Representations of Memory in Contemporary South African Literature by Young, Black, Female Authors

Laura Winstanley

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Representations of Memory in Contemporary South African Literature by Young, Black, Female Authors

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Abstract

This thesis explores the representation and construction of collective memory published in South Africa since 2007 by young, black, female authors. Collective memory is what is remembered about the past in order to create a desired national or other social identity. The purpose of this thesis is to explore different facets of South African identity and the way in which collective memory both constitutes group identity and is, in turn, constituted by such groups. This thesis analyses the role of gender, generation and race in the development of collective memory. The research methods included analysis of texts, specifically literature through the theoretical lens of memory studies specifically the work of Aleida and Jan Assmann. Postcolonial theory and more recent discourses of decolonisation have also played an important role in the analysis of these contemporary texts. Primary sources include interviews with the authors of the key texts, conducted by me and others, as well as the texts themselves.

The thesis concludes that contemporary South African authors are moving away from earlier postapartheid literature, with its preoccupation on apartheid, to focus on the issues facing South Africa today. Contemporary literature represents the survival of precolonial memory, and its recovery after the fall of apartheid. It explores the experience of black people in a country and a world which still favours whiteness over blackness. Black people remain economically disadvantaged, which leads to a lack of access, for the vast majority to political or social power. It illustrates the structural racism resulting in economic and social inequality as well as the potential of decolonisation to complement South Africa’s political independence. These authors create a sense of what it means to be a black woman in South Africa. Feminist rewritings and an insistence of women’s importance as creators and distributors of collective memory are a feature of all these texts. Finally, the role of generation in the construction of collective memory is demonstrated in these texts by their avoidance of the apartheid as a topic and focus on a variety of contemporary issues. The expectation and disappointment which characterises this generation pervades the literature they have produced.

Contemporary authors attempt to shape the vision of South African memory in order to bring about social change. They view their work as a contribution to collective memory. They attempt to amplify what South African identity and memory means, and fill in the gaps left by national metanarratives which continue to dominate the postcolonial nation. These authors are multiply disadvantaged by race, gender and age. They view part of their role as readdressing the lack of literature published by people like them, and the lack of representation they find within canonised literature. This thesis explores the varied and innovate ways in which they are contributing to literature and to collective memory.

Resumen

Esta tesis explora la representación y construcción de la memoria colectiva de Sudáfrica a través de lo publicado desde 2007 por autoras jóvenes negras. La memoria colectiva nutre las distintas identidades grupales presentes en Sudáfrica, las cuales a su vez crean las narrativas retroalimentan la memoria colectiva.

La tesis concluye que las autoras sudafricanas contemporáneas, a diferencia de lo que ocurría con la literatura inmediatamente posterior al apartheid, están sustituyendo la preocupación por el apartheid para centrarse en los problemas que enfrenta Sudáfrica en la actualidad. La literatura contemporánea explora la supervivencia de la memoria precolonial y su recuperación tras la caída del régimen del apartheid, abordando también el racismo estructural que resulta en la desigualdad económica y social de Sudáfrica. Las reescrituras de mitos e historias en clave feministas, así como la insistencia en el rol de las mujeres como creadoras y distribuidoras de memoria colectiva son un elemento común de los textos analizados.

Las autoras contemporáneas intentan dar forma a su visión de la memoria sudafricana para impulsar el cambio social y económico. Su trabajo es una contribución a la memoria colectiva de Sudáfrica, llenando los vacíos dejados por las metanarrativas nacionales que continúan dominando esta nación poscolonial.

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Introduction: collective memory and literature in South Africa

“Coming to terms with the past has emerged as the grand narrative of the late twentieth and early 21st centuries. Individuals and nations are seeking to overcome their traumatic legacies through the establishment of historical truth and the creation of collective memory” (McEwan 740). The creation, or reconstruction of collective memory as a means of overcoming trauma and creating a new, collective identity, is nowhere more a national preoccupation than in South Africa. South Africa has conducted a great deal of memory work, a self-conscious attempt to re-write narratives of collective memory. The difficulty of approaching memory is a problem that pervades South African society and its literature. What we remember, how we remember and the notions of self and nation built on this basis is a space of conflict but also creation. Collective memory is not only a means of memorialisation, to preserve what came before, but it also underpins the way an emerging society defines itself. Literature has been posited as a means of “filling in the gaps” left by other attempts to collate South African collective memory, which have tended to exclude certain voices (Brink 30). Black and female voices, in particular, have failed to appear as part of recorded history (McEwan 740). This thesis will consider the representation of memory in literature published from 2007 to 2022 by South African authors, focusing on young, black, female writers. Memory appears both as a tool of belonging and identity-building but also as a burden where individual narratives are overshadowed and rendered mute in the search for a unifying and restorative communal identity.

Literature is a sphere where this interplay between nationalism and memory is both represented and deconstructed. South Africa is a particularly fascinating case in terms of the construction of collective memory, as within its national borders collective memory is also transcultural. South Africa has eleven official languages and many different cultural groups, so the movement and development of collective memories can be observed within it.

South African literature: emergent writers and their critics

Why South African literature, and why *this* South African literature?[1] Indeed, if we are to talk about South African literature at all, at least some attention must be paid to what "South African literature" means in the first place. The value of studying South African literature, is distinctly unfashionable in South African academic circles where research is directed towards the transcultural and transnational nature of literature (Mbao "Feeling Towards the Contemporary" 89). This trend notwithstanding, the construction of national identity and the rise of nationalism has become a preoccupation both in South Africa and internationally.

The new identity-based movements which have sprung up all over the world asserting the importance of non-dominant collective memories, such as Black Lives Matter, have been faced with a nationalist response in the United States and the UK among other countries (Bieber; Bone; Orazi). The independence movements in Scotland and Catalunya, which assert an alternative version of history and identity to that of their respective nations, have been met with a backlash from the UK and Spain based on a justification of national unity drawn from collective memory (Bone; Kingsley & Minder). In South Africa itself, tropes of the nation continue to be asserted and xenophobia is on the rise despite an apparent upsurge in inter-ethnic conflict between South African citizens and a breakdown of communication between various groups within the country (Reiersgord). There is a distinct sense of South African exceptionalism that seems to align with the rise of ethnic nationalism throughout the world (Reiersgord).

Why, then, has there been a decrease in the study of South African literature as a canon? Since 2005, if not before, the very existence of South African literature has been questioned. De Kock one of the earliest to pose this question, later claimed that rather than thinking that

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[1] Beyond literature published in South Africa by South Africans I have followed Michael Chapman's (2022,pp.4-5) restriction that it must be in some way related to South Africa and reflective on the South African experience.

South Africa literature did not exist, he wished to suggest that academics who had previously worked on the topic were:

> more interested in writing our names on any number of sexy topics (cities, oceanic discourse, jazz, metropolitans, whiteness studies, ugly/beautiful aesthetics, self-styling, to name a few) than the more modest tasks of assessing, describing, and evaluating the writings of others demarcated as imaginative SA writers. (19-20)

Although not wishing to dismiss the importance of any of these topics; this thesis will explore South African writing because, whilst national identity may have become less important for literary critics, it has become increasingly important for individuals and groups in terms of how they understand their identities and how they understand their collective memory. Literature is a sphere where collective memory is both represented and deconstructed (Erll and Rigney 113). Literary works represent nations and other groups, their constructions of identity and how these processes occur (113). Beyond the mere representation of national collective memory, literature brings to light experiences beyond the dominant groups' narratives, revealing other memories of the nation beyond those condoned by the powerful. Francesca Mussi describes the way literature can contribute to the important narratives of a nation, such as reconciliation but she also claims that literature can "become an extremely useful critical site from which to question, challenge and keep the dialogue on the past open to understand better the present" (10). Analysing the literature of a nation does not preclude exploring the transcultural elements of collective memory. Postapartheid South African literature is a broad field, with exceptionally varied content, genre and style. This thesis will focus on the work of young, black, female authors as I have identified that this is an area in which strikingly little research has been conducted. Several scholars have written well-researched and incisive studies of literature in South Africa, divided along the lines of language or language groupings, or by ethnicity or cultural background. Duncan Brown has compiled an extensive list of these studies, yet there is a notable group missing (Brown 1112). Brown does not identify a study which includes black, female authors as a group, although, as he notes, white female authors have been the subject of studies (1112).

This has to some degree been rectified since Brown's article was written by the publication of *I Wrote My Story Anyway* adding the category of black, female writers to the groupings listed above (Boswell, 2021). The author, Barbara Boswell describes black women as "the most negatively impacted by colonialism" (*I Wrote My Story Anyway* 14). This assessment brings to mind Gayatri Spivak's description of the subaltern female:

> Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effected. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labor, for both of which there is 'evidence.' It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. . . (Spivak 28)

Boswell links this double colonisation due to gender and race to the exclusion of black women from literary and other creative and cultural spheres. She writes that "South African society, structured in recent history by the oppressive and exploitative systems of colonialism and apartheid, has historically been organised in a way that systematically excluded black women from writing and other forms of cultural production" (Boswell *I Wrote My Story Anyway* 19). She finds that, freed from "laws such as the Publications Act of 1963, the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, or an apartheid imaginary that conceived of black subjects as devoid of culture" consequently "black women have been prolific, producing novels, plays and poetry that are often at the vanguard of social change" (19). She presents this as a radical, political act, claiming "black women have seized a space previously denied them to render worlds hitherto unseen in South African literature" (20)

Her book goes a long way to bridging the gap I have identified, yet it is just one study amongst a multitude evaluating South African literature. Accordingly, I will build on Boswell's important work to consider the contemporary, black, female authors who are concerned with constructing and representing South African identities and memories. That is to say, where Boswell's study concludes with writers of the transition and the first postapartheid years, my study begins. Boswell includes the following writers: Miriam Tlali, Lauretta Ngcobo, Sindiwe Magona, Zoë Wicomb, Agnes Sam, Farida Karodia, Zukiswa Wanner, Yvette Christiansë, Rayda Jacobs and Kagiso Lesego Molope. The youngest of these authors are a similar age to the eldest of my chosen cohort but began publishing before where my study begins2. I will reflect on the literary heritage these authors represent and the effect their work had on my chosen authors in the first section of this thesis.

As I have outlined, the cohort of authors I am focusing on for this thesis are all young, black women. I have used other criteria to further restrict the scope of my research. All these writers are "emergent" authors and not only contemporary ones, by which I mean that their first work was published after the apartheid. The first novel was published in 2007, the most recent thirteen years later in 2020. I wanted to use authors who had not published before the fall of apartheid for two reasons. I am interested in memory and generation, and I wanted to restrict my work to solely postapartheid authors, not only authors who continued to publish their work after the end of the apartheid, to establish if there is a generational approach to collective memory. For the same reason, I focus on works by authors who were children during the apartheid, providing a generational scope on their work. All these authors publish in English, and all texts are written predominantly in English though some contain other languages too.

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[2] The authors included are in their late twenties, thirties and forties.

Authors will be presented ordered by the date they published their first literary work appearing in this thesis.

Kopano Matlwa

Kopano Matlwa is a practising doctor with a PhD in medicine. She has worked on a variety of public health projects in South Africa alongside writing three novels. Her first novel *Coconut* was published in 2007. Her third and most recent novel *Period Pain* was published in 2016.

Coconut is a novel split into two parts. It is an account of South Africa immediately after the transition to democracy and highlights how much, and how little has changed. It focuses on one day in the lives of two young girls but narrates their stories through reported flashbacks presented in italic script. One part is told by Ofilwe. She is a rich private-school-attending child of the new black middle classes. She experiences bullying and racism at school and is constantly trying to make herself more acceptable to white beauty standards to fit in with her classmates. She reconnects with the traditions of her grandparents as she grows up, but continues to feel uncomfortable in her own skin. The other narrator, Fikile (also known as Fiks) lives in a poor, black township. She is abused by her uncle who she cannot escape due to poverty. She is exploited by her white employer and condescended to by her white customers. Fikile’s self-declared dream is to be “rich and brown” (*Coconut* 140). The two girls only meet once in the novel and their behaviour demonstrates in just a few moments that they despise each other. This novel is useful for my study falling as it does between the earlier transition literature and the later works of literature which I have included that focus on contemporary South Africa.

