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Dedication

I dedicate this diploma thesis to my wonderful family.

First and foremost, I wish to thank our precious daughter Sarah for her patience. You are the joy of our lives.

I would like to thank my spouse, Martin. Without your patience and emotional support, the last few months would have been much more difficult.

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This diploma thesis could not have been accomplished without your infinite love and encouragement.

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Herics Barbara

Wien, 2013

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1. Introduction

South Africa, a country poor in economy, is enriched by a remarkable diversity both in ethnicity and culture. This diversity, along with South Africa's history of inequality during colonialism as well as apartheid, has influenced South African literature through the centuries. Preserved in print for all times, the oppression and discrimination of South Africa's indigenous people can be found in various forms of literature.

Oppression and discrimination are the most widely known historical facts in South Africa's history. However, another detrimental factor is the impact of industrialization and modernization on traditional modes of living, forcing even indigenous peoples far away from the modern world to adapt. Traditional, social, as well as cultural structures have changed incredibly. Too many practices and customs have disappeared entirely due to the influence of the Western world, few have endured.

This diploma thesis examines the everlasting tussle between traditionalism and modernism by investigating key concepts such as generational conflicts, gender roles, increasing urbanization, and the constant search for identity. In order to examine the representation of tribal culture in South African fiction, the following novels have been chosen: Zakes Mda's *Heart of Redness* and *She Plays With the Darkness*, Johnny Masilela's *We Shall Not Weep*, as well as Mandla Langa's *The Memory of Stones*. All four books are set in different tribal communities and deal with the influence of modernization in contemporary rural South Africa.

Taking a closer look at how these concepts are depicted in the selected novels, the aim is to understand the change of social structures through history and literature. Many questions arise, such as if today's society is mostly influenced by modernization, or if traditions and indigenous customs do play an equal, or perhaps a more significant role. Will such influences urge indigenous people to become part of the modern world and join a society that is mainly characterized

by Western values and mannerisms, void of most traditions and customs, or will they be able to hold on to their traditions and customary modes of living? It is further investigated in what ways these societal changes are portrayed in the literature at hand.

The first chapter following the introduction is devoted to the definition of South African literature, examining its characteristics as well as the crucial role of history in the emergence of the vast literary output of the nation.

The second chapter offers short biographies of the selected authors along with descriptions of their work, followed by a look at the role authors' lives and experiences play in their writings. All of the selected novels appear to provide an authentic account of the nation's current state of affairs through autobiographical elements.

The subsequent chapter provides a description of important cultural practices, customs, and social structures, as well as an overview of major historical events that have influenced the depicted indigenous communities.

The last chapter focuses on generational conflicts, the change of family as well as community structures, and shifting gender roles. The subchapter on culture, identity, and heritage examines important factors in the shaping of identity, as well as the influence of cultural heritage on modern society. The dichotomy of rural vs. urban lifestyle is discussed in this chapter as well as the extent of difference in both, the impact of modernization on tradition and cultural lifestyles, and the opposition of indigenous knowledge and Western sciences. The chapter finds its conclusion in an analysis of generational conflicts. These chapters provide the basis for an examination of selected key concepts in order to investigate how tribal culture is depicted in contemporary literature. The main focus lies on medicine as well as education, as a close examination of all aspects would exceed the scope of this paper.

2. Contemporary South African Literature

Throughout history, South African literature has consistently contributed to the world of books in a unique and significant manner. During the years of transition from apartheid to democracy, this remarkable country has not only undergone considerable changes in regards to politics, but has equally drawn the world's eyes to its written works of art. It is indeed a fascinating journey to discover the roots of South Africa's influence on world literature.

A careful examination of the characteristics and influences of South African literature including its representatives in a world literary context will provide a thorough description of the subject. Since a detailed analysis would exceed the intended scope of this paper, some aspects of the circumstances under which contemporary South African literature has come into being can only be touched on briefly. Nonetheless, in order to provide better understanding of the primary works mentioned in this paper, selected features of South African literature will be discussed in a detailed and precise manner.

Thus, this paper shall begin with the foundation of contemporary South African literature, historical events that influenced its characteristics, as well as its importance and impact on Africa and its people.

2.1. The Role of History

South African literature reflects the nation's remarkable history and diversity. Each and every written work is unique in itself, just like the magnificent country that inspired it. Strongly influenced and shaped by the nation's distinctive history of oppression, racism, violence and political struggle, the South African written world fascinates scholars and students around the globe. Sadly, the at times violent history as well as the country's struggles not only started with apartheid, but have found a beginning much earlier during the time of colonization by the Dutch and the British in the 17th and 18th century. The most relevant historical incidents to have contributed to South African literature include the Dutch (1652 – 1806) and British (1806-1910) colonization, the rise of the Zulu kingdom and

the Great Trek (1835-1838), the Anglo-Boer War (1899 – 1902) that shaped the formation of modern South Africa deeply, and finally, industrialization¹. Unfortunately, these time periods were marked by perceived white superiority over the native black population, which led to the establishment of apartheid (1948 -1991), the rise of Black Consciousness after 1960, and the subsequent struggle for democracy, which found its beginning in 1994.

The impact of colonization and its aftermath must not be underestimated by those who read South African literature. Considering the nature of the political struggles – especially by the indigenous peoples, it is not surprising that politics have always occupied a central position in South African writing.

The period of decolonization and the resulting search for identity mark the starting point for African literature as such, and South African literature in particular, to be regarded as a prominent component of contemporary world literature (Booker 2). Even a short glimpse at the historical events that shaped South Africa easily explains the importance of history and the country's past as the two major characteristics of South African literature.

Moslund (24) argues that today the distinctions between fiction and non-fiction are blurred, as the importance of literature as a tool to depict the past are more and more understood. His view recognizes literary texts of any kind – fictional or factual – as “valid and important ways of representing and giving voice to the past” (25). This close relation between historical fiction and volumes detailing historical data implies that the authors of fiction may also be accepted as historians. Moslund thus refers to contemporary South African literary works as “novel histories”, “historical fictions” or “historical novels” (118) that “invite readers to enact upon history autonomously and evaluate the present critically and self-critically” (123).

Moslund speaks of so called “counter-histories”, which reconstruct the past socially as well as psychologically, and in this way “attempt to regain command of one's own identity” (16). These counter histories may take the form of

¹ All information on the history of South Africa is taken from Heywood.

“historical revisionism, the recuperation of the silenced past, witness testimonies, biographical accounts” or other texts that present an alternative past.

[...] Counter-histories simply allow events, truths and realities to exist by making them known and by calling them forth from the darkness and silence of repression and censorship. (Moslund 16)

In Southern Africa, such counter-histories were crucial to the process of mobilizing resistance against the white minority rule of apartheid (Moslund 17), as well as in the reconstruction of “collective memories” (Moslund 18).

Similarly to Moslund, Jaspal Singh and Rajendra Chetty emphasize the close correlation between history and fiction in southern Africa. Due to the fact that many South African literary works are autobiographical or semi-autobiographical (7), Singh and Chetty explain, that “fiction gives us history from the inside” and that it provides a basis for a shift of social relations “from a traumatized past to a reconstructed future” (Singh and Chetty 1).

The importance of the close connection of history and fiction is further evaluated by Ranka Primorac, who argues that fiction is capable of constructing “possible worlds” and therefore creates alternatives to history (Graham 10).

In the same way the above-mentioned literary scholars stress the notion of history and the past as ever changing, dynamic and influencing the present and the creation of identities, Helgesson speaks of “historicity” (Graham 11) – a term that is used to emphasize the “shift of focus from history *per se* to the *effects* of history”. In Helgesson’s opinion, fiction is the ideal genre to find an interface of historicity.

As the role of history in literature has been depicted by the above mentioned literary scholars, it is now clear that the novelist taking on the role of a historian is of increasing importance, not only through presenting history in a factual way, but rather representing and reshaping it in a fictional manner and by doing so, fictitious novels can no more be seen as “mere fictions”, but have to be

understood as ‘perceptions of the world as a story, and thus inviting the reading audience to act upon it accordingly’ (Brink in Attridge and Jolly 18-23).

2.2.Mode and Language of Transmission – from Author to Audience

Having evaluated history’s essential role in the character of South African fiction, it is of importance to investigate the difficulties in defining South African literature as such, by considering the role of the target audience, the writers themselves, and also the mode of transmission and the language of expression. Among scholars worldwide, there is little consensus on how African literature in general can be accurately defined.

Chinua Achebe states, that due to the diversity of the country, there is no such thing as a precise definition of African literature.

You cannot cram African literature into a small, neat definition. I do not see African literature as one unit but as a group of associated units – in fact the sum total of all the *national* and *ethnic* literatures of Africa. (Achebe in Amuta 105)

For Achebe, all written texts – whether they are written in European or African languages – account for the label of “African literature”. In his point of view, the use of European languages possesses historical legitimization, because “the use of these languages to communicate African experiences enriches both the language in question and the literature itself” (Amuta 112).

One of the scholars opposing this position is Ngugi, who insists, that African literature can only be written in African language, otherwise it would have to be referred to as “Afro-European” literature (Amuta 112).

The choice, which language seems to be more appropriate to use, is the subject in ongoing debates. Booker, for example, gives various reasons for the motivation of using English as the language of expression. For one, English literary works may find a bigger market since they can also be read outside of the continent and do not limit readership to various regional dialects. Furthermore, many Africans are more literate in English than in their indigenous languages. Rushdie, author of the notorious article *The Empire writes back*

states, that due to its magnitude and flexibility, English is the perfect language for transmission of African literary texts, because of its ability to include so many diverse realities (Booker 16).

All these views share the importance of the written mode of transmission of literary works. It is however crucial to remember that the most traditional African culture is oral in nature, and that before the time of colonization, most African languages did not possess written forms! In contrast to written forms, oral literary culture is not static but constantly changing in form and content, according to the also ever changing realities of life (Amuta 69). It is important to take into consideration that in oral interchange as well as in popular speech, the use of indigenous languages predominates. (Chapman, xx).

South African literature can thus be regarded as a “hybrid phenomenon” (Booker 7), since combining traditional African (oral tradition) and European (written texts) culture was brought to the continent at the times of colonization.

Another difficulty in defining South African literature in its evolutionary process and diversity is the notion of the “African writer”. What classifies a writer as “South African”? Is it his ethnicity, his cultural background, his identity? Could descendants of white European settlers qualify as African? All these questions may be seen in the larger context – i.e. the question of one’s own identity in particular and of the nation’s identity in general. Since the fall of apartheid, the country and its people have worked hard to find answers for many questions, but the quest for definition of identity is likely the most urgent matter of all. As the country is still in transition, and has not yet found its inner self, people must redefine themselves in their new role as “new South Africans”.

According to Booker, the African writer is not only born in Africa but is also culturally rooted in African society (ix). Similarly, Chapman defines the characteristics of a South African writer not by means of birth, race, or nationality, but rather through “intimate knowledge and close identification” of the culture and its people (9).

With regard to the body of writing, Coetzee claims, that there is no difference in nature between white and black writing. What differentiates 'white written words from black written words', is that they are "generated by the concerns of people no longer European, not yet African" (Attwell 2005, 14). With respect to the different cultural background of black and white writers however, Coetzee's statement that black written works do not differ in nature from white literacy pieces, may well be argued with, since the concerns that generate white writing are to a certain extent not likely to correspond to those of black writers. Maybe it is because of this, that white writing has received far more attention outside of South Africa than any other writing, whether it is black writers writing in English, or literature written in indigenous languages. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the country's two literature Nobel Prize laureates (J.M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer) are white South Africans.

Works by black writers, such as Zakes Mda, Njabulo Ndebele, Zoe Wicomb, as well as Bessie Head, have gained growing world-wide attention respectively. In contrast to white literature, the above mentioned authors are more concerned with locating the situation of black South African subjectivity within the newly defined conditions of modernity. While Head and Wicomb focus primarily on gender positions, Mda's and Ndebele's fictions predominantly display a desire to articulate a black, urban South African epistemology (Attwell 2005, 178 ff). Ndebele and Mda see language, knowledge, and cultural activity to a large extent as instruments of power, and discuss how these instruments are to be understood and developed (Attwell 2005, 180).

It is of importance to note, that the first novels to be published in South Africa were of British origin. Written in English by white European settlers, these novels conveyed the experience of settler life in indigenous South Africa. The first novel, Oliver Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, was published in 1883. Therefore, white South African writing has a much longer history than its black counterpart, which began in the mid to late 1920s (Killam, 3). Additionally, the apartheid-imposed censorship on black writing must be taken into account as well.

The existing difference between black and white writing with regard to the influence of the writer's own identity and cultural background, takes in the formation of the work's theme and motifs, and ultimately leads to a discussion of the target audience.

As mentioned earlier, many writers choose to write their work in the English language, simply because by doing so, a large audience can be reached. Especially for Western readers, South African literature opens new possibilities of deepening the existing understanding, and gives precious new glimpses of a nation that so vastly differs from their own.

Nonetheless, it is not always the Westernized readership that is the one most targeted by South African writers. Due to the crucial role of South African literature in the context of social and racial oppression, as well as in the goal of literary outputs that had come into being during those difficult times it can be claimed that literature seeks to re-define the past and give new meaning to the present.

If this is the intention of the author, it may be presumed that his work is targeted for a local readership. Given the linguistic diversity of the country, such literary works are primarily written in one of the native languages, clearly intended as part of the local lives and cultures. It is however also important to take into consideration the high illiteracy rate among rural, indigenous people.

Incidentally, Ndebele locates fictions close to the oral tradition of black communities since fiction echoes the tradition of storytelling in rural life (Attwell 2005, 179).

Adding to the diversity of South African literature works are the innumerable literary outputs. It is not sufficient to simply discuss, who qualifies as an author of South African literature. There may be books written *about* Africa – primarily and foremost by Europeans, thus mirroring stereotypes and common racial prejudices. A prominent example of this is Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*, which depicts African society and its cultures as backward and savage. On the

other hand, the richness of South African literature comprises also, nowadays primarily, works *from* Africa, which reflect on the plentiful diversity and multiplicity of its people and culture.

Given the variety of South African literary output, ranging from oral traditions to written works, from English to several indigenous African languages, as well as from various genres such as poetry, short stories, etc. to novels, it comes as no surprise that due to its potential in generic multiplicity, the novel has been granted a higher level of importance, and has subsequently resulted in remarkably widespread recognition for South African writers.

Even though, according to sales figures, the majority of South Africans prefer short stories over novels (Chapman 385), the majority of European and American attention has been granted to novels. Mikhail Bakhtin from Russia, perhaps the most influential of all modern novel theorists, is of the opinion, that the reason for the popularity in the use of the novel to transmit South African culture lies in its remarkable and unique ability to unify various genres.

[...] one the most important characteristics of the novel is its generic multiplicity, its ability to incorporate and make use of conventions normally associated with any number of other genres, even those not usually considered literary. Thus, a novel can incorporate poems, songs, letters, sermons, diary entries, newspaper articles, and so on, and still be regarded as a novel. (Booker 18f)

Correspondingly, Chapman (385) claims that the reason for the novel's popularity lies in the fact that the novel is the best genre to depict life in its variety and complexity.

J.M. Coetzee claims that even though he acknowledges the central role the novel takes within South African literature, the ideal novel has not been written yet. His conception of the "ideal" South African novel should possess the following characteristics:

The imagined world should be national as distinct from nationalist. It should characterize the society at all levels during the time in which it is set. It should employ realistic techniques that make the world accessible to most of the

reading public. It should make the local, universal.
(Chapman 407)

2.3. Themes, Motifs, and Objectives

*One of the things a writer is for is to say the unsayable,
to speak the unspeakable,
to ask difficult questions.
(Salman Rushdie in Altnöder, 33)*

What is it that writers of contemporary South African literature in the end do convey to their audience? According to Altnöder (35f), a major divergence in black and white South African writing with regard to motifs and themes is to be found. She claims, that during the final years of apartheid, black writing dealt primarily with crisis of identity, dispossession, corruption, and cultural fragmentation, whereas “White South African literature exhibits remarkable affinities with that of other settler colonies”. Therefore, issues of exile, the problem of finding a place to live and ‘feeling at home’ were often addressed. In the post- apartheid writings beginning in 1991, a specific shared feature of black and white South African literature emerges – i.e. the general commitment to political themes.

In addition to the above-mentioned rewriting of history and fictionalizing of historical facts, African writers also evoke and revive urban and rural traditions.

Literature from South Africa is broadly about urbanization, where the old-versus-the-new or the rural-memory-versus-the-city-opportunity characterises forms of expression beyond any stronghold of language, race or nationality.
(Chapman, xviii)

This is also argued by Attwell (2005, 176), who claims that black South African writing in particular, is deeply concerned with - and reflects - a feeling of dislocation. Removal from rural life, difficulties concerning citizenship, economic independence, and political representation depict these struggles. Another central aspect of black South African writing, namely the concept of cultural struggle, can be found in works by Njabulo Ndebele and Zakes Mda. The aim and particular characteristics of Mda’s fiction will be subject to further, more detailed analysis in the subsequent chapter.

Durrant argues that due the tension caused by the “oppressive memory of the past and the liberatory promise of the future” (1) that mark post-colonial and post-apartheid literature, an act of mourning is essential, since without it, the grave wrongdoings of the past cannot be overcome, and wounds inflicted in the past would not be able to heal.

Such musings lead to the question how much mourning, revisiting, reshaping of the past and its injustices is really helpful in paving the way to a non-racist future, in which identities are finally found, and diverse boundaries blurred? There is no doubt that one must not ignore history and apartheid’s role in it, the suffering it caused, but how many repetitions are too many or too few to prove constructive in the shaping of a better future, free of the mistakes of the past, this is a question that remains unanswered. It is out of question that historical fiction created after the years of apartheid has primarily the intention of preventing past injustice from disgracing the future.

The chosen themes mentioned above have numerous objectives and intentions as to what is supposed to be achieved when writing for or speaking to an intended audience. Thus, it is legitimate to claim that South African literary objectives are as heterogeneous as the literary output and the country itself.

With the multiplicity of African experiences and the pasts of numerous ethnic groups that are all distinctive from one another in one way or the other, it would be literally impossible to expect that there could be only one direction for SA fiction. (Larson 282)

Larson consequently reasons that the future development of South African literature in general and fiction in particular will only reflect one tendency, diversity. Given the innumerable perspectives and subsequent objectives of a literature that emerged in a country that has within only a few years moved from rural to urban, from illiterate to literate, from communal to individual, and from local to global, such reasoning does not come as a surprise at all.

In his essay, *Creativity after Apartheid*, Zakes Mda had wondered which topics authors would write about after the fall of apartheid. Mda states, that apartheid offered ready-made stories that were narrated “by the greatest author of them

all – apartheid” (1). The authors’ creativity was not much challenged, they simply had to observe life as it was, and write it down.

Despite his concerns, a great number of new literary artists have risen after apartheid. Among these are Johnny Masilela (*We Shall Not Weep*), and Phaswane Mpe (*Welcome to Our Hillbrow*). Mda claims, that post-apartheid writers do possess a literary freedom in our time which few writers could enjoy during the period of apartheid. They are now able to address any topic of their choice without fear of censorship.

Mda also examines the role of the novel during apartheid. He claims that apart from works by authors such as Sol Plaatje, who published short novels in the indigenous African languages, the novel was not really the typical genre of the black writer. Other genres, such as poetry, plays and short stories were found to be more useful, since they permitted the author to communicate with the audience directly and faster (3). Authors were in the need to pass their intended messages on to their audience as fast as they could, since cultural expression was seen as a weapon in the years of struggles for liberation.

It is this change within society and the entangled diversity of its literary objectives that will provide the stepping stones for further observations and discoveries, as well as their detailed analysis in the subsequent chapters of this paper.

3. Selected Authors and Their Works

This chapter provides a closer examination of selected South African authors and their works in order to reflect upon the actual use of theoretical concepts depicted in the previous chapter and to explore to which extent these specific novels show certain typical features of contemporary South African literature. Authors' biographies as well as a short summary of each novel display how much influence tribal cultures have on authors and their literary works. Zakes Mda from the Xhosa culture, Mandla Langa from the Zulu tribe, and Johnny Masilela from the Ndebele people display deep roots in tribal culture. Specific key concepts of the novels summarized in this chapter will be more deeply examined in chapter 5.

3.1. Zakes Mda

Zakes Mda is one of South Africa's best known novelists, poets, and playwrights. Born in 1948 as Zanemvula Kizito Gatyeni Mda in isiXhosa, he adopted his pen name Zakes Mda when his work was first published at the age of thirteen or fourteen². His birth name carries the meaning 'The one, who came with the rain'.

During his youth in Johannesburg, Mda joined a street gang, whereupon he was sent to live with his grandparents in Lower Telle, Eastern Cape for two years. During this time, he devoted himself to Xhosa tradition and culture³. Due to his father's political activism, the family had to go into exile into the neighboring Lesotho⁴.

In 1983, Mda emigrated to America, where he acquired his Master of Arts degrees in Theater as well as Mass Communication. In the following years, Mda taught at various universities in Lesotho and America. It was only in 1994 – after more than 30 years of exile – that Mda returned to Johannesburg to teach at the University of Witwatersrand. Since 1994, he has been traveling to and fro the

² [Http://geosireads.wordpress.com/?s=Zakes+Mda](http://geosireads.wordpress.com/?s=Zakes+Mda).

³ [Http://www.zakesmda.com/pages/Interview_Wark.html](http://www.zakesmda.com/pages/Interview_Wark.html).

⁴ Mda's father worked as a lawyer and was a founding member of the African National Congress Youth League.

United States, giving lectures at his alma mater, the Ohio University in Athens, and in South Africa, where he continues to work as a full-time writer⁵. In addition to numerous plays, Mda has composed eight novels. Among these are *Ways of Dying* (1995), *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995), *The Heart of Redness* (2000), and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002).

Due to Mda's multifaceted life, autobiographical elements are utilized greatly in his novels. For example, Camagu, protagonist of *The Heart of Redness*, represents a young academic who spends most of his life in exile. Being regarded as a stranger in his own country and having difficulty finding work, he decides to turn his back on South Africa and return to America for good. But just before he is about to leave, he meets a girl named NomiaRussia at a wake in Hillbrow, moves to a small village named Quolorha-by-Sea, and finds a new meaning in his life due to being able to retrieve his cultural heritage.

Camagu's founding of a cooperative business - owned and run by the community, may be closely compared to Mda's cooperate bee farm in the Eastern Cape, which originated over 10 years prior to the writing of *The Heart of Redness*⁶. Biographical elements are also to be found in *She Plays with the Darkness*, which is set in Lesotho, Mda's first place of exile, portraying the life of two siblings, Radisene and Dikosha, in a time of political and social unrest and change.

