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Sophia Oester

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1. Introduction

This thesis explores the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in three selected contemporary South African novels, namely Jann Turner's *Southern Cross*, Carel van der Merwe's *No Man's Land* and Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust*. To provide context, an overview of the South African Truth Commission will be given, briefly exploring the historical developments in South Africa leading to its formation, and explaining its purpose and way of proceeding as well as the outcomes achieved and common points of criticism. Moreover, the Commission's understanding of truth as well as the connection between the emphasis that it placed on testimony and its becoming a popular motive in narratives, especially novels after the conclusion of its public hearings will be dealt with in section 3.

The greater part of my work will be devoted to the analysis of the three novels by reference to the research questions listed in section 4, investigating the significance of the TRC in each of them, as well as identifying references and parallels drawn to the real-life Commission and/or its persona. Furthermore, the metaphors and comparisons used to describe the Commission, as well as the attitudes towards it will be examined and the aspects of the Commission considered most significant in the individual works explored. Finally, I will analyze the way in which these novels contribute to the wider discourse on truth and justice that evolved around the TRC according to the criteria which have been established by Black and Gready, determining which of them apply to these works.

While the novels are expected to act as a comment on the TRC, pointing out its weaknesses and crediting its achievements, it is the goal of this inquiry to find out in what way and in regard to which particulars they do so.

2. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

2.1 Background: The transition from apartheid to majority rule

The policy of apartheid, which literally means “separateness” or “apartness”, was officially introduced in South Africa in 1948 by the National Party government and remained in place until 1994, when the first democratic elections, in which South Africans of all colours were allowed to vote, took place (Clark and Worger, 3). It is based on the idea that people should be divided according to race in every aspect of daily life, favouring Whites and discriminating against Blacks (3).

The basis for this system was laid by the colonisation of South Africa by the Dutch and the British which started in 1652 with the Dutch East India Company building an outpost at the Cape of Good Hope in order to have a place for resupplying their ships sailing to Asia (11; Worden, vii; Butler, 10). Moreover, the colonisation of the Cape area served the goal of “optimising” the slave trade. However, when the local Khoi population refused to accept the bad terms offered to them in trade for supplies, their land was confiscated by the company and given to European settlers, who relied heavily on slave labour (Clark and Worger, 11). From 1659 onwards, many slaves were imported to South Africa, mainly from other African countries, while at the same time Dutch settlers, as well as German and French Huguenots, arrived (12). With white men outnumbering white women by far, many mixed race children were born, which were often not accepted in white society. A parallel “coloured” society therefore developed, and along with it a new Creole language, based on Dutch but also influenced by Malay and Portuguese, which became the basis for Afrikaans (12). The fact that mixed race children were not welcome in white society shows that at that time public standing and basic rights were already linked to race (12). When the British took the Cape in 1795, they tried to prevent Dutch settlers from expanding into African farmer's land by establishing small British farms along the frontiers, in order to avoid costly border wars (12). However, these British settlers also soon began to drive their African neighbours off their land, in order to make their farms more profitable (12). Since the profitability of the farms run by Europeans was based on slave labour, the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and of slavery throughout the British empire in 1830 was a heavy blow for most European settlers in South Africa (Clark and Worger, 12; Butler, 8). Not only did exploitation of Blacks and discrimination against them remain firmly in place (Clark and Worger, 3), but about 20 per cent of the Boers

(the Dutch word for farmer) decided to leave the British territory and seek out new lands in the North and East, where they could still practice slavery. This became known as the “Great Trek” (13), although Butler claims that it was rather a “series of episodic migrations” that took place in the late 1830s (Butler, 8). However, the “Vortrekkers” succeeded in driving the African population off their land and in establishing the independent states of Transvaal, Transorangia and Natalia Republic (13) as well as in developing their own culture and society separate from their European motherlands, identifying “British Imperialism and African treachery” as the main threats to their independence (13).

The discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886 had a huge impact on the economic and political structures in South Africa, which for the first time experienced the investment of foreign capital and large scale immigration (Clark and Worger, 14; Butler, 12). Since the mines required a huge workforce of cheap labourers in order to be profitable, the British conquered the remaining African independent states in the 1870s and 1880s and subjected African workers in the newly founded industrial cities to harsh and discriminating laws, such as the pass laws, established in 1872, which decreed, among other things, that workers had to leave behind their wives and children in the rural areas (Clark and Worger, 14). Since the British generally disposed of more capital than the Boers and were better connected with European investors, they owned most of the mines and therefore profited most from the newly found wealth. However, the Boers tried to make money of the precious materials found in their territory by imposing high taxes, which ultimately led to the South African Anglo-Boer war that lasted from 1899 to 1902 (15) and, mainly due to a “scorched earth” policy adopted by the British, cost many lives of civilians (Clark and Worger, 16; Butler, 12). Although the Boers were victorious in the first months of fighting, the British eventually gained the victory, after spending 20 times as much as the expected costs, burning down 30 000 Boer farms and incarcerating more than 200 000 people, Boer men, women and children as well as Africans (Clark and Worger, 15; Tutu, 31). However, the Boer leaders refused to sign a peace agreement until the British would promise them compensation for the destroyed property as well as a certain degree of self government, including the decision about African's right to vote (Clark and Worger, 16). The peace agreement was signed in the context of both, Boers and British, increasingly dreading a “Native uprising” (16) and their constant concern to keep labour as cheap as possible (17). As a consequence of their perpetual efforts to force Africans to enter the labour market by making it impossible for them to earn their livelihoods through agriculture (Butler, 13), many political associations were formed by Africans, Indians and

Coloureds in the early 1900s, some of them connected with activists against British race policies in other countries (Clark and Worger, 18). At the same time, in May 1910, Afrikaners and British jointly established the Union of South Africa, realising that both groups could make profit by exploiting the African workers and had a shared interest in segregation and white supremacy (Clark and Worger, 20; Butler, 13). From 1910 on, strict segregation laws were put in place which reserved more skilled, higher paid jobs for Whites, forbade Africans to live in the cities without a pass that proved they were employed there and, with the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924, forbade them to organise themselves into unions (Clark and Worger, 21). As a reaction to this strict segregation policy, a group of educated Africans formed the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) in 1912, which in 1923 was renamed the African National Congress (ANC). Its goal was to achieve equal treatment for all South Africans, regardless of their colour (23) through a dialogue with the British (24). The British, however, were reluctant to get involved in South Africa's domestic affairs (24). The SANNC together with trade unions such as the ICU (Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union) got involved in organizing strikes and protests which, although forcefully repressed by the government, did not fail to unsettle South Africa's white population (25), which by the end of the 20th century only accounted for about 10 per cent of the total population, albeit controlling most of the countries resources (21). In December 1935 the All-Africa Convention (AAC) was founded in Bloemfontein in order to unite the efforts and members of almost all African organisations in order to fight against segregation laws.

Simultaneously, Afrikanerdom found itself more and more on the rise, with the National Party gaining the majority of Afrikaners' votes in 1915 and the foundation of the Broederbond, devoted to promoting Afrikaner culture in 1918 (Clark and Worger, 27). Segregationist legislation became even stricter and Afrikaner ethnic organisations were thriving and expanding. Many Afrikaners were admirers of Hitler and established youth organisations similar to the German "Hitlerjugend" (29). One of them, the Broederbond's scout group called the Voortrekkers, consciously built on the memory of the Great Trek, which was celebrated by a huge centennial celebration in 1938, with great emotional and unifying effect (30). The term "apartheid", as well as the theories behind it, emerged in the 1930ies and was widely used by Afrikaner politicians fighting for voters among Afrikaans-speaking workers, who "felt exploited by British capitalists on one side and threatened by cheaper black workers on the other" (Clark and Worger, 4), and flourished when the United and the National Party competed for votes during the 1948 elections (Clark and Worger, 4, Butler, 15). During the

1950s, many African and Asian countries, most of which had recently gained independency, severely criticised apartheid in South Africa, appealing to the United Nations to take action against it (Clark and Worger, 4). In 1966, after apartheid rule had become increasingly brutal, the General Assembly of the United Nations finally labelled it a “crime against humanity” (5). By this time numerous police shootings at demonstrators like, for example, the one in Sharpeville in 1960, where 61 demonstrators were shot to death, had occurred and the ANC and PAC (Pan African Congress) had both been banned (Clark and Worger, xi). However, it still took until the 1980s for these facts to finally hit the headlines of international media, by which time the country was already in a state similar to a civil war (5). After the government had repeatedly tried to kill leaders of the ANC and other activists (89) they joined together in their efforts to “Make apartheid unworkable!” and to “Make the country ungovernable!” (90) by attacking places where supporters of the apartheid state were known to meet (police stations, beer halls and homes of councillors) as well as organising boycotts and strikes (90; Butler, 23) often severely punishing those who refused to participate (Clark and Worger, 91). The number of days lost in strike multiplied every year between 1983 and 1987 (91; 96). As a consequence of this general unrest, ANC leader Nelson Mandela, who had gone underground in 1961 and been arrested for “inciting unrest” in 1962 (Clark and Worger, xi) was offered release from prison, on the condition that the ANC would agree to “unconditionally reject violence as a political instrument” (91). He refused, however, explaining that the life under apartheid offered to him could not be called freedom (92). The unrest increased further, as did police killings from less than 100 in 1948 to more than 500 in 1985 (94). When police fired at a funeral procession in Uitenhage in March 1985 and killed 21 people (Thornton, 217), the local population, as a reaction to the violence, invented “necklacing”, killing a person by placing a tyre around their neck and setting it on fire. The councillor they “necklaced” that day was the first of over 60 victims who died this way in the same year (Clark and Worger, 92). In July 1985 the state of emergency was declared in 36 magisterial districts, authorising the police to arrest and detain people without warrants, raising formal charges or even notifying relatives (93). Along with it came stricter censorship and increased presence of troops and police in townships (93), for which African men, often unemployed and uneducated, were employed as so called “kitskonstables” by the police in order to support their staff. Since they usually received little training and often were not held accountable by their superiors, many victims suffered under their cruelty (94). Generally, police killings, violence and torture of detainees increased dramatically, eventually affecting the economy when international attention caused investors to withdraw their money (94). In this context,

President Botha repealed the pass laws and Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act in 1986 and agreed to meetings with Nelson Mandela, raising the hopes of anti-apartheid activists, until he ordered the security forces to close in on them and extended the state of emergency to the whole country (95).

The ANC and trade unions reacted by joining forces and intensifying their efforts to end apartheid, bombing places where security forces gathered, organising rent strikes and, since marches and demonstrations had been forbidden, gathering by the 10 000s at funerals, often proudly displaying the ANC and UDF banners, even though they were regularly shot at and tear gassed by the police (96). The state responded by establishing the Civilian Co-operative Bureau in 1987, which was put in charge of eliminating all enemies of the state (98), and banning all anti-apartheid organisations. It is estimated that in 1987 30 000 people were under arrest for “unrest related incidents” (96), most of whom were subjected to torture (93). Moreover, the state secretly supported Inkatha, which was later identified as a “dominant perpetrator group in committing human rights violations” by the TRC (TRC Report Vol. 2, 404). They were joined, among others by Eugene de Kock (99), the notorious commander of Vlakplaas established in 1979, which had quickly become a place of assassination, torture and abduction (93). The grave economic problems, a result of the boycott and the decrease in the price of gold, which caused severe inflation, were one of the main reasons why the government finally started negotiations with the ANC in 1989 (102). When President Botha suffered a stroke in the same year, de Klerk became the president and opened parliament in 1990 by un-banning 31 anti-apartheid organisations, among them the ANC and PAC, and intensifying negotiation. On February 11th, Nelson Mandela was released from prison, after 10 000 days in captivity, calling supporters to intensify the struggle for universal suffrage in a rousing speech delivered in Cape Town (103). However, government supported violence still continued and in 1992 the ANC suspended negotiations with de Klerk, accusing him of promoting shallow democracy while really aiming to prevent majority rule (Clark and Worger, 106; Butler, 25). Negotiations were resumed in September, when de Klerk promised that national elections in which all South Africans, Black and White alike, would be allowed to vote, would be held no later than 1994 (Clark and Worger, 107). At the same time, the government started to sell state enterprises off to White entrepreneurs in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of a black majority government. Moreover, a systematic destruction of “state sensitive files” was arranged in order to purge the memory of apartheid (107).

Negotiations were in full swing in 1993 and 1994, though frequently opposed and disrupted by Inkatha and PAC operations as well as right wing whites such as the “Afrikaaner Weerstandsbeweging” (108). However, an interim constitution was agreed upon in September 1993 (108; Butler, 25) and the first general elections were finally held on 26th April 1994 and the following three days (Clark and Worger, 109). 91 per cent of registered voters participated in these elections, which were won by the ANC (62.6 %), with the National Party coming second (20.4 %) and Inkatha with 10.5 per cent in the third place. Right wing parties and the PAC both gained less than five per cent of the votes – not enough for representation in government (110; Butler, 108). The National Assembly unanimously elected Nelson Mandela as president on the 9th May 1994, after 14 000 people had been killed between 1990 and 1994 in politics related occurrences.

2.2 Purpose

The proposal to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in order to deal with the violence and human rights violations committed in the past was put forward by the ANC and the base for it was created by the final clause of the Interim Constitution of 1993, as well as by the National Unity and Reconciliation Act, passed in Parliament in 1995 (TRC Website). Wilson (15) points out, that the expectations towards the Commission were a “potent mixture” of “truth-telling, healing, nation-building [and] history writing”. Sanders, building on Hayner, describes a truth commission as “a quasi-judicial body designed to establish the truth about an era of political wrong in ways that promote peace, democracy, and a culture of human rights in the country concerned” (Sanders, 2).

After their first use in the 1970s in Africa, truth commissions were installed more and more frequently throughout the 1980s, their use peaking in the 1990s and declining only little in the 2000s (Black, 51). Truth commissions are installed after grave human rights abuses in the course of political conflicts and are usually founded as the result of political compromise (Sanders, 2), that is, when there is no clear winning and defeated side and the goal is to enable both sides to live together, even after the atrocities that have been committed. They can either serve as an alternative to criminal trials of perpetrators or be set up as a complement to such trials (Sanders 2). Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the chair of the TRC, therefore called the Truth Commission “a third way” besides “Nuremberg or national amnesia” (Tutu, 10). Hayner (24)

lists the following as basic aims for installing any truth commission, which were also highly relevant for the South African TRC: to discover, clarify, and formally acknowledge past abuses; to respond to specific needs of victims; to contribute to justice and accountability; to outline institutional responsibility and recommend reforms; and to promote reconciliation and reduce conflict over the past.

She points out that fact-finding is crucial in order “to establish an accurate record of a country's past, clarify uncertain events and lift the lid of silence and denial from a contentious and painful period of history.” (Hayner, 24-25). In the South African context this meant to “establish as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of the gross violations of human rights” (Graham, 11) committed during the era of apartheid and the struggle against it in the years of 1960 to 1994. As in many cases when a truth commission is established the victims are already painfully aware of the past abuses, the Commission does not always find out a lot of new truth but rather denies the unharmed part of the population the possibility of continued denial of the past (Hayner, 25). Though in most cases, due to their great number, it is not possible to investigate in detail all the testimonies given by victims (26), they are usually recorded and analysed for general patterns, which are presented together with some key cases that are explored in full. Therefore, the truth contained in victims’ testimonies does not only become known (which it often has been, unofficially, before) but also officially acknowledged in a context where “official denial has been [...] pervasive” (Hayner, 27). This may not only have a healing effect on the victimised population, but will also affect the state narrative, which will, for example, be taught in schools. Additionally, it has been argued, that it is the duty of the state to expose and to publish the truth about human rights violation according to international law and human rights (30-31).

Secondly, Hayner points out that a truth commission, in contrast to an ordinary judicial trial, is usually concerned with the needs and interests of the victims. In order to grant them a public voice, much more time is given to testimonies than in traditional courts and there is usually no cross-examination. Truth commissions may offer a reparation programme, but they can also be of help in very practical matters as for example, issuing death certificates for people who have been disappeared, which might enable their families to access their bank accounts and process their wills (Hayner, 28).

Thirdly, Hayner claims that truth commissions, rather than necessarily replacing justice in court, can complement it by helping to identify perpetrators. Trials or other consequences,

such as their removal from high positions might follow (29). Furthermore, as an independent body, truth commissions can help to identify institutional responsibilities and reveal structures that need to be changed in order to prevent past abuses from recurring (29). Finally, the promotion of reconciliation and the reducing of tensions that result from past violence are listed as a reason for installing truth commissions. Although Hayner points out that

[T]he goal of reconciliation has been so closely associated with some past truth commissions that many casual observers assume that reconciliation is an integral, or even primary, purpose of creating a truth commission, which is not always true (30),

she argues that truth finding is a prerequisite for forgiveness and reconciliation, since victims can hardly be asked to forgive without knowing whom and what (30). Moreover, she claims that direct confrontation of the abuses of the past decrease the likelihood of old conflicts re-emerging and exploding in violence or future political conflicts (30). Black likewise points out that “scripts of healing, of transformative disclosure, and of national homecoming” have often been mentioned in relation to the purposes and goals of truth commissions (Black, 50).

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission has – as it is already indicated in its title – maybe made the most explicit claim in the history of truth commissions to not only investigating the human rights violations of the past but also serve the goal of reconciliation and forgiveness, enabling the groups of victims and perpetrators to continue living together relatively peacefully in the same country. With its strong focus on reconciliation and forgiveness, it has since served as a model for many later truth commissions (Black, 50), even though it has also been severely criticised for exactly this reason (cf. 2.e).

Another point that set it apart from other similar institutions was that it made “full disclosure” of the crimes committed a prerequisite for amnesty being granted to perpetrators, thereby linking it to the “truth-seeking process” (Hayner, 41). Moreover, instead of announcing a general amnesty for all politically motivated crimes, as other truth commissions have done (Hayner, 97f) every perpetrator had to apply for amnesty individually to the TRC (Sanders, 2; Chapman and van der Merwe, 10-11).

2.3 Way of proceeding

The TRC consisted of 17 men and women, appointed by President Nelson Mandela in December 1995 after “a public nomination and selection process” (Hayner, 41). With

Archbishop Desmond Tutu as chair, it fully began its work in April 1996, which apart from investigating and holding hearings included running a witness-protection programme (41). The venture was granted 300 members of staff, four offices and a budget of 18 million dollars a year for two-and-a-half years with the goal of establishing “as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of the gross violations of human rights” (Graham, 11) in the time period from 1960 to 1994. The South African TRC was, therefore, granted more time, staff and resources than any other truth commission before (Chapman and van der Merwe, 241).

There were several reasons why the South African TRC was unique in the history of truth commission and it has pioneered many courses of action that have been taken on by other truth commissions since. One of these points was the fact that many of the hearings were held publicly, which rarely occurred in the course of previous truth commissions. This meant that they also received massive attention from the media with four hours of hearings being broadcasted live on national radio each day and the instalment of the Sunday evening television show Truth Commission Special Report (Hayner, 42). Out of the 21 000 victims that submitted their testimonies to the TRC, 2 000 appeared in public hearings (Chapman and van der Merwe, 10; Hayner 2002:42; Sanders 2007:4), the transcripts of which are available to the public on the TRC website¹.

There were three types of hearings, which were very different in nature:

A Human Rights Violations Commission heard stories from survivors and families of victims, while perpetrators were dealt with in Amnesty hearings and special hearings were installed in order to investigate the role of different institutions in society in the abusive practices of the past. While the procedures at victims’ hearings were aimed at creating a “decidedly non-judicial” (Graham, 11) atmosphere and a safe place, where the individual testimonies about the past could be told, acknowledged and made part of the official record (Graham, 11), amnesty hearings were usually public (Sanders, 3) and perpetrators could be cross-examined by the commission as well as victims or the legal councils representing them or their families (Hayner, 43). In Human Rights Violation Hearings, the commission refrained from cross-examining the witnesses. Special hearings dealt with the religious and legal communities, youth, women, business and labour, the health sector, the media, prisons and the armed forces, compulsory military service, political party policies and the use of chemical and

¹ <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/> (last access: 3rd April, 2014)

biological weapons (Hayner, 42), in order to investigate how they, as different institutions and sectors of society, had been involved with the suppressive system of apartheid. The TRC gave recommendations for changes and restructuring in several of these areas.

Another way in which the South African TRC was innovative was that it was given the power of granting amnesty to individuals for crimes that had been committed for political motives in the period from 1960 and April 1994 (Hayner, 43; Sanders, 2). While neither remorse nor an apology were a prerequisite for amnesty, perpetrators had to give full disclosure of the crimes committed (Hayner, 43; Sanders, 2), which linked the granting of amnesty to the fact-finding function of the Commission. Perpetrators who did not apply for amnesty before the deadline could be sued and brought to trial in an ordinary judicial court. In order to give an incentive for perpetrators to apply for amnesty, this deadline was set before the Commission's work was scheduled to end, so that by not applying they would run the risk of being named in a later hearing (Hayner, 43). For the same reason, not all of the amnesty hearings were held publicly, so as to leave it unclear who had already been accused in front of the Commission (43). However, many high-ranking perpetrators seemed to take the risk of later prosecution, rather than apply for amnesty (43).

Moreover, the TRC stands out among truth commissions through its distinct religious character. With Archbishop Tutu being the chair, a strong focus on reconciliation and forgiveness was to be expected and did leave a strong imprint on the work of the South African TRC, which operated under the banner “Truth – The Road to Reconciliation“. This clearly indicates that the final aim of the venture was national reconciliation, while revealing the truth was only seen as a way to reach this goal, but not as the goal itself. It might be due to this focus on reconciliation, that the TRC, reacting to often unforeseen demands made by victims, made several changes to its planned course of action (Sanders, 4). One example for this is the performance of exhumations after many victims demanded the right to at least lay their loved one's bones to rest and mourn their loss according to their traditions and customs, which was often impossible without having retrieved the body (Sanders, 10).

Finally, the TRC is one of few truth commissions that was repeatedly challenged in court, both in regard to its decisions as well as its legitimacy, since it was argued that it was unconstitutional (Hayner, 44). Moreover, several of its verdicts were contested and, in the days before the release of its final report in October 1998, two more charges were raised against the Commission, one of them by ex-president F.W. de Klerk, who meant to prevent

the mentioning of his name in the report, the other by the ANC who was concerned about the light this report might cast on its past actions (44). Eventually, however, the court ruled in favour of the commission and the report was released.

2.4 Outcomes and consequences

The most visible and tangible outcome the TRC produced was its final report, the first five volumes of which were presented to President Mandela in 1998 and the remaining two to President Thabo Mbeki in 2003. While truth commissions have made it their task to widely distribute low cost shortened versions of their report among the population, thereby increasing its influence on the people (Hayner, 237), the TRC did not decide to do so. Therefore, due to the enormous size of the Report as well as its costs, which were simply too high for most South Africans, and its style, it mainly appealed to academics, rather than the common man in the street for whom a simplified and compact version would have been more helpful (Chapman and van der Merwe, 253; 299).

The thousands of pages do not only include the Commission's findings about human rights abuses and structural injustice during the time of apartheid, but also several recommendations to the new government. However, it soon became apparent, that the government could or would not follow all these recommendations, which is why many of them remained just that: well meant suggestions and good ideas, for which there was no funding available and which were therefore never realised, or only in debilitated form (Chapman and van der Merwe, 281-282). This reluctance to implement the recommendations might have partly been founded in the fact that many of them were not thoroughly investigated (282).

One example, in which this was the case, is the Reparations programme. According to the Commission's recommendation, the government supported almost 17 000 South Africans with "urgent interim reparations" by the end of 2001 (Sanders, 117). However, in volume 5 of its report of 1998, the Commission had furthermore suggested that individual victims be paid up to 23 023 Rand per year over the course of six years (TRC Report 5, 184-186). They reaffirmed that suggestion in volume 6 (97), which was released in 2003. It acknowledged that "these measures can never bring back the dead, nor adequately compensate for pain and suffering" but also claimed that "they can and must improve the quality of life of the victims of human rights violations and/or their dependants" (TRC Report 5, 175). The concept they

followed was therefore one of acknowledgement and relief (Sanders, 117). The report suggested a threefold system of calculating the amount paid to a victim:

An amount to acknowledge the suffering caused by the gross violation that took place, an amount to enable access to services and facilities and an amount to subsidise daily living costs, based on socio-economic circumstances (TRC Report 5, 184).

The first amount should make up 50 per cent of the grant, while the two others should account for 25 per cent each (185). However, the government under President Thebo Mbeki in 2003 decided on a one-off payment of 30 000 rand to every victim, plus their support of regular housing, education and medical programmes, which had also been recommended by the TRC. Many victims therefore felt they had been treated unfairly and their suffering been taken lightly by the government.

Another area where the Commission had to deliver concrete results were the amnesty hearings, which took longer than expected but were finally concluded in 2003, with 1 167 out of 7 116 applicants being granted amnesty and 5 143 applications denied on formal, administrative grounds before holding hearings, since they related to criminal offences that did not fall into the TRC's area of responsibility (Chapman and van der Merwe, 94; 250). Though the amnesty process has been criticised by many (cf. section 2.5), it was, after all, a way to deal with the crimes of the past and the individual perpetrators who committed them.

Whether the TRC managed to achieve its less tangible aims such as promoting reconciliation, restoring the national narrative or diminishing the danger of future outbreaks of violence is harder to assess. Shane Graham argues that while the TRC failed to reach its goal of restoring “human and civil dignity” it did achieve, or at least contribute to, the “restoration of the narrative” (Graham, 12). Sanders (12) points out that this might be due to the fact that “its hearings conveyed how the country's history of wrong was understood by its people and how they envisaged that wrong being made good.” However, unsurprisingly, the TRC did not achieve all of its goals and failed in several areas, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.5 Critique

The TRC has been subjected to criticism on many different grounds as well as from different sides. This might be due to the fact that truth commissions generally raise very high hopes and expectations, which they are often unable to fulfil and, therefore, often leave behind and aftertaste of disappointment (Hayner, 8). Although some of the expectations might have been

unrealistic from the beginning, they were encouraged by several of the TRC's actions such as, for example, the question that was posed to most victims, whether they would like to meet with their perpetrator. This raised hopes that the TRC would facilitate such meetings, which in most cases was impossible, not only because of the lack of organisational structures to facilitate this, but also because in most cases the perpetrator was not known to the TRC. One reason for this raising of hopes might be the TRC's failure to "acknowledge its own limitations" (Chapman and van der Merwe, 275). In communication with the public, it did not only suggest that it would be able to complete the task assigned in a full and satisfactory manner, but sometimes even raised hopes that it could go beyond that task (275).