Period Pain is Matlwa’s third novel, and it clearly illustrates the change that South Africa has gone through since 2007. Gone are concerns about residual racism and conflict over previously divided spaces. This has been replaced with growing anxiety about the state of South Africa today. Masechaba, the central character is a young doctor in a public hospital. She is overworked and lacks the resources she needs to properly care for her patients. Much of their ill health is caused by poverty, particularly a lack of early medical intervention due to an inability to access the scant available resources. The hospital is cleaned up for a visit by a government minister. Matlwa's description of the superficial nature of this temporary improvement implicitly lays the blame for the crisis at the government's door. Masechaba becomes involved in a campaign to counter xenophobic violence against migrants to South Africa from other African countries. Her best friend and flatmate, Nyasha, has criticised her inaction and she feels compelled to act after witnessing terrible acts of violence on the television. She is raped by attackers who claim that they are doing so because of her support for migrants. She eventually recovers from this attack and continues with the resulting pregnancy. She is happy, to her great surprise, to be a mother, and the novel ends on a hopeful note despite all the suffering it contains. This novel deals with many of the headline-dominating issues in South Africa today, yet still seems to stay hopeful about the future of South Africa.

Mohale Mashigo

Mohale Mashigo has had a varied career. *The Yearning* was published in 2016 when Mashigo was already a successful singer-songwriter and radio presenter. She was born in Soweto in 1983. *The Yearning* was her debut novel and won the 2017 University of Johannesburg Prize for South African Debut Writing. *The Yearning* is set in postapartheid South Africa and follows the life of Marubini, a young woman who works in marketing for a wine company. She enjoys her job; has friends she likes to go out with and has a great relationship with her partner. However, she begins to experience traumatic flashbacks, remaining unaware of their cause. When she was a child, she was sexually abused by a neighbour. In an attempt to help her deal with the trauma, her father, who is a sangoma (a healer), removes her trauma through a ceremony which requires him to take her trauma far away from their home. He has, according to the official history, subsequently died in a racist anti-Zulu attack in the transition period unrest. Doubt is cast on the manner of his death later in the novel, as Marubini rediscovers what happened to her in the past and learns to live with her trauma. The novel reflects on the hope of recovery that permeated South Africa after the end of apartheid. Despite this optimistic outlook, Mashigo explores the idea that suppressing pain and trauma, however well-intentioned, is never a permanent solution.

Sisonke Msimang

Sisonke Msimang's memoir *Always Another Country* was published in 2017. She was born in Zambia to South African parents who had fled into exile following her father's political activism and subsequent persecution by the apartheid regime. Msimang always felt South African growing up and returned there as a teenager to meet her extended family. She experienced disappointment with the postapartheid government which contrasted dramatically with the hope she had held throughout her childhood. Her memoir documents her experiences as a child in Zambia and Canada, where her family moved when she was a young child. She experiences racism in Canada and in the United States where she later goes to study. However, the memoir is mainly concerned with the transition to democracy in South Africa. Msimang describes the white community's reluctance to let go of apartheid privilege and South Africa's persistent problems with crime, especially violent crime. Msimang eventually takes the difficult decision to leave South Africa with her Australian partner to start a new life in his country. Msimang is the eldest of the writers in this cohort, but due to her exile, she did not experience life under the apartheid regime, though it had a huge impact on her life. As a young adult, she is a witness to the transition to democracy and the early years of the first ANC government. Her disappointment is apparently greater than that of all the other writers, perhaps because she was older during the times of optimism and because she eventually felt she had to leave South Africa again, even though she was no longer exiled.

Keletso Mopai

Keletso Mopai's first short story collection *If You Keep Digging* was published in 2019, although some of the stories had been printed a few years prior to the collection's publication. Mopai is one of the younger writers in the cohort, born in the early nineties. She grew up in a township in Limpopo Province of South Africa, before attending boarding school. She studied Geology at university and saw writing as a hobby until *If You Keep Digging* was published. This collection provides a panoramic view of South Africa today. Each short story focuses on a different set of characters, and through them the reader forms an idea about what it means to be South African today. Two intertwined short stories, "Monkeys" and "In Papa's Name", describe the interactions between a young Afrikaner who is struggling with his abusive father, and another boy growing up in a black township without a father, who was a victim of the apartheid state. The endemic poverty and lack of change which has occurred in South Africa in the past decades is viscerally presented in these short stories. The school one of the young, black characters attends does not even have enough food for the children, let alone any additional educational facilities. Other short stories in this collection deal with the problems faced by young women in South Africa, particularly sexual violence but also unachievable beauty standards. Mopai considers other issues facing South Africans such as unsafe working conditions and migration. The short stories are not without hope but do paint a generally bleak picture of life in South Africa today.

Rešoketšwe Manenzhe

Rešoketšwe Manenzhe is another young author, born in the early nineteen-nineties. *Scatterlings* was published in 2020 and won the Dinaane Debut Fiction Award and was shortlisted for the Sunday Times/CNA Literary Award for Fiction. This novel is the exception in terms of literature produced by this cohort. Manenzhe does not write about contemporary South Africa but rather sets her novel in 1927. This year the South African government passed an act forbidding sexual relations between people of different races, the Immorality Act. The novel describes the response of a family which is made up of the mother, Alisa, a British woman of Caribbean descent and a white Dutch father, Abram and their two daughters Dido and Emilia. Alisa, long troubled by mental illness, is so afraid that she attempts to kill her two young children, the eldest of whom, Dido, survives, while Alisa commits suicide. The novel focuses on Dido and her father's attempt to escape the South African state. They encounter and are helped by South Africans from a variety of backgrounds, and despite the horror that the novel begins with, it ends on a note of if not exactly hope, then not complete despair.

Although this novel focuses on a particular moment in South African history, it contains myths, traditions, and stories from within and outside of South Africa. It is the text that deals most directly with the idea of collective memory and how such memory forms identity. South African identity is shown to be fluid and influenced by peoples and traditions from around the world. Memory travels easily between countries with the migration of people and ideas in *Scatterlings*.

These are not all the works of literature published by young, black, South African women from 2007 to 2022. Due to the limitations of space, and the focus of my thesis on collective memory, I have had to select certain works for inclusion in the thesis. All the works have achieved some degree of commercial or critical success within South Africa and internationally. I have avoided certain genres, such as crime fiction, to focus on literature which explored a wider variety of facets of South Africa life. In addition, each text allows for a productive study of collective memory construction and representation. Despite the limits imposed by these criteria, my texts provide a cross-section of important literature published in the past fifteen years by young, black women. I have included a wide range of genres in this thesis to explore the varied way emergent writers are representing and constructing collective memory.

South African history: conflict and consensus

South African history is a site of conflict today and has been so for many years. The importance of precolonial history was diminished and narratives of colonial history were imposed upon the peoples living in what is now South Africa. John Wright explains that:

> History is always a contested terrain, but in South African society, largely shaped as it has been by a rapacious European settler colonialism and by a particularly predatory form of mining capital, conflicts over the past have, for at least two centuries, often been fierce. Understanding why this is so must inform any overview of the region's history before the establishment of colonial domination (Wright 2).

The history I wish to present here is the history of colonialism, postcolonialism and decolonisation of South Africa. The history of the area that makes up present-day South Africa is rich and varied, and the authors who I have included in my thesis reference various traditions which I will describe in greater detail throughout the thesis.

The apartheid in South Africa began in 1948. This formalised segregation of people by race was built on the legislation introduced since the 17th century by the Dutch and then British colonisers. South Africa, which contained peoples of many ethnic and language groups including the Bantu (the Xhosa and Zulu belong to this group) and the Khoikhoi and San people who predate the Bantu people in Southern Africa (Nattrass 35-37, 46). Part of modern-day South Africa, known as the Cape colony, was colonised by the Dutch, who created the first permanent European settlement in 1652. The Dutch settlers became the Boer people, and their language became Afrikaans. The Boer people took part in the Great Trek, partly due to increased English influence in the Cape colony (71). There was an increase in British settlement and influence after their victory in the Boer war (56, 105). Important changes also occurred within the African societies which existed in what would become South Africa. There was a period of warfare and migration, which intensified in the mid-19th century mainly whilst Shaka

Zulu, a gifted and revolutionary military commander, was in power (81). The causes are controversial, but the result was great upheaval and death. Several wars took place between the Dutch and British colonisers and the people whose land they colonised, including the Zulu people (140).

The union of the former Boer colonies, called the Union of South Africa, existed between 1910 and 1948. During this time the African National Congress, the party that would go on to win South Africa's first truly democratic elections[3], was formed. It was subsequently banned and many of its members, including Nelson Mandela, were imprisoned. The apartheid was formalised in 1948. One of its most important legislative acts was the Bantu Self-Government Act which forced the eviction of thousands of black South Africans, particularly from urban areas to the so-called "homelands" also known as the Bantustans (217). Although the proclaimed rationale behind this move was to maintain ethnic groups separate but equal, in practice it was a way of creating a captive black labour force who could not survive on the meagre land they were allowed to live on, which was only about 14% of the land in South Africa and was poor quality land for farming (218). The aim of restricting black people to such a small part of the land was to ensure that "black people would not be able to survive on so little land and would still need to come and work in 'white' areas" (218). The regime controlled where people lived, employment rights and even who could marry or have a relationship with whom, all on the grounds of race (Blakemore).

As well as legally entrenched injustices the apartheid government was also guilty of the assassination of people trying to resist it. The police murdered many suspects including political activists such as Steve Biko, a student leader famous for his activism and the "black is beautiful" slogan (Nattrass 265). One of the most famous incidents of police brutality is the 1960 Sharpeville massacre. Black people were required by apartheid law to carry passes to enter designated “white” areas, though many of them had been living there all their lives (Nattrass, 238). The police responded to anti-pass protests by shooting with live ammunition; people including men, women and children were shot as they tried to escape. (238-9.) Another incident which highlights the regime's brutality is the 1976 shooting of school children who were protesting against many problems with the resources-starved education system including a new law proposal that they would have to learn in Afrikaans (Nattrass, 2017, p.266). Many other peaceful protests were also brutally put down. Black people were the victims of violence even when not involved in political action or protest, either by the police or by other white people acting with impunity, knowing it was highly unlikely that they would ever face prosecution.

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[3] With universal adult suffrage

After a period of serious instability in the 1990s, president De Klerk conceded the first elections that had universal suffrage in 1994. The ANC, led by Nelson Mandela, won a landslide victory in those elections. Mandela is credited with a peaceful transfer of power from white minority rule to democracy, as well as calming the inter-ethnic violence which threatened South Africa in the early nineteen nineties (Blakemore). In the postapartheid years, one of the most important developments was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission[4] and the memory work which surrounded it5.This process was significant in the history of South Africa, and is particularly important for this thesis, involving as it does the deliberate construction of collective memory. The TRC was created by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act No. 35 of 1994 (Ross 26.) The TRC, brought into being by that Act, aimed to investigate “gross violations of human rights” (Ross 28). The TRC was designed to create a record of the crimes committed under the apartheid, to provide justice for the victims and amnesty or in some cases punishment for the perpetrators. The Act was based on the idea of Ubuntu which features in the South African constitution: ‘reparation but not … retaliation’, and

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[4] Henceforth TRC

[5] I will go into detail about the idea behind, and the methodology of, the TRC in section three of my thesis so here I will just provide a brief overview.

‘ubuntu but not … victimisation’ (26). Mussi defines Ubuntu thus: “a person with Ubuntu is aware of belonging to a greater whole and that all people are interconnected; this means that we are diminished when others are humiliated or oppressed, we are dehumanised when we dehumanise the Other (4). She goes on to explain that Ubuntu was meant to be the “ethical foundation of the TRC, Ubuntu represents and demands responsibility and reciprocity” (5). Maluleke suggests that this is a universal value, shared by many cultures within South Africa and beyond (5). The main idea behind Ubuntu is an ethical system which “values people as a community, rather than as individuals. The Zulus and other peoples have a saying, 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu', which means a person is a person through other persons. It is a humanistic way of life which holds ethics and morals at the forefront of everything” (5).

