at the mercy of violent warders. It may have been this brutalising experience that finally made him capable of committing a murder himself When he kills Mbete he not only avenges Sindiswa but also takes revenge for all the misery he had to endure – Mbete being the representative of the white superiority.

Still, throughout the many devastating years in prison, Kondile keeps strong and sane because he can hold on to the love he has for his wife to whom he longs to return (cf. *Silent* 55).

Giving testimony to the memories of prison experiences constitutes a subgenre of testimony, that of the prison narrative or the prison memoir.[58] Ruth First's *117 Days* [1963], Albie Sach's *Jail Diary* [1966], Breyten Breytenbach's *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* [1984], and partly Nelson Mandela's two volumes of *Long Walk to Freedom* [2002/2003] are only a few examples.

5.3. Memories of Exile

As Sindiswa is dead and her parents have not heard from her while she was gone, they have to rebuild her past on the memories recalled by all those who knew her. The quest for pieces of the truth which are patched together into a whole -like a quilt composed of different pieces- is represented in the form of the novel. The way that the author lets the reader have glimpses of the whole story now and then, mirrors the widening of the narrator's point of view. Only step by step does he find out, years after Sindiswa's death, what has really happened:

Sindiswa helped to organise the flight of many colleagues but when she herself fled into exile, she felt she had abandoned her people as many had only become involved in the struggle because of her encouragement. When she finally arrives in Lesotho, she realises that freedom has many faces (cf. *Silent* 145) and that one of them is the misery that people live in. It is interesting to note that from the narrator's standpoint, while his daughter goes into exile to Lesotho, she is not only absent from her home but also from the narrative form. The reader is not informed about her life in exile at the time but only in retrospective, when her father searches for her. Therefore, the reader is on the same level as the first-person-narrator and the narrative structure provides an ellipsis regarding Sindiswa's life in Lesotho.

Kondile meanwhile goes into inner exile: "I retreated deep into my shell" (*Silent,* 6). It is only John Smith's persistence that makes him come out again when he says: "If you will not speak out for yourself, then do so for your daughter's memory" (*Silent* 7).

[58] For an introduction into prison writing as a genre see
Mark Sanders: *Complicities. The Intellectual and Apartheid*. Durham: Duke University, 2002. 131-158.

When Kondile receives a letter from his daughter, telling him about her whereabouts, to him the word 'exile' is synonymous with loss and death (cf. *Silent* 10). Fikile, Sindiswa's lover and Vuyelwa's father, knows "that exile is no place to raise a child" (*Silent* 123). Although exile means freedom it also means poverty, the constant fear of attacks by the Boers and the threat of being surrounded by spies (cf. *Silent* 124). Sindiswa has to abandon her role of 'the most wanted activist of town' because in exile she is only a refugee (*Silent* 124). When this situation is taken advantage of by Mbete – "deviously like a serpent in human clothing" – Sindiswa Sindiswa starts drinking heavily (*Silent* 128). The abuse and subsequently her alcohol problem depress her so badly that she tries to commit suicide. Her father realises that she "perished because humanity allows itself to be silenced by evil" (*Silent* 127). Fikile explains to him that people of the exile community are mostly heroes who are "prepared to die for what they believe in" (*Silent* 130).

Sindiswa, however, has no other choice but to leave her home because she belongs to a generation that "ha[s] tasted the freedom of ideas" from education and thus "put[s] "liberty far above everything, including their lives (*Silent* 44). This is the reason why nothing raised the ire of the state more than a clever native" (*Silent* 47).

Whereas her father's and her grandfather's generation have resigned to the fact that obedience, acceptance and misery are their life, she is longing for change. In contrast to her father she becomes active by organising demonstration and meetings. Kondile later on becomes active by writing his own and his daughter's story.

The character of Sindiswa shows the will to live the rainbow philosophy promoted during Mandela's presidency. When George Oliver, a good friend (and despite his name a native), challenges Sindiswa by saying that *they* should claim the right to be indigenous, the reverend comes to her rescue and replies: "The purpose of our struggle, George, is to *unite* the races" (*Silent,* 47) [emphasis added].

In Sindiswa's exile Lesotho, Kondile encounters "the liberty of Africa" (*Silent* 110) and remembers his daughter saying "Freedom of the citizens is the very essence of nationhood" (*Silent* 111). There are no pass laws or curfews for blacks but "the tentacles of poverty had spread widely through this independent land, a wretched millstone around any leader's neck" (*Silent* 111).

5.4. Truth and Justice in a White Man's World

Kondile does not believe that there will ever be justice in his life, even less after Sindiswa's death. So he retreats to alcohol until he is shaken to the core by a vision of Sindiswa one night. He then believes that fate has intercepted his path and tells him to go on a quest: "It was that, the vision of Sindiswa, which impelled me to lift myself up out of the abyss and go in search of the truth" (*Silent* 21). As a result he not only stops drinking completely but also makes peace with his wife Nomsa. The image of Sindiswa that Kondile sees is the materialisation of his bad conscience. He blames himself for having abused his wife, for not having been able to protect Sindiswa from her fate and for having been an accomplice to silence. His wallowing in self-pity does however only make things worse. Fikile, his son-in-law, tells him to his face that he is responsible for what happened to his daughter and that he is guilty of apathy and silent obedience: "We were all present when the descent of our country into the abyss began. Many people, including you, did nothing. That is why people like Sindi and I ended up in this country [Lesotho]" (*Silent,* 130). Kondile realises that he is to blame for not acting and thus takes matters into his own hands and goes to search for those he thinks responsible for Sindiswa's death: "I had an obligation to look my daughter's tormentor in the eye" (*Silent* 131). Those who are left behind, when someone dies, need to know how the beloved person died in order to come to terms with the past.

Once Kondile has found out what happened to his daughter he is full of feelings of hatred and vengeance. He knows that his truth will never be accepted at court so he kills the people's hero Mbete by strangling him, in Kondile's eye "a fitting finale for a monster" (*Silent* 2). He knows he is guilty of a crime and even calls the police but can justify his actions to himself: "His [Mbete's] case needed jungle justice and instant execution" (*Silent* 158). He is satisfied because he believes that justice has been done but he has also become "just like them" (*Silent* 161) – the police who justify brutal killings with their own crude explanations called official truth.

Kondile is convinced that he has to take care of justice himself because there is no justice to be expected from a white court. How can those be fair who have justified so many laws undermining humanity? Kondile grows up with the experience that the executives of these laws are cruel and that laws never have been for his benefit but that they only support the government in its cruelty. In his hometown Alice, Kondile

lives with the constant threat of being convicted or tortured by the feared Boer policeman Colonel Goosen. Kondile's younger brother Boysie flees from him because he cannot present a pass. He flees into a church where he mingles with the worshippers of that Sunday's service but "[n]ot even the house of God was sanctuary from the malevolent arm of Goosen and his version of the law" (*Silent* 51). Policemen were only "the state's main instrument of power" (ibid.) and victims were not represented legally. The narrator describes the sentencing of victims as "parody of justice" (*Silent*, 50). The narrator's world of morality is turned up-side down because "the very custodians of virtue were themselves proponents of injustice" (*Silent* 52). The unreasonable laws made it almost "impossible for natives to conduct their lives while being law-abiding" (*Silent* 85). One of the numerous examples from the novel supporting this statement is the scene where Kondile and Nomsa attend a funeral in their village. A young girl has been killed by the police when defying the order to disperse at a demonstration. In the official version by the state, she was killed by a stray bullet. The number of mourners at a funeral was restricted by law but in the African community it is regarded as disrespectful not to offer the family ones condolences even if one is not closely related (cf. *Silent* 85). Despite the occasion, the police shoot into the crowd and even let their dogs out. There are several casualties – among them also children – and Kondile describes the incident as "the slaughter of the innocent" (*Silent* 86).

Another law prevents Kondile and his brother Boysie from leaving South Africa to find out more about Sindiswa's death. They have to wait for two years until they can finally leave but only due to Simon Blithedale who claims he needs them to come along to Lesotho to do certain chores for him. Kondile knows that, as a good native, he placidly has to take abuse from the law and its executives.

Thus, from his point of view, the judge who is in charge of his case, Judge Boschoff, has no respect; neither for justice nor for human life, just like the policemen in Alice. To emphasise his point, the narrator tells the reader about a white man who has been set free "for killing a native whose mongrel dog ha[s] mated with his alsatian" (*Silent* 3).

Kondile consciously decides not to defend himself, he feels "doomed" from the beginning: "I had murdered a hero and had to pay" and "would not budge in my intractable silence" (*Silent* 5). After the false and incomplete testimonies of Anil,

– Mbete's second hand at the centre – and Mrs Mbete, not even Fikile's courageous testimony can prevent the verdict of imprisonment. Kondile is found guilty of murder and has to serve a life sentence. He is willing to accept the consequences of his actions and although he murdered scrupulously, he is not devoid of morals. The narrator also has a strong belief in God as well as trust in prayer which help him through the five years when he does not receive any news from his beloved daughter: "One of the most extraordinary attributes of an African is the ability to live on nothing but hope: a spirit that is indestructible, optimism even in defeat" (*Silent,* 22). As the narrator says, "it is a truism that the suppression of the truth, or of dissenting views, does not mean that they cease to exist" (*Silent* 81). Whether justice is done or not, the truth remains and "a facade of compliance" as well as "a false sense of calm" is created which is soon violently disrupted (*Silent,* 81).

To the judge the case is clear: Kondile is a murderer. To the silent, who only hear the voice of the white supremacy, he is also guilty. They do not think about his possible motifs or any events leading to the murder. The narrator's life sentence is pronounced "to the collective jubilation of the crowd" (*Silence* 168). Truth in court is the official, the "objective" version of the truth – no matter whether it is accurate or justified. This made it extremely easy for the apartheid government to maintain their status because the subjective truth was ignored and marginalized just like the people of the subaltern. Kondile's truth is not heard, he does not even want to defend himself because he knows that his memories will count for nothing. His trial is political, and not about a murder, but to fan the flames of fear and hatred. The fact that the narrator is imprisoned – due to the absence of credible witnesses who are willing to speak out on his behalf – affirms the silence that is imposed on the subaltern community. As a consequence, Kondile lives on his memories in prison and just does what he has done all his life so far – he obediently waits in silence. When John Smith tells him that he has to tell his daughter's story, this means to testify to a subjective truth, why she had to die. He finally realises that nobody had known about her misery. He wishes to speak for her and tell her story which the authorities do not acknowledge. So he becomes the instrument of her testimony which is thus intertwined with his own. Both still lie in "hitherto unmapped and uncharted areas of subjective experience"[59].The truth will finally be ascertained by means of the telling. Through Kondile also Sindiswa will be heard, her never narrated experience becomes

[59] Expression (courtesy of Dr. Mengel, professor of literature studies at the English Department of the University of Vienna).

accessible through words. By presenting these testimonials in the narrator's form the author in turn enables the reader to become a witness to more than one truth and memory in his own stance. Thus the process of bearing this testimony through the reader to the world has been set in motion. Now a new kind of justice will finally be possible.

5.5. Silence and the Subaltern in Testimony

The term "Subalternity" has been coined by Gayatri Spivak and is concerned with representations of oppression. In Spivak's famous essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* she gives attention to the question whether it is at all possible for subaltern voices to speak "in a discourse in which subaltern groups are already spoken for" (Cashmore, 415).

During Apartheid, blacks and coloureds constituted subaltern groups suppressed by whites. As in many colonised countries, whiteness in South Africa was a culturally constructed ethnic identity existing at the cost of subaltern minorities who had been silenced (cf. Cashmore, 415): "The privileged position of the white male in relation to subaltern groups has been 'naturalized' " to the point of invisibility. Yet the position of centrality is made possible by the denial of a voice to Others (Cashmore, 415).

This silencing of subaltern voices is at the heart of Nyoka Mtutuzeli's *I Speak to the Silent* -the silence that was imposed on blacks and coloureds during apartheid. They were silenced by whites but also by their own people. The press that tries to honestly inform its readers has to pay a price: "their voices were silenced with repeated bannings, their journalists detained" (*Silent* 61).

White supremacy built up a network of surveillance and control in which blacks and coloureds were spying on their own people. As a result blacks had to act against their kinship and were haunted by their people. The common way to silence someone from their own ranks was the notorious "necklacing": A tyre was put around one's neck, filled with petrol and ignited. This is how informers were burnt to death.

The student activist Sindiswa represents the subaltern voice of many blacks. She draws her revolutionary thought from old copies of *Confessions* by Jean Jacques Rousseau and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The former represents one of the earliest autobiographical writings describing Rousseau's quest for his true self by

emphasizing that the human being consists of a variety of social identities (cf. France 10). The latter is a satirical novel criticising Soviet communism (cf. Baker ix), depicting how animals overthrow their farmer in a revolution. These readings lead Sindiswa to think for herself and to *appreciate* her own self. South African hypocrisy of the church seemed to echo Orwell's work: "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others" (Orwell 133). As in Orwell's novel, language in Sindiswa's world has become a tool of oppression and laws are changed to the benefit of some but at the cost of the majority. Language serves to disguise injustice by ambiguous and nebulous wording.