Many survivors were disappointed by how little truth was laid bare by the TRC's work. The Investigation Unit, whose responsibility it was to analyse the data obtained from victims' statements and to research the facts related to the applications for amnesty, was chronically understaffed and overwhelmed by its workload (Chapman and van der Merwe, 241). Furthermore, it only fully started its work in mid 1996 and was closed just after the start of the amnesty hearings in 1998 (241), which meant that it was only able to investigate a few key cases and there was little research into whether the perpetrators really told the truth and whether their disclosure of facts was really as full as they claimed it to be. The amnesty hearings were, therefore, not the valuable source of information many had hoped they would be (276) and many details, especially about the bigger structures underlying the apartheid state, such as the lines of command, were never revealed (276). Additionally, the security forces and other offices of state had systematically destroyed files and information in preparation of the transition so that the TRC in many cases had little documentation to draw on (247). Political parties were likewise reluctant to offer support and cooperation to the TRC, especially when it came to revealing the truth about the past of their members (246). Finally, even the information that was obtained, for example through the victims' hearings and statements, was never fed into a system that allowed to link data from the victims' and the amnesty hearings (251). The connection between the two was only made in a few prominent cases.

Another point of criticism was the TRC's strong focus on reconciliation and forgiveness, which, is often argued, impeded administering justice and sometimes even the full investigation and extraction of the truth (Chapman and van der Merwe, 45; 251-252). The reason for this assumption is, among others, the TRC's reluctance to exercise its legal rights in

some key high-profile cases when it refrained from subpoenaing prominent witnesses for fear of the conflicts it might cause to break out, even if it might have proven a possibility to obtain additional data. Furthermore, for fear of causing outbreaks of violence, the TRC's community hearings were very much focused on the past and the injustices done then and often did not sufficiently acknowledge the fact that the people involved in these conflicts were still living together side by side day by day (Chapman and van der Merwe, 258). The strong focus on the past that did not consider the current injustices and conflicts, which were often far more pressing for people, and the fact that the TRC could not or was reluctant to play an active long term role in restoring communities, made many feel that the TRC was letting them down where they were most desperately in need of help (257f).

Moreover, many felt that the model of forgiveness promoted by the TRC was too Christian, upholding unconditional forgiveness, even for perpetrators who did not regret their deeds or, which was the case in probably 90 per cent of the cases, were not known (Chapman and van der Merwe, 256). Archbishop Tutu, for example, argued that it will be the victims, who will benefit most from forgiving, as it is a step towards being freed from the past wrong afflicted on them (Tutu, 34; 127). Linking forgiveness with the African concept of “ubuntu” he argued that, since human beings are so interconnected, the evil that an individual afflicts on or wishes to another person, will most of all dehumanise themselves (34-35). However, many victims felt these ideals demanded too much of them, even though they claimed they would be able to forgive if the perpetrators would fulfil certain conditions – for example acknowledging their fault, apologising for the wrong done or showing regret and willingness to change. In reality, very few perpetrators fulfilled these conditions and many victims felt that it would have been the TRC's role to make them do this, for example by organising the amnesty proceedings in a different way that would force more perpetrators to apply and give a full account of their actions, but that the Commission had failed in doing so (Chapman and van der Merwe, 256). Apart from being “too Christian” for many, the TRC's understanding of reconciliation was simply too vague for many others (254; 260), who felt it was never clearly articulated whom they were being prompted to reconcile with. The fact that reconciliation was hardly mentioned in connection with race might have contributed to this confusion and obscurity (260).

Another aspect that is sometimes criticised was the nature of the victims’ hearings which was aimed at giving victims a voice, restoring dignity and promoting psychological healing. It has

been argued, however, that since the TRC had a rather closed definition of human rights violations and not everybody who had suffered severely under apartheid fell into one of the Commission's categories. However, even of those who fell into these categories about 21 000 (Wilson, 21; Hayner, 42) submitted their statements to the TRC and out of these, for practical reasons, only 2000 were given the possibility to testify publicly (Hayner, 42; Chapman and van der Merwe, 10; 25). While some critics have pointed out that the 2 000 victims giving testimony at the public hearings were not chosen in a manner that represented the parts of the population that had suffered most under apartheid, and that it might have given the impression that only the 20 000 recognised victims had truly suffered, ignoring the oppressed masses of Blacks (273), most admit, that it is a simply impossible demand that a truth commission should hear everybody, especially in a country where the larger part of the population had suffered severely under apartheid. Still, it is true that some survivors, especially those that testified during the amnesty hearings, went away rather disillusioned and frustrated than satisfied (Chapman and van der Merwe, 276). Many more felt that although victims' hearings were successful at giving people a voice, this voice and the demands that it made were often ignored afterwards (136, 137). However, there is general agreement about the fact that the victims' hearings and the media coverage they received had an educational effect on South Africans and made it very difficult for any group to claim that the abuses under apartheid had not occurred or could easily be justified (279).

Another point of criticism was the amnesty process, which also fell under the TRC's responsibility and which was controversial from the beginning. As the South African TRC is the only truth commission in history that has ever been given the power to grant or reject amnesty (Hayner, 98), this is not surprising. While the granting of amnesty is sometimes viewed as not conforming to international human rights legislation (Chapman and van der Merwe, 266), in South Africa it was mostly accepted as a "necessary evil" (266) with the goal to establish democracy and trade truth for amnesty and the hope that the amnesty hearings would prove an important source of information (250). When they did not, or only in few cases, the disappointment was great and grew even greater in the face of the obvious "lack of appetite for prosecution" where no amnesty had been granted or the perpetrator had not applied (267). Even though the TRC handed over documentation and names to the state prosecutor, it did not actively promote prosecution of perpetrators, as this was seen as threatening the great goal of reconciliation (267).

It may seem that the main beneficiaries of the amnesty process were members of the liberation forces, who had already been tried under the apartheid state and the majority of whom was already in jail, hoping that the amnesty process might help them to be released prematurely. Overall, between 53 and 61 per cent of applications came from individuals associated with the ANC, 18 to 23 per cent from the state security force members, 8 per cent from PAC associates and 7 per cent were aligned with the Inkatha Freedom Party (Carnita Ernest quoted in Chapman and van der Merwe, 268). Many of the members of the liberation forces, whose human rights violations had already been prosecuted by the apartheid state and who were later denied amnesty by the TRC, felt that they were treated unjustly, compared to members of the state forces who often did not apply for amnesty and who were never prosecuted, neither by the apartheid state at the time, nor later by the TRC (Chapman and van der Merwe, 268). The vast majority of applicants for amnesty were, therefore, Blacks (251), while many of the high rank white officials under apartheid took the risk of not applying for amnesty and never had to appear before the Commission or a court. This also, to a certain degree, defied the concept of amnesty as a tool of truth-seeking (293).

3. Testimony, Truth and the Novel

3.1 The TRC's understanding of Truth

The TRC Report (Vol 1, 110-114) identified four different kinds of truth relevant for the Commission's work:

1. Factual or forensic truth: The familiar legal or scientific notion of bringing to light factual, corroborated evidence (111) about "particular incidents and in respect of specific people" as well as concerning "context, causes and patterns of violations" (111).
2. Personal or narrative truth: means the individual truths of victims and perpetrators alike and aimed at ensuring "that the truth about the past included the validation of the individual subjective experiences of people who had previously been silenced or voiceless" (112).
3. Social or 'dialogue' truth is, in the words of Albie Sachs, defined as "the truth of experience that is established through interaction, discussion and debate" (113),

valuing transparency and participation and affirming the dignity of human beings (113-114).

4. Healing and restorative truth: was mentioned as “the kind of truth that places facts and what they mean within the context of human relationships both amongst citizens and between the state and its citizens” (114) and as “a truth that would contribute to the reparation of the damage inflicted in the past and to the prevention of the recurrence of serious abuses in the future”. For the restoration of the dignity of victims, acknowledgement plays an important part.

Although this definition of “rainbow truths” (Wilson, 36; Chapman and van der Merwe, 242) have often been read as a sign of problematic inconsistency in the TRC’s approach to truth finding and have therefore subjected the commission to a substantial amount of criticism (cf. e.g. Wilson, 36; Chapman and van der Merwe, 242-244), without doubt the “public education function” of truth-telling happening in a public space “was a significant accomplishment” (Chapman and van der Mewe, 242). Hayner (25) even proposes that “the commission’s most important contribution” might have been “to remove the possibility of continued denial” (cf. Mda, 124), which was mainly due to their focus on narrative truth. She also argues, that it may have a “cathartic or healing effect” (Hayner, 28), which is supported by Wilson (37), who, furthermore, lists “affirming dignity” and “nation-building” as aims that can be achieved through narrative truth, even though he criticises that it is not seen as an end to itself or given “any epistemological standing” (37) in the TRC Report, but is instead only viewed as means to an end. However, the Report does explicitly state that the stories people told before the TRC “provided unique insights into the pain of South Africa’s past” (TRC Report, Vol. 1, 112) and that

[t]he transcripts of the hearings, individual statements, a mountain of press clippings and video material are all part of an invaluable record which the Commission handed over to the National Archives for public access. This record will form a part of the national memory for generations yet to come. (Vol 1, 113)

It therefore does acknowledge testimonies as a source of truth which is worth being noted and recorded, regardless of the consequences, even if Wilson is right in observing that, in the report, “the healing potential of telling stories” (Vol 1, 112) and its contribution to the process of reconciliation are emphasised several times, thereby promoting healing and reconciliation as the real, underlying aim to be achieved by means of narrative truth.

Although the Commission officially operated with these four kinds of truth, they were only written 18 months into the process (Chapman and van der Merwe, 242) and according to Chapman and van der Merwe (244) most of the staff's approach to truth was a narrative or historical one. Factual truth was mainly revealed and worked with in relation to micro-truth, that is in regard to individual cases, events and persons, rather than in exposing the overall structures and patterns of South Africa's apartheid past (243). Generally, it can be said that the TRC defined truth as factual or forensic truth in Amnesty hearings (Graham 2003, 12), which also included investigation and cross examination, and narrative truth in Human Rights Violations Hearings, in which victims publicly gave their testimonies. However, since the report does not reveal which kind of truth should be worked with in what context or should account for what portion of the TRC's work, it remained somewhat unclear, how they were meant to relate to each other (Wilson, 37). Graham (2003, 11) also criticises that the Commission's emphasis on "present[ing] multiple perspectives and versions" distracted from their unpleasant but necessary task to make "determinations of guilt and responsibility".

3.2 The role of testimony in the proceedings of the TRC

The TRC saw itself as an instrument for national healing, bringing about national reconciliation through exposure of truth:

[R]econciliation depends on forgiveness and that forgiveness can only take place if gross violations of human rights are fully disclosed. What is therefore envisaged is reconciliation through a process of national healing. (TRC CD-rom 1998: Notes to the Bill 1995:1, quoted in Ross, 13)

However, the link between truth and reconciliation was considered self evident (Ross, 12) and rarely explained even though it already became apparent in the Commission's slogan: "Truth – the Road to Reconciliation". A much quoted phrase was "The truth will set you free." from the Gospel of St John (8: 32) but explicit explanations by the commission itself as to how this causal relationship should work are hard to come by.

However, Ross identifies three different models that were widely used in order to describe the Commission's "healing intervention" through truth in the South African context (12): The first uses the metaphor of South Africa as a wounded body that has its festering, unhealed wounds opened and cleansed by truth telling, permitting the outset of a healing process. The

second model likens South African society to a psyche, whose memories and experiences of the past should become the subject of “analysis” in order to trigger a process of acknowledgement that will finally lead to the possibility of resuming daily life again. Ross (12) remarks that “drawing heavily from a simplified model of psychoanalysis, ‘recollection’ was presumed to ensure ‘non-repetition’”. Thirdly, a spiritual model was used, which saw healing in a spiritual, Christian sense and aimed to achieve it through a process of contrition, confession and acknowledgement (cf. Moon, 92). In all three models, testimony, whether it be called truth-telling, describing the experiences of the past or confession followed by acknowledgement, plays an important role, which is typical for the context of truth commissions which usually “draw significant power from testimonial narration” (Black, 48; cf. Ross, 27).

As the atmosphere at the victims’ hearings was to be “decidedly nonjudicial” (Graham 2003, 11) they were not conducted like court meetings, but soon developed a standardized routine (Ross, 13). They were held at different locations all over the country and each venue was decorated with Commission banners and slogans, a national flag, as well as plants and flowers. The audience was seated in rows with the testifier in front of them, facing the commission, which was usually represented by 3 to 17 Commissioners (Ross, 13). The length of the individual testimonies ranged from 15 minutes to more than 1,5 hours, although most witnesses spoke for about 30 minutes (Ross, 14), which meant that the Commission heard approximately ten victims of human rights violations per day (13). Every day of hearings was commenced with a prayer (Moon, 91) and each witness was assigned a committee member in order to help them give their testimony by, for example, asking questions or giving them cues when they paused (14) and assuring them that they were “amongst friends” (TRC Website, HRV Transcripts e.g. Napier, Shan; Malobola, Nampunding Mabel; Lekhuleni, Skinod). Testifiers were briefed before the hearing about what to expect and also accompanied by their “briefer” during the hearing, as well as debriefed afterwards. Briefers, commissioners and journalists were also given the possibility to attend a debriefing with psychologists in order to cope with secondary traumatisation (14). Additionally, the TRC employed special “comforters” whose job it was to offer emotional and psychological support to the witnesses, as well as to hand them tissues and perform comforting gestures (Edelstein, 92-97; Ross, 14). After a testifier entered the stage, they were sworn in and asked to introduce themselves and their family situation before they went on to describe the incident or situation that they had submitted a statement about (Ross, 14). The audience was expected to be quiet, disciplined

and not disruptive (14; 35). In some cases, when the Commissioners were disturbed by the audience's disrespectful behaviour, they paused the hearing until order was restored (14). The witnesses could choose the language in which they wanted to testify and the TRC offered simultaneous translation into English, Afrikaans and one regional major language (Ross, 14). Translators, most of whom had formerly worked in courts, often reported about the difficulties that came with translating victim's testimonies, which were narrated in the first person and often emotionally very demanding to translate (Ross, 14). When victims found themselves unable to continue or started crying, Archbishop Tutu occasionally started to sing a hymn in which the whole audience joined in, or silence was kept until the witnesses found themselves able to speak again (15). In some cases a Commissioner asked some questions for clarification and often also inquired after what the testifier would like the Commission to do for them (14), however, in contrast to amnesty hearings, there was consciously no cross-examination at victim's hearings (15). After the testimony, the witness was usually thanked and referred on to staff for debriefing, while the next testifier occupied the witness stand (15).

Graham states that testimonies, in the context of truth commissions are "deeply political acts" (2003, 13) since they name and call to attention the abuses of power that were committed by the state. He moreover argues that traumatic testimonies serve three purposes, which often stand in conflict with each other: On the one hand, they give evidence of violations of the victims' rights and therefore should be "accurate and objectively faithful to the events as they happened" (2003,13). This aspect corresponds to the TRC's definition of factual or forensic truth. On the other hand, they serve the purpose of communicating some of the horror the victim experienced to the listeners, which matches "personal or narrative truth" or, how Graham calls it "psychological truth". He remarks that this function can hardly be fulfilled by the survivor presenting an "empirically precise account of an event" (2003, 13), even if the victim would be able to provide the listeners with such, which is often not possible due to the psychological damage done by the traumatic event that often renders their memories fragmentary, scattered and unsound. Thirdly, Graham claims, testifying about a traumatic event can and should have a therapeutic aspect for the victim (2003, 14), since narration requires an agent, namely the narrator, and thus narrating the story of an event, which is traumatic precisely because it robbed the victim of their agency, can help to "restor[e] the victim's subjectivity". However, this third dimension of traumatic testimony then diminishes the second purpose, for as the survivor regains their sense of agency, at least to some degree, "the pain and sense of rupture he or she attempts to convey grows less immediate" (14).

Black points out that, with its strong focus on narrative truth and the format of public hearings it chose, the TRC “implicitly generalize[d] the logic of trauma theory to the level of the nation” (Black, 51), arguing that “by actively narrating one's experience in the presence of an attentive witness, the survivor reforms parts of the self that have been damaged and fragmented.” (51)

Indeed, the TRC's approach seems very much in line with Laub's claim that “[o]ne has to know one's buried truth in order to be able to live one's life.” (Felman and Laub, 78). In order to investigate Black's claim further, the nature of trauma and trauma theory shall briefly be explored in the following pages.

Van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela, drawing on Levi and Wieser, claim that the very essence of a trauma consists in the “loss of language, meaning, order, and sense of continuity” (Van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela, 39). Dori Laub points out that, because of its horrendousness and incomprehensibility the traumatic event not only “precludes its registration” and “temporarily knock[s] out” the “observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind” (Felman and Laub, 57) but also seems to “t[ake] place outside the parameters of 'normal' reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time” (69), which means that it cannot be comprehended in terms of or incorporated into a chronological sequence. As Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, who was a member of the TRC, puts it, the confrontation with atrocities is too horrible for human beings to take in and therefore “rupture[s] our senses” (Gobodo-Madikizela, 26). Laub explains that

Trauma survivors live not with memories of the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no ending, attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect. (Felman and Laub, 69).

Their lives are, therefore, invaded again and again by the re-emergence or reappearance of the traumatic event, as if it had never passed (65). He claims that this “entrapment” can only be undone by a “therapeutic process [...] of constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history and [...] of re-externalizing the event” (69), which is possible “only when one can articulate and *transmit* the story, literally transfer it to another outside oneself and then take it back again, inside.” (69; emphasis in the original). Correspondingly, Van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela write:

Narrating one's life is about finding structure, coherence and meaning in life. Trauma, in contrast, is about the shattering of life's narrative structure, about a loss of meaning – the traumatised person has “lost the plot”. A fundamental issue concerning trauma is the regaining of meaning after trauma, the rewriting of one's life narrative to incorporate the traumatic loss in the new narrative (6).

Additionally, Laub emphasises the importance of reclaiming the traumatic event, warning that even if successfully repressed, it nevertheless invariably plays a decisive formative role in who one comes to be, and in how one comes to live one's life. (Felman and Laub, 85-86)

However, the transmission of the story that is needed in order to undo the survivors “entrapment”, is by no means easy to achieve since “pain and horror puzzle both language and memory” (Ross, 27). Gobodo-Madizikela explains that “the impact of the event cannot be adequately captured in words. Instead, it is ‘lost’ in words.” (28) and Laub states that “while silence is defeat, it serves them [the survivors] both as a sanctuary and as a place of bondage.” (Felman and Laub, 58). Many scholars studying trauma agree with this idea of the “unspeakability” of trauma (cf. Ross 27; Hayner, 2; Graham 2003, 12-13; Felman and Laub, 57; Langer 4-5; Caruth, *Experience* 4; *Memory* 10; van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madizikela, 6) but also observe the need of survivors of traumatic events to tell their stories and the demand for an appropriate setting to do so (e.g., Gobodo-Madizikela, 27; Hayner, 2; Caruth, *Memory* 10; Felman and Laub 78; 85-86; Brison, 51). Laub, for example, speaks of the “imperative need to tell” (Felman and Laub, 78) what they have seen and experienced in every survivor in order to “come to know one's story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself” (78). They see this as especially important since the story becomes more and more distorted in the survivor's memory the longer it remains untold (79), eventually leading them to doubt the reality of the events they witnessed (79).

Nonetheless, they also acknowledge the difficulty of acting upon this imperative:

Yet no [...] [t]here are never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in thought, memory and speech. (Felman and Laub, 78)

This paradox between the need to tell and the impossibility of putting the traumatic experience into words is important to recognize when dealing with the testimonies of human rights violation that were submitted to the TRC and told publicly in the course of the Human Rights Violations Hearings. Narrative is important in this context, because it offers the possibility of “remak[ing] of the self” (Brison, 49; 51). By narrating the traumatic event or events experienced as a victim, the affected adopts a different position, namely that as a subject, who is in control of the story. Van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madizikela even claim that “reconstructing the trauma into narrative form is one of the most crucial processes in the journey towards the victim’s healing” (26). On the other hand, Ross (6) points out that finding words for the traumatic experience might not only be difficult for the victim, but that it might, especially when urged to do so, also “jeopardise strategies to cope, often tentative and fragile, that may already be in place.” (Ross, 6). Bringing traumatic experiences to the surface might therefore not always have a healing effect but, on the contrary, threaten the victim’s established routines that they often acquired with immense effort and that constitute their more or less ordinary life.

Victims’ testimonies often reflect the rupture that occurred with the traumatic experience, being characterized by showing “no regard for chronology at all” and being “jumbled, elliptical, [...] partial and fragmented, [...] full of interpretation and enmeshed in lived memory” (Wilson, 49; cf. Graham 2003, 13). The reason for this discontinuity is often seen in the fact that “the traumatic event precludes closure and continues to haunt the survivor’s present” (Graham 2003, 13). Yet, testifying about traumatic experiences may serve the process of ordering events somehow, even if not chronologically. Wilson (50) points out that memory often “relies on information which may be considered irrelevant to investigation of the act, but is highly relevant to the victim’s ability to remember” in order to structure the narrative of events. He defines these “mnemonic devices” as “key events or symbolic images upon which the structure of the narrative hinges, and emotional associations tend to pivot” (50-51) and gives the example of a man starting his testimony about his village being destroyed by describing in great detail a gas bottle, that he found on the path (51).

Graham (2009, 2) states that “[i]deally, memory acts as the connecting tissue between the body and the physical places it has occupied, providing at least the perception of a stable basis for identity and a sense of community.” However, Gobodo-Madizikela points out that, when dealing with trauma “memory renders the accounts of events unreliable” (26), recounting as

an example her memories of the outbreak of violence following the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 which she experienced as a 5-year-old in Langa Township in Cape Town and comparing them with the historical facts. Only as an adult she realized that what she had experienced as the slaughtering of hundreds of people had actually only led to the death of one person. One therefore has to be careful with using testimonies as a source of forensic truth and Graham criticizes that this was done by “pit[ting] the victims’ versions of events directly against those of the perpetrators” in some cases (Graham 2003, 12); however, victims’ testimonies are still true in the sense that they are “the lived experience of what the victim went through” (Gobodo-Madizikela, 28) and therefore not less real than cold, historical facts. In terms of factual, forensic truth, Graham’s criticism that “‘truth’ about the past [is] hard to find in thousands of conflicting testimonies” (2003, 11) might be valid, however, the TRC’s accomplishment of “br[inging] ordinary, mostly black experiences of the apartheid era into the national public space”, thanks to the extensive media coverage (Wilson, 21), should not be overlooked. In terms of revealing truth about the “lived experience of how [people] remembered [the past]” (Gobodo-Madizikela, 26) the Commission can therefore hardly be called unsuccessful.

Felman and Laub (70) have pointed out that “[t]estimonies are not monologues” and “cannot take place in solitude” (71). They deem the role of the “empathetic listener” so crucial, that they claim that:

The absence of an empathetic listener, or more radically, the absence of an *addressable other*, an other who can hear the anguish of one’s memories and thus affirm and recognise their realness, annihilates the story (68; emphasis in the original).

Since this implies that testimony cannot exist without a listener, the role of the audience in the TRC’s proceedings shall briefly be explored, focusing on the Human Rights Violation or Victims’ Hearings where most of the testimonies were given. It has to be born in mind that due to the extensive media coverage the term “audience” includes not only those physically present at the hearings but also those listening and watching via radio and television. Felman and Laub continually stress the importance of the listener in the process of testifying about traumatic events (cf. e.g. 58; 68; 70-71). They describe the listener as partaker in “the process [...] wherein the cognizance, the “knowing” of the event is given birth to” (57), even if the event is historically well documented, and as “the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time” (57). Moreover, “he [the listener to trauma] comes to partially experience trauma in himself” (57) since he “comes to be a participant and co-owner of the traumatic event” (57), which makes giving testimony about trauma a demanding and

hazardous process not only for the survivor but also for the listener (Felman and Laub, 72-73). The TRC's offer of debriefing sessions, not only for victims but also for briefers, comforters, journalists (Ross, 14) in order to avoid "secondary traumatising" might have been underpinned by their theory. However, despite all the difficulties related to witnessing trauma, Laub claims that

[i]t is the encounter and the coming together between the survivor and the listener, which makes possible something like a repossession of the act of witnessing. This joint responsibility is the source of the reemerging truth (85).

They define the listener's role as being "unobtrusively present, throughout the testimony" (71) and "listen[ing] and hear[ing] the silence" (58) where words don't suffice. Ross argues, similarly that in order to convey pain, one sometimes has to rely on silence rather than words (49) and is dependent on the "imaginative engagement" of the listener (49) and on these grounds criticises the TRC's focus on words and telling which, she argues, was based on the assumption that "the world is knowable only through words" (50). However she does not give concrete suggestions how else survivors could have shared their experiences with the Commission as well as the public.

Ross (27) states that testimonies always play a crucial role when truth commissions are established because they constitute a "coming-to-voice in public sphere" and, moreover, establish "rights of recountability" (Werbner, 1), meaning "the right, especially in the face of state violence and oppression, to make a citizen's memory known and acknowledged in the public sphere" (Werbner, 1). Within this context, the witnesses, or testifiers, are both concurrently: representatives of others who have had to make similar experiences of suffering as well as individuals with distinctive, singular experiences (Ross, 15). While they voice the stories of their individual, unique suffering, collectively their testimonies provide a picture not only of the atrocities committed during apartheid, but also of how violence and discrimination invaded and determined everyday life (Ross, 48). However, she also criticizes the TRC's dealing with testimony on several grounds: Ross states that many of the testimonies given before the TRC drew heavily upon oral tradition, thereby inviting the audience at the Human Rights Violation Hearings to "participate [...] in performances of memory and meaning, and dr[awing] audiences with them in the testimonial process" (Ross, 35). However, the context that was provided for giving these testimonies was very unlike traditional spaces of telling (Ross, 34-35) and Ross lists this, next to the gravity and horror of the offences about which witnesses testified, as one reason for the difficulty many victims faced to put their experiences into words (35).