The TRC has been much criticised in recent years for various failings, significantly a too narrow focus on violence and a lack of consideration of the legal injustices of the apartheid, particularly the economic ones. As Fiona Ross (28) explains: “the definitions of violence and violation laid down in the Act were narrow. They did not address forms of structural violence or the racial discrimination that characterised apartheid” (28). The voices of women were also often lost, only appearing as witnesses and not victims in their own right. The Commission acknowledged this failure was inherent in its own parameters:

> The Commission’s relative neglect of the effects of the ‘ordinary’ workings of apartheid has a gender bias, as well as a racial one. A large number of statistics can be produced to substantiate the fact that women were subject to more restrictions and suffered more in economic terms than did men during the apartheid years. (Ross 36)

As well as producing this gender bias, this structuring of the TRC meant that the Commission did not take into account the injustices committed by the apartheid regime which were legal according to the apartheid’s rules. A lack of focus particularly on righting economic wrongs means people’s lives did not change as substantially as might have been expected after the end of apartheid. The TRC is still divisive in South Africa today; however, most South Africans' disappointment with the postapartheid regime is more directly related to the present than the past. The subsequent years have been characterised by disappointment with the postapartheid governments, all led by the ANC. This has mainly been due to the slow pace of change and economic redistribution. In 2020 the World Bank declared South Africa the most unequal country in the world and cited race as a determining factor in quality of life and opportunities (“South Africa Most Unequal Country in the World”).

Theoretical framework

In the following section, I will outline the terms, theories and ideas used within this thesis. Terms such as memory have a complex history and have been divided into different categories depending on the field of study, whether psychological, literary, sociological or anthropological. I will outline what I mean by memory and map out the various conceptions of memory which I have used to analyse the texts in this thesis. Aleida and Jan Assmann’s work, based on the collective memory theories first developed by Maurice Halbwachs, is crucial to the understanding of collective memory I wish to put forward here.

Collective memory: its purpose, fuction and limitations

As Aleida Assmann claims, there is no need to convince anyone of the existence of individual memory (“Transformations” 49). However, collective memory and the extent to which it can be called memory is a more contentious issue. Assmann questions Susan Sontag’s assertion that collective memory is not truly memory. Sontag writes that:

> all memory is individual, unreproducible - it dies with each person. What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, that this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds. (85-6)

The divide between collective and individual memory, Assmann insists, is not as stark as we might imagine. Individual memory, rather than preserving "an original stimulus" is also a process of "continuous reinscription and reconstruction" in the context of the present, in other words not so far away from the stipulating that Sontag describes (A. Assmann, p.53). Individual memory, like collective memory is conditioned by collectives: both in terms of co-remembering that occurs within families and groups, but also in terms of how and why things are remembered at all by individuals. Assmann explains:

> Once they are verbalized in the form of a narrative or represented by a visual image, the individual's memories become part of an intersubjective symbolic system and are, strictly speaking, no longer a purely exclusive and unalienable property. By encoding them in the common medium of language, they can be exchanged, shared, corroborated, confirmed, corrected, disputed, and even appropriated. In addition to that, it is sometimes notoriously difficult to distinguish what one has experienced oneself from what one has been told and afterward incorporated into one's own stock of autobiographical memories. (A. Assmann "Transformations" 50)

Maurice Halbwachs, one of the foundational thinkers of collective memory theory, claims that social frames condition both individual and collective memory, so in a sense all memory is collective. He writes: "no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections" (Halbwachs & Coser 43). Before the work of Halbwachs "memory" was "a matter of our neuromental system" (J. Assmann 109). This personal memory was the "only form of memory…recognized as such until the 1920s" (109). Jan Assmann explains that Halbwachs was able to show that "our memory depends, like consciousness in general, on socialization and communication, and that memory can be analysed as a function of our social life" (109).

Communicative and cultural memory:

Aleida and Jan Assmann have worked extensively with Halbwachs' theories of memory and have introduced distinctions of their own. Collective memory can be divided into two types, following their work: cultural memory and communicative memory:

> Cultural memory is a form of collective memory, in the sense that it is shared by a number of people and that it conveys to these people a collective, that is, cultural, identity. Halbwachs, however, the inventor of the term "collective memory," was careful to keep his concept of collective memory apart from the realm of traditions, transmissions, and transferences which we propose to subsume under the term "cultural memory." We preserve Halbwachs's distinction by breaking up his concept of collective memory into "communicative" and "cultural memory," but we insist on including the cultural sphere, which he excluded, in the study of memory. We are, therefore, not arguing for replacing his idea of "collective memory" with "cultural memory"; rather, we distinguish between both forms as two different modi memorandi, ways of remembering. (J. Assmann 110)

Communicative memory is multi-generational but exists within families or other groups who verbally construct their family memories of histories together. It is what people tell each other and what a group such as a family forms together. Communicative memory exists normally within smaller groups and has a limited lifespan, which Jan Assmann describes as three generations (111). It is not institutionalised, and has a more democratic means of creation, without any specialists (112).

The second kind of collective memory is cultural memory. Cultural memory differs from collective memory in that it can span far greater periods of time and be shared by people who have never spoken to each other. This memory can refer back to many generations ago, or even to a non-specified time which allows myth as well as history to form an important part of cultural memory. This kind of memory is that which, as Jan Assmann mentions above, Halbwachs did not include in his formulation of collective memory. It is linked to group identity, often but not always national, religious or ethnic. It is what a group chooses to remember (to memorialise, put in an archive, teach in a history class, or talk about). Cultural memory is “not the past as such, as it is investigated and reconstructed by archaeologists and historians…but only the past as it is remembered” (J. Assmann 113). This past performs an identity-constructing function: “Cultural memory reaches back into the past only so far as the past can be reclaimed as 'ours” (113). Cultural memory is collective, deliberate remembering and, sometimes, deliberate forgetting: “it is only by forgetting what lies outside the horizon of the relevant that it performs an identity function” (113). When I talk about collective memory, I will be referring to both communicative and cultural memory as defined by Aleida and Jan Assmann. Where pertinent to my reading of the texts, I will distinguish between the two types of collective memory according to the distinctions laid out here in the introduction.

Cultural memory, history and the nation

In the construction of collective memory, national identity is often at stake. Homi K. Bhabha describes the construction of a nation through the imagining of a simultaneously ancient and modern space. He does not refer to collective memory but his description of the modernity of nations in contrast to their claimed historicity illustrates the way in which nations create themselves out of narratives of collective memory. He explains that “the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of its irredeemably plural modern space…into a signifying space that is archaic and mythical, paradoxically representing the nation's modern territoriality, in the patriotic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism” (Bhabha 300).

Nation states do not have a memory, in the way that an individual does. But in order to perform the paradox Bhabha describes, they need to have a memory of their own antiquity. Aleida Assmann claims that they are compelled to make one:

> Institutions and groups do not possess a memory like individuals do; there is, of course, no equivalent to the neurological system. Institutions and larger social groups, such as nations, governments, the church, or a firm do not "have" a memory - they "make" one for themselves with the aid of memorial signs such as symbols, texts, images, rites, ceremonies, places, and monuments. Together with such a memory, these groups and institutions "construct" an identity (A. Assmann “Transformations” 54).

It is not just knowledge or facts about the past, it is what we choose to remember, commemorate and pass on to the next generation in the hope of preserving our identity and creating a particular kind of future. Jay and Stone give an example which highlights the difference between an event that we are aware of as a part of history, and a significant occurrence which forms a part of our collective memory:

> Americans may have a shared representation of the 2005 subway bombings in London, but the memory likely figures little in the way Americans view themselves. In contrast, the London bombings may loom large in shaping British identity. In such instances, the former may be a shared representation, but only the latter would be a collective memory” (Stone & Jay 505).

The huge commemorative events which took place in the UK to mark a hundred years since various First World War battles contrasts with a complete lack of national reflection on colonial events (Hirsch “Practicing Feminism” 9). British cities such as Bristol are littered with statues remembering the generosity of men whose fortunes were based on the slave trade and whose victims received no such memorialisation. Marianne Hirsch describes the deliberate focus on certain national events at the expense of others as an attempt to “weaponize” memory for conservative ends (1). The silence on certain moments of a nation or groups history is an equally important part of collective memory as what they choose to publicly remember. Aleida Assmann claims that: “memory is double edged. It can both serve as a medium for reconciliation, peacemaking and coexistence on the one hand and for rekindling conflicts by refueling hatred and revenge on the other" ("Dialogic Memory" 199). It can be more than double-edged; beyond reconciliation and rekindling conflicts it can also be an excuse and a distraction.

Memory is "not the past as such, as it is investigated and reconstructed by archaeologists and historians" but instead "only the past as it is remembered" (J. Assmann 113). Pierre Nora's distinction between memory and history is useful here. Whilst it may not achieve it, history aims for objectivity. History is not the possession of one group, but implies a degree of consensus:

> Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again. Memory is blind to all but the group it binds-which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs has said, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority. Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative. (Nora 9)

The overlap between history and cultural memory is greater when it comes to nation states or other large powerful group identities. Although they are not the same, they can be conflated (A. Assmann "Transformations" 64). Cultural memory can be recorded in history, and then taught to children by groups with the power to do so, this will often mean a nation state, or a colonial empire (64). Those who do not have the power to impose their narratives, less powerful members of a social group for example, or a minority culture in a state, may also have their own group memory, which does not count as history in the way the dominant group's memory would. Their memories are relegated to counter histories or are not remembered at all. As our understanding of history has changed, the difference between history and memory has become less clear. Aleida Assmann claims that:

> Historiography, as theoreticians explain, involves rhetorical use of language and, in spite of all claims to impartiality, a specific vantage point, an unacknowledged agenda, a hidden bias. In addition, we have come to accept that we live in a world mediated by representations in the form of texts and images, an acceptance that has had an impact on both individual remembering and the work of the historian. (A. Assmann "Transformations" 53)

The overlap between collective memory and history of nations is extensive, as nations wish to use their history to shore up the shared identity of their citizens today. However, Assmann insists that the identity forming element of memory means it remains distinct from history: "memory is knowledge with an identity-index, it is knowledge about oneself, that is, one's own diachronic identity, be it as an individual or as a member of a family, a generation, a community, a nation, or a cultural and religious tradition" (J. Assmann 114).

Cultural memory, postcolonialism and decolonisation

It is impossible to consider the construction of collective memory in South Africa without considering its history as a colonised nation, and the processes of decolonisation which have occurred since the fall of the apartheid regime. Colonialism is defined by Edward Said as "almost always a consequence of imperialism…the implanting of settlements on distant territory" (8). As well as the physical fact of occupying land already lived on by other people, colonialism separates indigenous peoples from the colonisers by racist discourse and legislative systems (Ashcroft et al. 55). Colonialism affects all areas of life from education to religion, as well as democratic and economic processes (Oyedemi "De-Coloniality" 2). Colonialism cannot be said to end with the creation of universal suffrage, and the decolonisation of the political sphere (Oyedemi "Postcolonial Casualties" 214). Colonialism affects so many areas of life that its impact on postcolonial societies remains long after independence. Toks Oyedemi explains the impact that has on people living in a country which has been colonised:

> In the postcolony, the colonial experience is a continuous pain, for the colonial project has never ended. The murder, genocide, robbery, and wars that characterised colonial pains are gradually buried in archives, repositories and pages of books, the distant rehashing and imaginary articulations of the colonial harms are what current generations live by, away from the physical pains their forebears endured. However, for this generation, the continuous cultural damage is an equally painful experience. (Oyedemi "Postcolonial Casualties" 214).

Postcolonialism[6] is a contested term which can refer to the state of having been colonised and the temporal aftermath, or to a holistic rejection of cultural, social and political colonialism and neo-colonialism ("Postcolonial Casualties" 214-5) This second definition is closer to the theory of decolonisation, which is the removal of colonialism in all its forms from a postcolonial nation or group. Oyedemi describes decoloniality as "the opposition to coloniality. It confronts coloniality and its oppressive matrix of racial, cultural and economic domination" ("Postcolonial Casualties" 218). Decolonisation as a practice arose from a concern that even when democratic decolonisation had occurred, through universal suffrage and elections, cultural and economic colonisation had been insufficiently removed from postcolonial societies. Attempts at decolonisation which merely replicate the power dynamics of colonisation have also been criticised. Oyedemi claims that:

> In essence, the rainbow nationalism ideology is beginning to be questioned, as social, cultural and economic separations of groups are visible in South African spaces. It has

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[6] In order to explore the link between postcolonialism, decolonisation and collective memory I will first distinguish between these two terms. Neither have a fixed definition, so I will outline the key ideas which have contributed to these terms and the way in which I wish to use them in this thesis.