Sindiswa received these books from Simon Blithedale, the son of the Blithedale family who is originally British. Kondile wonders why the English -in contrast to the Boers who rather add books to the banned list- strive to educate natives and so tempt them into rebellion. Only later, when he goes to Lesotho, does he find out that his daughter was "a great she-warrior" and ask himself whether she was "the saviour that the native had long been waiting for" (*Silent* 102).

John Smith tells the devastated father that "[y]our daughter's story must be told. It must be heard" (*Silent* 7). Finally, after many fruitless attempts, 'this comment hit home"(*Silent* 7) and Kondile offers his story "testimony to the fact that the best societies on earth are built on courage and truth"(*Silent 9*).

The novel is Kondile's testimony – The author is Mtutuzeli Nyoka but the fictional narrator Kondile tells his story as a representative for all others like him, the subaltern, repressed social group of natives living in townships and suffering from the inhumane government. Kondile has been among the silent almost all his life. It takes his daughter's death to realise that he has to act and cannot keep suffering. His testimonial account is also a warning to others not to wait any longer in silence. He realises that only someone who *is* one of them, who comes from their midst, can truly speak up for himself and simultaneously for all others who have met a similar fate. Consequently, he has to *speak to* the silent in order *to make them speak* in return. Therefore, his testimony speaks *for* the subaltern but it also speaks *to* them to make them fight for their rights.

The testimonial form is a performative act; it is an outcry for change, a way of trying to communicate with others – not only with ones own kind but also with the Other. Kondile not only speaks to his community but also to the judge, the Blithedales and all others who remain silent despite injustice. In the same way Kondile reaches out to

his people, the author, Nyoka, reaches out to people in the real world – to his readership.

By *not* telling his story, Kondile unconsciously supports the "conspiracy of silence" (*Silent* 168) that veils the injustice of othering those who are made to be inferior. His fear gives rise to a "deadly silence" (*Silent* 137). Whites like the police officer Goosen or even Mr. Mbete, himself black and officially supporting those fleeing into exile for the cause of the struggle, profit from people like Kondile who do not dare to speak up but remain in the realm of the subaltern:

> Silence was, to my father, the ultimate secret of survival. To pretend you are not there, that you don't suffer -to pretend, by silence, that all is well. There is safety in such pretence. There were many natives like my father -like me- who quietly carried the burdens and accepted all the conditions of their miserable lives. (*Silent,* 27)

At his own trial, Kondile suddenly realises that it is this silence that his daughter was referring to. There are no credible witnesses to speak out on his behalf.They were there in that courtroom with him but did not raise their voices because they obeyed the unspoken law of silence. They were there in that courtroom with him but did not raise their voices because they obeyed the unspoken law of silence. The law that his father had already taught him but that he had failed to teach Sindiswa: "comply and be silent" (*Silent* 168). Nobody offers their testimony because they play along with the Boers -who they think will be even harsher when protest is raised. The narrator then knows that their "silence was a sin" because "it was complicity and co-operation in our own abuse", giving the law enforcers the opportunity to kill millions of victims by laws as powerful as bullets (cf. *Silent*, 168): "Our victims died in their millions over many generations. We, the *Silent,* complied in one of the worst massacres in history" (*Silent* 169).

Kondile realises that he has to break this silence of those who endure. He wants to awaken them by speaking to them because "iniquity is not only the work of the evil among us, but also a product of the silence of those who bear witness to it (*Silent* 8). In the end, he knows that it is exactly this silencing of their voices that his daughter has so courageously struggled against and that she has sacrificed her life for.

5.6. Narrative Exposure Theory in I Speak to the Silent

Like in Narrative Exposure treatment Kondile starts telling John Smith about his life and "the story just poured out, like water after a dam's sluice gates have been opened" (cf. *Silent* 11). He stirs the memories to life that he has kept hidden in the depths of his soul for so many years (ibid.). As is characteristic for testimonies, the narrator starts with his birth: "[P]erhaps I need to start my story at the very beginning" (*Silent* 24) and then makes the reader familiar with his hometown Alice and the villagers. In the beginning John Smith is in the role of the therapist but later Kondile realises that only he himself can write his story because only he could fully know and understand the torment he had suffered (cf. *Silent* 11). Smith, who initially functioned as an interpreter by enabling the subaltern voice to be heard, takes a back seat and lets Kondile reclaim his past by recalling and formulating repressed memories: "In the early days of our interactions, it was to be his [Smith's] book. Later, as the story took over and my compulsion to tell it grew, it became mine [Kondile's book]" (*Silent* 10). Kondile learns how much power lies in words and that healing "can come from telling your story to another" (*Silent* 170).

How absolutely imperative this narrative memory is to healing the trauma of those who suffer from their "hot"[60], subconscious memories, the author proves in a row of characters. The one character, who will forever forego this healing process, is Zola, speechlessly bound to a chair and crying out his pain in a terrible and endless wail, this victim, who has no words to ever make the injustice understood that has been done to him It is not only the suffering of the young man with the headshot that has rendered him speechless, but his cries ring out from a traumatic memory as a veritable example of an inaccessible and ‘hot’ memory. He symbolizes the traumatic memory of all those who will not be heard any more, whose autobiographies will never be testified, who will forever remain among those with the non-declarative memory.

This character is the perfect foil for that of Kondile, who finally, after a very hurtful process, achieves to heave himself from the level of his wordless trauma to that of the speakable, to that of the declarative *cold* memory. He does this not only to make himself heard, but it is a truly social act: He does it to rip the memory of his daughter, to whose suffering nobody has as yet born witness, from her fate of never

[60] See chapter 2.1.of this thesis.

being heard. So his own memory, intertwined with that of his daughter, becomes autobiographic through merging fact and perception in a long and painful struggle. Narrating his memory helps him to overcome his trauma. It enables him to distance himself from the state of mind that made him a murderer, who could only deal with his suffering through aggression and by striking out mindlessly and without reasoning about the consequences.

Since then he has gone the long way to declarative memory, which is, in the truest sense of Mandela's autobiography, the "long walk to freedom". Making one's own or somebody else's story accessible to the world through narration is not only the way to individual freedom, but perhaps even the road to a better future for a new South Africa.

5.7. The Discourse of the Other

Social identity describes a person's self as defined in relation to others (cf. Kuper 789). When Apartheid legalised "systemic racism"[61] in South Africa, blacks and coloureds were defined only in relation to whites.

From a philosophical point of view, Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel[62] spoke of a life and death struggle with the Other, a struggle between master and slave. Schopenhauer spoke of "Will and Representation, Heidegger of Being and Time, Sartre of Being and Nothingness" but all of these concepts relate to the same main thought: Others were the "targets of hatred", embodying the "scapegoats" for white supremacy (cf. Cashmore 306). Throughout history, colonialism included dehumanization and often cultural genocide[63]. Otherness was the basis for the

[61] "Systemic racism is a characteristic of societies in which most major aspects of life are shaped to some degree by core racist realities […] in societies such as the USA, Great Britain, France and South Africa" (Cashmore 416).

[62] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831): "Along with J. G. Fichte and F. W. J. von Schelling, Hegel (1770-1831) belongs to the period of "German idealism" in the decades following Kant. Being the most systematic of the post-Kantian idealists, Hegel attempted throughout his published writings as well as in his lectures, to elaborate a comprehensive and systematic ontology from a "logical" starting point. He is perhaps best-known for his teleological account of history, an account which was later taken over by Karl Marx and "inverted" into a materialist theory of an historical development culminating in communism".

Paul Redding (E-text): "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel".

[63] Cultural genocide or deculturation refers to the decline or demise of a culture and is opposed to ethnocide, which refers to both the cultural eradication and physical destruction of its bearers. In any case the people representing a culture are differentiated by traits such as ethnicity, race, religion, language or nationality (cf. Cashmore 99-100).

construction of boundaries in communities. The Afrikaans term Apartheid[64], meaning "apartness" or "total separation", is a system of separation already rooted in the white master – black slave relationships of colonialism in the seventeenth century.

> Over time, then, Otherness has referred to questions of being and nonbeing, immanence and transcendence, and to cultural differences along lines of language, religion, civilizational or evolutionary status (savages, primitives), 'race', ethnicity, nationality, gender, class, development, ideology, age citizenship, and so forth. (Cashmore, 307)

Hegel claims that self-consciousness can only exist if it is acknowledged as such by another person, thus another independent being has to be superseded in order to become certain of oneself as the essential being (cf. Hegel 111). The distribution of roles however lies in "one being only *recognized*, the other only *recognizing*" (Hegel 113): Thus the relation of the self-conscious individuals is such that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle (Hegel 113-114).
One being represents the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself. The Other in consequence has to be the dependent consciousness "whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is lord, the other is bondsman" (Hegel 115).
The roots of Apartheid reflected this Hegelian mode of thought: During seventeenth-century colonialism, the white man was the 'lord' and the black slave was his "bondsman" (ibid). Kondile knows that the roles between him and the Blithedale family are firmly distributed: "Certain things were made clear to me from an early age: he was the master's son and I was the servant's" (*Silent* 6). Nevertheless, the Blithedale family is still an exception to the majority of whites in these days: They help Sindiswa to go underground and even let her stay at their house, which was against the law. Most whites however did not see blacks as human beings but as the Other and objects – which did not go unnoticed by the native: "I often wonder, even today, if whites realise that beneath our wretched dark skins pound human hearts, with the same feelings and needs as every human being on this earth" (*Silent* 35).

[64] In the 1650s the Dutch started a slave colony in Cape Town. During the 18th and 19th centuries, Dutch settlers known as Boers (farmers) moved into central South Africa where they came into conflict with the natives, for instance with the Khoikhoi (referred to as Hottentots by the Boers). By the 1870s the Boers had established the Orange Free State and Transvaal as whites-only-areas. When gold was discovered in Johannesburg, the British started showing interest and defeated the Boers in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). Thus, the area became a British colony where blacks were still excluded. When the Afrikaner Nationalist Party won the election in 1948, Apartheid was legalised and Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd (1901-66) did his part to institutionalize the dehumanizing state system (cf. Cashmore 39-40).

Kondile also cannot understand how white people can make derogatory statements about natives in their presence. He wonders whether they are either impervious or indifferent about it: "I could not decide whether they thought us deaf, or if they simply did not see us" (*Silent* 63).

Due to this social exclusion, Kondile's voice is silenced. He cannot speak to the Other or publicly make a stance because he is ignored and has been allocated the position of a dehumanized existence.

In the native's eyes, such behaviour renders the white superiority inhuman but Reverend Siwisa pleads with the villagers to reconcile and forgive. He explains that whites are 'also human' and that they are victims too, victims "of a society that raised its children on the misguided doctrine of white supremacy" (*Silent* 52). This marginalisation is the background for testimony as a genre. After 1994 major changes had been made in the context of political and social advancement. Nevertheless, there was still the problem of the unfinished business with the past that had to be taken care of. Apart from the official testimonies at court and at the TRC, the testimonial mode seemed fit to meet the demands of reclaiming and representing memories and at the same time provided a platform for dealing with the past. This explains why the form of the testimonial narrative is so often found in that period of transition.

Before that, only the white man's word counted, natives were not equal but regarded as "savages" (*Silent,* 70)to whom all human moral codes and behaviour did not apply, because a native was "lacking in morals" and "prone to […] bestial tendencies" (ibid.).When Dr Gladstone, a well-known and respected person in Alice, is found dead next to the body of a native, the newspapers only report about the white man as "dead natives were simply beneath mention" (*Silent* 69). There is no question but that the murderer *is* a native and suspects are immediately arrested for "interrogation […] – a euphemism for the extraction of confession by torture" (*Silent* 71). Confession, originally a religious act undertaken voluntarily to be absolved from ones sins, became the forced outcome of torture – not only in court but also in church: "They warned all priests to come forward immediately should any native confess to them" (*Silent* 71). As the native cannot make himself heard and is even denied to tell his story to receive absolution, he has no chance of speaking his truth. Therefore, the testimonial mode is the form that opens up a possibility for speech. Testimony is the form that provides the narrator with the chance to tell his version of the truth, his

subjective truth that opposes the official truth of the press. Testimony is a medium that is available to the narrator even during his imprisonment.

Once he is accused of murder of a white man even his own people shun Kondile. They are begging for his blood at his trial, his verdict is accompanied by "jubilant chants" (cf. *Silent* 3). In prison it gets worse because he is not only reduced to a number by the authorities but also "surrounded by hatred" (*Silent* 4) and hostility from his fellow prisoners who ignore, spit on and threaten him.

Kondile describes himself as "Uncle Tom[65] -grinning, submissive and subservient (*Silent* 12). He is obsessed by knowledge -being the first in his family to read and to go to Lovedale College: "Lovedale was the centre of our lives. The students came from all over Africa and the lecturers from abroad. We owe most of our leaders to Lovedale" (*Silent* 25). His father's death however puts an end to Kondile's prospect of higher education because he has to start working. He still devours every book he can get his hands on and reads whatever his master passes on to him. These books teach him his people's "supposed inferiority and primitiveness" (*Silent* 12) and strengthen his belief that he has to present himself as a "good native" (ibid.). Kondile follows in his father's footsteps who 'toiled like a slave for his master and died like one" (*Silent* 13). W. E. B. DuBois introduced his idea of "double-consciousness" in 1897, claiming that persons of colour were not experienced as such by whites. They were not experienced as conscious human agents with subjectivity, "but as racialized Others" (qtd. in Kuper 112):

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on it in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels this two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideas in one dark body, whose dogged strength keeps it from being torn asunder. (DuBois 11)

DuBois claims that when a white person's objectifying gaze is directed at an African American the result for the black person is double consciousness: In Du Bois' view, the African American had two souls, one looking at himself but with the eyes of

[65] In 1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe published the anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which was meant to denounce the terrible conditions under which slaves had to live. The main protagonist ironically is a pro-slavery slave named Tom. Born before the American Civil War he seems to gladly accept his role as a faithful and submissive servant. Therefore he became a model slave and those in favour of slavery liked to refer to him praising slavery, because, after all - How could the white man be wrong? It was said that if the slaves were content and loyal then all was well (cf. Bogle 5; Meer 53). Also see: Beecher Stowe, Harriet: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. London: Blackie and Son Limited, 1852.

others and one looking at himself with his own eyes. This concept is also true for the South African native who is objectified by the white man.