Furthermore, she criticizes that not all South Africans had equal access to having their testimony heard by a TRC official, not to mention being chosen to testify at a public hearing. She lists the rural population, who often lived far away from TRC offices and sometimes even out of reach of the media, women, the elderly and ill as well as those who were too traumatized to testify among this group (16), pointing out that black women from the homelands, who were the group most discriminated against under apartheid once again were not sufficiently provided for by the system set up by the TRC (16-17). However, the TRC did take care to hear a comparable number of men and women (17). Moreover, she mentions political activists as another group that was underrepresented in the public hearings, in this case not because of the TRC's bureaucracy but because they refused to regard themselves as victims (16). Among those who testified in public hearings were very few women who had been actively involved in the resistance against apartheid (17). Those women who did submit their testimonies to the TRC often did not choose their own suffering or violations they themselves experienced as the main theme but rather crimes committed against related men (17). While some of these objections and challenges of the manner the TRC's dealt with survivor's testimonies might be valid, it should not be forgotten, that by bringing them to the public and attributing importance to them, it managed to make widely unknown and unheard truths from the periphery available to the public and brought them into the focus of national, and even international, attention.

3.3 Testimony, narration and the novel after the TRC

With all the positive effects the TRC may have had and the enormous contribution it made to the "restoration of the narrative" (Graham 2003, 12), Mike Nicol's word should be kept in mind: "The struggle for truth continues ever afterwards. Because afterwards is where we live...Afterwards is where stories begin." (Nicol, 3). It is in this space, after the hearings that the TRC conducted, that writers picked up its legacy and relied on it for inspiration and stories that they developed further.

Gready (159) points out that "[t]he TRC itself never resolved the tension between facilitating closure and encouraging ongoing debate" and Van der Vlies argues similarly that it was "the sense that the Commission had in effect initiated a process of storytelling rather than produced a final version of the past" that "endorsed narrative and narration." (951). Gready

adds, that the TRC, by bringing the past to the present, served as a key trigger for “an outpouring of autobiographical and historical fiction, autobiographies and memoirs, and generically hybrid texts” (163) and that this impulse to tell was not restricted to genres generally labelled as “high culture” (164) but reached as far as TV game and talk shows and soap operas. Black points out the thriller as another genre, which has hardly been taken seriously as in the context of “literature in the aftermath of atrocity” (47) but which has picked up the theme of the TRC in a great number of “whodunit” novels. That way, different cultural commodities have drawn on and rewritten testimonies given before the TRC as well as served as new spaces for truth-telling (Gready, 164).

A genre that has been particularly productive in this respect is the novel. Gready highlights its function as “cultural commentary” (162-163) in respect to the TRC, due to its “unique truth practices and repertoire available to the novel as a genre” (156) in contrast to, for example, a Human Rights or Truth Commission Report, that is subjected to different standards and conventions and might be inhibited by “resource constraints, methodological shortcomings, or political sensitivities” (Gready, 162-163). Samuelson argues that literature “complicates and restores complexity to the notions of national and gendered collectivity” (Samuelson, 241), which is exactly the task many South African post-TRC novels have taken on. While in the context of the TRC hearings, testimony and truth-telling were clearly embedded into a discourse of reconciliation, forgiveness and healing of the nation, as well as expected to serve the building of a the new South Africa (Gready, 156), novels have the opportunity but not the obligation to serve the “truth to reconciliation discourse” (165). Therefore, while some reproduced this discourse, others challenged it by “unpack[ing] the silences and ‘unfinished business’ of apartheid *and* the TRC” (Gready, 156; emphasis in the original), as for example the desire for revenge and retribution (157), spying and betrayal (165), beneficiaries of apartheid (157), and the fact that many people could be considered both, victims and perpetrators at the same time (164). Therefore, post TRC novels have contributed by pointing out the many shades of grey regarding identity (174), by raising questions and stimulating debate about controversial topics (164). Gready states that, by choosing the TRC as their subject, they have “mediated upon the meanings of its keywords (truth, justice, reconciliation), retold its stories and reinvented its meta-narratives and metaphors” (164) and thereby “redrawn the contours of South African culture and reconfigured the locus of truth telling” (164). Black, in his analysis of truth commission Thrillers takes this a step further by claiming that by addressing the 'unfinished business' of the TRC they “challenge the utopian narrative of disclosure in the national context” (63) since their perspectives are often “deeply

at odds with the narrative structures that form central tenets of legal, political, and journalistic discourse about truth commissions” (48) which “frequently emphasises a shift from chronic illness to robust health” (48).

Moreover, he views the novel as a competitor to the TRC in the sense that, in the fictional space, it is able to reveal things that the real-life TRC was not able to address or bring to light, since it has the possibility of “creat[ing] for itself something that no truth commission can ever claim: access to a space that is constructed as transparently knowable” (Black, 55) and can, therefore, by using different or omniscient narrators, access the minds of victims and perpetrators alike. The reader can therefore learn the truth even if the TRC fails and the characters never will (Black, 55). This potentiality of the novel might be one reason for the TRC being such a popular and sought-after element in fiction, since it offer the promise of truth being revealed, if not in the real world than at least in the fictional space. The broad, international media attention that the TRC received may be another reason why so many authors picked it up as a topic as well as explain the interest of a wide, international readership consuming theses novels. In this context it can be said that the novel is following other genres such as the news, talk shows and other literary genres such as eye-witness accounts and memoirs.

Another advantage novels have over Truth Commission or Human Rights Reports is that they are a popular genre and often circulate far beyond the borders of the nations they were produced or set in (cf. Black, 50; 63). Especially those picking up the subjects of political violence and truth commissions within a context of “narrative conventions” and a genre that is usually associated and designed to attract a “mass international readership” (Black 63), may become “part of a larger globalizing discourse on truth and justice” (Black, 50) and “hint at new ways in which [...] legacies of atrocity might become newly visible in a broader global area” (Black 63). However, she makes it clear that they do not only invite the reader to reflect on justice and politics but “make use of familiar plots of concealment and disclosure to invite broader meditation [...] also on the processes by which witnesses and readers claim to learn the truth” (Black, 63).

Black points out that “the thriller has rarely been considered a serious player in discussions of literature in the aftermath of atrocity” (47) but that the focus has been on the written accounts of survivors or eye-witnesses and “elite literary productions” instead (48). One reason for this might be that it may seem unethical to write fictionalized accounts about real atrocities, as van

der Vlies claims: “[T]he cost of telling stories about the past might be a kind of epistemic violence for real victims of past abuse.” (Van der Vlies, 951). Jacques Derrida points out that “testimony always goes hand in hand with at least the possibility of fiction, perjury and lie” but at the same time sees literature and fiction as “the very origin of truthful testimony” (Derrida quoted in Sanders, 157), therefore being indispensable. Moreover, Gready sees the danger that might come with a “proliferation of voice, such as the emergence of a culture of victimhood” (164). Black responds to the objections raised against fiction in the aftermath of political violence by pointing out that “only silence is ethically unsullied” (49) but, on the other hand, still speaks out in favour of “productive alternatives to the metanarratives of silence that have come to dominate critical thinking about the writing of catastrophe.” (Black, 63).

In conclusion, one can therefore say that, although novels dealing with the atrocities committed during apartheid and the TRC should be sensitive to real-life victims, their contribution to coming to terms with and working through these chapters of South African History is crucial, since they draw attention to the complexities and shades of grey in regard to many issues and provide a forum for discussing still unresolved “legac[ies] from the past” (Gready, 165).

4. Research questions

In the following chapters, three South African post-TRC novels, Jann Turner’s *Southern Cross* (SC), Carel van der Merwe’s *No Man’s Land* (NML) and *Red Dust* (RD) by Gillian Slovo, will be analyzed and interpreted with regard to the role the TRC plays in the novel. I will investigate which elements of the real-life TRC have been reproduced or drawn upon, which metaphors and comparisons are used to describe the Commission and how its significance is constituted in the relevant novels. Moreover, I will seek to determine which expectations and attitudes towards the TRC can be detected in each of the novels. Furthermore, the ways the novel contributes to the international discourse about truth and justice evolving around the TRC will be explored. I will thereby draw on Shameen Black and Paul Gready’s work who claim that post-TRC novels typically do so in the following ways:

- they explore topics that were left unacknowledged by apartheid as well as the TRC (Gready, 156, 165)
- they challenge and reproduce the TRC's rhetoric of national healing and of speaking truth to reconciliation (Black, 48, 63; Gready, 156, 165)
- they function as a competitor to the TRC, since by adopting multiple points of view and accessing the minds of the characters they can, at least in the fictional domain, reveal more truth than the Truth Commission (Black, 48, 55; Gready, 174)
- they meditate on the processes of how truth is told and learned by both, characters and readers (Black, 63; Gready, 174)
- they appeal to an international readership (Black, 50, 63) and imply that the consequences of atrocities reach beyond the local sphere (Black, 47, 50, 64)
- they add ambiguity and complexity to the discussion (Gready, 164, 174; Black 51)

Each of the selected novels will be examined as to how they make use of those features and therefore can be read as a commentary on the TRC.

5. Jann Turner: *Southern Cross*

5.1 Summary

Jann Turner's thriller "Southern Cross" tells the story of Anna Kriel, a "coloured" woman and her white partner Paul Lewis, who in the South Africa of 1987 are part of an undercover cell operating for the ANC. They work together closely with their black housemates Rachel and Jacob Oliphant and their supervisor Joe Dladla. When Paul and Jacob are cruelly murdered on the road during a mission, Anna's world collapses but her determination to find the murderers sustains her. While it seems obvious that the two men were executed by the security police, the details seem impossible to reveal, which propels Anna, ten years later, to testify before the TRC, hoping that the public attention drawn to the case will open up new sources which might reveal the hows and whys of the "Mafikeng Road Murders". Although Frans Nel, a former security police officer applies for amnesty in the case, the TRC sheds little light on the events of the past. However, the journalist James Kay suddenly steps into Anna's life, claiming to have evidence that Paul used to work as a spy for the security police. Once again, Anna's world seems to fall apart but determined to learn the whole truth she sets out to

interview potential sources. She consults several former members of the Police, among them Colonel Ig Du Preez, a former leading member of the Security Branch whom she visits in maximum security prison and who proves a valuable source. He connects Anna with Shane Fourie, a former colleague of Nel who confirms that Paul worked for the apartheid police and suggests that Nel's reason for murdering him might have been Paul's affair with Nel's wife Sherry. When Paul's betrayal of the ANC is revealed at Frans Nel's amnesty hearing, Anna's loyalty is also doubted, among others by her employer, the ministry of safety and security. Joe, who has become head of police under the new government and, moreover, her close friend and lover, constantly urges her to stop her preoccupation with the past and focus on the present. However, this is no option for Anna who continues her investigations despite the fact that she finds another potential source murdered and herself being followed. Speaking to Frans Nel's ex-wife, she finally learns that it was Joe who used to be Paul's senior as a double agent. When Nel realizes she already has this information he fills in the details that are still left unsolved: It was Joe and Nel who killed Paul, because he intended to switch sides and hand himself over to the ANC. After a confrontation with Anna, in which she refrains from shooting him, Joe is found dead only a day later, probably executed by members of the criminal ring he was part of, while Anna is finally able to accommodate the past and takes up her life in the present together with James.

5.2 The Role of the TRC

5.2.1 References to the real-life TRC

The TRC plays a crucial role in the novel, most noticeably because there are five whole chapters devoted to the description of the hearings conducted by the Commission: Chapters 8 to 11 deal with the Human Rights Violations Hearing Anna testifies at and chapter 26 describes Frans Nel's amnesty hearing. These parts draw heavily on material from the non-fictional TRC, which might be due to the fact that Jann Turner herself also testified at a TRC victim's hearing about the death of her father, who, because of his activism against apartheid, was shot in front of her eyes when she was only 13 years old. Moreover, the character of Ig du Preez is modelled on Eugene de Kock, whom Turner met and even used part of their conversation for the novel (Davis, 313).

One example for the parallels to the real TRC is that the victim's hearing in Soweto where Anna testifies about Paul's and Jacob's murder is set in the same location as the real TRC

Human Rights Violations hearings, the Regina Mundi Cathedral. However, the novel dates the hearing in 1997, while the real hearings in Soweto were conducted in July 1996 (TRC Website). Likewise, Pretoria City Hall, where Frans Nel's amnesty hearing is set in the novel, was also a location for real amnesty hearings. Furthermore, the novel features real life persona, such as Archbishop Tutu, whom *Southern Cross* portrays as an old friend of Anna and Rachel (SC, 85). Even one of the other witnesses giving their testimony at the same hearing as the two widows, Sophie Thema (SC, 78), is based on one of the witnesses testifying before the TRC at the victims' hearings in Soweto on the 23rd July, 1996 (TRC Website) though the words the novel puts into her mouth do not appear on the transcript of her hearing. However, the novel also features entirely fictional minor characters, such as for example Mrs Nkosi for whom no model could be found in the transcripts of the Soweto hearings. Another parallel is the phrase "You are amongst many friends." that was frequently used by the real TRC and Archbishop Tutu (TRC Website, HRV Transcripts) and which also appears in the novel (SC, 89).

It seems as if the novel tries to portray the Commission as accurately as possible in order to convince the reader of the trustworthiness and plausibility of the plot. This is supported by a statement in the foreword that claims that "[t]he story that follows is not one of those documented by the Truth Commission, but it could have been" (SC, foreword).

5.2.2 Metaphors and comparisons used to describe the TRC

Throughout the novel, different metaphors and similes are used to describe the TRC and its work. One of them describes the Commission as a travelling circus, referring primarily to its mobility:

The Commissioners had become a travelling-circus, moving week by week, sometimes day by day, setting up in town halls and churches and school gymnasiums in every corner of the country. (SC, 69)

However, the metaphor also evokes the mental image of presentation of a show that might have an absurdly entertaining or very dramatic component.

Similarly, Frans Nel's amnesty hearing is described as theatre: "The stage was all set for the peculiar theatre that would be played out over the day" (SC, 215), drawing special attention to the stage, which was an important part of the set-up of the real-life TRC since the Commissioners, witnesses and/or applicants were usually seated there, separated from the audience. One reason for the choice of this metaphor might be the fact that the protagonists

already know that Frans Nel is not telling the truth and therefore only acting, trying to deliver his previously rehearsed lines as convincingly as possible. This makes the hearing similar to a pre-scripted play, up to the point where Willem Swanepoel introduces the new evidence for Paul's double agency, the photo that shows Frans Nel on a fishing trip together with Paul, and thereby forces Nel to react to it.

Another picture that is used to describe this process is that of a drawn-out dance, likening the truth to one of the partners who is constantly trying to sidestep: "The long, slow dance with the ever-elusive truth would not end today, but the tempo was about to change." (SC, 214)

5.2.3 The TRC as a place of emotional catharsis

The hearings of the Commission are presented as a place of emotional catharsis. Since the chapters concerned with the TRC hearings are narrated at a very slow pace, they frequently make use of direct speech (e.g. SC, 78-82; 89-93; 217-223) and not only the surroundings but also the characters' feelings are depicted in detail. Emotional scenes such as the singing of songs or the emotional breakdown of witnesses, the pain the protagonists feel and their emotional reactions to the testimonies given by others are described comprehensively. One example is the description of Mrs Nkosi giving her testimony, which is suddenly interrupted by an outbreak of emotions:

"I last saw him in Gaborone in nineteen eighty-three," she said calmly, then suddenly she lost control, the pain of her loss ripped into her afresh and she let out a cry that seemed to come from a pit of grief so deep that it pierced the hearts of everyone in that room. (SC, 79)

The strange forms that these outbreaks may assume are further illustrated by the following passage: "Suddenly the woman smashed her open palm against the tabletop, then looked down at it as if it were not a part of her." (SC, 81)

Anna, who uses much of her energy to maintain her composure and of whom it is said that "most of all [she] feared feeling." (SC, 34), already expects and fears this kind of expression of emotions prior to her hearing, as the following passage illustrates: "It was what Anna had dreaded about today, the splitting of scars and the gouging open of wounds." (SC, 81). She finds that her expectations were justified, as the Regina Mundi Cathedral, where her hearing takes place, is described as "place of remembering" (SC, 68) from which a "litany of pain resounde[s] [...] and r[i]ng[s] out into the world." (SC, 83) and Anna indeed finds it hard to cope with this outpour of pain and grief that brings back her own memories: "It moved Anna

in a manner she found hard to bear. It touched chords so raw and painful that she was terrified she'd snap.” (SC, 80-81)

However, she is not the only one who tries to keep her composure and to avoid being emotionally touched, as the journalists, who have already sat through hundreds of hearings, similarly find that “[y]ou couldn't avoid the pain, there was too much of it.” (SC, 79) and even the archbishop seems to be marked by it:

The weariness in his eyes and the sadness etched into the corners of his mouth showed that no one, not even this invincible messenger of God, was inured against the pain recounted freshly, day in day out before this commission. (SC, 78)

Eventually, Anna is so disturbed that she even feels the effects physically, for example “a bitter, bile taste on her tongue” (SC, 82) and trying to get up she collapses and is carried outside by Joe, where she throws up and breaks down sobbing (SC, 82). Her friend Rachel attributes this to her “try[ing] to keep it all in” (SC, 82) and the fluids leaving her body while she is vomiting and crying can therefore be interpreted as a metaphor for her repressed pain finally coming to the surface and leaving her body.

5.2.4 The TRC as a place of acknowledgement and a turning point in South African history

Apart from a place of emotional catharsis, the TRC is portrayed as a turning point in the history of South Africa. It seems to be an important concern of the narrator to point out to the reader that the TRC hearings were a complete novelty and were in stark contrast to the long traditions of apartheid. It is, for example, described how Anna finds her “observations on the Truth Commission machine in action (SC, 80) so moving she “f[inds] [it] hard to bear” (SC, 81) as she compares the TRC proceedings around her to how everyday life used to be under apartheid, with all the limitations, discriminations and humiliations it held for black and coloured people. This scene illustrates how much pain these memories still evoke, but also that the Commission finally provides a counterpart that these experiences can be contrasted to. A similar point is made by yet another passage describing a woman telling the gruelling story of her neighbours being murdered during a police raid and of how she found them the next morning. The woman closes her testimony with the words: “That morning I never imagined there would be a day like today. I never imagined I'd be saying – I'm free” (SC, 82), thereby also contrasting the TRC to the crimes of the past and depicting it as a critical point, overturning the old structures.

In order to convey the significance of the Commission to readers who might not be familiar with the South African context and might never have watched or listened to a TRC hearing even over the media, these chapters dealing with the TRC hearings are narrated very slowly. Not only are large parts of them recorded in direct speech, but they also contain a great amount of precise descriptions of the locations, surroundings and proceedings, as is illustrated, for example, by the following passage:

Anna's mind meandered [...] to observations on the Truth Commission machine in action [...]. She watched the statement takers who moved quietly through the crowd, bringing tissues here, a glass of water, or words of comfort there. Then the translators inside their grey and glass booths at the side of the stage, their mouths moving soundlessly, their words bleeding out of the headphones given to those who needed them. The voices spoke in English and Afrikaans and Xhosa and Sotho and all the other languages of the South Africans listening inside that church and on their radios and in their cars and homes and schools across the country. (SC, 80-81).

Further examples are the entry of Archbishop Tutu and the other Commissioners (SC, 78) or the swearing in of the witnesses (SC, 217), which are also recounted in detail. However, the novel goes beyond a simple description of the location and also provides the reader with background knowledge which is not fundamental in order to understand the plot but aids the reader to understand the context it is embedded in (cf. SC, 29; 217). Even though it is usually linked to the thoughts of one of the protagonists, at times it resembles a commentary or a passage from a history book:

This was a Human Rights Violations hearing, where victims or their survivors came to tell their stories and to ask the Commission for truth and reparation. [...] Every day the Commission sat, collecting stories of the victims of gross human rights violation committed in the name of the struggle both for and against that terrible, racist regime called apartheid. There were no confrontations between victims and perpetrators at such events; those would come later during the amnesty proceedings. (SC, 68-69)

Additionally, the reader is provided with a half-page general introduction to the TRC, serving as a sort of foreword, which not only further highlights the Commission's significance for the novel but also suggests that it is aimed at a broad readership, not all of whom will be familiar with the historical background and the role of the TRC.

5.2.5 The TRC and the absence of truth-telling

Whereas the significance of the TRC as a place of acknowledgement and a historic novelty is repeatedly stressed, rarely does the novel portray it as a place of truth-telling and investigation. While Anna mentions to James that the “wall of silence – around the police at least – has mostly crumbled since the Truth Commission,” (SC, 121) she also remarks bitterly

that not even the slightest hint which could provide an explanation for Jacob's and Paul's murder has been disclosed. Before her own hearing in front of the Human Rights Violations Committee takes place, Anna, who is so deeply touched by the symbolic meaning of the Commission, does not arrive there with the expectation to learn the truth since she is aware that: “[t]he Truth Commission's Investigative Unit simply didn't have the capacity to initiate the kind of thorough checking out that Paul and Jacob's case required” (SC, 64). However, her hope is to use the public space for acknowledgement and recognition the TRC provides in order to heighten the publicity of Paul and Jacob's case and provoke potential sources to come forward.

At the end of the novel, during his confrontation with Anna, Nel expresses the same view in harsher words, claiming he and Joe were never in the least afraid the Commission might actually bring their actions to light and therefore did not see it as a threat: “I mean, the Truth Commission investigations people couldn't find a Castle in a brewery; they weren't going to get anywhere. You were the problem.” (SC, 303). Indeed it is Anna and Willem's tireless efforts, rather than the TRC, that finally bring the truth to light and the places this truth-telling happens, which will be further explored in section 5.4.4, seem to be everywhere except in front of the panel of Truth Commissioners.

Moreover, it turns out that even where there was the honest intention to speak the truth, this is not always the case as, for example, in the victim's hearing where Anna tells Paul's story from her own perspective and only finds out later that he was anything but the noble hero and martyr as whom she described him. The TRC hearing thereby – though unintended – becomes a platform for spreading untruth.

5.3 Attitudes and expectations towards the Commission

Even before the hearing actually occurs, Anna's expectations towards the TRC are by no means euphoric but very limited:

Anna was all too aware that the Truth Commission was more about *acknowledgement*, about *jogging the collective conscience* than it was about thorough investigation. However, it just might inspire someone to come forward, might jerk an amnesty application out of one of the killers, or at least someone who knew them. So it was not a new investigation she expected from this, but rather the *publicity* and the *recognition* for Paul and Jacob that might awaken consciousness or memory in someone who could shed light on the mystery. (SC, 64; emphasis added)

This passage portrays the TRC not as a serious resource of investigation and the finding out of truth but rather as a symbolic institution and a platform which will add publicity to the case

and therefore might in turn help Anna's own investigations by opening up paths to new sources. Even in the testimony Anna presents before the TRC she implies that she sees it not only as the Commission's but also as her own duty to expose the truth about Paul's murder:

It is up to me and to all of us to fulfil our obligation to Paul and Jacob and the hundreds of others who died fighting against apartheid. It is our obligation to uncover the truth of what happened, to identify the perpetrators and the people who armed and exhorted them to killing. (SC, 93)

Indeed the TRC does not manage to bring up any new information in the case of Paul and Jacob's murder – even when new information is introduced, as during Frans Nel's amnesty hearing, it is presented by Anna and Willem Swanepoel rather than the commissioners or the investigations unit of the TRC. Nevertheless, once again, the Commission acts as a platform for this information to be presented publically, drawing the attention of the media and ascertaining that it will not remain without legal effect.

However, even if the TRC serves as this platform, the novel still challenges “the idea of national disclosure before the law” (Black, 48). Frans Nel's amnesty hearing is nothing but a farce with Joe Dladla pulling the strings in the background, as he does for the larger part of the novel, for example by executing Balletjies Badenhorst before Anna can reach him. The fact that he managed to become Head of police in the new South Africa and appears to be a very positive character for most of the novel sheds doubt on the executive system of the new government, not only because it is betrayed by the very people it employs and trusts but also because it is clearly unable to control the violence administered by criminal gangs on a large scale. Even though Anna, and with her the reader, finds out the truth about Joe, his actions are never publically exposed and brought to trial – the “disclosure before the law” never happens because the state is unable to identify and capture the real perpetrators. The TRC likewise is incapable of solving the riddle as well of punishing the guilty. The novel concludes by stating that at least there is some form of justice that assured Joe was punished for his actions, however, it is not administered by the law of the state and its executive forces but by the criminal underground:

If this new democracy had failed to clear out all the corruption at least there was a kind of justice in the criminal world Joe came from. In the end it took him back into its bloody embrace, meting out its punishment with simplicity and a savagery that seemed appropriate. (SC, 314)

Generally it can be said that while the protagonists' expectations towards the TRC are not very great, there are no indications in the novel that they deem it superfluous. On the contrary, the novel stresses its symbolic meaning as a place of acknowledgement of suffering and voicing grief about the injustices of the past publically (cf. section 1.2.4). However, it also

points out the Commission's limitations and its inability to accomplish everything they would like to.

5.4 *Southern Cross* as part of an international discourse on Truth and Justice

5.4.1 Spying and betrayal - Exploring unacknowledged topics

One way *Southern Cross* takes part in the discourse around the TRC is by tackling the issues of betrayal and spying, thereby “challeng[ing] the silences of apartheid and the TRC alike” (Gready, 164) since neither of them explored this sensitive topic to a satisfying extent. Especially black double agents hardly came forward after the fall of apartheid and the topic was rarely talked about for a long time. This might be one reason why it is now dealt with in novels, another, less official forum than the TRC (cf. Gready, 164).

Turner's novel paints a vivid picture of the consequences these issues have for the everyday life not only of the spies but also of their victims who are, in the majority of the cases, people physically and emotionally close to them. Anna, and to a lesser degree also Rachel, are the main victims of the betrayal of two men they trusted – Paul and Joe. Although Anna is not oblivious of the threat of spies, for a long time she deems it impossible that she herself could be affected by them:

Anna knew also that there were spies around, generally people who'd been captured by the cops and tortured so badly that they turned on their own. There were also the plain greedy ones who would do anything for the money, broken people with no principle or family or community to guide them. But Anna was sure there had been no spy close to them when Paul was arrested. (SC, 14)

This passage is also the first one that touches on the different reasons for people to take up spying: failed operations combined with torture and/or money. It is noteworthy that at this point Anna still thinks in very clear-cut, black and white categories in which spies definitely classify as “bad”. She later, in a conversation with James, touches on the subject again and lists further reasons for people to become double agents:

So many reasons. Some, like Paul, were suckered into it at an early age. Given a way out of a sentence for a drug conviction or whatever. The police seemed like an easy option. [...] Others were turned by force and threat. (SC, 245)

Paul here serves as an illustration for young people who became informers not because of their political convictions or own maliciousness but because of the security police taking advantage of their personal problems and the vulnerable position that they left them in, in

Paul's case his addiction to drugs, and offering them an easy way out in exchange for their services.