> led to a new form of nationalism fuelled by the anger of unmet economic needs and the inequality that the neoliberal capitalist policies continue to exacerbate. Unfortunately, the anger is not only geared toward the state or political leadership, but also at other Africans, expressed in a xenophobic attitude. Immigrant Africans to South Africa have become scapegoats of the unrealised hope of economic liberation. ("Postcolonial Casualties" 221).

New national narratives including but not exclusive to that of the Rainbow Nation[7] have attempted to put the South African nation, rather than its people, at the centre of decolonisation. Oyedemi makes an explicit link between the rainbow nation ideology and a failure to distribute after the end of apartheid:

> Alongside weak economic decolonisation, a postcolonial psychological happiness was codified in the imagination of South Africans through rainbow nationalism as a signifier of a nation, a united nation. Rainbow nationalism symbolises an attempt to reconcile racially, economically and culturally segregated populations in post-apartheid South Africa. ("Postcolonial Casualties" 220-21)

Recent protests such as Rhodes must fall, and fees must fall have attempted to promote a more comprehensive form of decolonisation. Not only should South Africa be politically decolonised, but economic and cultural decolonisation are also deemed necessary in order to fully let go of the apartheid and colonial past (214).

Collective memory in postcolonial nations is complicated by the effect of colonisation on collective memory, and the often pressing need to create a stable identity to secure the future of the nation. Colonialism interrupts both communicative memory (between generations) and cultural memory by the imposition of a foreign one (Rothberg 364). The violence of this interruption of collective memory must be included in any concept of postcolonial memory. Collective memory is constantly changing and developing but colonialism represents a break with the past that lacked any degree of consensus and violently imposed new ways of understanding the past. A decolonised memory studies, or theories of memory, according to Michael Rothberg, "require an understanding of the relationship between memory, identity and violence" (363). However, he claims that there has been too little overlap in the study of collective memory and the process of decolonisation. It seems almost absurd to suggest that memory studies does not take into account postcolonial concerns, given the focus on history and decolonisation in political and ethical contexts in postcolonial nations. However, Rothberg claims memory studies and postcolonial studies have a "paradoxical relationship" and that many of the key texts of postcolonialism do not include memory theory, by which he means the understanding of memory developed by Halbwachs, Nora and other more recent theorists (360). Even more strikingly he says that memory studies, up until the second decade of the twenty-first century, had not really taken colonialism into account, or really considered the impact of colonialism on collective memory. This, he argues, is a relationship which is changing, as the similarity of their concerns is being acknowledged (362).

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[7] The Rainbow Nation ideology was developed during the transition to democracy to describe the aspired to multi-ethnic and multi-cultural South Africa.

Dirk Göttsche claims that memory has long been a concern of postcolonial analysis although a different terminology may have been used to describe the similar theories or concepts:

> Postcolonial discourse uses memory – both individual and collective – to promote critical knowledge of the history of colonialism, raise awareness of its continuing impact in the present, and work towards political, social and cultural decolonization in a globalized, interconnected and yet conflict-ridden world that continues to be marked by colonial legacies such as racism, asymmetrical power relations and uneven access to resources and opportunities. (Göttsche 3-4)

However, like Rothberg, he notes that the two disciplines have not necessarily worked together to provide a theoretical basis for this postcolonial interest in memory. Memory theory has often been applied to postcolonial nations, but often with too little attention paid to the specifics of the colonial situation (Buelens and Craps 4). This is common in the case of national trauma, where collective memory has been presented as being of equal importance to personal memory and thus the healing of personal trauma is secondary to healing the state. In cases such as South Africa, where serious human rights abuses have occurred, the new national government attempts to record the crimes of the past and create a new narrative to replace the imperialist narrative of the nation. Lea David outlines the remembrance process in such cases:

> The rationale for placing the notion of 'dealing with the past' at the heart of post-conflict and human rights abuse processes has tended to rest on three primary assumptions. The first, borrowed from individual psychology, is that working through the past is necessary for healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. The second, a political position, argues that accountability fosters democracy and promotes peace and human rights; while the third posits processes of dealing with the past as a moral duty, to remember the victims and acknowledge their trauma (Dragović-Soso). The ultimate goal is to 'heal the nation' and to 'reconcile' in order to move beyond the troubled past. (2)

However, even in a postcolonial context where the construction of a new metanarrative is understandable in a country whose sense of self has been shattered, new metanarratives still exclude certain stories. In a 2011 speech, later published as an article, writer and activist Verne Harris, reflecting on the long tradition of 'memory for justice' in postapartheid South Africa, suggested that despite a wealth of memory work South Africa remains severely damaged (3). Harris accepts the need for the creation of new postcolonial narratives, to repair colonial damage, yet still asserts that "memory work deployed in this way runs the risk of being trapped into a totalising agenda and of foregoing the opportunity to harness truly liberatory energies."

(4). The result of this is that “too many sub-narratives have been squeezed out, too many counter-narratives ignored. Loose threads too often have been seen as threats to a seamless narrative rather than opportunity for richer, more complex and more textured weaving” (4).

A preoccupation with creating a single narrative can also be problematic in contexts where trauma and healing are understood in very different ways. Marianne Hirsch describes the way in which trauma theory has been directly applied to postcolonial nations: “reliance on paradigms based on European histories, such as trauma and psychoanalysis, has been critiqued from global and postcolonial perspectives, even as they continue to be invoked to describe injury and survival from South Africa and Rwanda to post dictatorship Latin America” (“Practicing Memory” 11). Trauma is often attributed to postcolonial nations, and its cure part of their recovery. Stef Craps is not opposed to the use of trauma in a postcolonial context, yet he also notes the assumption that discourses of trauma are neutral and not situation-specific (“Beyond Eurocentrism” 46). In fact, these discourses “developed out of the history of Western modernity.” As such they cannot sustain the claims of “universal validity” which Craps suggest they continue to make (46). He claims that “today the concept of trauma is widely used to describe responses to extreme events across space and time” but that this is inaccurate as trauma “is actually a Western artefact, ‘invented’ in the late nineteenth century” (48). These objections have implications. The definition of trauma commonly held describes a single traumatic event, which deviates from the “normal.” In a postcolonial context, or even merely an international one, norms of trauma and healing may well be very different from those promoted by trauma theory.

Postmemory: inherited memories, inherited trauma

I will be considering the memories of people who did not experience the apartheid, or whose only memories of it are from childhood. Marianne Hirsch’s conception of postmemory describes as memory the feelings of trauma experienced by the children of victims of an atrocity, or bystanders who witnessed but did not experience the event. Hirsch explains "to grow up with overwhelming inherited memories… is to risk having one's own life stories displaced. However, the contrast to this displacement is a creative force, which Hirsch describes as "retrospective witnessing by adoption" allowing a connection to wider narratives and subsequent emergent identities ("Surviving Images" 10). A sense of responsibility to those who came before, identified by Robert Frosch, can be manifested in many ways (Frosh 18). Younger generations can feel that their own experiences are not worthy of describing, and certainly not worthy of literary expression. They can try to tell their parents' stories or avoid them, believing that they are not theirs to tell. The concept of postmemory has not yet been extensively applied to South Africa, as the events of the apartheid are not yet so long ago. The authors whose work I am analysing stand somewhere between postmemory and having their own memories of apartheid, as they were young children during the apartheid.

Gender: the place of women and the feminine in collective memory

The role of gender in memory is a subject which has not received much interest until relatively recently. Hirsch writes that "the study of memory has been slow to integrate the analysis of gender and sexuality as markers of social difference" ("Practicing Feminism" 2). Memory in popular culture as well as in academic circles has been focused on acts of memorial, that tend to focus on significant historical events, mainly those in which men participated more than women or at least are perceived to have participated more than women. Women appear as objects, rather than individuals, in the historical production of memory. Meg Samuelson identifies the way that the figure of woman is used in nationalism:

> In the now-famous phrase with which Benedict Anderson entitles his 1983 study of nationalism, nations are 'imagined communities', and they are imagined, frequently, through gendered tropes: women bear the symbolic weight of nationalism; their bodies

> are the contested sites on which national identities are erected and national unity is forged. (2)

Samuelson observes that women are still being used in this way in postcolonial nationalism. She claims that the “transitional cultural moment” is a project of remembering the nation that nonetheless “dismembers women” (2). She claims that:

> All too often in male nationalisms, gender difference between women and men serves to symbolically define the limits of national difference and power between men. Excluded from direct action as national citizens, women are subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit. (Samuelson 354)

Women have also often been excluded from the recording and creation of collective memory. In terms of archiving Cheryl McEwan believes that this is a trend which must change in postcolonial nations: “those previously denied agency, including black South African women” she believes, should “play a full part in the documenting of their lives” (743). The extent to which this is happening is unclear. Despite efforts to include female testimony in memory creating processes like the TRC, their voices remain secondary.

Black writers, race and memory

As well as considering works only by women, I have also chosen to work with texts published by black women. Choosing to look at authors of a particular ethnicity runs the risk of essentialising the characteristics of a particular group. Race as a system of categorisation was developed to meet the needs of racism, rather than the other way around (Ashcroft et al. 218). Reproducing such categories has been actively discouraged in South Africa. Why then only black female authors?

Race is at once both a fantasy created to support imperial desires, and a reality which impacts on the lives of many (224). Black South Africans are more likely to be unemployed, less likely to be educated to tertiary level, more likely to live in poor housing and lack access to services because of the racist systems which were not fully removed following the end of apartheid (Milazzo 8). Newly democratic South Africa promoted a colour-blind approach to being South African, encapsulated in the idea of the Rainbow Nation where people of all colours were welcome in South Africa, and race was not an important factor. This is to some extent still in existence today, in 2018 President Ramaphosa declared "this year gives us an opportunity to reaffirm our vision of a non-racial society - to build a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it, black and white…" The problem with this colour-blind approach is that life in South Africa is still dominated by notions of race. Marzia Milazzo identifies continued inequalities in a 2015 article:

> Twenty years after the official end of apartheid, racial inequality remains rampant in South Africa. White people, less than 10 percent of the population, own approximately 85 percent of the land, 85 percent of the entire economy, and over 90 percent of the largest companies. (8)

The discourse of colour blindness implies that race does not matter and only serves to amplify racial inequality. "Colorblindness is a transnational discourse deployed also in Europe and in other former European settler colonies— from Australia to Brazil and from Cuba to the United States, places in which racial inequality remains pervasive" (Millazo 8). This is not merely coincidental, as Achille Mbembe explains: "reactionary and conservative forces have co-opted nonracialism, which they now equate with colour-blindness. They use nonracialism as a weapon to discredit any attempt to deracialise property, institutions and structures inherited from an odious past" (Mbembe).

He claims that colour blindness or non-racialism is a worthy aim of decolonisation; however, it is not possible where such inequality remains to ignore the role of race in poverty and other forms of oppression. He writes "a proper nonracial project is not the equivalent of colour-blindness. Under current conditions, colour-blindness simply means 'keeping blacks in their place '" (Mbembe). It is important for this thesis to be aware that racial difference is an important marker in the construction of collective memory in South Africa.

