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Nina Postiasi

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Signature



History is the present. That's why every generation writes it anew. But  
what most people think of as history is its end product, myth.

E. L. Doctorow



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## 1 Rewriting a Country's History

History and narratives converge in the rewriting of history in the contemporary South African fiction.

South African literature has been deeply affected by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's fundamentally narrative mode: its public interest in converting traumatic memory into narrative memory.<sup>1</sup>

The possibility to see that what happened to oneself happened to many others, too, and the sharing of these experiences presents a way towards reconciliation and is a beginning in coming to terms with the past. In this respect, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the TRC, did not function as an occurrence itself, but represented these occurrences. Moreover, as Jyoti Mistry claims, history [...] informs identity and impacts the identity of the nation at large.<sup>2</sup> However, South African literature is preoccupied, as the authors of fiction are expected to treat political issues.<sup>3</sup> Consequently,

South African writers will now have to emerge from the dominating theme of apartheid into a closer examination of humanity in a 'free' society. (Jones, 3)

The authors' challenges now are not to focus on the topic of apartheid so much, but to provide a guideline for South Africa's people in the present. However, they can only do this by coming to terms with the past, and not by forgetting about elapsed times or neglecting them.

To succeed in understanding one another, it is essential to know about the others' stories. Moreover, it is necessary that people tell their own stories.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Driver, South Africa: Under a new dispensation?, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-03-20-driver-en.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mistry, (Hi)Story, Truth and Nation, Building a "new" South Africa, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2001-04-01-mistry-en.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Knapp, 11.

Thereby, it is possible for people to concern themselves with their own, already familiar stories, as well as with new ones.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, the people's stories need to be made public, so that they become accessible to the public. Through dealing with the own past, people might find ways to come to terms with it, and when they learn about the different stories of others, they may understand parts of other people's attitudes and feelings.

### 1.1 The Writing and Rewriting of History

In modern historiography, scholars regard history as a conglomeration of physical happenings within space and time. At present, the writing of history is being looked at from a different perspective. The so-called science of history in its established view is no longer the only and ultimate way of presenting and considering past events. Alternate versions of history in narratives introduce a new outlook regarding the depiction of history. Additionally, these perspectives can be considered as alternative drafts to the conservative ways of recording history. Rewriting history is a possible concept for dealing with the past, giving it a new focus or new contents. As the retyping of history often takes place in narratives, the formal approach to dealing with history is worth looking at, as well as the way authors present history in narrative fiction. These alternative drafts to the conservative ways of writing history are becoming more and more important.

[...] South Africa has been stabilised economically and politically; but socially, the remains of past injustices are still omnipresent' (Knapp, 8) Consequently, it is necessary and important to deal with them. Various contemporary narratives include relevant and significant events of the past; to find a homogeneous basis for an analysis, one genre, i.e. novels, and one language, i.e. English, has to be chosen. When dealing with contemporary South African literature, particularly with novels, it is

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Knapp, 12.

necessary to state that the novels discussed can only represent a selection of the wide range of contemporary South African fiction. Obviously, any choice of sources involves the negation of other sources.

There is not only one history of South Africa, as this country's past includes various peoples, periods, opinions and views. Moreover, there are of course several ways of presenting distinct histories, and different approaches to history. Generally, when dealing with the way history is written, or rewritten, it is of importance to state '[...] that there is always more than one history.' (Walder, 25) This is valid in the field of traditional, non-fictional historiography as well as in the area of rewriting history in fiction. The

[...] literary production in the first decade of the new democracy shows evidence of change, including the presence of once-marginalized or silenced voices.<sup>5</sup>

However, it is necessary to always be aware of the pitfall of stereotyping when dealing with the fate and history of a nation on the basis of a selection of novels.

Results in traditional historiographies, and in alternate versions of history, are always dependent on the questions which are asked. Not only one history exists, but several histories.<sup>6</sup> They may be complementary or contradictory; still, they are always coexistent.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Driver, South Africa: Under a new dispensation?, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-03-20-driver-en.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Iggers, *Geschichtswissenschaft*, 98.

## 1.2 History and Literature

People do no longer regard history as something which they can only capture from an outside perspective. Past events can be examined from the inside as well, and it has to be taken into consideration how people's lives are affected by historical events. Nevertheless, universal historical concepts are necessary for individuals to organise information.

The '[...] narrative in the human sciences has been restricted to case histories and the discipline of historical studies.' (Rosaldo, 127) However, these restrictions do not apply anymore. Narratives like novels are more and more regarded as presenting certain aspects of history as well, even though possibly in other contexts than it is the case in conservative academic historiographies. In *Culture & truth: the remaking of social analysis*, Renato Rosaldo argues that

[...] "historical understanding" [...] refers to the interaction of ideas, events, and institutions as they change through time [whereas] "human agency" [...] designates the study of the feelings and intentions of social actors. (127)

What this all amounts to is that the traditional ways of writing history primarily discuss major, extensive events, whereas what is referred to as human agency is dealt with in narratives. These are then the subject of a more accurate discussion within the area of rewriting history.

Causes and consequences, and where they are located in time, are key concepts of history. In novels, however, authors do not always present occurrences in a chronological order. Through this technique the narrators can highlight certain aspects. Furthermore, they have the possibility to create connections between the events and the characters in a novel through other methods besides chronology.

Literature is an important means for presenting thoughts, opinions, and critical voices.

Literature [...] can be considered a medium in which society with all its goods and evils is critically portrayed and in which the marginalised are given a voice to speak about their grief and ill-treatment of the past, present and foreseeable future. In other words, literature often functions as an outlet for the oppressed, silenced, or simply forgotten, who have no other way of making their views and beliefs, or simply the gravity of their misery, known to the public. (Knapp, 8)

Literature gives a voice to the silent or even silenced ones, and has the potential to make their fates publicly known. Thus, it provides a chance to account for the past.

### **1.3 Language in Literature and in Historiographies**

In both areas, in historiographies and in narratives, the means to convey information is the same – language. Definitely, history can, at least partly, be presented via exhibits, too. However, scholars even describe and discuss those. Usually, historical findings and ideas are introduced and passed on via language. Here, it is essential to differentiate between primary sources like findings or early narratives which may function as the basis of closer examinations, and secondary sources which are usually presented in a narrative form. This mode is necessary to provide others with information, and to present the content. However, reality is also constructed through language, and this is how images are generated. The fact that historians and authors of fiction use the same tool – narration – can be an important cause for similarities. This constitutes a motivation for historiographers to insist on the differences between their work and narration. Even when focusing on such differences like the choice of characters, the formality and the coverage of topics, '[...] the important point is that every history, even the most “synchronic” or “structural” of them, will be emplotted in some way.' (White, *Metahistory*, 8) Consequently, a structure and a frame are needed in historiographies, as well as in fictional narratives.

Language can be theoretically examined and dealt with due to its formality and structure. It is a means of communication, which is employed differently in distinct correlations. Consequently, context influences the usage of certain linguistic styles. However, there is no major difference between the usage of language in historiographies and in narratives. Historians may use a more formal language and certain technical terms; this is one of the distinctions mentioned above. Still, historians describe, explain and concentrate on specific aspects, too. Usually they have to set their focuses in another way as compared to the authors of fiction. The reception of historiographies differs from that of narratives, they are not only written, but read in another context, too.<sup>7</sup>

Resulting from '[...] the minimal community of speaker and hearer, [...] the action of decoding is as important as encoding, reception as much as production of a text.' (Struever, 130-131) In the first part of the quote the agents are called *speaker* and *hearer*, which applies for *writer* and *reader* as well. As Suleiman suggests, '[...] the author and the reader of a text are related to each other as the sender and the receiver of a message.' (7) Meaning itself always depends on both the sender and the receiver, and their specific contexts.

#### 1.4 Objectivity in Writing

The approaches towards the writing and the perception of history are changing. The traditional way of historiography is no longer the ultimate, universally accepted and only way of dealing with the past. Recently,

[...] it has become a commonplace to argue that history cannot give us direct access to objective facts, since the ideology and the verbal strategies of the historian will determine what he chooses to notice and how he describes it. [...] history is simply the result of the writing and (even more) the ideology of the historian. (Lerner, 334)

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Struever, 127-128.

Definitely, a historian cannot be objective to one hundred percent. Still, as competent historians are aware of that, they can be careful to concentrate on objectivity as far as possible. However, history is always written from a certain ideological perspective, which is influenced by the present situation. Thus, historiographers have to be conscious of presuppositions and procedures, and the fact that their versions and concepts are not the ultimate truth.

Generally, a historian can only interpret what is already existent. However, he or she deals with certain aspects due to his or her experience, knowledge, and on the basis of personal interests and ideas as well. Moreover, historians can choose what to discuss in further detail, or what to leave out. This can happen consciously, as far as the aim of the analysis is concerned, or depending on the (implied) audience, the subject of the research, and the formal appearance of the publication, whether it is an article, a speech, or the like. On a subconscious level, a historian might be influenced by what exactly he or she intends to find out, which results are desired, and personal beliefs. Consequently, '[...] the historian must be self-conscious about what his narrative *does*.' (Struever, 142) It is important for historians to be aware of the impact of the aspects just mentioned, and furthermore they have to be conscious about the fact that they themselves influence others with their work.

Both, authors of fiction and historiographers, are '[...] merely uncovering what already lies there, waiting to be told.' (Steedman, 47) However, their sources, respectively their choice of sources and topics may vary.

For Lerner, 'It is necessary to state the obvious. Fiction differs from history in not making a claim to truth.' (336) As already mentioned above, this is not the only difference between fiction and history. Still, this is a major aspect, and as it is expressed by Lerner in this quote, it might militate in favour of fiction.

## 1.5 Literature as a Mirror of the Past and the Present

When dealing with the past, the present plays a major role. It has to be taken into consideration that the present and the actual knowledge influence the way people look at elapsed times. Furthermore, the interest in certain events in the past is dependent on current concerns. In addition, novels are influenced by their authors' lives, and by the history of the country in which the novels take place and are written. Literature consequently functions as a mirror, or even a continuation of what has happened in the authors' and the novels' surroundings.<sup>8</sup> As Lerner claims, 'The world of fiction is not *purely* imaginary.' (337)

When dealing with present circumstances, it is necessary to know about the past. What people and whole societies constitute in the present is frequently predicted by occurrences in the past. Identity is partly constructed by telling and retelling oneself and others about times gone by.<sup>9</sup> Obviously, it is not feasible to expect that everyone has a profound historical knowledge; however, it is helpful to know about the circumstances influencing the present. Generally, no one deals with events which are not important currently. 'For every moment of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.' (Benjamin, 362) Of course, these depicted moments can be of interest at another time, and need not be forgotten forever. Nevertheless, as Benjamin states, the way the past is dealt with, and if it is actually covered or not, depends on the present. Consequently, aspects which appear to be of minor interest, or aspects which are neglected completely, may vanish from the examined past. The novels discussed all deal with aspects and parts of the South African past. Still they focus on issues which are currently of importance and interest as well, as these notwithstanding influence the people in their present lives. The choice of topics represents what is still important in the present, and consequently communicates actual concerns.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Stachelberger, 2, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Knapp, 14.

When historians want to be as objective as possible, they have the opportunity to '[...] blot out everything they know about the later course of history.' (Benjamin, 363) Obviously, this is not possible, but it would be very interesting to look upon a certain era in history without being aware of the consequences. At least, the interpretations would differ, and occurrences would be looked upon differently. When we already know the aftermath, we cannot consider the situations in the past as they actually were without any prejudices. In the general perception of history, the past cannot be captured how it exactly was, as the real insight of an eye-witness is usually missing. Scholars can only develop ideas, theories and approaches.

The rewriting of history has a certain agenda; it sets a different focus and presents other aspects than traditional historiography. Concepts and ideas of history correspond with current situations and actual efforts to understand the past; at least people are frequently '[...] attempting to come to terms with the past.' (Attridge, 3). In his introduction to Carolyn Steedman's article in *The cultural studies reader* Simon During asks 'How today does the past engage in the present?' (Steedman, 46) Times gone by are still influential in the present, in people's minds and memories, and this is exactly where the rewriting of history ties in. It deals with influential aspects of the past, with topics which cannot be forgotten, or with events people do not want to forget.

## **1.6 The Audience and the Reader**

As far as literature is concerned, its audience has to be taken into consideration. 'South African culture engages most fully with an international audience.' (Attridge, 5) This statement is as well valid for South African literature which is mainly written in English. The usage of the English language is not only a formal aspect of the novels, but also a political and sociological one. The novels should be accessible to a wide range of readers even without being translated. Moreover, due to the fact that Afrikaans was the language of apartheid, '[...] black south Africans

became promoters of English, a reflection of their desire to reach an audience beyond their own community.' (Stachelberger, 12)

Lerner claims '[...] that any text can be related to at least three contexts: its ideology, its strategies of writing, and social reality.' (335) Obviously, he accuses the author of being ideological, which must not be understood in a negative sense here, but can, for instance, mean that the author is influenced by own experiences. A strategy of writing, for instance, is the decision which piece of writing to produce, a non-fictional or a fictional text. In both cases, the author has to decide on the length and format of the text, the implied reader, the purpose of writing, and consequently the act of publishing it. The social reality does not only affect the author, but the reader, too. An author can be mostly aware of his or her social reality; however, it is not possible to know exactly about the recipient's social reality. As far as the readers are concerned it is necessary to point out that '[...] no one reads from a neutral or final position.' (Clifford, 18) A written text, for example in a historical setting, or in a narrative one, does never exist on its own. It is not only influenced by the author and his or her surroundings, it is as well dependent on its perception by the reader. The implied reader has an impact on what the author writes about, and in which way he or she does this, as well, as authors does not only write for themselves.