In the story she tells to James, Anna also touches on another factor: the capriciousness of some ANC commanders who used their subordinates not only for political missions but also for their own personal gain. She illustrates this by telling James about a commander that sent one of his soldiers at great risk from the camp in Tanzania over the border to Johannesburg in order to buy him a new pair of shoes (SC, 246). “[W]hat if the mission went wrong?” Anna asks, “[f]or three days he takes the beating and the interrogation and then he thinks – what the hell am I doing this for? So my Commander can have a new pair of shoes?” (SC, 246-47). Paul, and with him other double agents, are thereby presented as perpetrators and victims at the same time. At one point, Anna even seems to find some empathy for Paul. “She remember[s] that Paul was scared a lot” (SC, 191) and grieves for the damage his betrayal had done to himself, his conscience and his psyche:

She tried to imagine what it must have been like for him, living two lives or more. She knew what intelligence work was like and what it did to a person. A person living the life of a spy backs off from being forthright, from honesty, and year by year they become more devious, more damaged until they are unable to distinguish any more between their true self and all their compartments of legends and lies. (SC, 191)

While Anna seems to hold on to this belief of traitors being usually both, victims and perpetrators at the same time even after she discovers Paul's betrayal and still offers very similar explanations for the general phenomenon of spying, the discovery of Paul's double identity clearly changes her personal relation to the topic. Again, it is in her conversations with James that the reader learns her thoughts:

“How can you be sure that you know anybody?”

She glared back at him with incomprehension. It was blindingly simple to her.

“You just do. You *know* when someone is lying to you.” (SC, 126; emphasis in the original)

While at this point Anna's trust in Paul, in people in general and in her own judgement of them is still in place, little later that confidence of hers is shaken and she remembers this conversation full of shame and self-doubt:

You just know when someone is lying to you. She remembered how emphatically she'd said that to James Kay. You know because it's in the eyes, the tone of voice, in the body language and the way the liar trips themselves up over the small details. And yet she hadn't known. (SC, 191; emphasis in the original)

The betrayal shatters not only her trust but also her worldview of “Real is real. Not real is not real.” (SC, 191), especially as Paul's betrayal of her was not only of a political but also of a personal nature, as she discovers he also had an affair (SC, 180). How unconditional her trust

in Paul and how shocking his betrayal had been is illustrated when she tells James about how, after Paul's death, she found a bag full of condoms she had never seen before, but simply “couldn't figure out what they were doing amongst his things” (SC, 245).

5.4.2 Challenging and doubling TRC's rhetoric speaking Truth to Reconciliation and national healing

The reason for the full truth eventually being revealed is Anna's unwavering determination to find it, despite the voices around her that repeatedly tell her to give up her quest and the fact that the pieces of information she does find continue to cause her pain. The novel thereby also repeatedly poses the question whether the truth really does have a healing effect or whether the protagonists would not fare better without knowing it. The main characters voicing this opinion are Joe (e.g. SC, 240) and, to a lesser degree, Rachel (e.g. SC, 309). While it becomes clear at the end of the novel that Joe's motives for urging Anna to give up her investigations were far from pure, Rachel's opinion seems to come out of a genuine concern for Anna's and her own well being, as nearly every new information Anna brings to light shatters their world again and causes them more pain. While Anna has never regained an ordinary, everyday life after Paul's death but instead still seems to live with and partly in the past, Rachel has since remarried, raised her boys and managed to construct an ordinary life for her and her family. Understandably, she is therefore also more concerned than Anna about having it all shattered again and again by new and horrible revelations about betrayals in the past as well as the present. The following dialogue between the two women, which is found at the very end of the novel, illustrates this tension in their relationship, as well as Anna's conviction that she will not be able to leave behind the past and start living in the present unless she knows the truth:

“Does it help to know the truth?” she sniffled [...], looking at Anna with more than a hint of accusation. Her eyes were red-rimmed and swollen and bloodshot.

“I'm not sure,” Anna answered, [...] “At least there are no shadows any more.”

Rachel snorted. “You're telling me.”

“All I know is I want to live in the present. I'll settle for nothing less than what is real.” (SC, 309)

Nonetheless, Anna is the person suffering most from the information being revealed, since she is the one most intimately connected to the both of the traitors, Paul and Joe, Paul having been the love of her life and Joe her best friend as well as her lover in the lonely years after Paul's death. Whereas she is not prepared to give up her quest for the truth, despite the pain it causes

her, she also does not fully agree with the idea of truth bringing about healing and closure that is promoted by the TRC, as is displayed in the following passages:

On the flight home Anna recalled Bobby Thorpe's platitude. "The truth shall make you free." *What a load of crap*, she thought. The truth had bound and gagged and paralysed her; there was nothing liberating about the truth at all. (SC, 286; emphasis in the original)

And the truth was more awful and more familiar than she cared to know. The truth was no acid pellet of knowledge delivered to the Commission for sanitising and sealing and disposing in the dustbin of history. It was a dull mirror, which showed the dirt that clung to everyone, instead of cleansing and absorbing it all. (SC, 300)

While these passages display Anna refuting the idea that truth has a healing and freeing effect, it seems that, eventually, the truth does have a liberating effect on her life, as it enables her to leave the sphere of the past still drenched in Paul that she has been living in and to start inhabiting the presence and even looking forward with excitement to the future:

The moment was laden with memory, but with a sense of the future too. "You know," [Anna] said, "I feel so excited, I don't know where the feeling's come from, but it's bursting out of me."

Rachel looked into her friend's eyes. "It's the future." Yes, it was *her* future. She had restored it to herself. (SC, 309; emphasis in the original)

This passage is in stark contrast to Anna's thoughts earlier in the novel, when it states that "the past wouldn't let go of Anna" (SC, 240) and she herself is convinced of her inability to live without it, as her thoughts at this point illustrate: "I don't know how to take care of the living. I don't know how to live without my ghosts." (SC, 239)

It seems fitting that the last part of the novel is introduced by a quote from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: "What's past is prologue" (SC, 311) which implies that having learned the full truth about Paul's death and Joe's role in it does not only help Anna to put the past to rest but also enables her to start the future. The last chapters of the novel are full of incidents that illustrate Anna's changed view on life and the new beginnings and little alterations that come with it. Not only does she allow herself to fall in love again, she also buys herself "an armful of the richest red blooms" (SC, 310) to put into the kitchen and in this new relationship with James compares herself to one of them, feeling "like a flower opening towards the sun, fragile and vulnerable, but robustly loved" (SC, 310). Moreover, the closing chapter describes her dreaming the recurring dream of meeting Paul at sea once again, however, this time picturing "their final leave-taking" (SC, 315). The novel describes her waking up afterwards as a decisive point, finally bringing closure:

Anna woke up crying and certain that she would never dream of him again. She felt like an accident victim coming round in hospital. Aching and bewildered, but alive. It *was over*. (SC, 315; emphasis added)

Even with regard to Joe's betrayal, which seems even harder for her to comprehend than Paul's, she comes to the conclusion that "[s]he simply ha[s] to let it go" (SC, 317) since no explanation will ever be offered to her. Having accepted that, on the way home from Joe's funeral she drives through a sudden storm, which can be viewed as a metaphor for the recent events in her own life. The passage ends as follows, describing a new beginning: "When the storm was past and the dust had settled and the sky was clear, the world smelled new." (SC, 317).

In contrast to Anna, Joe serves as an example of someone who refused to confront his past and, even though he managed to make a smooth and successful transition into the new South Africa, he is therefore simply continuing, living out the same patterns he always did and still securing his power by betrayals, intrigues and deceptions. The novel, therefore, challenges and confirms the TRC's claim about the truth setting people free at the same time since, on the one hand, it points out that the process of speaking and learning truth might be much more complex and painful than this slogan suggests, but, on the other hand, it illustrates how learning the truth finally brings about positive developments in the protagonist's lives.

5.4.3 Competing with the TRC by revealing more truth than the Commission

The novel does not only have a valuable contribution to make to the discourse about truth and justice evolving around the TRC because it picks up issues the Commission could not adequately address, but also because of its possibility to explore multiple points of view and, therefore, to expose the thoughts and motives of its (fictional) characters. The reader therefore learns more truth about the fictional story than any Truth Commission, whether fictional or real, ever could (Black, 55). In *Southern Cross*, the 3rd person omniscient narrator seems to zoom in on different characters at different points of the novel in order to convey their emotions and thoughts, thereby granting the reader access into their consciousness. However, corresponding to the genre of the thriller or "whodunit" novel, the truth is revealed to the reader only bit by bit in very small portions, leaving them to guess and keeping up suspense right until the end. Even though the reader finally learns the full truth about who murdered Jacob and Paul, as well as about the general motives that drove them, some details, such as what moved Joe Dladla to act as he did remain unsolved. Moreover, the case of the Mafikeng-Road-murders is never fully resolved in front of the Commission, who, therefore, clearly remains at a disadvantage in comparison to the reader.

5.4.4 The processes of telling and learning Truth

Gready's (174) claim that in most South African post-TRC novels "the real work of speaking truth to reconciliation, where it happens at all, takes place off stage" definitely applies to *Southern Cross*. After James encounters the information about Paul's double identity in a bookstore in London (SC, 57-58), the locations and situations in which Anna learns the truth little by little are all rather unofficial: over lunch with James (SC, 119-127), talking to Shane Fourie in the kitchen of an almost crumbling farm (SC, 176-184) and, finally, interviewing Sherry Nel at the bar of her diner (SC, 286). However, people seem to be far more inclined towards truth-telling there than, for example, at Frans Nel's amnesty hearing (SC, 214-224). Another situation where "speaking truth to reconciliation" (Gready, 174) takes place are the conversations between Anna and Ig du Preez. Though unofficial and unscripted, they seem to produce very tangible results, like the two characters imagining themselves in each other's shoes (SC, 275; 235), talking about very personal issues, like, for example, Ig's relationship to his wife (SC, 274) and eventually even embracing each other at the end of their last meeting (SC, 276).

When Anna finally finds out the details about Paul's death, she herself seems surprised about the informal and undramatic way this happens: "It [the truth] had seemed so impenetrable and now it was as easy as sitting down to tea in the Imperial Hotel with Frans Nel." (SC, 301) One effect of truth-telling in unexpected places and situations is that not only the protagonists but also the reader does not learn the whole truth at once and, moreover, not at the points they might expect to, but only little by little which, corresponding to the genre of the thriller, keeps up suspense by information distribution.

5.4.5 International dimension

The fact that the novel repeatedly provides comments and explanations on the proceedings and structure of the TRC indicates that it is intended for an international readership which might not be familiar with the Commission to the same degree that South Africans are expected to be. A lot of space is devoted to the descriptions of the locations, decorations and set-up of the rooms (cf. SC, 68) as is illustrated, for example, by the following passage:

Massive organ pipes framed the proscenium arch, which was fringed by heavy mustard-coloured velvet curtains. A Truth Commission banner hung above the crescent of tables. The applicant's table was opposite theirs with a larger desk set up

for the Amnesty committee in between, centre stage. The grey and glass translators' booths occupied the far corner and stacks of documentation on a further table to the right of the booths. (SC, 215)

Another factor that makes the novel appealing for an international readership is that it is not exclusively set in South Africa but also uses international connections, for example through the characters of James Kay, who has a parallel life in London, which is also where part of the plot around Paul's betrayal develops, and his mother, a famous South African anti-apartheid activist in exile. Moreover, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola are repeatedly mentioned, mostly in connection with the cash-in-transit-crimes but also with regard to the struggle against apartheid. The novel therefore calls attention to the international connections and implies that the consequences of local events might reach beyond the national space, thereby contributing to making the discourse of justice and truth a global, international one (Black, 50).

With regard to an international, globalized discourse about the TRC, the role of the media, which contributed significantly to the TRC's international renown, must not be forgotten, especially since it is an important element of the novel. Its main representatives are James Kay, a journalist for the Sunday Chronicle, and his colleague Ilse McLean, who works for a TV station. They represent the print and screen media but their clique of friends also includes the radio journalists. Since several chapters are focused on James and his point of view on the events, even though they are narrated in 3rd person, the reader is repeatedly given some insight into the journalists' attitudes towards the TRC which has become part of their everyday life and breadwinning. It is made clear that their lives lack every form of routine and normality due to their job:

They were part of a loose posse of Melville residents, crazy singles, junkies and journos whose lives consisted of working, drinking, drugging and crashing somewhere comfortable if it wasn't home – which it often wasn't-before getting up to start the next round. (SC, 76)

The time spent on the job together and the constant exposure to testimony of trauma that they all have in common seems to somehow unite them despite their differences:

They were a motley crew, ranging from wary old hacks to bright-eyed and bushy-tailed young reporters. They had sat together in more stompie-strewn, smoke filled hearing rooms than any of them cared to remember. (SC, 75-76)

Moreover, occasionally the effects a job that exposes them to so much pain on a daily basis has on their personalities and psyches is touched upon. It is, for example, mentioned that Ilse has “attended too many of these hearings for her patience and compassion to be left unscathed.” (SC, 78) and is “taking strain” (SC, 248). James seems to be more robust or more

successful at warding off the effects of listening to trauma, however, as he sits through the many testimonies given before Anna's, even though he "use[s] every mind game he kn[ows]" in order to avoid the pain, he finds that "even he [is] not immune" (SC, 79) and that the sound of the struggle songs "bring[s] a lump even to [his] throat" (SC, 77). Towards the end of the hearing, the novel describes him as "sagging under the weight of the terrible murmur of testimony escaping from beneath the flat staccato of the translator's voices." (SC, 79)

One coping mechanism the journalists seem to have developed as a consequence of the constant exposure to pain and stories about atrocities while they cover the TRC hearings is sarcasm. A small portion of it can be detected when James wonders about some representatives of the international papers being present at Anna's hearing, since they usually only come for "truly sensational horror stor[ies]" (SC, 75), except when it happens to be "a slow week for news" (SC, 75). These are examples for the journalists' cynicism but nowhere does it become more apparent than in the scene when Anna and James, the night before they set off to meet Balletjies Badenhorst, encounter Ilse "with a large contingent of Truth Commission journalists and staff" (SC, 247) who are in East London "and after a long day of murder and mayhem [...] seem[...] intent on oblivion" (247). After several rounds of tequila Ilse intends a cynic parody of the TRC, calling it the "Wheel of Misery" and presenting it as a show in which contestants compete for the award for the most horrible story presented, as well as for reparation payments and exhumations:

"Viewers don't forget to enter our weekly competition – this week's prize is an exhumation for two in picturesque Piet Retief! And just to make sure you're really fit for the event – you do your *own* digging!" The others were laughing now with awful hysteria. One of the radio reporters joined in [...] "Ladies and gentlemen! This week on Wheel of Misery we have Mrs Tshabalala – give her a big round of applause!" they all cheered and clapped [...] and Ilse took up the threat again. "That's right. Mrs Tshabalala lost all three of her sons and her house in a police raid on a night vigil where *thirty-seven* people died! Competing against her for the grand prize is Mr Mabesa! Mr Solly Mabesa was tortured and almost *killed* during five years of illegal detention by the apartheid security forces! And – you guessed it – he's traumatized! So – who will drive off with this week's grand prize of rep-ah-ration!? Stay tuned!" (SC, 248, emphasis in the original)

With her speech Ilse addresses two dangers in connection with the TRC: one is a "emergence of a culture of victimhood" (Gready, 164) that was seen as a danger in relation to the great value the TRC placed on testimony and acknowledgement, the other one lies with the many demands, for example for exhumations, that were brought before the TRC which could be met in some but by no means all cases. Even though Ilse's words are full of bitterness and

cynicism and may reveal more about her emotional state than about the TRC, it might still be significant that she as a media representative makes and voices these observations, since it underscores the role of the media as a critical observer. After her speech Ilse breaks down laughing but it is only a matter of seconds until her laughter turns into tears and her cynicism is exposed as a façade. Eventually, at the very end of the novel, she quits her job at the Truth Commission since she cannot bear it anymore (SC, 313).

While it seems that the journalists see the TRC as a positive and important institution and the parts focused on them contribute to the message that it is unique as well as a complete turnaround in history, these passages also illustrate the toll their work and the constant confrontation with the atrocities of the past takes on them. Still, their role is portrayed as a very important one – not only for the plot of the novel for which James and his discovery about Paul are crucial, but also for the TRC whose message would not be spread without them and whose impact would therefore be but a fraction. Moreover, they play a crucial role in the new South African because of their exposure of injustice and corruption.

On the other hand, there are situations when Anna perceives the constant presence and the insensibility of the media representatives as strenuous or even molesting, for example when she can hardly flee the reporter's questions after her appearance before the TRC's human rights committee (SC, 95-96). However, as a government employee she is generally views communication with the media as a necessary part of the job and even on that day seems to be very understanding, possibly even pleased about Joe's unofficial press conference about the cash-in-transit crimes at the steps of the cathedral (SC, 72).

5.4.6 Ambiguity and complexity

Finally, *Southern Cross* definitely „reflect[s] upon ambiguity and complexity, interrogating gray areas of experience” (Gready, 164). The novel even quotes very similar words from Ig du Preez, as an introduction to part five: “It's a mistake to see it all in black and white. It never was and never will be. It's a thousand shades of grey.” (SC, 195; 274)

One way *Southern Cross* achieves to demonstrate this is by using characters that are hard to neatly separate into categories of “good” and “bad”, with the exception of Anna, Rachel and Jacob who are portrayed in almost exclusively positive terms. However, both traitors, Paul and Joe, are also introduced as “good” characters initially so that not only Anna but also the

reader is surprised, shocked and disillusioned when they learn about their betrayal. This holds true for Paul in particular, since he is mainly presented from Anna's perspective and the image the reader receives of him, is therefore drenched in her almost unconditional love for him. Moreover, by his tragic death, he is given the status of a martyr not only by Anna but the whole community, which can be seen by the crowds that attend the TRC hearings concerning his death (SC, 214-215) and the hymn they sing after Anna's testimony: "Farewell our fallen soldier" (SC, 93). The revelation of his true identity causes one to question these neat categories of good and bad, although one might simply try to shift his character from the "good" to the "bad" category, especially since his betrayal is not only of a political, ideological nature but also of a very personal one. The more one learns about his history though, the less it is possible to categorize this character, since the novel goes to great lengths in order to illustrate that he was not only a perpetrator but a victim at the same time, who was recruited by the police long before he even met Anna, at a time when he was very vulnerable. When James later tries to offer Anna an explanation for Paul's actions he states: "Good guys have always been infiltrated and corrupted by the bad. [...] Always have and always will be." (SC, 316), thereby expressing the novel's proposition that most perpetrators are at the same time victims of others. Interestingly, however, James still uses vocabulary that suggests that clear categories of "good guys" and "bad guys" do exist, even if he does not clarify who might belong to these categories and moreover acknowledges that also "good" people are corruptible.

To make Paul's case even more complex, it is later revealed that the reason for his murder was in fact that he had started to question his own actions and had decided to switch sides. The quote he leaves behind for Anna and that reads „There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" indicates that it might have been her love and dedication to him and the right causes that might have motivated him to undertake the journey to the ANC meeting in Vryburg in order to hand himself over to them (SC, 302).

While Paul's betrayal is revealed relatively early on in the novel, Joe's treachery does not become apparent until the very end, thereby increasing the shock it causes, since for the greater part of the novel the reader has reason to believe that Joe is interested in Anna's wellbeing. In contrast to Paul he never arrives at the point of regretting his actions and the intentions and motives for his actions are never revealed.

While Joe and Paul both seem to be good characters and are then revealed to be traitors, Colonel Ig du Preez is a character who spent most of his life supporting apartheid and

committing cruel crimes against those struggling to end it but eventually proves to be one of Anna's most valuable sources and helpers. Not only is he deeply sorry for his past actions and is trying to make amends in whatever way possible, but he also seems genuinely interested in Anna's wellbeing, showing concern for her safety as well as supporting her in her quest for truth that he hopes might bring her inner peace (cf. SC, 275). It seems that even the two characters themselves are surprised and partly bewildered by the way their relationship develops and by the trust that is growing between them, as the following passages demonstrate:

It was odd, this interaction, and she suddenly realised why. He trusted her. (SC, 235)

It was a matter of trust. He knew as well as she did that the evidence for his trustworthiness was thin. Yet she believed him. [...] "Thanks, Ig. I do trust you on this." (SC, 273)

"I don't really know why I trust you. I mean, we should be enemies. We *were* enemies." (SC, 275; emphasis in the original)

The fact that this is possible might be ascribed to various factors, one of them being that Anna and the Colonel both speak very openly about the past and another one might be du Preez' vulnerable position that makes it easy for Anna to find compassion for him. She encounters with a broken man who is grateful for any form of human contact rather than the tough commander and torturer she might have expected and soon realizes that in his own way, he too has become a victim of apartheid (SC, 233) and, moreover, truly regrets his past action, stating: "Even if that murderer was me. I still say that's what they deserve. To be hung, drawn and quartered. So whatever I can do to help, I try, you know?" (SC, 275). Anna seems very impressed not only by Ig's changed attitude, but also for the way he owns up to his past actions:

The greatness in people, Anna believed, lay in their ability and willingness to take responsibility for the bad as well as the good that they created and that is in them. [...] It's a rare quality. Paul didn't have it. She wasn't sure the Colonel did either. But he had the beginnings of it, of self-recognition. (SC, 235)

The passage contrasts the Colonel to Paul Lewis; however, Joe Dladla who managed the transition from the old to the new South Africa so smoothly without ever being held accountable for his actions in either system, can also be considered his counterpart to some degree. Concerning Joe, Anna, who until the end of the novel is so determined to learn the truth about people and understand their motives, eventually has to accept that some things are too complex to comprehend:

Joe would always remain a puzzle and that was the hardest thing for Anna to grasp. Right and wrong, action and consequence, logic and science, and psychology and

explanation – none of them had any power in the face of what he'd done. She simply had to let it go. SC, 317

With regard to Colonel Ig du Preez, the novel moreover raises the question of people like him were the real perpetrators and whether imprisoning them is really an act of justice when thousands of other supporters and constructors of apartheid assumed no responsibility and were still free, since it had not been them doing the “dirty work” of firing shots and torturing people. The following passage illustrates this tension:

The irony of it struck Anna quite forcefully this time. That Du Preez should be inside, while the men who'd constructed the policy – the politicians and generals who'd created and resourced and funded this work – were free. Living it up on the international lecture circuit and sipping sundowners on the verandas of their retirement homes. They'd gotten away with murder. (SC, 233)

Though less prominent, Shane Fourie takes on a similar role to the Colonel in the novel. Likewise a former member of the security police under apartheid, he is suspicious of Anna's visit initially but then willingly provides the information she asks about and is even prepared to act as a witness against Frans Nel before the Truth Commission's Amnesty Committee even if he still speaks of black people in derogatory terms and makes it clear that his motivation to leave the security police was not an ethical one but his fear of getting intrigues and internal power struggles (SC, 179).

Describing Anna and Rachel's struggle to come to terms with Joe's actions the novel makes the following statement, which can be read as a summary of the message communicated by its plot: “The truth had a complex of causes and the blame was too widespread to be meaningful.” (SC, 309)

Finally, even James Kay, who is the hope of Anna's newly found future, is a character portrayed in shades of gray. Although he seems to genuinely love Anna and supports her in many ways, his weaknesses are not covered up. His disastrous relationship with Alison marked by their mutual dependence on each other, his dishonesty towards her and his disappointing Ilse serve as examples, as does his obsession with his career that makes him care little for people's feelings, as can be observed by his publishing the article about Paul's double identity despite being aware of the effect it would have on Anna's life.

6. Carel van der Merwe: *No Man's Land*

6.1 Summary

Carel van der Merwe's novel *No Man's Land* (NML) was published in 2007, simultaneously with the Afrikaans version *Nasleep*, and is set in Johannesburg and London, both cities in which van der Merwe has lived himself.

The novel's main protagonist is Paul du Toit, a former member of the Special Forces of the South African army and successful business man, until he is forced to apply to the TRC for amnesty for the deaths of two activists, one of whom, André had been his childhood friend. Due to the public attention paid to his hearing, he loses his job and social contacts and, most importantly, his wife Louise files for divorce, which causes him to fall into a depression. Essentially unemployable in South Africa, he decides to follow her to London, attempting to find her and win her back.

In London, Paul finds work as a security guard and during one of his shifts rescues Monica, who later becomes his friend and lover, from two attackers. When he finally finds Louise and confronts her realizes she had made the decision to leave him before she even knew about his hearing, the real reasons for her leaving being her frustration about not having children, Paul's alcohol problem and his unwillingness to leave South Africa. However, he still refuses to sign the divorce papers. Shortly afterwards, he is ambushed by Monica's attackers who want to take revenge. Waking up in hospital the next day, he is visited by the police, who are suspicious about the motives for this attack. Since he does not have a legal work permit, he flees from hospital and decides to take matters into his own hands by breaking into one of the man's apartment, overpowering and torturing him until he provides him with information and assuring himself that they will not come after him again.

Paul's story is repeatedly interrupted by the transcript of his amnesty hearing as well as flashbacks to his time in the army and the secret service. Little by little, it is revealed that, when all three of them were still students, André was having an affair with Louise, which Paul was aware of and that he was, at least partly, responsible for André's death.

When Paul receives a phone call from his mother, informing him of his father's death, he returns to his parent's farm for the funeral. Only hours before his departure, Louise and he finally talk openly about André and Paul agrees to sign the divorce papers but Louise suddenly hesitates. He uses his stay in South Africa to visit the victim's families, realizing more and more the wickedness as well as the consequences of his past actions and begins to

question the things told to him by his superiors and politicians like his father. He decides not to accept the farm as his inheritance but to leave South Africa behind and return to London and Monica instead.