Transcultural memory studies

Transcultural memory, analysing memory existing between cultures as well as within them has been a significant shift in the focus in the field of memory studies. While memory studies had a tendency to look at the construction of memory in terms of nation states, in recent years memory theory has turned more towards the way memory is not fixed by nation state boundaries. Astrid Erll has developed the theory of "travelling memory" to describe this. She writes:

> Memories do not hold still – on the contrary, they seem to be constituted first of all through movement. What we are dealing with, therefore, is not so much (and perhaps not even metaphorically) 'sites' of memory, lieux de mémoire, but rather the 'travels' of memory, les voyages or les mouvements de mémoire. Possible contexts of such movement range from everyday interaction among different social groups to transnational media reception and from trade, migration and diaspora to war and colonialism. (11)

She insists that even within nations, national memory is not strictly contained or defined:

> There are the many fuzzy edges of national memory, for example, the sheer plethora of shared lieux de me´moire that have emerged through travel, trade, war, and colonialism. There is the great internal heterogeneity of cultural remembering within the nation-state. Different social classes, generations, ethnicities, religious communities, and subcultures all generate their own, but in many ways intersecting, frameworks of memory. (Erll 8).

The transcultural perspective has meant a move away from considering memory on a national basis. However, South Africa's situation is so particular due to the, in my view, unique memory work it has completed. There has been a political and cultural effort to form collective memory, which is rarely conducted as a self-conscious process, through means such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC.) The role of South Africa's literature in that process is an area which still requires a lot of research. The still relatively recent ending of apartheid in 1994 means that the process of forming a postapartheid canon is still very much work in process. Instead of looking at the transculturality of memory I will use Erll's model of "travelling memory" to explore the "fuzzy edges" of South Africa's collective memory. As Erll describes all collective memory is transcultural anyway, as that everyone's experience of memory is made of membership to a variety of groups that are not defined by national boundaries (10).

Literature and memory: mutual construction and representation

The role literature places in the creation or representation of collective memory is complex. Astrid Erll and Anne Rigney describes the role of literature as "a memorial medium in its own right, as a way of contributing to the larger discussion of the ways in which societies recollect their past" (112). Literature in this way is both a representation of collective memory, and a creator of it by what it chooses to write about and how it represents historical events (112). Erll and Rigney divide the functions of literature into three principal roles: literature as a medium of remembrance, literature as an object of remembrance and literature as a medium for observing the production of cultural memory (112). They claim that "the most obvious literary genres to spring to mind in this context are the historical novel, historical drama, and autobiography, but as with other forms of culture, the repertoire of available forms keeps changing" (112). As well as the genres they have focused on, I will be exploring memoir, contemporary novels and short stories. As well as acting as the producer of collective memory, literature also represents the process of remembering. These texts show how groups remember, what they remember and who is involved in this process, whether on a familial or national level. Erll and Rigney explain: "by imaginatively representing acts of recollection, literature makes remembrance observable" (113). This allows the reader to gain "cultural knowledge about how memory works for individuals and group" (113).

Thesis structure: memory, generation, race and gender

Memory in South Africa has received a lot of critical attention, both from a sociological and literary perspective. Memory is not only a means of memorialisation, to preserve what came before, but it also underpins the way an emerging or altering society defines itself. Harris asks, "to what extent are the failures of the postapartheid project failures of memory?", and his resulting paper finds that they are substantially so (3). If memory works is seen as remedial for a country's pain and integrant to the narrative of its future, how then, with so much at stake, should memory be approached? What role can literature play in this process?

This thesis will consider the representation of memory in the texts outlined above as both a tool of belonging and identity building, but also a burden where individual narratives are overshadowed and rendered mute in the search for a unifying and restorative communal identity. Unlike traditional monuments, that in stabilising a memory also facilitate its forgetting, literary works, like the novel provide a dynamic space where other forms of testimony and memorialisation cannot only be registered but also continually revisited and re-inscribed. Literature can be a space for the possibility of creating hybrid transitory identities where memory is not instrumentalised for a predetermined end but allows for continual engagement with the past.

My thesis will be structured in three sections: collective memory and generation; collective memory, group and nation; collective memory and gender. Section one explores the role of generation in the representation and construction of collective memory. I will examine the key historical events that this generation of authors have lived through, as well as the key movements which have altered political and social thinking in South Africa and beyond. This section will also analyse the authors' own thoughts on their work, and how they believe that they are contributing to collective memory and identity in South Africa. Section two evaluates the importance of the group in the construction of collective memory. The groups include the nation of South Africa, as well as various ethnic and social groups. Some of the collective memory analysed here is precolonial and focuses on myths and traditions. Other collective memory includes that of the experience of colonialism, apartheid as well as contemporary South Africa. Section three considers the relationship between gender and collective memory by looking at the role of women in South African memory construction. This section portrays the way in which female experience is represented in collective memory, as well as how women are used as part of the symbolic register of collective memory. Women's exclusion from national collective memory, and even exclusion within their own social group is to some degree countered by the collective memory they can construct through literature.

Section 1: Collective memory and generation

Chapter 1: Collective memory and the integration generation

In a recent publication on South African Literature, literary critic Wamuwi Mbao bemoaned an international understanding of South African literature that does not appear to have changed in the past twenty years. Dalmon Gamut recently won the Booker Prize, and the critical response to his victory was generally to compare him to the great South African writers J.M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer and Andre Brink. Mbao argues that this "suggests that the picture of aspirational South African literature held by the global North stopped updating some two decades ago" (Mbao "Feeling Towards the Contemporary" 89). By focusing on a generation of authors who started publishing less than two decades ago, I hope to go some way to rectifying the situation Mbao describes.

In this section of my thesis, I want to explore the effect of generation on postapartheid constructions of collective memory. The authors included in this thesis are all part of a generation that experienced the apartheid as children, and their memories are consequently very different to those of older South Africans, or younger ones who did not live through the apartheid at all. As outlined in the introduction, I have included a memoir, Sisonke Msimang's Always Another Country, four novels: Mohale Mashigo's *The Yearning,* Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* and *Period Pain* and Rešoketšwe Manenzhe's *Scatterlings,* and a short story collection, Keletso Mopai's *If You Keep Digging*. Of these literary works only Manenzhe's *Scatterlings* has a non-contemporary setting, and her story takes place in the mid-1920s. All the other works take place between 1994 and the present day, with brief mentions of apartheid in Msimang's *Always Another Country* during her childhood in exile.

The end of apartheid and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission continue to dominate critical and literary accounts of apartheid South Africa. However, the younger generation of authors, whose work I have focused on, have not taken the apartheid as a starting point for their writing. This generation writes about the first years of democracy more often than about the struggles of their parents' generation. While all generations tend to describe the times they live in, it is significant that this generation do not seem to find inspiration in the events of their early childhood or the earlier apartheid years at all. Their work delves into the lingering effects from the apartheid that can still be found in South Africa today and highlights the disturbing lack of change. This lack of change is predominantly based in a failure to redistribute economic resources and wealth after apartheid, meaning that for many, particularly black people, their lives have not materially changed since 1994. South Africa is a postcolonial nation, and the process of political decolonisation may have been completed but there is still a long way to go in terms of economic and cultural decolonisation (Oyedemi "Postcolonial Casualties 214).

In contemporary literature by new authors, the apartheid does not exist as a source of representation, and as a historical event it barely features in such writing. It is sometimes presented as the cause of South Africa's present-day problems, but almost always indirectly. In this section I will analyse why that might be the case. This section of my thesis will look at the particularities of the generation of authors I have focused on, and the way in which generation and collective memory interact in their work. I will outline the historical realities this generation lived through, and the impact that this had on their ability to publish and the public perception of their writing. This section will highlight events and trends which all South Africans have lived through since the end of apartheid but focuses on those which have particularly affected this generation of female writers.

This generation of authors are the not quite born-frees. They experienced at least some part of their childhood under apartheid. Although the term "born-free" sometimes is used to describe those who came of age in the 2010s, which would include people born as early as 1992, before the end of apartheid, for the purposes of this study I am limiting the definition of born free to those born after 1994. All the authors I have selected were born before 1994 and were the "integration generation" who moved from a childhood under apartheid to adulthood in the newly democratic South Africa. The eldest, Sisonke Msimang was born in 1974. She describes herself and her sisters as "freedom's children" (*Always Another Country* 14). By contrast, Keletso Mopai and Rešoketšwe Manenzhe were born in the early nineteen nineties and so were just starting primary school as South Africa moved towards democracy. Kopano Matlwa and Mohale Mashigo fall into the middle of this group and experienced the transition as school children. What these writers have in common is that they were alive during the apartheid but did not experience it as adults.

The apartheid continues to dominate political and literary discourse both within South Africa, and internationally. However, it is not part of these younger authors' autobiographical memory in most cases, or only to a very limited extent as childhood memories from their infancy. Msimang is the exception to this, as she was eighteen at the end of apartheid, and to some extent also Mashigo, who was eleven in 1994. They were not, however, freedom fighters, activists, or in any way significantly involved in the overthrow of the apartheid regime. The author most likely to have autobiographical memory of apartheid, Msimang, was not living in South Africa during apartheid. Their youth would not have protected them from apartheid, as education was one of the many areas the apartheid regime exploited to disenfranchise and discriminate against black people. However, their contact with the regime may well not have been as devastating as for adults who came up against the police, the judicial system, and other means of state control. This may well have impacted the way that they remember the apartheid, and how they interact with collective memory of apartheid.

Oyedemi explores the impact of colonialism and the decolonisation process on young South Africans:

> In South Africa, the process of undoing the effects of over 350 years of colonialism and apartheid is a long, arduous and very difficult task. For much of the successes of the

> postapartheid government in redressing the legacies of apartheid, for the current generation, although ‘born-free’, they remain victims of the difficult process of decolonisation. As such the term ‘born-free’ negates the realities of this generation, who are in a different struggle as activists and causalities of a continuous struggle for a postapartheid decolonised South Africa (Oyedemi “Postcolonial Casualties” 215).

Oyedemi is referring to born frees, but his words are also applicable to the slightly older South Africans who felt the weight of being the first generation to come of age in a free South Africa. Their concerns as writers are not so much with apartheid, but with the continued inequalities that pervade South Africa. Colonialism is not a system which simply stops with democratic emancipation. Economic and social inequalities that would not have seemed out of place in the apartheid continue. Oyedemi further claims that:

> For much of the celebration of postapartheid ‘postcolonial’ South Africa, the seemingly indelible nature of the cultural and economic legacies of colonialism reflected in the current social structures of South Africa, and the inability of postapartheid state and institutions to address fundamentally these legacies is a continued reminder that political decolonisation achieved through representational participation in an electoral process is merely symbolic; it is yet to produce economic and cultural decolonisation. (225)

In this section I will illustrate the effect of coming of age at a time of great hope which has descended into disappointment. Perhaps their situation is different from the born frees who do not remember this hope, though they certainly have cultural memory of it.

Postmemory of apartheid in South Africa

As I will explore, the apartheid as a lived experience does not feature heavily in these texts. This is contrary to what I expected when embarking on this thesis. My interest in inter-generational memory in the context of Holocaust studies led me to believe that trauma inflicted on one generation often reoccurred in the lives and literary works of the following generation and that this was reflected in literary output. This includes novels and biographies which attempt to tell their parents' stories, and also reflections on their own experiences of growing up with the weight of their parents' memories.

Postmemory, as outlined in the introduction, is a concept of vicarious memory developed by Marianne Hirsch, which has often been used to investigate the experiences of the children of Holocaust victims. These children's parents (now elderly themselves) conveyed their memories with such power, Hirsch claims, that their children experienced them not so much as second-hand but as first-hand memories. Hirsch explains that:

> Postmemory describes the relationship that later generations or distant contemporary witnesses bear to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of others—to experiences they "remember" or know only by means of stories, images, and behaviors. (Hirsch, "Generation of Postmemory" 106-7.

Intergenerational trauma can mean that events lived through by parents or grandparents are experienced by the younger generation almost as autobiographical memories. The importance of memories from one or two generations back has been so strongly passed onto children that the experience their parents' memories as their own. I will consider the extent to which such theories can also be applied to apartheid in South Africa and the trauma it caused.

Although, as I have explained, these young writers were alive during the apartheid, the bulk of memory about it is likely to be inherited rather than experienced. These writers, however, seem far more preoccupied with the new South Africa than the old one. They are conscious of living at an important moment of history and feel pressure to make the most of such a moment. I will explore what the effect of coming of age at this momentous period of history has been on the way these writers represent collective memory.