Kondile's daughter Sindiswa is ahead of the times and resents her father's beliefs of having to succumb to the white man's treatment and *othering*. Already at a very early age she notices the striking difference in the treatment of whites as opposed to the treatment of natives and thus asks her father "Are there any good white people, tata?" (*Silent* 52). She openly speaks about the things that her father would prefer not to talk about: "Tata – can't you see that the relationship between you and Simon Blithedale is the same as that between a dog and its master?" she confronts him one day, to be met by his anger and embarrassment. Her attempts to convince her father that he must not believe in the "superiority of the white man and the inferiority of women" (*Silent* 14) are futile during her life time. Thus, she turns to different books that inspire her to revolt against the system. When her father finally sets aside his beliefs, the revolution has already cost Sindiswa her life, she has become a hero fallen in the course of the struggle (*Silent* 17). Like so many youths in the Soweto uprisings in 1976[66] she belonged to a generation of children "that did what most of us only dreamt about but never had the courage to do" (*Silent* 74). It is a conflict between the generations.

> A march by school children in Soweto rocked the very foundations of the nation and left our country changed forever [...]. Parents turned against

[66] The Soweto uprisings rocked the country on the 16th of June in 1976. The protest was aimed at the inequalities of "Bantu education" and the introduction of Afrikaans -the language of the oppressor- as working language in schools. Inspired by Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement, the South African Students Movement (SASM) initiated a student boycott and organized a demonstration for the 16th of June. Students from different schools came together to march to the Orlando stadium. The police overreacted and opened fire on the peacefully demonstrating school children. A mass chaos ensued and children started fighting with sticks and stones against their attackers. Fifteen thousand school children had gathered for the march and over 500 people were killed, among them thirteen-year-old Hector Pieterson. A photo of him dying shocked people all over the world and made him a symbol for youth resistance against Apartheid. Some of the young people involved were imprisoned on Robben Island. The uprising triggered school boycotts, riots and violence across South Africa. In the early 1990s a memorial was built to the victims of the Soweto uprising and in 2002 a memorial museum opened in Soweto. Today the 16th of June is a public holiday called "Youth Day" in South Africa. For an interview with Hector Pieterson's sister Antoinette Sithole who is a tour guide at the Museum see: Gideon Mendel (E-text): “The Long March to Freedom”.

For further references see:

Elsaé Brink. *Soweto. 16 June 1976. Personal Accounts of the Uprising.* Cape Town: Kwela, 2006.

Nelson Mandela. *Long Walk to Freedom.* Volume 2. 1962-1994. London: Abacus, 2003.223-226.

William Beinart: *Twentieth-Century South Africa.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 237-238.

South African.info.Gateway to the Nation:”The Day Hector Pieterson Died” (cf. Lucille Davie, E-text), “Hector Pieterson” (E-text), "Soweto wie es leibt und lebt" (E-text) [Soweto as it is] [my translation].

> their children, for an army of children pitted against the most powerful force in the continent was foredoomed to fail. My generation accepted injustice with resignation and often laughed about it. For the younger generation, however, it was a matter of life and death. (*Silent* 75)

While the novel represents the medium to communicate for Kondile, his daughter's platforms for giving testimony are public meetings and demonstrations. They have the same beliefs and aims but try to reach them in different ways. Kondile believes that one of the most valuable qualifications for salvation is education but Sindiswa pleads for liberation *before* education. The narrator tells the reader how schools were burnt down but also how the authorities were only content with this behaviour. In the end it was the natives who had to pay dearly: they had deprived themselves of the possibilities to work because they had not finished their schooling. They had finalised what the system had pursued all along, namely, that "[l]ife never allowed them to rise above the level of mere existence" (*Silent* 142). When his daughter tells him about her plans he fears for her because he can still vividly recall the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960[67] when natives marched to the police station to protest against the pass laws. The police saw the natives as the enemy, as the dreaded Other they had to keep in place, fearing for their own existence. Thus, they opened fire and killed and wounded hundreds.

Kondile always knew that his daughter was right about the injustice against them but he at first denies the truth because he believes that when one accepts the truth as facts, "one has to act" (cf. *Silent* 15). While his daughter throws herself into the struggle without reservation, Kondile does his utmost not to be noticed. The question arises how a human being can endure what Kondile, representative of thousands of blacks, is going through: He is used to a life in poverty governed by obedience towards the white population. When he was young, he watched three of his siblings die and lost his father who was his "dearest and closest friend" (*Silent* 30). The

[67] Sharpeville was a small township close to Johannesburg. The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) activists, who had split from the African National Congress (ANC) in 1959 organized an unarmed demonstration against the pass laws that obligated black and coloured South Africans to carry a passbook at all times as proof that they were authorized to move about in South Africa. It came to a mass shooting because the police felt outnumbered and panicked. Without warning they opened fire, killing 69 and wounding more than 400 people, including women and children. Most had been shot in the back as they had turned around to flee. A state of emergency was declared and armed forces were sent out. Mass arrests and the banning of the ANC and PAC followed. Outraged protests came from across the globe and for the first time, the UN Security Council intervened in South Africa.

Cf. Nelson, Mandela: *Long Walk to Freedom. Volume 1. 1918-1962*. London: Abacus, 1994. 344-346;

William Beinart: *Twentieth-Century South Africa.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 166-167.

constant threats, harassments, imprisonments and killings are daily routine. After five long years of not knowing about his only daughter's whereabouts and well-being, he has to find out about her death right after he has been told that she is alive. His depression, alcohol abuse and violence problems make him lose his wife who until then has been his strongest support. But the worst is yet to come when he finds out how much his daughter has suffered in exile and hears of her tragic death; not to mention his own guilt and anger that he has to live with when he kills Mbete.

From the on he is treated like a criminal by his own people. In prison he has to go through even more physical and psychological pain, losing one of his best friends, "Mountain", until he can finally make peace with himself and give testimony to John Smith. Kondile's father always described sufferings "without undue sadness, lightened with humour" (*Silent* 30) and despite their poverty, the Kondile family always provides warmth and love in their home, even to strangers. This attitude towards life and their love for each other as a family make them stick together and wait days on end to overcome all hardship and misery.

I speak to the Silent is a fictional novel but Barney Pityana claims that "this book tells the stories so many of us are familiar with but the veracity of which is bound to be doubted by younger generations".[68] To preserve these memories of the older generation and provide access to them, many authors decide to write a testimonial novel. Thus, Kondile's testimony is based on the black people's truth, presenting the reader with what *is* fiction in this novel but what *was* reality to so many during that time.

5.8. Testimonies to the Commission in I Speak to the Silent

In the last three chapters, the narrator describes the transition to democracy when the government unbanned all political organisations under the presidency of FW de Klerk: "The white man now wanted to talk. The impossible had indeed happened"

[68] From the blurb of Nyoka Mtutuzeli's *I Speak to the Silent.*

"Prof N Barney Pityana is Principal and Vice Chancellor of the University of South Africa (UNISA) in the City of Tshwane, South Africa since 2001 and was recently re-appointed as Principal and Vice Chancellor for another term, until 2010. He was previously Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission, one of the independent constitutional institutions established to protect democracy in South Africa (1995-2001). He has also served as a member of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights for a term of six years".

In April 2006, Professor Pityana received the Award of the Order of the Grand Counsellor of the Baobab: Silver from [former] President Thabo Mbeki'. For more information on Barney Pityana see the UNISA principal's website (cf. "Curriculum Vitae: Nyameko Barney Pityana," E-text).

(*Silent* 148). The TRC is set up and South Africa takes a new path – that of reconciliation. The last two chapters of the novel depict hearings at the TRC – in the style of the original hearing transcripts – and are therefore dominated by dialogue.

Kondile is on the one hand a murderer but on the other hand a father whose daughter has died because of a cruel man – so he is also a victim. To reconstruct his self, he needs to hear that the perpetrator is remorseful: "I knew what I wanted from him. An admission that he was to blame for my daughter's death. Confession. Apology. Remorse" (*Silent* 153). When Kondile goes to Mebete's house he realises that the violence of his tormentors has become his own (cf. *Silent* 53). After having served several years in prison, Kondile receives a pardon by the new native president - supposedly a reference to the first native president Nelson Mandela.

It is not Mbete himself but his wife who applies for amnesty at the TRC. She sheds light on the events of the past and enables the Kondile family to find the last answers to the riddle of Sindiswa's death. The narrator views the TRC as a "laudable attempt by a nation scarred and tormented by centuries of inhumanity to finally purge itself" (*Silent* 171). When he sees the feared Colonel Goosen at the hearings, he pities him. Had he been in charge he would have clubbed him to death. The colonel only dies a few weeks after his testimony and Kondile feels a loss.

The novel is a microcosm of South African reality: Speaking the truth in front of the nation and to the world will bring closure and healing to the country – regardless of whether the medium is a real or fictive form of testimony. Both speak to those who care to listen and try to shape the future for the better. What is revealed at the hearing the narrator attends is a marginalised truth that has become official. Therefore, the press is so eager to hear statements from Mrs Mbete: They are "like vultures descending upon a dead carcass" (*Silent* 179).

Mrs Mbete's testimony has opened old wounds and Sindiwa's daughter Vuyelwa struggles immensely to come to terms with the truth. Nevertheless, it also sets her free and enables her to finally finish what her grandfather and her mother had dropped out of – an education at Lovedale College. Kondile in the end completes his high school education.

Vuyelwa represents the new generation of South Africa who knows that the past cannot be undone but that a new nation can be built upon truth and trust. The narrator, however, also believes that those responsible have to compensate for the sufferings they have caused. To say "sorry" is not enough because wrongs have to be

corrected and poverty and pain have to be alleviated: "What we want to see is true reconciliation, not just tolerance. The former is enduring, the latter not" (*Silent,* 184). Mrs Mbete shows remorse and privately asks Kondile and his wife for forgiveness. As she and Nomsa embrace each other it seems as if a spell has been broken: There is no need for words and for the first time in a long time, Kondile and his wife sleep peacefully at night (cf. *Silent* 185). The narrator is aware that the whole truth can never be known but he has found out enough to be able to reclaim the memory. His people have forgiven him and he knows enough of the truth now to be proud that his daughter "died a hero in the field" (*Silent* 187). Kondile's testimony has opened the doors to forgiveness and a new beginning. By narrating his story he has not only stated his own truth but also spoken out for the subaltern and oppressed members of the South African society. Telling ones story is the first step towards healing and reconciliation.

6. *Mother to Mother* (Sindiwe Magona, 2001)

6.1. Historical background to Sindiwe Magona's Mother to Mother

Sindiwe Magona was born in a little village in the Transkei, South Africa, then a "Bantu-Homeland"[69] for the Xhosa. When she was four, her family moved to a squatter camp outside of Cape Town. Before Magona was 23 years old, she was left by her husband while she was pregnant and had to raise two children singlehandedly under the harsh living conditions of the apartheid government.

However, she made her way as an author and even earned several degrees, including an Honorary Doctorate from Hartwick College in New York. In the course of time she was offered a job at the United Nations and taking her children with her, moved to New York. Recently, she has moved back to her home in South Africa.

Magona' s work focuses on "women's issues, HIV/AIDS, the plight of children and the fight against apartheid and racism"[70]. She has published two autobiographical books, *To My Children's Children* in 1990 and *Forced to Grow* in 1992. Magona is also the author of two collections of short stories, *Living, Loving and Lying Awake at Night [1992]* and *Push-Push! And Other Stories* [1996]. So far she has co-written eighteen children's books and two novels, *Mother to Mother* in 1998 and only recently, in September 2008, her new novel *Beauty's Gift*[71] was published.

Her first novel is about a black mother trying to come to terms with the fact that her son has murdered a young white woman. The killer's mother addresses the mother of the victim because she wants her to understand under which circumstances she herself as well as her son have grown up. Mandisa grieves for the other mother and tries to communicate with her through letters. She describes her own and her son's lives as representative for many black youths growing up under difficult and brutal circumstances in the South African townships of the apartheid era.

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[69] Judith Lütge Coullie: *The Closest of Strangers: South African Women's Life Writing*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2004.

[70] Magona's novel *The Green Freedom of a Cockatoo* is not yet published but said to be forthcoming. See University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg: "The Green Freedom of a Cockatoo" (cf. E-text).

[71] For Sindiwe Magona's bibliography and publications see
Judith Lütge Coullie: *The Closest of Strangers: South African Women's Life Writing*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2004.