6.2 The Role of the TRC

6.2.1 The transcript of the amnesty hearing

The TRC plays a crucial role in the novel in several ways. Most noticeable are the transcripts of Paul du Toit's amnesty hearing which constitute an important part of the novel (NML, 20-24; 45-50; 67-70; 86-89; 104-109; 124-131; 148-154; 173-177). While there is no indication that the novel is based on real-life characters, it goes to great lengths to make the story plausible to the reader and the transcript of Paul's hearing is, therefore, modelled on the real transcripts of amnesty hearings. Since it does not merely include the parts relevant to the plot but also all the formalities like the swearing in, reading out of statements and, for example, announcements as to when the Commission will adjourn or reconvene, it provides a relatively detailed picture of the proceedings at a TRC amnesty hearing, which is coloured in and personalized by Paul's memories of the hearing recorded in the other parts.

The transcript also plays an important role for the narrative structure of the novel. Since the main plotline commences with the days after Paul's hearing and is told in present tense, the transcript is presented to the reader in eight small portions, interrupting the main plotline again and again, referring back to an earlier point of time. The fact that it is divided into small portions does not only make the transcript more reader-friendly but also keeps up suspense, since the most crucial information, Brad Friedman's affidavit, is not presented until the very end of the hearing, and therefore also close to the end of the novel, even though it is referred to before (NML, 26), thereby foreshadowing its significance as a turning point. Additionally, the main narration is also interrupted by various flashbacks to earlier events, mainly during his time in the Special Forces. However, in contrast to the transcript, the flashbacks are usually embedded in the flow of the text and not set apart by special typing convention or headings providing year dates, which is very common in many TRC novels that are narrated in a non-chronological manner.

Another way, in which the transcript is significant for the novel, is that it captures Paul's attitude towards his past actions and their victims at the time of the hearing and preserves it, therefore providing a point of reference that his mindset later on in the novel can be compared

and contrasted to. This documents his change of character and emphasises his change of attitude.

6.2.2 Metaphors and comparisons used to describe the TRC

One of the metaphors used to describe the TRC, employed by Captain Harris, is that of a circus. In order to soothe Paul, who is rather worried about the amnesty hearing, he states that “[t]he TRC is a fucking circus, run by the clowns” (NML, 15), adding that, “[i]f [they] stick together” they will “run rings around them” (NML, 15). The commission is thereby compared to a show designed for entertainment, and its staff to clowns who are not to be taken seriously and can easily be tricked or kept busy with petty non-essentials. However, Paul does not agree with Harris since “he ha[s] seen on television how some of the TRC advocates cross-examined the amnesty applicants” (NML, 15) and got a different impression. Using the inclusive first person plural, Harris clearly states his plan to only say as much as is absolutely necessary in order to appease the Commission, thereby making it clear that he only applies for amnesty because he is forced to, not because he regrets his actions or is interested in reconciliation and that he expects Paul to have a similar attitude: “We’ll tell them what they need to hear, that’s all. We’re not there to apologise or ask anyone’s forgiveness.” (NML, 15) Nevertheless, the fact that Harris, though against his will, does agree to appear before the Commission and give them at least some information, as well as him stressing the importance of “stick[ing] together”, demonstrates that the TRC does have some power to intervene with his life, which challenges his claim that they are nothing but a harmless and ridiculous circus. However, the publicity his and Paul’s hearing receives from the media and the public does conform to the show element his metaphor points out.

Another metaphor that is used for the Commission is that of a machine that is systematically trying to destroy Paul:

[H]e was in the maws of an *implacable machine* that would first grind him up, then discard him. In six days’ time his past, his life, would be exposed for all to see, to pick over, to rummage through, to sneer at. (NML, 18; emphasis added)

The TRC is viewed as a heartless technical mechanism that purposefully disintegrates the protagonist’s life, leaving nothing but waste behind, which is then “pick[ed] over”, “rummage[ed] through” and “sneer[ed] at” by bystanders, whose presence and whose prying seems to be an especially hurtful part of the process. What is mainly feared in regard to the amnesty process is the public exposure of the past. Interestingly, in the same paragraph, which

likens the Commission to a lifeless machine, it is stated that “[t]he amnesty process had taken on a *life of its own*” (NML, 18; emphasis added), thereby comparing it to an organism rather than a piece of mechanics. The passage therefore, by mixing two metaphors, seems to combine the unpredictability and uncontrollability of a live organism with the cold heartlessness and efficiency of a machine in order to portray the extent of the threat that the Commission is to Paul.

6.2.3 The TRC hearing as a place of acknowledgement and a turning point in the protagonist’s life

The amnesty hearing clearly marks a turning point in Paul du Toit’s life and in the novel often serves as a point of reference, categorizing events as before and after this one. One reason for its significance is the public exposure of Paul’s past that comes with the hearing, as is expressed by the sentence: “[H]e had crossed a border, the border between safe anonymity and public notoriety, and now he was in no man’s land.” (NML, 15)

Moreover, while all information presented at the hearing has been known to Paul all along, the amnesty process still forces him to concern himself with the past again, something that he only does very reluctantly. This is displayed, for example, by the fact that he delays revealing the truth to those close to him, as his wife or his parents, for as long as possible and only does so when he sees no other option: “Then the TRC set a date and, a week before the hearing, he could no longer hold off telling her.” (NML, 15). One reason for this behaviour is Paul’s fear of the questions and discussions about the past that he will inevitably provoke with such a revelation. After the hearing, these conversations about the past, whether with his parents, Louise, his brother or later on his housemates, even though he cannot escape them anymore, annoy and vex him greatly, independent of the speaker’s intention, whether it be to make him repent and receive forgiveness (NML, 29), tell the whole truth (NML, 16) or simply state that they themselves had no idea about the crimes committed in the past (NML, 30).

However, the public exposure has not only affected his relationships with those close to him but also to work colleagues, casual acquaintances and even strangers. He is afraid of being recognized and therefore starts keeping to himself and avoiding public places, as explained in the following quote: “After the newspaper articles and his brief appearance on the television news he feels exposed and vulnerable in public places.” (NML, 25). When he does make an effort to contact people in order to find out about Louise’s whereabouts the changed

behaviour of his friends and acquaintances towards him only increases his sense of being an outcast:

He has become a pariah [...]. No one talks or asks about his hearing, and he can sense that his calls aren't welcome. It is the new South Africa and he is an unwelcome reminder of the past, a past most whites want to forget or ignore. (NML, 25)

Furthermore, this public disclosure of Paul's well kept secrets does not only affect his social but also his professional life. Not only does he lose his job the next day but he realizes that it is almost impossible to find other employment in South Africa. It seems that the hearing marks the beginning of his downfall, with which comes the loss of everything that made up his comfortable middle class suburban South African life: his job, his house, his wife and his social relations. When he realizes this and decides to move to London, the job he gets there, working nightshifts as a security guard, is a menial one far below his qualifications and only affords a room in a shared flat in a poor area. His London life, therefore, is in stark contrast from the affluent suburban life he used to live in Johannesburg. The following quotes illustrate not only his social and professional downfall that begins with the TRC amnesty hearing but also his own awareness of it:

So you fall, he thinks, now he is truly part of the flotsam and jetsam of this city. (NML, 58)

Once he was a businessman of sorts, he thinks, but already that seems in the distant past. (NML, 72)

6.2.4 The TRC as a place of encounter between victims' relatives and perpetrators

Another reason for the significance of the TRC hearing is that it serves as a meeting point for the perpetrator and members of the victim's families, some of whom Paul has never met before. Even though they might not speak to each other and even avoid eye contact, as the following passage illustrates, it adds a personal dimension to the killing of the activists that Paul has long tried to block off. Notwithstanding, the encounter also costs both parties a considerable amount of strength and seems to take its toll on them psychologically and emotionally:

[D]uring the hearing he had avoided looking at the public gallery, as there sat the Peters family and Leon, André's older brother. Beforehand he had seen Leon come into the room; he had walked towards him, hand outstretched, but Leon had turned away. Then a TRC official had pointed out the Peters family. Mrs Peters, an elderly coloured woman, [...] was flanked by two younger women, who both looked away

when they saw him watching them. But Mrs Peters had looked at him with what had seemed like – and he struggles to articulate it – sympathy, a look that he could not bear. (NML, 26)

However, this first meeting with the victim's families does not exactly produce a change of attitude in Paul, as can be seen by the words addressed to the family members of Ebrahim and André at the end of the hearing (NML, 88-89). This change of attitude comes only after he has endured a social and personal descent and met Mrs Peters and her daughter in a much more informal setting.

In this context, it is informative to look at the two apologies made by Paul that are included in the novel. While Captain Harris decides before the meeting that he will refuse to make any apologies to anybody, it seems that Paul eventually decides otherwise, since the transcript of the hearing includes a message to the victim's families:

MR VAN VUUREN: Mr du Toit, do you have anything to say to the families of the victims?

MR DU TOIT: Yes. I want to express my deep regret for *their* loss. *We* never wanted to injure or kill anyone. Looking back now, it must be difficult for people to understand why we acted as we did. But at that time we considered it a war, and unfortunately in a war there are sometimes *unforeseen casualties*. I wish I could change what happened, but I can't. (NML, 88-89; emphasis added)

The way in which the protagonists sets up an opposition between "us" and "them" is striking, as is the way he does not address the family members directly but speaks about them, using the 3rd person plural. Moreover, he expresses his regret for their loss, but not for his actions with regard to which he even speaks about "understanding" the reasons for them. It could even be argued that, by stating that those reasons might be hard to comprehend at the present time, he implies that they were legitimate and comprehensible in the past. While he does acknowledge that the outcome of his actions was undesirable, he does neither directly express his regret for what he did, nor asks for forgiveness and, instead of taking responsibility for the death of the two young men, he calls them "unforeseen casualties" of an unfortunate war. It is not surprising that Mrs. Peters suspects egoistic motives on his side when Paul comes to see her after the hearing and refers to his refusal to take responsibility:

Do you think it [saying you are sorry] will make you sleep better at night? [...] [A]s you said at the hearing, you were just doing your job, it was an accident. You're sorry, but you weren't responsible, is that not right?" (NML, 194)

Paul's apology which he offers in response to her words is very different to the one delivered at the official hearing:

Mrs Peters, please. I was wrong, we were wrong. It was wrong of us to fight like that. And I know Ebrahim would be alive today if it hadn't been for me. I am sorry, truly sorry. (NML, 195)

In this passage he clearly equates “we” and “I”, not only admitting that he was on the wrong side but also his personal involvement. Moreover, Paul no longer tries to justify his actions but acknowledges his wrongdoing and expresses his regret for what he did. Furthermore, he establishes a direct connection between Ebrahim’s death and his own involvement in planting the bomb. His change of attitude is emphasized by his awareness of the fact that he has no right to be pardoned or forgiven, but will have to live with his guilt for the rest of his life: “And suddenly he knows, and the realization is overwhelming, that he cannot expect, does not deserve, anything.” (NML, 196)

He seems to hold on to this mindset even after receiving the information that he has been granted amnesty, pointing out explicitly that it is not to be equated with pardon or absolution:

He has been granted amnesty, and for that he should be grateful, but absolution he does not deserve, not will he get it. The mark is on him, he will be a restless wanderer. (NML, 204)

By calling Paul a “restless wanderer” that is marked by a sign, this passage draws a parallel to the biblical figure of Cain who killed his brother out of jealousy, denied his crime and was punished by a curse that prevented his land from yielding fruit. Moreover, Cain was exiled from Eden and lived as a “restless wanderer” for the rest of his life, wearing the mark that God puts upon him as the only protection from people’s wrath (Genesis 4). Even though the parallels between Cain and the protagonist are not elaborated on in the novel, they are striking. Paul himself feels that the severity of his crime is increased by the fact that “[n]ot only has he killed [but] he has killed one of their own” (NML, 25), which puts him in a similar position as Cain who killed his own brother, and for a long time, he does not admit his guilt. Even the punishments that Cain receives are paralleled in Paul du Toit’s life: while Cain’s land becomes unfruitful, Paul loses his job, which likewise leads to his economic downfall and both of them live in exile as a consequence of the crime they committed. The TRC granting Paul amnesty rather than him being punished for his actions could even be interpreted as the modern expression of the mark that God puts on Cain in order to prevent people from killing him, which might have appeared as a form of justice to them. The fact that Paul uses biblical language comparing himself to Cain, a clearly guilty and very unpopular figure, suggests that he has not only realized the extent of this guiltiness but also resigned himself to live with its consequences.

It therefore seems that the short time spent with Mrs Peters and her daughter in their living room has a greater effect on Paul than everything before, including the official hearing and not only challenge but change his self-righteous, defensive attitude. However, it can be argued

that this second meeting would have been very unlikely to take place at all if it had not been for the amnesty hearing and the consequences for Paul's life that came with it. Additionally, it should not be forgotten that the meeting between him and Mrs. Peters could only be set up with the TRC's help which adds significance to the Commissions role in facilitating reconciliation.

6.2.5 The TRC and truth-telling

While the TRC does constitute a turning point in the protagonist's life because of the public exposure of his past, what is revealed in the course of the hearing is not necessarily the truth. Whereas a great part of Paul du Toit's initial statement which he reads out is dedicated to his motivation for joining the Special Forces and his perspective on South African history and Afrikaner identity, the tone of the hearing changes when the cross-examination begins. This part of the hearing resembles a trial in a court of law with the lawyers in charge on both sides tactically provoking each others with hints and accusations, which makes the TRC a platform for both, truth and lies.

Paul later explains to Louise that it was his lawyer, van Vuuren, who advised him to lie and not to tell the TRC that he had known of André's activities in the ECC before going to university since it might diminish his credibility. Even Brad Friedman's affidavit which appears to contain the most important revelation of the hearing, namely that of Louise's affair with André and, therefore, Paul's personal motives for killing him, does not contain the whole truth, even though it comes close to it. At the point where this part of the protocol is presented to the reader, they already know that Paul was aware of André's and Louise's affair without them telling him about it. Paul later claims, in a conversation with Louise that though he had wanted to take revenge on André and the idea to denote an explosive in the community hall might have been be a product of this desire for revenge, by the time André was killed Paul had calmed down and did no longer desire to kill his rival, even though he still sought to scare him. Paul, therefore, holds fast to the claim that, though the explosion was not, André's death was an accident. However, this version of the story is only revealed in a private conversation with his wife, not in front of the Commission, where he holds fast to the claim that the death of all civilians was unintended and a mere accident.

It seems that the TRC, probably in want of proof and details to prove Friedman's implications, accepts Paul's version of the story, since both he and Captain Harris are granted amnesty. This can be interpreted as the Commission officially sanctioning what the reader

knows to be a lie. Only at the very end of the novel, when Harris tells Paul about their application being granted, does the protagonist himself begin to question his version of events and realises that not only the TRC but also he himself had been deceived, that Tommy had only been a cover up and that his superior's plan had always been to kill the activists. This makes the distinction between truths and lies even more difficult, since many of those statements that Paul might have genuinely believed to be true are proven wrong. Similarly, there is no reason to doubt Brad Friedman's honest intention to shed light on the case and reveal the truth, however, the reader knows what he implies in his affidavit, namely that André's revelation about his affair with Louise caused his death, not to be true, since Paul already knew about their liaison beforehand. However, his version of the story does point towards the truth, since it was Louise's affair with André that gave Paul the idea to plant a bomb at the ECC's meeting place. The novel thereby makes it very difficult to distinguish clearly between truth and lies, not only for the TRC but also for the reader, and comprises honest errors and conscious schemes of betrayal and truth-twisting alike. Louise's question "How many versions of the truth are there?" (NML, 157), therefore, seems very appropriate.

The following quote illustrates how the novel presents truth as something slippery which is not easy to get hold of and even more difficult to hold on to. The protagonist and the commission are described as being equally unsuccessful in this quest and the truth is therefore presented as impossible to obtain.

And the truth? The truth had somehow slipped away, not only from him but also from the TRC. Between him and the truth was a curtain, and the shadows behind the curtain kept on moving and changing shape. And he could not bear to look at the curtain for too long. But all that mattered was that she believed he had planned to kill André, and that he would have to convince her otherwise. (NML, 136)

Even though the TRC concerns itself with the case, the truth is not unveiled but remains behind a curtain which does not allow clear sight but only shadowy reflections of it. Moreover, the protagonist states his reluctance to even try to distinguish the shadows, for one because it is emotionally distressing for him but also because the truth is secondary to Louise's opinion for him. Therefore, not what actually happened in the past but what Louise believes to have happened is his most important concern.

Apart from the fact that truth and un-truth are presented likewise in front of the Commission, it moreover falls short of revealing essential information, such as the chain of command which is never disclosed (NML, 149).

6.3 Attitudes and expectations towards the Commission

In general, most characters' attitudes towards the TRC are rather negative. As expressed by the metaphors used to describe it, which are discussed in section 6.2.2, Paul and Captain Harris see it as a mechanism intended to destroy them or a ridiculous show respectively. Moreover, it is implied that several deals had been made behind the scenes in order to protect high ranking politicians and the image of the ANC government:

It was rumored that politicians on both sides had made a deal – more than a few current high-ranking ANC officials had been informers on the previous government's payroll and the political fallout if these names were exposed would be hugely damaging to the new government. But, according to Harris, the deal had changed. Pressure from the ANC rank and file required sacrificial offerings: a few lower ranking officers in exchange for both sides ignoring those higher up. (NML, 14-15)

It is only because the changes of conditions of this deal and the chain of amnesty applications it triggers that Captain Harris and Paul are forced to apply for amnesty, serving as "sacrificial offerings". The quote displays their attitude towards these developments and the self-pity and bitterness they sense as they consider themselves victims of a corrupt and unfair process and political manoeuvring.

This sense of victimization is also indicated in the following passage, which describes Paul's struggle to find employment after his hearing:

[h]e is invariably asked at some stage whether he is a member of a previously disadvantaged community. No, he answers. But he is tempted to add: I am, however, a member of a currently disadvantaged community, a white Afrikaner male, a species on which it's now open season. (NML, 33)

He realizes that his former privileges now, under the new government and its affirmative action policy, constitute an impediment to finding employment, apart from the fact that his amnesty hearing has been covered by the media and few companies would employ a perpetrator whom the TRC is investigating. As the quote displays, Paul feels so victimized he even compares himself and his fellow white Afrikaner men to game which is being hunted. This sense of victimization seems to be shared by many Afrikaners, who perceive the TRC and the new government not only as a threat to their long-standing rights but also their identity, and view the Commission as a way of humbling and subduing them. After a visit to South Africa, Paul's housemate Chris delivers the following statement about the country's situation and the TRC, serving as an example of the view of many Afrikaners:

And then there's all this Truth and Reconciliation bullshit – my father says it's just another way of making us feel guilty, to get us to accept whatever is dished out to us without complaining. (NML, 84)

When the new government starts to change the name of towns and cities, one farmer even claims that “[t]hey are trying to erase [them] from history” (NML, 206).

However, Paul does not merely feel victimized by the TRC and the ANC government, but also by his fellow Afrikaners, especially the former politicians among them, who claim they never had a clue of what was going on and are now putting the blame on a few individuals, singled out as public sacrifices. One of these people is Paul’s father, a former, apartheid-supporting politician who after his hearing tells him: “[...] I must say, I didn’t know that the Army had a programme like that in the eighties,” to which Paul only answers by sarcastically pointing out that “it seems a lot of people didn’t know what was going on” (NML, 30).

Paul is bitter about being reproached by the nation he fought for and the very people he sought to impress, as well as outraged by the hypocrisy and deliberate ignorance of these people, who claim they never knew what underpinned their luxurious and privileged way of life, which some of them still managed to retain:

The politicians who had sent them to do their dirty work in the neighbouring countries and the black townships now denied knowing the details of what happened. [...] Secure with their guaranteed government pensions and coastal retirement houses and game farms, they had adapted quite well to the new South Africa. But this generation, the generation that had listened and believed, had been cut adrift and left to atone for the sins of their fathers. (NML, 30)

Moreover, this passage also poses the question whether those who may have managed to remain officially unsullied are really innocent and whether the real perpetrators are really those that carried out the “dirty work” or those who commanded it and profited from it. He considers it unjust that his generation has been left to pay the price for the “sins of their fathers” who had brought them up, taught and ordered them to act a certain way and now refuse to take responsibility for it. Moreover, none of these people seem to be investigated by the TRC or forced to apply for amnesty. On the other hand the protagonist himself, by providing as little information as possible to the commission, contributes to the chain of command never being revealed and his superiors’ going free instead of being held accountable for their actions, orders and attitudes.

Another factor that adds to Paul’s bitterness is that the nation he believed in and used to fight for has now not only ceased to exist but he feels that its very existence seems to be denied by a large percentage of the inhabitants of the new South Africa. Therefore, not only his efforts remain unacknowledged but by constituting an unwelcome reminder of the past in a nation so keen to “move on”, he himself becomes an outcast who does not seem to have a place.

Not only has he killed, he has killed one of their own. His crimes had been for the nation, he had argued at the hearing. But that nation is in denial: the past is the past, things happened that they weren't aware of, it is now time to move on. It is now the time of the Rainbow Nation, a nation born out of a political miracle, a virgin birth. (NML, 25)

By likening the Rainbow Nation to a "political miracle" and "a virgin birth", he presents it as something unreal, impossible and made up, a surreal goal that is deemed to fail. The notion that he does not seem to see a place for himself in this new venture, as well as the fact that he deems it altogether unrealistic are expanded on in the following quote:

But hadn't South Africa always been, and wouldn't it always be, about black and white? Apartheid had been abolished a decade earlier, skin colour not. The old laws had new cloaks: affirmative action, black economic empowerment, racial employment and sport quotas – the building blocks of the new promised land. The rainbow nation, but did a rainbow have white in it? (NML, 62)

While Paul, the perpetrator who is granted amnesty by the TRC and therefore remains unpunished, feels victimized by the Commission, the new nation of South Africa as well as his fellow Afrikaners, the TRC is also criticised on different grounds. The novel points out that some members of the victim's families frown upon the Commission since they feel it does not deal with perpetrators rigorously enough and find it incomprehensible that they should be granted amnesty instead of being punished for what they did. Ms Motsepe, a representative of the TRC who organizes and facilitates the meeting between Paul and Mrs Peters explains to him that:

It is not an easy thing for the families. They do not understand why there is no court case, why the perpetrators are still walking around free. It is difficult to explain this whole reconciliation thing to them. (NML, 195)

Another way in which the TRC stirs emotions and anxieties is the fact that it is a complete novelty and people are unsure what to expect. The perpetrators' sense of insecurity is increased by the fact that it is not subjected to the same rules as a court of law, which makes the outcome of their hearing unpredictable even to their lawyer (cf. NML, 35). This, combined with the slow speed of the bureaucratic process (NML, 34), prove the months of waiting for the Commission's verdict very distressing and arduous for Paul.

6.4 *No Man's Land* as part of an international discourse on Truth and Justice

6.4.1 Challenging and doubling the TRC's rhetoric of speaking Truth to Reconciliation and national healing

No Man's Land definitely challenges the TRC's rhetoric of speaking truth to reconciliation and therefore facilitating national homecoming and healing and living together peacefully as a rainbow nation. For one thing, it criticizes that these ideas will ultimately remain just that, empty words and dreams that will never be implemented. Secondly, it is suggested that the words and metaphors politicians use are almost interchangeable, that one political system is just like another and the apartheid state and the new Rainbow Nation are both nothing but constructs and ideas and might have more in common than their followers might admit, as the following passage expresses: "Words were for politicians, those peddlers of dreams, dreams of patriotism and love of the Volk or the Rainbow Nation, dreams that were ultimately just that." (NML, 62). The quote can be read as an expression of the disillusionment about politics and change, with Paul coming to the conclusion that politicians and their words are all the same, no matter whether black or white, right- or left-wing, pro- or anti-apartheid.

Moreover, the way society moves on from one system to another so easily, without really working through the past, is condemned. For example, the novel critically mentions how the beginning of the Rainbow nation is sometimes presented as a miraculous emergence, a "virgin birth", unaccompanied by any conflict, scandals or discord and, above all, without a previous history (NML, 25).

While the novel seems to support the TRC's paradigm of speaking truth to reconciliation to some degree, it questions it at the same time. This is illustrated, for example, by Paul's meeting with the victim's families after his hearing which marks a turning point in the way he views his past actions and makes him change his attitude on the supremacy of Afrikanerdom and feel true regret. However, on the other hand it also induces his decision to leave the country and return to London, which is very much in contrast to the ideas of national homecoming and the joint building of a new nation promoted by the TRC.

Moreover, the TRC, though it marks a turning point in Paul's life, is in no way "helpful" to him. The truth does not set him free; on the contrary, it changes his life for worse, leaves him depressed and lonely and essentially ruins him socially and financially. However, his change

of attitude, which only comes later on, may be, at least in part, attributed to his downfall triggered by the amnesty hearing which provokes different reflections on life because of the different view his changed position gives him. He is suddenly forced to own up to his own weaknesses and shortcomings and realizes how fragile his carefully built world really is and how much influence other people's actions can have on it. It might be this realisation that causes him to consider the damage his own actions have done to other people's lives. Moreover, it might be his own brokenness that makes him receptive for other people's pain and is responsible for his wish to visit and apologize to André's and Ebrahim's families. Additionally, for the first time he asks questions about what was going on behind the scenes in the "projects" he was involved with while working with the Security Forces.

Finally, the novel challenges the TRC's vision of reconciliation by repeatedly pointing out the problems of the new post-apartheid South Africa, above all the high crime rate. The fact that Paul "does not want to linger in the driveway" since "only a week ago a resident was hijacked in the next street" (NML, 9) is drawn attention to, as is the fact that his father death was "quick and painless" and "in South Africa these days one should be grateful for that" (NML, 167). Moreover, Louise's number one reason for preferring London over Johannesburg is that "it's safe here" and she "do[es]n't have to worry when [she is] alone at home" (NML, 157). The picture which is presented is one of people being paranoid about security, many of them, for example Louise and Paul's brother, longing to emigrate because they feel they cannot bear living in the country any longer (cf. NML, 157; 188), whites living in fear of farm murders or squatters taking over their land (NML, 167; 205) and blacks working long hours in badly paid jobs, as is illustrated by the example of the South African nurse Paul meets in London (NML, 143). The high rate of crime and violence, to a large percentage a result of anger and frustration about the past and the present, makes Paul wonder whether "[m]aybe violence [is] in the genes of his country" (NML, 84) since "[t]he same eternal struggle, between those who ha[ve] and those who d[o] not" seems to be "fought on a more elemental level" here (NML, 85). Without explicitly criticising the concept of reconciliation, the repeated stressing of the country's descent into crime and violence does imply that it is an unsuccessful concept which does not have a strong enough effect on people's lives.