Mda's works stand out due to the embedding of supernatural elements in his realist narrative. This interlacing of myth and reality, as well as of tradition and modernism, form the basis of many novels by Mda. Magic realism in literature is said to have its origin in Latin America in the 1940s. One of the most prominent representatives of literary magic realism is the Latin-American Nobel Prize Laureate Gabriel Garcia Márquez.

⁵ [Http://www.cccb.org/en/autor-zakes_mda-10200](http://www.cccb.org/en/autor-zakes_mda-10200).

⁶ [Http://geosireads.wordpress.com/2012/08/26/an-interview-with-south-african-writer-zakes-mda/](http://geosireads.wordpress.com/2012/08/26/an-interview-with-south-african-writer-zakes-mda/).

Mda claims that it was never his initial intention to write in a magic realist mode, but that, instead, he based his writing on the oral traditions of South Africa's indigenous people.

My writing draws from the oral traditions of the peoples of southern Africa. I come from a culture of storytelling. In all our stories [...] the magical happens as part of the real. And indeed this magic seems to grow imperceptibly out of the real. [...] Such stories are told in a matter-of-fact manner, the unreal happening as part of reality and accepted as normal. (http://www.cccb.org/en/autor-zakes_mda-10200)

In traditional oral culture, there is no clear line between supernatural and objective reality. Mda is aware that the merging of the real and the supernatural may pose a challenge to Western readership. He understands that what in the Western world is perceived as magical, is part of the real world for Africans – “it is part of their realism”⁷.

These fluctuating boundaries between the real and the fantastic, between the living and the dead, are represented in various rituals that are still used nowadays to commune with the dead, and are equally represented in the novels. African orature is based on an everlasting conversation of the living with the – so called – fourth dimension, which consists not only of the dead, but also of the unborn.

The past plays an essential role for Zakes Mda and his literary works⁸. The only way to create a future for South Africa and to prevent the terrible things of the past from happening again is through memory and reconciliation. Mda feels that all great literature deals with the past, that it is imperative to forgive, but not forget. Mda refers to this as “Ubuntu”⁹, an African concept that takes on the idea of brotherhood and interconnectedness, which is equivalent to the American concept of “forgive and forget”. However, rather than forget, one should memorize the past, as the incidents of the past created peoples' identities of today. Furthermore, the memory of the past is said to prevent the once oppressed from becoming the new oppressors.

⁷ [Http://www.africaspeaks.com/reasoning/index.php?topic=2198.0](http://www.africaspeaks.com/reasoning/index.php?topic=2198.0).

⁸ [Http://www.africaspeaks.com/reasoning/index.php?topic=2198.0](http://www.africaspeaks.com/reasoning/index.php?topic=2198.0).

⁹ [Http://www.kclibrary.org/blog/kc-unbound/author-interview-south-african-novelist-zakes-mda-mandela-apartheid-and-ubuntu](http://www.kclibrary.org/blog/kc-unbound/author-interview-south-african-novelist-zakes-mda-mandela-apartheid-and-ubuntu).

In addition to the intertextuality of oral and written tradition, the use of indigenous African languages is yet another striking characteristic feature found in Mda's work. In *She Plays With the Darkness* and *The Heart of Redness*, Mda draws heavily on diglossia - the use of tribal languages (in these cases predominately isiXhosa) alongside the English written word. Altnöder argues that there may be two reasons for the intermingling of languages, which occurs so frequently in post-apartheid literature. For one, it may be due to the richness of idiomatic expressions in the indigenous languages which cannot be translated into English in a suitable manner. On the other hand, authors may use linguistic diversity in order to “[draw] attention to the writers’ individual positioning within the post-apartheid time-space” (34).

While the reasons for the coexistence of English and tribal languages in literary works vary between authors of South African fiction, it proves true that diglossia reflects the cultural situation of the country in the best way possible, while incorporating a social context into the novels.

With regard to the socio-political context of novels, Mda points out that his novels do not respond to the so called “western aesthetic concepts”, which insist that literature must be independent of politics and social obligations. In fact, it is specifically these “traditional African aesthetics” Mda responds to that cannot separate art from real life, but rather see the artist as a social commentator, stressing the political commitment of black writing (Horn, 526). Mda considers himself a storyteller and social critic who began to write over 30 years ago in exile, and continues to write about one theme - South Africa. Traditional African Aesthetics are equally visible in Langa's and Masilela's novels.

3.1.1. She Plays with the Darkness

Set in Lesotho, the novel tells the story of two siblings, Dikosha and Radisene, over a period of 20 years. Grown up in the mountain village of Ha Samane, the once so close siblings grow more and more distant, as change and progress have different effects on them.

Dikosha spends her days singing and dancing in the village. She creates her own world, hurt by the community's judgment and prejudice after having been conceived at a night dance. She communes with the paintings of Bushmen of the Cave of Barwa and only speaks with others when absolutely necessary. Still suffering from the fact that further education was denied to her simply due to her gender, she withdraws more and more from the ordinary world and seeks the company of mystic dancers of the Bushmen's paintings. In her imagination, she is a monster-woman-dancer "ready to devour all the dancers of the world [...] and then dancing for ever and ever, until the end of time" (16).

In the world of the ancestors, Dikosha finds happiness and security. Performing the Great Dance of the Strong for Dikosha, pulling arrows out of her chest and thighs throughout the dance, this community takes the pain of the world from her, thus appearing as the ideal society to Dikosha, as "they did not seem to know any form of violence directed at other human beings [and] [m]en did not deem themselves to be more important than women" (52f).

Radisene, Dikosha's brother, works in the city of Mafeteng as a night school teacher, but soon loses his job when the state of emergency is declared in 1970. He succumbs to alcohol and insists he will only visit his family in Ha Samane again when his fortune changes to the better. Working as an ambulance-chaser in Maseru, he is soon able to acquire enough wealth to send money to his village and build a mansion for his mother. The wealthier and more successful he gets, the less Dikosha wishes to associate with him.

In this novel, Mda combines the mystic and the mundane, giving even snakes a voice (70f). The mystic element appears through the angelic boy Shana, who suddenly appears in the village. Despite his heavenly looks and voice, his words portray violence and sexual prejudice, supported by the sounds of his music instrument, the sekgankula. (100). Through music a close bond develops between Dikosha and Shana. Even though they never exchange a word, they visit each other in their dreams and, together with the people of the Cave of Barwa, play music together and dance (134). Adding to the mystic, Dikosha is

able to grow her own cabbages which grow bigger each time Shana plays his sekgankula, even though in the setting of the novel, cabbages can only be imported in reality.

Through her gift of knowing and feeling things before they happen, Dikosha is aware that something terrible is to happen, even before the mist kills Shana in the mountains. It is then, that she withdraws more and more in her rondavel, where she “plays with the darkness” (169f), and takes confessions of men (178).

It is in part due to the communities’ belief in the mythical world, that Dikosha’s reputation in the village changes. At first, Dikosha is not taken seriously and has to endure whispering behind her back, but when her grandmother Nkongo dies and her dead body is only found many years later, people come to believe that Dikosha has killed her through her wailing. Since then, people treat Dikosha with respect and are careful not to upset her so she will not bring misfortune. Mythic elements can also be found in other characters of the novel, such as Nkongo and Hlong.

[There had been rumors that Nkongo] was able to manufacture the thokolose hobgoblin from sorghum bread [...] and sent it to torment her enemies. But many people [...] were known to own the thokolose hobgoblin or to fly on a broom at night, and yet no one ostarised them. They lived in communion and good neighbourliness with the rest of the people of the village. It was well-known that a man like Hlong, for instance, had the ability to send lightning to destroy his enemies. (73)

Similar to Mda’s other novels, the plot of *She Plays with the Darkness* combines the politics of the time with community and family, and bonds the past with the present. The open ending of the book however leaves innumerable questions to the reader. What is to become of Dikosha and Radisene? What is a penniless Radisene to do with a girlfriend who treats him disrespectfully? What will happen to the women who are jailed in the novel? Will Dikosha’s character change after leaving the village for the first time in her life, well into her forties? Questions remain unanswered, leaving the reader to wonder about the characters’ fate.

3.1.2. The Heart of Redness

In *The Heart of Redness*, Mda presents the hybrid identity of contemporary South Africa through the continuous intermingling of traditional myths with daily life, and in this way, applies a mixture of social and magic realism in his novel (Kornwell et al. 33).

Upon reading the title, one might be reminded of Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* – a novel that contains numerous prejudices and portrays the people of South Africa as backward. Mda stresses however that he did not intend this allusion. The original title of his novel was *Ululants*, but the publishing agency disapproved, so Mda had to think of something new. An acquaintance in a bar suggested 'The Heart of Redness' to Mda, which found the publisher's approval as the novel's new title (Pesenhofer-Yarton 129).

Using two interconnected narratives, the novel combines two different timeframes, emphasizing that the past continues to influence the present (Kornwell et al 137). One plot is set around 1850, describing the Great Cattle Killing in Xhosaland as well as the prophecies of a young prophetess called Nongqawuse. Alongside these 19th century events, the second storyline is set in 1998, in the same rural seaside village of Qolorha-by-Sea, presenting a contemporary environmental point of view on the everlasting conflict between tradition and modernity.

The Heart of Redness is not only built around two different timeframes, but also portrays two divergent tendencies. On the one hand, the Believers represent traditionalism and "redness" – referring to the red ochre tribal women who paint red coloring all over their bodies – and on the other hand, the Unbelievers, who display a strong faith in modernity.

In the middle of the 19th century, "belief" takes the form of believing in the words of the young prophetess Nongqawuse, while "unbelief" appears as perceived modernization coming from the British. In South Africa, during the late 1990s, the Xhosa community has to decide which way to take – should it be progress

at any cost, which might jeopardize their identity, or a moderate, balanced approach to progress that respects their traditions and cultures?

The Unbelievers, represented through characters such as Bhonco and Xoliswa, are supporters of progress the way it comes with holiday resorts and mass tourism.

‘[The Believers] want us to remain in our wilderness!’ says the elder. ‘To remain red all our lives! To stay in the darkness of redness!’

The Unbelievers are moving forward with the times. That is why they support the casino and the water-sports paradise that the developers want to build. The Unbelievers stand for civilization. To prove this point Bhonco has now turned away from beads and has decided to take out the suits his daughter bought him [...]. He is in the process of persuading his wife also to do away with the red ochre that women smear on their bodies and with which they also dye their isikhakha skirts. When the villagers talk of the redness of unenlightenment they are referring to the red ochre. But then even the isikhakha skirt itself represents backwardness. (71)

Believers, such as Zim and Qukezwa, yearn for a type of progress that respects nature as well as their customs and does not harm them. They are proud of their traditions and customs and live in a close relationship with nature.

The main protagonist Camagu represents the choice the community faces – between Western modernization, taking their freedom from them yet again, or modernization through which they would not lose their identity, but stick to their traditional roots.

Camagu leaves for America in the 1960’s in order to complete his doctoral degree in communications and economic development. Due to not being able to find a job in the cities of South Africa, shortly before he intends to return to America for good, he chooses to stay in Qolorha-by-Sea, fascinated by its nature, landscape, and the timeless traditions of the community in the face of modernization (60). Mda opted to present the community’s choice in modernization in the form of a love triangle. Even though Camagu is at first

fascinated by Xoliswa's beauty, he falls in love with Qukezwa, whom he marries.

At the end of the novel, Mda combines the two stories from different time frames by merging the identity of Heitsi, Qukezwa's and Camagu's son, with the child of the ancestors Twin and Qukezwa. Behind both stands the figure of Heitsi Eibib, the "earliest prophet of the Khoikhoi" (23).

Not only is the novel multi-voiced and multi-disciplinary, Mda also uses the Xhosa tradition of split-tone singing as a structural device. To Attwell, the novel's most outstanding innovation lies not in discussing racial conflict, but the ongoing, unfinished encounter with modernity.

[...] instead of focusing on racial conflict, or apartheid and its counter-histories, the *Heart of Redness* foregrounds the encounter with modernity, not as completed event, but as unfinished business, over which the amaXhosa – and through figures like Dalton and Camagu, South Africans in general – must take charge. (2004, 171f)

Apartheid is mentioned not once in Mda's novel, which is even more striking, as he refers to the apartheid generations as "the Middle Generations" rather than giving them a voice. It is his way of not focusing on the struggles of the past, but rather urging the reader to concentrate on the future.

3.2.Mandla Langa

Mandla Langa was born in 1950 in KwaZulu Natal and grew up in the outskirts of Durban. After finishing his studies at Fort Hare University, he returned to Durban to work as teacher at a local school.

At the age of 26, Langa was arrested and charged with trying to leave the country without official permission. After spending 101 days in jail, Langa spent years in exile. In Botswana, he discovered that the oppressing system can be challenged by mobilizing the international community through writing as one of many other means.

During the years of exile, Langa joined the military organization of the African National Congress (ANC), “Umkhonto we Sizwe” (isiXhosa and isiZulu for “Spear of the Nation”), which played an important role in the resistance struggle. He completed training in Angola and subsequently traveled extensively within Africa, at the same time occupying various positions within the ANC¹⁰.

Besides his passionate commitment to the resistance struggle, Langa took time to write, composing a number of poetry texts. Because of his hope to expose what was forbidden to the South African media due to censorship, Langa acquired his diploma for journalism in Hungary and London.

In the years of transition from apartheid to democracy, Langa occupied numerous prominent positions in the media business. As a published poet, novelist, and writer of short stories, and as an outstanding figure in the fight against apartheid, Langa received various honorable prizes. In 1991, he was the first South African to be awarded for his creative writing by the Arts Council of Great Britain Bursary. In 2007, Langa received the Order of Ikhamanga Silver¹¹ award for excellent achievement. This South African honor is granted by the President for exceptional achievements in arts, literature, culture, journalism, music and sports. Soon after, in 2009, Langa’s novel *The Lost Colours of the Chameleon* (2008) won the Commonwealth Writer’s Prize in the category “Best Book”¹².

In addition to various other works of literature, Langa published the novels *Tenderness of Blood* (1987), *A Rainbow on the Paper Sky* (1989), as well as *The Memory of Stones* (2000). Together with the jazz musician Hugh Masekela he also composed an opera called *Milestones* which is yet another example displaying his diverse talent.

Similarly to Mda, Langa also draws from the roots of South African reality. An example of this can be found in his novel *The Memory of Stones* which depicts

¹⁰ <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/pebble.asp?reid=1353>.

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_Ikhamanga.

¹² <http://bookslive.co.za/blog/2009/03/11/mandla-langa-and-uwem-akpan-win-the-2009-commonwealth-writers-prizes-africa-region/>.

the destructive violence in his home province in KwaZulu Natal, narrating the return of the once removed Zulu tribal people to their ancestral land in the mid 1990's. Another parallel to Langa's political life is to be drawn in a closer examination of characters such as Jonah, who at the age of 15 becomes a member of the MK fighting in Botswana, Mozambique and Angola (99), or the figure Mpanza, who worked for the South African National Defense Force in Angola, Hungary, and several other countries (37-39).

In *The Memory of Stones*, Langa also employs various mystical elements of the Zulu culture, embodied in part through the character of Nozizwe, an old *nyaga*¹³, who symbolizes tradition and is described as a "wizened old woman bent over a grindstone, pulverizing an evil smelling mix of herbs" (142). Further magical elements can be seen in the meat-eating Vulture Men (246), as well as the miracles that evolved at the time of Baba Joshua's death – his dead body that was without a scent, the rose in his arms that started to bloom, as well as his sudden smile after death which caused even mute Naomi to find her words and begin to speak (270).

3.2.1. The Memory of Stones

Written in the year 2000, the plot is set in 1996 and depicts the stories of a vast cast of characters interacting with each other. The multiple narrative voices, as well as the constant move between the present and the remembered past, together emphasize the fact that the past still haunts the present and that everything is interrelated in various ways.

The story finds its beginning with the members of The Temple of the New Jerusalem sect, a religious group led by the 70 year old Baba Joshua. Due to the decision of the Land Claims Court, the Zulu community of Ngoza in KwaZulu Natal, who had been forced to leave their land over 20 years ago, is now allowed to return to their homeland. Before their return, the area had been allocated to the military. During their years in exile far away from their place of origin, the Zulu people felt displaced and insecure, seemingly having lost contact to their ancestors, a crucial part of Zulu identity. The close interrelation

¹³ An *nyaga* is a traditional healer. For more information see chapter 4.

of the land and the construction of identity appear to dominate the theme of the novel.

When Baba Joshua's wife Nomonde dies in exile, Baba Joshua begins to have visions of collecting his people, in order to lead them back to Ngoza (34). Back in Ngoza, the settlers must stand up against Johnny M., a black gangster, who aims to drive the people away again in order to make room for a grand resort and casino. Johnny M. is assisted by the corrupt white police officer Grey, who also wishes to profit from the land.

Baba Joshua stands for tradition, hoping for nothing more than being able to live in his ancestral home, yet his daughter Zodwa dreams of working for a law company in a big city, as she graduates from law school at the Eastern Cape. She finds the thought of returning to Ngoza terrifying.

“What's there to be top dog about in Ngoza? The squatter camp? The road leading nowhere? The peasants trying to make a living? Papa's followers are just so pitiable I could scream. [...] Me, I'm a city woman.” (88)

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. (106)

Zodwa has always looked up to her brother Jonah, a fighter for the armed wing of the African National Congress in Angola, who is murdered by his fellow comrades in the year 1990, following the unjust accusation of being an informer (127).

On his deathbed, Baba Joshua asks for Zodwa's solemn promise, that she will take charge of the settlement and help his people after his death (172f). Zodwa requires much recollection, thought, and self-honesty to find and answer the question “What have I done for my people?” (223).

As Zodwa chooses to accept her father's position within the community, the change of leadership threatens to split the community in half. Among her opponents are Johnny M, Zodwa's treacherous uncle Mbongwa, the corrupt

police chief Grey, and a number of village elders who are against the idea of a woman being in charge. Thankfully, Zodwa finds support in Nozizwe, the old and wise village *sangoma*, as well as in Benedita Venter, a mixed-race British woman married to an Afrikaner police man, and is now trying to find her roots. The women of New Rivers “who despise men” (221) are a further source of assistance and assurance. Mpanza, a former freedom fighter and comrade of Jonah, is yet another ally, guilt-burdened by the fact that he took part in Jonah’s assassination, trying to escape the past through excessive drinking. Looking for Baba Joshua and Zodwa, he travels to Ngoza in order to confess and receive forgiveness, so he may close this chapter of his life and start anew.

As the majority of the storylines come to a climax, the novel turns quite turbulent. Nearing the conclusion of the narrative, Zodwa challenges Johnny M. to the test of the Humiliation Tree (342), thereby increasing supernatural and superstitious elements.

She knew that Johnny M had been strengthened by a sorcerer [...], the legendary inyanga who had administered even to leaders such as the late Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid. (343)

Zodwa meets Dingane in just this eerie world, the man who killed his half-brother Shaka. Dingane explains that Shaka Zulu’s violence helped shape the African identity. Zodwa wonders if this shaping of African identity should be done at all costs, yet he replies that “all change, is usually preceded [...] by a cataclysm. Simply put, that means bloodshed.” (349). Once other members of the ancient Zulu royal family (349ff) join this mystic conversation, Zodwa learns from them what it takes to be a leader.

Such a combination of myth and reality serves to assist in identity construction, and examines the central question, the price at which the construction of a “new” South African identity comes.

Having successfully completed the test of the Humiliation Tree, a newly strengthened Zodwa “knew, she was now on the threshold of a new revelation and a new beginning – which would be the beginning for her people” (354). She assures the community during her speech that she is the right person to

lead them to a better future, causing Johnny M.'s breakdown - "the man who had struck fear into every heart in Ngoza" suddenly loses composure, and begins to cry (356)

Zodwa suffers through dramatic losses throughout the novel. She has to mourn her mother, brother, and father. Yet her biggest conflict is with herself. She is torn between her love to Mpanza and his betrayal. She triumphs over her pain and learns to forgive the man who helped kill her beloved brother. The description of this difficult fight is one of the most outstanding parts in this extraordinary novel.

[...] the memories were the most constant feature 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. (361)

Perhaps when their graves were dug up in some future millennium, the paleontologists would comment on their primitive state. But these experts would have had no access to the enduring power of memory. (366)

Myths, traditions and identity play a crucial role in coming to terms with the past. The construction of collective identity, based on collective memory, enables people to find a new path to the future. This is stressed in Baba Joshua's quote (13) – "the most important thing, however, is how we shape our future [...] which is buried in the ruins of our past [...] and in how faithfully we preserve memory".

3.3. Johnny Masilela

Born in 1957, Johnny Masilela started his writing career by contributing weekly columns for Pretoria News. Masilela is not only an author of short stories and novels, he also composes excellent screenplays.

His first novel, *Deliver Us From Evil: Scenes From A Rural Transvaal Upbringing*, an autobiographic work, was published in 1997. Later, Masilela

used the storyline for a screenplay, *Christmas With Granny*, which won the M-Net New Directions Film Award¹⁴.

Masilela is an active member of the Ijima Letuthuko¹⁵, a group of intellectuals and traditionalists whose main objective is the preservation and recording of Ndebele art and oral literature. It is led by King Mayitjha III, an Ndebele monarch.

Masilela's fascination with the culture of the Ndebele tribes is also shown in his novel *We Shall Not Weep* (2002). Due to the amount of necessary research, he required four years and over 27 rewrites to perfect and complete this masterpiece.¹⁶ Award-winning columnist and "Insight & Opinion" editor of the Sunday Times, Fred Khumalo¹⁷, states that:

We Shall Not Weep is not only a coming-of-age novel but also explores the displacement of a people from a comfortable, rustic existence of a bygone rural era to the maelstrom of urbanisation.¹⁸

Even though Khumalo goes on to argue that Masilela's novel is simple, both in the pace of the story as in its language, he stresses that this is precisely the strength of this book. Then again, to Khumalo, the presented female characters appear flat in contrast to the depiction of the male characters.

Mda's *Heart of Redness*, as well as Langa's *The Memory of Stones* are comparable to Masilela's work, since all stories link current social and cultural conditions to their historical roots. Comparing Masilela to Mda, Khumalo regards Mda's work as being artistically superior.

Vukile Pokwana, equally a local South African journalist, is delighted by Masilela's novel and refers to it as "a sort of cinematic guided tour into the lives of the Ndebele people, making it an illuminating and stimulating read"¹⁹.