Still, the question remains if a text can be understood in the same way it was meant. Probably, a reader can only understand a text from his or her perspective, this element should not be denied.<sup>10</sup> An author cannot take into consideration all the readers' contexts, beliefs, value systems and so on. However, the aim can be to find the best possible way to convey the content and its meaning.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Iggers, *Geschichtswissenschaft*, 100, 104.

## 2 South Africa and Politics

The political situation in South Africa has been dominated by the apartheid systems for many decades. In the nineties of the last century, after the official and political end of apartheid, it was still omnipresent in the minds and in the lives of people. In 1994, Aletta J. Norval stated that in a sense

[...] we are witnessing the 'end' of apartheid, in another the very logic of apartheid continues to exercise a destructive hold over society. We are not yet, and might not for some time to come, be in what may probably be called a 'post-apartheid' situation. The latter would require a break with the more general logics of apartheid, and this is not easily effected. (115-116)

Contemporary South African novels raise political questions as well as personal ones. In her introduction to *Literarische Spurensuche psychischer und physischer Konsequenzen der südafrikanischen Apartheidspolitik*, Ellen Putzki claims that literature is supposed to deal with aspects outside politics, too.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, she sets high standards concerning the aim and the function of literature in South Africa.

Hier wird eine neue Dimension der Literatur gefordert. Literatur als Lebenshilfe, als Orientierung und Richtschnur in einem Land, das zunehmend an Orientierungslosigkeit leidet, dessen Bewohner, seien es Schwarze, Weiße oder Farbige, darunter leiden, dass alle fest gefügten Werteschemata auseinanderbrechen. (13)

Putzki expects narratives to function as orientation in a drifting country in which people are suffering from the breaking apart of the old value systems. These changes can be positive, and still uncertainties may arise from them. During apartheid, the value system was stable, and people could rely on it. Now they have to become accustomed to new laws, rules and possibilities.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Putzki, 11.

## 2.1 Colonialism and Postcolonialism

When dealing with the history of South Africa, the terms colonialism and postcolonialism are of major importance. Considering that '[...] the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer', (Ashcroft, 10) leads to an insight into the complex relations then. The idea of apartheid roots in the colonial past of South Africa. There, the native and indigenous inhabitants were forced upon a new culture and a new way of living. The new settlements founded by the Dutch and the British people were the beginning of a separation of the native inhabitants of South Africa and the colonisers. Nevertheless, '[...] racial stereotyping is not the product of modern colonialism alone, but goes back to the Greek and Roman periods.' (Loomba, 105) Racism is not new and did not originate in a colonial South Africa, which however does not legitimate what has happened there. As colonialism is jointly responsible for the formation of South Africa, it is subsequently accountable for the development of apartheid, too.

Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world but everywhere it locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history. [...] The process of 'forming a community' in the new land necessarily meant *unforming* or re-forming the communities that existed there already. (Loomba, 2)

These traumatic experiences are still subject of myths and stories, and part of people's collective memory.

To a major extent, economic interests were responsible for settling foreign countries, and '[...] the profits always flowed back into the so-called 'mother-country'.' (Loomba, 4) Economically, the colonised countries did not gain benefit.

However, there is a difference between political and economic colonialism. The first, also called imperialism, typically ends with the independence of the formerly colonised country, whereas a country occupied for economic reasons will remain dependent on the colonising country.<sup>12</sup> As countries were often colonised both for political and economic reasons, no clear separation can be made here. For the notion of independence from the colonial powers, Loomba distinguishes two terms which are *postcolonial* and *neo-colonial*.

A country may be both postcolonial (in the sense of being formally independent) and neo-colonial (in the sense of remaining economically and/or culturally dependent) at the same time. (7)

Even though the two terms describe different political and economic situations of a country, both can apply at the same time. Colonialism and postcolonialism did not only affect people and their lives in the past, but still influence the present self-concept of the native inhabitants of South Africa.

Analyses of 'postcolonial' societies too often work with the sense that colonialism is the only history of these societies. What came before colonial rule? What indigenous ideologies, practices and hierarchies existed alongside colonialism and interacted with it? (Loomba, 17)

Colonialism is not the only historical notion of oppressed countries, and a history before it exists. Exactly this history is often neglected, and South Africa's history is often reduced to what has happened during and after colonialism, too. Contemporary South African literature dealing with the past often focuses on events originating in colonialism; this is why other aspects of South Africa's history might be left out. This does not mean that other or earlier events and aspects are less important, they are just not the focus in many cases. For the writing of history, written documents are of importance. These documents often developed with the beginning of colonialism, which is another reason why information has increased since then. For scholars, it is easier and more reliable to work with written

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Loomba, 6.

records than with stories passed on orally. Though, the written documents often present the colonisers' perspectives. In this respect, Ania Loomba raises the question '[t]o what extent did colonial power succeed in silencing the colonised?' (231) As the colonised people did not have the same options and possibilities to spread their stories and ideas, the oppressors could easily outbalance them.

Furthermore, Loomba asks if there is a possibility to give those people a voice through intellectually dealing with their (hi)stories.<sup>13</sup> This is exactly what rewriting history and the representation of events in narratives do. For persons concerned and involved, it might not be so important where something is dealt with, be it in historiographies or in fictional narratives, but that it is dealt with at all.

As, '[h]uman identities and subjectivities are shifting and fragmentary' (Loomba, 233), it is impossible to come to a universally valid conclusion. There might be a way of presenting the fate of many people and the discomfort they had to suffer from; nevertheless, not every single life story can be taken into consideration. Consequently, one can only focus on specific topics, without claiming to come to a solution valid for everyone involved.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Loomba, 231.

### **3 The Role of Alternate Histories**

Authors of fiction rewrite history for various reasons. They may create alternate versions of the past due to personal interests in certain topics, or they miss something in traditional historiographies, which they want to depict. In their narratives, the writers cannot include all aspects of times gone by, but they have to focus on a special topic. They may choose a specific era in the past, the history of some area, an occurrence they are interested in, or the story of a people.

When rewriting a certain part of history, authors usually follow some aim. They write alternate histories due to personal reasons and interests, or based on their peoples' or their countries' situations. Consequently, they can set focuses on topics they want to investigate, or which appear significant for them. Through the rewriting of history, the authors may find reconciliation, and they provide reconciliation for their readers, and/or the people affected.

In narratives, the focuses are set differently than in traditional historiographies; therefore, the writers can include the stories of ordinary people and their whereabouts. Moreover, it is possible to discuss sensitive topics, as well as common ones.

Through the depiction of alternate histories in narration, a wider audience can be informed. Even people who are usually not interested in history, or who lack access to a reliable and authentic selection of chronicles or the like, may read, or at least hear about, certain novels and their contents. Moreover, the language in literature assembles oral narration and is usually easier to read and understand than that in academic works. Through this first examination of a certain topic in novels, the audience might get interested in the historical background, and investigate it in more detail. The rewriting of history frequently deals with traumatic events of the past, and often, people still need to come to terms with these incidents.

## 4 David's Story

In this novel, the story of a family is skilfully linked with the story of a people. The ways the family's and the people's history are remembered, present a view on the various aspects history includes. In ordinary people's lives it contains memories as well as traditions and beliefs. In *David's Story*, the main character aims to look behind the stories of his family and his people, accepting that he might create an alternate past. David is prepared to rewrite his and his family's history. He is coloured, and in South Africa's history, coloured people had to face major difficulties, as they did not entirely belong to a certain political or social group. Somehow they were lost in the social fabric. In this novel, Zoe Wicomb gives attention to the Griquas who are descendants of the Khoisan people, and she rewrites part of their history.

### 4.1 The Interest in History

History (re)presents the origin, the roots. Often, it is important for people where they come from. This helps imagining continuity, togetherness and identity. Thus, we should not only look back upon history. It is also part of the present, respectively influences and shapes it and is influenced and shaped by it. However, when looking back at it, history as such is constructed primarily through the point of view from which it is being looked at. People regard the past differently in the various periods of time following it. Depending on how far the events took place back in time, and moreover depending on the present political, social and economic circumstances, people regard, judge, and even configure the past differently.

It is important that people are aware of history; this cognition is a necessary factor in identity construction.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Knapp, 15.

The main character in this novel intends to produce a piece of fiction, a piece of literature. Consequently, its role in contemporary South Africa is worth looking at.

According to Knapp,

[...] literature is used to address the shortcomings of the political, economic and social transformation that has reshaped the South African social landscape since the end of apartheid. (9)

Concluding, literature is of importance for the South African people's social lives. David, the main character of *David's Story*, is predominately interested in his own story; however, through compiling a literary work, he may help and support others in similar uncertain situations.

#### **4.2 Settings – Time and Place**

Zoe Wicomb does not divide the novel *David's Story* into chapters, but into sections. Mostly, she arranges them according to places occurring in the narrative and periods of time within it. This piece of contemporary South African fiction contains various settings, changing between rural and urban landscape, intimate family life and public life, as well as private and political aspects. Stories and history before the actual time frame of the plot are discussed as well; consequently sections dealing with the past are included. Moreover, even within these individual parts, there are separations. The continuous changes in time and place are striking.

#### **4.3 Public and Private History**

Even before the preface, a family tree of David and his relatives is drawn. It shows David's relation to Adam Kok I and the la Fleur's. The history of David and his people originates in this family tree. It builds the chronological basis for the story as the events in the family's life relate to the country's general history. On the basis of David and his concerns, Wicomb presents the development of the country.

#### 4.3.1 An Alternate Version of History

Generally, the history of a family adheres with the overall history of a people. This is also true with David, his family, and their story, which becomes obvious in the course of the novel. Based on the saga of David's family, certain topics concerning the country's history occur. Zoe Wicomb skilfully includes these aspects in the novel.

David, the main character, tells his story to a female narrator who constructs a plot out of what he tells her, and of what she complements. She produces the remaining narrative parts, too. David wants to rewrite his family's history, and he has to link it with the public and political history, as historical agents and events never exist on their own.

When resuming the events in his life, David makes '[...] flights into history, although he is no historian.' (David, 1) This is of major importance as far as the topic of rewriting history is concerned. It shows how ordinary people, compared to historians, remember, perceive, and consequently create a certain past. Obviously, their approach towards history is different from that of a historian who knows the scholarly way of dealing with elapsed events. Non-historians might perceive history differently, as they do not deal with it on an academic basis, but on the basis of their experiences and memories. What they accept as their history can vary from what a historian might claim to be their history. However, the non-academic view is important for individuals and influences their current attitudes towards the past and the present. In remembering various aspects of the past, and events in the past, people draw attention to them. David regards his story from his individual point of view. He takes into consideration what is of importance for him, and his understanding of the actual situation. He might regard the past as a certain justification for the present and of what happens within in the present.

David has a certain '[...] eagerness to historicise, to link things.' (David, 2) This quotation very well describes part of the work of a historian, namely to link various events and aspects, to give them a frame, and to relate

them to each other. Only through this linking of events, a history emerges from single events in the past. David is aware of this procedure and its effects, and consequently uses it for himself and his effort to rewrite history. However, he '[...] made a mess of the dates and lost a century.' (David, 2) Certainly, people expect historians to stick to dates and to take everything into consideration, not only what appears to be of importance. However, writers of academic histories are influenced by their knowledge, interests and experiences, too. Consequently, when dealing with the same subject, different historians might very well come to different conclusions. No one, however, supposes that David makes a perfectly objective history out of his family's story. Consequently, he can leave the chaos unresolved.

#### 4.3.2 Reflections on Nelson Mandela

At the beginning of the novel, David's wife is introduced. Her given name is Saartjie which changes into Sarah, and in the ANC movement her comrades finally call her Sally. Her name changes according to her surroundings, and represents how she is regarded and perceived by others. Also through presenting the members of her family, especially including their thoughts and opinions, the narrator rewrites history. Obviously, she does not only include David's wife in the novel, but Ouma Sarie, too. She, for instance, thinks of Nelson Mandela.

In her thoughts, she is glad

[t]hat the Boers have all these years kept Mandela clean and fresh on the island so that when everything had gone stinking rotten, there was someone clean and ready to take things in hand. (David, 8)

Mandela does not participate in all the fights and struggles taking place in the years after his imprisonment. He is still alive, and due to his isolation he could not make any mistakes. Nothing which could have raised people's mistrust has happened; hence he became an icon, a hero.

‘Nelson Mandela has been one of the few contemporary heroes whose reputation and idolized status has always remained intact.’<sup>15</sup> The questions arising here are how Mandela’s role and the myths surrounding him developed, and how people can separate Mandela from these myths. In modern times, heroes are not regarded as being god-like anymore, rather their ordinary lives and life-stories as members of the society influence their heroic status.

#### 4.3.3 The Perception of Physical Appearance

In the part *Beeswater 1922*, the development and consequently the perception of (private) history are discussed. When the story of David’s family is reviewed, it turns out to be impossible to leave out more private, intimate aspects as ‘[...] concupiscence and steatopygia.’ (David, 96) Usually, academics neglect these aspects in the writing of history. If they deal with them at all, they appear on a general level, not reduced to one family, and not in a way that can make one feel exposed.

However, dealing with fleshly desires and physical attributes shows the importance of bodily characteristics.

Ideologies of racial difference were intensified by their incorporation into the discourse of science. Science claimed to demonstrate that the biological features of each group determined its psychological and social attributes. (Loomba, 115)

People were discriminated against for their physical appearance. How embarrassing this actually can be for the person concerned becomes obvious within the novel in which these disadvantages affect concrete persons.