6.4.2 Competing with the TRC by revealing more truth than the Commission

No man's land is an example of a novel, where the TRC never finds out the truth, while the reader eventually learns what really occurred. In this case, since the transcript of the hearing is included in the novel, the reader is provided with the same information as the Commission, however, they additionally receive insight into the protagonists thoughts and feelings, including his flashbacks, memories and conversation with other characters, which are communicated by a 3rd person limited narrator. The reader therefore has a clear advantage over the TRC as far as information is concerned, even though they will only be handed small pieces of the truth at a time and often have to revise the version of events they thought to be true when another version of the truth is revealed later on in the novel.

Therefore, while the Commission grants Paul amnesty because it has no method of establishing whether the personal motive that he might have had to kill André really existed or not, the reader is given more information. Brad Friedman, the TRC's main informer suggests that Paul might have known about André's liaison with Louise but is not certain himself. The reader, however, is additionally presented with Paul's version of the story, which he tells to Louise and which claims that, though he did feel the wish to kill André at some point, he had already come to his senses and merely wanted to scare him by the time the bomb went off. The story that is closest to the truth is therefore not revealed at the hearing, in front of the TRC but at a very informal setting, over a cup of tea with Louise in a shabby flat in London. However, since Paul changes his version of the story several times, confesses he cannot remember many of the details himself (cf. NML, 138; 171) and moreover claims that he has had "the instinct for concealment, the skill at not revealing himself" from "early on" (NML, 76) the reader does have reason to doubt his version of events. When Captain Harris eventually concedes that the plan was never for Tommy to detonate the bomb and Paul realizes that it had been the plan to kill the activists all along, the reader is left with the choice whether to believe that Paul never saw through the plot or not.

6.4.3 The processes of telling and learning Truth

Van der Merwe's novel pays a lot of attention to the problem of truth and the processes of it being told and learned or withheld. As already mentioned in section 6.2.5, truth is often portrayed as something slippery that is almost impossible to get hold of and easy to miss. There are so many versions of it, claimed by different people at different times that one is easily confused. Louise, who is doing her own share of telling and withholding truth, gives

vent to her confusion about Paul's stories with the question: "How many versions of the truth are there?" (NML, 157).

One reason for the uncovering of the truth being so difficult might be the fact that Paul and his colleagues have been formally trained in how to lie and mislead others during their time in the army and their secret services. Taking on other identities, conducting investigations and spying on people used to be part of his job and his everyday life. There are various examples of how he still applies the principles and skills acquired during his training in his everyday life, especially during his search for Louise. For instance, he is very careful about what information he provides to whom. To his housemates, for example, he provides a fake reason for his being in London and does not tell them about Monika's attackers. Similarly, when he is hospital he gives them a wrong address, however, only changing one number so that he could blame it on an administrative error in case he would be found out. Another example would be him using the bathroom of one company building in order to spy on Louise who is working in the office of a building close to it (NML, 98) and taking on different identities in order to gain access to this building. (NML, 113) as well as her home phone number (NML, 90). The way his search is described, drawing heavily on the use of military language, suggests that, although it is a personal quest he is set on, he views it another mission to accomplish, similar to the ones he was involved in during his time in the army and Special Forces. The following quotes serve as an illustration of this phenomenon:

He'll have to *infiltrate* the South African expatriate community, he decides. (NML, 55; emphasis added)

Once again he is on a *mission* of sorts, he thinks, but what are the chances *of picking up the spoor of his quarry* in this *unfamiliar landscape*? (NML, 59; emphasis added)

The familiar sensations of spotting a *surveillance target*: the slowing of time, apprehension and excitement mingled, senses heightened. (NML, 96; emphasis added)

Particularly the last example indicates that he greatly enjoys the thrill of the quest and immerses himself into the mission to a degree that the people involved become mere figures in a calculation or factors in a game. Even though Louise is his wife and he is watching her in order to win her back, she is referred to as "his quarry" and a "surveillance target", indicating that to him the personal dimension is secondary to the mission.

In the context of speaking and learning truth as well as with regard to the TRC's speaking truth to reconciliation paradigm, it is interesting to briefly consider two apologies made by Paul once again (cf. section 6.2.4). While the first, official apology given at the hearing may

appear like a mockery to the victim's relatives, the second one is certainly seems more sincere and upright. It is noteworthy, however, that the real apology, which might be classified as an example of acknowledging truth in order to facilitate reconciliation, does not take place in front of the TRC but in an informal, off-stage setting, even though a staff member of the TRC is present at the scene. The scene can therefore be seen as an illustration of Gready's claim:

While the TRC is a powerful, if variously characterized, presence [...], the real work of speaking truth to reconciliation, where it happens at all, takes place off stage. (Gready 2009, 174)

The novel includes several other examples of "speaking truth to reconciliation" happening "off stage", not in an official space specifically provided for this purpose but in unofficial settings and sometimes in the middle of everyday tasks. Paul's drive in the car with his brother from the airport to his father's funeral can be mentioned as one example:

"It was wrong what we did. I..."

Pieter interrupts. "Ja, it was wrong to plant a bomb. But so was all that bullshit they fed us at school, all the stuff Pa was always going on about. And what happened was an accident."

[...] "*At the end of the day we are responsible for our choices.*" (NML, 182; emphasis added)

The scene is crucial since the brothers finally break the silence surrounding the past and, moreover, Paul decides to take responsibility for his actions and choices, even though his brother is offering excuses for his behaviour.

Another example is the telephone conversation with Captain Harris in which Paul finally begins to ask questions and causes some truth to finally be spoken between them (NML, 203). The following passage is not only significant because Paul finally begins to question the version of events presented to him but also because, for the first time in the novel he calls Harris "Jim" instead of "Captain", indicating that he no longer accepts him as an authority:

"Jim, what happened to Tommy?" he asks.

"Come, come, don't make out now as if you didn't suspect. [...] You know as well as I do that Tommy was a loose end, and loose ends are dangerous"

"Jim, what else didn't I know?" (NML, 203)

Although Harris offers little information over the phone, his allusions are enough to make Paul conclude that "it had been the plan all along to maim and kill the activists" (NML, 204), a realisation that causes him to reflect on the past, his involvement in it and his own guilt (cf. NML, 204).

Besides these examples of truth being spoken and ultimately contributing processes of reconciliation, there are also examples in *No man's land* where truth is never spoken and it is

too late for reconciliation to take place. One of them is Paul's father who holds on to the claim that he had no idea of what was going on in the past, even though he was an influential pro-apartheid politician who was involved in ordering military missions. He dies without the truth about the past being spoken out by either him or Paul and without them experiencing real reconciliation or healing of their strained relationship. Another situation where Paul realises it is too late for reconciliation is his visit to Mrs Pretorius, André's mother. Though she is still alive and Paul is able to visit her in the nursing home, Alzheimer's disease has severely damaged her memory, to the degree that she does not recall her son's death any more. While speaking truth is therefore no longer helpful, nor possible, Mrs Pretorius still seems to be very sensitive towards emotions and when Paul begins to cry she comforts him. This scene of the victim's mother soothing the man responsible for the death of her son could be interpreted as a form of reconciliation, however, it is not based on Mrs Pretorius's forgiving Paul but on the fact that she does not know what he has done and that she has every reason to be angry with and hate him:

For the second time in as many days he feels himself slipping. Something has been stripped from him, a membrane of sorts, an excision that has left his nerve-endings exposed and raw.

He feels a hand cover his. "What is wrong, why are you crying?" She strokes the back of his hand. "There now, there now," she soothes him. (NML, 198)

6.4.4 International dimension

With the plot being set in South Africa and London, the novel definitely has an international dimension. Moreover, several other international connections are pointed out: much of Paul's military past is set in Angola (cf. e.g. NML, 23), Louise has wanted to emigrate to Australia for years, Paul's brother is living in New York and Paul meets several South Africans in London. His housemates are examples of them, another one is a nurse taking care of him in the hospital who explains to Paul that

[s]he is from Durban, one of a dozen or so South African nurses who work at the hospital. In two months here she earns more than her annual salary at home but she is homesick for mieliepap and braaivleis [...] (NML, 143)

Finally, the affidavit reaching the TRC just before the end of Paul's hearing is sent from another South African in exile, Brad Friedman who lives in Canada. The novel therefore illustrates the international connections between countries and individuals whose actions and development influence each other across national borders.

Similar to *Southern Cross* it is also written in a way that does not acquire prior knowledge of South African history or politics but offers background information and explanations of connections which makes it appealing to an international readership. One example is the explanation of TRC proceedings in order to convey the importance but also limitations of the Commission:

As I said, the TRC is not a court of law – it is up to the applicant to prove that he committed his act for political reasons. And remember, even if amnesty is refused it has no legal consequences. The onus remains on the State to make a case in a proper court of law. (NML, 35)

The novel moreover recounts and comments on South African history repeatedly, often establishing a connection to the present, as the following example illustrates:

What was the difference between a cattle raid on an Eastern Cape farm two hundred years ago and a Limpopo farm attack today? The same eternal struggle, between those who had and those who did not, but in South Africa fought on a more elemental level. (NML, 85)

Further examples are Paul beginning his statement before the TRC by recounting his family history starting with the Great Trek in 1838 (NML, 21-22) or his perception of London:

Everywhere are monumental granite and stone buildings, the legacy of the empire that had crushed the Boer republics a century before. (NML, 53)

Though a reader with detailed knowledge of South Africa's history might be at advantage in interpreting these comments, this is by no means necessary for following the plot which makes the novel easily comprehensible for an international readers without any prior knowledge but also caters to those seeking to engage themselves in the topic of South Africa.

6.4.5 Ambiguity and complexity

No Man's Land does add ambiguity and complexity to the discourse of truth and justice around the TRC. One of the ways it does so, is by using a third person limited narrator, who presents the story from the point of view of the perpetrator, thereby granting the reader insight into his feelings, experiences, memories, motivation and attitude. Although it is obvious from the beginning that Paul is not a "good" man but has committed serious wrongdoings, he is the character that the reader gets to know most intimately and is thereby invited to identify with, while the victims of his actions remain distant and are not presented extensively enough to permit the reader to identify with them. Identification with the perpetrator is made easier by the fact that he is presented in a very vulnerable and miserable position with his previous pride and security being stripped away and, moreover, undergoing a change of attitude throughout the novel.

Moreover, the novel meditates on guilt and innocence and asks the question whether it is a matter of black and white or of shades of gray. One example for these reflections is the following passage, which is taken from a conversation between Paul and André which the protagonist remembers and in which André encourages his friend to explore the shades of gray and question what they are told, rather than blindly believing everything:

Your problem is that you see everything in black and white, but life's not like that. Don't believe everything you read in Die Oggendblad or see on SABC. Read some books, a couple of English newspapers – maybe then your eyes will open a bit. (NML, 61)

Interestingly, André perceives Paul's clear cut categories of black and white as a problem; however, at that point of time his friend is not very interested in receiving his advice (cf. NML, 61). The consequences of this mentality appear years later, when Monica asks him the simple question "Why did you fight over Namibia?" (NML, 140) and Paul realizes that he cannot remember the reasons that were given to him by his superiors and which he had accepted without thinking: "Reasons had been provided to him, that much he remembers, but he had not questioned those reasons; others had decided for him, and he had accepted that." (NML, 140)

The question of guilt and innocence is often posed in the context of knowledge. People, as for example Paul's father, claim their innocence on the ground of their ignorance about what was going on in the past. As already pointed out in section 6.3, Paul is outraged by their argumentation. On the other hand, the novel also makes mention of whites feeling that they are made to feel guilty and complaining about the negative impact this has on their everyday lives. Louise's words, when she explains Paul why she prefers London over Johannesburg serve as an example for this sensation: "[O]ver here I don't have to read every day how guilty I should feel about the past, for being white. I'm sick and tired of all that. I just want to live my life." (NML, 157-158)

Moreover the novel questions clear divisions into black and white by drawing comparisons between crimes committed on both sides of the struggle or between historical development and contemporary problems with violence and crime as, for example, in the following passage:

What was the difference between a cattle raid on an Eastern Cape farm two hundred years ago and a Limpopo farm attack today? The same eternal struggle, between those who had and those who did not, but in South Africa fought on a more elemental level. (NML, 85)

While this passage establishes a connection between South Africa's violent past in which whites suppressed the black majority and the contemporary fear of white farmers of being attacked on their remote farms and implies that what they are facing at the moment should be viewed as a result of their ancestor's actions rather than them becoming victimized without reason, the novel also contains passages that criticize the government for putting too much blame on the past rather than their own failure in some areas. One example is the following remark made by Pieter, Paul's brother:

[A]lready things are running down. Look at what we saw on the way from here to the airport-potholes everywhere, cars and taxis that should be in a scrapyard, new squatter camps, cattle grazing next to the highway. [...] Mark my words, anything that goes wrong in this country for the next century will be blamed on apartheid and the whites. (NML, 189)

Generally, it can be argued that the novel poses the question: Who are the people that make it too easy for themselves? Is it the exiles that simply turn the back on South Africa and build a new life somewhere else, the whites most of whom claim they did not know what was going on and therefore cannot be held accountable for what happened in the past, or the new government that takes credit for the improvements and blames all the problems on the history of their nation or is it really all or most of them to various degrees? The question points out the human tendency to criticise and condemn others rather than admitting the own wrongdoings and the novel conveys the message that this is done by members of every group.

7. Gillian Slovo: *Red Dust*

7.1 Summary

Red Dust was published in 2000 and is set in the fictional town of Smitsrivier that is soon to be visited by the TRC, bringing with them Dirk Hendricks, a former member of the Security Police who is to receive his amnesty hearing. James Sizela and his wife, whose son disappeared years earlier hope for the hearing to reveal the truth about his death, for which they believe Hendricks and his friend Pieter Muller to be responsible. They therefore call on Alex Mpondo, Steve's comrade who had been in prison at the same time and is now an MP in the new government, to oppose Hendricks's amnesty application. Alex reluctantly agrees, understanding the Sizelas need to find their son's body and give him a proper burial. As their legal representative, Sarah Barcant, who has left Smitsrivier 14 years earlier for New York, is

summoned by her former mentor Ben Hoffmann. When the hearing starts, it soon becomes apparent that Hendricks uses this platform as another outlet for his sadistic impulses and an opportunity to torture Alex, even if this time not physically but emotionally. Playing the role of the regretting police officer he relates in great detail not only the methods of torture he used on Mpondo, evoking the most gruesome memories, but also accusing him of betrayal. Despite his reluctance to expose his friend Pieter Muller as Steve's murderer, Sarah and Ben finally move Hendricks to reveal the place where Steve's body is buried. During the exhumation of his body, a document is found that was buried with it and clearly names Pieter Muller as his interrogator. Muller, upon being interrogated by the police, immediately applies for amnesty and, moreover, calls James Sizela, summoning him to his house, supposedly to tell him the truth about Steve's death. Instead, however, after putting a gun on the table before James, he provokes him with stories about Steve's cowardice and contempt for his father until James finally picks up the weapon and shoots Muller. He goes unpunished by Marie Muller's intervention, who picks up the gun and insists her husband shot himself as soon as the police arrive, despite the fact that this version of events makes her unable to cash in Pieter's life-insurance.

Notwithstanding Sarah's lack of understanding for his decision, Alex decides to stop opposing Hendricks's amnesty application, unwilling to expose himself to Hendricks accusations and be labelled a victim any longer. Determined to set his conscience at ease, she interviews Hendricks about the sequel of events, being told that Alex's betrayal was the cause for Steve's death. Even though she lies to Alex about Hendricks's declaration, he does not believe her, knowing Hendricks too well to believe he would reveal information so comforting to Alex. The reader finally learns that in fact it was Alex's refusal to tell Hendricks anything that led to Pieter mocking his colleague and, eventually to the two of them competing who would be the first to break their prisoner, whereby Pieter went too far and killed Steve before Alex even revealed his name.

7.2 The Role of the TRC

7.2.1 References to the real-life TRC

Similar to *Southern Cross*, *Red Dust* includes a passage, titled "Acknowledgement" at the end of the book, in which the author informs the reader that despite Smitsrivier as well as the

characters of this book being fictional, the South African TRC is a historical institution (RD, 339). Moreover, it mentions that the real amnesty hearings, similar to those described in the book, had not been concluded at the time of the novel's publishing in 2000 (RD, 339) and that in the fictional account of the Commission's stay in Smitsrivier some of its real rules, as for example the deadlines for amnesty applications, have been altered (RD, 339). It seems, therefore, that the author felt the need to establish the link between the fictional and the real TRC and make it clear to what degree the novel is fictional and which parts based on historical events.

In order to capture the atmosphere of the hearings, to which eight whole chapters are devoted, they are described in great detail, paying attention not only to the developments taking place but also the set-up, audience, persona present and protocol (e.g. RD, 80-82; 76-79; 123-124). Since the novel has an omniscient narrator who appears to zoom in on different characters in different chapters, informing the reader of their thoughts and feelings above anyone else's, the descriptions are coloured by the attitudes of the different characters and often refer to what they have already heard about the Commission over the media. The following two examples both use such references, and although the first one is narrated from Alex's and the second one from Pieter Muller's perspective, that is characters from two opposing sides, it is striking that they both point out the discrepancy between the words of the Commissioners and the actual (fictional) reality they perceive:

Not, as the good Archbishop Tutu kept insisting that begging forgiveness was a prerequisite for amnesty, but let's face it, it helped, especially if the plea seemed as unpremeditated and heartfelt as Dirk Hendricks's. (RD, 236)

Despite the fact that Truth Commission officials kept repeating that these hearings were neither contests nor exercises in revenge, the set-up looked undeniably confrontational to Pieter. (RD, 82)

Moreover, these portrayals are not neutral, since they draw attention to inequalities, as for example the fact that as former policemen the perpetrators at these amnesty hearings had received training as on how to give evidence and act in court, while for many victims this might be the first time they ever spoke in court. This is illustrated by the following quotes that describe Hendricks's behaviour during the hearing:

[T]he old Dirk sprung back to life, no longer a beaten prisoner but the man he once was, a policeman giving evidence as he had so many times before, while the judge clipped his way through the oath. (RD, 84)

"I do, Mr Chairman," the prisoner said, also in English, his voice imbued by the lifelessness that was a familiar part of the courtroom game of point and counterpoint taught to every new police recruit. (RD, 85)

7.2.2 Metaphors and comparisons used to describe the TRC

As in the other novels analysed, the metaphors and comparisons that are used in *Red Dust* in order to describe the TRC are an indicator of the attitudes towards the Commission. They can be roughly divided into two categories: those that depict the Commission as a show or entertainment of some sort, and those that liken it to a way of bringing relief, with the majority of examples fitting the first category.

There are numerous examples of the Commission being described as some sort of show providing entertainment. One that is repeatedly used is that of a circus which, “costing the country a fortune” (RD, 84), entertains the masses with music and a freak show, in which Dirk Hendricks and his former colleagues are the main attractions:

While the townships danced to the Commission’s music, men like Dirk were being brought from jail and made to sit in countless other town halls like this one and take their punishment. Their role was clear. They were designated freaks at the centre of the Truth Commission circus, their job to make everybody else look and feel good. It was justice, rainbow-nation style: the new stereotyping where black had become white and white, black. (RD, 94)

Dirk would get his amnesty and the circus would move on and there’d be another freak at which the fingers of another group of sanctimonious citizens could point. (RD, 211)

The “freaks” are viewed as interchangeable objects to be stared at and the whole show designed to entertain the audience, which, as the first example points out, mainly consists of the township population, and “make everybody [...] look and feel good”. The second example, again, stresses the interchangeability of the perpetrators and moreover calls the audience a hypocritical and finger-pointing group of people by putting the blame for the injustices of the past on a few selected individuals instead of taking responsibility for their share in it.

Closely related to the metaphor of the circus is that of a zoo, which is employed by Hendricks, when he expresses his desire to speak to Alex privately, “[n]ot here, like monkeys in a zoo” (RD, 233). Interestingly, this time not only the perpetrators but also Alex, the former victim, is referred to as an object of the audience’s attention and entertainment. Finally, another passage compares the hearings to a “baroque blending of court ceremonial, street party and revivalist meeting” as well as a “dance of the past” (RD, 84), employing further metaphors from the field of entertainment and staged shows. However, it is presented as a mixture of

very different forms of shows, pointing out the Commissions legal, celebrative and religious character. The passage goes on to point out the event's significance as a turning point in Smitsrivier's history, by which "every rule by which [it] had once lived out its life seemed to have vanquished." (RD, 84).

The second type of metaphors, which presents the Commission as a means of bringing relief and healing in some way contains only two examples. One likens the Commission to a band-aid and a "social antiseptic" (RD, 239), the other one views the Commission as a "ritual cleansing" (RD, 299). What the passages have in common is that they both point out the futility and insufficiency of this enterprise. The first one is used by Alex Mpondo in a conversation with Sarah Barcant, urging her to "[s]it down and tell [him] what [she] think[s] of South Africa's very own Band-Aid." (RD, 239), later explaining himself further:

The Truth Commission as social antiseptic, [...] [t]hat's what one of the Commissioners called it the other day. Bit like counting your chickens after the horse has bolted, if you ask me...or some such mixed metaphor. [...] (RD, 239)

While he does not say so explicitly, the context makes it clear that he deems South Africa's wounds are far too serious in order to be mended by a simple Band-Aid or the rubbing in of some antiseptic. Alex strengthens his point by the use of another metaphor in which he combines the two idioms "Don't count the chickens before they've hatched!" and "to close the barn door after the horse has bolted", expressing that the Commission will never be able to undo all the harm that has already been done and all that they do is merely keeping track of the minor offenses, while the main perpetrators have already "bolted", that is blended into the new South Africa.

Finally, Pieter Muller compares the Truth Commission to a "ritual cleansing" (RD, 299) an act that, similarly to an antiseptic, is designed to bring about relief and alleviation and prevent soiling and infection, though in a less literal sense. However, this focus is not on the relief the act might provide but to its uselessness and emptiness, since a ritual in itself, if it does not point to something greater, invisible going on behind the scenes, does not bring about any change. He therefore, in his speech aimed at James Sizela, accuses the Commission of being a promise of things that do not actually exist, a mere make-belief without any substance:

"The Truth Commission is like a ritual cleansing," she heard the husband saying, "with all the pomp and ceremony rituals demand – and all the simplifications. You and I: we're alike, we're not interested in make-believe." (RD, 299)

7.2.3 The TRC as a place of encounter between the victim and perpetrator

One reason why the TRC and its hearing in Smitsrivier play such a crucial role in *Red Dust* is the fact that it serves as a platform for the first meeting between the perpetrator and his former victim after years. The novel repeatedly draws attention to the outward reversal of their roles, pointing out that Hendricks is now “[a] prisoner where once he had been master” (RD, 69-70) or describing how “Dirk the prisoner t[akes] a good look at the man who had once been his prisoner” (RD, 197). It appears that Alex Mpondo, now an MP and a free man while Hendricks is a prisoner, is clearly in the more advantageous position. Whereas Mpondo constitutes a legal threat to Hendricks amnesty application, he does not have to fear being legally affected by the hearing himself in any way. However, in the power struggle that soon develops between the two, it seems that Hendricks still has several advantages that give him power over his opponent.

The first one is his ability to evoke memories in Alex’s mind that he has struggled to eliminate or at least suppress for several years. The following passage illustrates not only the destructiveness of these memories but also Alex’s inability to control them. This makes him a victim of his memories, not only at the moment of remembering them but even before, since he continually lives in fear of their reappearance, which frustrates the effort of all the years trying to forget them:

It had taken years for Alex to recover, even partially, from what Hendricks had done to him. [...] And now [...] it was all seeping back. His past was being slowly excavated and there was nothing he could do to shut it out. (RD, 30)

His fears prove valid when Hendricks purposefully reminds Alex of the suppressed events with his detailed descriptions of torture methods (e.g. RD, 190), several times forcing Alex to leave the room (RD 133; 135) and hide in the bathroom, or leaving him behind so shaken that he is comforted by his lawyer like a little child (RD, 201). The following quote not only names the fear of the re-emergence of the memories as the reason for Alex reluctance to attend the hearing at all, which is only overcome by his respect for the Sizela’s wish to lay their son to rest, but also illustrates how his fears are confirmed during the hearing and the re-emergence of the memories is just as harmful as he had expected:

All the time the memory was just as he must always have feared it would be, without knowing that this is what he feared. This was why, he now realized, he hadn’t wanted to attend the hearing – to revisit Smitsrivier – because he hadn’t wanted to remember. (RD, 133)

Besides Alex's fear to remember, Hendricks's knowledge of Alex's betrayal is the prime source of his power. Dirk's position is strengthened by the fact that Alex never made this information public, which increases his shame in front of the audience. Therefore, when questioned about his past crimes by Mpondo, Hendricks soon turns the tables on him, to the surprise of the audience accusing Alex with the words: "You know what you did. [...] You told me where the weaponry was stored. Just like I knew you would." (RD, 192). In this case, his power roots in the fact that betrayal is generally considered a shameful act and he carefully makes use of his most powerful piece of information: the connection between Alex betrayal and Steve's death that, after Pieter Muller's death, only he can reveal since there are no other witnesses and all records have been destroyed. These circumstances, together with the gaps in Alex memory that make it impossible for him to reconstruct the sequel of events himself, enable Hendricks to claim any version of the story as the truth, without anyone being able to prove him wrong.