¹⁴ [Http://www.nb.co.za/authors/2608](http://www.nb.co.za/authors/2608).

¹⁵ [Http://www.nb.co.za/authors/2608](http://www.nb.co.za/authors/2608).

¹⁶ [Http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/citypress/2002/08/04/29/4.html](http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/citypress/2002/08/04/29/4.html).

¹⁷ [Http://www.african-writing.com/hol/fredkhumalo.htm](http://www.african-writing.com/hol/fredkhumalo.htm).

¹⁸ [Http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/citypress/2002/08/04/29/6.html](http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/citypress/2002/08/04/29/6.html).

¹⁹ [Http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/citypress/2002/08/04/29/4.html](http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/citypress/2002/08/04/29/4.html).

Masilela himself states that the novel's vigor lies in the fact that "it revisits the way of the Ndebele people beyond the tourism brochure"²⁰. Not only does the novel explore the dichotomy between the rural and the urban, but it also depicts themes of witchcraft and superstitions that are still common today in the lives of the Ndebele people which are subject of further examination in chapter 4.2.3. .

3.3.1. We Shall Not Weep

This very unique novel about the rural life of the Ndebele people portrays the journey of a culture marked by change and conflict. It further illustrates the allocation of territories for the black population by the apartheid regime. These territories, called Bantustans or homelands, had the purpose of concentrating members of selected ethnic groups. In making these homelands ethnically homogenous, the basis for the creation of nation states for South African's diverse ethnic groups was laid. Such ethnic groups were regarded as "autonomous". The dehumanization of the black population through the creation of Bantustans is present in *We shall not weep*, alongside other political and societal factors that marked the time period of the story line, as it was set in the 1960s and early 1970s.

We shall not weep is the story of Duma, the one "who came with the doom-doom of the thunder" (17), of his coming-to-age in a country full of violence and oppression. It is the story of the Ndebele people, of their traditions and superstitions. It is a story of the discrepancies between the rural and the urban, the traditional and the modern. It is a story of traditional gender roles and family roles. It is a story of an everlasting search for the inner self in an ever-changing environment.

Duma was born during a terrible drought that devastated the land of the Ndebele – "the land of bare-breasted maidens, and wars over cattle and the dagga crop" (17). The people of the Ndebele believe in Laduma, "the great god of the rainclouds and of the thunderbolt" (6). The elements of thunder and lightning are carried on through the story, along with the belief of the Ndebele that the ancestors cause much to happen – either in a good or bad way.

²⁰ [Http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/citypress/2002/08/04/29/4.html](http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/citypress/2002/08/04/29/4.html).

Duma's birth is stained with a bad omen due to the death of his mother, who is struck by lightning soon after childbirth, and due to his father's suicide. Duma, now an orphan, grows up with his elderly grandparents, Songwana and Mantombi Mabena. Destructive rain that drained the country right after his birth, as well as Duma's eyes, that "squinted inwards and [...] outwards, like those of a chameleon" (13) only add to the community's conviction that the child is to be a curse to the people of Ndebele.

There are those who are born into the land to bring sunshine, and there are those who are born into the land to bring darkness, and disease, and destruction. Now since yesterday, the rain has lashed the land of the Ndebele with a viciousness never seen here since the bloody wars. (19)

In the belief that this newborn child brought the evil spirit with him, the tribe's people come to the conclusion that the ancestors demand a sacrifice. Not willing to let the community kill the boy, the Mabenas hasten to leave the village and settle down in Boekenhout – "[a] place set aside for people streaming into the towns by Indod' Emhlophe, the White Man" (20).

Growing up in the urban hut community of Boekenhout, Duma finds himself between two worlds. His grandfather, albeit exchanging his traditional cowhide skirt for a workman's overall (20), adheres to the traditions of the Ndebele people and continues to practice his divine powers, such as reading the future from dried bones and the rumble of thunder (36).

Indeed even people from as far as the gold mines came to consult with the old man with the rolled moustache. They came to him to explain their strange dreams. To heal an eye that discharged pus, or a baby who cried all the time. (35)

On the other hand, Duma is continuously exposed to, and fascinated by, the modern world – the world of (Western) education, marabi music, as well as lifestyles in the big town of Pretoria. He dreams of being a part of this world. He is very happy when his grandfather gives in, allowing Duma to attend school. He admires Uncle Chicago, Chicago Lentswane, who represents Western

modernization due to his American accent and marabi music. Duma is even fascinated by white people:

White people! The only white person he knew was the Sister from Little Flower Catholic Church in Boekenhout. How he wished the bus could stop so that he could touch those white children! (51)

He is distraught when his grandparents tell him that he will be taken back to the land of his people, the land of the Ndebele, once he is old enough. This so-called “home” is foreign to him. He does not want to be taken to a new place he does not know (55).

But not just Mabena longs for his ancestral land. His wife Mantombi has great difficulties getting used to modern life, and is “troubled by the battered morals of the people” (63) in Boekenhout.

She longed for the land where maidens smeared their bodies with a mixture of red ochre and animal fat; how they would squat next to the full udders of the goats, milking them into the gaping mouths of clay pots. (63)

During the introduction of the Bantustan policies by the White government, Madlozi, “the one who could tame the thunder and the most senior tribal elder from back in the land of the Ndebele” (103), visits Mabena and orders him to return to his ancestral home. He tells him about the new laws that have been imposed on the tribal people by the White ministers, how the village suffers more and more from drought and hunger, and finally reports the death of King Mabhogo (103-106).

You must return. And not tomorrow – now! The land of the Ndebele is in the grip of sickness, a sickness that needs healing, not of the herbal kind. The people and the land need absolute cleansing. (103f)

Back in the land of the Ndebele, Duma is taken “beyond the mountains to go through the rite of passage into real manhood” (119). But he still does not feel like a part of the traditional community. Instead, he dreams about “wearing a Stetson hat and play marabi music” (119). Beyond the mountains, after Duma successfully finishes his initiation ritual, a “blinding light, followed by a terrifying thunderbolt” closes Madlozi’s eyes forever.

Shortly after, Mabena too passes on, leaving Duma to face his future on his own in the dichotomy of traditional and urban life. It is up to him, and thus also in a way to the reader, to choose which path to take in modern South Africa.

4. South African Tribes

According to the CIA World Fact Book, South Africa comprises almost 50 million people of disparate cultures, languages, heritages, and religions. It is twice the size of Texas, and ranks as the 26th largest country in the world. Its cultural and ethnical diversity is displayed in eleven official languages. According to the 2001 census, the population at the time consisted of almost 24% isiZulu-speakers, 18% isiXhosa-speakers, 13% Afrikaans, 8% English and almost 2% isiNdebele speakers. These figures point to the important role indigenous tribes play in present-day South Africa.

In this chapter, major South African tribes, their cultures and historical backgrounds will be examined in order to gain an understanding of the problems and concerns the multiplicity of peoples must face in this new era. In order to investigate specific cultures, it is imperative to form a correct understanding of the term “tribe”.

4.1. The Concept of “Tribe”

The term tribe is commonly used by media and in everyday language, as well as by the peoples of South Africa. Literature of the last century however points to the fact that definitions and denotations of this word do vary a lot.

Dictionaries offer the following, mostly similar definitions:

A group of people, often related families, who live together, sharing the same language, culture and history, especially those who do not live in towns or cities. (Cambridge Dictionary of American English)

A social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader[...]. (Oxford English Dictionary)

These definitions describe tribes as predominantly rural societies that share the same language, culture and history. However, it is nearly impossible for groups to share the exact same language and cultural practices, as a closer

investigation of selected tribes demonstrates that even within specific tribes, language use and cultural practices vary greatly.

Raymond Williams, a Marxist literary scholar and social historian, argues that dictionary definitions of words have their limitations since they appear to be isolated in time and therefore do not illustrate or take into account the ideological struggle around the meaning of these words. He speaks of a so-called “active vocabulary”, since words and their associated meaning depend very much upon the changing nature of society (Shepherd 4).

Morton Fried, Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University in New York City, states that the term “tribe” has no explicit definition in anthropology, at least no more than in popular usage (Fried, 1). In his opinion, the division of various ethnic groups according to demographic or territorial borders cannot be seen as a satisfying solution, as there are numerous ethnical groups that are considered tribes, but vary in culture, language, religion, and territory. Similarities are in fact rare. He points out that ethnical groups are not homogenous in any sense and that by using the term tribe, one ignores reality. Nonetheless, Fried offers an alternative term called “secondary tribe”, and describes the term “secondary” as follows:

Societies ‘pushed by one means or another toward a higher form of organization by an external power which already has been raised to statehood.’ (Fried 99)

Thus, Fried sees a close correlation between tribalism and the - direct or indirect – presence of complex political states. He claims that tribes arose simply because higher sophisticated societies – i.e. states – hoped to exploit or manage them either in a political or economic way (Fried 101 ff.). The assumption that tribes are less sophisticated or even inferior groups, leads to another field of discussion – i.e. the ongoing debate about the racial and prejudicial connotations that the usage of the term tribe conveys.

In his work *Talking about “Tribe”*, Chris Lowe claims, that the usage of the term tribe promotes a xenophobic description of diverse African groups as primitive and savage. He is of the opinion that by using this term, one reflects the once

so common, but nowadays entirely outdated ideas of the 19th century social theory, which centered on the concept that societies undergo an evolutionary process, progressing from hunting to herding, continuing to agriculture, and finally reaching the stage of mechanical industry. Thus, only 'simple' agriculturalist societies have been referred to as tribal by numerous 19th century ideologists, who seem to have forgotten that it was precisely such primitive societies who established big empires such as the Zulu kingdom.

Tribe became a cornerstone idea for European colonial rule in Africa. [...] The idea that Africans were a more primitive, lower order of humanity was sometimes held to be a permanent condition which justified Europeans in enslaving and dominating them. [...] Calling nearly all African social groups tribes and African identities tribal in the era of scientific racism turned the idea of tribe from a social science category into a racial stereotype. By definition Africans were supposed to live in tribes, preferably with chiefs. [...] The idea of tribe we have today cannot escape these roots. (Lowe section 2)

In this paper, the use of the word "tribe" is not used in a derogatory sense. It does not suggest or insinuate that members of a specific ethnic culture are inferior or primitive. Tribes are understood, similarly to Julian Steward's perception, as "an ethnic group, i.e., an aggregation of people who share a common way of life, who usually have a language on their own" (Steward 64). Alternative descriptions such as people, ethnic group, community, village, or chiefdom, as have been also offered by Lowe, are used alongside the term tribe in the course of this paper.

4.2. History of Tribes

South Africa is proud of its diverse cultural wealth and traditions. Although some cultural traditions have been forsaken, others still form an integral part of our daily life, often blending with each other and with modern elements to present a fascinating juxtaposition of old and new. (Nelson Mandela in Magubane foreword)

The 19th century marked one of the most remarkable changes in South African society. This predominantly violent change within society and culture found its beginning due to external factors such as the Industrial Revolution, which led to

an increasing demand of raw materials as well as the Slave Trade. Internal forces such as (forced) migration interlocked with, and were in the course of time also affected by, external factors - such as contact with Europeans. The most notable movement of that time was the long expansion of indigenous language-speaking peoples to South Africa, who are thought to originate from West Africa. The indigenous language group can roughly be divided into the Sotho language family (consisting of three main sub-groupings, i.e. Tswana, Southern Sotho and Northern Sotho), who settled in the area of the interior plateau, and the Nguni language group, who in turn settled at the coastal corridor from Zululand, to the borders of the Cape Colony (Cooper 12ff).

The Nguni language group can further be divided into the northern section, comprising the Zulu, Ndebele und Swati tribes, as well as the southern section, which consists of the Xhosa, Mpondo, Thembu and Mfengu (Meinhof 5). The Nguni languages are characterized by the possession of clicks borrowed from the Bushmen who inhabited the country before the arrival of the indigenous language-speaking tribes. These clicks were gradually absorbed and assimilated in the course of time. Southern dialects, the isiXhosa dialect in particular, consist of more click sounds than the languages of the Nguni group in the North. The tribes are in themselves not homogenous, as each group consists of various subgroups and dialects. The AmaXhosa for example, can be further divided into nine subgroups, consisting of the amaXhosa, amaTembu, amaBomvana, amaMpondo, amaMpondomise, amaBhaca, amaXhesibe, amaNtlamgwini, and the amaMfengu, who again can be divided into the amaHlubi, amaZizi, and the amaBhele. All amaXhosa tribes are related to each other through chiefs who belong to a common dynastic lineage. On basis of genealogy, the tribes can be further differentiated into the Gcaleka, the Rharhabe, and the pre-Gcaleka/Rharhabe, each heterogeneous in itself respectively²¹.

Despite the linguistic differences, the Sotho and Nguni peoples do share a common culture. Both practice a mixed economy of cattle-keeping and agriculture, which “enabled the Bantu to maintain relatively high population

²¹ http://www.myfundi.co.za/e/The_Xhosa_tribal_groups_lineages_and_clans.

densities, as well as develop more complex social and political institutions than their predecessors” (Cooper 14).

In conclusion, through the course of settlement in the last millennium, four main groups of indigenous communities may be roughly identified as inhabitants of the South African nation. In order of their arrival, one may differentiate between the Khoisan (including the San hunters and Khoikhoi herders), the Nguni and Sotho, known for their pastoral economy and agriculture, the industrialized Afrikaner settlers, who have been arriving in South Africa since the 17th century, and at last, Indian groups, who have been brought to the continent through servitude and slavery in the 19th century (Heywood 1).

It will be the first two of the above mentioned groups, the Khoisan and the members of the Nguni language group, which will be subjected to a more detailed analysis in the course of this chapter, listed according to the number of their members in present-day South Africa.

4.2.1.Zulu

The amaZulu, the largest ethnic group in South Africa, consists of approximately 11 million people who live predominately in the area of KwaZulu Natal. The first amaZulu peoples are believed to have come to South Africa in the course of the Bantu migrations during the 9th century A.D. ²².

The Zulu kingdom played an important role in South African history towards the end of the 18th century under chief Dingiswayo, and even more so since the beginning of the 19th century under Shaka’s rule. Dingiswayo had to flee from his father as he feared, his own son Dingiswayo might overthrow him. During his travels throughout KwaZulu Natal and due to his encounters with the Portuguese settlers, Dingiswayo acquired essential skills in trading and discovered the importance of building up an army. Shaka, after years of serving in Dingiswayo’s army, became the Zulu chief following his father’s death. At this time, the Zulus were a small group of about 1,500 people. Shaka, just as his

²² [Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zulu_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zulu_people).

mentor Dingiswayo, was determined to unite all independent neighboring groups into one grand Zulu nation.

‘Shaka’, Dingane said, ‘did a lot of good, not so much for the Zulu kingdom as for introducing a new way of fighting, which earned us our self-respect. From kwaSoshangane, which I hear you now call Mozambique, farther south-east to Mzilikazi’s land, which was called Rhodesia and then Zimbabwe, all the way down to eKapa, the land of the Xhosa and those short yellow people, the hunters – all that was wrought by my brother’s restlessness. But it all served to shape an African identity.’ (*Stones* 349)

In 1828, Shaka was assassinated by his half-brother Dingane, who then took over leadership, but lacked Shaka’s military genius, causing the mighty Zulu nation to crumble (Magubane 34). The arriving of Dutch settlers, known as Voortrekkers, added even more tension. Countless battles between the amaZulu and the Voortrekkers followed, leading to the death of over 3,000 Zulu warriors, while the Voortrekkers only registered minor losses. In addition to the struggles with European settlers, Dingane was attacked by his half-brother Mpande and his powerful military, leading to Mpande’s succession to the throne.

Mpande had been considered harmless, if not an idiot, by Dingane, and so had been spared when Dingane rid himself of all perceived sibling threats on accession to the throne. However, he proved to be a shrewd ruler who played both ends of the political spectrum – maintaining a dignified but qualified subservience to his white neighbours in the Colony of Natal south of the Thukela River, while retaining control over and the loyalty of his followers north of the river. (Magubane 37)

In 1872, Zulu military power reached to what is assumed to be the highest point of its perfection. Cetshwayo, Shaka’s nephew, restored the fighting force to its full vigor (Omer-Cooper 47). This growing Zulu power was perceived as a major threat to British rule and thus led to a war between the English and the amaZulu, in which “Cesthwayo’s military headquarters at Ondini were razed to the ground and his army rooted” (Magubane 37). The power of the Zulu royal house was thereupon divided among 13 chieftainships which led to an immense weakening of the amaZulu power.

From 1910 onwards, due to the ever increasing white control over South Africa, Cesthwayo's sons and grandsons were reduced to the statuses of ordinary chiefs, ruling only over a small area of the once great Zulu empire. It was not until 1950 that the Nationalist government appointed Cetshwayo's great-grandson Cyprian the paramount chief of the Zulus, granting symbolical power only.

Today, the amaZulu still take great pride in Zuluness and its history, as well as the legacy of King Shaka. On a political level, this pride of heritage is supported by the powerful and influential Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

Within the social organization of the amaZulu, patrilineal kinship forms the basis of traditional life, which used to be centered on the existence of extended homesteads. Until recently, these included the head of the house, his wives and children, younger brothers and their wives and families, and at times, their sons. Thus, the Zulu homestead very much resembled a small kingdom. The head of the household represented the king of his own domestic domain. Due to the increasing tendency of urbanization, which led to a break-up of traditional social structures, the homesteads have become smaller, at times housing only a man and his wife (or wives), and their children. In a polygamous society such as the amaZulu, the ranking of wives had to be settled. The first wife of a commoner typically became the chief wife, while in kings' families, as well as those of other important chiefs, the great wife was rarely the first wife, as the status of 'first wife' had to be decided through consultations with advisors of the community who possessed a specific reputation within the group and were eligible to wear the head-ring which signaled the attainment of full adulthood (Magubane 50).

These homesteads were traditionally self-supporting economic units due to their own cattle and fields. Central to the homesteads were the cattle byres, used not only for penning the cattle and storing grain, but also in order to commune with ancestral spirits who were believed to dwell there (Magubane 40).

The central position of the byre within the kraal displays the particular importance of cattle in amaZulu culture and tradition. Not only were cattle

products used as food, clothing, and fuel, but cattle also occupied a significant role in the performance of rituals. The number of cattle reflected the prestige and wealth the owner enjoyed within the community. Furthermore, cattle were the only accepted means of payment in marriage exchanges. On many levels, cattle equaled both a wife and her children. In a divorce, the husband was allowed to claim part of the given dowry, the exact head of cattle depending on how many children were born in the course of this marriage.

Cattle were also personified, as each herd member was regarded as “an individual animal with a distinct colour pattern, horn shape, gender, status and history” (Hammond-Tooke 66). The color pattern played a special role as the king received all white cattle from the byres of common villagers. The color white symbolizes purity and harmony in amaZulu culture – “White is the color of the ancestors, diviners and protection against lightning” (Hammond-Tooke 68).

Traditional healers take a special position within the amaZulu community. Even though the history of traditional medicine reaches far back into antiquity, innumerable traditional healers, diviners, and herbalists were criminalized and outlawed throughout colonial rule. White missionaries and settlers misunderstood the nature of traditional medicine. Therefore, indigenous diviners were believed to practice the evils of witchcraft (Flint and Parle 313). Only in 2004, the State of South Africa legally recognized the practice of traditional medicine.

AmaZulu people differentiate between a diviner, who discovers the cause of illness with the help of bones, shells and seeds, and an herbalist who has the task to provide medicines made from plants and animals (Magubane 61). The diviners can further be differentiated into *isangoma*, who commune with the ancestors, and *isanusi*, who ‘smell out’ evil-doers (Magubane 62).

When Nozizwe asks Zodwa to undress, the latter responds as if to the most natural request. [...] Taking off her clothes, she feels the cool air blowing like feathers over her skin, caressing her body hair. She looks on as Nozizwe empties her bag in the table, scattering bones and phials containing dark powders. She then selects wood shavings and adds shredded twigs to make a small fire. Placing an aluminium mug on the flame, she scoops some water from the lake

and mixes herbs and powder, allowing a pungent smell to waft over the younger woman. Then she isolates a blade and makes small twin incisions on Zodwa's face, first on her widow's peak, then where the jaw meets the neck. Then the arms, elbows, wrists, knees and ankles are subjected to Nozizwe's surgery. [...] Then Nozizwe takes a bone necklace from the scattered objects on the table. 'Put this on,' she commands, 'and never remove it. Not even for a lover'. (*Stones* 225)

AmaZulu people believe that ancestors are mindful of them at all times, indeed, that nothing happens without a reason. If a person should encounter misfortune, it is commonly believed that this person has upset the ancestors in one way or another. Sacrificial offerings constitute a connecting bridge between the living and the dead, in order to support the requests for good spirit or thank the ancestors for their blessings. Ancestors are consulted before any important event or decision. Sacrifices are usually given in the form of cattle or goats. The ceremony itself follows a strict protocol since it is believed that the sacrifice would otherwise not fulfill its intended cause. In the course of the white missionaries' influence throughout the 20th century, many amaZulu traditionalists incorporate Christian practices in displaying respect for their ancestors (Magubane 62).

Today, the amaZulu population appears to be evenly split in half, as 50% live in rural areas, and the other 50% have moved to South Africa's major cities. Notably, it is mainly men who leave their homes in the countryside in order to seek work in the cities (Magubane 62). New laws and regulations were passed in the course of South Africa's path to democracy, which influenced traditional structures further. Never before would it have been possible that land could be allocated to women, thus creating increased equality for women.

AmaZulu are a proud people, who celebrate and display their cultural identity regardless of external influences. Their beadworks represent nationalism, the celebration of cultural heritage, and Zuluness even in our time (Morris and Preston-Whyte 91). Beads and Beadwork have played a persistent role in the last century in daily life as well as ceremonies. According to oral tradition, beads even preceded cattle as original means of payment in marriage transactions.

Far more than simple ornaments, beads have come to convey a cultural and also symbolic meaning.

Thus particular styles of beaded ornament characterized male as opposed to female dress and distinguished the young from the old, the married from the unmarried, commoners from royals and lords from their servants. Diviners and healers dressed differently from other people and were recognizable by their profuse use of beads even in everyday dress. (Morris and Preston-Whyte 15).

Even though beads still highlight the difference of marital status, gender, age, and profession in selected areas even in our time, the wearing of beadwork has completely died out in rural areas strongly influenced by Christianity, as well as in urban cities. Christian missionaries associated the wearing of beads with heathen practices, and therefore urged their converts to lay the beadwork aside. In spite of this interference, beads are still considered to be of great importance in rural communities where ancestors form the center of religious belief, as well as in communities with traditional organizational structures (Morris and Preston-Whyte 20).