The novel was provoked by the tragic death of Amy Biehl in 1993. The 26-year-old American was on a Fulbright scholarship at the University of the Western Cape in order to assist with preparations for the first democratic elections to be held in 1994. Amy was committed to help end apartheid and make a difference in South Africa. The young woman was murdered on the 25th of August 1993, a few days before she would have returned home to California after a ten-months-scholarship. She wanted to drop off a few of her black friends in the township Guguletu[72]. The car was attacked by an angry mob that threw stones at the vehicle. Amy was hit on the head and could not continue to drive, so she fled. She was tracked down and finally stoned and knifed by four young men, three of them being high school students. She died as a result of her injuries.

The four men responsible for her death were convicted and sentenced to 18 years of imprisonment. In 1998, after serving four years, their application for amnesty was granted by the TRC and all four of them were released. Amy's parents, Linda and Peter Biehl [who died in 2002][73] and their three other children had flown in from California to attend the hearing. Linda commented: "You're trying to know whether to hate them or - I just felt this void"[74]. In remembrance of their daughter the parents spent some time in Guguletu, the township where Amy's murderers had grown up. Amy's mother told the press: "[W]hen I was able to come out into their environment, then I knew, OK, there was some logic to it. I can understand how, if you were a youth living in these conditions, you could be stirred up, and you could become violent. I think I can understand that".[75]

As Amy's parents believed that her daughter would have wanted them to continue what she had begun[76], they established the Amy Biehl Foundation Trust in Cape Town with programmes designed 'to develop and empower youth in the townships and contribute to community building efforts as a mechanism to reduce the levels of crime and violence in these areas'.[77] The homepage that promotes the foundation and

[72] Guguletu: Township in the Cape Flats that was a designated homeland to many black South Africans when they were relocated to live outside of the cities as those were declared white residential areas according to the Group Areas Act of 1950. Guguletu and Nyanga were established in 1960 because Langa, the only official black housing area in Cape Town, was overcrowded. Residents of Guguletu come from both inside and outside the Cape Town area. Cf. Centre for Popular Memory (E-text).

[73] Cf. Donna Bryson (E-text): "People Don't Want a Death to Be in Vain 22 April 2008".

[74] Andy Rooney (E-text): "Amy's Story".

[75] Ibid.

[76] Cf. CNN International (E-text).

[77] Amy Biehl Foundation Trust (SA) (cf. E-text).

asks for donations in the U.S. is called the Amy Biehl Foundation[78] and since 2000 has supported a school[79] in New Mexico which was named after the young girl.

The programmes offered in Cape Town are after school activities for those who wish to go to college. Activities include sports, music lessons, environmental classes, creative arts including drama and dance, readings by youth role models, IT-classes as well as programmes focusing on prison outreach, first aid training or AIDS awareness.[80] At the amnesty hearing Archbishop Desmond Tutu said that the Biehl family had turned the logic "all upside down" because it should have been the responsibility of the South Africans to give the parents some kind of reparation.[81] Instead the victims, grieving over the loss of their child, stated that they wanted to help the community which produced their daughter's murderers.[82].

To be able to dedicate most of their time to the projects in South Africa, Amy's parents gave up their former jobs. They also opened a bakery in Guguletu, which provided the area with bread and offered jobs. It soon branched out to other townships as well. The after school programmes spread to other poor areas. August 25th of 2008 will be the 15th anniversary of Amy's death. In 2000, the 7th anniversary of Amy's death, her parents visited the spot, where their daughter was killed and distributed bread to the community for free.[83] Among other awards that the couple received, Linda Biehl was awarded the Order of the Companion of OR Tambo in bronze for 'displaying outstanding spirit of forgiveness in the wake of the murder of her daughter and contributing to the promotion of non-racism in post-apartheid South Africa' in April 2008.[84]

Stanford University which Amy had graduated from, annually awards two Fulbright scholarships in memory of Amy Biehl.[85]

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[78] Amy Biehl Foundation (USA) (cf. E-text).

[79] Amy Biehl High School (cf. E-text). Also see Jill Davidson (E-text): "Small School, Big Influence: Amy Biehl High School Tells Its Story Fall 2005".

[80] Cf. Amy Biehl Foundation (USA) (E-text).

[81] Amnesty hearing transcripts (E-text). Also see "Amy's Story" (E-text), the Amnesty decision of Amy Biehl's hearing in Cape Town from 1998 (cf. “Decision AC/98/0030”, E-text).

[82] Cf. "Amy's Story" (E-text).

[83] Cf. Daily Dispatch (E-text): "Amy Biehl is remembered".

[84] "The award -- named for the late African National Congress hero Oliver Tambo -- has been granted in the past to former United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan and, posthumously, Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi. Entertainer and civil rights activist Harry Belafonte was a fellow honoree this year". Cf. Donna Bryson (E-text): "People Don't Want a Death to Be in Vain". Also see The Presidency (E-text): “The Order of the Companions of O R Tambo”, "National Orders Awards, 22 April 2008" (cf. E-text), see Bathandwa Mbola (E-text).

[85] Mail & Guardian (E-text): "Recipients Named for 2008 National Orders". Also see Cf. Angela Freeman (E-text).

Ntombeki Ambrose Peni[86] and Mzikhona Eazi Nofemela, two members of the mob that killed Amy, got in contact with the Biehls who forgave them for what they did and even employed both of them at the Amy Biehl Foundation Trust. About the Biehls Peni said to the press: 'They are very generous people. They are more than friends. To me they are parents.'[87] According to Peter Biehl, their relationship could be "strange", but nevertheless he and his wife created a construction company involving Peni and Nofomela and he believes:

> If they make it, they are clear evidence to the new South Africa: Two people can pull themselves up from the very worst of possible situations and make something of themselves. That's her [Amy's] dream. And I think that she's living that dream today, through these two guys.[88]

6.2. Magona's Novel and the Subaltern

Amy Biehl's story has been widely published on, numerous newspapers reported on the case and in 2000 even a film was released by the foundation: *A Long Night's Journey Into Day*[89] – a prize-winning documentary featuring several cases examined by the TRC, one of them being Amy's death. As a result, the story of Amy Biehl obtained publicity and can be accessed online from all over the world today. Even though it is fortunate that Amy's parents had the wish and the means to change life of South African township residents for the better, the fact that we only know one side of the story, the white American point of view, cannot escape notice. We gain insight into Amy's life but not into the perpetrators' lives. Hardly anything is known about them and their circumstances and although Altnöder claims "that Amy Biehl's parents visited their [daughter's killers'] homes and embraced their mothers" (Altnöder 90), nothing is known of their parents' reactions.

According to Cashmore, the subaltern, "the denial of a voice to Others", exists because of the position of centrality that whiteness holds world-wide (Cashmore 415). As the voices of black communities were not included in the public discourse of the Amy Biehl case, Sindiwe Magona decided to testify for them and wrote a novel about the other side of the story, from the perspective of the black mother.

[86] For a recent article where Peni is mentioned because Mandela has become his role model, see: Donna Bryson (E-text).
[87] Cf. Daily Dispatch (E-text): "Amy Biehl is remembered" .
[88] See Cate Malek (E-text).
[89] The film was awarded the top prize for documentaries at the Sundance Film Festival and the Peace Film Prize at the Berlin Film Festival. Cf. "A Long Night's Journey Into Day." (E-text). .

Sindiwe Magona grew up in a black township of Cape Town. Thus, she was a member of a subaltern group, part of the black township community whose voice was silenced by the apartheid government. Residents of townships had no say in any matter; they had been forcefully relocated to areas outside of towns and cities. They were not allowed to leave their new homes without a pass, regardless of whether they came from Soweto, Langa or Guguletu. Amy Biehl came to South Africa to help with voter's registration because township inhabitants had no right to vote until the 1994 elections. After the murder, the victim's story was all over the newspapers, "rightly so" in Magona's eyes, but she nevertheless wanted to make the other mother's voice heard (*Mother* v). Consequently, she became the interlocutor who speaks for Mxolisi's mother.

The sophisticated and at times poetic narrator's voice sometimes irritates in sentences such as "What thoughts filled her mind as she woke! What dreams were hers the night just past!" (*Mother* 5) but in general the narrator's voice seems to belong to a woman growing up in a township. Her figurative language illustrates her surroundings and the rural township village she grew up in. Therefore her speech is prevalently characterized by comparisons to nature and the animals living in it. Altnöder claims that the pattern is governed by the fact that "those in power are elevated to godlike status, while those lacking power are reduced to the position of the absolute Other, animals" (Altnöder, 98). When Mandisa and her family are relocated from Blouvlei to Guguletu, they have to go trekking like pack animals (cf. *Mother* 66). However, those in power are compared to animals: One of the policemen who, raids Mandisa's house, is described as "not human" and is accused of "having robbed some poor bull frog of his [face]…and an ox for his neck and eyes" (*Mother* 85). The author often makes striking use of metaphors involving animals, insects or nature:

> Like the rollings of the dung beetle, merely passing it [the rumour that a white was killed in the township] along carried within itself the mechanism for its own augmentation and it grew until it became the hoarse roar of a river greedily drinking down the first rains after a long, hard-hitting drought. (*Mother* 53)

The references to animals also arise from what people in the tribe say, e.g. "Troubles come as thick as the hairs of a well-fed dog, my people say" (*Mother* 88). When the truth is out, Mandisa in her role as Mxolisi's mother is called "Mother of the serpent"

(*Mother* 115). As the narrator receives her new and derogatory name from China's family, "a snake slithered down the furrow in my back" – the snake being an allegory for insidiousness and deceitfulness.

At the time of Amy's killing Magona was in New York, but when she came back six months later, she found out that one of the four young men involved in the murder, who were on trial, was the son of her childhood friend: "Well, that changed things a bit, because then I was catapulted into a situation where I had *empathy* for the mother of the perpetrator of such a crime" (Attwell 284). Magona asked herself how the killer's mother, her old friend, was handling the situation. She did not know the Biehl family but somehow she felt the urge to tell them about the harsh life in the township to make them understand better why this had happened:

For two years I had this urge to go to the Biehls, especially the mother, to explain how this woman Mandisa was as a child. How bright, how full of zest, how full of life. And explain what happened to her when she was fifteen or sixteen, when she got pregnant as a teenager. And, two children later, a young man who was himself a child, who can't have been twenty, left the area. And I don't know that they have ever seen each other since. And I know vaguely that she has had other children. And I know what kind of life she must have had as a poor African woman. Because that's a situation I have been in, in my early twenties when I was left with my children. (Attwell, 284)

Thus, Magona weaves in her own experience of growing up in a township, which becomes obvious when comparing the novel with her autobiographical works *To my Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* (cf. Altnöder 91). The killers' *real* mothers growing up in a township, also would probably not have had the educational background enabling them to produce a novel. Magona grew up in a township as well but had two years teacher's training. She says about herself "I am just telling stories! I do not come from a background of literature studies […] I have to feel strongly about something, and therefore I will write about it" (Attwell 292).

The author believes that there are lessons to be learnt from "knowing something of the other world" (*Mother*, v). Thus, she introduces her readers into the world of this young woman's killer, into "[…] the world of those, young as she was young, whose environment failed to nurture them in the higher ideals of humanity and who, instead, became lost creatures of malice and destruction" (*Mother*, v).

By empathising with the killer's mother, she prevents her readers from seeing only black and white but confronts them with the grey areas. Magona's sensitive style of writing forces readers to face their stereotypes as she wants them to see that Mxolisi, the killer in the book, cannot simply be branded a bad person. In accordance with Cashmore who states that "the Self no longer represents a fixed identity" (Cashmore 307), Magona shows how Mxolisi's identity is shaped; how he is influenced by his surroundings, by the experiences he has as well as by interaction with numerous other people. She wants the other mother, who represents all those who do not know the harsh and inhumane township life, to understand why and how a killing like this could happen. Therefore, Mxolisi's mother addresses her letters to the mother of the victim but on a different level: The letters are addressed to the reader. The author's aim is identical with the TRC's aim to achieve the "construction of an ethical community" (Libin 136). This community was required to hold "a position of openness, accessibility and understanding: a stance of ethical responsiveness, a vulnerability to the approach of the Other" (Libin 136). Narrating the story of the Other, of Mxolisi's mother, Magona – within the frame of a fictional testimony – paves the way for reconciliation. She knows that the opportunity to forgive will only present itself if one takes into account the point of view of the Other. She believes that Mxolisi killed the young woman because he was not himself but rendered a "de-personalised" object by the crowd, "merely a tool – and hence an object – of the black race" (Altnöder, 106).

Magona said that it was the urge to talk to the Biehls that made her write her first novel. She wanted to explain to them how mere children could kill someone, what could have driven them so far:

> I wanted to explain that, sometimes with the best intention in the world, there are situations where parents cannot be effective parents. And definitely during this time I write about. The government of South Africa was waging war against African families. If the father was working, it was never for enough wages. So the mother had also to be working; the children were being brought up by who? And today we wonder that all these young people are lost. We were not there. The parents were not there to raise their children. I wanted to explain this to the Biehls. Not that it excuses the people who killed their child. (Attwell 285)

Although Magona never could get herself to speak to the Biehls in person ["I didn't; I am a coward, I confess it!"], she freed herself of the feelings of grief by writing a fictional testimony "and that's *Mother to Mother"* (Attwell 287). In the story the

victim's mother does not respond. In real life, however, Linda Biehl reads the opening passage from Mother to Mother: ">>I do not pretend to know how your daughter died. . . my son was only an agent. . .<< Biehl read, as her husband stared blankly at the audience"[90]. Magona wanted the story of the Other to be heard and thus the testimony of "the black mother's narrative voice claims a textual space that aims to fill this gap [that only the white mother's side is heard] by portraying the world of her son as a representative of the lives of all four real-life perpetrators involved in the killing of Amy Biehl" (Altnöder 107-108).