This part of my thesis aims to create a sense of this generation of authors in terms of the context that they come from, their literary and personal concerns, as well as their style. In chapter two, I will explain the key events and movements which have occurred in the lifetimes of these authors and identify trends in discourse and political thinking which may have affected their work. I will consider the social change which has allowed these authors to publish their work and receive awards and, in many cases, substantial readership. In chapter three I will evaluate the impact of being part of this generation on the work that these authors have produced focusing on why they have not found the apartheid to be a source of literary inspiration. The third chapter will consider what these authors are choosing to write about, rather than the apartheid. In chapter four I will evaluate the critical response, or lack thereof, there has been to the texts included in my study. In the final chapter, I will present the authors' own views on their writing, from interviews I have conducted myself and interviews with other academics, literary critics and journalists.

Chapter 2: Historical events, trends and movements inspiring the integration generation

This chapter will explore the context in which my cohort of authors is writing. I will outline the political and social background of their lives, analysing the political, social and literary movements leading up to and during their lifetimes. Defining a generation is complex, and individual experiences can vary more within a generation at times than between older and younger people. The boundaries are artificial yet can still be useful to provide analysis of shifts in society (Dimock). The concept of the "integration generation" I am using is to act as an analytical tool to evaluate changes in the production of memory in recent South African literature.[8] The term was used by Mohale Mashigo to describe herself, she explains: "I was part of the 'integration generation'. We were young enough to learn how to learn the ways of the other people but also old enough to understand the ways of our people" (Mashigo "We Bury Our Stories"). Kopano Matlwa has said she is "too old" to be counted as a born free, she is part of the integration generation who were the first to join mixed race schools and enter the workplace as legal equals (Matlwa "South Africa After Apartheid" 08:27-08:33).

The cohort of authors I have focused on write in a way which is different from older authors, and I would speculate younger authors too, although there have not yet been sufficient literary works published by South Africans in their twenties to evaluate this. The oldest of the truly "born-free" cohort, those born after 1994, is only in their late twenties, and though some literary works have been published I would argue that so far publications have been insufficient to evaluate a particularly generational preoccupation. Naturally, a generation is an entirely artificial marker. However, due to the significant events in the recent history of South Africa, there is a lot which binds people whose childhoods were lived under apartheid together. Michael Chapman claims historical events, while not determining the content or style of literature produced, do provide “contextual precision” to an exploration of literary works (5). In this chapter, I aim to provide an overview of the lived experiences of new South African writers and the context from which their work was created.

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[8] The term integration generation is sometimes used to describe the older "born frees" but is not commonly applied. I have taken the term to use for my cohort of authors. It is appropriate because they had to perform the process of integration; most of the younger born frees entered a world which had to some degree already been desegregated.

The generation I am focussing on is the integration generation, the generation whose childhood saw the change from apartheid regime to multi-racial democracy. This generation of authors came of age in a very significant moment of history, yet they generally were not able to contribute to it coming about or define the direction the newly democratic South Africa took. They witnessed their parents struggle against apartheid in many cases and lived with the aftermath of policies which favoured white citizens at the expense of all other ethnic groups. I want to consider what has defined them politically and socially, and what effect living at this moment in history may have had on their writing.

When highlighting the important historical events and trends of contemporary South Africa, it is important to note that there is an overwhelming sense of disappointment. Andrew van de Vlies identifies this in terms of the way in which South Africa is represented in contemporary literature and indeed the general feeling that pervades South Africa. He describes a “state of impasse” based on the “disappointed postcolonial project” (14). He notes that this disappointment is shifting towards anger, a tendency which is also reflected in contemporary literature (van der Vlies 24). Oyedemi ties this sense of disappointment to the born-frees, but I find his words equally applicable to my generation of authors:

> They are the victims of unrealised struggle for freedom; freedom as in the shaking-off the colonial cultural hegemony that defined their identity, culture, language, and education in a unified Eurocentric ideology shaped by the colonial and apartheid systems. They are casualties of the unrealised struggle for freedom in the actualisation of economic participation and conspicuous genuine embrace of their presence in social-

> economic spaces hitherto reserved for whiteness – both embodied and cultural (Oyedemi "Postcolonial Casualties" 215).

The hope of the end of the apartheid and the transition period was dominated by the "rainbow nation" discourse which promoted a multiracial South Africa that would achieve economic success but no longer at the expense of the majority of its citizens. The relief at the negotiation of a peaceful transition at a moment that appeared to present a very great risk of violence contributed to this feeling of optimism. The statesmanship of Nelson Mandela and the promise he believed South Africa held was another key component of the wave of joy that really did sweep the nation (Myre). It is very easy to become jaded about the progress or lack thereof which has occurred in South Africa, but the feeling of optimism was real. I will evaluate the impact of being born at a moment of hope and growing up with disappointment as the predominant generational feeling. This has impacted on the way in which these authors describe the moment of transition and its aftermath, as well as how they portray the history of South Africa.

How can this generation of authors be defined? All the authors covered in this thesis were born before the end of apartheid, so the events outlined here will span the early 1990s to the present day. There are some key historical events they have lived through, and some important changes in political and social thought. The end of the apartheid, the transition period and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were all events they experienced as children or young adults. This time, when the ANC came to power and Mandela became president was marked by a great feeling of optimism. Although the Rainbow nation concept is sometimes viewed as a source of disappointment in present day South Africa, there was a belief that South Africa was going to be a desirable place to live for all South Africans. Alongside the changes politically there were also crucial social changes which meant that black authors were able to document this significant moment. The end of apartheid had a positive impact on the production and publication of work by black writers, though as I will explore in the next chapter there were some significant limitations to this. Access to education was for black people immediately improved at the end of the apartheid, an event which naturally appears in many works by younger authors as they lived through this change in their school years.

What is the effect of the failure of the ANC to bring about the vision of South Africa it presented in the lifetime of these authors? There are two main impacts, one practical and the other less tangible and to do with the state of feeling in the country. South Africa has moved from a state of optimism to one of pessimism. This change has affected the whole population, it is no less disappointing for an older adult, who perhaps gave their youth fighting against apartheid, to acknowledge that things have not worked out quite as expected. However, for this generation it is different. They were supposed to be the main beneficiaries of postcolonial, democratic South Africa, the ones that would take up the educational opportunities, succeed and thrive in the new South Africa. The authors whose work is included in my thesis have certainly taken up such opportunities, but remain very aware that many young, black South Africans have not been able to do so. Changes in the lived experiences of most South Africans did not keep pace with what was dictated by changes in the law. The authors I have chosen for this thesis have been able to make a living from writing, a challenge for all aspiring writers regardless of race. However, that their work was published and is read internationally is very much against the odds, particularly for young black women.

I think it is important to stress that life for almost all South Africans has improved since the end of apartheid. The apartheid was a brutal, racist regime which disenfranchised millions of black South Africans. Police brutality, whilst not completely over, is very much reduced. South Africans are free to marry who they choose and have children with any other person without the risk of prosecution. Education and jobs are open to all, and South Africans can live wherever they decide, finances allowing. None of these things were possible under apartheid.

The source of disappointment is not that things have not improved, but the gap between the vision of Mandela and others in the ANC, and what they were able to achieve. The events, movements and trends I will explore below is by no means an exhaustive description of what has happened in South Africa in the past fifteen years. I have chosen to focus on areas which register with the writing of South African authors, alongside events which appear to have impacted the writing of the authors in my cannon.

Collective memory of the postapartheid period is in a constant process of recreation. This is the case with all collective memory, as it relates to the present far more than to the past. It is the means of creating identity, by the very selection process which decides what is important for who a group or nation is (A. Assmann "Dialogic Memory" 201). It is what a society or group deems important to remember about themselves and excludes historical moments that are either seen as unimportant or which people would rather not remember due to their traumatic nature. This process can be largely unconscious, people simply ceasing to record certain events, or a more conscious process of inclusion and exclusion (201). The latter is far more common in terms of nation states, as the government apparatus allows for the deliberate exclusion of events by not including them in, for example, statutory education or museums. Considerable effort has been put into the construction of collective memory in South Africa, in terms of museums and other archival spaces as well as literature and other medias. The events that South African authors choose to write about are both a reflection of the processes of memory construction, and indicate which events form a part of collective memory. Memory differs from history in that it does not attempt to be comprehensive nor objective. It is "our" history, the things in the past which impact upon identity and sense of group or self today (J. Assmann 113). Collective memory of apartheid and the years following is constructed through the events which are included in contemporary literature, both by these new authors and other more established ones. They both represent collective memory, and act as objects of collective memory. This chapter will investigate the events which could form a source of collective memory construction, and which feature in contemporary South African literature.

Politics, hope and disillusionment

Politically speaking, South Africa has been dominated by the ANC since they were first elected in 1994. The party has in recent years won a smaller vote share than it did in the first elections, but they are still indisputably the main political force in South Africa. South Africa's successes and failures are bound up with the record of the ANC, no other party has been in power in the postapartheid era. The change in the national feeling from optimism to pessimism is also related to the actions of the ANC government. Many of those at the highest levels in the ANC spent many years struggling against apartheid, and many suffered greatly. The fall from grace which some have experienced has also impacted the general mood in South Africa. Recent presidents have often been compared unfavourably to South Africa's beloved first president of the transition from apartheid to democracy. Nelson Mandela negotiated the end of apartheid and was the first postapartheid president. He was only president for five years, so the action he was able to take was limited. He is seen as being largely successful and is still very much admired both within and outside of South Africa. As well as negotiating a peaceful end to apartheid, Mandela helped bring South Africans together in the transition years. His death in 2013 was a cause of reflection within South Africa on how far the country had come as well as the issues which remain. Mandela is strongly associated with the optimism that South Africans felt at the end of the apartheid, and he is also seen as being beyond reproach in terms of his behaviour in office. Even today he is seen as a person to admire, and it was during his centenary celebration that President Ramaphosa stated the ANC would continue to try to live up to Mandela's ideals (Liese Sall 3). Elleke Boehmer suggests that Mandela's reputation is very different internationally to among South Africans. She refers to a poem by Koleka Putuma which implies that Mandela is loved by white people due to his failure to take real action against the former proponents of apartheid (“Mandela and Beyond” 2). If Mandela had really “won” Boehmer speculates, he would not be so loved and it would have required a dramatic change in the global order (3-4). Despite this assessment Mandela is generally still looked upon favourably, if not quite so favourably within South Africa as outside it.

Thabo Mbeki’s premiership followed Mandela’s. His economic policies, whilst successful, created a new middle class rather than lifting the majority out of poverty (McGreal). Internationally he is perhaps best known for AIDS denialism. Whilst his words did indeed cause a delay in essential AIDS treatment in South Africa, the intention behind his words is perhaps more understandable in a postcolonial country like South Africa. He did not want to follow the colonial idea that black people were responsible for their ill health, but rather blamed poverty for the spread of AIDS. However, his refusal to link AIDS to HIV delayed South Africa’s AIDS response. Mbeki’s inaction and dismissal of AIDS led to a slow start to efforts to tackle the crisis, causing an increase in infection. The disappointment that characterises South Africa today began to set in during Mbeki’s presidency. Nelson Mandela’s government was short-lived and people’s patience had not yet run out with the speed at which change was able to happen. Mbeki’s presidency was not seen as corrupt, while the leader who followed him would be, but South Africans were concerned that not enough successful action was taken during his leadership (McGreal).

Since 2007 the initial disappointment with the failure of the idea of the Rainbow nation has changed to a more complicated sense of the promise of the ANC being unfulfilled. Corruption is rife in South Africa. The ANC inherited the corrupt Bantustans from the apartheid regime, and not enough has been done to get rid of corruption. Some ANC politicians have even participated in financial crimes, notably Zuma who received a prison sentence for corruption. Michael Chapman identifies the following phase of disillusionment: “the anti-intellectualism and kleptomania of the Zuma presidency (2009-2018)” (4). Zuma’s presidency remains controversial. He has many very loyal supporters, but other South Africans were shocked by the allegations of corruption and assault which dogged Zuma for years. His imprisonment was greeted by relief by some members of the population, and with outrage by others. By the time Zuma was president it was already clear that the choice not to redistribute land and wealth at the end of apartheid was having an impact upon the lives of many South Africans. Legal rights were not enough to ensure equality of education and services, and the poorest, predominantly black South Africans had to live with over-stretched services.