The amaZulu society and culture had to face further changes in the last decades due to modernization. Family, societal, and gender roles were impacted, which will be closely examined in chapter 5.

4.2.2.Xhosa

While historical evidence indicates a presence of the amaXhosa at the Eastern Cape as early as 1593, there is reason to believe that first isiXhosa-speaking tribes have lived in the area of present-day East London since the 7th century A.D. (Magubane 12). From the 18th century on, the amaXhosa of the Eastern Cape were the first of the Nguni speaking peoples that have come into contact with European settlers. These cross-cultural contacts left intense traces within the indigenous culture which, to some extent, are still visible today. Christian missionaries had an immense influence on tribal culture and belief systems, leading to an increasing number of conversions which in turn affected the indigenous belief system. This development proved formative in the division of so-called "School people" and "Red traditionalists" (Magubane 12).

As a result of Western missionary stations, School people not only welcomed Western education and Christianity, but also changed their way of dress along with their cultural customs in order to center on church and education. Red traditionalists, on the other hand, took great pride in their indigenous customs. While rejecting ecclesiastical practices, Red traditionalists held on to rituals that were performed to honor their ancestors. Red alludes to the ochre that is traditionally put on the body, or is used for dyeing clothes. Even though the majority of isiXhosa-speaking tribes in our time are Christians, rituals of celebrating and commemorating the spirits of the ancestors exist alongside various Christian practices. The amaXhosa believe that all dead people, men as well as women, have the power to influence the lives of their living descendants, and communicate with them through dreams and omens.

The amaXhosa are naturally a very superstitious people, and dreams and visions are often taken seriously. It was this belief in communication between the ancestors and the living through dreams and visions that brought the amaXhosa tribe to the verge of ruin in the mid 1800s, at the time of the young prophetess Nongqawuse²³.

Raised by her witchdoctor uncle, Nongqawuse was sixteen when she first experienced visions of ancestors, who promised through these visions that they would come and drive all the white settlers away, but only after the amaXhosa's culling of their cattle, and the destruction of their crops as sacrifice.

In *The Heart of Redness*, Mda gives account of the tragedy and myth that evolved through Nongqawuse. While one part of the amaXhosa peoples, represented by Twin and his descendants, believed in the prophecies, killed their cattle and destroyed their crops, the other part, personified through Twin-Twin and his descendants, refused to accept the prophecies.

²³ [Http://www.encounter.co.za/article/118.html](http://www.encounter.co.za/article/118.html).

Due to the great cattle killing, innumerable amaXhosa died of starvation, while others were rescued by neighboring communities and European settlers. The number of victims of starvation varies widely, ranging from 25.000²⁴ to 75.000²⁵.

Marriage between members of the same clan is strictly forbidden in amaXhosa tribes. After the wedding, the bride resides with her husband and his relatives and may then receive visits from her husband's ancestors. As the AmaXhosa society is polygamous, it is quite common among wealthier members of the community that a man may have as many wives as he yearns for. The wives are however distinguished in rank according to different huts. The first wife carries the responsibility to produce a son, who is to inherit his father's position within the community. Each wife has her own dwelling and economic resources (Magubane 25).

The transfer of cattle is central to the traditional marriage ceremony, serving as insurance and as compensation for the loss of labor in the bride's family as the daughter is to help in the husband's family after the wedding. If the bride is treated badly by her husband and his family, the bride could return, and her husband's family would lose the cattle, thus, the importance of the transfer is in fact substantial. The number of cattle and children traditionally display a man's wealth and status within his community. Furthermore, cattle, as well as goats, play a crucial role in ceremonies. Their slaughter is used to appeal to the ancestral spirits, so they may assist in major decisions.

The traditional rituals that are performed when asking one's hand in marriage, as well as the required bride's price known as *lobola*, are depicted in *The Heart of Redness* (236-243). According to tradition, relatives of the suitor must ask the chosen woman's relatives for her hand in marriage, and only after the suitor is invited by the woman's relatives, he visits the homestead in person. Negotiations are always held between the relatives of the eligible couple, never by the suitor himself, as is the case with Camagu.

'This is highly irregular,' says the uncle. 'The suitor has come personally on the very first day. He is supposed to

²⁴ [Http://www.encounter.co.za/article/118.html](http://www.encounter.co.za/article/118.html).

²⁵ [Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nongqawuse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nongqawuse).

come on our demand. He is not supposed to negotiate his own marriage.' 'I have no relatives here to do that for me, my fathers and mothers. It is for that reason I came myself with this son of Dalton.' (237)

On his next visit to the bride's relatives, the suitor is to bring a certain amount of cattle with him— "the first one is payment for the very act of asking for marriage, the second is for the face of the woman, and the third one is for the room in which the newlyweds will sleep" (238). Only after the three heads of cattle are provided, the *lobola* is negotiated. In Camagu's case, it consists of twelve heads of cattle, each worth a thousand rand, since his chosen wife Qukezwa "is a child of the spirits" (242). After three days, the bride is taken to her husband's house, where a goat has to be slaughtered and the bride receives a new name, given to her by the relatives of the groom. In Qukezwa's case, the new name is given by NoGiant and MamCirha, loyal friends and coworkers of Camagu's cooperative (243).

In the amaXhosa society, men fulfill the roles of hunters and stockmen, while women are responsible for the growing of the crops and looking after the land in the close vicinity of the homestead²⁶. Within the patriarchal amaXhosa society, women are not formally given political authority, and only share the same status as men once they reach menopause (Magubane 28). Furthermore, it is often the paternal side of the family that proves to be of special importance within societal structures and relationships, as it is with regard to the paternal side that families are incorporated into broader relationship groups such as lineages and clans.

A special status within the community is held by a traditional healer, who carries the title *igqirha*. This typically female diviner helps people by curing various kinds of illnesses, mental as well as physical, and by giving protection against all kinds of evil spirits. Such a diviner is also called to Zim, shortly before he passes away.

An igqirha [...] is called and puts her finger right on the problem. Only after she and her acolytes have eaten the goat that was slaughtered for them, of course. (*Redness* 250)

²⁶ [Http://www.encounter.co.za/article/126.html](http://www.encounter.co.za/article/126.html).

The amaXhosa, just like the amaZulu, are highly respected for their healing powers. The profession of healers and diviners is seen as a calling from the ancestors through a dream or illness. They are easily identified by their special way of dress – “elaborately beaded headdresses decorated with beads of various colours [...], crisscross-beaded necklace bands, animal skins, charms [...] and goat gall bladders” (Tiley-Nel ch.2).

The spirits often seized her and shook her violently, making her grunt like a pig and gasp for breath. This thwasa had started many years ago. At first she resisted it. Sometimes it subsided and she thought it was over for ever. But it would come back again. When the spirits seized her, she sometimes got sick with strange ailments which could not be cured by Western doctors. Those who knew about these things told her that she was being called by the ancestors to be a traditional doctor. (*Darkness* 119)

Specific traditional rituals, such as rituals for healing illness or curing misfortune, are to be performed at all stages during the life-circle (Magubane 32). Still today, such traditional rituals are practiced in rural areas as well as in the suburbs of South African towns. Myth and mystic surround the daily customs, rituals and ancestral spirits that play an integral part in the amaXhosa lifestyle.

Following the amaZulu, the amaXhosa is the second biggest tribal group in Southern Africa, consisting of an estimated 8 million people. Just as the amaZulu, the amaXhosa in present day are represented by the African National Congress Party (ANC) on a political level. The ANC builds the counterpart to the Zulu-dominated Inkatha Freedom Party.

4.2.3.Ndebele

The amaNdebele tribe consists of an estimated 800,000 South people who live in the Northern Province. Most amaNdebele forebears fled from KwaZulu Natal after their defeat by Shaka Zulu in 1817. King Musi, who is said to have been a just and highly respected ruler, relied on diplomacy rather than fighting, and thus he and his followers were allowed to settle among the Sotho peoples. After his death however, his eldest son and one of his senior sons quarreled about who was to take over the throne. This squabbling led to an ever increasing split

of the once united amaNdebele, as well as the scattering of individual tribal communities throughout the South African territory (Magubane 64-66). Northern Ndebele adapted to the Sotho lifestyle and language, while the Southern Ndebele kept their Nguni language and continued to perform traditional rituals and customs, such as initiation or the wearing of traditional neck-rings, so called *iindzila*²⁷.

Similar to other tribal traditions in South Africa, the amaNdebele culture is shaped by a spiritual world that influences every single aspect of daily life. Ancestors are said to be jealous, requiring constant sacrifices. Furthermore, ancestral spirits are believed to protect their descendants from misfortune by guiding them in their dreams.

Similar to the amaZulu and amaXhosa cultures, strong patriarchal attitudes as well as the practice of polygamy are evident in amaNdebele tribes. The worth of a man and his status within society are measured by the number of his wives.

AmaNdebele are known for their artistic craftsmanship throughout the world. Ornaments and intricately decorated homes are a typical feature of Ndebele culture. One may wonder if the highly sophisticated and decorated adornment worn by women “owes more to their own aesthetic sensibilities or to the wishes of Ndebele men to have their status as wealthy husbands displayed by their wives’ ornamentation” (Magubane 76).

A further distinctive feature of Ndebele culture is the initiation rite of boys and girls²⁸. Male initiation ceremonies, or *wela*, mark the passage from boyhood to manhood. Dressed only in a loincloth and a grass headband or a headband made of beads (*Weep* 127), a group of young boys are led to special initiation lodges in the mountains. Leaving the village, the boys’ faces are covered with white blankets in order to prevent the young initiates to be recognized by the community. The initiation process begins with the act of circumcision, which is traditionally performed by a tribal elder who is chosen by the chief. After circumcision at the river, the boys cross the river casting their eyes to the

²⁷ [Http://myfundi.co.za/e/Ndebele_culture,_traditions_and_rituals](http://myfundi.co.za/e/Ndebele_culture,_traditions_and_rituals).

²⁸ All information of male and female initiation is taken from Magubane 70-75.

ground. They follow the elders into the mountains, where they are to stay for two winter months in the company of other elders of the tribal community. During this time, the boys are inducted into traditional knowledge, history, and customs of the Ndebele. This knowledge is passed on from generation to generation. In order to ensure that the revelations of initiation remain unknown to others, a secret language is studied by the young boys. Words are literally spoken in reverse, and praise poems, so called *isibongo*, are memorized. When the initiates leave the secret lodges in the mountains, their clothes are set on fire, symbolizing the ending of boyhood. Back in the village, the young men are welcomed by the community and the chief, and are provided with new clothes in celebration of their achievements. Only after the ritual of initiation has been completed successfully, the young men are allowed to marry.

In *We Shall Not Weep*, Masilela also gives a detailed account of the initiation ritual Duma has to undergo in order to become a man (120-128):

‘You are about to enter the sacred hut where your rite of passage into manhood shall be confirmed. [...] In this sacred hut, you are going to be led into the secrets of the people of the land of the Ndebele, secrets you shall not be allowed to share with anyone who has never been here. If you choose to share these secrets with anyone who has never been in this sacred hut, be warned that that shall be a mistake punishable by death.’ (127)

Contrary to the initiation of boys, female initiation is less painful, as no circumcision is performed. The right time for the beginning of the initiation ritual is believed to be the morning before the first full moon, once the girls have reached puberty. In order to symbolize the return to nature, the girls’ clothing is removed entirely and all of their body hair is shaved off. Afterwards, the girls spend the day dancing and singing songs.

They sing songs before launching into a tirade of abuse and cursing against males, the concept of masculinity and male sexual organs, and women who have not been initiated. (Magubane 73)

In the morning, the girls are washed in the river, an act that symbolizes the cleansing of girlhood before returning home. The following day, they are again washed during a celebration and sent into seclusion in a room in their huts,

which has been especially designed for this purpose. During seclusion, girls receive instructions about womanhood and marital as well as societal responsibilities. They are not allowed to talk to male villagers at this time of their lives. In the past, seclusion took up to three months, but nowadays, due to schooling and employment, it has been reduced to one month (Magubane 75).

Marking the final part of this traditional custom, the girls are taken to the river to be washed one last time before their initiation clothes are burnt, which symbolizes the end of girlhood. In order to indicate that the girls have now ascended to womanhood, they are given beaded aprons as a symbol of their new status.

The changed societal status of male and female initiates is celebrated by the tribe in the form of a communal feast, which offers the opportunity for young men and women to look for a potential spouse.

4.2.4.Khoisan

Before Bantu-speaking tribes settled in the area of present-day South Africa, the land had already been inhabited by the San, also referred to as Bushmen by European settlers, and the so called Hottentots. Since the term Hottentots, referring to Khoikhoi people, carries negative connotations and has throughout colonial history been used in a derogatory and pejorative way, this term is avoided in the course of this paper.

In order to be distinguished from other, often less privileged people, for example the San, the Khoikhoi referred to themselves as “the real people”. Due to an increasing assimilation of the Khoikhoi and the San, the wider term Khoisan is used to denote the ethnic group both peoples belong to.

Even though both groups shared more or less the same language which is characterized by the numerous click-sounds, the social and economic patterns differed from each other. While the San were hunters and thus lived in flexible and mobile groups of not more than fifty people, the cattle and sheep herding

Khoikhoi groups set up kraals that were significantly bigger, some comprising over a hundred people.

Similarly to the tribes mentioned in the previous subchapters, cattle and livestock did not only serve economic purposes, but also played a crucial role in displaying one's wealth. They also carried an important meaning in traditional customs in the Khoikhoi culture. Goats and cattle were almost never slaughtered, except for ritual occasions. Poor families measured by their possession of livestock were looked down on, regardless, whether they were Khoikhoi or San. Due to their hunting practices, San rarely, if at all, possessed livestock of their own, and typically served as herd boys or servants for the better-off Khoikhoi. Presumably, there was a strict division of duties regarding the management and welfare of livestock. While boys looked after the well-being of the cattle and goats, women and girls milked the cows and were responsible for the smaller stock. Men, as the heads of the households, managed the cattle (Boonzaier et al. 41f).

In contrast to the San, who dwelled in temporary shelters or in caves "which they adorned with representations of animals, men and hunting scenes" (Omer-Cooper 12) that still display their cultural heritage to this day, Khoikhoi families lived in so-called mat houses which fit their environmental needs. The construction of the houses was a shared task. Men were responsible for gathering saplings that were used to build the frames, and women collected reeds for the subsequent manufacturing of grass mats with which the frames were covered. These saplings and reeds provided shelter from the hot sun and protection from strong winds and rain. Since the Khoikhoi relied on their livestock for a living, it was at times necessary to move within the region, in search for green pastures for their herds. A great advantage of the mat houses proved to be that they could easily be dismantled and transported. The mats were removed and taken along, while the frames often remained if the Khoikhoi intended to return to the place again (Boonzaier et al. 36ff).

Being an exogamous patrilineal clan, marriage within one's clan was strictly forbidden. As the village consisted primarily of male descendants with their

wives and children, a Khoikhoi village not only included people of the same descent, but also members of other clans, such as the San people. Each village recognized the authority of a headman, generally the most wealthy stock-owner of the village, who was responsible for making decisions as to when and where to move. The headman also acted as a mediator in all kinds of disputes, or as a judge in criminal and civil cases (Boonzaier et al 38f).

Several villages were further united, some combining up to several thousand people into a tribe (or horde). The headman of the senior clan was recognized as the chief of the tribe. Although such a chief was authorized to grant temporary user rights of the land to outsiders and also collected a tribute, usually in the form of cattle or goats, he neither owned the land, nor the resources on it.

Even though the chief was the acknowledged head of the tribe, he himself did not possess great authority as he depended on the wishes and support of the tribal council, which consisted of all the headmen of all the other clans. Various clans were always linked together through the existence of the tribal council. The importance of the institution of clans far outweighed the political significance of the tribe as such (Boonzaier et al. 40ff).

As in many other societies, the cult of the ancestors played a crucial role in ritual and everyday life. In the case of the Khoikhoi, transition rites and the symbolizing of the passage from one period of life to another were of particular importance. An example for one of these transition rites is the childbirth ritual.

Prior to delivery, the expecting mother was brought into a hut where she was to remain for at least seven days after childbirth. During this time of seclusion, she was only supported by elder women of the community and no man was allowed in the hut. This ritual is also depicted in Mda's *Heart of Redness* (224-229), when Qukezwa, daughter of a Xhosa father and a Khoikhoi mother, gives birth to her son Heitsi.

Although there was a strict gender division in the rituals, each representing the different tasks of labor in the society, women possessed a considerable amount of power within the household. In contrast to other ethnical tribes, Khoikhoi women were also allowed to own their own livestock, and some even reigned as temporary chiefs over the tribe (Boonzaier et al 47).

Two prominent figures are central to the Khoikhoi's religious mythology. Tsiqwa is the deity who is regarded as the creator of the Khoikhoi. Heitsi Eibib, the earliest prophet of the Khoikhoi as well as a magician, is said to have died several times and was reborn in a different shape each time. Piles of stones have been found in the region. These served as places of worship for Heitsi Eibib. Believing people constantly added stones whenever they passed, as a way of seeking Heitsi Eibib's guidance and good will.

[Qukezwa] was standing in front of a pile of stones, oblivious of him. She added another stone to the pile, and carefully placed green herbs on top of it. All the while she was chanting softly, 'Father of fathers, oh Tsiqwa! You are our father. [...] Let us sing our praises. In return give us your blessings. Father of fathers! You are our Lord, O Tsiqwa!' [...] –'Who is that Tsiqwa you are addressing?' [...] – 'Tsiqwa is the one who tells his stories in heaven. He created the Khoikhoi and all the world. [...]'

From this daughter of joy he learned more about Tsiqwa. Together they sang the song of Heitsi Eibib, the earliest prophet of the Khoikhoi. The song told the story oh how Heitsi Eibib brought his people to the Great River. But they could not cross, for the river was overflowing. [...] Heitsi Eibib prayed, 'O Tsiqwa! Father of fathers. Open yourself that I may pass through, and close yourself afterwards. As soon as he had uttered these words the Great River opened, and his people crossed. But when the enemies tried to pass through the opening, when they were right in the middle, the Great River closed upon them, and they all perished in its waters. (*Redness* 22f).

Due to the fast assimilation of the Khoikhoi and San into other African as well as European societies, ancient economic and political structures eventually disappeared. Traditional culture was almost completely erased by the middle of the 18th century. Elphick names five conditions that led to the final erosion of Khoikhoi society.

[The colonial system] absorbed livestock and labor from the Khoikhoi economy, subjugated Khoikhoi chiefs to Dutch overrule and their followers to Dutch law, encroached on Khoikhoi pastures, and endangered the integrity of Khoikhoi culture. (237f)

The Khoikhoi's cultural structures were entirely absorbed when the Dutch took all their livestock, forcing the village members to work as laborers on their farms, which marked the end of the Khoikhoi's independence.

5.The Constant Struggle between Tradition and Modernization

This chapter addresses the influence of modernization and globalization, as well as the resulting urbanization, on traditions and customs. All key concepts, such as generational conflicts and gender relations, identity construction and heritage, changes in education, as well as the rural-urban dichotomy, are depicted in the selected literature. The main objective is to understand South African contemporary society and the challenges people must face on an everyday basis, as well as the creation of a solid ground on which a possible future for the country and its peoples may be predicted.

5.1.Culture, Identity and Heritage

Culture is the process by which a person becomes all that they were created capable of being. (Thomas Carlyle)

A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots. (Marcus Garvey)

These two epigraphs point towards the idea that culture and the knowledge of cultural roots are essential in order to understand human nature as well as oneself. It is apparent in both quotes that the concept of culture carries a wide range of meaning.

In the course of time, influenced by increasing scientific research, the concept of culture acquired different meanings and definitions. Matthew Arnold, a humanist of the 19th century, defined culture “as a study of perfection, an inward condition of the mind and the spirit”. He understands culture as “the best that has been thought and said” (Segers 176). In this value-laden point of view, the concept of culture applies only to a chosen few, “educated” people.

Studies of anthropology widened the understanding of culture, applying it to all people. It was argued that “there is no such thing as human nature independent of culture” (Segers 177). Thus, culture may be compared to concepts of values, rituals, traditions and sets of norms (cf Segers 177ff). Psychologist Edward H. Schein argues that in contrast to these concepts, culture is characterized by two

essential features. The first, structural stability, implies that cultural elements are joined together into a consistent whole that is not visible and not changing. The second essential characteristic of culture in Schein's point of view is the fact that shared learning forms the basis of the concept of culture. Schein concludes that "[f]or shared learning to occur, there must be a history of shared experience, which in turn implies some stability of members in a group". (Segers 177)

Geert Hofstede differentiates between two meanings of the concept of culture. One refers to civilization and may be found in art, education and literature, the other defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group [...] from another" (Segers 178). This perspective implies that culture is not innate, but requires the process of learning. Additionally, Hofstede stresses that culture compounds different levels – such as an ethic level, a gender level, a generational level, a national level, etc. – which are interrelated, change according to situation and "show an onion-like layering of symbols, heroes, rituals and, as the deepest layer, values" (Viljoen 6). This perspective of culture as an "ever-changing entity" (Segers 179) implies that it is not possible to speak about "the" cultural identity of a person, but rather that one's identities change according to circumstance (Segers 179).

Hofstede's intercultural research led him to distinguish five dimensions which may serve as a basis to classify individual cultures. These five dimensions may be briefly summarized as:

1. Social inequality, including the relationship with authority;
2. The relationship between the individual and the group;
3. Concepts of masculinity and femininity; the social implications of having been born as a boy or a girl;
4. Ways of dealing with uncertainty, relating to the control of aggression and the expression of emotions;
5. A long-term orientation in life versus a short-term orientation.

(Segers 179)

Applying these dimensions to cultures represented in the novels shows that all three indigenous cultures, the amaZulu, amaXhosa, and amaNdebele culture,

share certain cultural features that differentiate them from other cultures, especially from the industrialized Western kind. All depicted indigenous cultures represent a patriarchal society, where patrilineal kinship forms the basis of traditional life. Distinctive personalities such as a chief, a king, or a diviner stand out from the rest of the community, and ordinary people take a subordinate role to either people of higher social status or of advanced age. The elders of a community equally occupy a special status within society. The relationship between an individual and the group will be discussed in chapter 5.4., in which generational roles within family and community are examined in more detail. It has been mentioned in chapter 4 that in most indigenous South African cultures, women were responsible for duties within the close vicinity of the homestead, whereas other matters, such as political or societal affairs, were predominately settled by men. This is represented in Masilela's *We Shall Not Weep*, when Mabena takes part in a meeting concerning the building of a new school in Boekenhout. He exclaims:

‘Back in the land of the Ndebele, we had different gatherings for different reasons. Like this gathering we have today. I hear it is a gathering to take certain decisions. But can someone explain to me how do men gather to take decisions in the presence of women?’
(*Weep* 33)

In our time, this strict division of social roles within a community changes more and more, and boundaries become increasingly blurred due to modernization and urbanization. In *She Plays with the Darkness* (56), Mda gives account of a tribal community that is ruled by a female chief. In fact, there have been various indigenous African cultures that had a female leader at least once in history.