It seems that the fictional novel is the only way the South African subaltern voice can be heard, as the black mother's story can not be found or heard anywhere else up to this day.

6.3. Truthfulness of Testimony

As this novel clearly fictionalises a historic event, dealing with the question of truthfulness of testimony is inevitable. The official version is represented by newspaper articles and websites, most of which are written by American citizens or, in the latter case, even by the Biehl family themselves. Either they are biased because they are American or because they are South African. They will be biased being one of the killers or one, on the other hand, one of the victim's friends who were driven home by Amy that day. Any testimony must necessarily be subjective. Hence, one cannot say whether the novel sticks to *facts* or not, because as usual only a mosaic-like picture of different truths is known.

It is, however, Mxolisi's truth, that represents the microcosmic truth of the black community in Guguletu – and on a wider scale the macrocosm of truth of the black community of South Africa. Their truth has not yet been told, is not out there in public – is not the *official* version of the truth. Until 1994, the official truth had always been the truth of the government, of the apartheid state. Ironically the murder was committed in 1993, just one year before the first democratic elections for all South Africans were held. After the elections it was believed that nobody would be discriminated against because of "race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture or language" (Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1993). Still, in the Biehl case,

[90]Public Speech delivered at Berkely University by Linda Biehl in 1999: Fernando Quintero (E-text).

the official truth always was that of the whites: the South African whites' as well as the American whites'. No black voices were heard, they were the subaltern group and their point of view was marginalized. It was only in 1997, at the TRC hearings, that the side of the Other was heard and made public for the first time.

In 1998 *Mother to Mother* was published to support this black subaltern voice and to enable it to both speak and reach out to South Africa and beyond. Magona, who wanted this voice to be heard, realised that the South African testimonial novel was one way to authentically make the black subaltern voice heard.

Magona is careful not to project her fictional realisation of the incident on real life. She consciously does not give the white victim in her novel a name, which drives her even more into the representative position of the white activist in the struggle (cf. Altnöder 92).

In the novel, Mxolisi is singled out by the police as the only killer, although when speaking with his mother, he claims that "many people stabbed her" (*Mother* 195). At the TRC hearing there were four men responsible for the killing. Mxolisi, in contrast to the unnamed white victim, represents the black experience in South Africa (cf. Altnöder, 92). Magona's description of the day the murder happened is similar to the description in the TRC reports of the hearing which state that…

> [T]he applicants explained their behaviour by saying that earlier that day they had attended a meeting at the Langa High School where a Pan African Student organisation (PASO) unit was relaunched. Peni was elected Chairperson at the meeting […] and Nofemela was a PASO organiser at the Joe Slovo High School.[91]

According to the TRC[92], the strike by "teachers in the Western Cape, who demanded recognition for the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU)" as well as "the struggles of the Azanian Peoples Liberation Army (APLA) for the return of the land to the African People", were addressed at this meeting. In 1993, APLA, the military wing of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), had declared the "Year of the Great Storm" in reference to a political struggle, not only against the government but also against white people in particular. Magona uses a political slogan of the liberation movement in her novel: "One settler, one bullet" (cf. *Mother* 206).

In front of the TRC, the four accused said to have acted as they did because they believed that 'by killing civilian white[s], APLA was sending a serious political

[91] Cf. "Decision AC/98/0030" (E-text): Amnesty decision of Amy Biehl's hearing in Cape Town from 1998.

[92] Cf. Ibid. for the whole paragraph.

message to the government of the day' which would eventually "compel them to hand over political power to the majority of the people of South Africa". They did not know that their target was actually a comrade, but within their racial and simplistic way of thinking every white person was a settler and hence an oppressor.
At the meeting the speakers urged PASO members to support the APLA struggle.[93] Although the first democratic elections, in which everyone would be able to vote, were already in preparation, this prospect nevertheless could not compensate "the injustices suffered by the majority of the South African population" (cf. Altnöder 79).
In the novel the political meeting does not take place. Mxolisi and his friends have to postpone it to the next day because Reverend Mananga informs them that their venue, the hall of the Anglican Church in Guguletu, is occupied by another group. Without having achieved anything, but still full of confidence and in a revolutionary mood, they make their way back home. They break into a song which clearly is in the style of one of the major protest lyrics during the black civil rights' movement. The song was sung by slaves working on plantations even before the American Civil War [1861-1865] and its text was gradually changed to "We *will* overcome" (Cf. Finlayson 14). Mxolisi and his friends also adapt it; they see themselves as having *already* overcome. Although South Africa is still in the transition phase at that time, they encourage themselves by singing:

> For deep, in our hearts, We did believe
> We would overcome, one day! (*Mother*, 19).

Magona includes this song as a form of testimony to the hardship they overcame, a way of expressing self-confidence and hope for the future. As the reader will find out in the final chapter, Mandisa ironically also imagined the girls in the victim's car to be singing until they were attacked. “Mxolisi's group toyi-toyied[94] its way along NY3, towards NY 1. As the vanguard neared NY 1, all at once, it came to an abrupt halt; hit by familiar cacophony: the crackling of hungry tongues of fire, busy devouring […] a vehicle” (*Mother*, 15).

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[93] Cf. ibid. [23 November 2008].
For a detailed account on the meeting and the different political organisations also see:
Sonja Altnöder: "Fictionalising 'Facts': Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother*. In: Inhabiting the 'New' South Africa. Ethical Encounters at the Race-Gender Interface in Four Post-Apartheid Novels by Zoe Wicomb, Sindiwe Magona, Nadine Gordimer and Farida Karodia." Studies in English Literary and Cultural History. 76-90.

[94] According to Krog, toyi-toyi refers to a dance performed e.g. during protest marches.
Cf. Antjie Krog: *Country of My Skull.* Johannesburg: Random House, 1998.

Coming closer, the gang realises that the car must have been hijacked by youths acting according to "Operation Barcelona"[95], which was launched in 1993 to stop all delivery into townships. This measure was taken by residents to make their townships ungovernable, hoping to force the government to act on their behalf. As the police arrive, Mxolisi and his friends leave hurriedly.

When Mxolisi's group later meets up with other friends, who have also been roaming the streets, they share the spoils. The other group was luckier, though they "had also come across a vehicle that had been hijacked. But in their case, they were able to scavenge from the victim, a meat delivery man" (*Mother* 17). The novel does, however, depict Mxolisi and his friends as the attackers who initially hijacked the vehicles. The TRC report, stating the decision on the case of the murder, describes the following incidences:

> The attack on the car driven by Amy Biehl was one of many incidents of general lawlessness in NY1[96] that afternoon. Bands of toy toying youths threw stones at delivery vehicles and cars driven by white people. One delivery vehicle was toppled over and set alight and only arrival of the police prevented more damage.[97]

Although the descriptions are similar, the novel is only loosely based on the events of the 25 August 1993, the fictional life story of Mandisa and Mxolisi constitutes the main part of the novel. Both are characters that sprang from the author's imagination, but with her background and knowledge of actual township life, their stories probably bear a lot of resemblance to the lives of the real killers. According to Michael Bernard-Donals, the accuracy of testimony does not lie in the conformity with facts, but in the ability to make the reader catch a glimpse of the *experienced* truth of the event, which Magona definitely achieves through her narration:

> [...] accounts of horrible events that are inaccessible to the memories of the tellers […] indicate an event as it occurs before anyone's ability to speak of it, not so much in their accordance with the facts of history […] but in the way they disrupt the narrative of history and force the reader or the interviewer to see something horrible, perhaps a trace of the traumatic event. (Bernard-Donals 1311)

[95]Cf. “Decision AC/98/0030.” (E-text): Amnesty decision of Amy Biehl's hearing in Cape Town from 1998.

[96] Native Yard 1. Ntombi Mzamane, who grew up in Guguletu, produced the 4-minute-film *Native Yard 1* about the main street of the township. During the apartheid era whites did not give names to the streets but just numbered them. Cf. Ikon South Africa (E-text): a platform for young filmmakers.

[97]Cf. “Decision AC/98/0030.” (E-text).

6.4. Loving Rejection and Atonement[98]

Mxolisi's birth "unreasonably and totally destroy[s] the me: 'I was...the me I would have become" (*Mother*, 2). The son destroys the young mother's dreams of pursuing her high school education in East London and forces her to leave her family and marry China, whom she does not love any more as he, once he knows she is pregnant, behaves with indifference and shock towards her. Thus, Mandisa tries to repress her feelings of resentment towards her son but a sangoma, a traditional South African healer, sees through her:

> Why the wrath in her eyes? […] out of them shone boiling anger and...was it pity? "Mama," she said, her voice once more her own. "You must free this your son [….] Children are very sensitive. They know when we hate them." After a small pause she shook her head. "Perhaps, I use a word too strong...but, resentment can be worse than hate." (*Mother*, 154)

The sangoma tells Mandisa that her son "needs all the love and understanding he can get' as he has seen 'great evil in his short life" (ibid.). He holds himself responsible for the death of his two teenage friends, Zazi and Mzamo, who liked to play with him when he was still a toddler. When one day the police came looking for them, Mxolisi, thinking it was a game of hide and seek, gave their hiding place away. His friends were shot before his unbelieving eyes. Since then, he had stopped talking because "he'd witnessed the children of the words his mouth had uttered" (*Mother* 148).

Mxolisi is also unconsciously held responsible for this by his mother. In consequence to this he does not speak a word for two years because he can feel that he is being blamed. Mandisa is shocked as she has obviously repressed that she has feelings of hate towards her son. He deprives her of her home in Guguletu, of her family and of her education. Her own parents shun her when she is pregnant and she can never again ameliorate her relationship to her mother. Once Mxolisi is born, they are doting grandparents, but still act in a reserved and distanced way towards her. Even when she leaves her parents' house for good she knows that her mother will miss Mxolisi but she, as her own daughter is not even bid farewell: "A part of me hated him. Not him…but what he was…had been…the effect he seemed to have on my life. Always

[98] Mandisa's love-hate relationship towards her son Mxolisi finally leads to atonement because of the inevitable death due to the difficult circumstances in an apartheid world.

negative, always cheating me of something I desperately wanted. I shrunk because he was" (*Mother* 142).

When Mandisa realises that it is her own fault that Mxolisi does not speak she is paralysed: "My whole being turned to ice" (*Mother* 154). After this experience, a strong bond develops between Mxolisi and his mother, even more so because he at first grows up without a father.

6.5. The Testimonial Form

To be able to express the privacy and the individual side of testimony within the novel as an openly available, public form, Magona chose an epistolary structure. The epistolary novel was originally discovered in the 18th century[99], when works like Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa or The History of a Young Lady* [1747] reached their heyday. According to Bray, Richardson is called "the most widely-admired epistolary novelist in the English language" (Bray, 54).

Perry states that 'because the letter-writer's imagination is involved in the translation of experience into language, a fiction told through letters becomes a story about events in consciousness, whatever else it may be about (Perry, 119). Thus, this form seems ideal for Magona's testimony dealing with consciousness and guilt.[100]

African women writers have rediscovered the epistle, since the letter "ensures an open inquiry into those matters that affect one's material well-being, one's spiritual disposition, one's destiny, and one's relationship both to other people and to the environment" (qtd. in Altnöder 77-78). Letters seem an apt medium for black female writing as they are a literary form that combines privacy and intimacy – the letter per se is a private form but the epistolary novel makes it public. According to Altnöder, *Mother to Mother* illustrates "not only […] what precedes but in fact what precludes the integrity of a black person in (post-)apartheid South Africa" (Altnöder 93).

[99]It is not clear which one was the first epistolary novel. Some claim that *Les Lettres portugaises*, published 1669 and attributed to Gabriel de Lavergne, were the impulse for translating letters into English and therefore starting an English tradition of epistle writing in literature.

[100]For an overview of the development of the epistolary novel see

Godfrey Frank Singer: *The Epistolary Novel. Its Origin, Development, Decline, and Residuary Influence.* New York: Russell and Russell, 1963. 1-20.

For a detailed representation of consciousness in the epistolary novel see:

Joe Bray: *The Epistolary Novel. Representations of Consciousness*. London: Routledge, 2003.

The whole novel consists of one long letter addressed to the victim's mother and is written by the fictional character Mandisa. Since Magona does not include any responding letters the reader is left with the impression that the letters remain unanswered. The title *Mother to Mother* could imply a dialogue but as it turns out, it is only Mandisa who stretches out to bond with the other mother in their – as Mandisa assumes – mutual grief. Whenever the narrator addresses the other mother directly as if she was talking to her face to face, the textural structure changes to italics. As Altnöder already mentioned, textual and structural elements are "intricately intertwined and cannot easily be discussed in isolation", thus it is more futile to concentrate on 'instances of actual overlap" (Altnöder 92).