As the following passage illustrates, what weighs heavily on Alex's mind is not only the question of whether his breaking under torture led to Steve's death or not but also the fact his comrades hear the truth "not from his own mouth, but from his enemy's" (RD, 206), therefore being presented not with "his version but he's torturer's" (RD, 206) and that because "there was too much he couldn't remember, and didn't know" (RD, 206) Dirk Hendricks has become a "repository of his past" which he is unable to access:

That's what the future holds, he thought: people wanting to know without asking whether my betrayal ended in Steve's death. A question, the only question. One he could not answer because he genuinely did not know. Only Dirk Hendricks knew. The irony of it. Dirk Hendricks as repository of his past. (RD, 244)

Thirdly, Hendricks gains power from the fact that what a reviewer calls "the grotesque intimacy of the relationship between the aggressor and victim" (RD, back cover, Financial Times) seems to be still unbroken and causes Alex to feel great shame. The connection between the two is also noticed by onlookers, even though they cannot necessarily apprehend the bond that still exists between the two men:

There was something going on between the two that had not yet surfaced into words – a different kind of question and answer that showed itself in every gesture. [...] These two, who had stood on opposite sides of the race divide that had rent South Africa open, were joined together now. They knew each other not like enemies or strangers, but like intimates. Almost brothers. (RD, 185)

However, Alex seems to be increasingly aware of how well he knows Hendricks, as well as of the fact that this is to his disadvantage since it only infuses him with still greater fear of the man:

The truth was that Alex knew Dirk Hendricks from the inside. [...] It was the way Dirk Hendricks's mind worked. That's what Alex knew. That's what had made the whole experience doubly unbearable, that he had sat opposite his torturer and he had known what he was thinking and known also what he was planning to say next. (RD, 236)

The novel explicitly points out that it is impossible for Alex to use this knowledge to his advantage but, on the contrary, is almost too much for him to bear since "to know Dirk Hendricks [...] was to fear him the more" (RD, 236-237). What adds further to Alex shame and agony is the fact that he and Dirk Hendricks seem to be, or at least have been, so intimately connected that it feels to Alex as if they had melted into one single person. The following passage, an extract of a dream that Alex has, describes this phenomenon in visual terms: "Two faces. Two hands. Or was it one? One hand laid upon the other. Two faces that seemed like one. [...] [T]wo men. Dirk Hendricks. Alex Mpondo." (RD, 75)

While the reader is not told whether Hendricks feels this connection as strong as his former prisoner, it does, however, become apparent that Alex is so ashamed of that bond that links him to his torturer that his only comfort is that he does not believe him to know how severely he injured and terrified his victim:

He didn't understand that colour no longer divided them, that, because of what Hendricks had done to Alex, they were the same. Because what Dirk Hendricks did not know – *and what he must never know* – was that he had turned Alex white. Bleached white, lily white. White with fear. No wonder Alex's feet had led him into a white bar. He was no longer black. (RD, 238, emphasis added)

Additionally, the passage clearly speaks of the two men being "the same" person, making it impossible to separate them. One reason for this sensation being so troubling for Alex might be that this removal of any division between him and his torturer does not only mean the complete loss of his own identity, but also makes clear distinctions of torturer and victim, perpetrator and assaulted impossible, thereby forcing the victim to share the perpetrator's guilt. Furthermore, the emphasis the passage puts on colour is significant not only in terms of the racial distinctions made under apartheid, but also in terms of clear "black and white" categories of right and wrong that seem to have likewise disappeared because of the intensity and intimacy of their relationship which makes it impossible for the victim to distance himself from the perpetrators actions. The relationship between Hendricks and Mpondo is an example of what Michaela Borzaga (90) calls "unwanted and violent entanglements that took place between black and white", using Sarah Nuttall's definition of entanglement as "a condition of

being twisted together or entwined” which is marked by “an intimacy gained, even if it was resisted [...] or uninvited” (Nuttall, 1).

Having explored these reasons for Hendricks’s advantage in the power game that develops between him and Mpondo during the hearing will help to shed light and partly account for the two-faced behaviour and attitude that Hendricks displays during the hearing. He presents himself as the dutiful police officer, who was merely following orders and doing his job, oblivious of the maliciousness of his actions:

I was a loyal policeman. We were taught that the enemy was all around, that we must fight communism and its terrorists with all our might. This is what I did. I did not benefit financially from my actions – apart from drawing my police salary, that is. I did it for the good of South Africa! Or that’s what I believed I was doing then [...] We were in a war situation. People do all kinds of terrible things in wartime.” (RD, 131)

He even goes as far as to claim: “What I did to Mr Mpondo I did in good faith.” (RD, 231) and voicing his opinion of himself having likewise been a “victim [...] of [his] own ignorance and the things [he] thought were true” (RD, 221), supporting his claims with accounts of his broken marriage and separation from his children, as well as a psychologist’s report diagnosing him as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of his job. However, despite denying his awareness of the wrongness of his actions at the time, he acknowledges that he regrets them in hindsight and even delivers heartfelt apologies, claiming that “[i]n hindsight: it was wrong” and that he is “truly sorry for the hurt [he] caused” (RD, 132). Hendricks, who refers to the hearing as “Showtime” (RD, 79) plays his role so convincingly, that even Alex, who is already familiar with his many facets is impressed by the “unpremeditated and heartfelt” (RD, 236) way he manages to deliver his apology, admitting that “[y]ou had to admire the bastard: he was so slick. And his timing was perfect” (RD, 235). However, the following passage shows his feelings to be generally very different and describes his outrage at Hendricks impertinence and shamelessness with which he delivers his lies and excuses in front of the Commission:

That Dirk Hendricks was an impostor. Alex knew all about Hendricks: he was a man empty of conscience and unashamed to find himself putting forward a series of ritualised lies to a commission that had been set up to hear the truth. [...] And for Dirk Hendricks to precede this hypocrisy with an account of a stress disorder! He had no shame. (RD, 132)

On the other hand, Hendricks’s thoughts when discussing a past case in which they had both been involved with Ben Hoffman, whose client had been sent to jail merely on the grounds of Dirks testimony without any further evidence display his true attitude towards the past, that proves his apologies in front of the Commission to be hollow and rehearsed:

If justice had been skewed – and he wasn't denying that it might have been – he could not be held responsible. It was the way things operated then. Wrong maybe, but Dirk was damned if he was going to shoulder the blame for everything that had gone wrong in the past. (RD, 254)

These examples, together with other details, such as Hendricks's refusing to call Mpondo by his name during most of the hearing and continually referring to him as "the prisoner" instead (RD, 125-126), display Hendricks's unchanged attitudes and opinions, despite his altered position. It seems that while Hendricks manages to fool part of the audience as well as the judges with his act, Alex is very conscious of his other nature and goals:

[Sarah] could never have understood, as Alex did, that Dirk Hendricks hadn't changed at all, that what he wanted now was the same thing he had always wanted – to obliterate Alex. (RD, 237)

This second, sadistic side of Dirk Hendricks is initially only known to Alex, even though attentive observers gain some glimpses into this dark side of Hendricks's character. When Sarah does so, she is "fascinated and repelled" (RD, 191) at the same time by the transformation she suddenly witnesses taking place in Hendricks's during the hearing:

That's all it took. When Alex said those two words: *And then?*, everything was changed. Dirk Hendricks's tongue flicked out, a snake's lick, before it hurriedly withdrew, a lustful, greedy, anticipating move. Watching, Sarah saw another man breaking free of the prisoner's chrysalis. [...] he looked somehow more substantial and also much more dangerous. The shift was extraordinary. (RD, 191; emphasis in the original)

It is noteworthy, that this situation finally helps Sarah to understand the menace that Hendricks's poses, which her client has been warning her about.

Interestingly, despite all the unease, agitation and pain the confrontation with Hendricks's causes for Alex and his conviction at the beginning of the hearing that "[t]here [would be] nothing in it for him" (RD, 31), in the end draws a surprisingly positive conclusion:

And yet, he thought, as he steered away from Smitsrivier, he didn't regret coming back. He had looked Dirk Hendricks in the eye. Perhaps that was a start. (RD, 337)

The quote suggests that he eventually views the confrontation with his former torturer as the start of a new era in his life and an overcoming of Hendricks's power.

7.2.4 The TRC as a place of recalling and re-enacting the past

Closely connected to the relationship between Alex Mpondo and Dirk Hendricks, the former victim and torturer, is the topic of the TRC serving as a place of not only recalling and remembering, but to a certain degree re-enacting the past. This is striking since the

Commission was formed with the intention of, if not being able to undo the past, then at least hoping to heal its wounds where possible, as well as making a clear statement that the future should look very different compared to the apartheid era. However, in the interaction between Dirk Hendricks and Alex Mpondo the reader as well as the other characters observe something very different: Even though the outer circumstances are so clearly altered, through the power his knowledge gives him, Dirk Hendricks once again seems to live out his sadistic inclinations, making Alex once more the victim. Though this time Hendricks does not submit Alex to physical pain, he exposes him to public scorn and mistrust as well as his uncontrollable flashbacks of torture instead. The fact that Hendricks plays the dutiful, regretting police officer in front of the judges even manages to win parts of the audience, as well as the Commission's determination to give everyone a fair hearing and its inclination to grant amnesty, strengthens his position. Sarah only becomes aware of this fact when she manages to organize a private meeting with Hendricks and Alex so violently denies wanting to know anything at all from this man that she begins to reflect on it:

“No. [...] I don't want to know anything from him.” [...] Sarah sat wondering whether Alex's denial was so intense precisely because there was something he wanted to know from Hendricks. She kept her counsel. If this really was the case, she thought, how unbearable: to need something from your former torturer. (RD, 137)

When she, rather naively, tries to put Alex mind at rest by lying to him about what Hendricks told her about Steve's death, he is too familiar with Hendricks and his sadism to be fooled by her story:

No matter the truth of what happened, Hendricks would have lied, most certainly said anything, to keep Alex on the hook. [...] With Muller dead, Alex would never know whether the things he had said, not only in pain but also in the anger of his conviction that Steve had betrayed him, had let to Steve's annihilation. (RD, 337)

This passage illustrates, that even with his situation having changed, Hendricks's character has not and he is not prepared to give up what power he still has got left over his former prisoner. The reason for this is that this power play seems to satisfy his sadistic inclinations and he seems to receive great pleasure from not only reducing Alex to nothing but also keeping him uncertain about his own past actions (cf. RD, 193-194). One passage describes Mpondo as “the man whom Dirk Hendricks has created” who is now “conscious only for those bloodless eyes, those soft, sympathetic, sadistic eyes, pulling him into the intimacy that had never been breached” (RD, 194), suggesting that Hendricks still has the power to completely transform Alex. Sarah, witnessing Alex interrogation of Hendricks, calls the process an “exercise in masochism.” (RD, 193) in which Alex summons the torturer in Hendricks. However, Alex eventually cannot bear the situation any more, leaves the room and

finds himself in the bathroom formerly reserved for blacks, where he makes the following observation, realising that Hendricks power over him still remains almost unbroken:

Dirk Hendricks did this to me, he thought. Hendricks who, even cast down, had the power to summon up the *kaffir* in Alex and send him scuttling to the servant's quarters. Hendricks who had this power even though it was Hendricks who was the prisoner and who, when the recess was called, was led away by guards. (RD, 204; emphasis in the original)

The fact that their relationship therefore still seems to be defined by their former positions of victim and torturer, leads to Alex applying similar strategies during the hearing as he did in prison while being tortured by Hendricks:

That was enough. Alex did what he had learned to do in jail. He cut Hendricks's voice from consciousness. (RD, 126)

The novel therefore establishes a clear connection between the two situations that originally were intended to be antonymous rather than similar to each other.

This is intensified by the fact that this tension is not reversed by a moment of sudden transformation, but the novel ends with Alex begging Ben and Sarah: "[P]lease. Don't press Hendricks any longer." (RD, 229) arguing as follows: "I can't sit and listen to Dirk Hendricks. I know him too well. I know that the more you pressure him, the more he'll *turn the screws on me*." (RD, 228; emphasis added). It seems ironic that he uses a metaphor derived from the field of torture in order to make his point, once more establishing a connection between the torture chamber and the TRC hearing. Confronted with Sarah's lack of understanding for his decision, he makes the following declaration: "It was such a struggle to free myself from that man's clutches, [...] I won't be his victim again." (RD, 316), thereby prompting Ben to ask whether he thinks "victimhood is a matter of choice" (RD, 316). Alex's answer draws attention to the aspect of his situation that is now different from that time when he was Hendricks's prisoner: the fact that he is now a free man with the right to get up and leave at any time:

"I don't know about always," Alex said, "but it is now. When I go to the hearing I sit in the victim's seat. My lawyer [...] is known as the victim's lawyer. If I want to go somewhere private during the hearing, to get away from the crowd, I must go to a place reserved for Truth Commission officials and for victims." With each hit of that one word – victim- his voice rose. "And when the Commission publishes its report, my name will be among the names of other victims." (RD, 316)

The passage moreover points out that he does not perceive the Commission as a wholesome process furthering his healing or undoing any of the violations committed against him, but rather confirming his powerless position as a victim in contrast to Hendricks's more powerful one as a perpetrator. He moreover argues that, in contrast to Hendricks, he runs an additional

risk should the hearing continue, namely that of adopting Hendricks's version of the events, carefully crafted by his sadistic mind. Furthermore, Alex sees the danger of being disturbed by the memories to a degree that will leave him unable to live an ordinary life:

I can't risk Dirk Hendricks's narrative, his version of history, becoming mine. And he's bound to get his amnesty, so why should I put myself through this? I can't sleep. I can't eat. I can't go on. I'm sorry. (RD, 228)

The fact that Alex mentions as his only consolation "that Hendricks would never guess at the depth of damage he had inflicted on his prisoner." (RD, 238) does seem very unsatisfying and unjust and definitely challenges the TRC's rhetoric of national healing, reconciliation and being a clear signal for the end of the wrongs committed in the past and the beginning of a new era. On the other hand, Alex's refusal to keep attending the hearing, despite Sarah's protests, can be interpreted as a conscious step on his side of relinquishing his victimhood, acknowledging the damage Hendricks has done to him but deciding to take action himself and preventing it from happening again. Ben Hoffman seems to hold this view, as he commends Alex for being "man enough to know that" it "is no longer about Steve" but about himself now (RD, 319).

7.2.5 The TRC and the absence of truth-telling

While the TRC in *Red Dust* definitely plays an important role as a place to recall the past and as a trigger setting a chain of events related to it in motion, its hearings are marked by the absence rather than the presence of truth-telling. The novel seems to convey the message that truth is simply not always possible to be obtained (cf. section 1.4.4; Mengel, 162) and the hearings, in accordance with them being referred to repeatedly as some kind of show, seem to be mainly about the skilful delivery of well rehearsed lies.

This becomes apparent, for example, when Hendricks is reproached for having "neglected to mention" the farm in his amnesty application (RD, 198) and wonders how to account for it: "By telling the truth [...]: that he didn't mention the farm because he thought it would complicate things?" (RD, 198). Though he decides against it in this particular case, he generally finds it "[b]etter to tell as much of the truth as could be tolerated." (RD, 197), however, recognizing it as "part of the rules of the game" (RD, 197) that "facts must be carefully selected to prevent overload and that a good witness must learn to winnow the truth" (RD, 196-197). In his case, he is convinced that "the new history of their country c[an] no

longer fit the old truths” (RD, 198) and that his exposing the truth in all its fullness would minimize his chances of being believed, as is illustrated by the following quote:

If he were to try and explain this, the truth, as it had really been, with all its complexities, the people here would think he was lying, just as Mpondo had made Dirk look like he’d been lying about the wet blanket that his family had kept in the bath. Dirk had not been lying. The necklacing, the blanket, the pain: all of it was true. (RD, 199)

These examples make it clear that Hendricks is not as interested in speaking the truth as he is in being believed, which is crucial for him being granted amnesty. He therefore carefully selects the information he presents in front of the Commission, being less concerned about its truth content than about its believability.

Another aspect that speaks against the TRC hearings being a place of truth-telling is the fact that the participants are repeatedly encouraged to meet privately, in a less official setting in order to reveal further information. This is suggested by the Commissioners themselves (RD, 124) as well as by Hendricks (RD, 233) at different stages of the hearing. Similarly, towards the end of the novel, Sarah requests a private meeting with Hendricks in order to question him about the connection between Alex’s betrayal and Steve’s death.

This behaviour by the different parties suggests that they perceive the likelihood of truth being revealed in these private conferences to be higher than during the public hearings, which labels the TRC as potentially valuable in providing a framework or trigger for truth-telling, but not as a platform for it. This is expressed more directly by Pieter Muller claiming that “the last thing spoken at the Truth Commission is the truth” (RD, 299) and Sarah “laugh[ing] out loud” as an answer to the question: “Is it [the Truth Commission] about truth?” (RD, 318).

One counterexample which does portray the TRC as a platform for revealing truth is Pieter Muller’s threat to James Sizela:

“I’m going to do what you asked of me and break the trend. I’m going to tell the truth to the Truth Commission. [...] I’ll tell them everything just as I have told you but with more detail. I’ll describe your son and the pain he underwent. I’ll tell them what he told me about you as well. I’ll make you listen, not only you, but his mother as well...” (RD, 302)

It becomes apparent from context, however, that Muller’s intention is by no means to reveal what really happened, but to add to the Sizela’s suffering by inventing cruel and disgraceful details about their son’s death, trying to evoke guilt and shame on their part. He therefore does not threaten to use the TRC as a means of making the truth known, but of spreading lies,

which due to the fact that there are no other witnesses to Steve's death will be almost impossible to refute.

7.3 Attitudes and Expectations towards the Commission

By using an omniscient narrator, the novel allows the reader to learn very different attitudes towards the Commission, held by different characters. Many of the expectations towards the TRC and the hearings are of a very personal nature. For James Sizela, its coming to town represents his "last chance to find his son's body" (RD, 17). He seems to have accepted that "Muller will never stand trial for Steve's murder" (RD, 17) and does not seem to give much consideration to the Commission's greater significance for South Africa or the discourse of reconciliation and forgiveness built around it but merely sees it as a tool to reach his goal, as is made clear by the following passage:

If the Truth Commission was useful in this, then James would use it too. All James wanted was his son. His son to bury before he himself grew too old to do so. (RD, 47)

However, despite trying to ban the remaining questions from his mind, he also hopes that the hearing will shed some light on the circumstances and causes of his son's death. It seems that the mere existence of the Truth Commission, together with the knowledge of its coming to Smitsrivier has reduced his ability to suppress these questions:

How much had his boy suffered? Had he cried out? Had he been brave? Questions that should not even be asked. And now with the Truth Commission about to start these questions might not only be asked but also answered. (RD, 46)

For Dirk Hendricks, the hearing in Smitsrivier, which is neither his first nor his last amnesty hearing, seems to be merely another step towards his release from custody and, eventually, freedom. He therefore seems to almost look forward to the hearing, being sure and reminding himself that "[h]is ordeal was over. Almost over." (RD, 77) and entering the hall with a feeling of excitement and confidence, bracing himself for the "Showtime" (RD, 79) he'll have to get through before his freedom can finally be secured. The development of events seems to be to his satisfaction, since he draws the following conclusion at the end of the hearing, even reviewing his former, biased opinion of the TRC:

The amnesty hearing hadn't turned out to be the ANC-inspired pretence at justice he'd originally assumed it would be. These judges were real, decent people, willing to give him a fair hearing. (RD, 250)

It is striking, that the novel includes these words of praise from a perpetrator who perceives the Commission's procedures to be relatively fair, while at the same time incorporating Mpondo's observation of the victim's families present at the hearings "staring numbly at their children's killers" and struggling to "accept that the result would not be justice but the truth." (RD, 171), pointing out that for them the TRC means that they have to settle for less than most of them wish for or perceive to be just.

In contrast to Hendricks, his friend and former fellow police officer, Pieter Muller, seems to hold a very different view of the TRC, deeming it "all so bloody hypocritical" (RD, 95) but at the same time realizing that "[t]hings ha[ve] changed" (RD, 212) since the TRC triggers a chain of events that ultimately lead to his exposure and death. For him, the Commission's coming to town clearly marks a turning point of his life. He experiences first hand that "the white community is less protective of its sinners than it used to be" (RD, 121) when his business loses a great number of customers and someone even sprays his wall calling him a murderer. When Dirk Hendricks finally reveals the location of Steve's body and it becomes apparent that Muller was his interrogator and therefore responsible for his death, Muller's crimes become publically known. While he does apply for amnesty, he chooses to orchestrate his other own death rather than be held accountable for his actions by the Commission, leaving his wife to explain the two principles that Peter seemed to esteem higher than his life: "One: he would never have gone to the Truth Commission, and two: he would never have gone to jail." (RD, 311).

Alex Mpondo's expectations towards the TRC seem to be very different. At the beginning of the novel he is sure that "No good could come from it" for him personally and that "[T]here [is] nothing in it for him" (RD, 31). Even though in the end he draws the conclusion that "he didn't regret coming back" since having "looked Dirk Hendricks in the eye" might have been a start (RD, 337) that is the only gain he receives from the hearing which causes him a great amount of pain and shame and which only his regard for the Sizela's need makes him attend.

Apart from these opinions of those personally affected by the TRC and its work, the novel also includes several passages in which the characters are reflecting on the Commission in general. These mainly consist of conversations between Ben and Sarah, pondering the significance and reasonableness of the TRC.

While Sarah voices her criticism about "the grandiose claims the Commission keep making for their project." (RD, 39) which she deems impossible to implement, Ben seems to be more

appreciative of the fact that such an institution was ever brought about by “two opposing sides” that “were at war with each other” (RD, 38), adding that he views it as “far more than [a compromise]” since it provides South Africa with “a chance to heal itself” (RD, 38). However, Sarah responds by pointing out the complex and partial nature of truth:

Even the name’s a give-away. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission! Whose truth exactly? In your words: the torturer’s or the freedom fighter’s? The policeman’s or the terrorist’s? [...] truth is not neutral. [...] I’m not trying to say that the law is neutral. I know it works unevenly. But at least the law provides some standards for inequalities to be judged. (RD, 38)

Her speech provokes Ben to remind her that “the law can only come into play when there is evidence” (RD, 39), which is not the case here since almost all evidence has been destroyed by the perpetrators themselves, which means that despite all the criticism towards the Commission, there are few better alternatives.

Towards the end of the novel, when Ben points out that “the Truth Commission is not about justice” and was also “never meant to be” (RD, 318) they seem to resume this discussion as to its nature and purpose and Sarah is, again, quick to point out its faults and shortcomings:

If the new rulers of South Africa think justice is complicated, well, they should know that the truth is even more elusive. So what else is there? Reconciliation? That’s what the churchmen preach. Good for them, somebody has to. But I defy you to find reconciliation between the individuals either in this case or in a score of others. Oh sure – there’ve been the usual heart-warming sentiments from the mouths of those wonderful old mamas, the ones who always bear the cost of this country. They’re South Africa’s speciality – they make the world feel good about its own humanity.

Even though Ben does not attempt to defy her arguments, except for pointing out that “[t]he reconciliation the Commission talks about is not between individuals” (RD, 318) he silences her further objections to society-wide reconciliation supported by crime statistics with a simple “It is what it is.” (RD, 318). This does not only leave Sarah speechless but also astonished at “how fundamentally he had been changed” (RD, 318), having once been one of the few people of Smitsrivier who “had refused to accept what is but had instead argued and worked for what should be” (RD, 318-319). While she attributes this change of attitude in Ben to his dying, it might also be interpreted as a sign of him seeing the TRC as a crucial turning point for the situation in Smitsrivier and of it having moved towards more equality and justice, which makes him more tolerant of the imperfections of the system that are still in place.

7.4 *Red Dust* as part of an international Discourse of Truth and Justice

7.4.1 Loyalty and Betrayal - Exploring unacknowledged topics

By addressing loyalty and betrayal, the novel can be considered an example of topics that were not sufficiently acknowledged by the TRC or being explored in other contexts and media. With Dirk Hendricks and Alex Mpondo, the novel features two characters on two opposing sides that have both betrayed their best friend, thereby making the point that betrayal is an issue that both sides of the apartheid conflict had to deal with. Interestingly, Mpondo as well as Hendricks have very consciously chosen sides and are committed to their group, which is illustrated, for example by Alex remembering how “the collective had become more important than the individual” (RD, 171) and Dirk Hendricks strongly disagreeing when Ben, begging him to reveal the location of Steve’s body tries to convince him that “[t]his is not about sides” (RD, 257). “How can it not be?” he asks, “South Africa had always been about sides, from even before the *Engelse oorlog*.” (RD, 257).

Alex, after all these years is still haunted by the question: “[H]ad he, by his cowardice, been responsible for Steve’s death?” (RD, 204), unable to appease his conscience. Instead he keeps wondering about the reasons, asking more and more questions like “Why Steve? Why Steve and not Alex? Was it because Steve was braver than Alex?” (RD, 206) and finally concluding that he is guilty, since “[t]here’s more than one way to bear responsibility” and though he “might not have struck the blow”, “[t]hrough [his] words [he] sentenced Steve to death.” (RD, 330)

Dirk initially seems to condemn Alex for the betrayal of his friend, calling “all that sympathy” for “the likes of Mpondo” that are “crucified by [their] betrayal of [their] friend[s]” a waste (RD, 258). However, when being faced with the “impossible choice” of “either tell them where Sizela was buried or else to allow himself to be buried in prison” (RD, 334) he comes to the conclusion that “[n]o matter how much it was that he and Pieter had shared, no matter how strong their friendship, that time was gone” and that it was now “every man for himself” (RD, 195). This stands in clear contrast to his initial resolution to remain loyal and holding on to his old values about which side was “right” stating that “[j]ust because they’d won, because the law was on their side, that didn’t make them right” (RD, 258). His fickleness in this matter reveals not only his double moral standards but also his readiness to change his views to more opportune ones when times change.

Despite arguing to himself that “[h]e had done what he had to, that was all” (RD, 336) and soothing his conscience with the question: “How could anybody, even Pieter, have expected him to do anything other than he did?” (RD, 334), it seems that Dirk is haunted by the question whether “his betrayal had killed Pieter?” (RD, 334). This becomes even more understandable, when the reader learns that Hendricks’s betrayal had occurred long before, when he buried the record together with Steve’s body and was not rooted, as in Alex’s case, in any kind of external pressure he was exposed to, but in his own anger towards Muller because of his carelessness in killing Steve and leaving Dirk alone and exposed when burying the body (RD, 334). The way Hendricks deals with this unanswered question is, however, very different to Alex’s who assumes responsibility for Steve’s death even though, as the reader knows, he only named him after he had already been killed. Dirk, in contrast, continually intends to justify his actions to himself, arguing that “[b]ack then [...] how could he have known that what he did would stretch so far into the future to be ended only by Pieter’s death?” (RD, 334) and assuring himself that it “wasn’t his fault” (RD, 334). He seems to realise the destructive power of the unanswered question, being aware that “[i]f he dwelt on it, it would drive him mad” (RD, 336) and therefore determinedly refusing that option, whereas Alex seems to accept the fact that he will have to live with the uncertainty for the rest of his life.