Yet another example of gender division in cultural life can be found in *The Memory of Stones*, when Zodwa is to take over her father's role within the community, but has to learn that some men within the community do not wish to see a woman take on such an important role (221).

Hofstede claimed that the concept of culture consists of different, interrelated levels, but Viljoen as well as van der Merwe added a fifth layer to Hofstede's dimensions, consisting of stories and myths, in which the first layers are

embedded and through which “individuals seek to achieve coherence and psychological wholeness” (Viljoen 6).

Dircksen argues that myths and rituals, as a means to comprehend life, possess an intrinsic social function, for they combine and unite societies and thus help in the construction of personal as well as collective cultural identities (Viljoen 14). While cultural identities concern one’s social life within a particular group, individual identities deal with our innate struggle for personal truth (Dircksen 89).

The relationship between myth and identity is equally represented in *The Heart of Redness* through the characters of Zim and Bhonco. Due to the split of their ancestors on account of Nongqawuse’ prophecies, each of them leads his life in strong accordance to cultural heritage carried over for centuries in the form of myths and rituals. Both therefore occupy a special, distinguished position of esteem within the community. Bhonco, a convinced Unbeliever, firmly holds on to constant struggles on the subject of belief since he believes that “they shaped his present and the present of the nation. His role in life is to teach people not to believe” (*Redness* 6). In contrast, Zim, a staunch Believer, even shaves off his eyebrows and dresses in accordance to old traditions (*Redness* 165) in order to show that he believes in the prophecies of Nongqawuse and the involving lifestyle. Both counterparts know their identity, their place in the world and in society. It seems that each has found his inner truth.

Feinstein and Mayo emphasize the importance of myths for the identity of groups and classify four reasons for the growing importance of myths and the rituals that are associated with them in modern society.

Rituals, and myths, address (1) our urge to comprehend our existence in a meaningful way, (2) our search for a marked pathway as we move from one stage of our lives to the next, (3) our need to establish secure and fulfilling relationships within a human community, and (4) our longing to know our part in the vast wonder of the cosmos. (Dircksen 89)

Losing touch with traditional myths, customs and rituals often results in the loss of identity. Dircksen claims that modern societies in the course of globalization

have become desacralized. The loss of cultural heritage, especially “its meaning-giving stories” (Viljoen 14), result in the loss of a sense of belonging. She argues that due to colonialism and the later globalization, many young South Africans lack cultural knowledge as well as a pride of their indigenous folklore. Stories and myths seem to have become inappropriate for people living in the 21st century.

Such a change in the belief system seems to apply to almost all major young characters in the novels at hand. In *The Heart of Redness*, it is represented through the character of Xoliswa who regards the belief in tradition and myths, as well as the performance of rituals as backward, representing savageness and barbarism (*Redness* 150). She is drawn to everything that is American and dreams of living in a big city, of being a part of the Western lifestyle. She is surprised that such highly educated men like Camagu whom she regards as a kindred spirit because “both of them have lived in the land of the free and the brave” (*Redness* 67), is fascinated “by such rubbish as the memory ritual of the Unbelievers” (*Redness* 87). She regards traditional amaXhosa customs as “shameful” (*Redness* 150) and refers to the myth evolving around Nongqawuse and her prophecies as a “shame and a disgrace” (*Redness* 96).

She knows that she will never get Camagu back. He has decided to forsake all forms of civilized life and to follow heathen ways. He is a lost cause. [...] She stands for civilization and progress, while he is bent on reinforcing shameful practices and uncultured modes of dress. They deserve each other, he and Qukezwa. They will wallow in redness together. She [...] will soon turn her back in this village. [...] The sooner she leaves this heart of redness the better. (*Redness* 261)

Contrary to Xoliswa, Camagu only finds his true self the moment he comes to Qolorha-by-Sea, as he is then able to and rediscover long forgotten traditional customs and rituals. After having spent most of his life in exile in America, he has forgotten his cultural roots. Returning to his country, he experiences a lack of belonging which is in part represented by his promiscuous lifestyle, in his words - “his unquenchable desire for flesh” (*Redness* 28). It is through Qukezwa that he learns more about tradition, customs and their meanings. Through his captivation with indigenous practices such as the memory ritual of

the Believers, he gradually rediscovers his cultural roots and in this manner, he earns respect.

‘I am not from America. I am an African from the amaMpondomise clan. My totem is the brown mole snake, Majola. I believe in him, not for you, not for your fellow villagers, but for myself. And by the way, I have noticed that I have gained more respect from these people you call peasants since they saw that I respect my customs.’ (*Redness* 150)

The fact that Camagu becomes a well-respected man within the amaXhosa society proves Dircksen’s argument that performances of “myths and cultural rituals promote cooperation and a stronger sense of community” (Dircksen 95).

Towards the end of the novel, the scars of history are visible on Xoliswa’s back - for the first time on a woman, proving that one cannot fully escape the past, myths, or cultural heritage. Without the incidents of the past and without their cultural heritage, people are incomplete. Myths and rituals determine who we are and constitute an essential part of our character and personality.

Similarly to Xoliswa, Zodwa in *The Memory of Stones* is satisfied with her urban life, dreams of becoming a lawyer in a big company someday and is terrified when she learns that she has to return to her home village in order to take over her father’s position as the head of the community.

Similarly, Duma, the main protagonist in *We Shall Not Weep*, is fascinated by the lifestyle of the urban periphery and dreams of becoming a well-known musician one day, wearing Western clothes, just like “Uncle Chicago”. He shows little interest in learning how to read dried bones or tell the future just like his grandpa does. When told by his grandparents that he will be taken back to the mountain one day, he feels horrified as this mountain means not home, but a foreign place to him. He grew up in an urban surrounding, influenced by Western norms and virtues, music and education. The land of the Ndebele, the ancestral home his grandparents enthuse over, seems out of reach for him, since traditional tribal systems and norms appear foreign and unreal to him.

Radisene in *She plays with the Darkness* is more and more absorbed by the urban lifestyle following his move to the city. He continuously attempts to earn more money, he hopes to make his fortune, but at the same time he gradually reduces his visits to his village more and more. In this way, he slowly forgets his cultural roots, and as a natural consequence, his unhappiness increases steadily. His priorities are ill-fated in his pursuit of money and fortune, as he abandons important values such as cultural identity, family ties, and ethics.

Distinctive cultural practices and common traits form one's identity and mediate a sense of belonging. This need is visible in Mabena who feels lost in the urban surroundings of Boekenhout, away from his ancestral home with its cultural practices. He feels a sense of belonging when he notices that there are other proud indigenous people living in the squatter camps who keep up traditions and dress, and behave according to traditional virtues (*Weep* 30).

The loss of touch with one's culture and heritage may have disastrous consequences, as is displayed in *She Plays with the Darkness*. Radisene urges Dikosha to leave her village for the first time in her life to join him on one of his business travels (199ff). For the first time in the novel, Dikosha seems uncertain and distressed, and radiates a sense of vulnerability and insecurity.

Dirksen claims that re-establishing myth and rituals can counteract the loss of meaning (Viljoen 14) in that myths as a source of cultural knowledge need to be shared and spread. Only then "it can lead to a greater understanding and tolerance among the peoples of a country" (Dirksen 96).

The concept of cultural identity is made up of numerous constituent parts. In addition to the above mentioned importance of myths and rituals, other concepts such as ethnicity, nation, space and land are of importance.

African identities become meaningful and politically contested within *historically located* debates and theories of race, nation and culture. The formation of postcolonial nation states, and the genesis of national consciousness in colonial African countries, are coherent [...] within conceptions of Africa as a (heterogeneous) whole. (Kanneh 48)

Ethnicity, nation, nation states as well as land are part of our culture and thus shape who we are and how we live. Cultural identity however is a much broader concept than national identity (Segers 182). People not only identify themselves through belonging to a certain state or nation, but may also describe their identity through reference to other features, such as cultural heritage, descent or social as well as cultural affiliation. This is represented in *We Shall Not Weep*, when Mabena introduces himself differently to different people. In the first situation, he addresses King Mabhogo in his home village in the land of the Ndebele, yet the second scene takes place in the urban surroundings of Boekenhout.

‘I greet you, ndabwzitha. The one pointing the is’bugu to the skies is I, Songwana Mabena. Hau’mpela, if it was not for your failing eyes, you could recognize me. I am Songwana Mabena, ndabezitha. [...] I am the one who carves wood, ndabezitha.’ (*Weep* 7)

‘My name is Songwana Mabena, he of the Mbuduma clan. [...] He who used to blow the horn of the kudu for the important gatherings of the tribespeople of the feared god of the thunderbolt.’ (*Weep* 33)

As can be seen through these two quotes, identity is, just as Hofstede proposed, an ever-changing construct that assimilates according to situation. In the first quote, Mabena is among his tribal people and thus has no need to introduce himself with the clan name. Instead he points out the fact that he carves wood which distinguishes him from other Mabenas in the community. Yet in an environment that is still alien for him, he feels the need to emphasize his cultural roots and his affiliation. He understands the importance of these traits which indeed characterize and identify him the most.

The importance of heritage within the construction of identity is again considered in *The Heart of Redness*, as characters are identified and characterized through referring to them either with their clan name or relating to their ancestors. The story finds its beginning through the introduction of Bhonco as the “son of Ximiya” (3) which as a theme is repeated several times throughout the novel. The same applies to Dalton – “this child of Dalton” (146). Only Camagu (150) refers to himself as an “African”, but he too adds “of the

Mpondomise clan” which not only presents his ethnical background, but also his cultural roots.

In addition to myths, nationalism, and ethnicity, other commonly accepted identity markers such as naming, ways of dress, language, hair, and skin color are displayed in the novel.

In the novels, the usage of names occupies a special position in the construction and representation of identity. On the one hand, tribal names are often Anglicized - reflecting a distance between a person and his cultural heritage. This applies to Radisene, who, living in the city and trying to make more money, resuscitated his church name and named his insurance claims company “Joseph Radison” (*Darkness* 83). Another example is Hlong, the airfield manager of HaSamane, who preferred to be addressed only by his church name of Petrose on Sundays (*Darkness* 139). This also mirrored the fact that “he liked to speak in English, especially with the lowland people, to show them that he too had some schooling” (*Darkness* 13).

Names equally display a close connection to the past and one’s heritage. This is the case with Qukezwa and Twin in *The Heart of Redness*, who are named after their ancestors, thus displaying a close bond to cultural history and the Cult of the Believers. Heitsi is named after the earliest prophet of the Khoikhoi people, inviting the readership to reflect on the importance of the past, its rituals and cultural practices, as well as the way it affects the present and determines one’s identity.

Dikosha, in contrast to her brother Radisene, represents tradition and tribal culture. She refused to have her name changed to the church name of Mary, insisting that “her name was Dikosha, and no church could change that” (*Darkness* 15).

The way of dress displays one’s stance over the matter of importance of cultural heritage. It is apparent in all four novels that those who deny or diminish the importance of their cultural roots, choose Western clothes over

traditional tribal costumes. This applies to Xoliswa, Bhonco, Radisene, Zodwa, and Duma, the latter wishing to dress like 'his Uncle Chicago'. In contrast to these five who despise cultural costumes and regard them as a sign of backwardness, their counterparts Qukezwa, Zim, NoPetticoat, Dikosha, Baba Joshua, and Mabena wear traditional costumes with pride.

To prove his point Bhonco has now turned away from beads and has decided to take out the suits that his daughter bought him many years ago from his trunk under the bed. From now on he will be seen only in suits. He is in the process of persuading his wife also to do away with the red ochre that women smear on their bodies and with which they also dye their isikhakha skirts. [...] But then the isikhakha skirt itself represents backwardness. NoPetticoat must do away with this prided isiXhosa costume. (*Redness* 71)

'The clothes they make at the cooperative ... they are so beautiful. The isikhakha skirts. The beaded ornaments. [...]' – 'They are clothes of the amaqaba, mother – of the red people who have not yet seen the light of civilization.' – 'Oh, how I miss the beautiful isiXhosa clothes of the amahomba!' (*Redness* 227)

Hair is noted in *The Heart of Redness* as yet another identity marker, when Zim shaves off his eyebrows in accordance to the teachings of Nonkosi (165). Through this, he displays his belonging to a cultural practice. In *We Shall Not Weep* (119), the initiates get their heads shaven to symbolize their new status within society and their new identity as men.

Skin color serves as yet another marker of identity which is displayed in two characters. Englishman Dalton is a white trading store owner of "English stock", but with an "umXhosa heart [who] speaks better isiXhosa than most of the amaXhosa people of the village" (*Redness* 8). Against his father's will, he attended the initiation school, was circumcised in accordance to amaXhosa customs, and thus "knows the secret of the mountain. He is a man" (*Redness* 8). The majority of the villagers regard him as an equal member of the community, yet some argue that "he is just as all the selfish white people. They have nothing to do with the community" (*Redness* 68). In contrast to the white cottage owners, who come to the village only in summer, he regards himself as one of the natives and participates in the modernization of the community by

conducting a form of cultural tourism (*Redness* 96). His sense of belonging to amaXhosa society, as well as the fact that he considers himself as one of them, leads to an argument with the white cottage owners who accuse him of self-delusion.

'I am staying here', says Dalton. 'I am not joining your chicken run. This is my land. I belong here. It is the land of my forefathers.' 'That is self-delusion, John,' warns the first emigrant. [...] 'The Afrikaner is more reliable than you chaps. He belongs to the soil. He is of Africa. Even if he is not happy about the present situation he will not go anywhere. He cannot go anywhere.' [...] Your homelands are in Australia and New Zealand. That is why you emigrate in droves to those countries where you can spend a blissful life without blacks ... with people of your culture and your language ... [...] Whenever there is any problem in this country you threaten to leave. You are only here for what you can get out of this country. You think you can hold us all to ransom.' 'Us? You are not a native, John. You may think you are, but you are not.' [...] They can all leave for all he cares. Yes, let him go. He does not need them. He has his community of Qolorha-by-Sea. And his wife's people. (*Redness* 139-141)

The case of Dalton proves that skin color does not automatically determine one's identity, but that culture, its values and norms as well as the choice people make in order to belong to a specific group, are of greater magnitude.

Benedita Venter, the child of a black South African father and a white Scottish mother, is yet another example. She is plagued by thoughts of suicide and consults Alina, a friend of her mother, who with the help of a tortoise tells her that she needs to go to South Africa and look for her ill father, who pines for her and her brother (*Stones* 76). Benedita decides to look for her cultural roots and heritage, but her search for her true self - her identity, cannot find its beginning until she meets Zodwa and Nozizwe in Ngoza.

I was black in London [...] and became white in South Africa, only to realise I'm back to the consciousness of blackness that only London can evoke. (*Stones* 365)

The concept of space holds a crucial part in the process of identity construction. Space is more than just a specific location within a physical place. As soon as a place is inhabited, it is associated with emotions, ideology, memories, and

stories. It reveals “important aspects of the social imaginary” (Viljoen 15). Environmental psychologists such as Kaminoff argue that place identity arises as soon as people associate a place with their memories, interpretations and conceptions (Durrheim et al. 116-119). Through this, people acquire a sense of identification and belonging. It is through the medium of language that people feel more connected to each other and are able to “construct and communicate the meanings of places” (Durrheim et al. 116). Language, as identity marker, constructs the belonging or not-belonging of certain people within a specific group. Therefore, whites or people of another race may feel foreign in an indigenous community and vice versa. This is also the case with Benedita Venter who feels like an intruder and outsider in Baba Joshua’s community (*Stones* 152). The connotation of places is very much visible in everyday-life. Durrheim et al (116) argue that by referring to townships, one immediately thinks of black inhabitants, whereas suburbs may refer to a predominantly white area.

The importance of space in creating identity is emphasized by Ashcroft et al. in this statement:

‘By ‘Place’ we do not simply mean ‘landscape’. [...] Rather ‘place’ in postcolonial societies is a complex interaction of language, history and environment. [...] The theory of place does not simply propose a binary separation between the ‘place’ named and described in language, and some ‘real’ place inaccessible to it, but rather indicates that in some sense place *is* language, something in a constant flux, a discourse in process.’ (Ashcroft et al. 391 in Viljoen 15).

Space, just like identity, is a dynamic and complex social construct. It is through remembering, representing or imagining - and thus identifying oneself with a certain space that the intrinsic link between space and identity becomes obvious. Viljoen speaks of a symbiotic relationship between space and identity, since “the very spaces we occupy form our identities, and these identities determine our perceptions and representations of those spaces” (12).

In *The Memory of Stones*, memories and cultural roots of peoples are represented through items and stones each family left behind during the removal of rural inhabitants by Whites in 1975.

She sees mountains of shields, spears, kaross wraps, earthenware and gourds – all showing age. [...] ‘When the police removed us,’ Joshua says, ‘these are the things we salvaged. Each item represents a family. [...] We wanted to be able to remember something of ourselves that we left behind. [...] Many people died in the long exile. We have a duty to bring their bones back here.’ (*Stones* 106)

The less space is understood as something physical, the more its importance in the process of identifying oneself becomes obvious. Space, as well as place, may not refer to a physical location at all, but rather to a place within society, community, or family that shares common belief systems as well as a common culture, with which a person may identify the most, and which shapes his self and personality (Viljoen 16). Thus, displacement, be it from a geographical space or from a certain community, may lead to an identity crisis, since it alienates and interferes with identity.

The fact that displacement leads to a crisis of identity is dealt with in all depicted novels. In *The Memory of Stones*, Baba Joshua as well as his family and fellow villagers were removed in 1975, leaving behind precious memories. Through all those years, they yearn for their ancestral home and their cultural heritage. Nomonde, Baba Joshua’s wife, dies in exile. “Her illness [...] had something to do with her being removed from her original home. She could not stand the life in the township” (*Stones* 90). Two weeks after his wife’s death, Baba Joshua decides to “collect the scattered people with an aim to return to the place where his umbilical cord is buried” (*Stones* 34). In doing so, he hopes to regain parts of his identity and heritage.

Similarly, Songwana Mabena suffers feelings of insecurity, when he and his family flee to the tent village of Boekenhout. While in exile, both he and his wife yearn for their ancestral home and traditional customs. Mabena does not assimilate to the urban influences, but sticks to his traditions instead. Therefore, his inner self remains unchanged through all those years. Just like Baba Joshua, he is determined to return to his home village and does not turn his

back on his culture. Both his culture and traditional practices provide a source of strength for him.

The dispossession of land and its consequences are portrayed in both time frames within Mda's novel *The Heart of Redness* (cf Graham 158f). A big building company that aims to introduce a casino and water sports paradise in Qolorha-by-Sea, features a strong resemblance with colonial forebears. In post-apartheid rural South Africa, this company stands as a bearer of progress and development. In colonial times, land was taken away from indigenous African peoples under the disguise of bringing civilization to the people, but rural post-apartheid society has to face the challenge as to how their resources and land should be utilized in order to escape poverty and dependency as well as the consequent economic underdevelopment that has been brought upon them through colonialism. (Graham 159).

‘Land is a small price to pay for a gift that will last you a lifetime... that will be enjoyed by your future generations. The gift of British civilization!’ (*Redness* 123)

Lefa Leballo, the new chief executive officer of the black empowerment company that is going to develop the village into a tourist heaven [...] tells the villagers how lucky they are to be living in a new and democratic South Africa where the key word is transparency. In the old days such projects would be done without consulting them at all. [...] ‘You talk of all these rides and all these wonderful things [...] but for whose benefit are they?’ [...] ‘This son of Cesane is right. They will destroy our trees and the plants of our forefathers for nothing. We, the people of Qolorha, will not gain anything from this.’ [...] ‘They will lose more than they will gain from jobs. I tell you, people of Qolorha, these visitors are interested only in profits for their company. [...]’ (*Redness* 198-200)

In both instances, indigenous tribal people would lose their right for their land and with it, the touch of their cultural roots, consequently leaving behind essential parts that form their identity. Even though numerous ideas to help villagers out of economic underdevelopment are proposed, it is Camagu's suggestion to create “a kind of tourism that will benefit the people, that will not destroy indigenous forests” (*Redness* 201), that has the function of displaying “culture of the amaXhosa as they live today, not yesterday. The amaXhosa

people are not a museum piece. Like all cultures, their culture is dynamic” (*Redness* 248). Camagu aims at letting the villagers actively participate in the realization of this project which allows them to grow ecologically, preserving their land and culture as it is.

In the case of Camagu, it is the return to Johannesburg after an exile of 30 years that triggers an identity crisis. He feels just as much as an exile in his own country when being excluded from various possibilities by the new Aristocrats of the Revolution (*Redness* 33), an elite group that has gained wealth and status through the black empowerment. In his moment of choice, when he decides against a second exile and travels to Qolorha-by-Sea instead, he ultimately determines his cultural identity. Camagu’s return to the countryside is not just a coming back to a rural area. It is a coming back to the nation just the same. Graham argues that through this returning to South Africa in general, and the country in particular, as well as through the “romancing [of] the indigenous”, Mda tries to “present the local as being distinct *from* the national, but as constitutive *of* it” (Graham 161).

In conclusion, characters who have not found their cultural heritage and roots still seem to be lost in the “in-between” - always looking for something they can neither name nor find. This applies to Benedita, as well as to Radisene, Camagu, and Duma. Individuals with a strong sense of culture, who take pride in the celebration and practicing of cultural elements, who feel a close connection to their land, such as Zim, Qukezwa, Mabena, Baba Joshua, and Dikosha, seem to have found their place within society and their inner truths.

The examination of characters and their cultural identities illustrates the influence of modernization on traditional concepts such as myths and rituals, and consequently, on the construction of identity. Many appear to feel torn between the rural and the urban, the Western world and Africa, as well as the modern and the traditional. They find themselves on a constant search for their true selves and identities in the “new” South Africa. Perhaps, the key to finding one’s identity lies in the re-discovering of traditional values and virtues that convey solidarity and security.