Cyril Ramaphosa was elected in 2018, with one of his stated aims being to prevent corruption and to increase economic equality. The failure of the ANC leadership to bring about real change is evidenced in the challenges many black South Africans still face in terms of access to basic services. This disappointment which characterised the later years of the transition and up to the present day was caused by a failure to see real change in terms of quality of life for most South Africans. The political changes that have occurred in South Africa clearly form part of collective memory there. Nonetheless, it is this disappointment that features in many of the publications by young South Africa authors today, rather than specifically referencing political events. The reasons for this will be explored in the next chapter.

Protests, movements and new ideas

As well as governmental politics, the transition period and postapartheid South Africa was a hotbed of political movements. Protests have a long history in South Africa and continue to this day. During the apartheid, strikes were illegal and brutally put down. Protest was also forbidden and met with violence such as in the Soweto school protests. Children who were protesting a government decision to force them to learn in Afrikaans were shot by the apartheid police force. Political protest did not end with the fall of the apartheid regime, unfortunately, nor did a brutal response to it from the state or state agents. Workers, who remain disadvantaged even after the end of apartheid, often take strike action. Many labour protests lead to violence even today.

This was particularly noticeable in the 2012 miners' strike, where 34 miners were shot and killed by the police. This was important for the psyche of postapartheid South Africa, echoing as it did the apartheid police force's brutal suppression of protest. Such events reinforced the feeling that South Africa had not moved on from apartheid.

Political protest about the colonial era and its aftermath has also been an important feature in contemporary South Africa. The "Rhodes must fall" movement, which became international, started at the University of Cape Town, where Chumani Maxwele threw excrement at a statue of Cecil Rhodes (Oyedemi "Postcolonial Casualties" 23). The university decided to remove the statue after many other students joined in the direct action. This protest led to debates about the decolonisation of education in South Africa, and indeed around the world. The people who joined these movements were disappointed at the state of current South Africa, but rather than feeling disempowered by the perceived inadequacies of their government, the young people involved believed in the possibility of real, radical change. Although not directly referencing these movements, the authors chosen for my thesis are often concerned with issues such as the decolonisation of education, raised by such movements. Protests reflect disappointment but also the hope for a better future. The mainly young people taking part in such protests believe that South Africa can still be transformed and that it has not missed its chance. This sense of hope for change in the future is a theme which appears many times in works by younger authors.

Crime, violence and xenophobic attacks

Unfortunately, another area which characterises postapartheid South Africa is violent crime. The crime rate in South Africa is controversial, due to the attribution of criminality to the black population as an excuse for its racist laws. Some explanation for the high rate of crime postapartheid South Africa is provided by Zeb Larson:

The bump in statistics can be attributed to the fact that the Bantustans were deliberately excluded from apartheid-era counts. It is extraordinarily difficult to assess whether there actually was an increase in crime or whether there was simply a more honest reporting after 1994. Critics also point to the murder rate in South Africa, which is indeed high. In fact, the homicide rate has dropped by about half since 1994 (Larson).

Despite this, it is inarguable that South Africans live in fear of violent crime, and with good reason. As well as violent crime affecting all the population, sexual violence is rife. As I will explore in the next chapter, sexual assault appears in almost all of the texts in my thesis. Women and girls, particularly black women and girls, are at a very high risk of rape. Conviction rates, in common with the rest of the world, are very low. Samantha Schalkwyk describes the psychological weight of living as a woman or girl in a country so plagued by sexual violence:

> In countries, like South Africa, where violence is an ever-present part of life, where babies and old women are raped on a daily basis, where young girls' maimed bodies are found dumped on empty fields, women have to face these images and try to deal with them in their own way. Women have to make sense of such violence and what it suggests for their own body and sense of value in the world. Living within such violence, whether one has experienced direct physical force on the body or not, shapes women's subjectivities in powerful ways. It is of critical importance to examine what it means psychically to inhabit a female body in such contexts. (Schalkwyk 1)

As well as what has been described as the "epidemic" of rape in South Africa, other forms of violence are also a problem. South Africa has witnessed outbreaks of xenophobic violence. They are sporadic but intensify at intervals, notably in 2008. They are often provoked by problems within South Africa, the current spate of attacks being blamed on an increase in poverty caused by a reduction in economic activity due to the Covid 19 virus. The literature chosen for this thesis highlights the enduring poverty of children in Keletso Mopai's *If You*

Keep Digging, low quality of schools or residual racism in formerly white schools in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut*, alongside a struggling public health system portrayed in Matlwa's *Period Pain*. These injustices are shown to exist alongside great wealth. The expectations which South Africans had that there would be greater redistribution has led to anger that immigrants from the rest of Africa are coming and taking what should belong to South Africans. This xenophobic phenomenon is common throughout the world, rather than the rich being blamed, poor noncitizens are targeted (Nyamnjoh 49).

Education, the end of apartheid and new possibilities

The dramatic social shift at the end of apartheid had a liberating impact on these women writers. During the apartheid, black children's access to education was severely limited. Schooling was completely segregated by assigned race, and resources were directed mainly towards white children. A few private schools permitted children who were not designated as "white" to attend, but this was a tiny minority. Education was not even compulsory for those designated as "African". After the end of apartheid, the school system was completely overhauled, so that all children could attend any school. The goal was to create "a uniform and democratic school system" (Ndimande 36).

This attempt was not entirely successful. Firstly, because segregated residential areas meant schools did not mix as much as might have been hoped, and secondly because already prosperous schools were able to attract additional funding for example through parents giving money for certain projects (36). Educational quality for most children did improve somewhat, but for some children it improved dramatically. Some children were able to access formerly all-white schools, where the educational quality remained higher, but many families were not due to high fees or the schools being located far from their homes (37). This can be seen in terms of the authors I am working with, who despite quite different economic backgrounds have all been able to achieve higher education. Sisonke Msimang spent her childhood abroad as her parents' political activism meant it was not safe for the family to remain in South Africa. Her family was quite prosperous as her father worked in important positions internationally and she was able to study in mixed-race classrooms from a young age. The younger authors would have begun school in already desegregated classrooms, though their less prosperous background means such schools would have still had inferior apartheid-era facilities. Mopai has described not thinking of herself as poor, though she describes a primary school without a working toilet and living in a deprived neighbourhood ("Mopai Owns Her Own Story"). The other authors in this cohort fall somewhere between these two childhood experiences in terms of prosperity.

Their different backgrounds and lives as children offer a far greater contrast than their social status as adults. They are as a cohort exceptionally highly educated. Matlwa and Manenzhe both have Ph.D.'s and Msimang has a Master's degree, while both Mashigo and Mopai are honours graduates. This means that although the authors are from very different childhood backgrounds, they have a similar level of attainment as adults. They have overcome the challenges of the postapartheid era, but their attainment is also due the possibilities opened up to them after the apartheid. Equally brilliant and driven young women would have struggled to achieve what these women have even one generation before, where education for black children was seriously restricted by the apartheid regime. These authors have also been able to access professional careers following their qualifications. They have generally worked in other positions alongside their writing. Msimang works in human rights, Matlwa is a doctor, Mashigo is a singer-songwriter and former radio presenter, Manenzhe is an engineer and lecturer. Mopai has focused primarily on writing, achieving success at a young age, but studied chemistry and geology before publishing *If You Keep Digging*.

Conclusion

This chapter is by no means a complete account of the significant events which have occurred in South Africa since 2007. I have tried to focus on events which feature in the literature included in this thesis, or which appear to me to have had an impact on the authors in this thesis. These authors are exceptional by any metric. However, there must surely be many stories that have been lost due to other women’s inability to access high-level education. These women form the new black middle class, and the stories of those who did not manage to escape poverty and gain access to good quality education never reach publication let alone a wide readership.

Chapter 3: Traumatic absence or disappointed silence in the literature of the integration generation's approach to apartheid

In the previous chapter, I outlined the main events, movements and trends which have occurred in the lives of the authors included in this thesis. In the subsequent two chapters I will review the inclusion or exclusion of these events and trends in the literature produced by the authors of the "integration generation." There are some trends which appear across almost all the works, where some key events are completely ignored by authors in my canon. This chapter will focus on what I view as a surprising omission: the lack of focus on the apartheid in literature produced by new South African authors. The most significant event of their lifetimes, from an international and national perspective, must surely be the end of apartheid. When I first began researching this thesis, I imagined that I would be writing about a generational approach to apartheid. However, what I have discovered is that there is not an identifiable generational approach to representing apartheid, but rather that the apartheid is barely mentioned by any writers of this cohort.

Instead, these writers are exploring the transition and contemporary South Africa. The thirteen-year publishing window I have chosen for my thesis has been a time of great change, as explored in the previous chapter. The literature in this period portrays the change which has happened in the nation, moving from a disappointment with the failure of the transition, to a more profound sense of being unsettled by the state of South Africa today. Naturally authors write about the world contemporary to them, but even when they reach back to history new writers are still in general not looking to the apartheid. A multitude of significant national and international events and movements have occurred in the lifetimes of these authors, many of which appear in the writing they have produced. That notwithstanding, the most significant event historically speaking, the end of apartheid barely appears in the pages of these texts. Whilst I have argued that the end of apartheid made an expansion in literature and authorship possible, due to an expansion of publishing and education, the authors have not chosen to write about it.

The authors in the canon I have created cannot be said to entirely represent all young, black, female authors although their focus in terms of content appears generally similar to that of other authors of their generation. Young male authors, too, are focusing on the contemporary moment in South Africa (Chapman p.5) In this chapter I want to explore if apartheid exists in the literature of this generation as a silent unspoken part of history, or simply is not there at all in their literature. If it is the case that the apartheid does not appear even as a traumatic absence, then why should that be so? Is the cause of this a traumatic inability to speak, or rather a disappointment with the present which overwhelms any concerns about the past?

This part of my thesis will not go into depth regarding the ways the authors in this cohort represent memories, or the process of constructing collective memory. Instead, I will focus on providing an overview of the collective memory contained within their work. Literature can function as an object of collective memory, as well as representing the means by which such memory is constructed, and the memories which make up collective memory as a whole (Erll and Rigney 113). This section of the thesis will primarily focus on the former, namely how these texts exist as objects of collective memory. I will produce a snapshot of this generation's writing which will illustrate which historical and contemporary events are important enough to form part of South African collective memory according to the choices made by these authors. In the subsequent two sections of my thesis, I will delve deeper into how contemporary authors are representing the processes of constructing memory, and the memories that they represent.

Trauma and postmemory

If the apartheid exists as a trauma in South African collective memory, what does that mean for contemporary South African literature? Significant theoretical discussion has been generated on the topics of group trauma and postmemory, the inheritance of memory from parents or other close family members. I will deal with these theories briefly in terms of their implications for this generation's writing. Theories of inter-generational or group trauma focus on the idea that a whole culture can be traumatised, not just individuals within that group (Erikson 183). Kai Erikson describes what it means for a society to be traumatised, pointing out the disconnection and loss of sense of self: the point to be made here is not that calamity serves to strengthen the bonds linking people together— it does not, most of the time—but that the shared experience becomes almost like a common culture, a source of kinship (185).

This trauma could appear in literature as a subject matter, such as an account of the trauma the group or nation has gone through, or as a traumatic absence, a topic which authors are unable to take on. Trauma theory allows for both these possibilities, with a preference being shown in Western critical analysis for a particular structuring of trauma, with a form which reflects the nature of trauma. Stef Craps and Gert Buelens identify a preference for “experimental, (post)modernist textual strategies” rather than a recounting of the events which precipitated the trauma (5). However, neither this form of traumatic representation nor accounts of the apartheid appear to be the approach taken by the cohort of emergent South African writers.

This is further complicated by the fact that these authors were witnesses of the apartheid as young children. They are dealing not only with their own trauma and how to represent it, but also the trauma of their parents and grandparents. Intergenerational trauma can mean that events lived through by parents or grandparents are experienced by the younger generation almost as autobiographical memories. This is similar to the idea of collective trauma, but implies a far more visceral and personal inheritance than the “mood and imagery” described by Erikson (185). It is not the same as collective memory, which is selected knowledge and practices from or about the past. Instead, the importance of memories from one or two generations back has been so strongly passed onto children that they experience their parents’ memories as their own.