In the text's temporal frame there are three narrative levels embedded in each other. First, there is the level of the telling, second there is the narrative level of fictionalised facts and third, there is the narrative level of historical flashbacks. The first, the level of the telling, is the master narrative from which the narrative voice of Mandisa, the mother as a witness, directly addresses the victim's mother. This voice controls the two other levels which are subordinate to the master narrative. The second is the narrative level of fictionalised facts on which Mandisa tells her version of the day of the killing and its aftermath – how she imagines it. She also recounts her own and her son's lives "on the narrative level of historical flashbacks" (Altnöder 93):

> This structural pecularity implies that – as regards content – the narrating I (positioned on the level of the telling) explicitly fashions the I(s) being narrated on the two subordinate levels with the specific intention of attaining the narratee's understanding of a black person's life in apartheid South Africa. (ibid.)

The first chapter, *Mandisa's lament,* starts with a personal address of this style to the other mother and is written after the victim has been killed and Mandisa has found out that her son is held responsible for the murder. The first sentence takes away the outcome of the attack on the young woman and foreshadows the ending: *"My son killed your daughter"* (*Mother* 1). Amy Biehl's death is therefore inevitable, in regard to both the perpetrator and the victim:

> On the one hand, the perpetrator could not evade the fate of his personal history so decisively influenced by apartheid's politics […] – and on the other hand, the victim could not escape her preordained death described on the narrative level of fictionalised facts. (Altnöder 93)

The looming death is already foreshadowed in the first chapter and anticipated in the second, when the day of the murder, but not the killing itself, is described. It is always at the back of both the narratee's and the reader's mind (cf. Altnöder, 94). As the reader is deprived of the narration of this event until the end, he subsequently anticipates the killing. Accordingly, the narrative and the structural level of the novel both express the inescapability of the victim's death.

The second chapter describes the day of the murder, 25 August 1993, until Mxolisi and his gang join the mob which surrounds a small car on NY 1. The fact that the reader is deprived of the knowledge who is in the car and what is going to happen next, creates suspense. The reader is not told what happens at NY 1 but is forced to abandon the mob of people surrounding the car.

Some scenes of the second chapter are depicted as a flashback, the narrating I, Mandisa, does not yet know that her son will kill a white woman. However, she also abandons her role as an involved narrator and describes what she imagines Amy's morning could have been like and what thoughts she might have had: "What hopes did she harbour in her breast for the day just born?" (*Mother*, 5).

Mandisa herself gets up and after several attempts succeeds in waking her three children. She is content with herself as she still possesses "the ability to raise the dead" (*Mother* 7) Juxtaposing the victim's and her own family's morning routines, the narrator reveals the strikingly different lifestyles – the white woman's world full of wealth, hope and opportunity as opposed to the black youth's world of poverty, hopelessness and a bleak outlook on the future.

The day the young American girl goes to university to bid all her friends farewell starts with a shower and some breakfast: "A big fluffy towel wrapped around her, barefoot, she heads for the kitchen […] Hurriedly, she gulps down cold-milk cereal. Chases it down with black coffee, piping hot. And a slice of wholewheat bread" (*Mother* 5).

Mxolisi is woken up by his mother who urges him and his brother Lunga not to let the boiled water for washing themselves get cold again. Mandisa desperately tries to keep a routine for her children, although she knows they do not go to school, once she has left the house for work. Instead, they go roaming the streets because they live by the motto "Liberation now, education later!" (*Mother* 61) [capital letters in original]. Their breakfast is bread with jam; Mxolisi blames his mother for not preparing porridge for them anymore because she has to leave early for her work to

be a maid in a white family's house. Then he asks: "Can we have some money for eggs, Mama?" (*Mother* 7), which lets the reader assume that the children do not receive pocket money – like Amy perhaps did – and that financial resources are tight in general for the family.

Once Mandisa has left the house, she projects an imagined scenario onto Mxolisi and his group of friends who spend their time prowling around (cf. Altnöder 95). The narration, however, comes to an abrupt halt, as Mxolisi and his friends are approaching the victim's car, and stops before the actual killing takes place.

Like in Zoe Wicomb's *David's Story*[101], the core of the story, what lies at the heart of Mxolisi's and Mandisa's trauma, is not [immediately] told. In Wicomb's novel the reader can only imagine what has happened to Dulcie; in the case of *Mother to Mother* the reader is kept in suspense how the killing actually happened until the last few pages of the book. To the reader, it seems that in the middle of the story there is a black hole, a part of Mxolisi' s life that neither the novel's character Mandisa nor the empathic reader has access to. Thus, a trauma is captured within the novel, the black hole is translated into a fragmentary narrative form. That form mirrors Mandisa's efforts and failures in claiming the truth that foreshadows the whole narration.

Chapter three again changes to the view of the "involved I" (Altnöder 95). Mandisa's telling now takes place from a limited narrative perspective; she does not know her son has killed someone but is still to find out. She is on her way to her children, sent back home early by her employer, Mrs Nelson, who briskly tells her "Trouble in Guguletu, my girl! I think you'd better go!" (*Mother* 23). The reader is now pushed into Mandisa's subject position and can only experience everything through her eyes. On the bus back home the narrator recalls how she was relocated to this black township, until wild speculations among the passengers about what could have happened during their absence bring her back to reality.

In chapter four it is still Wednesday the 25th of August 1993 in the evening, when Mandisa returns home and her daughter Siziwe tells her that Mxolisi is missing. From Skonana, their neighbour, they hear the news that a white woman has been stabbed.

In the fifth chapter Mandisa remembers both her own school days and then Mxolisi's that were governed by boycotts, strikes and indifference. This comparison brings out the gap between the generations – Mandisa was still obedient towards her

[101] Cf. Dorothy Driver's afterword in the paperback edition of: Zoe Wicomb: *David's Story.* New York: The Feminist Press. 2001. 215-254.

suppressors. Mxolisi already started revolting against injustice. One paragraph also addresses the victim's mother, identifiable in structure by italics, wondering about the American girl's education and evidently blaming her for being so careless: *"And your daughter, did she not go to school? Couldn't she see all the signs telling her this is a place where only black people live?"* (*Mother*, 72) [italics in the original]. This chapter also bears a break in the narrative structure. Mandisa knows that a white woman was killed but she does not know who did it and she does not know anything about the victim. Nevertheless she ponders: "A white person killed in Guguletu, a black township. Killed, from all accounts, for no reason at all. Killed, in fact, while doing good…helping the people of the township" (*Mother* 69). Mandisa could not have known that the victim was actually helping people. At this point, the narrator breaks out of her limited point of view (cf. Altnöder 95).

Chapter six depicts the day after the killing when Mandisa's house is raided by the police in search of Mxolisi. Once again the novel testifies to the destruction of the only safe place that blacks had, their home – their place:

> Place can be described as a mental construction in which the physical space is pivotal in creating and sustaining social relationships. This is important in the complex processes of reconstructing one's identity. (Field, Meyer and Swanson, 40)

Mandisa's memories of her old home, Blouvlei, are modelled on Sindiwe's childhood home in Blaauvlei, a squatter location outside Cape Town (cf. Altnöder, 97). By describing the relocation Magona gives a voice to all the voiceless who had to flee to other places where they had to start from scratch. Along these lines, testifying to such a traumatic event helps to reconstruct identities. The Population Registration Act of 1950 that had established four racial categories in combination with the Group Areas Act that confined each race to separate homelands, led to the declaration of white residential areas (cf. Altnöder 96). District Six in Cape Town is one of the most notorious examples where 60,000 people were forcibly removed to barren areas, known as the Cape Flats, and their houses in District Six were completely demolished.[102]

[102] Cf. The District Six Museum Homepage: Originally this district was a mixed community of freed slaves, merchants, artisans, labourers and immigrants and had close links to the city and the port. According to the Group Areas Act, it was declared a white area in 1966 and until "1982, the life of the community was over". In 1994, a museum was established that today displays and revives the memories of these experiences and deals with the general history of forced removals. For a detailed description of life in District Six in autobiographical form, see Nomvuyo Ngcelwane: Sala Kahle. District Six. An African Woman's Perspective. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 1998.

Chapter seven begins with a paragraph in italics – partly a repetition from the initial letter to the other mother – and continues as an account of the time when the narrator is fifteen years old. It seems as if the narrator wants to get the other mother, and also the reader, more involved in the story in order to make both understand her difficult youth: how she is sent to live with her grandmother, when she is fifteen in order to be protected from unwanted pregnancy, how she finds out she has already been pregnant with Mxolisi once she arrived, and how finally, against her will and after long negotiations on their parents' sides, she has to marry the father of her child, China. After China has left her, Mandisa meets Lungile and soon gets pregnant with her second son Lunga. Later she meets Dwadwa, her third husband, and gives birth to her daughter Siziwe. When Mandisa reflects on the general childhood and youth experiences in a township, her first-person narrative voice assumes a communal tone. She pictures their children's lives as typical for the majority of blacks growing up in South Africa (cf. Altnöder, 103). In her eyes, the frustration and hopelessness of their surroundings forced them into violence and crime.

> Our children made our homes the target of their wrath and visited untold devastation on them. A few of us gasped. Privately. […] With impunity they [our children] broke with old tradition and crossed the boundary between that which separates human beings from beasts. (*Mother*, 76)

In chapter eight, Mandisa again addresses the victim's mother trying to bond with her in their mutual pain:

> *Three children have come from my womb. Three claim me as mother. Three. But now, since your daughter's unfortunate death, I have been called mother to so many more: Mother of the beast […] There are those who even go as far as calling me Satan's mother.* (*Mother* 115, italics in original)

Chapter nine picks up the string of the frame story again and continues after the police raid, whereas chapter ten is again set in Mandisa's childhood, when her grandfather, Taomkhulu, tells her the legend of Nongqawuse which is also printed in italics. She was a young Xhosa girl who claimed to have seen the ancestors. According to her, they told her that if the tribes killed all their cattle and burnt down all their crops as a proof of faith, they would be rewarded with healthier cattle and new crops. Most importantly, however, the white settlers [the English] would be driven into the sea where they would all drown. The price was high because the tribes had to destroy all their food sources. In addition to this, the cattle were

precious because they served to pay tribute to the chiefs or were used as dowry, "lobola" in Xhosa, but the natives suffered under the white government and there was "no sacrifice too great to wash away the curse" (*Mother* 176). Thus, it came to the tragic cattle killings[103] of 1856 and 1857. When they had done as they were told, many natives famished but nothing happened, worst of all, the whites did not leave. At school Mandisa learnt that the Xhosa did as they were told because they were "superstitious and ignorant" (*Mother* 175).

Again, the official record of this historic event is biased. By including this incident in her testimony, Magona actively rewrites history, this time the history as the Xhosa saw it and not from the view of the white settlers: In the course of her grandfather's narration "what had seemed stupid decisions" at school "became not only understandable but highly honourable" (*Mother* 183).

In reality and regardless of their belief, the Xhosa must have been desperate because they felt threatened by the settlers. Apart from that, Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape at that time, "trampled on this human wreckage: he exiled the starving, crushed the survivors, and seized more than half of Xhosaland for a colony of white settlement" (Peires, ix). Until today it is not clear whether it was a plot by Grey to destroy the Xhosa or a plot by the chiefs themselves to bring about a war with the Cape Colony. It is, however, without controversy that the Xhosa must have deemed the prospect of being ruled over by whites unbearable, otherwise they would hardly have compromised everything they owned. To Magona the incident of the cattle killing is similar to the "liberation before education" movement, as the general idea in both situations was that "to advance we had to retreat" (Attwell, 290). The school boycotts and strikes were justified by the belief that they would lead them "to advance in the struggle" (ibid.). The author believes this can be compared to

> [when] a prophet or prophets, a voice, a movement, a feeling, the general feeling, the mood of the moment, says—destroy everything and your lot will be improved. The same thing happened in 1857. I don't know how these things happen and I don't know why people don't learn from history. You cannot advance by destroying everything. (Attwell 290)

In the final chapter twelve which describes the killing, Magona mentions the Xhosa prophet to indicate that nothing has changed for the better but only for the worse

[103] Zakes Mda's novel *The Heart of Redness* is a synthesis of written history, oral tradition and magical realism about the Xhosa cattle killing. Mda is a novelist and a playwright and has received every major South African prize for his work. Zakes Mda: *The Heart of Redness.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.

since the cattle killings. Only the desire to drive the whites away is still there and possesses Mxolisi: Nongqawuse has voiced the unconscious collective wish of the nation: rid ourselves of the scourge (cf. *Mother* 210).

With all the anachrony[104] (Genette 40) of flashbacks and the constant change of place and time, the setting is indicated by titles as well as by the format of the text. The second part of chapter ten, titled "1pm-Thurdsday 26 August" (*Mother* 183), depicts the worried mother's journey to her son's secret hiding place.

Chapter eleven shows Mandisa trying to come to terms with the terrible truth which she now knows about because her son has told her. She is supported by her neighbours who come to grieve with her. The text is interspersed with paragraphs in italics, addressing the victim's mother as *"Sister-Mother"* and "*Mother of the Slain"* (*Mother*, 198; 199).

The final chapter comes full circle with the unfinished narration of the killing from the first chapter. The form also serves as a link to the other chapter as it begins with a letter to the mother in italics and ends with the description of the killing. The interrupted string of narration starting in the second chapter is picked up again. The reader is taken even further back in time, when the young American is still driving the yellow Mazda towards Guguletu, singing with her friends. As the action moves on, the reader can listen in on the girl's conversation in the car and shares the victim's last thoughts. In the novel Mxolisi never tells his mother any details about the killing.. Nevertheless, she takes over the narration telling the other mother what has happened. As Mandisa is not present she is projecting her imaginations on her son and tells the story as if he and all others had indeed acted like that.