5.2.Urban vs. Rural Dichotomy

In order to gain a correct understanding of urban-rural dichotomy, it is imperative to take a brief look at the history of urbanization during the apartheid era. Innumerable indigenous people moved from rural areas to cities due to unequal education as well as the exploitation of inexpensive, black workers. This presented one of the main challenges of apartheid, by authorities of that time also referred to as “the native problem” (Durrheim et al. 3).

Migrant workers looked for jobs in mines as well as other parts of the industrial sector. Durrheim et al speak of an exploitation of rural areas, as rural inhabitants were forced to work in mines on meager wages and small pensions, and once these workers were too sick or old to perform, they were sent back to their rural communities to be cared for (3).

The extraordinarily high rate of urbanization, mainly due to internal rural-urban migration rather than international migration, resulted in the development of squatter camps and slums on the urban periphery. Migration increased so fast that proper housing could not be provided to all since it was not possible at such a pace, or at a cost people could afford (Obudho and Mhlanga 5f). However, migration was not the only reason for the development of shanty-towns. Another, probably the most important cause, was the segregation system of the apartheid era.

During apartheid, cities were segregated into Whites living in the center, occupying high business positions, and Blacks inhabiting the townships and squatter camps on the outskirts of the cities. Coloreds as well as Indians lived in-between (Durrheim et al 4). Due to this system of segregation, the concepts of place and race appeared to merge almost seamlessly:

By law and by design, the townships were black and the cities were white; the townships were underdeveloped and the cities were developed; the townships were policed to subdue protest whereas the cities were policed to maintain law and order and eliminate violence. (Durrheim et al 122)

Black peripheral townships were characterized by a high unemployment and poverty rate and lacked basic amenities such as water, sewage systems, or electricity. Locating black people out of the centers of the towns fulfilled the task of keeping Africans away from Whites while keeping them close enough to take advantage of their cheap labor at the same time (Durrheim et al 120).

The implantation of the Group Areas Act in 1950 presented a cornerstone concept of social segregation based on racial differences. It created designated residential areas based on race, reserving the most developed parts of the country for Whites (Durrheim et al 5ff). Due to forced removals under Prime Minister Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd in the time period between the 1960s and 1980s, when racial segregation resulted in the establishment of special homelands, the so-called “Bantustans”, indigenous people were moved to special areas that were allocated for them.

‘They say Indod’ Emhlope wants to give the tribespeople power to rule themselves,’ Evelyn started. [...] – ‘Give the tribespeople power to rule themselves?’ Mantombi asked Evelyn. ‘But where we come from, the faraway land of the Ndebele, the tribespeople have always ruled themselves. Hau’mpela.– ‘They say the tribespeople will be given land according the ethnic group to which they belonged. Not by means of the small tribes you are talking about, Mantombi! They say every ethnic group shall have its own land and its own government and its own Ministers, just like Indod’ Emhlope has at his palace on top of the mountain in Pretoria.’ [...] ‘Yes, you are right, Evelyn. The big meeting today is about the tribespeople ruling themselves. I know because my boyfriend works for a white man who is against the stinker laws. And my boyfriend’s white man knows a lot about these things. The white man says the government wants to trick black people into accepting fake rule.’ (Weep 95-96)

Ten homelands were created, each allocated to a specific indigenous ethnic group. The intention was to deny South African citizenship to the inhabitants. Africans were separated from their ancestral lands which played an important role in their traditional beliefs and had to cope with much lower living standards than they had enjoyed prior to relocation.

Migrant laborers were issued special passports called “dompass”. These passports made it possible to leave the homestead for limited time periods in

order to work at other locations (Durrheim et al 6). It was common to pass a curfew on black inhabitants in the cities, making it impossible for black inhabitants to be outside their homes at a certain time in the evening. This topic is taken up by Zakes Mda in *She Plays with the Darkness*, when Radisene, due to his employment as a night school teacher, breaks the curfew, is whipped atrociously, and loses two colleagues due to police violence.

But all they heard was the same old song by the Mahotella Queens, and periodic announcements by Prime Minister Leabua that the state of emergency, or qomatsi, was in force and that there was a curfew from six in the evening to six in the morning. What a stupid thing to try to do, imprisoning people in their own houses, Radisene thought. (*Darkness* 22)

They had only just walked out of the mission precinct when they were blinded by flashlights. Makhele bolted, and a shot rang out. Radisene and Cynthia froze on the spot. Makhele carried on running. There was another shot, and he fell to the ground. Radisene tried to go to him, but a whip lashed across his back. 'Stop right there!' shouted one of the four policemen confronting them. 'You want to die like that old fool?' 'What are you doing here at this time? Don't you know there is a curfew?' [...] 'Where is your curfew permit?' [...] (*Darkness* 31)

Newly created townships such as KwaMashu soon acquired the reputation of being violent and dangerous places (Durrheim et al 121). Even though Durrheim et al claim that townships were viewed by insiders as 'friendly, community-oriented and vibrant places to live and play' (121), the characters in the novels convey a picture of township life as a life of poverty, crime, and decay.

The full weight of the exile is felt in KwaMashu, where he lives with his wife, Nomonde and two disgruntled children, Jonah and Zodwa. Everything goes wrong here. The water is brackish, and has to be fetched two kilometres away. Following rains, running rainwater mixed with sewage becomes a river separating, isolating, the houses. Each day, he trudges to the station, to take a train to town, where he works at a rubber factory. Some of the men of Ngoza are unemployed, and they look to him to help out. Others die slowly from poverty and despair, taking to the grave the memory of condemning eyes of loved ones. [...] Nomonde has lost all hope. It is this lack of will to survive which makes her weak and susceptible to colds. [...] (*Stones* 33)

Zodwa and her brother Jonah were born in Ngoza but grew up in KwaMashu Township, south of Durban. Like children of exile, they quickly adapted to their new surroundings and turned their backs on their father's desire to return to ancestral land. [...] Durban also held memories of her mother's death. [...] Her illness, Zodwa thought, had something to do with being removed from her original home. She couldn't stand the life in the township: the small houses and the lack of space, the squalor, the brashness and the violence. (*Stones* 89-90)

The life and suffering due to the new surrounding of the tent city in Boekenhout, a township of Pretoria, is portrayed in *We Shall Not Weep* through Mantombi and Songwana Mabena.

She was troubled by the place Boekenhout. Since the three of them – herself, Mabena and Duma – moved home, she had been troubled by the battered morals of the people here. For in this shackland of police raids and government taxes, not many children cared to look the other way when a drunken mother staggered to the side of the road, clutching at her wraparound, to urinate. (*Weep* 63)

Forced removals affected urban squatter dwellers who were moved from overpopulated townships to special designated areas due to slum clearance programs, as well as rural communities which were relocated in order to leave economically productive and attractive land to Whites (Thompson 190ff).

In *The Memory of Stones*, the rural community of Ngoza was forcibly removed from their ancestral land, so it may be used by the army as a military base. The people were not allowed to return for twenty long years. (*Stones* 30).

Zodwa remembers the forced removal of the people of Ngoza:

In her mind Ngoza could be reduced to abstract terms, a place that was caught up in the maw of contending forces. This was were the might of the government – *their* government, she mentally corrected herself – had removed the inhabitants to make way for white progress. She was very young, in June 1975, when it all happened. The memory of it all was very unreliable. But she could still remember the shouting and the carrying on, the sound of trucks, her mother's dull eyes as she watched Joshua remonstrating with a burly officer who seemed bored and detached, his own eyes under the peaked cap as soulless

as cut glass. [...] The womenfolk, who risked being clubbed down with batons and raffle-butts, are more demonstrative, hurling abuse and household missiles at the police contingent. Some of the younger black constables are shamefaced as if participating in an obscene ritual, but they have to stand firm and continue to bring the dwellings down to the ground. The eyes and ears of the older constables are more attuned to the commands of their bored superior. They don't need any orders before wading into the villagers with their weapons. Their eyes belong to clay figurines: black coal against a field of muddy white. [...] (*Stones* 5-6)

In *We Shall Not Weep*, the Mabenas and other families in Boekenhout are forced to leave as well. Their removal would take them away from Boekenhout which fell under the Tswana Territorial Authority (*Weep* 94f) and was therefore returned to the Botswana people as their ancestral land.

It was like a pilgrimage of people headed back to their rural origins. For Duma and Grandfather and Grandmother it was a journey back to the land of the Ndebele, the rolling hills and valleys.

For the Molemelas and Molotos, back to the land of man and beast, the land of Queen Mogjadji, she who had the power to release, or hold back, rain clouds.

For the Khozas and Baloyis, back to the land of Malamulele. The land of ground-nuts and green mopani worms.

Across Boekenhout almost everybody who did not speak the Setswana language was heading back to their tribal lands; to any place where children could be taught in Shangaan, in Ndebele, in Zulu, in Xhosa – languages other than Setswana.

Great numbers of families were loading their belongings on lorries and tractors, heading eastwards to the land of the Ndebele, and northwards to the land of Queen Modjadji, and further north to Malamulele. (*Weep* 109)

It was not until the 1980s that inner suburbs in cities, such as Hillbrow in Johannesburg, were frequently inhabited by black Africans. This caused Whites to move out of the inner parts of the cities and suburbs to newly built gated communities on the edges of the cities (Durrheim et al 123). The new intermingling of races in the cities is represented in *The Heart of Redness*, when NomaRussia tells Camagu “No one comes from Hillbrow. Everyone here comes from somewhere else” (*Redness* 35), signifying the high rate of migration within a city such as Johannesburg.

Even though cities have undergone considerable change within the last decades, social inequality based on racial differences still exists, as black areas are economically underdeveloped and affected by crime and poverty (Durrheim et al 123).

In his article "The 'Healthy Reserve' and the 'Dressed Native'", anthropologist Randall Packard (1989) introduces two interrelated discourses with regard to the urban-rural dichotomy. Packard claims that the concept of the "healthy reserve" refers to the idealistic picture of rural South Africa, where tribal communities live in harmony with nature, while the discourse of the "dressed native" alludes to the opposite. It portrays indigenous Africans as healthy as long as they live in their rural communities, but unable to adjust to a sophisticated 20th century way of life when they dwell in the city. This perspective leaves room for numerous racial prejudices as it portrays black South Africans as backward and primitive, whereas Whites are presented as civilized and more sophisticated, since they do not seem to have problems living in towns (Durrheim et al 99ff). Even though the racist implications in painting the picture of the supreme white race that guards and protects the uncivilized Africans cannot be denied, Durrheim et al argue that such discourses "have a life on their own. They circulate and have currency, providing ready-made resources for constructing and depicting the world in recognisable ways that are likely to be believed and gain acceptance" (99).

This seems to prove true, considering the examples quoted above which portray the difficulties indigenous people encounter as they must face the surroundings of cities. However, should Whites, without preparation or assistance, be forced to fight for survival in rural communities that lack basic amenities such as running water, a functioning sewage system, Western medicine as well as countless other basic necessities they have grown accustomed to, they too would be lost in a world that is foreign to them - just as a life in the city is foreign to the older tribal characters in the novels.

Remarkably, towns and cities are often portrayed in negative ways in the

novels, in contrast to colorful and mostly peaceful descriptions of rural areas. This contrast is illustrated in quotations in *The Heart of Redness*, when the village of Qolorha-by-Sea is described as being in “reach in wonders” (7), and Camagu considers it to be “the most beautiful place on earth” (62,139) while Hillbrow is commonly referred to as “an ungrateful city” that “never sleeps”, where “every morning a number of dead bodies adorn the streets” (27).

In *She Plays with the Darkness*, the preference of older community members for rural over urban areas is depicted in the statement by Father-of-the-Daughters, who states that he would not wish a life in the city to his worst enemies:

They have all these wonderful things, including something called television which is a bioscope in your own house. Yet their lives are miserable. They lack the joy and the freedom that we have here in the mountains [...] It is a dog-eat-dog life in Maseru. [...] Their lives are so sad that laughter has to be induced, and there are people who are paid a lot of money to make people laugh. (*Darkness* 165)

With regard to the increasing rate of urbanization and its effect on rural areas, Obudho and Mhlanga claim that due to the fact that educated young Africans went to live and work in the cities, the development of rural communities faced a state of stagnation (6). It is questionable, whether the redistribution of land is sufficient in counteracting the increasing degree of urbanization, since people in rural areas still lack essential resources and development. This is portrayed in *The Memory of Stones* (29ff) when villagers, for the first time in twenty years, get to legally return to their native land.

With regard to the novels, the claim of developmental stagnation in rural areas seems to strike true, as all rural communities celebrate and cherish traditional values over modern concepts. Most of the villages represented in the novels do not possess developed streets, electricity, or other standards of modernization. The village of Ha Samane in *She Plays with the Darkness* relies on a flying doctor service which brings white doctors to the mountains on special days (75). Furthermore, the village can only be reached on horseback, by plane, or with cars sturdy enough to withstand bad road conditions. Similar to the village of Ha

Samane, the community of Baba Joshua, who were forced to live in tents in Ngoza, lacked proper housing, electricity, and roads.

When they start their ascent, they come upon another spread of village slum, huts made of straw and twigs and hessian sacking. [...] 'There it is,' says the driver, pointing. In the middle distance rises a tent village, the grey canvases seeming like so many bundles of clothing, alongside timber supports that look skeletal in the approaching dusk. [...] The minibus can't go any further because the dirt track disappears abruptly as the wall of stones stands athwart the car's path. (*Stones* 96-97)

Nonetheless, the communities portrayed in the novels do encounter influences of modern life, usually associated with urban areas, and slowly, traditional belief systems do begin to change. In *She Plays with the Darkness*, the village of Ha Samane is split into a lower part that clings to tradition, represented in the mural paintings on houses, as well as an upper part whose inhabitants consider such habits as heathen and old-fashioned.

It was an art that had been practised by their grandmothers who lived in darkness, and was kept alive by people of the Free State farms, who really knew no better since they were enslaved by Boers. People of the upper part of Ha Samane felt that they were civilized Christians who had turned away from this heathen practice. Their houses were all smeared with the grey soil of the village, and had a dull grey sameness to them. (13)

It is significant that traditional virtues are attributed to the lower part and modern virtues to the upper part, as this mirrors a commonly held prejudice. Traditional tribal values are thought of as inferior, while modern, educated, and civilized values are seen as superior. The latter are generally associated with a Western lifestyle.

In conclusion, neither the townships, nor the rural communities are sufficiently developed, as proper housing and living standards are lacking in both instances. This is also indicated by Thompson:

[b]y March 1999, 747,717 [of the promised one million state-subsidized houses] had been built, amounting to 75 percent of the target, but many of them were rudimentary buildings. Likewise, by late 1997, 82 percent of urban households and 32 percent of rural households had electricity, but 41 percent of all South African households

still had no electricity; and 3.5 million people were supplied with water between 1994 and 1999, which still left 12 million people without piped water in their homes. (Thompson 283)

Thompson further notes that by 1998, just under half of the population lived under the poverty line. Poverty at this time concentrated primarily among Africans, as 61 percent of Africans were defined as poor (Thompson 283).

Urban cities greatly influence the lifestyle and belief system of young black South Africans. Due to the migration of young generations to urban, industrial centers of South Africa, traditional rituals and customs as well as systems of belief seem to become irrelevant. Thus, the next chapter aims at investigating the dichotomy of indigenous knowledge versus Western sciences especially in terms of education, and medicine in order to determine if traditional virtues truly do become irrelevant for generations growing up in the 21st century.

5.3. Indigenous Knowledge vs. Western Sciences

In this chapter, the dichotomy of tradition and modernism on the level of indigenous knowledge as opposed to Western sciences is to be investigated. In order to better understand the matter, special attention is paid to the fields of education and medicine.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), indigenous knowledge may be defined as follows:

Indigenous knowledge is the local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. It is the basis for local-level decision-making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities. [...] [It provides the] information base for a society, which facilitates communication and decision-making. Indigenous information systems are dynamic, and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems.²⁹

²⁹ [Http://www.unesco.org/most/bpindi.htm#definition](http://www.unesco.org/most/bpindi.htm#definition).

In his article about cultural ownership and social identity in post-colonial South Africa, Julian Jonker engages in the domestic and international exploitation of cultural expressions of indigenous knowledge. The exploitation of indigenous folklore, reaching from the exploitation of Khoisan rock art to the field of medicine, has gained national and international attention in the last decades. Among others, the UNESCO has been engaged in the topic of exploitation of indigenous culture for years, defining it as the use of ‘traditional’ cultural expressions in contexts “outside of their customary use, and by persons who do not belong to the originating communities” (Jonker 201).

The exploitation of traditional forms of cultural knowledge with regard to Khoisan rock art is portrayed in *She Plays with the Darkness* as Dikosha learns of vandalism. People write their names on the ancient Khoisan drawings in the Cave of Barwa, causing great difficulty for Dikosha in the conjuring of spirits as well as in communing with them (*Darkness* 101). The names of politicians on the walls of the cave indicate that for a long time, especially during apartheid, politicians did not pay attention, or simply did not care about the preservation of expressions of indigenous knowledge. Khoisan drawings disappear more and more under these signatures, which symbolizes the disappearance of indigenous cultures, such as, at a very drastic level, the complete vanishing of the Khoikhoi culture due to the influence of contact with Western cultures.

A similar, albeit likely more dreadful exploitation of indigenous knowledge and people is the displaying of the so-called “Hottentot-Venus” Saartjie Baartman, whose skeleton was exhibited in a disrespectful manner in Europe during the 19th century. Mda touches this topic as Camagu remembers his visit to the British Museum in London.

‘The heads of our ancestors are all over Europe ... trophies collected in military action and in executions,’ continues Camagu. ‘Not only heads. In Paris the private parts of a Khoikhoi woman called Saartjie Baartman are kept in a bottle!’ (*Redness* 168)

In South Africa, the protection of indigenous culture and knowledge systems has been regarded as an important element of science policy ever since the year 1995. One of the measures taken to protect indigenous knowledge

systems is the Protection of Indigenous Knowledge Bill, which fulfilled the purpose of recognizing as well as protecting indigenous forms of expression and folklore (Jonker 201). The draft of the Indigenous Knowledge Systems Bill defines indigenous knowledge as “productions consisting of characteristic elements of the traditional artistic heritage developed and maintained by a community of South Africa or individuals reflecting the traditional artistic expectations of such a community” (Jonker 203-204). According to this definition, indigenous knowledge includes wisdoms, laws, knowledge, and teachings of an indigenous community, expressed through rituals, songs, stories, legends, myths, and folklore, which have in many cases been passed on orally from generation to generation. Organizations such as UNESCO and WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) however argued that the use of the term “folklore” suggests that the term ‘indigenous knowledge’ refers to having originated from lower cultures. Thus, the term traditional knowledge (TK) is preferable, since it indicates that folklore cannot be separated from indigenous culture and knowledge.

In many cases TK holders do not separate ‘artistic’ from ‘useful’ aspects of their intellectual creations and innovations; rather, both emanate from a single belief system which is expressed in daily life and ritual. (Jonker 202)

Thus, indigenous knowledge contains creative expressions such as art and music as well as entire knowledge systems. It indicates the recognition of the holistic nature of any kind of indigenous cultural texts. It is for this reason that Jonker insists that there is no distinction between science and art as is recognized by Western cultures.

It is further argued that indigenous knowledge is characterized by a collective nature of creativity, which distinguishes it from the individual creativity of Western culture. This is reflected in the existence of copyright and trademarks as well as patents in Western culture, which do not exist in indigenous knowledge. Due to this dichotomy of individual Western cultural expression and collective indigenous cultural expression, scholars worldwide called for legislation, hoping to protect indigenous culture based on collective rights (Jonker 202f). In practice however, these rights fall under the jurisdiction of

state instead of the originating communities. The state therefore profits from these rights to a greater extent than the original creators. Further reservations regarding the consequences of intellectual property rights of indigenous knowledge systems were held due to the concern that the exploitation of one part of the knowledge system may lead to an imbalance of the holistic lifestyle of indigenous communities. Hence, it has been argued that “[i]ndividual intellectual property regimes of the Western kind ... [are] geared toward commercial exploitation rather than toward shielding and keeping secrets inherent in the sacred” (Jonker 204-205).

With regard to the legal jurisdiction of indigenous knowledge expressions, it must be considered that forms of ownership within a particular native community have always existed in one form or another due to the fact that communities follow internal rules of customary law outside of the influence of state or national law. An example of internal customary law is given in *The Heart of Redness*, when Zim has to take responsibility for Qukezwa’s deed of chopping down trees (*Redness* 213f). According to Xhosa customs and traditions, the father is to be charged with the crime. He has to take responsibility as his daughter is not married, even though she is twenty years old and would therefore have to answer to the charge according to national law. A similar instance of an application of customary law can be found in *She Plays with the Darkness*, when Hlong is charged for an alleged crime committed by his two sons who are not yet married (*Darkness* 139ff).

Education

The dichotomous relationship between indigenous knowledge and Western sciences may be observed at the level of education as well. Education within tribal communities traditionally took the form of teaching traditions, rituals, and the way to use herbs, plants, or animal parts for healing purposes, or in order to tell the future. An example for this way of teaching is the initiation process, which often included circumcision as a major part in tribal education.

Circumcision makes the child a man. Anyone who has not experienced this rite is unequipped for war, unfitted for business, inadmissible in society. (Thompson 24)

The great importance of initiation is portrayed in *We Shall Not Weep*, when Duma is told on various occasions that he will learn everything he needs in life at the “mountain school” (*Weep* 120).

Initiation schools thus imparted knowledge as well as virtues such as respect for elders and tribal authorities, religious beliefs, and rituals (Thompson 27). Such values and wisdoms seemed to be more important for a child’s future than Western sciences such as mathematics or natural sciences, as they prepared a child for life in a tribal community in a much better way than Western sciences could. This is reflected in the dialogue between Mabena and Mashabela, as Mashabela visits the homestead of Mabena in order to persuade him to allow Duma to attend the local school he is about to build for the community of Boekenhout.

‘And by that you mean your school shall teach the boys how to study the sacred language of dried bones?’ [...] ‘No ways, because that will mean taking away such great responsibility from wise ones like yourself. [...] What we at school will attempt to do is to teach the children to recognise that the world is changing fast around us.’ ‘You know why Mamlambo, the oldest of the villagers, rubs herbs onto the baby’s scalp, and beneath the toes? [...] So you do not know, and yet you say you are a man of education. [...] The old women rub herbs onto the baby’s scalp, and beneath the toes, to give the little one wisdom and strength. [...] You see, teacher, [...] you can speak the white man’s language, and dress like the white man. But if you have not had your scalp rubbed with the herbs you have no wisdom at all. You are like a stupid ant that chases a piece of grass against the wind. [...] You know why we insist that the boys should sleep next to the chicken pen or, back in the land of the Ndebele, next to the enclosure where the goats are kept? [...] So you do not know. And you say you have got the white man’s education. [...] The boys are made to sleep next to the animals so that they can look after them, know them, feel the smell of goat or chicken droppings in their nostrils, and be part of them. [...] Now tell me something, teacher. [...] What do all these things mean to you? [...] It is wisdom!’ – ‘Mabena, Mbuduma! I hear as you talk. You talk about wisdom. The wisdom passed on by our forefathers from generation to generation. But still there is another kind of wisdom that we failed to acquire as the African people. A wisdom that the white man gives to the black man with one hand, and takes away with the other. Who are we then to help the white man deny our children this wisdom? [...]