[...] the body is a crucial site for inscription. How people are perceived controls how they are treated, and physical differences are crucial in such constructions. (Ashcroft, 166)

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Mistry, Mandela: Humanitarian Hero, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2002-12-18-mistry-en.html>.

According to Ashcroft, people treat others differently due to their physical appearance. The perception of people however is often constructed. They are not regarded as individuals, but as part of a certain group, often classified on the basis of their visual nature.

Ania Loomba states that

[...] the idea of biologically-constituted races intensified the contradiction [...] between racial difference and the Biblical notion of the human species as a unitary creation of God. (116)

However, people read and interpret the Bible as they want to, and as they might need to in certain situations. Moreover, indigenous people are often not regarded as humans on the same level as others. The colonisers found ways to claim the native South Africans as being different from them, if not, as mostly done, as being minor to them.

Furthermore, the question whether all the humans belong to the same species, '[...] was the central issue at the heart of anthropological, cultural and scientific debates throughout the nineteenth century.' (Loomba, 116) The differences in skin colour and body shape were used as markers for regarding the native South Africans as being a different group of humans.

'Race' thus became a marker of an 'imagined community' [...]. Scientific racism from the eighteenth century calcified the assumption that race is responsible for cultural formation and historical development. Nations are often regarded as the expression of biological and racial attributes. (Loomba, 118)

Biological attributes formed the basis for racism; consequently no one had to think about the discrimination of others. In the minds of people this was no ethical dilemma, but a justified view due to scientific, i.e. biological, findings.

In their works, historians usually do not discuss how people personally had to suffer under these disadvantages. Of course, scholars deal with discriminations due to certain physical attributes as for example skin

colours. Nevertheless, the effects of being penalised because of physical attributes belong to the more personal parts of people's lives as they are personally offending and wounding. Exactly these parts of the ordinary people's lives, their feelings and perceptions, have been neglected for a long time. Only recently, historians started to become engaged in this regard.

When David includes his family, how they had to suffer, and how they were discriminated against, a first step towards understanding these people's feelings is done. Readers might experience or imagine a certain access to the characters of a novel, and might be more emotionally touched. When people learn about facts in academic historical works, they usually do not concern themselves so much with the agents as in fiction.

#### 4.3.4 David's Family

Sally, David's wife, first meets him at the beginning of the ANC training and again two years later. When they are a couple already, they often do not see each other for a long time due to different missions. They are separated due to circumstances they cannot influence. Consequently, the political situation, which forces them into their jobs in the movement, affects their personal lives and their lives as part of a couple. They have two children; a son and a daughter, but David is more concerned with his own childhood. David's father is not satisfied with his son and

David believes that it was his father's irrational rage that fired his interest in Le Fleur, the Griqua chief who succeeded Adam Kok and founded the settlement in Namaqualand. (David, 24)

Engrained in his own unresolved story, David aims to find out more about the past. The *father's irrational rage* points to something which must have happened, or at least to something which concerns the people.

#### 4.3.5 Women in the Movement

Dulcie is a comrade in the ANC and has a special relation to David. This is why Sally is jealous of her. However, throughout the novel it does not become clear which bond ties David to Dulcie, and he often behaves affectedly when it comes to this topic. Both women, Sally and Dulcie, are in the ANC. The women's roles there are regarded absolutely critically.

Louise du Toit claims that

[...] women "comrades" were raped (used as concubines) and their role in the movement thereby reduced to a sexual function. [...] Women were both at the heart of the struggle (on both sides they were often portrayed as the ultimate *reason* for the struggle) and fundamentally foreign to it – marginal, exceptional, excessive, exploitable and out of place, essentially displaced.<sup>16</sup>

This leads to the question how displaced the women actually felt in the movement, and how they themselves regarded their roles. In any case, as is stressed in the excerpt above, being a woman caused additional problems in the movement.

Dulcie obviously has feelings for David. However, in passages in which men torture her, it is not obvious if David is among her tormentors or not. The novel does not only provide the readers with information and answers, but leaves some questions unanswered as well. Not everything that has happened in the past can be fully examined in the present.

Basically, [...] people in whose name and by whose sacrifice wars were fought and independence won (Jones, 2) were betrayed and had to suffer, even in their personal lives. The work for the movement highly influences David, his wife and children, and even his relation to Dulcie. In David's family he himself and his wife Sally get involved in the movement, and to a certain extent they have to sacrifice their lives for the ideas of the ANC.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Du Toit, *Feminism and the ethics of reconciliation*, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-03-16-dutoit-en.html>.

#### 4.4 David's Story – Questions and Answers

Several parts of the novel *David's Story* are titled *Cape Town 1991* or *Kokstad 1991*. There, David believes to find answers. He decides to go to Kokstad to find out more about his roots and his family's (hi)story. After a quarrel, he leaves Sally with her doubts and a broken heart. She does not get the response she is longing for. David is looking for answers, but merely answers for himself, and does not accept the fact that his wife is looking for them as well. In searching for own replies, David does not recognise Sally's call for answers.

In *Kokstad 1991*, the narrator presents David's truth again, how he reads and remembers something, and what he believes in. However, it is not clear, how she can separate his memories from his beliefs, and how close they are to verity. Moreover, how can it, in the connection with personal memories, be defined? When reading this statement, '[...] there it is – the truth, which he recognises after years of false memory' (David, 141), how can one be specific in how far the memories are wrong, and the newly gained truth is absolute? David recognises the lowdown after the process of revealing it. However, this is not an ultimate statement, as there are ongoing discussions about truth and the perception of it in the novel. Nevertheless, David thinks it is feasible to arrive at a new and final verity. 'So it is possible, he says, to correct a false memory, in the end to arrive at the truth and find out what really happened.' (David, 142) In this respect, the readers can follow his arguments. Something new, oblique until then, may be revealed and can consequently lead to different insights. However, the question if they are true remains. Obviously, false memory can be corrected, but how can new memories be created? For an individual it might be possible to modify certain recollections, but it is a complicated concern to change them with other people.

Back to *Cape Town 1991*, David wants to find out more about the Griquas and especially about the Griqua Chief Le Fleur. Nevertheless, Le Fleur might not meet David's expectations. However, he is ready to consciously alter history.

At his hotel in Kokstad, David meets a man called Thomas. They talk about the Griqua history and apartheid. Nevertheless, one day Thomas Stewart turns up again and is waiting in David's room in the hotel. He offers him a job in the diamond business. As David does not work for money only, he refuses. Apparently, he believed in the movement's work, and found a certain satisfaction in his duties there. Furthermore, diamonds function as a symbolic reduction of the exploitation of the country South Africa, its land, its resources, and its people.

Another part which is titled *Kokstad 1991* is about David's rules and habits which probably origin in his training and his work in the movement. Obviously, his work for the ANC affects his personal life, especially concerning his habits and the rules he uses in and needs for his daily routine. They present a certain guideline which helps David to orientate himself in a world full of questions.

David claims to be a teacher from Cape Town doing a research on Griquas. In this way, he can ask questions, do some research, follow his interest, and he even can lead a sort of normal life. When he, however, finds a hit list in his room, on which he reads his and Dulcie's names, reality catches up with him. Even moving to another place, the hotel in town, and leading a different life there with a different identity does not protect him from his past.

When David is away for his researches, Sally stays at home with her kids on her own. When people from the movement come to Sally's house to frighten her, she refers to them as '[...] these Boers.' (David, 121) Her time in the ANC, especially the hard training is dealt with in the novel. Sally had a difficult time in the movement, and she still cannot lead a normal life without it in the present.

Another incident occurs when Sally is waiting for David to call as she is not sure of his whereabouts. The waiting process is intensified because she thinks David is with Dulcie. Instead of David someone else calls Sally to

find out where David is. The options the caller suggests are that David is still in Kokstad, or back home already. The man on the phone asks Sally not to do anything, because he himself will find out. This call obviously leads to even more fear and insecurity with Sally. As she has to stay with her children, she does not have any options to find out more about David and where he is and what he is doing. Consequently, as often, Sally is left with her questions, doubts, and insecurity.

After his disappearance, David is found dead. On his funeral day, data disappear from the narrator's computer which is even shot at. The narrator also catches a glimpse of a visitor who could be Dulcie. In the end it remains open which data were deleted from the computer, and what is missing of David's story. Generally, in the course of history, specific events may have been lost, as well as aspects of every private story. Nevertheless, a difference exists between deliberately leaving out or even deleting aspects, or just not taking them into consideration. The announcement of the ANC rally on June 16<sup>th</sup> functions as the political background for the passage on David's death. A major occurrence functions as the frame for a story concerning less people. However, political and public incidents usually build a setting for more private events. People find orientation through significant dates which are valid for others as well.

## **4.5 A People's Story**

### **4.5.1 The Griqua Past**

The novel is a debate about the meaning of nation and national belonging. The Griquas, descendants the Khoisan people, were and are politically eclipsed, both in the old and in the new system. A complex relation exists between them and other members of the coloureds. It is not typical of the South African writing to focus on one group.<sup>17</sup> However, especially this is

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Driver in David, 119.

the case in *David's Story*. It is told from one perspective, and focuses on one group of people. Nevertheless, David makes an effort to gain new insight, and even finds an alternate history of his people. Consequently, he is ready to experience a new outlook.

For the authors of fiction it is difficult to deal with their heritage, too. Zoe Wicomb for instance '[...] expressed a determination to avoid the tyrannical simplicities of ideology.' (Fletcher, 15) In order to escape from these simplicities it is necessary to challenge them, and to be willing to undergo a change in perspective. Therefore, a certain distance, be it geographical or emotional, is required.

One section of the novel is titled *The Griqua's of Kokstad in One Short Chapter – and Our Arrival at Their History*. However, the female narrator states that this part is not a history, but a narrative and '[...] is as unreliable as David's [narrative].' (David, 38) Introduced by the narrator, the question of the reliability of stories occurs once more. Obviously, no one can expect them to be as authentic as historiographies. However, they present the people's views which should also be taken into consideration when dealing with the history of a country and its people. The narrator claims that David depends too much on Ouma Ragel's and what she tells him, as 'Ouma Ragel's stories may not have been as reliable as David thinks.' (David, 103) This again leads to the discussion about the tenacity of people's views of history, respectively their own histories. Within this Griqua history, there is a diary entry, too. Even if the content is not invented, a diary entry can only be partial and subjective, as it does only display the thoughts and feelings of one individual from a personal and specific perspective.

Moreover, the narrator raises the question of truth. Linked to reliability, truth is a major topic when the writing of history and especially the rewriting of it are concerned.

Thus David ought to have seen how truth, far from being ready-made, takes time to be born, slowly takes shape in the very act of repetition, of telling again and again about the miracles performed by the Chief, seasoned and smoked in Ouma's cooking shelter to last forever – stories that made that much more sense than the remaining fragments of the man's own text. Which, as I pointed out to David, only goes to show that people cannot be relied on to tell their own stories. (David, 103)

Truth develops, or it is created, from facts, memories, opinions and desires. People's perception is not reliable, as everyone experiences events differently. Through repetition myths, as well as history, are created.

The female narrator states that she and David '[...] were left to patch together a family history.' (David, 96) Consequently, David and the narrator have to do part of a historian's job which consists of linking various events to compile one story, too. As already mentioned above, David and the narrator are in the advantageous situation that they can choose what to include and what to leave out, as they are not professional writers of history. However, the narrator reviews that the writing of history is not done properly in this case, but it is only a patching together.

#### 4.5.2 The Griqua Identity

A people cannot only have one homogeneous identity, but still some aspects influence sameness. Religion is a major topic with the Griquas, as well as their food, and their names. All these aspects, religion, food and names, are important for a people's classification. They had to change their names into English ones, which was of course a tremendous recess into the people's lives, culture and nationality.

In the chapter *Beeswater 1922*, the people have difficulties with the fruit as it has not rained for a long period. Consequently, they decide to use some magic. This is another aspect of identity, something which has to do with culture, tradition, and habits, and distinguishes one people from another. Antjie, David's great-grandmother is one of the Rain Sisters.

When people aim to restore themselves, they focus even more on traditions which can preserve parts of the self-perception. However, after losing imposed sameness, it is challenging to make and remake new social and political identities.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4.6 Outside History

The stories presented in *David's Story* are those of individuals, consequently no access to truth can be guaranteed. This is obviously the case in narratives, independent from their attempts to present history. However, the novel '[...] brings history alive.' (Driver in David, 217) Through presenting general history on the basis of private, individual stories, it becomes more lively. Certain aspects of bygone times are dealt with again in this alternate version of history, Driver once more stresses the '[...] importance of confronting the past.' (Driver in David, 217) The examination of the background is important for understanding the present, and to come to terms with the past, too.

By all means, the interest in the further past can manifest itself in the attempt to displace the present or the recent past. Moreover, David's genealogy is difficult, partly invented, and he leaves out people and time.<sup>19</sup> Dealing with an elapsed time is a possibility to distract from other, more recent concerns. David is in the position to look back upon an eventful family history and thus has the possibility to neglect urgent matters in the present.

When covering alternate versions of history in narratives, the question, '[...] what kind of truth [...] fiction [can] tell' (Driver in David, 217) appears. On the basis of the situation in the movement, this question is discussed in the novel. In certain passages, the difficulties which occur because the narrator is not in the movement are dealt with. The narrator can only

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Goldberg, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Driver in David, 218.

describe what David tells her, respectively what she gets to know or thinks to know about it. She will probably never know the whole truth, or all the different aspects David does not tell her about. However, due to not being in the movement, and not being an eye-witness, the narrator can present a more objective view.