7.4.2 Challenging and doubling TRC’s rhetoric speaking Truth to Reconciliation and national healing

One way Red Dust challenges the TRC’s rhetoric of speaking truth to reconciliation is by asking the question whether learning the truth is really helpful or rather harmful. Alex’s description of the victim’s relatives at the TRC hearings does not only doubt the logic of exchanging justice for truth but also whether the hearings are actually a suitable tool of exposing truth and, even if they proved to be, whether that is of any benefit to the victims and their families:

You could spot them at every Truth Commission hearing, sitting in the front row, staring numbly at their children’s killers as if that way they could understand what had happened and that way could accept that the result would not be justice but the truth. The truth: had any of them uncovered it? And if they had – had it made them better? Sometimes, Alex doubted it. (RD, 171)

It is noteworthy, however, that the passage describes Alex as *sometimes* doubting all this, not as generally rebuking the Commission’s claim that “the truth will set you free”.

This “packaged slogan” (RD, 337) is also directly referred to by both, Alex and Dirk Hendricks. The former remembers it when he observes that “no matter the truth of what happened, Hendricks would have lied” (RD, 337) and therefore, after Muller’s death there is no way for him to learn the truth since, despite all the Commissions grand claims, it “was never so easy to come by” (RD, 337). Hendricks, on the other hand, whom one would suspect to be more suspicious of the TRC’s rhetoric than Alex Mpondo, an MP in the ANC government, makes a very different observation:

Then [during the hearing], for the first time, he had understood, really understood, what Archbishop Tutu had meant when he said on television that the truth could set you free. Dirk had felt that strength which the archbishop talked about flowing inside him as he sat there on the stage. Far better that he had told the truth: far better for all concerned. (RD, 251)

The reader is therefore presented with an example of not the victims, but the perpetrator gaining relief and a sense of freedom from the truth being revealed. However, it should be taken into account that the information Hendricks revealed at this hearing was not about his own criminal behaviour but about Alex’s betrayal. By only revealing truth very selectively and making sure the information he reveals incriminates Alex rather than himself, he does everything in his power to direct their attention away from his crimes by disgracing Alex Mpondo instead, who is left regretting his own inability to predict Hendricks’s behaviour:

There. Finally. It was out in the open. His betrayal. [...] He had expected Hendricks to answer the question by describing how he had cried out, and often blacked out as well. But he should have know that what he had done instead was unleash his own disgrace. (RD, 192)

The passage clearly displays that, despite the truth of Hendricks’s claims, they do not contribute in any way to Alex’s healing or freedom, nor are they spoken with the intention of bringing about reconciliation.

Another example which challenges the Commission’s paradigm is Pieter’s confrontation with James Sizela in which he claims to tell him the truth about his son. While the reader is not informed about the true details of Steve’s death, it is obvious that Muller’s claims about his lack of intelligence and disappointment in his father are invented in order to enrage James. This, therefore, is not an example of truth-telling, but of the strategical use of lies, similar to the presentation of Hendricks’s excuses for his behaviour in the past, which become all the more harmful by means of the little amounts of truth that they contain. However, it seems that the presence of the Commission has prompted Muller’s invention of these lies and

confrontation of James, which, once again, challenges the idea of the TRC being a tool of promoting healing and understanding.

In both of these examples, it might be argued that if the full truth had been spoken it might have brought a certain degree of freedom to the victims, especially to Alex who could have been relieved from his doubts and regrets about his friend's death. However, for the Sizelas to be exposed to the full story of the cruelty, arbitrariness and futility of their son's suffering and death is not likely to have had a very liberating, but rather a crushing effect on them.

Moreover, the general absence of truth-telling throughout the novel despite the TRC's presence could be interpreted as a challenge to the Commission's rhetoric. In contrast to the other novels, speaking truth to reconciliation does not merely happen "off stage" (Gready, 174), that is outside of the official TRC hearings, but seems to be almost inexistent, even between the characters on the same side. Dirk and Pieter, who only communicate through looks but hardly ever words are one example, James Sizela who seems to never directly ask Alex Mpondo about his breaking under torture or express the anger he feels towards Alex is another one. The most drastic example, however, is the relationship between Pieter and Marie Muller, which seems to be so marked by the absence of verbal communication and truth-telling that Marie even has to rely on informers among her neighbours in order to hear about Pieter being summoned to court.

7.4.3 Competing with the TRC by revealing more truth than the Commission

Red Dust can be counted as a classic example of a novel acting as a competitor to the TRC by being able to reveal more information and shedding more light on the (fictional) events it narrates than the real life Commission was able to in many of its cases. This is mainly due to the fact that the novel has the possibility to use an omniscient narrator and thereby provide the reader with considerably more information than even the fictional Commission in the novel, since they gain insight into the characters' minds and thoughts. It is only by this means that the reader eventually learns about the competition between Hendricks and Muller in breaking their prisoners and that Steve had already died when Alex broke under torture. By withholding this information until the very last chapter, the novel makes use of information distribution in order to keep up suspense, which is typical for the genre of the thriller. Another example is the background for Dirk Hendricks's betrayal of his friend Pieter by burying a

sheet from the police record along with Steve's body, which is never revealed to any of the other characters, not even Pieter, and only made known to the reader through Hendricks's thoughts.

In contrast to the reader, the fictional Commission, except for the location of Steve's body learns very little of this information, which is partly due to Alex abstaining from further opposing Hendricks's amnesty application, which, one could argue, leaves the case officially unsolved and the truth unspoken.

7.4.4 The processes of telling and learning Truth

While the processes of telling and learning Truth is an important topic in Slovo's *Red Dust*, which is already indicated by the quote from Shakespeare's *Henry IV* on the first page: "Is not the truth the truth?" (part I, ii 4), it is striking that the novel generally seems to be marked by the absence of truth-telling. One could therefore argue that the novel does not reflect as much on the processes of telling and learning truth, as Black (2011, 63) and Gready (2009, 174) point out TRC novels often do, but rather on the processes of telling and being exposed to lies. Moreover, *Red Dust* repeatedly points out the fact that truth is simply not always possible to be obtained and often remains unrevealed (cf. Mengel, 162). Steve's death and its relation to Alex's betrayal is but one example of it, others being the motive and course of events of Pieter Muller's death, which remains a secret to all other characters except his wife Marie and James Sizela, or the motives for Dirk Hendricks's burying evidence against Muller with Steve's body, which are never revealed to any of the other characters. However, as pointed out in the previous section, the reader, in contrast to the other characters and the Commission, in all these cases eventually learns the truth by means of the omniscient narrator.

Two reasons that might account for the lack of truth-telling are the characters' loyalties on the one hand and, on the other, the power that their exclusive knowledge of the truth gives them over the other characters, especially when this truth is considered to be shameful or likely to cause pain. Hendricks's withholding of the truth in relation to Steve's death provides an excellent example of how these two motives work together. On one hand, the way in which he tells Sarah about Alex's alleged responsibility for his friend's death makes it clear that he enjoys the discomfort he knows this revelation will give her as well as Mpondo and the power that his exclusive knowledge about the true connection between the events gives him:

He was smiling now. "Your friend Mpondo," he said, "was responsible for Steve Sizela's death," leaning back, relaxed, casual, "and that's the truth of it." (RD, 326)

This is confirmed by Mpondo's conviction that "no matter the truth of what happened, Hendricks would have lied [...] to keep Alex on the hook" (RD, 337). On the other hand, Dirk's thoughts later on tell the reader that apart from satisfying his sadistic streak, the withholding of the truth also serves the preservation and protection of Pieter's reputation, even after his death:

What had she expected – that he would tell the truth? The truth that Mpondo only broke after Sizela's death? That Pieter was just clumsy? That it was an accident? How could Dirk have said any of that? Of course he couldn't. Not if he cared about Pieter. (RD, 335)

Again, the power that the knowledge of truth gives to its possessor, is related to the fact that it would put somebody else to shame.

Sarah tries to get Alex off the hook by pointing out the fact that he himself was a victim, not a perpetrator and therefore cannot be held accountable for Steve's death, as is displayed by the following quote. However Ben's answer makes it clear, that there is more than the rational truth of hard facts and that her reasoning will not help Alex to regain his peace of conscience and mind:

"Whatever the timing. Alex did not kill Steve Sizela. Pieter Muller did. Which leaves Alex only with the reality that he broke under torture. How can there be any shame in that? Men like Hendricks were experts : they were trained to break their victims."

Ben nodded. "That, of course, is the rational truth" (RD, 320)

Moreover, the fact Sarah's question: "How can there be shame in that?" remains unanswered, suggests that he understands there can in fact be shame in the truth, namely if the truth is about an act, such as betrayal of a friend, considered shameful by society, almost regardless of the context it occurs in. The novel therefore paints a picture of perpetrators shaming and thereby further injuring their former victims in public by claiming to present the truth.

A further example of the novel meditating on the topic of truth and lies is Sarah telling Ben she is going to stay in South Africa "[f]or a while at least" (RD, 338), later "thinking that although what she'd just told Ben wasn't a lie, it was also only half the truth" (RD, 338). Despite the example being of minor consequence for the plot of the novel, it draws attention to the fine shades that seem to lie between lie and truth of which so many appear in the novel.

Finally, an example that is analysed in the novel by including Alex's reflection on the event is Marie Muller's lying about her husband's death and that way ensuring James Sizela's freedom. While it seems like an honourable act, especially since it makes her unable to cash in her husband's life insurance, Alex also observes that she had simultaneously patronized

him and “stopped James from being James, from telling the truth” and thereby “kept [him] as her sort had always tried to keep him: securely in his place” (RD, 313). While Marie Muller’s lie therefore helps James to gain his freedom, in a different sense it also restricts and binds him, eventually even forcing him to resign from his job since he feels that “he c[an] no longer foster those principles of probity, morality, integrity that were essential for the proper development of any individual” (RD, 307).

7.4.5 International dimension

Whereas *Red Dust* is exclusively set in South Africa, the novel certainly has an international dimension to it, mainly made up by the character of Sarah Barcant and her parallel life in New York which she only leaves for a short period of time to support Ben in the TRC case.

While her move from Smitsrivier to New York is called “[a] stunning dislocation” and “[a] continental shift for which there could be no mental bridge” (RD, 8) her emigration is also deemed “inevitable” (RD, 82) by other characters, due to her achievements and mindset. Despite the fact that, on her arrival in Smitsrivier, Sarah is struck by its familiarity, even after all these years (RD, 8), other characters, such as Pieter Muller or her former school friend André, who have never left the town, do not see her as part of it anymore, nor do they seem to welcome her return, as the following passages illustrate:

She was the kind who felt little loyalty for their country and who, on fleeing, so completely remade themselves that they could never come back. (RD, 82)

You weren’t here during the hard times and if you think you can now swan back into town and tell us what to do, you and your *blerry* subpoenas, you’ve got another thought coming. (RD, 162; emphasis in the original)

Towards the end of the novel, despite Ben urging her to stay in South Africa (RD, 152; 338), Sarah seems to increasingly feel in a similar way to them, sensing that Smitsrivier “had once been home to her and yet now New York beckoned” (RD, 338) and longing for the “ordinary life” she lives there “unmarked by the contours of heroism, sacrifice and guilt that were so much a piece of everything South African” (RD, 338).

Besides dealing with the topics of home, homecoming and exile the novel also makes reference to the My Lai massacre (RD, 148 -150), when Hendricks’s explains to Sarah that during an interrogation you have to focus so hard on your prisoner that “even if the My Lai massacre was going on next door you wouldn’t hear it” (RD, 148). This is another example of establishing connections and parallels between the histories of different nations and could also

be interpreted as a reminder to the reader, or to Sarah Barcant, that South Africa is not the only country having to record outbreaks of violence.

Apart from these examples, its being intended for an international readership can also be deduced by the explanations it offers on the TRC and its rules and procedures. The novel goes to great lengths to explain the chain of amnesty applications (RD, 18-19; 31), the participant's right to choose the language they speak in front of the TRC (RD, 83), the setup of the room (RD, 82) or the prerequisites for amnesty (RD, 81), all elements which would be familiar to a South African audience, which would have listened to and watched TRC hearings over the media.

7.4.6 Ambiguity and complexity

Slovo's novel definitely adds ambiguity and complexity to the discussion about the TRC by meditating on topics such as loyalty, truth, reconciliation and power as well as by offering insights into the thoughts, reasonings and motives of the different characters on both sides. By offering this information it invites the reader to identify with, or at least find understanding for most of them to some degree. Even though the novel does, perhaps more clearly than the other two that have been analysed, distinguish between victims and perpetrators when it comes to the past, it breaks up the clear categories of "good and bad" or "black and white" by explaining the thoughts, attitudes and struggles of both sides. That way, neither side is portrayed as only "bad", since even the torturers' positive sides are mentioned, portraying Pieter and Dirk as family men, concerned for their wives and children and drawing attention to the fact that they are by no means the only ones guilty but that most of their former colleagues have simply "melt[ed] away into the new South Africa" (RD, 26). Moreover, when talking about the present, this distinction between victims and perpetrators becomes less clear. While Alex seems to become a victim once again, James Sizela, for example, could be labelled a perpetrator after shooting Pieter Muller. Marie Muller, on the other hand, can either be credited with protecting him from punishment for his actions because of her understanding that his action was provoked by her husband's shameless, cruel and sadistic behaviour or criticised for patronizing James, preventing him from acting as a subject, taking responsibility for his actions.

By telling of loyalty and betrayal on both sides, the novel seems to suggest that everybody is capable of it and seems to caution against rushed, harsh judgement. One could interpret Ben Hoffman's words to Sarah as a summary of the novel's message on ambiguity:

[Y]ou must see [...] that nothing is as simple as you would have it. If you were to take the trouble to understand, to really understand, those guns-for-hire like Hendricks, then you would also understand why this country is still so violent. We are all interconnected here. You cannot pay attention only to one side as if it stands separate from the other. (RD, 151)

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the three novels has shown that the TRC plays a crucial role in each of them and all three authors seem to have made a conscious effort to portray the Commission in very realistic terms in their fictional works, making reference to real life events and persona as well as the discussion in the media surrounding it. *Southern Cross* even goes as far as incorporating names and places significant for the work of the real TRC and *No Man's Land* includes a fictional transcript of an amnesty hearing, very closely modelled on the proceedings of the real TRC. Moreover, all three novels include detailed descriptions of public hearings held by the Commission, conveying great parts of them in direct speech.

The way the TRC is relevant varies in each of the novels, though some parallels can be detected. While *Southern Cross* and *No Man's Land* portray its hearings as a place where the violent and unjust nature of the past is acknowledged and the TRC itself as marking a significant turning point in South African history, *Red Dust*, although it does pay some credit to the changes of situation that have arrived together with the Commission, rather depicts it as a place where the past is re-enacted and victims stay victims, whereas their former perpetrators continue to torment them by new means. All three novels further describe the hearings as forums where less truth is revealed and exposed as expected or hoped for and as a platform for perpetrators to present excuses for their crimes. However, even though the Commission is presented as unable to excavate the full truth about the past, all three novels credit it with being at least a first attempt of dealing with it rather than letting silence and denial prevail. Moreover, all three make mention of it as a frame where the perpetrators encounter their former victims and/or their families. While in *No Man's Land* additionally the

TRC plays an important role as a turning point in the protagonist's life, *Southern Cross* stresses its significance in terms of a place of emotional catharsis.

Just as the way the TRC's significance is constituted in the individual novels differs, so do the metaphors used to describe the Commission. However, in all three cases the Commission is referred to at least once as a circus, although it varies who is considered the main attraction – the perpetrators acting as freaks of the side show (RD), or the commissioners serving as clowns (NML). The elements of show and entertainment contained in this metaphor is shared by a number of similar ones, describing the TRC as a theatre (SC), freak show (RD), zoo (RD), revivalist meeting (RD), street party (RD) and dance (RD, SC). Furthermore, *Red Dust* refers to the Commission as a band-aid, an antiseptic and a ritual cleansing, thereby echoing the images the TRC composed for itself (cf. 3.2). *No Man's Land* on the other hand likens it to an organism and simultaneously to a vicious machine of destruction.

All three novels share in the common point of criticism about the TRC (cf. 2.5) that the claims made by the commission were too grand to be delivered on and portray it as exposing less truth than desired or expected. Furthermore, in all three novels the characters' expectations of what the Commission will be able to do for them is rather limited. While *Southern Cross* seems to acknowledge and praise the public education function of the victims' hearings, *No Man's Land* and *Red Dust* severely criticise the amnesty process, pointing out the Commission's eagerness to grant amnesty even in the absence of full disclosure on one hand, and the selective prosecution of some perpetrators, mostly those who performed the "dirty work" and now serve as "sacrificial offerings", while the real sustainers and beneficiaries of apartheid go unpunished. It is noteworthy, however, that there is an element of hope in each of the novels and the Commission is not condemned entirely but merely presented as unequal to the enormity of the task it is faced with.

In regard to the importance they place on testimony, the novels differ. While *Southern Cross* includes several, most of them recorded in direct speech, they are less prominent in the other two novels. However, Mrs Peters' telling the protagonist about her son and his death, which is similar to the testimonies presented to the Commission, is crucial for the change in his attitude in *No Man's Land* and the flashbacks and memories of Alex Mpondo, though known only to the reader and never shared with the other characters, show some resemblance with the

descriptions of suffering given at the TRC hearings. Moreover, both of these novels describe the perpetrators as relating their own suffering connected to their former job to the Commission, which could be considered testimonies as well and do not fail to have their effect on the audience. Since all of these novels are concerned with the TRC and individual people's struggles and experiences connected to it, one could even classify the novels themselves as (fictional) testimonies about the TRC.

All the novels analyzed reflect on the TRC, thereby contributing to the international discourse about truth and justice evolving around it as well as picking up its legacy. They do this by addressing betrayal (RD, SC) and spying (SC) as well as the desire for revenge and retribution (RD), all topics which remained largely unacknowledged under apartheid as well as by the TRC. Moreover, they also mention the phenomena of "white guilt" on one hand and the claiming of ignorance as an excuse on the other. *Southern Cross* and, though to a lesser degree, also *No Man's Land* additionally reflect on the presence and role of the media in relation to the TRC hearings.

Furthermore, all the novels challenge the TRC's rhetoric in several ways. The process of speaking truth to reconciliation so fervently promoted by the Commission happens off stage, in informal settings, rather than at the hearings in *Southern Cross* and *No Man's Land* and hardly at all in *Red Cross*. Moreover, Slovo's and van der Merwe's novels portray life in exile as preferable to remaining to South Africa and all three novels challenge the concept of national reconciliation by constantly referring to the high crime rates in the country. Additionally, neither of the novels describes national disclosure before the law and in all three cases the Commission is forced to make a decision without having learnt the full truth.

While in all the novels the TRC remains ignorant of the full truth, the reader, kept in suspense for a long time conforming to the genre of the "whodunit" novel, is eventually presented with the information about what really occurred. This is possible through the use of an omniscient narrator (RD, SC) through which the reader can access the minds and thoughts of different characters or a third person limited narrator relating the thoughts of the perpetrator (NML). By thus adopting multiple points of view and granting the reader insights into the characters thoughts and feelings, the novel acts as a competitor to the TRC, being able to reveal more truth than the Commission by the particular means available to it.

Truth is also an important motive in all the novels, which reflect on the processes of it being told and learnt, often presenting truth as arising from unexpected sources. Furthermore, they question the liberating effect the Commission claims truth-telling should have. *Southern Cross* and *No Man's Land* provide examples where the truth, though very painful and troublesome to the characters, eventually has a positive, liberating effect on them and, in the case of Paul du Toit, provokes a very positive change of attitude. *Red Dust*, on the other hand, is so marked by the absence of truth telling that such positive, healing effects can hardly be detected. This might be due to the fact that what truth is revealed is factual and there are no examples of narrative or restorative truth (cf. section 3.1) to be found in the novel. In this context, it is also important to mention that *Southern Cross*, which seems to be much more supportive of the reconciliation discourse than the other two novels and portrays the TRC hearings as part of the national healing, is concerned with a Human Rights Violation Hearing as well as an Amnesty Hearing, while the other two novels focus exclusively on amnesty processes.

Moreover, all three novels appeal to an international readership and have been circulated internationally. They include explanations of the Commission and its proceedings and rules to ensure readers not familiar with the political context may follow and, furthermore, portray the consequences of the atrocities committed as extending beyond the local sphere. Additionally, they all feature characters living in exile who, despite having left the country, find themselves unable to escape their connection to South Africa and its history and are still being influenced by the developments. In relation to this, it is striking that all three authors live or have at some point lived abroad but still choose to make South Africa the theme of their writing.

Furthermore, the novels add ambiguity and complexity to the discussion around the TRC in several ways. *Southern Cross* is the one that most clearly breaks up the clear-cut distinction between victims and perpetrators, strongly suggesting that people can be both at the same time. *No Man's Land*, though less explicitly, makes a similar point, both of them featuring perpetrators that ultimately regret their crimes and only eventually realise the destructive consequences they had. *Red Dust*, on the other hand, portrays the perpetrators as submitting to the Commission's rules as far as opportune for them by making public excuses and apologies but really still as intent on tormenting their former victims as always and gaining pleasure

from their anguish. However, by including the failures of the “good” characters, such as betrayal, murder committed in anger or lack of understanding, the novel still promotes shades of grey rather than categories of black and white. Moreover, the novels are not forced to neatly assign all characters to clear-cut categories of victim or perpetrator the way the commission had to, thereby pointing out how many positions there are in between these two and that blame and guilt are never easy and often impossible to assign.

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10. Apendix

Abstract in English

Zusammenfassung auf Deutsch

Lebenslauf

Abstract

This thesis explores the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in three selected contemporary South African novels, namely Jann Turner's *Southern Cross*, Carel van der Merwe's *No Man's Land* and Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust*.

Their analysis has shown that the TRC plays a crucial role in each of them, their representations of the TRC modelled very closely on the real life Commission and providing explanations on its proceedings for an international readership. Moreover, they draw on oral testimonies presented to the real TRC to varying degrees. While the novels credit the Commission's hearings as being a place of acknowledgement of the crimes of the apartheid past rather than allowing silence and denial to prevail, they also point out its falling short of its grand claims and its being unequal to the task set before it. Moreover, the metaphors used for the TRC repeatedly point out the show character of its public hearings.

All three novels furthermore meditate on the Commission's claim of truth being the way to reconciliation and freedom, while simultaneously presenting the TRC as unable to expose the whole truth in any of the cases dealt with in the novels. The reader, on the other hand, by the novel's means of adapting multiple views and providing insight into the character's thoughts, is eventually presented the truth. By the same means the novels add complexity and ambiguity to the discussion surrounding the TRC, having the additional advantage of not being obliged to categorize neatly into victims and perpetrators in the same way that the Commission had to. They therefore add shades of grey where black and white categories dominate the discourse, suggesting that some might have been victims and perpetrators simultaneously and that blame and guilt are not easy to assign.

Zusammenfassung auf Deutsch

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Süd-Afrikanischen „Truth and Reconciliation Commission“ (TRC; zu Deutsch: Wahrheits- und Versöhnungskommission) und deren Repräsentation, Funktion und Wertigkeit in drei zeitgenössischen südafrikanischen Romanen. Diese sind Jann Turners *Southern Cross*, Carel van der Merwes *No Man's Land* and *Red Dust* von Gillian Slovo.

Nebst einer Einführung zum historischen Kontext der Einsetzung der TRC nach dem Fall des Apartheid Regimes, sowie deren Ziel, Arbeitsweise, Ergebnisse und häufige Kritikpunkte, wurde das Wahrheitsverständnis der TRC, die Wichtigkeit persönlicher Zeugnisse für deren Arbeit und deren Beliebtheit als Romanelement untersucht.

Der größte Teil der Arbeit ist der Analyse der ausgewählten Romane gewidmet, die Bedeutung der TRC in jedem der Texte bestätigt hat. In allen drei Fällen scheinen die Autoren stark auf Material der historischen TRC zurückgegriffen haben, um die Kommission so realistisch wie möglich schildern zu können. Weiters scheinen die Romane an die mündlichen Zeugnisse, die einen Großteil der Anhörungen vor der Kommission ausmachten, zurückzugreifen, wenn auch in unterschiedlichem Ausmaß. Immer wieder werden außerdem Erklärungen über die Arbeitsweise und Regeln der Kommission geliefert, um die Werke auch für ein internationales Publikum verständlich zu halten. Die Metaphern, die verwendet werden um die TRC zu beschreiben, vergleichen deren öffentliche Anhörungen immer wieder mit verschiedenen Arten von Shows.

Während die Romane die Kommission als einen ersten Versuch zur Aufarbeitung der belasteten Vergangenheit, die davor großteils totgeschwiegen oder geleugnet wurde, positiv bewerten, weisen sie auch auf die Unmöglichkeit eines solchen Vorhabens hin, da die Anforderungen, die an die Kommission gestellt wurden, ihre Kapazitäten bei weitem überstiegen. Sie kritisieren daher die großartigen Verheißungen der Kommission, die unerfüllbare Hoffnungen weckten. Außerdem stellen die Werke das Motto der Kommission in Frage, welches Wahrheit als Weg zu nationaler Versöhnung und persönlicher Freiheit präsentierte. In keinem der Romane gelingt es der Kommission, die ganze Wahrheit ans Licht zu bringen, während der Leser, dank der Möglichkeit des Romans verschiedene Erzählperspektiven zu verwenden und so die Gedanken mehrerer Charaktere zu schildern, schlußendlich Einblick in die wahren Geschehnisse bekommt. Da die Romane den zusätzlichen Vorteil haben nicht wie die TRC in jedem Fall zwischen Opfer und Täter

differenzieren zu müssen, bereichern sie die Diskussion rund um die Kommission an Komplexität indem sie aufzeigen, dass manchen Personen beide Rollen erfüllen und Schuld nicht immer eindeutig zugewiesen werden kann.

Lebenslauf

Persönliche Daten

Name: Sophia Oester
Geburtsdatum: 19. 06. 1989
Geburtsort: Melk an der Donau
Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich, Schweiz

Ausbildung

Seit 2008 Lehramtsstudium für die Unterrichtsfächer Englisch und Spanisch an der Universität Wien
1999-2007 Neusprachlicher Zweig des Stiftsgymnasiums Melk
1995-1999 Volksschule Leiben

Auslandsaufenthalte

Februar-Mai 2014 Comenius Assistenz an der Menntaskólinn í Reykjavík, Island
Februar-Juli 2011 Auslandssemester (Erasmus) in Valencia, Spanien
September 2007-August 2008 Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr (EVS) in der Jugendarbeit der Holy Trinity Church in Bath, England
Mitarbeit und Leitung bei mehrwöchigen Musicalprojekten des Vereins KISI-God's singing Kids in Österreich, Palästina, Uganda und Peru