The white man is overrunning the land. The white man wants to make sure our people are denied the knowledge that shall make us people with dignity. [...] The white man, the very same white man from whom you reclaimed the cattle, will rejoice to hear there are some among us who do not want children to acquire this other knowledge. (*Weep* 40-43)

This extract illustrates that traditional rites and indigenous knowledge such as reading the future with the help of bones are of great importance to tribal communities, especially to the elder generation. Still, the teacher Mashabela stresses the importance of Western education in a new South Africa that is strongly influenced by Western culture and globalization. Furthermore, the teacher's speech points out the white man's hope to deny Africans equal access to education.

Missionaries played a vital role in the mediation of modern education, as the government failed to provide adequate education for indigenous South Africans. The role of missionaries in conveying modern education to tribal children is depicted in *She Plays with the Darkness*. Diksha and Radisene acquired Western education at a mission primary school (*Darkness* 15), and Radisene was "lucky [...], for the Holy Fathers of the church took him under their wings and paid his fees at a Catholic high school in the lowland of Mafeteng" (*Darkness* 5). Even though Diksha showed higher academic achievements, she was denied further education by the missionaries, who claimed that Radisene was a boy and "showed promise as somebody who could be prepared for the work of the Lord" (*Darkness* 5).

Assisted by teachers, doctors, as well as nurses, forty missions were in operation in the country of South Africa in the 1920s. At that time, missions were the only institutions to provide modern education to native South Africans (Thompson 172). Most teachers in missionary schools were Africans who lacked higher education, they could only teach their students basic literacy skills in order to prepare them for minor jobs in the industrial sector.

Inequality in education has a long history in South Africa. In 1932, the Carnegie Commission formulated a social strategy attempting to "under-skill indigenous

black students more in order to prevent them from being able to compete with Whites at the job market” (Durrheim et al 3). Certain high schools such as the Anglican missionary school St. Pete’s in the Transvaal were however suited with competent teachers. At the top of the educational system were universities such as Fort Hare, which had 195 pupils of African, Indian and so-called Colored ethnicity by 1940 (Thompson 172). The syllabus needed to conform to officially instructed guidelines, teaching the dominant assumptions of that time, while disregarding African culture or the African perspective during colonization (Thompson 173).

Not only were African teachers paid meager wages, but African schools were also underdeveloped and received only very little financial support from the government, if any at all. Thompson states that in 1946 the white educational system received more than twenty times as much per capita than black schools (181). The inequality of education as well as the equally unbalanced distribution of public funds was not only noticeable in racial segregation, but also within African ethnicities. This is mentioned in *We Shall Not Weep*, when the Melodi Bantu School which teaches in the Setswana language, is given preferential treatment over a new school. The Lady Selborne Community School, planned by Mashabela, would teach languages other than Setswana.

In at least one letter where a reply was forthcoming, yours the undersigned wished to inform the Bantu teacher Mashabela that though no budget had been allocated for such a school for the financial year ending, it was not the policy of the Ministry to prevent Bantu communities from setting up such institutions. Yours, the undersigned, wished the Bantu teacher Mashabela and the community all the best in their endeavours to explore such a possibility for children who spoke languages other than Setswana. (*Weep* 29)

The government refused to financially assist Mashabela in his plan to build a new school for native children who speak languages other than Setswana, but children who did speak this language were allowed to attend the better equipped Melodi Bantu School.

Duma watched from the far end of the school grounds as younger pupils ran the length of the school fence to welcome a truck loaded with new desks made of oak-wood and blue iron-tubing. [...] The driver changed gears –

before whizzing past the main gate towards neighbouring Melodi Bantu School, leaving even the older Duma baffled. Then Duma became angry; he was beginning to wonder why all good things were meant for Melodi Bantu School. Was it this thing that Mister Mashabela often referred to – the segregation of one language group of African people from others? (*Weep* 93)

Missionaries received only small subsidies from the government, since in the eyes of officials, they “were transmitting dangerous, alien ideas to their African students and turning them, in Verwoerd’s words, into Black Englishmen” (Thompson 196).

As industries soon needed more inexpensive but literate laborers than mission schools were able to provide, the Bantu Education Act was implemented in 1953. It ensured a low quality education for native people and a high quality education for white people, thus ensuring the supremacy of the white race.

Prime Minister Verwoerd stated:

Native education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accord with the policy of the state. ... If the native in South Africa today in any kind of school in existence is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake. ... There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. (Thompson 196).

On the basis of the Bantu Educational Act governmental control over African education increased making it almost impossible for non-governmental educational institutions to exist. However, even though education was compulsory for whites but not for native students, the number of African students increased rapidly. In 1979 almost 21.5 percent of the entire native population attended schools. (Thompson 196). Unfortunately, many African students failed the matriculation examination due to under-equipped schools and insufficiently qualified teachers. To make matters worse, the textbooks expressed the government’s racial views and white education continued to receive ten times more funds than African educational institutions (Thompson 197).

Once the Extension of University Education Act was passed by parliament in 1959 university education was made nearly impossible for natives. Due to this act, no African students were allowed to attend universities without a special permission by the cabinet minister. This led to the establishment of segregated colleges for students of African, Indian, and Colored ethnicity which stood under tight control by officials. By the end of the 1970s white students constituted almost 80 percent of all university students (Thompson 197).

Once in power, the Mandela government tried to cope with this unbalanced educational system. Even though there has been a considerable remodeling of the educational system from 1994 onwards as educational institutions have been opened for all races, a major positive turn promising economic growth and success is yet to come. The gap between well-educated white people and ill-educated natives has been too great to overcome.

In 1994, 24 percent of the adult African population had no schooling at all, 37 percent had attended only primary school, 22 percent had some secondary education, and only 6 percent had some higher education. (Thompson 266).

Under a weak education minister, the disparity between white and black education methods, a legacy of colonization and apartheid, could not be overcome in the era of the new South Africa. Thompson notes that by 1998 26 percent of African teachers were under-qualified, idle, and often intoxicated (Thompson 285). This is depicted in *She Plays with the Darkness*.

The students were always complaining that they did not get what they called a 'proper education' even though they paid exorbitant fees. Sometimes the teachers failed to come to class, especially at the end of the month, or on Mondays when hangover bells were ringing in their heads. (*Darkness* 30)

The low morale among African teachers soon led to the fact that fewer and fewer people chose an educational profession which irrevocably resulted in a shortage of teachers in South Africa.

Due to the inequality in Apartheid's different syllabuses for native Africans, African students were especially weak in mathematics and sciences (Thompson

285) which left them ill-prepared for a life in the global cities of the 21st century. The dire lack of mathematical education is mentioned briefly by Masilela, when account is given that Mabena “had difficulty in understanding or counting money” (*Weep* 50).

In the year 2000 the new education minister Kader Asmal described the disastrous state of the South African educational system as follows:

[T]he educational condition of the majority of people in this country amounts to a national emergency. It will not be an exaggeration to say that there is a crisis at each level of the system. (Thompson 286)

An inadequate education prevents Africans from filling higher, better paid positions within the South African economy. It plays a vital role in the high poverty rate in the countryside, especially among native South Africans. This proves the importance of Western sciences such as mathematics over traditional knowledge in the 21st century which is characterized by globalization and growing importance of technologies. However, cultural practices must not be forgotten, as traditions and indigenous knowledge play an essential role in the formation of identity. With the help of Western education and the study of science, indigenous communities can find their place in the new era without the need to abandon their traditional rites, as is depicted in the influence of Camagu’s western educational background.

Western education alone is not sufficient in order to be able to survive in an indigenous community which is taught through Xoliswa and Zodwa. Even though Zodwa has a law degree, she is unfit for a life in the rural community. She needs Nozizwe’s help and advice in order to be able to lead her father’s peoples. The same holds true for Xoliswa who occupies a high status within the tribal community of Qolorha-by-Sea as principal of the local school, yet it is the less educated Qukezwa who is much better prepared for rural life. Qukezwa knows her history as well as the history of her people by heart and is highly knowledgeable in biology. She is able to teach Camagu a lot about traditional customs and practices, such as the memory ritual of the Believers (*Redness* 73), or the right way to harvest the sea (*Redness* 102).

‘Do you know what I call what you are doing?’ [Camagu] asks sneeringly. ‘Chopping down a stupid plant, what else?’ ‘Vandalism. Why are you destroying these beautiful plants that have such nice purple flowers?’ [...] ‘Nice plants, eh? Nice for you, maybe. But not nice for indigenous plants. This is the inkberry. It comes from across the Kei River. It kills other plants. These flowers that you like so much will eventually become berries. Each berry is a prospective plant that will kill the plants of my forefathers. And this plant is poisonous to animals too, although its berries are not. Birds eat the berries without any harm, and spread these terrible plants with their droppings.’ (*Redness* 90)

Qukezwa illustrates that knowledge does not come from books or Western education as Xoliswa believes. In Qukezwa’s eyes, real knowledge comes from understanding nature, from knowing nature, animals, plants and traditions (*Redness* 103). Furthermore, this quote not only demonstrates Qukezwa’s extensive knowledge of plants but it can also be understood as a metaphor. Relationships between indigenous people and the offspring of white European settlers threaten to destroy indigenous culture and way of life. Thus, a symbiotic relationship between indigenous knowledge and Western education should be aspired.

Medicine

The dichotomy of Western science and indigenous knowledge is noticeable in the field of medicine as well. Healers, as representatives of indigenous knowledge, often experience discrimination of their profession with regard to Western medicine.

According to their talents and calling, various kinds of traditional healers may be differentiated. Throughout history, healers have carried out a variety of functions within tribal communities, “bringing rain, detecting witches and criminals, ‘doctoring’ armies, negotiating with ancestors, and using herbs and surgical procedures to cure and mend the body” (Flint 2). Furthermore, healers may be defined as highly respected guardians of traditional beliefs, offering traditional medicine and holistic treatment in order to ease ailments that are nowadays, amongst others, predominantly rooted in modern conditions such as poverty, unstable rule, and disease (Rüther 45). Since healers are known to

communicate with spirits of ancestors they play a vital role in traditional ceremonies. Rüter offers the following description of healers' roles within contemporary South African society:

Healers conceive of themselves as specialists of a local, or indigenous, knowledge. Commanding the support of a vast constituency among young and old South Africans, among rural and urban people and among privileged as well as disadvantaged members of society, they are eager to stress versatility in tradition and want to dedicate their expertise to social, political, economic and cultural transformation processes of the nation. This turns them into agents whose role is perceived with ambiguity in South Africa. (Rüter 45)

Since the founding of the first healers' association in 1931 in Natal traditional healers have been struggling to achieve a legal recognition of their profession. Even though the Natal Native Code from 1891 "legalized and licensed the practices of African midwives and inyangas" (Flint 2), discussion arose regarding the strict distinction between what is called "African medicine" versus "European medicine" since many of the herbs and plants used in the preparation of traditional medicine had been imported from overseas a long time ago. Judge Feetham ruled in 1940 that "native medicines are characteristically *native both in origin and composition*, that is medicines compounded and prepared from roots, bark, herbs, leaves, fats, skins and bones and other *indigenous* substances". The same judge added later that another distinguishing feature between European and traditional medicine is the "degree of sophistication" with which the medicines were set up (Flint 2).

During this time, the legal status of healers was limited to a great degree. Members of the association called for a licensing system and showed their will to cooperate with representatives of Western medicine with regard to specific areas of influence (Rüter 46).

The public say the European Doctor can treat the mother in a scientific way; the Native herbalist can attend according to Native custom and can administer medicinal herbs as his predecessors have done for centuries. (Rüter 52)

From the 1960s onward theological scholars considered traditional healers a part of indigenous forms of religion, and therefore, incompatible with Christianity. Healers and their profession were regarded as superstitious, practicing witchcraft, and representing the “home ground of the devil” (Rüther 47). However, as the number of independent churches increased throughout South Africa, so did religious competition. Critical awareness was raised, and Christian theologians found a new interest in the practices of African Religion.

After the 1970s anthropologists recognized the healers’ essential role in the production and reservation of indigenous knowledge. Many scholars predicted that traditional healers and their craft would fall victim to modernization, urbanization, and the resulting influence of Western medicine. Indeed, the novels at hand, in which traditional healers are very much linked to rural communities, would support this claim. Rüther claims that recent studies have shown that rituals, beliefs, and traditional performances play a major role in the contribution of “the shaping of a specifically African modernity” (48).

Fighting for legal recognition, healers, aware of the importance of written records in a modern society, produced numerous writings, including newspaper articles, in order to be able to convey an accurate image of their profession (Rüther 49). The difference between what healers are believed to practice and their actual work continues to be discussed in many South African newspaper articles, novels, and movies. These texts entail debates that focus on healers’ influence on culture while religious aspects receive less attention. This shows that, in contrast to the last decades, current debates focus on the cultural and medicinal aspects rather than a possible religious impact (Rüther 50).

The exploitation of indigenous knowledge by Western companies affects the field of medicine as well. Some healers, to the great disapproval of healers’ associations, have gained a lot of money by revealing secrets of herbal treatment and selling their medicine to international companies. Being exploited of their intellectual property rights they only receive a small fraction of the compensation they are entitled to. Since the 1930s healers’ societies have been working against those they consider unsuited for their profession, such as

healers with political ambitions, or healers who were known to trade herbs on a commercial basis and clearly entered the profession solely for business or their own well-being.

In the 1970s and 1980s, healers received a new visibility in South African media. However, too many middle class and Christian newspaper readers would not acknowledge the fact that healers were portrayed “as part of a general African tradition that was held to be a cultural resource for any African” (Rüther 56). Healers not only provide alternative bio-medicine but also heal spiritual ailments.

In each of the novels discussed in this paper fields of healers’ activities are mentioned. In *The Memory of Stones*, Nozizwe performs a ritual on Zodwa with the help of bones and powders, so she may “be strengthened to deal with whatever comes her way” (*Stones* 225). Back in London, Benedita visited a Nigerian woman named Alina, whose tortoise helped her in reading the future (*Stones* 76). In *We Shall Not Weep*, traditional healers are represented through the characters of Mamlambo, the “elderly village midwife”, and “the oldest person in the land of the Ndebele” (*Weep* 11) who performs a ritual on newborns so that they may acquire strength and wisdom (*Weep* 41). Other traditional healers are Madlozi, “who understands the secret ways of the thunderbolt” (*Weep* 13), and “wise men of the village such as Songwana Mabena [...] who could read the future from dried bones and the rumble of the thunder” (*Weep* 12).

Mabena, whose divine powers have been well known shortly after his arrival, achieves a high level of popularity in Boekenhout and “even people from as far as the gold mines came to consult with the old man” (*Weep* 35). He helps people explain their bad dreams (*Weep* 35), cures injured body parts (*Weep* 42), and administers muthi to a person possessed by the spirit (*Weep* 42). In the colonial story frame of *Heart of Redness*, a diviner detects witches with the help of poles (*Redness* 16). Even in the post-apartheid era diviners and healers could be found in Qolorha-by-Sea. Zim and Bhonco who both share distinctive indigenous knowledge and are able to commune with the ancestors have the

power to put a spell on each other. For instance, Zim is said to have sent birds and bees to follow Bhonco wherever he goes (*Redness* 225 ff). A diviner, a so-called *igqirha*, is called when Zim is torn between “the world of the living and the world of the ancestors” (*Redness* 250). In *She Plays with the Darkness*, Dikosha’s grandmother is said to have been a witch as she “was able to manufacture the thokolose [sic] hobgoblin from sorghum bread [...] and sent it to torment her enemies” (*Darkness* 73).

The healers’ importance for indigenous communities and South Africa in general not only rests on their power to treat ailments in a predominantly herbal way with the temporary assistance of communing with spirits of ancestors but much more on the fact that they, as bearers of indigenous knowledge and agents of a distinct spirituality, have played and continue to play an essential role in cultivating and maintaining traditional African customs.

With the newly won access to popular culture, healers and their craft were discussed in numerous contexts, such as spirituality, economics, politics, sports, and herbal medicines (Rüther 56). Due to the popularization of their images healers’ part in the process of shaping African culture was widely accepted but recognition of their profession was still denied to them, as many questioned the relationship of healers and politics due to rumors that some politicians may have been under the protection of certain well-known and highly-respected healers. This subject is briefly mentioned by Langa, when Zodwa states that Johnny M was under special protection when taking the test of the Humiliation Tree:

She knew that Johnny M had been strengthened by a sorcerer who had learnt the art of midnight death at the feet of Khotso Sethuntsa, the legendary inyanga who had administered even to leaders such as the late Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid. (*Stones* 343)

Despite these rumors and accusations, the majority of healers emphasized their apolitical intentions (Rüther 57). Once healers could replace their image as political allies and religious enemies their path towards legitimization of their profession became paved. It was understood that “the fact that they worked with dreams and commanded the voices of the ancestors became a by-product of

their activity” (Rüther 58). In some regards, their profession was compared to that of Western psychiatrists and thus became less deviant and foreign to many (white) people of South Africa.

The change of the political climate in the 1990s bestowed the profession of healers with new energy on their way to the legitimization of their profession. Once again, as this was of great importance to the new government, healers stressed that they had nothing at all in common with witchcraft. They emphasized their interest in health care issues such as those connected with HIV/AIDS instead (Rüther 59). The depiction of healers, or *nyangas*, in the novels may be seen as contradicting this claim since healers are portrayed as possessing the gift of bewitching somebody and thus, instead of just healing and curing healers, may even be capable of harming someone. NomaRussia was accused of having bewitched NoEngland with the help of a diviner, in order to have Zim all for herself (*Redness* 40). But the diviner worked together with NoEngland and in turn put a spell on NomaRussia so that “since that day the girl has never been able to have another tryst with anyone [and] [l]overs have run away from her because whenever she tries to know a man – in the biblical sense, that is – she sees the moon” (*Redness* 41).

In the mid-1990s the healers’ role in HIV/AIDS problems was highly recognized. The aim of the government and international health organizations was an establishment of cooperation between healers, the government, and representatives of Western medicine such as doctors and hospitals. This cooperation was intended to consist of “health policies [...] and AIDS-awareness campaigns, in which healers [were] assigned the specific tasks of distributing condoms and getting involved in AIDS and sex education” (Rüther 61). Traditional healers however were not satisfied with such a minor role, only offering cheap assistance in health care programs. In mass media they emphasized the extraordinary situation that made them become healers in the first place, such as the experience of the calling.

The exceptional incident of a calling is portrayed by Mda, when Misty, who went to Ireland in order to become a medical laboratory assistant (*Darkness* 29), tells

Radisene how she found out that it was her destiny to become a traditional healer.

'My life is not my own. I have been called by the ancestors. I am going to be a lethuela diviner.' 'But you are an educated woman, Misti. You can't be a lethuela.' 'When the ancestors call you, they don't ask whether you are educated or not.' Then she told him the whole story. She was in her thwasa period now, possessed by the spirits that were forcing her to go for training as a lethuela diviner. The spirits often seized her and shook her violently, making her grunt like a pig and gasp for breath. [...] When the spirits seized her, she sometimes got sick with strange ailments which could not be cured by Western doctors. Those who knew about these things told her that she was being called by the ancestors to be a traditional doctor. She laughed in their faces. [...] She was an educated woman with a B.Sc. degree. The whole notion was ridiculous. Then she began to have visions. She saw strange figures that other people could not see. She heard voices that other people could not hear. (*Darkness* 119).

During a later encounter, Misty tells Radisene that she enjoys "her dual practice both as a traditional doctor in the African mode and as a medical laboratory technologist in the Western mode" (*Darkness* 172). The case of Misty shows that it is important to unite both worlds, African and European, in order to truly know one's own identity. A symbiotic relationship between Western and African medicine is not impossible.

In 2004, the South African parliament passed the Traditional Health Practitioners Bill and finally granted healers their long wished and fought for officially recognized status. The bill initiated a legal licensing framework, offering free access to benefits of medical regulation to over 350,000 healers.

An Interim Traditional Health Practitioners Council was charged to 'provide for a regulatory framework to ensure the efficacy, safety and quality of traditional health care services; to provide for the management and control over the registration, training, and conduct of practitioners, students and specified categories in the traditional health practitioners profession; and to provide for matters connected therewith.' (Flint 5)

Throughout colonialism and apartheid, healers were stigmatized by accusations of witchcraft and superstition, and had to cooperate outside the public domain.

Still, they would not give up, and continued to demonstrate the true image of their profession to society. With the help of mass media, they experienced a breakthrough on the way to legitimization which played an important role as opinion-maker and displayed healers as major images of the African culture and belief system.

Especially in the “new” South Africa which seeks to understand and make sense of the happenings of colonialism and apartheid through producing African knowledge and identity, the role of traditional healers as agents of indigenous knowledge in the process of production must not be underestimated.

African healers are specialists in their people’s customs and try to give incentives how to integrate these customs into everyday life. Their knowledge is a key resource for African people whose elderly generations are not consulted for advice and instruction as it used to be in earlier periods. (Rüther 65)

The change in influence and respect with regard to generational roles in modern society in general and on the micro-level of a family setting in particular, is the subject of closer examination in the subsequent chapter.

5.4. Generational Conflicts

Urbanization and modernization left a considerable impact on the culture and belief system of individuals. The influence on families and society as a whole was remarkable. The migrant labor system, imposed during the years of apartheid in order to provide mines with cheap labor while at the same time preventing Africans from settling down in white areas, affected the structure and functions of family and society. Mine workers were not allowed to bring their wives and children along with them to the close vicinity of the mines. They had to leave their families behind in order to be able to support them financially. Men became “shadowy figures who provided for the family without much direct involvement” (Barbarin & Richter 142). Many of these workers chose to see prostitutes or founded second families with wives that were closer to them. Such issues are portrayed in the novels, as women of Ha Samane and other villages frequently ride their horses to the post office, waiting for mail from their loved ones.