As everything about the movement remains ambiguous, Dulcie seems to be a creation between fact and fiction, as well. Nevertheless, David tells the narrator that she once met Dulcie at a party. She can believe this or not, but she will always stay outside David's history, which is a good position to remain as objective as possible.

Though, some aspects of history continue to be uncertain, even for the most interested and enquiring person. This however leads to mythmaking. As Dorothy Driver argues, 'Where history is silent, myth often speaks' (Driver in David, 228)

During the discussion of the narrator's reliability, David complains about the plot she creates on the basis of his story.

You have turned it into a story of women; it's full of old women, for God's sake, David accuses. Who would want to read a story like that? It's not a proper history at all. (David, 199)

This quotation shows that there obviously is an intention that someone reads this narrative. David indirectly talks to the narrator about the future readers of this piece of fiction. Nevertheless, he still aims to produce a piece of history, which is shown in his complaint of the story not being a '[...] proper history at all.' (David, 199) David refers to the future reader, and has a certain historical demand concerning the story of his life and his family. Moreover, the role of women is discussed, as women have usually not been in the foreground in historical works, as well as in the perception of men. David wants and claims to be progressive in his aim to rewrite the Griqua history, however, he is still influenced by traditional norms and values.

In the novel, the narrator immediately answers David's accusations not to write a proper history.

What else can I do? If it's not really to be about you, if you won't give me any facts, if you will only give me the mumbo jumbo stuff, my task is to invent a structure, some kind of reed pondok in which your voodoo shadow can trash about without rhyme or reason, but at least with boundaries, so that we don't lose you altogether. It's impossible, this writing of a story through someone else. The whole thing's impossible. (David, 199)

Every written piece needs a certain structure, obviously this especially accounts for narratives. However, the narrator does not have enough information to create a proper story, so she willingly admits to invent a structure. She even suggests that it is not possible to make a story of all the bits and pieces she gets from David.

David insists on the narrator being able to make a story out of what he tells her.

You've been to university, you've read all kinds of books, poetry and stuff, he says, you must know about such things, about how things happen, how they twist and turn and become something else, what such terrible things really mean . . . how to write about, how to turn into a proper story . . . (David, 204)

When another person turns the information into a proper written text, it might become something else. In this case however, it seems to be important for David that a usable structure is created, as he himself wants to arrive at a compact saga of his family in the end.

## 5 The Cry of Winnie Mandela

In historical writings, authors often neglect the connection between politics and personal matters. In this novel however, the narrator links the protagonists' stories to the country's story. He rewrites the history of South Africa's people, especially focusing on women's concerns. Winnie Mandela's life is regarded and rewritten, too. The mythological Penelope functions as a foil for the novel, and the fictional characters represent the South African people.

Winnie Mandela's role in South Africa's political history remains ambiguous, however, in this novel the author attempts to regard the personal sides of her life, too. Ndebele is well aware of Winnie's life and her political importance; however, in *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* he focuses on private aspects, and in this way he rewrites a part of his country's history. Another topic which is important when dealing with South Africa is its colonisation; in the novel, the invasion of land is related to the women's stories and the invasion of female bodies.

### 5.1 A Different View on History

In the usual, conservative discussion of history one primarily finds political history, often combined with economic history. In this novel, Ndebele presents another point of view, the topics discussed are different. Historiographers often write chronicles years, decades, or even centuries after the events have taken place, and usually history is dealt with by people who are not eye-witnesses. In *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*, Ndebele rewrites the contemporary history of his country, focusing on the lives of ordinary people who are frequently neglected in the scholarly discussion of history.

In the course of time, history was mainly written by men, and it was basically discussed from male perspectives. This is only changing recently. The novel *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* is recorded by a male author as well, nevertheless the story is presented from a female perspective. It shows the effects of male actions and behaviour on women. A question arising in this context might be in how far a male author can present a female perspective. However, Ndebele focuses on the women's whereabouts, their problems, and their emotions and how they can find a way to coming to terms with their own past, and their country's past. He gives them a voice, and this might be one of the most important aspects for many women having been silenced so far.

As Nelson Mandela states, 'The imposition of silence was a powerful tool in the oppressive arsenal of apartheid.'<sup>20</sup> South Africa's novelists play an important role in revealing, and in telling the stories which remained untold so far, or as Mandela claims, 'In countering and breaking the tyranny of silence, the writers and intellectuals of our society were key.'<sup>21</sup>

Different to the traditional way of writing history, this novel is very emotional, as the topics the author deals with are emotionally affected for the women involved. In the classical sense of history, scholars use exact dates and data; this is not the case in novels. Obviously, in a novel, things are more personal than in the conservative writing of history as a historian should not involve his or her emotions when critically dealing with the past. Usually, historiographers do not reveal or discuss the feelings of the agents of the past. This is different in narrative works. Within the novel *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*, very personal insights into the lives of the women involved are given. The readers get to know them and their emotions. The narrator does not present superficial aspects of their lives, but rather fundamental ones. He mainly neglects aspects like income, their economic situation or political view and does not discuss them in greater

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Mandela in the Preface to Brink. *Reinventing a continent: writing and politics in South Africa 1982-1995*.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

detail, but the focus lies on more personal matters like love, marriage, children, relationships and failure in all these areas.

As the story is told from different perspectives, and through the involvement of authorial narration, the language changes frequently, and the discourse varies. These are aspects which are typical of narration, and readers do not usually find them in historiographies.

The novel *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* discusses some major aspects in the lives of female South Africans. Furthermore it deals with [...] the discourses of "reconciliation" and "forgiveness" from the perspective of women.<sup>22</sup> Still, according to Louise du Toit,

[...] the locally dominant liberal models of feminist politics based on universality, sameness, and inclusion (often called "gender mainstreaming"), seldom manage to reach the critical depth needed to do justice to women's (current or desired) position.<sup>23</sup>

Topics which probably concern most women are relationships, family and children, marriage, unfaithfulness, loss and divorce, as well as other personal problems and insecurities, and economic difficulties. However, the major topic dealt with in the novel is waiting, as the main characters hold out for their men for several different reasons. Consequently, *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* presents various other aspects which accompany the process of waiting.

In the novel, Ndebele skilfully reveals and includes complex problems. He does not reduce them to a simple formula, but presents them on the basis of the lives of ordinary women. Moreover, he shows that each of these women has individual problems, even though they are summarised in one story.

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<sup>22</sup>Cf. Du Toit, *Feminism and the ethics of reconciliation*, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-03-16-dutoit-en.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

## 5.2 Winnie Mandela as a Role Model

As can be seen from the title, this work deals with Winnie Mandela's story and its possible relation to the lives of other South African women. 'In a path-breaking fusion of biography and fiction,'<sup>24</sup> Ndebele interweaves the events in Winnie Mandela's life with occurrences in the lives of other women in South Africa.

In this novel, Ndebele presents Winnie Mandela's relation to her husband Nelson Mandela, and one major topic in this marriage is Winnie's waiting for her husband while he is imprisoned in Robben Island for treason and terrorism. Winnie and Nelson Mandela are separated for a long time during their marriage, so Winnie Mandela spent many years of her life as a married woman on her own, while her husband was in prison for 27 years.

In his autobiography Mandela speaks [...] of his love for the woman in whom he found incredible strength and comfort during his long years in prison.<sup>25</sup>

The public lights focused on her during all this time, not so much as on her husband, but still. This case is famous and well-known, whereas the stories of many other women who were waiting for their husbands have been untold so far. This might be the case due to the fact that personal stories very seldom find their ways into works of history or into public generally. Najbulo Ndebele softly reveals some of these stories and skilfully connects them with each other and with Winnie's biography.

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Driver, South Africa: Under a new dispensation?, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-03-20-driver-en.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Mistry, Mandela: Humanitarian Hero, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2002-12-18-mistry-en.html>.

The famous story of Winnie Mandela functions as a representative model for the other sagas. The novel demonstrates how women perceived and still perceive Winnie's life and her waiting for Nelson Mandela. Moreover, it is displayed how the women in the novel link Winnie's experiences to their own. Winnie Mandela's life, especially the waiting process, functions as an example and a guideline for the women in the novel. They see that what happens to them obviously also happens to other women. This can, at least mentally, make things easier for them when they see that they are not the only ones suffering. Furthermore Winnie's actions can be seen as an exemplar as well, so that the other women have one public model which they can partly follow.

Ndebele links all these women's stories with Winnie Mandela and her handling of events. Nevertheless, it has to be stated that Winnie Mandela is no fictional character, even though she appears as one in this novel. What has happened to Winnie can as well be read in historical works, although the focus there would not lie on her feelings as much as in the novel. Consequently, Ndebele reveals private aspects of the Mandela's until then rather public case. Regarding the aspect of rewriting history, the other narratives in the novel are of the same importance, as they reveal the lives and problems of ordinary people whose whereabouts are not discussed in conservative historical works.

In this novel, the narrator links a public story, a part of the public history, with private tales, as such parts of private histories. He does not only describe the well known case of Winnie Mandela, but also reveals the cases of four ordinary South African women and includes events from their lives. Consequently, these females function as representatives for many other women and their matters.

### 5.3 Penelope's Part

Ndebele links the lives of the women in the novel with one great story of the Greek mythology, namely *Ulysses*, too. Written by the Greek poet Homer in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, it tells the saga of Ulysses and his travels. Penelope, Ulysses' wife who is waiting for her husband for many years, functions as a foil for the other women's stories, and the other women are Penelope's descendants, as they are waiting for their husbands as well. Penelope's concern serves as the background of all these women's stories, or even as the frame of the novel. *Ulysses* is a very old mythological story; nevertheless, as becomes obvious in the novel, it is still universally valid. Consequently, Ndebele can apply it to a narrative set in a different surrounding more than almost three thousand years later.

### 5.4 Four Women of South Africa

The lives of four women are discussed, and it is revealed how the waiting for their men affects their daily routines. Each of these women is expecting her husband to return for different reasons; these are presented in the course of the novel. Besides Winnie Mandela and Penelope, there are four female main characters in *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*. The narrator introduces them one after the other. Through this individual presentation, the women get the attention they deserve. Every time, the readers learn about the circumstances of their lives, and their reasons for waiting for a man.

The first of these four characters is Mannete Mofolo. Her husband Lejone is away working in the mines, and Mannete does not know about his fate. This is why she is unaware of the fact that Lejone has already married another woman. Lejone practises bigamy without informing his first wife. As Mannete is insecure about her husband's whereabouts, she searches for him. In doing this she breaks Penelope's law which implies to passively wait for the man without actively looking for him. Mannete is leaving home,

the place where the husband expects his wife to stay. The role of a woman in this regard is to be passive and patient. She should remain in the intended place, at home, where she should lead a life as normal as possible, at least not noticeable at all.

The second woman is not called by her name in the first part of the novel; the reader only knows that the name of her lover is Thumba. Her husband's name is neither mentioned. He leaves for studying abroad, and his wife sends him money all the time. When he returns after 14 years of absence, he leaves his wife for another woman. He justifies doing this because his wife has a child from another man. Even though he is away for such a long time, he expects his wife to wait for him and remain faithful. She is supposed to behave according to her role as a wife.

Mamello Molete is the third main character in the novel. In relation to the novel's topic, namely waiting, it is remarkable that her name means *patience*. Her husband has fled into exile and comes back ten years later. After his return he has to go to jail for 15 years, but he is released earlier. Here, the connection to Nelson Mandela's story is flamboyant. Other hints to Nelson Mandela are that Mamello's former husband is into politics after his release from prison, as well as the imminent divorce after he returns from the penitentiary. When Mamello's husband comes back from jail, they are getting divorced, and he marries another woman, a white woman. This leads to another topic in this chapter, which is skin colours. In South Africa, it might still appear uncommon that people with different skin colours build a couple. As white used to be the superior skin colour in the convictions of apartheid, Mamello can feel discriminated against, as her ex-husband's new wife is white. According to the earlier convictions which might still exist in people's minds, Mamello's husband has chosen a new wife which is superior to Mamello.

In the chapter about the fourth woman, again no names are mentioned. The husband is absent because he is unfaithful. Additionally, he also loses his job. When he finally dies, '[s]he had buried him in a casket costing thousands of rands which she thought he deserved.' (Cry, 37) Even though her husband did not treat her respectfully, she still attaches importance to him and his funeral. Although other people like family, friends, and members of the community might have known about the husband's moral conduct, they are presented an elaborate funeral after his death.

## 5.5 A Consolidation

In the second part of the novel all four women meet, which is introduced to the readers at the very beginning of *Part Two*.

Think of all the possible coincidences in life. What is the possibility of four descendants of Penelope meeting in a room one day and talking? Yet, unknown to us, they've done so. They have been doing so countless times all over the world, over the decades, constituting themselves each time into an *ibandla*. (Cry, 39)

The term *ibandla* which is also explained in the glossary at the end of the novel describes a group, a gathering. As the narrator tells the readers in this quote above, the women of the novel meet. Not only these women meet and talk, several other women do so as well. They meet everywhere around the world, and still, as the quote suggests, they do this unknown to us. Here, an aspect of rewriting history fits perfectly. Scholars frequently neglected the lives and stories of ordinary women in the course of history. This has been the case in South Africa and in South African history, too. The major topics of colonisation and Apartheid have always repelled other aspects of history – the lives of common people, without whom no history could have taken place. The four women in the novel all come from different places in the country of South Africa; consequently they represent the whole country and its women.