Another interesting feature of this novel is the use of languages other than English [isiXhosa, Afrikaans and isiZulu phrases][105] and Afrikaans language despite the fact that the novel is predominantly written in English. The narrator often uses words or phrases from her mother tongue, which makes the fictional account more authentic. Although Mandisa and her whole family are Xhosa, the narrating language is English as Magona wanted the Biehls to understand how the killing of their daughter could have happened. Apart from that, the author also knew that an English novel could attract a globalized audience (cf. Attwell, 285).

[104] Anachrony designates all forms of discordance between the two temporal orders of story and narrative "where temporal reference is deliberately sabotaged" (Genette 40).
[105] Cf. Samuelson 233.

So the novel is paradoxically written in the language of the oppressor: A native South African narrator explains the cultural distance and alienation from the whites [both British and Afrikaners] by means of English. The conflict between a "[w]hite, English speaking, narratee's perception" (Altnöder 97) and the "narrated I's experience" (ibid.) becomes evident when the narrator, using both languages, describes how her family's relocation from Blouvlei to Guguletu began: ">>*Abelungu bayazidiliz' izindlu zethu.* Whites are pulling down our houses.<<" Tata [father][106] said the words gently, with no hint of emotion whatsoever..." (*Mother* 64, italics as in original). To bridge the cultural gap, which is also expressed by the use of italics for Xhosa, Magona translates Xhosa into English. When the reader, however, identifies with the narrator, he has to encounter "a reversal of the boundary lines between apartheid's racial categories in that he or she is obliged to cross these boundaries through his or her identification with the black Other's experience, narrated from an involved first-person's point of view" (Altnöder 98).
By testifying in both languages, the author achieves the reader's identification with the narrator and thus, facilitates a more thorough understanding of the native South African background shaped by their specific culture and history.

6.6. The Narratee and the Novel

When writing *Mother to Mother,* Magona was aware that she was writing for a different readership than in her two previous autobiographical works. Her novel is based on a true story. The work was published in 1998 in the post-apartheid era, when the readership was slowly becoming globalized. (cf. Attwell 282). By addressing the mother with the second-person pronoun "you", Magona simultaneously speaks to her readership, to the public. According to Genette, Mandisa cannot speak to the extradiegetic narratee because her role only corresponds to the intradiegetic narratee. As she is one of the elements in the narrating situation, her role is intradiegetic. The intradiegetic reader, the reader addressed within the narrative frame, in this case is the white mother. She can be addressed by the intradiegetic narrator, Mandisa.[107] However, the extradiegetic narrator can aim at an

[106] For the translation of "tata" see Altnöder 97.
[107] Here, following Genette's concept, the intradiegetic pair would correspond to Mandisa as the narrator and the white mother as the narratee. Therefore, the extradiegetic pair would correspond to the author as the narrator and the real reader as the narratee (cf. Genette 259-262). Similarly, "the extradiegetic narrator [...] can only aim at an extradiegetic narratee, who merges with the implied

extradiegetic narratee who merges with the implied reader (cf. Genette, 260). This ambivalent form of address is used on purpose because it involves the reader in the narration of the events. Genette claims that "a narrative, like every discourse, is necessarily addressed to someone" and always contains below the surface an appeal to the receiver (ibid.). Samuelson argues that the maternal voice ensures that the "I" speaking is presented with a relational identity to talk to, thus, camouflaging "acts of self-(re)construction" as the Black Consciousness Movement "defined attention to the individual as shameful self-indulgence" and enforced the mother role (cf. Samuelson 229). Linda Biehl today sees the "attackers as much as victims as her daughter" because they "were too caught up in the struggle against apartheid to value life or consider personal responsibility".[108] Like her, Magona is convinced that in reality it was the system of apartheid that finally led to the murder of the young American; "a system that promoted a twisted sense of right and wrong, with everything seen through the warped prism of the overarching crime against humanity" (*Mother*, vi).

Mandisa is aware that her son "was only an agent, executing the long-simmering dark desires of his race", possessed by "the burning hatred for the oppressor" (*Mother*, 210). His whole community, his own parents, had been cheering him on "since the day he was born". He had heard the song "Boers, they are dogs!' before he could even walk (*Mother* 209).As a natural consequence this makes him the "blind but sharpened arrow of the wrath of his race" (*Mother* 210). In speaking to the public through the character Mandisa, Magona tries to induce a confession, the avowal from all South Africans to the fact that "we are all culpable" (Attwell 285): "*Now your daughter has paid for the sins of the fathers and mothers who did not do their share of seeing that my son had a life worth living" (Mother* 3), [italics in original].

reader, and with whom each real reader can identify" (Genette 260). Thus, the real reader is able to identify with the white mother.

[108] Cf. Donna Bryson: "People Don't Want a Death to Be in Vain" (E-text).

6.7. Paratext

As Sindiwe Magona was born and grew up in South Africa but also lived in New York, her novel was published in both countries. The covers of these two editions could not be more different and are testimonies in themselves.[109] Before one even opens the book, Magona testifies to a South African reality by the means of images and colours. The two products are presented very differently, depending on the eye of the beholder.

The cover of the American publication[110] of *Mother to Mother* shows the back of a black hand, seemingly lying across its own body, a body as if shrouded in some white material . The image takes up the lower two thirds of the cover. The hand might belong to Mandisa. It evokes a female black hand over a woman's womb, set off against the white garmen, evoking the image of a pregnant woman protecting her unborn child. This could symbolize Magona's close relationship to Mxolisi and the whole mysterious conception. The hand is not relaxed, it is, with its fingers decidedly in a stressful position, in the grip of an uncertain destiny.

The upper part of the frame shows the title. The letters are uneven in size and shape, the m" of the first "mother" is not a capital letter but the first letter of the second "'MotheR' is. The first 'm' is framed by a blue square. It might refer to the confinement and the inescapability that are dominating Mandisa's and her family's life. Both "mothers" have the final capital "R" in common. The letters already express the difference between the two mothers: The gap between their poor and rich lifestyles is also featured in the formation and colour of the title: 'mother to' is on one level and written in black whereas "MotheR" is on a lower level and in white. As no names are used, the universality of mother bondage comes to mind. Mandisa addresses the other person as a mother and so immediately tries bonding with her.

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[109] The two covers discussed are included at the end of this thesis. There is also another U.S. publication of the novel with a third cover, depicting a black woman in front of a red-brown and yellow background with huts behind her in the distance. This cover will, however, not be analysed as this would go beyond the scope of this thesis. This is also the reason why no analysis of the covers of Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull* (there are also several), and Mtutuzeli Nyoka's *I Speak to the Silent* is included. The cover of *Mother to Mother* which is not discussed here can be viewed at the following homepage:

Antiquarian Book Sellers' Association of America (E-texts).

[110] The homepage of Philippe Cheng shows a larger frame of the photograph depicted on the cover of the American publication. Here, it seems obvious that the cover shows a young woman lying on her side with her arm on her stomach. Cf. Phillipe Cheng (E-text).

Thus, the writing explicitly refers to the protagonists' skin colour, sets them apart and simultaneously bonds them together.

The background for the title looks like a sepia photograph of township shacks from a bird's eye view. The corrugated metal sheets and cardboard pieces that serve as roofs, an umbrella, probably indicated that protection from too much rain or sun is needed, and the washing lines are all clearly visible. The "houses" are all rather small and stand in rows, right next to each other, as Mandisa describes them in Guguletu: “Hundreds and hundreds of houses. Rows and rows, ceaselessly breathing on each other. Tiny houses huddled close together. Leaning against each other, pushing at each other. Sad small houses crowned with gray and flat unsmiling roofs” (*Mother* 27).

The overall impression of the houses is bleak, dirty and crowded, fitting Mandisa's description. The colours are simple and only black, sepia and white. The whole image is rather serious, if not depressing. The book's spine is blue and includes a miniscule black and white photograph of the author. The colour fades out at the back and continues into a brown background. There are several short reviews and in the upper left corner is the author's short biography.

The South African edition has a completely different cover and was created by Simon Ford. On the back of the cover, in the upper left corner, surrounded by the blurb, is a black-and-white photograph of Sindiwe Magona, elegant with white pearl jewellery and – smiling. A short paragraph informs the reader about the author's life.

The background colour here is ochre-red and there is the likeliness of a long stemmed sunflower whose petals are unfurling against a colourful background of a sun setting over a peaceful sea horizon. The stem of the flower rises masterfully between the silhouettes of two female breast facing each other in unobtrusive dovegrey. This image takes up two thirds of the cover page.. The title is printed in blue and white letters and at the bottom of the cover the author's name appears in white.

The picture can be interpreted in two ways:.For an interpretation we come back to some more details in the flower. Its petals are red, yellow and white, their material not organic leaves but some cotton print material – perhaps modeled from African womens’ colourful dresses. If one takes a closer look, however, the flower's petals show printed letters which makes them look like they are made from recycling

material. This is an interesting thought because it could be purposefully evoked by the artist. Something new is made from old pieces of the past.

The background landscape appears idyllically in romantic greens ,whites and blues, perhaps conjuring up a river and a mountain range in a beautiful – South African – landscape. This is illuminated by a sunrise or a sunset, the sky bright and colourful: yellow, orange, blue and grey. A smaller version of the flower image is repeated on the back cover, the petals bloom in the lower left corner.

A possible reading of the cover would be the bondage of the two grieving mothers symbolized by the two breasts. As they are facing each other, the two mothers could be said to face each other as well, the will to communicate seems implicit.. The blooming flower may symbolises life itself. The flower blossoms and represents a life, cared for by two mothers of different race and upbringing. The two breasts both look alike, there are no distinctions of race or colour setting them apart. The vivid background colours represent not only the South African landscape but the rainbow colours of the new South African nation. Meadows, water and sky can be nourishing to those living and growing up without separation. With its friendly colours the books beckons to the reader, its rusty background red not the aggressive colour of blood but a soothing earthy colour.

Another vision, however, could be evoked through the grey shapes that lets another shape become visible: a neck with its head, encapsulating the scenery and the sunrise or sunset.The flower could be blooming in someone's head. This might be read as the flower representing the victim, living on in the heads of those who remember, in Mxolisi, in Mandisa or other South Africans or non-South-Africans. The flower could also stand for the perpetrator, Mxolisi, who has always been looked after and cared for by his mother, he has always been on and in her mind.

No matter which reading is the one that was intended – and perhaps they all were – they share an optimistic outlook on life and the flower is most definitely a beacon of hope. In this context the background would be seen as a sunrise, symbolizing the bright future for a new South Africa.

The contrast to the American version of the novel could not be more obvious. Its colours are not striking but concentrate mainly on black and white. The editions are fitted to address different audiences: In America the death of Amy Biehl might be seen even more as a tragedy than in South Africa: Many of the Biehls' friends could not understand why the family wanted to fly to South Africa to take part in the

hearing of their daughter's murderers in the first place, let alone how they could forgive them. A cover like the South African one would probably not have been suitable for this audience. In South Africa, 1998 was not only the year in which the novel was published but it was also the year when the TRC had already been through many hearings and was working on amnesty applications. Hence, the more reconciliatory and optimistic cover makes sense for a South African audience.

- ***7.*** Conclusion

> *It is a fiction of testimony more than a testimony in which the witness swears to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth […] without the possibility of this fiction […] no truthful testimony would be possible. Consequently, the possibility of literary fiction haunts so-called truthful, responsible, serious, real testimony as its proper possibility. (Derrida, 72)*

The novels examined in this thesis all give testimony to truth – to a truth that has been denied its accountability and trustworthiness. What these authors have witnessed, has long been the repressed counterpart of the official version of the 'truth' as it was archived in the form of historical documents.

Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull* was one of the first testimonies after the elections that provoked an outcry across the country. It laid open that, although there was only one past, there were still numerous histories that had not been acknowledged so far. This fact is mirrored in the structure of the novel as well – the author weaves different elements of individual memories together in order to produce a close-knitted 'quilt of truth': testimonies, amnesty applications and radio transcripts as well as her own thoughts and poetry constitute the final work. One can say that unclaimed experience was finally claimed on two levels of meaning: On the one hand, nobody had yet taken responsibility for what had happened and, on the other hand, traumatic memories had not yet been integrated into peoples' lives, neither individually nor collectively.

Mtutuzeli Nyoka's *I Speak to the Silent* focuses on this void of voices that the protagonist finally speaks to. The title itself can be interpreted as speaking to those who remain silent, those who have not yet spoken up to the ones who submit them to injustice and violence. The main character changes from an obedient, quiet servant

who endures his hardship into a man who tells his story and who goes on a quest to find the answers that he is deprived of. This search for the truth is also represented in the narrative form which lets the reader only catch glimpses of the whole truth. Together with the narrator, the reader discovers bits and pieces of Sindiswa's life and is denied Kondile's truth of the murder until the very end. Despite the ellipses, the novel emphasizes that, in the end, it is inevitable for the truth to come out.

Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother* has also been written because of the need to tell the side of the story not told yet. The author decided to make the black mother's and her son's fate known by speaking to an audience ignorant of a truth which was not made public by the media. The narrative takes the form of an epistolary novel but, in fact, the parts that are a direct address to the other mother are few. The greater part of the story is on the level of telling because that is the main focus of the novel: To make both the implied and the real reader understand and realise what life in a black township community was like.