As soon as the plane arrived people from Ha Samane and from neighboring villages such as Ha Sache rode their horses to the post office to see if they had received any letters from their husbands, sons, fathers and brothers who worked in the mines. [...] Their husbands and sons had been long swallowed by the city of gold, and had established new families there. [...] Yet their relatives never lost hope. They came every Wednesday. (*Darkness* 8)

“Goldwidows” (*Darkness* 115), women whose husbands have either died at the mines or have been “swallowed by the city of gold” (*Darkness* 115) never to return again, were to be found all over the country.

During one of his business travels, Radisene meets a woman whose husband has recently passed away. She reveals how she feels about her loss. It is likely that many more “goldwidows” share the same emotions about their husbands’ demise.

You are surprised that I am not crying? Well, I’ll tell you why. I have not seen my husband for many many years. Since he went to the mines he never came back. Sometimes I would hear from people that they saw him in Maseru. When he was on leave he only went as far as Maseru to spend his money with the whores there. He did not send his children a single cent. Now they herd cattle for other people. And you tell me that he is dead. To me, that man died many years ago. (*Darkness* 60)

This extract not only illustrates changes in the composition and functioning of family life, it also indicates the new roles women and children were forced to take on in order to make a living. With husbands and fathers missing as the constant and authoritative part in a household, women were forced to look for work outside the domestic domain. Mothers were left with less time and energy to nurture their children or care for them properly (Barbarin & Richter 21).

Urban migration and its prospects for better living conditions and an improved quality in educational services for children led to an entirely new structure within African society, ultimately resulting in the liberation of gender roles. Barbarin and Richter emphasize the positive effects of modernization on African women:

The migration to urban areas has brought an important benefit to women. It has contributed to women’s autonomy

and independent access to employment, money and other resources such as land. Thus it has increased that possibility that women can sustain households on their own. (142)

The opening of the labor market, which offered women greater access to employment opportunities, has made women equal competitors in various professional fields. Competition for paid employment, the increasing unemployment rate of men (Barbarin & Richter 19ff), as well as the fact that men often only received meager wages for mine work and thus feared that their wives might earn higher salaries, often led to further conflicts within families. This is portrayed in *The Heart of Redness*, when NoGiant, one of Camagu's female business partners of the cooperate society, is attacked by her husband, who fails to accept that his wife, who earns her own money, dares to voice her opinion as well.

Her husband, who was on a brief holiday from the mines, demanded his conjugal rights. She assured him that she was prepared to give him as much conjugal rights as his body was capable of taking, provided he took a bath first.

That made him furious.

'You think that just because you now make all this money running around with educated people I am no longer good enough for you?' he yelled. [...] What gives her, a mere woman, the right to pass judgment on the state of his cleanliness or lack thereof? [...] [Camagu] tells [Qukezwa] he is disturbed that the success of his cooperative society is causing its members so many problems with their families. 'You should not worry yourself about that,' says Qukezwa. 'Men are insecure when women make more money. It makes women more independent. Men will just have to get used to it.' (*Redness* 220)

The newly won access to the job market allowed women to gradually gain greater independence from their families as well as from men which led to a decreasing rate in marriages. Barbarin and Richter state that only two out of five Birth-to-Ten³⁰ households are not single-parent female-headed households (143). The high rate of single mothers may be caused by two factors. The under-employment or unemployment of men presents an obstacle in the

³⁰ Birth-to-Ten refers to a systematic study carried out on urban children from their birth until they reached the age of ten. The study included observations on physical growth and status of development of children. For further information please consult Barbarin and Richter's book *Mandela's Children*.

payment of the customary *lobola*, and makes men who are struggling to find employment unattractive potential marriage partners in the first place (Barbarin & Richter 142).

The decrease in marriages is in part caused by women's access to higher education and better paid jobs. Women do not have to get married in order to secure their living. This applies for Xoliswa who is referred to as "old maid" (*Redness* 4) because at the age of thirty-six she is not yet married. It is unusual for unmarried Xhosa women to not stay with their parents, but Xoliswa, as the principal of the Qolorha-by-Sea Secondary School, lives in a two room staff house in the schoolyard (*Redness* 11).

The absence of marriage may be identified in almost all romantic relationships in the literature at hand. With exception to Qukezwa, who gets married to Camagu, neither Zodwa nor Tampololo, both very strong women who embody modernization to a certain degree, marry the men they love. Zodwa, even though she would like to work for a law company, takes over the leadership in her father's community and thus accepts a male role. Tampololo on the other hand, a divorced, stout woman, knows what she wants and does not only use her words to achieve her objective. Even though domestic violence still prevails strongly in South Africa (Barbarin & Richter 74-78), in this case, the woman is not the victim, but the victimizer. Tampololo beats her husband Trooper Motsahi several times throughout the novel.

'Where is he? Where is the bastard?' enquired a raspy voice outside. Everybody in the shebeen froze. They knew that voice. They looked at Trooper Motsahi pityingly and shook their heads. The door was kicked open and Tampololo stormed in. She was Trooper Motsahi's wife, and she was menacingly huge and beautiful. [...] 'What do you think I am eating when you walk straight from work to waste time with these layabouts?' 'Please, sweetie, one of these layabouts is my boss. [...] 'Don't you sweetie me, you fool! Your boss, your boss! [...] What kind of District Commander are you to sit with this useless loafer and not tell him to go home when it's late like this. [...] I'll show you what I'll do to him, next time you will involve yourself if only to save his life.' Tampololo leapt at Trooper Motsahi and throttled him with both hands. She threw him on the floor, sat on him, and rained fists on his face. [...] As he was being frogmarched home Trooper Motsahi pleaded, 'If you

must beat me at all, my love, please don't do it in public. You make me the laughing stock of my friends.' 'My love?' Tampololo snapped back. 'How can I be a love of a thing like you?' (*Darkness* 26-27)

This quote illustrates Tampololo's disrespect towards her husband's boss, a well-known police man, and demonstrates the change in gender roles. It is Trooper Motsahi who seems to have fewer rights than his spouse. Zodwa and Tampololo do not have to marry. Both women have achieved higher education, are financially independent, and do not require a man to provide for them.

Women's lower status in traditional societies, especially in the case of unmarried women, is given account of frequently in *We Shall Not Weep*. It is mentioned that "in the house of Mabena a woman should conduct herself with the utmost respect" (*Weep* 42). On one occasion, Mabena's wives mention that women are equal to men which causes Mabena to burst out in anger. He attempts to strangle one of the offending women with a whip. The village midwife Mamlambo has to intervene in the incident.

'You strangle your wife with a cowhide whip! What do you think you are doing? You, who cried so much for you mother's breast, must today turn around and say a woman is nothing in your eyes? Hau'mpela, you should be ashamed of yourself!' (*Weep* 41)

Inequality with regard to female and male statuses within traditional societies is portrayed in the *Heart of Redness*, as women are not allowed to participate in various rituals such as the memory rituals of the Unbelievers or other meetings of the elders (*Redness* 72). Similarly, in the land of the Ndebele, no woman is allowed to take part in important meetings but is instead barred from voicing her opinion (*Weep* 33).

It seems that women are the ones who perform the main work, while men solely harvest the fruit of women's labor. It is the duty of women, such as Mother-of-the-Daughters and Mother-of-Twins (*Darkness* 42), as well as Mantombi (*Weep* 24), to brew sorghum beer for the community. Even though Mother-of-Twins has received a lot of money from Radisene, and is considered to be quite rich, she contributes in community projects such as the construction of roads in order to improve and modernize the community.

Men generally did not like to work in self-help projects, even at those times when they were not digging the white man's gold. When the farming season was over they preferred to sit under the trees, drinking beer and playing morabaraba.

Most of those who worked at the self-help projects were women who held families together and single-handedly brought up children to manhood or womanhood. They were known as the goldwidows, for their husbands spent all their lives working in the mine, coming home for a few days only once or twice a year. (*Darkness* 108)

The ideal role of women in the eyes of men is portrayed when account is given that “[Dikosha] could have been a grandmother if she had done what all women were created for: to marry and settle down and look after her husband and children” (*Darkness* 135).

Tribal communities were mostly patrilineal. The status of a man was clearly above a woman which is illustrated by one Ndebele woman telling her friends about the typical male rule among her tribe's people which included the father as the head of the household, men of wisdom, and on the top, the king.

[...] We have ruled ourselves through ubaba, the father, at the head of the family, then above him the headman, and up to the men of wisdom, of which ubaba Mabena was one, and at the head of the tribe we had Mabhogo the King.’ (*Weep* 95)

Women, unequal to both men and Whites, have to carry a double burden. As Africans, they carry a lower status in society than Whites, and as women and wives, they are to be obedient to the men in both family and community. Social gender inequality is illustrated, as certain parts of the food are reserved for men (*Darkness* 43), and women are to walk behind their husbands, not side by side as Bhonco and his wife NoPetticoat usually do (*Redness* 7). This may be due to the fact that NoPetticoat is not submissive and does not obey her husband at all times. In fact, she is referred to as a “stubborn woman” who will not listen to her husband when he tells her to dispose of the red ochre and the traditional isiXhosa costumes (*Redness* 71). She resists her husband's and daughter's demands to turn away from tradition and starts to work at Camagu's cooperate society. She wears her traditional costumes with pride and begins to smoke the long pipe that is traditionally smoked by women (*Redness* 260). In

Bhonco's eyes, she commits the "ultimate betrayal" (*Redness* 234) in supporting his worst enemies, the Believers.

Unlike NoPetticoat, Mantombi is of the old school and celebrates traditional beliefs. She mentions that it is a "pity [Mabena's] other wives died" (*Weep* 66), and cannot understand that women nowadays "would not accept marriage as second or third wives. Young women who behaved as if they were equal to men. How disrespectful!" (*Weep* 63f).

The belief that men are to have control over their wives is portrayed by Father-of-the-Daughters, who cannot understand why Radisene complains to him about Tampololo's jealousy and temper.

'Tampololo is a very jealous woman, father. Now that you are here I hope you'll talk with her. She does not respect me at all. She treats me like a piece of rag.' 'You are a man, Radisene. You are the one who wears the pants. You ought to know how to control women.' 'This is a modern world, father. We don't control women, and in the same way we don't want them to control us.' 'Well, if that's what you think ... then don't come crying to me.' (*Darkness* 162)

The view of women as men's property is expressed when Mother-of-the-Daughters is raped. Instead of her, it is her husband who is being pitied by the community of Ha Samane. The villagers simply pass her by, ask her husband how he feels, and express what a shame it is that something so terrible should happen to him (*Redness* 184). It is argued at court that it is also partly Mother-of-the-Daughters' fault that she was raped by her former son-in-law Trooper Motsohi since she was allegedly drunk, even though she insisted she was not. Furthermore, it is mentioned that she "must be flattered that at her advanced age she should be subject of desire of a handsome young man" (*Redness* 187).

The trend towards gender equality and the fact that women nowadays take on a new role within society is displayed by Radisene, when he mentions that:

'We live in an age when a woman can do no wrong. When things go badly in a relationship people automatically take her side. She is the innocent party. It's payback time for all the centuries of oppression women have suffered. A

woman is no longer a human being with human flaws.'
(*Darkness* 194)

Modernism results in a major reformation of relationships between the individual and society. Due to forced removals and urbanization, extended kin networks that were once regarded “as an integral component of [...] social functioning and a critical source of support in rural areas” lose their significance. Families often live far away from their ancestral land and relatives and traditional virtues of family life disappear more and more. This distance between individuals and their relatives leads to a weakening of traditional family structures (Barbarin & Richter 18).

The migratory labor system was introduced during the apartheid era, resulting in a periodic absence of men within the household which in turn brings about new responsibilities for women. In addition to raising children and fulfilling domestic economic duties, women are forced to take over the role of the head of the house, a position that had previously been reserved for men. The absence of a male authority within the household, among other reasons, leads to an uncontrolled behavior of children (Thompson 202) which is given account of in *We Shall Not Weep*. It is mentioned that “children of school-going age went idle in the streets [and] many resorted to petty crime” (*Weep* 29).

Within traditional societies, the rights of children are limited. Depending on their gender, children are to herd cattle or help with domestic duties at an early age, but still, they are often denied their rights.

Indeed, in the house of Mabena, a child had no rights whatsoever – not even, as Grandfather liked saying, the right to think. A child lived by the strict orders of his elders.
Hau'mpela! (*Weep* 38)

The difference of children's rights in traditional rural communities and modern urban societies is visible in Madlozi's words. He reminds Duma that he has to obey the orders of the elders since he is not “in the towns where children have rights and all this nonsense” (*Weep* 123). On the International Day of the Girl Child in 2012, President Zuma stressed the importance of children's rights by stating:

‘Young children must have a right to decide their own future. It is through education that we can help to empower them so that they can make their own independent decisions on the lives that they want to lead.’ (The Presidency – Press Release)

MaNdlela, one of the women of New-Rivers, “dedicate[s] her life to saving the lives of children” (Stones 208). She escapes from the violent surroundings of the township of KwaMagwaza and comes to Ngoza, hoping to provide a better life for her children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces.

It did not matter whose offspring they were, the children were sacred bequests, issues of loins once engorged with love and a straining and a final clenching in the coupling, for the seed to find fertile ground, a place of rest.

The importance of strong, healthy families as “pillars of society” with “the ability to transmit society’s values, norms [and] morals” (Green Paper 4) found official acceptance when the government approved the Green Paper on Families in 2011, offering proposals to support families so they may form well-functioning social units, in order to build a better South Africa.

[T]his Green Paper is a call to all South Africans to create a new dispensation that deliberately supports and strengthens families in the country by eliminating all conditions eroding the family, inter alia, poverty and inequality, [...] , gender inequality and gender-based violence, domestic violence and child abuse. It places the family at the center of national policy discourse, development and implementation by advocating the rights-based policies and programmes which support family life and strengthen families in South Africa. (Green Paper 5)

Strong families are defined as families who possess a so-called rhythm, “which is expressed in routines, rituals or traditions” (Green Paper 4). In choosing this wording, the government acknowledges the importance of rituals and traditions with regard to family stability. Furthermore, the government stresses the importance of traditional leaders and refers to them as “crucial to the realisation of the vision of the Green Paper”, since “they remain the custodians of the traditional value system [and] also preside over land, marriages and the family in rural areas” (Green Paper 65).

Due to the changes in family structures as a result from modernization traditional customs continue to be strongly influenced. Traditions and customs play a vital part in regulating and “giving order to life” (Barbarin & Richter 18). Cultural practices such as initiation marks the transition from boyhood to manhood and fulfills regulatory functions, as modernism is replaced with modern alternatives (Barbarin & Richter 18). The decrease of the elders’ “high esteem of wisdom and authority” (Barbarin & Richter 19) within modern societies, as well as the elders’ influence on younger generations are depicted, when Zodwa tells her parents that she intends to be the one to decide her future.

‘Maybe she is right, Bhonco,’ pleaded NoPetticoat. ‘Maybe we should allow her to go.’ [...] ‘You cannot allow me to go, mother. When I want to go, I will go. I am not a child anymore. I was not asking for your permission. I was informing you.’ (*Redness* 226)

Another example of the change that occurs in generational roles within traditional societies is Radisene’s refusal to accept the money the old grandmothers of Ha Samane wish to give him in order to welcome him home. By doing so, he insults them even though he gives them more money in return to keep for themselves (*Darkness* 12).

Father-of-the-Daughters acknowledges the sinking role of elders in modern life, when after visiting his daughter Tampololo and Radisene, he reports to the community of Ha Samane that his advice does not appear to be appreciated anymore among the younger generation.

‘I tried to advise him. The problem with my age [...] is that I have accumulated so much experience about life, yet no one wants to learn from it for they think I am an old damn fool.’ (*Darkness* 165)

Young men, and later on also women, typically earned an income which enabled them to buy their own cattle and pay for their lobolas. This decreased their dependence on the elders of their communities even further (Thompson 172).

But even though the role of older generations in traditional societies may have changed as less respect is paid to them, their special status in society is still noticeable. A man can, for example, not “shake his mother-in-law’s hand, for according to custom he was not supposed to touch her” (*Darkness* 107). Today, elder generations take on new responsibilities and gain a new importance in the era of globalization and modernization. Barbarin and Richter argue that elder generations become increasingly important in looking after their grandchildren, as women spend their days at work and need someone to look after their children for them (Barbarin & Richter 21). Thus, modernization might bring with it a provision of new and meaningful roles for elderly generations who might otherwise feel unneeded.

6. Conclusion

Almost 80% of South Africa's population belongs to the three main tribes, the Zulu, the Xhosa, and the Ndebele. Tribal people have lived in a close relationship with nature ever since the beginning of time, but modernization has reached them nonetheless, at times in very harmful ways. The removal of many tribal people from their ancestral lands due to colonialism and the policies of apartheid have brought about a loss of once highly cherished customs and traditions. Even though the years of oppression under the system of apartheid are long past and ended over more than a decade ago, the country still struggles with the socio-economic challenges of the past. The ills of the past sadly continue to confront the country in many ways.

In our time, traditional norms and virtues do not seem to carry much importance. The virtue of a collective aspect of life in which the well-being of the community stands above the welfare of the individual seems to have fallen into oblivion, as has the importance of family and extended kinship, even the respect for elder members in society. It appears that the modern way of thinking is characterized by an ego-centered mode. The individual places the importance of his own well-being above the health of the community.

Due to industrialization and its effects on societal structures, people have lost their once so close connection to Mother Nature. It is now seen as humbug and heathenism to believe in ancestors' spirits, or follow traditional customary practices. People rely more and more on Western medical treatments and forget about traditional, herbal medicines. School syllabuses are centered on Western sciences rather than indigenous knowledge.

The tribal communities portrayed in the novels encounter influences of modern life, usually associated with urban areas. Traditional systems of belief begin their slow, but unstoppable process of change. Modernism does not halt before rural communities and in time influences all parts of rural traditional life through its ideas, systems of belief, and ways of life. Thus, influence of modernization

on rural areas is inevitable, but to which degree and for what price is not yet known. One must hope that traditional customs and beliefs can stand the test of time and that indigenous knowledge including myths, customs, and rituals will not be lost forever, but are preserved for future generations instead.

In order to prevent traditional ways of life and the practicing of customs from vanishing, it may be necessary to re-learn an appreciation of traditional values, to rediscover the importance of cultural identity and heritage. History plays a major part in the construction and formation of identity, having shaped society into what it is today. Thus, instead of the oppositional way of thinking that marks the current state of affairs in the “new” South Africa, a fusion of the two related concepts, tradition and modernity, should be preferred. Instead of an “either-or” perspective and way of thinking, people should strive for both – the traditional and the modern – in order to benefit from the best in each.

Even though traditional virtues seem to have been forgotten in the last decades, a re-discovering of the importance of traditions and heritage seems to take place in contemporary South African society. Similar to many other countries, people of South Africa seem to be increasingly aware of the significance of cultural traditions, and a new “back-to-the-roots” way of thinking is noticeable. A growing number of people today renounce Western medicine due to its chemicals and synthetics, and appreciate the gentle healing powers of traditional medicine and the wisdom of traditional doctors and healers. Hopefully, this is the first step towards a new mode of life, offering room for both traditional as well as modern virtues.

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German Abstract

Südafrika blickt auf eine einzigartige Geschichte, geprägt von Kolonialismus und Apartheid, zurück. Die jahrzehntelange Unterdrückung der afrikanischen Bevölkerung hat im Jahre 1990 ein Ende gefunden, jedoch sind die sozioökonomischen Auswirkungen auch heute noch spürbar.

Durch Apartheidpolitik und Industrialisierung verloren die Angehörigen der Stammesvölker nicht nur ihren angeborenen Stolz und ihr natürliches Ehrgefühl, sondern auch ihre ursprüngliche Heimat und lang gepflegte Traditionen. Durch den Einfluss der westlichen Welt und die daraus folgende Modernisierung wurden traditionelle Werte wie Familie, Gemeinschaft, der Glaube an die Vorfahren, sowie die damit verbundenen Bräuche und Traditionen immer mehr in den Hintergrund gedrängt. Es scheint, als wäre modernes Denken vom Ego bestimmt.

Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es zu untersuchen, wie die Kultur der Stammesvölker im „neuen“ Südafrika nach dem Fall der Apartheid in ausgewählten Romanen der Gegenwart dargestellt wird. Passen sich Stammesvölker immer mehr an die moderne, von westlichen Einflüssen geprägte Welt an, lassen aber dabei ihre Bräuche und Glaubenssysteme, sowie ihre Werte und Tugenden in Vergessenheit geraten? Oder aber gelingt es, trotz der Zunahme an modernen Einflüssen, diese Bräuche und Traditionen und somit die Kultur aufrecht zu erhalten? Um dies zu erforschen, wurden Werke gewählt, die von Autoren unterschiedlicher ethnischer Herkunft geschrieben wurden. Zakes Mda beschreibt in seinem Roman *The Heart of Redness* (2000) die Kultur der Xhosa, in *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995) jedoch die Lebensumstände in Lesotho. Johnny Masilela, Autor der Novelle *We Shall Not Weep* (2002), stammt vom Ndebele Volk ab und Mandla Langa's *The Memory of Stones* (2000) erzählt vom Volk der Zulu. Die unterschiedliche ethnische Herkunft der Autoren sowie die weitgefächerten Themenbereiche ihrer Werke ermöglichen es, sowohl Gegensätze als auch Gemeinsamkeiten in sozialer Problematik durch die Geschichte Südafrikas aufzuzeigen.

Die Notwendigkeit der Stammesvölker, sich fortwährend mit der Dichotomie der Tradition und Moderne auseinander setzen zu müssen, ist in allen vier Romanen ersichtlich. In jedem der Romane stellt sich die Frage, welcher Weg zum Modernismus der richtige ist, und welchen Preis man zu zahlen bereit ist.

Schlüsselkonzepte beinhalten Identitätskonstruktion, den Zwiespalt zwischen ländlichem und städtischem Leben, veränderte Geschlechterrollen, soziale und familiäre Strukturen, sowie die Dichotomie westlicher Wissenschaft und indigenem, traditionellem Wissen. Es wird versucht, der Darstellung indigener Kulturen in zeitgenössischen Romanen nachzugehen, sowie diese mit einem Blick auf Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und eine mögliche Zukunft zu analysieren.

Der Wandel zum „neuen“ Südafrika ist noch nicht vollständig vollzogen, und der Prozess der Selbstfindung des Landes dauert an. Inwiefern es den indigenen Stammesvölkern gelingen wird, sich im neuen Südafrika einzugliedern und trotz allem ihren Bräuchen und Traditionen treu zu bleiben, diese Frage kann in vollständigem Maße nur durch Zeit beantwortet werden.

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