‘They [the women] all come across us like stories we’ve heard. Yes, there’s something generic about them. Who are they, really?’ (Cry, 39) Even the narrator identifies the women and their stories as generic. However, he is ready to reveal their individuality. A possible answer to the question above is given when they are said to be ‘[...] an illustration of thought.’ (Cry, 39) Nevertheless, the narrator does not reduce the women to being just thoughts.

[...] they all seem to be struggling to wriggle out of the cocoon of thought, seeking to emerge as fully-fledged beings. Seemingly that’s what happens when thought, under the pressure of memory and narrative, steadily gives way to desire. (Cry, 39)

Each woman has the aim and the right to be taken seriously, even without a husband or a man at her side. Moreover, the terms *thought*, *memory* and *narrative* are crucial for the rewriting of history. What develops in people’s minds through thought and memory can be dealt with and presented to others in a narrative form. Besides, as in the quote above, memories and narratives can influence thoughts. Concerning the writing and especially the rewriting of history, a certain interrelation between these terms is obvious. In this case, Ndebele rewrites the history of South African women, and he presents the lives of ordinary people. He provides the women with a voice, and a stage.

Within this second part of the novel, the narrator introduces the second and the fourth woman by their names, too. ‘For now, the Second and the Fourth Descendants are tugging at the leash. They demand names.’ (Cry, 40) Strikingly, the narrator directly calls the women descendants of Penelope. As a consequence, it becomes obvious how important the relation between Penelope’s story and those of the other women in the novel is. One can imagine a circle which starts with Penelope and her life, going on for thousands of years, and leading to these women in South Africa’s present. There they are again linked to Penelope, which closes this ring. This does not exclude other women from this visualised community. Rather, all the women with the same or a similar fate are included in this circle, even if they are separated from the women in the

novel through time and space. Consequently, the women in the novel may function as representatives of all the women in the world waiting for someone, in many cases for their men.

## 5.6 The Roles of Women

Although this novel is written by a male author, the story is presented from a female perspective. Generally, the narrative and the individual concerns within show the women's perspectives. Ndebele is interested in the women's lives, so he does not describe the men's lives but those of the women. In conservative historical writings, women only played a minor role, if mentioned at all. Historiography has always focused on war and on politics. There has been no place for women due to society and its hierarchy. As women have been oppressed for centuries, and did not play an important role in society, they did not find much attention in historical writings. Women had to stay at home and look after the children; they did not take part in politics or public decisions, and they were no part of the working process. Only recently, scholars are becoming more and more interested in women; their achievements, and their roles in the family, are now part of the interests of historians.

### 5.6.1 Women and the Country

In research, the role of the country should not be neglected, even though '[...] academic study has, in the modern era, privileged time and history over space and geography.'<sup>26</sup> Still, geographical space is important for people as they can access it more immediately. History and time are not as concrete and not as easily available as the place someone lives in.

People inhabiting a certain area from and influence it. The novel *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* gives attention to the invasion of the country South Africa by the English and the Dutch.

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Editor's introduction to Soja, 113.

As soon as a certain place or area is occupied or inhabited by new, usually non-native people, or, in the case of South Africa colonisers, it is (re)named by them. These people use terms from their language to label places and areas. The '[...] naming or, in almost all cases renaming spaces in a symbolic and literal act of mastery and control' (Ashcroft, 28) is typical of a colonial situation.

Related to this, maps play an important role. They can constitute a visible, if minor, representative of the country and land as such. Generally, '[m]aps also inscribe their ideology on territory in numerous ways other than place names.' (Ashcroft, 28)

The invasion of a country and the notion of maps are related to the invasion of female bodies and women. As a country can be invaded by strangers or even enemies, also a female body can be invaded. This can, in both cases, be done violently or by mutual agreement. In the course of South Africa's history, the invasions, and the occupations, usually took place violently.

Sadly, many women were also abused physically. Consequently, there obviously is a connection between the invasion of the country and the invasion of female bodies. Ania Loomba discusses the relation between females and a country or nations, too. She states that

[i]f the nation is an imagined community, that imagining is profoundly gendered. [...] National fantasies, be they colonial, anti-colonial or postcolonial, also play upon and with the connection between women, land or nations. (215)

A nation as an imagined community is gendered in the people's imagination, too. People regard nations to be of female gender, and Loomba presents this obvious relation between females and nations in people's minds. Louise du Toit concerns herself with the same topic, and discusses expectations towards women not only in connection with land and countries, but even the universe in which women are considered to form borders.

It remains a superficial gesture to ask whether women are included or excluded in any particular symbolic order when women and the "feminine" serve to guarantee, uphold and symbolise, to *represent* the very borders, boundaries and logic of that universe. Women constitute the border as such – our [the women's] bodies, places or subjectivities define the limits of the thinkable, the rational, of the political.<sup>27</sup>

Du Toit goes even further, and does not only impose geographical borders on the women's imagined roles, but also rational and political borders. However, she goes on placing women beyond all these geographical, political and rational borders – just to generally equate women with the land, as she sees a relation between the home, and the womb.

Women's bodies were associated with what essentially lies outside "the real", outside politics and war, but which is then also crucially that which is being fought over: the land, the home, the womb, the human existence.<sup>28</sup>

It might appear uncommon to equate all women with land, the home, the womb and human existence as such, however, it is not that exceptional to compare women to nations. In Ndebele's aim [...] to rediscover the ordinary,<sup>29</sup> he addresses an emotional aspect of the notion of home. People frequently regard nations as home, obviously, but not only in a geographic sense, but in an emotional one as well.

The identification of women as national mothers stems from a wider association of nation with the family. The nation is cast as a home, its leaders and icons assume parental roles ([...] Winnie Mandela was 'Mother of the Nation') and fellow citizens are brothers and sisters. This association is not just metaphoric, nor is it new. (Loomba, 216)

In this quote, Loomba very well describes the emotional entanglement of women and nations, and she even includes a character from the novel *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* as an example.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Du Toit, Feminism and the ethics of reconciliation, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-03-16-dutoit-en.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Nevertheless, the female role of mother of the nation was not only positive, as women were primarily regarded as being helpless and powerless under colonial rule.<sup>30</sup> In conclusion, 'As mothers to the nation, women are granted limited agency.' (Loomba, 218) Well-known, men, and women, too, treated women as being passive and patient, and they only had limited possibilities.

The suppression of women is manifold. Ania Loomba claims that

[w]omen are not just symbolic space but real *targets* of colonist and nationalist discourses. Their subjection and the appropriation of their work is crucial to the workings of the colony or the nation. Thus, despite their other differences, and despite their contests over native women, colonial and indigenous patriarchies often collaborated to keep women 'in their place'. (222)

The essence of the quote above is that there was not much difference in how colonial or indigenous patriarchies treated women. Both regarded the females as mothers and wives, and expected them to lead unremarkable lives at home.

Hence the experiences of women in patriarchy and those of colonized subjects can be paralleled in a number of respects, and both feminist and post-colonial politics oppose such dominance. (Ashcroft, 93)

The women in the novel *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*, too, are wives and mothers who stay at home, trapped in a patriarchal society.

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Loomba, 218.

### 5.6.2 Women and Society

Even after the end of apartheid, '[...] women's struggles for equality will continue after formal independence.' (Loomba, 225) Women did not and do not only have to work and fight for their country's independence, but also for their own, private one. During colonial rule not only the colonisers oppressed the women, but their own people did so, too. During apartheid, many women did not only have to endure suppression and discrimination due to their skin colours and descents, but also due to their impressed roles as females. And even now, after the end of Apartheid, women are still underprivileged in their social roles.

As Ania Loomba puts it in her studies on *Colonialism – postcolonialism*,

The relationship between women, nations and community is thus highly variable and complicated both in the colonial period and afterwards. The important point is that if on the one hand, questions of women's rights and autonomy complicate any simple celebration of anti-colonialism, nation and liberation, then on the other, these issues shape approaches to feminism and to the understanding of women's place in society. (227)

Consequently, Loomba suggests differentiating between general issues concerning a society, and issues especially concerning women. Such a distinction might be complex, as women are affected by general issues as well. Moreover, not all the females in one country, or even in one area, have to face the same difficulties and problems. However, it is important to note that modern societies neglect female rights and needs as well.

## 5.7 The Process of Reconciliation

Reconciliation is an important topic in the lives of many South African people. *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* discusses if the TRC is an appropriate means of reconciliation, and in how far it can really help people. The novel presents two ways of reconciliation; one is the public, the official one, which is done by the TRC. The other is private reconciliation. And although the women's stories are linked to the public and political situation, they remain private stories of ordinary people. The women gain their own reconciliation through meeting, talking, and exchanging experiences and sharing their problems. Additionally, moving plays an important role in the process of reconciliation. The women move geographically, and achieve some kind of freedom through it. Moreover, moving helps them to find freedom in their minds as well; they undertake a pilgrimage of reconciliation. Generally, Ndebele's characters '[...] show signs of strong potential for revival.' (Losambe, 80) Consequently, the author presents a positive outlook for the women. After having lived for their men, they start to live their own lives again.

Reconciliation, especially the public one, is obviously linked to politics. The political circumstances in the country affect the women, too, and the public and the political situations relate to the more private aspects of people's lives. *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* is critical of the TRC. The women in the novel find their own ways to achieve reconciliation; consequently, the novel rather covers forms of private reconciliation.

## 6 The Heart of Redness

The colonisation of South Africa led to the neglect of the native people's stories. Zakes Mda, however, introduces an internal view of the British domination. In the novel *The Heart of Redness*, he focuses on the Xhosa people and rewrites parts of their history. Mda includes the story of the prophetess Nongqawuse, her predictions and the successive Cattle Killing Movement.

Zakes Mda rewrites a difficult episode in history of the Xhosa people. The author belongs to the Xhosa himself, and his aim is to wipe out the disgrace the Nongqawuse episode brought on his people. The Cattle Killing Movement caused a collective trauma with the Xhosas, and it seemingly demonstrates their backwardness. Mda, however, does not want to neglect this story, but he uses it as the basis for his novel. In not denying this aspect of the past, he provides the opportunity to come to terms with the past.

In *The Heart of Redness*, Mda describes the lives of two families generating from one ancestor. The author reveals their conflicts and problems. Generally, he presents the novel's topics through family matters; they form the basis for the aspects which he discusses. Thus, he links more universal problems to individual ones. Stories of life, love and loss are related to major historical aspects of a country and its people.

At the very beginning of the novel, a family tree highlights the characters' roots. It demonstrates the connection between the main characters in *The Heart of Redness*. They have a common ancestor, but the brothers have gone different ways due to divergent beliefs. Their descendants have not yet made peace. One group followed the prophetess' instructions, as they fancied her prophecies; whereas the others were not convinced by her predictions. Consequently, each of them claims the counterpart to be guilty of the fate of the Xhosa people.

## 6.1 The Past's Influence on the Present

The past has a certain influence on the present, which is especially valid for the plot Zakes Mda introduces in his novel. Skilfully,

Mda employs once again African narrative techniques, expressed by the cyclic and episodic nature of storytelling, where switches from one time level to the other occur through words, names, places or seasonal descriptions. (Pesenhofer-Yarnton, 31)

The tradition of storytelling can be perpetuated in a written form. Consequently, the skilfully developed act of narrating finds its continuation in contemporary fiction.

The past plays an important role in the novel, and it is approached from various perspectives. Events which took place 140 years ago are still influential in the present. They are revealed in the course of the novel, function as an explanation, as the background, and as the basis for actual events and feelings. The setting is fundamental, too, and even when the time is different now, the area is not. Current happenings are linked with incidents from elapsed times, thus a connection between the past and the present becomes obvious. Topics and problems originating from days gone by still influence the protagonists' lives. They, however, deal differently with the aspect of time. On the one hand, there are the people cherishing the past, whereas others are in favour of progress. In both cases, bygone times are of importance, whether to know what to cherish, or to know what to change.

Concluding, '[...] the idea that the past will always have a certain presence in our present lives' (Pesenhofer-Yarnton, 34), is one major proposition of this novel. On the basis of events which are already over, the narrator introduces the current story of a village and its inhabitants. In the course of the novel, he continually reveals the relations between the past and the present, as well as the connections between certain characters.

Within the novel, there is no clear separation between bygone and actual incidents. Only paragraphs differentiate the various sequences in time. This technique highlights how the past is still linked to the present through the people's memories or their traditions and beliefs, or through political and social situations. Due to the occurrence of people's or places' names for instance, the reader finds out at which point in time things happen. This technique reveals the chronological order of the narrative.

Mda's aim is to show a certain relation between the past and the present, and how influential the past still is.<sup>31</sup> It can constitute and affect actual situations, and is still of importance in people's minds. Conversely, the present perception of the past shapes and reshapes it. Due to Mda's intention to demonstrate this correlation, bygone events are a constant dimension in the novel *The Heart of Redness*.

This alternate version of history is presented to the readers in a written form. Therefore, the formal aspect should be considered as well. Linguistics is '[...] a domain of timeless and universal structures and structuring principles.' (Struever, 127) However, language is influenced by the extra-linguistic reality like context and meaning, how, by whom, and for what purpose it is used. Moreover, the speaking or listening subjects play important roles, as well as their intensions and their understanding.<sup>32</sup> Language does usually not exist on its own, and cannot be examined merely on the basis of its formality and structure in the contexts of history and narratives. Besides, perception is especially crucial when the rewriting of history is concerned. How people appreciate information highly influences its processing and treatment. When authors present their alternate versions of history in an interesting context and in a form potential readers are fond of, the chances to spread valuable data increase.