Therefore, all three novels serve to oppose the *objective* version of the truth with subjective accounts of witnesses – which correlate to their personal memories. The testimonial mode was thus bred in a situation of denial – a denial of truth and of freedom of speech to a certain group of people: the natives of South Africa. They can be classified as the subaltern, a group that is marginalised and whose voice is excluded from public discourse. They were depicted as the uncanny Other, colonised and enslaved by the racial classification system of apartheid. When this group started to speak up in the time of the country's transition to democracy, the novel proved to be a suitable medium for reaching a globalised audience, perhaps even the only form in which the subaltern *can* speak and reach the Other.

Although there are critical voices concerning fictionalised accounts of testimony and their accurateness, contemporary South African novels written in the testimonial mode complement official testimonies. According to Derrida, fiction constitutes a prerequisite for truthful testimony. Fiction and 'real testimony' both refer to historical events but communicate them in different ways; one being that fiction does not state but *relate to* facts. This is exactly what might make literature more suitable for recounting testimonies: not the information but the subject position of the witness and how a situation was experienced are of importance. The death of the inner self cannot be testified to in an official document but a novel can bear the message. In fact, novels written in a testimonial mode can be more apt to give testimony than

court documents because the past that needs to be told cannot be summarised by facts.

Furthermore, the fact that trauma resists narration, can be made responsible for many testimonies not given. Narrative Exposure Theory enables patients to narrate their memories, but not all persons concerned have access to or the means for such a treatment. To make the subaltern voices heard, it needs more than testimonies in the juridical context. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a starting point for truth-telling. It represented the focal point for both testimony and fiction.

South African novels, like the ones discussed in this thesis, summon witnesses to narrate the memory of the past, a memory that needs to be included in the nation's history. Hence, the testimonial mode is a performative act in itself. It is an outcry for acknowledgement, for the world to listen and for the situation to change. This genre, therefore, is a possibility for speaking of the unspeakable, for speaking to and from the silent and for dealing with memory in a way that does not work for the form of official testimonies. It requires emphatic readers who can help to reposition selves in their midst. Ideally, the audience and the speakers can eventually become an ethical community. Thus, contemporary testimonial fiction can substantially and significantly contribute to closure and healing of South Africa's past.

7. Conclusion

> *It is a fiction of testimony more than a testimony in which the witness swears to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth […] without the possibility of this fiction […] no truthful testimony would be possible. Consequently, the possibility of literary fiction haunts so-called truthful, responsible, serious, real testimony as its proper possibility. (Derrida, 72)*

The novels examined in this thesis all give testimony to truth – to a truth that has been denied its accountability and trustworthiness. What these authors have witnessed, has long been the repressed counterpart of the official version of the 'truth' as it was archived in the form of historical documents.

Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull* was one of the first testimonies after the elections that provoked an outcry across the country. It laid open that, although there was only one past, there were still numerous histories that had not been acknowledged so far.

This fact is mirrored in the structure of the novel as well – the author weaves different elements of individual memories together in order to produce a close-knitted 'quilt of truth': testimonies, amnesty applications and radio transcripts as well as her own thoughts and poetry constitute the final work. One can say that unclaimed experience was finally claimed on two levels of meaning: On the one hand, nobody had yet taken responsibility for what had happened and, on the other hand, traumatic memories had not yet been integrated into peoples' lives, neither individually nor collectively.

Mtutuzeli Nyoka's *I Speak to the Silent* focuses on this void of voices that the protagonist finally speaks to. The title itself can be interpreted as speaking to those who remain silent, those who have not yet spoken up to the ones who submit them to injustice and violence. The main character changes from an obedient, quiet servant who endures his hardship into a man who tells his story and who goes on a quest to find the answers that he is deprived of. This search for the truth is also represented in the narrative form which lets the reader only catch glimpses of the whole truth. Together with the narrator, the reader discovers bits and pieces of Sindiswa's life and is denied Kondile's truth of the murder until the very end. Despite the ellipses, the novel emphasizes that, in the end, it is inevitable for the truth to come out.

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8.4. Figures

Fig.1: Cover for publication in the United States of America: Photographs by Inge Morath/Magnum Photos and Philippe Cheng Cover Art Courtesy of Beacon Press, Boston.

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9. Index

10. Abstract

Die in dieser Diplomarbeit behandelten südafrikanischen Romane sind Zeugnisse jener Wahrheit, zu der Südafrika lange Zeit keinen Zugang hatte. Während die offizielle Version der *Wahrheit* in die Annalen der Geschichtsbücher einging, lebten viele Menschen in Südafrika ein unbekanntes, undokumentiertes Leben. Die Autorinnen und Autoren der hier behandelten Romane *bezeugen* hiermit eine oft im Gegensatz zur offiziellen Geschichtsdarstellung stehende und zu lange unterdrückte, Wahrheit.

Antje Krog verband in *Country of My Skull* die Veröffentlichung der Zeugnisse der *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* mit Fiktion und schuf damit die Basis für eine neue *ganze* Wahrheit. Trotz der Erkenntnis einer gemeinsamen Vergangenheit zeigte der Roman, dass bis dahin vieles nicht ans Licht gekommen war. Diese Tatsache findet sich auch im Aufbau des Romans wieder, denn die Autorin verwebt verschiedenste Elemente einzelner *Erinnerungen* miteinander, um mit diesen ein dicht gesponnenes Tuch von Wahrheiten über das Land zu legen: Geschichten von Zeitzeuginnen und Zeitzeugen, Anträge auf Amnestie, Radioprotokolle sowie ihre eigenen Gedanken werden so mit Poesie aus ihrer Feder vermischt. Die Erfahrungen der Menschen, die bis zu diesem Zeitpunkt von niemandem beansprucht worden waren, wurden nun gleich auf zwei Bedeutungsebenen relevant: einerseits hatte noch niemand Verantwortung für die Vergangenheit übernommen, und andererseits waren damals die *traumatischen* Erinnerungen der Menschen weder auf kollektiver, noch auf individueller Ebene, in ihr alltägliches Leben integriert worden.

In Mtutuzeli Nyokas *I Speak to the Silent* wird genau dieser stimmenleere Raum zum Gesprächspartner der Hauptfigur. Der Titel des Romans kann so ausgelegt werden, dass er die stumm gebliebenen Menschen anspricht: jene Menschen, die zuvor noch nicht die Stimme gegen die erhoben hatten, die sie in Unrecht und Gewalt unterwarfen. Die Hauptfigur in Nyokas Roman verändert sich von einem unterdrückten Stimmlosen zu einem, der seine Geschichte erzählt. Seine Suche nach der Wahrheit spiegelt sich auch in der elliptischen Erzählform wider, denn die Leserinnen und Leser können immer nur flüchtige Blicke auf die ganze Wahrheit werfen. Erst ganz zum Schluss kristallisiert sich heraus, dass der tödlichen Racheakt des Erzählers nicht die eigentliche Wahrheit ist.

Auch Sindiwe Magona will in ihrem Roman *Mother to Mother* die Hintergründe einer bisher in den Medien nicht dokumentierten Geschichte erzählen. Die schwarze Mutter eines zum Totschläger gewordenen Sohnes wendet sich an die weiße Mutter des Opfers. Obwohl zunächst scheinbar als Briefroman angelegt, gibt es nur wenige direkt an die Mutter des Opfers gerichtete Briefe. Der weitaus größere Teil des Romans befasst sich mit dem expressiven Ziel der Autorin von dem Leben in den Armenvierteln der schwarzen Gemeinschaft, in der sie selbst aufgewachsen ist, zu *erzählen*.

In diesem Sinne treten alle drei behandelten Romane der *objektiven* Version der Wahrheit mit *subjektiven* Aussagen von Zeitzeuginnen und Zeitzeugen entgegen und setzen diese Dynamik in Beziehung zu ihren eigenen Erinnerungen. Der distinktive Modus des Zeugnis-Ablegens leiht jener Gruppe der Bevölkerung Südafrikas, die schon vor den Europäern das Land besiedelte, eine Stimme. Die Stimme dieser *subalternen* Gruppe ist vom öffentlichen Diskurs ausgeschlossen. Sie wurde als das *unheimliche Fremde* dargestellt und mittels des rassistischen Apartheid-Systems versklavt. Im Zuge des Wandels Südafrikas zur Demokratie kristallisierte sich der Roman als ein geeignetes Medium heraus, das eigene Land sowie die breite Weltöffentlichkeit zu erreichen,

Die zeitgenössischen südafrikanischen Romane vervollständigen durch diesen Modus des fiktiven *Zeugnis-Ablegens* die offiziellen Zeitzeugnisse. Diese Fiktion benutzt historische und reale Fakten als Vorlagen, verarbeitet sie jedoch aus dem Blickwinkel der Zeuginnen und Zeugen. Das Auslöschen der eigenen Identität kann nicht durch offizielle Dokumente aufgezeichnet werden. Solche Romane jedoch können Zeugnissen und Zeugenaussagen oft besser gerecht werden als Gerichtsakte, denn gerade diese aufzuarbeitende Vergangenheit kann nicht durch Tatsachen und Fakten zusammengefasst werden.

Das Trauma der Sprachlosigkeit lässt viele Zeugenaussagen nie zu Worten werden. Die Psychologie macht sich die heilende Wirkung des Erinnerns und Erzählens zunutze. *(Narrative Exposure Theory).* Der Erzählmodus des Zeugnisablegens hat eine vergleichbare Basis: Sprachwerdung von bisher Ungesagtem.

Der neue südafrikanische Romanmodus lädt Zeuginnen und Zeugen ein, ihre Erinnerungen der Vergangenheit zu schildern – Zeugnisse, die Südafrika braucht um eine Geschichtsschreibung des ganzen Landes zu ermöglichen. Dadurch wird der Modus des Zeugnis-Ablegens selbst zum performativen Akt, der einem Aufschrei

nach Anerkennung gleicht, sodass die Welt zuhören und die Situation sich zum Besseren wenden kann. Dieses Genre gibt einer sonst sprachlosen Gruppe von Menschen eine öffentliche Stimme. So wird *Erinnerung fassbar*, was offizielle Zeugnisse nicht bewerkstelligen können. Empathischen Leserinnen und Lesern kommt durch die Auseinandersetzung mit dieser Thematik eine neue ausgleichende Bedeutung zu, die sie im Idealfall mit Autorinnen und Autoren zu einer Gemeinschaft verschmelzen lässt. So wäre es der zeitgenössischen Fiktion mit Hilfe des Modus des Zeugnis-Ablegens schließlich möglich, wesentlich und auf bedeutsame Art und Weise zur Wundheilung und Vergangenheitsbewältigung Südafrikas beizutragen.

11. Curriculum Vitae

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12. Appendix

Fig.1 Cover for publication in the United States of America:

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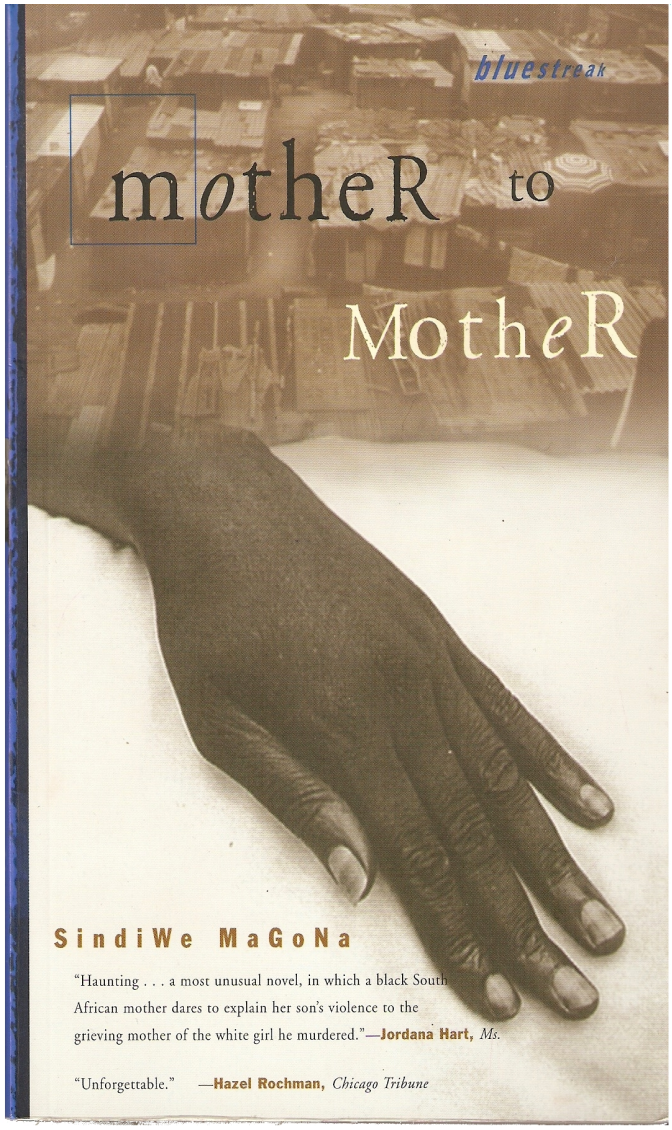

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