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Pesenhofer-Yarnton, 34.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Struever, 128.

As White states,

[i]t is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by “finding”, “identifying”, or “uncovering” the “stories” that lie buried in chronicles; and that the difference between “history” and “fiction” resides in the fact that the historian “finds” his stories, whereas the fiction writer “invents” his. (*Metahistory*, 6)

However, in the field of rewriting history, authors of fiction uncover stories, too. Through identifying important aspects, it is possible to focus on them more closely and create different versions of the past.

In addition, it is necessary to consider that history is highly affected by contemporary ideas and beliefs.<sup>33</sup> Present views, knowledge and insights always influence historiographies and narratives. Consequently, bygone events can never be regarded from an absolutely neutral position.

#### 6.1.1 A Prophetess Dividing a Family

Religious beliefs are an important aspect in the lives of native South Africans. In this novel, Mda focuses especially on the Xhosa history by including the prophetess Nongqawuse, her predictions and the subsequent Cattle Killing Movement.

The prophetess Nongqawuse heard from the spirits that all cattle which was already weakened from a lung disease brought by the British invaders in 1853, should be killed, and all crops had to be destroyed. If this were done, the dead would rise to save the people from the British. As the native South Africans were on the side of the Russians during the Crimean War in 1854, even the Russians were thought to accompany the ancestors. The resurrection was supposed to take place during a full moon in 1856. Nevertheless, nothing happened.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Jameson, 18.

The natives' faith and beliefs led to the action of ruining the crops and killing the cattle. Many people supported the prophetess' story to show that the British invaders were wrong as far as their Christian belief was concerned. Christianity was new for the Xhosa people, and not part of their culture. Additionally, they only knew bits and pieces of this religion and its origins, and so they could not understand that the Jews killed the son of their own god. This incomprehension supported the faith in the prophetess' story. However, the Cattle Killing Movement had the power to divide a people and families for generations. Some people were strongly willing to believe and obey the prophecy, whereas others did not want to follow the predictions. Consequently, the believers saw the guilt with the unbelievers who did not act according to the foreboding. It is striking that this discrepancy is founded in an action that should have weakened the white colonists.

The starving of the believers even leads to a [...] dog-eat-dog world' (Heart, 254) in which everyone only looks after himself or herself. The community does not exist anymore, therefore the Xhosa people are weakened even further. In spite of everything, people in the present still believe in the prophetess' forecast.

A myth often remains valid and influential. The most important aspect of a myth is not its actual content, but how it is transported, and how strong people believe in the propagation of it.<sup>34</sup> Still, a legend is always partly motivated by an actual event or people's faith, and usually it contains an analogy to reality. Furthermore, the impact of images people believe in is often stronger than that of rational explanations.<sup>35</sup> As a consequence of the Cattle Killing Movement, the ancestors had to leave their land and moved to Qolorha, the main setting of *The Heart of Redness*.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Barthes, 85.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 108, 114.

## 6.2 A Reduced Past

The stories of the past are not always accessible, and they are not open to everyone. Camagu, the male main character for instance, knows the prophetic story merely from what he has heard at school. Only at Qolorha he learns more about it, and experiences its effects in the present.<sup>36</sup> However, Camagu is not the only one in South Africa who is unaware of its past. Many people experience breaks and gaps in their country's and in their people's history. 'This reduction or erasure of non-white African history during the time of apartheid is highlighted by Mda.' (Pesenhofer-Yarnton, 46) As certain parts of the South African history were left out or even denied during the apartheid regime, it is understandable and necessary that local authors concern themselves with such issues after the end of apartheid. Various aspects have been neglected so far, however, some novelists are eager to (re)tell these stories. Often, they were only passed on orally. Today, producing fiction provides an opportunity to rewrite them, and consequently to remember them.

### 6.2.1 Colonisation

One principal point in South Africa's past is the colonisation of the country. In the novel, references to Australia show the similarities during the occupation, as far as the indigenous inhabitants are concerned. In the later course of history however, the two countries developed differently, and the local people were treated differently.

In *The Heart of Redness* an internal view of the British domination of South Africa is presented. The colonisers oppressed the local inhabitants, but no one filed their stories in the chronicles. Rewriting history is a possibility to deal with the natives' experiences. Eventually, others get access to these tales which provide an insight into people's lives during colonisation.

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Pesenhofer-Yarnton, 46.

## 6.3 Contrasts

### 6.3.1 Camagu Representing Contrasts

Mda skilfully chooses the framework for this novel. He presents the variety of South Africa on the basis of different settings, and Camagu functions as a connection between them. He is an educated man from Johannesburg; however, he comes to stay in the village Qolorha.

Moreover, the former and the present South Africa are subject of reflection. According to Pesenhofer-Yarnton, 'Camagu, the main protagonist [...] shares autobiographical traits with Zakes Mda.' (30) Consequently, the author also uses this novel to engage in his own past, and to rewrite his personal story.

Camagu was into exile due to political upheavals in the 1960s. He has been away for 30 years, and consequently has missed many occurrences in his native country. When he returns to South Africa, he cannot participate in the simplest social actions. For instance, he does not know the freedom dance. This however would be important, and helpful to get a job. On the basis of Camagu's story, Mda highlights the difficulties after having been away and then coming back to a democratic South Africa. Above all, Camagu has problems finding a job, because networking is very important in South Africa. Unfortunately, he does not know people who could support him. Until he comes to Qolorha, he leads an insecure life in town.

Furthermore, 'Camagu finds himself in the role of the catalyst, the mediator and observer established for the theatre for development.' (Pesenhofer-Yarnton, 31) According to this statement, Camagu does not only represent someone searching his place and his role in the present day South Africa, but he is wavering between different attitudes, too. These are tradition on the one hand, and progress and development as counterparts on the other. Camagu experiences the difficulties which

occur when persons with different opinions discuss these topics. People are often not only in favour of one or the other, but often they find advantages and disadvantages in both.

For Camagu, it is still challenging to find his own way and his faith. In a hotel, Camagu sees a brown snake, his people's totem, and he reacts according to their beliefs. He may be educated and may have spent enough time of his life in the city, but this incident is very important for him. Traditions are often, even subconsciously, anchored in people's minds.

### 6.3.2 Believers versus Unbelievers

The prophecies of Nongqawuse, and the subsequent actions led to destruction and famine. Consequently, two families which originate from one ancestor have difficulties with each other. One family belongs to the believers, one to the unbelievers. Both approach the past differently.

Bygone events cannot exist independently from the present, but they are influenced and shaped by it. Sometimes people even forget incidents which do not suit their actual perception of the past.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, they frame elapsed times according to their present interests and convictions, so the past and its perception depend on current circumstances.

*The Heart of Redness* starts with the introduction of Bhonco, his wife NoPetticoat and their 36-year-old daughter Xoliswa Ximiya. They belong to the group of unbelievers, and the male family members are '[...] burdened with the scars of history [...].' (Heart, 12) The unbelievers did not trust in the prophetess' prediction, nevertheless, they had to live with the consequences. Their descendants experience Nongqawuse's forecast and the aftermath as a *burden*, and they still suffer from what has happened then.

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Knapp, 16.

Generally, the unbelievers

[...] spend most of their time moaning about past injustices and bleeding for the world that would have been had the folly of belief not seized the nation a century and a half ago and spun it around until it was in a woozy stupor that is felt to this day. (Heart, 3)

As mentioned above, they were afflicted by something they did not believe in and they did not agree with. However, its consequence greatly influenced them. Frequently, people's lives are affected by certain occasions outside their power of decision.

Different from the others, Bhonco is not interested in lamenting about these injustices. He

[...] does not believe in grieving. He has long accepted that what has happened has happened. It is cast in cold iron that does not rust. His forebears bore the pain with stoicism. They lived with it until they passed on to the world of the ancestors. [...] This is a new life, and it must be celebrated. Bhonco, son of Ximiya, celebrates it with tears. (Heart, 3-4)

Bhonco does not see any chance or progress in thinking about the past. However, even he who does not want to lead the painful and stoic life like his forefathers did, celebrates in the traditional way of his family, namely with tears. Partly, he seems to be aware of his and his ancestors' behaviour, but he still does not find possibilities to withdraw particular actions.

The family representing the believers consists of Zim and his wife NoEngland who died one year ago, their daughter Qukezwa who is 19 years old, and Twin, their son, who was in love with Xoliswa Ximiya, the daughter of the opponents. Twin was not like the others of his kin and eventually left the village.

*The Heart of Redness* primarily focuses on the stories of the ancestors and on the lives of the families in the present. The middle generation is generally neglected in the people's memories, still it is mentioned.

The sufferings of the Middle Generations are only whispered. It is because of the insistence: *Forget the past. Don't only forgive it. Forget is as well. The past did not happen. You only dreamt it. It is a figment of your rich imagination. It did not happen. Banish your memory. It is a sin to have a memory. There is virtue in amnesia. The past. It did not happen. It did not happen. It did not happen.* (Heart, 137)

It is feasible to leave out certain actions or events in recollections; however, it is not possible to omit written records in general. People may remember what they want or decide to; still, a more abstract history exists. Its documentation is influenced by beliefs and concerns as well, and there is probably no potential to find a universally valid and accepted history, as the past always has to be interpreted.

At a concert which is organised by the secondary school every year, the abaThwa ask the unbelievers to give them back their dance. Although the unbelievers do not want to be confronted with the Middle Generation's sufferings, they still do not leave out their story as a whole, and use the dance to contact their ancestors.

### 6.3.3 Tradition and Modernity

Two major opposites in the novel are tradition and modernity. Of course, they are not only antipodes, but they also predict each other. New ventures may be rooted in old customs and they are influenced by them, and at least progress is a process and not stable. Even traditions are not totally steady, they may be influenced by memories, they are dependent on how they are perceived, and people adapt them according to present circumstances.

The people in Qolorha still long for the past. In their memories they think to find a better, a more familiar world. At the same time they enjoy the amenities of progress, too.

The discussions about a projected leisure resort are characteristic for the various opinions people have concerning progress. The debate about tourism is a well-chosen example for the diversities between those in favour of improvement, and the ones with faith in a more consuetudinary lifestyle.

Due to Qolorha's geographical position and its pristine beauty of nature, investors plan to build a tourist resort there. Nevertheless, some people oppose this endeavour. As expected, others complain. ' "They [the believers] want us to remain in our wildness!" says the elder. "To remain red all our lives! To stay in the darkness of redness!" ' (Heart, 71) Those who want a new resort in Qolorha do not see any other progress in the village, and fear that nothing at all would change if not someone began to alter things. Apparently, the colour red is of importance for the Xhosa people. They link it to their cultural heritage, as it is the colour of their native land, but also of their traditional clothes. As the colour red symbolises their cultural heritage as well, the Xhosa connect it with the times gone by, too. The unbelievers are suspected '[...] to move away from redness.' (Heart, 160) As already mentioned, the term *redness* includes various notions like traditions and successive values, the past, the ancestors, history and stories, and the rural setting. Consequently, moving away from it implies progress, as well as various shifts in the people's lives. Reasons for wanting to remain in the present state can be feelings of fear and insecurity concerning the future. These emotions may originate from the knowledge about all the trouble and discomfort changes brought in bygone times. Positive alterations in the recent past, like the end of the apartheid regime, might not have affected people's lives in the village as much as the events in a time further away, at least they might have experienced the changes in a distant past and their consequences more immediately.

In the course of the novel, NoPetticoat, wife of Bhonco, one of the unbelievers, returns to the customs. Keeping them can provide safety, stability and orientation.

#### **6.4 Family Affairs**

Zakes Mda includes several stories about love and relationships in *The Heart of Redness*. They present a certain bond between the characters, and function as a connection between distinct settings, and various points in time.

Twin, Zim's son, left Qolorha after his affair with Xoliswa, daughter of the unbelievers. He moved to town to lead a different life than that in the village. He was not like the other believers, and through going to the city he found a possibility to get away from the traditions and stories of his family. However, Twin died in the city. It was at his wake where Camagu first saw NomaRussia. Immediately, he was fascinated by this woman, and he only travelled to Qolorha because of her. NomaRussia, however, follows a certain aim by coming to Qolorha. She had been Zim's mistress; consequently his wife NoEngland put a spell on her. Now NomaRussia asks for her release from it, and begs Zim to help her. He is supposed to contact his dead wife to dismiss his former lover. When he hears that his son has deceased, he dies smilingly. NomaRussia perishes, too, and so both women are with Zim again.

In the end, Xoliswa, daughter of the unbelievers and Twin's ex-girlfriend, leaves for the town as well. This proves to be real progress, as she has the ability to lead a successful life in the city, and she emancipates from her family.

Through this consolidation of the protagonists, Mda displays the connection of people. Their correlations are not obvious at the beginning of the novel. However, in the course of time, the characters find each other, cross each other's paths, settle down, or leave again.

Camagu experiences these connections, too. First, he comes to Qolorha because of NomaRussia. In the village, he meets another woman, Xoliswa from the unbelievers. Interestingly, in the end he stays in Qolorha, and Xoliswa leaves the village and moves to town. During his stay in Qolorha, Camagu also gets to know Qukezwa, daughter of the believers. They start an affair, even have a child, and Camagu is finally allowed to marry her.

As a result of his relationship with Qukezwa and his stay in the village, Camagu changes his mind in favour of tradition. First he supported the tourist resort, and privileged progress. Now, he is influenced by the people surrounding him, they prefer the ancient customs, and do not want to modify anything in Qolorha. Furthermore, Camagu experiences the beauty of the nature in and around the village, and he does not want this to change because of a tourist resort.

#### 6.4.1 Finding a Way

In the novel, Mda provides solutions for coping with diverse opinions and agendas concerning the past and the present. Six years after the actual plot of *The Heart of Redness*, Qukezwa takes her son Heitsi down to the sea, but he is afraid of the water. Again, the beauty of the ambience is mentioned. Qukezwa loves the water; her son, however, is scared. On the basis of an allegory, the fear of something new is presented. For Qukezwa it is natural to go into the water, she is used to it. For her son, though, it is an unknown challenge. He has to overcome his inhibitions to experience the joy of bathing in the water. A great leap forward is necessary to get from traditions to progress and modernity.

At the beginning of the last chapter, Qukezwa sings in '[...] colours of today and of yesterday' (Heart, 271). In this quote, not only the various colours are important. Once more, Qukezwa demonstrates how to link the past with the present, and traditions with progress and modernity, without leaving any of these aspects behind. Additionally, '[...] she haunts yesterday's reefs and ridges with redness.' (Heart, 271) The past's influence is still present today, and often produces more questions than solutions. To be able to deal with elapsed times satisfactorily, it is helpful to come upon a smooth and coherent past. This is not feasible every time, consequently, it is at least of avail to find out more about it, and to find ways to come to terms with it, too.

## 7 The Memory of Stones

In *The Memory of Stones*, Mandla Langa rewrites the history of the people of Ngoza. Located in KwaZulu Natal, the novel depicts the stories of the people who currently live there. Their ancestors still play a major role in the present, thus the novel suggests possibilities to approach progress without neglecting the past.

The first settlers arrived in Natal in 1824, and it became a British crown colony in 1843.<sup>38</sup> After the so-called *Zulu War* from 1879 to 1880, however, Zululand was '[...] divided into thirteen administrative districts under mostly unsuitable chiefs appointed by the British.' (Reader, 17) Under the foreign rule it was difficult for the Zulus to follow their distinctive culture. However, they are not a homogeneous tribe and cannot look back on a consistent past. According to Reader, they owe their place in history '[...] a relatively brief period of intense activity [...], with little before or afterwards.' (3) In *The Memory of Stones*, Langa shows that the Zulus' history does not end with the colonial rule.

In the novel, the inhabitants of Ngoza have to leave their rural site, and the place is settled by whites. According to the Restitution of Land Act, the black people have a claim to this area and move there again. Langa depicts the situation after their return. He presents a new South Africa, moving away from the past and the traditional reigns of patriarchs or warlords. The emphasis lies on Zodwa, the female main protagonist, and her role in the settlement of Ngoza. On the basis of her story, Langa narrates the process of moving away from the traditional South Africa to a new one. It is remarkable that a woman takes over the reign in Ngoza, as women played a minor role in Zulu history and culture.

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Reader, 7, 15.

The Zulus traditionally had cattle, and were not interested in crop cultivation which they regarded as a woman's work.<sup>39</sup> Obviously, it is a long way from growing corn to ruling the people of a settlement, but on grounds of Zodwa's story, Langa deals with the women's history as well. Zodwa, who is first not interested in a life in the countryside, leaves to town to study law. Later, however, she takes over her father's reign in Ngoza, and becomes its leader. This contradicts the traditionally patriarchal structure of the Zulu people, and is a feministic aspect in the novel.

*Memory* and *history* do not describe the same aspects of past events; still they both cover past times. *Memory* deals with a rather personal, private discussion of bygone times, whereas the term *history* implies a public and more general examination of the past. The novel *The Memory of Stones* shows a significant relation to the topic of rewriting history. Different from traditional historiography, retyped stories often include recollection. The way somebody records history is of importance, as well as how others apprehend it. An author who rewrites the events of the past sets focal points, and may deal with them differently than others did before.

Reminiscence has a major impact on people and their perceptions of their individual and a general past. The rewriting of history leads to the propagation of knowledge and memories. Historiographers obviously hand on their chronicles in a written form, recollections, however, are often exclusively passed on orally. Narratives constitute a medium between written and oral versions. Formally, they are written, but their contents are often similar to those of verbal lore. The language itself is usually not as elaborated as in academic historiographies, the time frames are not as strict, and leaps are common. Another important feature of narratives is that emotions and feelings are consciously involved.

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Reader, 31.

Myth, history and fiction converge in alternate versions of history. However, they unmistakably allude to the real world.<sup>40</sup> The separations between the various domains blur, consequently new forms emerge from the processing of historical aspects in narratives.

In *The Memory of Stones*, an omniscient narrator introduces the characters one after the other. In this respect, a tale-teller can be compared to a historiographer whose task is to present the relevant agents, too. However, they are often already known to the readers, whereas the protagonists in novels are usually genuinely new and the narrator reveals their relations successively. Continually, the readers can link the characters' various stories. Even historiographers join the lives of individuals to present a common chronicle.

Within the novel, there are many leaps in time which highlight the relevance of the past in the present, and the connection of the various times. Moreover, these leaps to occurrences at different times can function as introduction for incidents in the novel, or as further explanations for situations, actions or emotions.

### **7.1 Moving – Leaving and Returning**

In *The Memory of Stones*, moving plays an important role. People have to leave their former settlements, or they go to cities or even further away, namely abroad. Others in turn, remigrate to their ancient homes, or they come to South Africa from different countries.

Ngoza was originally lived in by black people. After they were compelled to go away, whites populated the area. However, according to the Restitution of Land Act, the black people have a claim to Ngoza. In June 1990, the first settlers come back to Ngoza after they were forced to leave the place 20 years earlier.

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Stückrath, 16.

Zodwa, the female main character, leaves to Johannesburg, and then to Alice. She cannot imagine leading a life in a rural community like Ngoza.

In the settlement, Zodwa's father Baba Joshua is the spiritual leader. It is obvious how the notion of land is related to spiritualism in people's beliefs. Through their return to Ngoza, they come back to a spiritual place.

Suddenly her [Zodwa's] father is no mere champion of people returning to their ancestral lands; he is also their spiritual leader. The responsibility on him must be overpowering. How do you keep together a people once scattered through the four winds of the land? How do you create favourable conditions for families that have imbibed other influences, some inimical to the vision of Joshua and the Elders. What is their vision? (Memory, 106)

Through the remigration to their land, people also come back to their origins. They feel closer to their traditions and to their past. However, Baba Joshua has to keep the people together, and they all have to build a community again. The main question for the time coming is what they should make of their return to the ancestral land. Evidently, people in Ngoza cannot only live from their memories; they also need perspectives and opportunities for the future.

The narrator presents Zodwa's emotions and thoughts concerning Ngoza.

Alone in quarters provided for visitors, she senses that she is being sucked into something that is beyond her. Remembering that she just wants to become a lawyer, Zodwa determines to return to campus. The collective visions of the people who have returned is the least of her worries because, she knows, understanding implies taking some measure of responsibility. Her spirit on campus and the cities of the country, as well as the route to her chosen career, cannot be nurtured in this land of symbols and skins and the stammering *memory of stones* [my emphasis]. (Memory, 106)

At this time, Zodwa prefers not to be involved in the matters of Ngoza and its people. She is in favour of something novel, and she does not think that it is possible to achieve anything new at a place where memories are omnipresent.

Some white people find the way to Ngoza, too. The policeman Jannie Venter and his wife Benedita first live in a white neighbourhood in Pretoria, but then they go to Ngoza. Benedita's father is a black South African, but she does not know him as she grew up in England with her mother who is from Glasgow. Benedita was in the A-AM, the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, and she left London in 1992. She came to South Africa to search for her provenance, and to find out more about her origin. Through the act of moving to a black neighbourhood, she also physically approaches her roots.

The white people, as well as Johnny Mbazoo, live in Durban. Johnny M. went to school with Zodwa, but currently he has no connection to the black people. He is in prison for some time, and during his years there he learns to recite Shakespeare's works. Centuries later, the classics are still accessible, important and applicable. Consequently, literature plays a part in presenting a certain picture of the past, and in finding a bridge to times gone by.

## **7.2 People and the Colours of their Skins**

Skin colours are obviously an important topic when dealing with South Africa. The many years of apartheid still influence people, even after it ended. Today, people with different skin colours could live in the same neighbourhood, as no one is officially disadvantaged due to the colour of his or her skin.

For the native South Africans it is hard to believe that black and white people can live together without major racial difficulties in other parts of the world. In the novel, nations like The United Kingdom and Hungary occur. In these countries people might be confronted with difficulties due to the colour of their skin as well. However, nothing comparable to apartheid happens there. Everywhere around the world, there are people with racist attitudes; nevertheless the situation is different when the

government supports racism as in the former South Africa. Since the late eighteenth century,

[...] the term “race” was increasingly utilized in reference to human biological types, as science sought to establish the precise number of “races,” their respective characteristics, and their purported hierarchical relationships. (Gates, vii)

People were reduced to their physical attributes, from which their characteristics were gathered. Even after the 1960s, when morphological features like skin colour did no longer function as the basis of taxonomy, certain entities preserved the notions of race-based hierarchy.<sup>41</sup> Officially, such hierarchies do not exist anymore; however, there are still people who believe in a distinction of humans according to biological attributes.

### **7.3 A New South Africa**

In the patriarchal systems in the colonial and post-colonial South Africa and during the time of apartheid, women did not play important roles. This is different in the present settlement of Ngoza.

In the course of events, the three women Nerissa, Nozizwe and Zodwa are left to sort things out. Due to upheavals and Johnny M.'s intrigues, the local inhabitants of Ngoza feel threatened and suffer from the warlord's terror, they do not have access to fresh tap water, and enemies kill their geese.

The women support Baba Joshua's intention and want Zodwa to take over her father's position. They know that South Africa and its people are still rooted in traditions, and [...] that the time for peace would only come after some blood had been shed.` (Memory, 300) They are looking forward to the future, however, they are prepared to challenge Johnny M. and his men first.

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. Gates, ix.

Zodwa represents the new South Africa. The following dialogue with her opponent approves this.

We're in the new South Africa, now. Secrets are supposed to have died with the past.' 'That is,' he said gravely, 'if the past is really dead.' Zodwa seemed to think this over. 'You've got me there, mister,' she said. 'I suppose I'm one of the most immediate examples of the past standing in the path of development. (Memory, 323)

After doubts and moral conflicts, Zodwa is ready to take over her father's reign. She could still concern herself with the past and its secrets, but she decides to leave it behind. The present doubtlessly has its roots in the past; still Zodwa is looking forward to the future and development. However, she does not neglect the people's traditions.

#### **7.4 The Role of the Family**

The leading characters in *Ngoza* are already introduced in the first chapter of *The Memory of Stones*. The female main protagonist Zodwa, born in 1964, and her parents Nomonde and Baba Joshua live in Ngoza. Nomonde dies when their son Jonah leaves for Johannesburg. He, however, dies two years before the actual plot starts.

The family's story functions as the novel's fundament. Generally, a family constitutes the basis for all the larger communities like tribes, settlements, peoples, countries and nations. Moreover, through the story of this kin, the readers get some insights covering the personal sides of the protagonists, so they can link minor private stories to the whole plot of the novel.

Mpanza is Jonah's former comrade. It is a striking coincidence that he should look after Jonah's father Baba Joshua.

'We want you to keep an eye on Jonah's old man.' [...] 'He's running an operation down in Ngoza. People feel he might be fronting the counters. Mpanza knew that 'counters' was a collective term for enemies of the new state, and this applied to a wide spectrum from the white extremists, through the black traditionalists to the black far left. He saw that he had under-estimated his comrades. They knew his weaknesses, how the killing of Jonah and the burden of guilt had scarred him. (Memory, 51)

Obviously, Mpanza was involved in the killing of Jonah, but his definite role concerning this incident remains ambiguous. However, Mpanza apparently feels guilty for Jonah's death.

The readers find out more about Jonah's story, his leaving home and the joining of groups like the armed wing of the ANC. Finally, comrades shoot him in 1990 because they think he has broken under interrogation a few years earlier. It is striking that Jonah is killed by his pals; however, such incidents were often concealed. Consequently, Langa deals with a difficult topic of the ANC's past. The so-called *impimpis*, meaning *informers*, were regarded as enemies within the movement, hence former comrades killed them.

Even Zodwa is not sure how far she can trust her brother. She has doubts about him and asks herself whether his death was justified. As no one knows what has really been going on, Zodwa only has the possibility to follow her feelings. As she has not seen her brother for some time, she cannot be sure about him, and does not trust her judgment anymore. Through Mpanza, she gains the opportunity to find out more about her brother and the real circumstances of his death. In a striking dialogue, Mpanza tells Zodwa that he knew Jonah. Zodwa asks Mpanza "Who's this dreamer who told you about Africans and the kings?" (Memory, 330), and he answers "The dreamer was Jonah, [...] I think he missed you a lot." (Memory, 330) Here it becomes obvious that the two men knew each other, and later Zodwa even finds out how her brother has died. Through

Mpanza, the man who has killed Jonah, Zodwa paradoxically finds reconciliation, and the possibility to come to terms with the past, as well as with her brother's story.

## 7.5 Traditions

Traditions are important in the concept of history. They origin in the past, and they are still influential in the present. Consequently, they display a connection between elapsed times and now, and they are often closely linked to religious beliefs.

Three years ago, Joshua had a vision to bring up a new religion, respectively a sect. This demonstrates the importance of faith and its connection to traditional values, like the celebration of religious holidays.

Every nation believes in a certain official history of its country, and

[...] if it is repeated often enough, and with enough emphasis, it is accepted as a canon of received wisdom. And whole societies base their way of life on these 'messages' transmitted by official history. (Brink, 137)

This conclusion also applies for people's religious beliefs and their traditions. Individuals are willing to maintain them, as they represent parts of their people's and their country's history.

### 7.5.1 The Influence of Memories

When Zodwa visits Baba Joshua in the countryside she [...] despairs for her father, knowing that he is left with nothing but memories'. (Memory, 104) She understands that her father still cherishes the past and how life was like back in the old days, although times were not only positive then. Memories are fluctuating, they are not stable, and not reliable as well. Parts of them may be made up, or they change in the course of time.

Certainly, they can provide safety as long as they are steady; at times they are the only form of firmness in a quickly changing world.

Admittedly, not only recollections are subjective.

Like scientists and scholars in most disciplines, also historians decide to cover certain topics. Historical events and agents, as well as past processes and structures, can deliberately be chosen due to interest or field of research.<sup>42</sup> Still, a historian has to focus on more than topic and content. As Hayden White argues,

[his or her] problem is to construct a linguistic protocol, complete with lexical, grammatical, syntactical, and semantic dimensions, by which to characterize the field and its elements *in his own terms* [...], and thus to prepare them for the explanation and representation he will subsequently offer them in his narrative. (*Metahistory*, 30)

All these aspects described by White need not be considered when dealing with memories. In people's recollections, these formal aspects do not apply, moreover, they are not necessary. The people's awareness of their own commemorations relates to a certain '[...] "historical consciousness" [-] a distinct mode of thought' (White, *Metahistory*, 1), whereas it does not correspond with '[...] "historical knowledge" [-] an autonomous domain in the spectrum of the human and physical sciences.' (Ibid., 1) Memories can exist independently of historical knowledge or abstract historical interest.

Nhalanhla Maake claims that 'South African history is an inscription of a series of myths on the landscape of memories.' (147) Authors of fiction can identify and reveal these legends, and include them in their works. The narrative form allows to embed these myths, or to question them critically.

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. White, *Literaturtheorie*, 68.

R.R.R. Dhlomo was the first black author to write a novel in English and in his opinion art consisted of understanding what was going on in a person's surrounding.<sup>43</sup> This complements the idea that authors observe and notice people's interests, and deal with them in narratives. Consequently, when the past incidents appear to be important, writers can include them in contemporary works as well.

### 7.5.2 The Mourning Process

When Baba Joshua is about to die, the mourning process follows the traditions. He is dying slowly, thus he gives Zodwa time to think about the future and to answer the question if she is willing to take over his reign. His parting is accompanied by old rites which make the farewell easier. Baba Joshua's death is one evidence of the circle of life, and relates to the topic of memory as well. At the beginning of the last chapter of *The Memory of Stones* the notion of recollections comes up again.

Thirty days after the funeral, at the end of the mourning period, Ngoza was green, fecund, the long drought a mere memory, like the distant memory of a toothache. Looking at the growing things, marvelling at the many disguises nature sometimes wore to introduce herself to the living world, Zodwa found that the memories were the most constant features of her people's lives. They were there, changing all the time, as unreliable as a lover, but they would never escape from you, nor, she realised, could you ever escape from them. Memory had sustained her kinsmen, who were now more relaxed in their religious beliefs, holding on to some ancient orthodoxy but opening the door to other influences. (Memory, 361)

With Baba Joshua's death the long drought ends, and gives place to a new, fertile time. The processes of nature greatly influence people's lives, and they learn that everything vanishes, each time, however, something new is about to emerge. When Baba Joshua's reign ends, his daughter is prepared to take it over.

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Barnett, 13.

### 7.5.3 Magic

Before Zodwa can actually become the leader of the people of Ngoza, she has to challenge Johnny M. at the Humiliation Tree. The events there are under magical influence. Zodwa goes into the water and suddenly she is with the ancestors. As they are rather on Johnny M.'s side, Zodwa finds out that he must have spoken to them before. Consequently, she returns to the real world. This magical journey to the forefathers emphasises their influence. Shaka, well known for his '[...] misanthropy', (Reader, 3) and the other forefathers support Johnny M. as they are used to a man's rule. Consequently, they prefer his reign to Zodwa's. However, as Langa presents in *The Memory of Stones*, times have changed. The ancestors are still important for the Zulu people; however, traditional and patriarchal structures are not that powerful and influential anymore.

The community of native South Africans had their '[...] imaginative life rooted in a living tradition of the mythic, the legendary and the magical.' (Ashcroft, 118) Moreover,

[m]ythic and magical traditions [...] far from being alienated from the people, or mere mystifications, were the distinctive feature of their local and national cultures, and were collective forms by which they gave expression to their identity and articulated their difference from the dominant colonial and racial oppressors. They were [...] the modes of expression of that culture's reality. (Ashcroft 118-119)

Consequently, the native people had room to demonstrate their identities and cultures, whereas the colonisers or other oppressors did not have any access to it, and did not understand it.

Although myths often consist of simplifications, they are frequently rooted in the people's memories and provide explanations. Regularly, legends develop from unsolved conflicts which are still of importance.<sup>44</sup> They demand to be dealt with, in mythological form and in oral narration, and they appear in alternate histories.

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. White, *Literaturtheorie*, 314-316.

## 7.6 The Past, the Present and the Future

At the end of the novel, Zodwa thinks about the chance of future palaeontologists finding the relicts and fossils of Ngoza's people. It is part of the work of traditional historians to deal with archaeological excavations and explore what has happened in past times. For investigating the more recent past, historians primarily work with written documents which present more insights. However, they have to be examined and used critically, too, as their reliability depends on the person writing them, and his or her skills. Still, historians only have limited knowledge of the people's inward feelings and emotions. As Zodwa believes '[...] these experts would have no access to the enduring power of memory.' (Memory, 366) Frequently, historians lack the insights in how concerned people perceive, memorise and remember the past, and in how far elapsed times affect their lives.

## 7.7 The ANC and More Politics

The novel includes several public events which are often linked to the personal stories of the characters. Thus, Langa demonstrates the influence of politics on people's lives. Moreover, through the rewriting of the political history of South Africa, authors can choose certain aspects and events, and include them in narratives. The way *The Memory of Stones* is written is similar to the structures of oral tales, and strongly reminds the readers of the tradition of story telling. The narrator considers personal aspects of the historical agents, as well as certain occurrences which surround the major historical events.

Mpanza, Jonah's former comrade, was a member of the Amandla Cultural Ensemble of the ANC. In the past, Mpanza fought in the guerrilla war in Angola, together with Jonah. There, during the war, he asked himself why he did not fight the Boers at home. Later, some case was brought to the TRC by the ANC, but Mpanza was not taken in. The TRC's aim was to provide the people with the truth, so that they can find reconciliation and

come to terms with the past. Mpanza however, has to live with his bad conscious for killing Jonah for betrayal. Only later, the former comrades find out that Jonah had never been an enemy. Mpanza decides to visit Jonah's father Baba Joshua to find his own way of reconciliation.

Once, Mpanza has to go to Budapest. There he meets a woman called Judit. They discuss politics, and while talking about Kádár, Judit says '[i]t is not a cliché that the revolution eats its own children. I just hope that you never have the experience in your own country.' (Memory, 265) The woman's conclusion applies to the end of the apartheid regime, too. After this political era, time and patience are necessary to really improve the people's situation, and to enhance the way they regard their country. They cannot expect immediate changes in their lives, and there are still memories of the past which disadvantageously influence the present.

A scene in a shebeen exactly deals with the changes people await after the end of apartheid. One of the customers is talking about The Congress of South African Trade Unions' anniversary. For Nerissa, the shebeen's owner, this anniversary is not really important or influential as nothing has changed in her life. Addressing her customer she says '[...] when Cosatu came into power, I was in this shithole. Ten years later, I'm still in the same shithole, so, who cares?' (Memory, 283) This quotation expresses how many people feel in the so-called new South Africa. Moreover, Nerissa's statement represents the people's dissatisfaction and disillusion with the actual situation. For them not much, or possibly nothing at all, has changed. Even when they notice a general improvement in the country's situation – individual alterations are rare, or at least not obvious. Having more rights does not mean that the personal whereabouts and circumstances are different from before.

When Johnny M. comes to the shebeen he starts a fight with a customer and kills him. People's lives still do not count for many people in South Africa, at least not for those who are used to killing others, and Johnny M. is accustomed to spreading terror and fear.

Major political events which occur in the novel are the founding of the UDF in 1983, the Seven Days War one year after Mandela's release, the elections in 1994, and the assassination of Chris Hani. The communist Chris Hani was killed in 1993, and at his funeral celebrations Benedita and Venter get to know each other when Venter saves her from an attack. Once more, a public political event is linked with the private stories of two people in South Africa.

However, the personal, individual views of people do not express final versions of the truth. As Rosaldo claims,

Each viewpoint is arguably incomplete – a mix of insight and blindness, reach and limitations, impartiality and bias – taken together they achieve neither omniscience nor a unified master narrative but complex understandings of ever-changing, multifaceted social realities. (128)

Depending on the point of view, and on the attitudes people have towards the events, the individual perceptions of them can vary. Moreover, when people are involved personally, they may regard a situation more biased.

## 8 Conclusion

The present is clearly influenced by the past, and vice versa. The way we look at elapsed times is conditioned by actual situations, opinions and interests. When people concern themselves with specific events in the past, these occurrences are definitely of importance in the present.

The depiction of alternate histories in novels provides a chance to deal with certain, often difficult, aspects of the past in a narrative form. Obviously, one cannot expect to find accurate historical facts in literature; however, events of the past are still frequently included and discussed. Consequently, readers might find ways to come to terms with times gone by. Authors may suggest possibilities how individuals can deal with their own past, writers of fiction, however, are not able to provide universal solutions for all their readers.

When authors rewrite history, they present certain tendencies and directions how people could cope with past events, they set new focuses on topics they are interested in, and they discuss these issues differently than it is usually the case in traditional historiographies. In narration, the writers concentrate on the fates of individuals, whereas in academic historical works the community as a whole is of interest. Furthermore, personal aspects are not as important as general public and political events.

The rewriting of history is a possible alternative to the scholarly discussion of the past. However, these two concerns should not be regarded as antipodes, but they could rather complement one another. Historiographies provide the background for all the subsequent discussions of occurrences, whereas alternate versions of elapsed times focus on ordinary people and their whereabouts. Authors of fiction have an advantage over historians, because in narratives they can decide what they want to focus on. However, they often deal with aspects which are neglected in traditional historical works.

## 9 Appendix

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### 9.3 Abstract

Die traditionelle Geschichtsschreibung ist nicht mehr die einzige Form in der vergangene Ereignisse behandelt werden. Das nochmalige Auf- und Beschreiben von historischen Ereignissen in Literatur gewinnt zunehmend an Bedeutung. Die AutorInnen von Romanen haben die Möglichkeit neue Aspekte von Geschichte aufzugreifen, und auch aufzuarbeiten. In der Vergangenheit jedes Volkes und jeder Nation gibt es Geschehnisse die es wert sind sie noch einmal zu erwähnen, manchmal sogar zu betonen. So ist es auch im Fall von Südafrika und seiner wechselhaften, oftmals tragischen, Geschichte. Bereits während der Kolonialherrschaft und auch später unter dem Apartheidregime wurden immer wieder historische Ereignisse, ja sogar die Geschichte vieler Menschen, verleugnet, beziehungsweise gänzlich vernachlässigt. Zeitgenössische südafrikanische Autorinnen und Autoren haben nun die Möglichkeit, wenn nicht die Aufgabe, sich der Vergangenheit Stück für Stück anzunähern, und sie eventuell aufzuarbeiten. Selbstverständlich können Romane immer nur von wenigen ausgesuchten Aspekten in der Geschichte handeln, und die Auswahl dieser steht natürlich den AutorInnen frei. Meist konzentrieren sich diese auf Ereignisse die sie selbst, oder auch ihr Volk, betreffen, und oft sind das tragische und traumatische Vorfälle. Doch genau solche können in literarischer Form noch einmal behandelt werden, damit auch Nicht-Historiker die Chance haben Geschichte aufzuarbeiten. Daraus entsteht eine Möglichkeit die Vergangenheit zu bewältigen, und mitunter auch mit ihr abzuschließen. Es ist allerdings wichtig zu bedenken, dass die Betrachtung und die Behandlung von historischen Ereignissen in Romanen subjektiv bleiben müssen, da auch die Schriftsteller oft einer bestimmten Idee oder Anschauung folgen. Sie können somit nicht für eine neue historische Sicht der Dinge verantwortlich gemacht werden, allerdings geben sie LeserInnen die Gelegenheit sich selbst Gedanken zu machen, Vergessenes wieder zu betrachten, und so eventuell auch mit der Vergangenheit ins Reine zu kommen.

## 9.4 Curriculum Vitae

### **Persönliche Daten:**

Name: Nina Postiasi

Geburtsdatum: 20. Juni 1980

Geburtsort: Neunkirchen

Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich

### **Schulbildung und universitäre Ausbildung:**

seit 2000 Lehramtsstudium an der Universität Wien in den Fächern  
Anglistik und Amerikanistik und Geschichte

1995-2000 Städtische HLA Wiener Neustadt

1990-1995 BG und BRG Berndorf

1986-1990 Volksschule Pernitz

### **Bisherige berufliche Tätigkeiten:**

seit 2008 Leiterin von Sprachkursen,  
Die Wiener Volkshochschulen GmbH

seit 2003 Nachhilfeunterricht und Leitung von Gruppenkursen,  
LernQuadrat OG