As outlined in the introduction, Marianne Hirsch's "postmemory" is a concept which has often been used to explore the experiences of the children of Holocaust victims. These children's parents conveyed their memories with such power that their children experienced them not so much as second hand but as first-hand memories. Such was the cultural trauma that the Holocaust was inherited even by those who did not live through it. Hirsch describes the existence of a kind of collective memory that is experienced by those in a certain group almost as a personal memory. Hirsch links her idea to inter-generational trauma, and suggests it is a structure of transmission just as collective memory is. She claims: postmemory is not a movement, method, or idea; I see it, rather, as a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a consequence of traumatic recall but (unlike post-traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove ("Writing After the Holocaust" 3).

This theory has been productively applied to other group traumas such as dictatorships in South America and Asia. Younger generations in South Africa appear to have inherited the trauma from apartheid, but it is not entirely a memory for them, but rather a system which continues into the present due to poverty and discrimination. Although, as I have explained, the young writers in my thesis were alive during the apartheid, the bulk of their memory about it is likely to be inherited rather than experienced. Why then have they chosen not to write about apartheid? There is no evidence from the texts I have studied that their authors feel their own experiences are "evacuated" as a result of their parents' experiences taking on such a significant status in their lives (5). Their stories do demonstrate an insecurity at times about the value of what they have to tell, yet they still insist on its importance. Their connection to their parents' memories seems markedly differently to the victims of other national traumas, or even other young South Africans.

Postmemory of apartheid among young South Africans

Research suggests that young South Africans do identify with the apartheid as a series of events which happened to them, even though they were not actually present, or were too young to remember properly. A 2018 study on "vicarious memory," which shares many characteristics with Hirsch's "postmemory," evaluates the attitudes of young people to the apartheid. The subjects of the study were university students in 2018, so in a similar age range to writers like Mopai and Manenzhe. They bring up several important ideas about their relationship to the apartheid. The first idea is that their lives are still dominated by the apartheid past. One student comments:

> It is said that I am free but in all honestly (sic) I am a captive to the past, I am living in a world whereby the scars of apartheid define the person I am. ... the scars of the past and the continuous reminder of apartheid fear is instilled in me. I am free but my mind is still enslaved by the past." (Pillay 241)

Other students who took part in this study related even more explicitly to the apartheid past: "… we have reconciled but I can never forget what happened, this is my past." (242) Pillay describes this as "taking ownership of the past and its atrocities despite not having been present during that time" (242). This is a clearer example of postmemory. The student is not only stating that the past still has an effect on their life today, but claiming events which happened before their birth as "my past." They do not express a connection to this past via their parents, instead it is as though they had lived through the events themselves.

These students are of a similar age, albeit slightly younger, to the cohort of authors I am studying. This would seem to suggest that these authors would be even more likely than younger South Africans to claim the apartheid as "their" past. Yet they do not seem to have done this. The youngest members of this corpus of writers will barely remember the apartheid years, the older ones would have all been children. However, their parents' experiences do not seem to have been passed onto them in such a way as to mark their writing. Critical articles on postmemory tend to focus on the Boer war, not the experiences of black South Africans**.** Even when expanding the research criteria to include other formulations of postmemory such as vicarious memory, or articles on inter-generational trauma, there is still a very small amount of material written on the second generation, the children of apartheid survivors. It might be expected that there would be less material on postmemory than there is on the Holocaust or other historical group traumas like the disappearances in Pinochet's Chile, as these events occurred a longer time ago. However, the almost complete absence of scholarly articles or books on postmemory of the apartheid is still surprising.

Did the political situation at the end of apartheid not allow a sense of group trauma to fully develop? At the end of apartheid the new multi-racial democracy was negotiated. There was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which allowed for the punishment of those who had committed "gross human rights abuses" but there was no general condemnation of the actions of the apartheid state and its laws. Of course, they were implicitly condemned because they were changed, but there were no prosecutions based on those following apartheid-era laws, however discriminatory. The lack of redistribution, which led to a lack of material change, may also have influenced the failure to develop a postmemory. Postmemory does, however, allow for the kind of postness implied by postcolonial. It is not just after but also implies a "profound interrelation." Hirsch explains that:

> The "post" in "postmemory" signals more than a temporal delay and more than a location in an aftermath. Postmodern, for example, inscribes both a critical distance and a profound interrelation with the modern; postcolonial does not mean the end of the colonial but its troubling continuity. ("The Generation of Postmemory" 6)

Post does not only mean after, but it certainly includes that element. If the "integration" generation do not really feel that their lives are after a national trauma, but that the trauma is still ongoing, that is bound to have a profound impact upon their understanding of their relationship to apartheid.

Apartheid in contemporary literature

The research project cited above suggests that young South Africans do identify with the apartheid as a series of events which happened to them, even though they were not actually present, or were too young to remember properly. This is in line with Hirsch's research, which looked at the children of Holocaust survivors whose memories were marked by the horrors their parents had explained to them. In the study cited above, the students are of a similar age or slightly younger than the cohort of authors I am studying. This would suggest that these authors would be more likely to claim the apartheid as "their" past. Yet they do not seem to have done this, with the exception of Sisonke Msimang, the eldest of this cohort. Msimang refers to the first elections and the release of Mandela but is largely silent on the topic of apartheid. It is presented as an important series of events, but one that provides a background to her story, rather than being her own story. She begins her memoir grounding her parents' story in the history of the apartheid. This is told in parallel with Mandela's story. Her telling of these events does appear to contain elements of Hirsch's postmemory. As her father leaves South Africa to join an armed resistance movement, Mandela is being put on trial. Her memoir, described as "these stories," is placed in the context of the significant events of the apartheid. The apartheid, and people's resistance to it, is her reason for being but at no point does she present it as her story. This, too, cannot really be said to be postmemory, as Msimang is writing about her exile which occurred at the same time as the apartheid. When she returns to South Africa, her memoir focuses on the present moment with only occasional reflections on the apartheid recent past.

Apartheid trauma and memory

Mohale Mashigo's *The Yearning* does not refer directly to the apartheid in great detail, though it maintains some apartheid-era and particularly transition-era preoccupations. On the surface it is the story of overcoming personal trauma from childhood. The main character Marubini also connects with her multicultural background sharing myths and cultural practices with her grandparents and parents. Mashigo is concerned with multiple South African identities. Although the apartheid is not directly mentioned, the violence which preceded its end is. Her father is apparently a victim of inter-community violence between supporters of the ANC and the Inkatha. Traumatic memory, and the need to work through it, provides a representation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The novel stresses that deliberately forgetting, even traumatic events, does not provide healing but is instead damaging for all those involved. The central character is a young woman called Marubini, who suffered a traumatic assault as a young child. She no longer remembers this but suffers flashbacks which increasingly threaten her health. Marubini's parents tried to make her forget her traumatic past, but it resurfaces in a way which damages her in the present. The allegorical nature of this novel means that it is the work of literature which in my view most represents the apartheid as part of collective memory. The suppression of memory during the apartheid and the denial of suffering was very harmful. This harm continued in postapartheid South Africa, which tried to put an end to the apartheid and its trauma with the TRC. The result of that was that many people carried trauma with them, and the children of the apartheid inherited a trauma they could not remember. Hoffman describes the quality of this kind of memory:

> this is exactly the crux of the second generation's difficulty: that it has inherited not experience, but its shadows. The uncanny, in Freud's formulation, is the sensation of something that is both very alien and deeply familiar, something that only the unconscious knows. If so, then the second generation has grown up with the uncanny. And sometimes, it needs to be said, wrestling with shadows can be more frightening, or more confusing, than struggling with solid realities. (Hoffman 66)

Whether “more frightening” is reasonable to say in the context of the horrors of apartheid or not, *The Yearning* certainly shows the haunting effect of a trauma which you cannot remember. *The Yearning* represents the immediate aftermath of apartheid, and the hidden trauma of apartheid, rather than the apartheid era itself. Aside from Msimang’s work, this novel is the most concerned with the apartheid and the events which occurred during the author’s childhood. Hirsch claims that to grow up with others’ memories “is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present” (Hirsch “The Generation of Postmemory” 5). The apartheid effects certainly continue into the present in terms of material inequality, but the inheritance of memory in *The Yearning* is also affecting the present. It is the denied memory, more than the actual content of the memory and what occurred in the past, that damage the characters in the present.

No postmemory, no postapatheid

The apartheid for Msimang is a backdrop to her childhood, but already at a distance. She learns about the apartheid through stories, not through first-hand experience. She does portray a sense of feeling that the apartheid belonged to her and her sisters, that it was their past and not just their parents’. The youngest members of this cohort of writers will barely remember the apartheid years, the older ones would have all been children. However, with the exception of Msimang, their parents’ experiences do not seem to have been passed onto them in a such a way as to mark their writing. Critical articles on postmemory tend to be focussing on the Boer war, not the experiences of black South Africans**.** Why is that? Did the political situation at the end of apartheid not allow a sense of group trauma to fully develop? These questions will be explored in this section of my thesis. Mashigo too contains references to the apartheid only as a silent trauma, she is dealing far more with the politics of remembering and forgetting related to the apartheid.

Why is this not happening in South Africa? Perhaps the reason for the limited amount being written on the apartheid is due to a feeling that not much, or at least not enough has changed. Msimang appears to feel this:

> We used to be proud of ourselves. Today, suffering and poverty – once noble – are not only commonplace (they have always been), but acceptable. We no longer rage against them. We have come to look past the pain of black people because it is now blacks who are in charge. The wretchedness of apartheid is ostensibly over, so the suffering of blacks, under the rule of other blacks, is somehow less sinister – which does not change the fact of its horror (*Always Another Country* 12).

The suffering is not over, so the apartheid does not exist as a concrete event such as the Holocaust which has finished, and the children of apartheid survivors simply cannot have lived through anything comparable. I want to make this comparison very cautiously. The Holocaust came out of centuries of antisemitic violence in Europe, and years of racist laws against Jewish people. Even after the Holocaust, violent attacks occurred in Eastern Europe. However, the concentration camps and sheer scale of murder and suffering are unparalleled by anything before or since. The same cannot be so easily said about South Africa. The children of apartheid survivors can still be victims of many of the same things as their parents suffered under the apartheid. The legal system no longer allows for discrimination, but black people are still suffering from extreme poverty. Chapman further elaborates on this: “we speak of anti-apartheid and postapartheid while for millions of people apartheid has not in economic measurement ended” (4). If apartheid has not ended, there cannot be a postmemory of it.

Evidence in the literature that nothing has changed is particularly noticeable in the work of Matlwa and Mopai, though all authors refer to this to some extent. Mopai and Matlwa in *If You Keep Digging* and *Coconut* also appear to share the sense that it is not necessary to write about apartheid because many of the same injustices are still in existence. It seems more urgent to describe the racial and other inequalities that continue. Mopai's first short stories describe racism in transition-era South Africa, but then she moves on to explore many other kinds of discrimination and inequality which exist in South Africa today. She is particularly concerned about poverty, and strongly suggests that too little has changed in her portrayals of postapartheid life. Matlwa in *Coconut* explicitly portrays continued racism, though her focus is less economic and more related to access to space and appearance. Told through the eyes of two teenage girls, their concerns about fitting in result in both desiring to fulfil white, Western beauty standards and reject their heritage. Both Matlwa and Mopai´s work implies that the apartheid is not a thing of the past but part of a larger legacy of colonialism and racism which exists to this day.

Postmemory beyond apartheid

This generation is moving towards asking why: why is there still inequality, why did black poverty and violence against women come about in the first place? Rather than looking just at the injustices of the apartheid, or the present day, they are looking at trends and movements to explore how this situation first arose. Causes such as xenophobia, colonialism and misogyny are explored as the roots of not only apartheid but many other forms of injustice too.

The strikingly contemporary nature of the texts covered in this thesis is not shared by one of the novels, Manenzhe's *Scatterlings.* Unlike the other texts, this novel explicitly describes the inheritance of memories from older generations as a burden which each new generation has to bear:

> Ah, but every child inherits its parents' history. It inherits the history of the world in its entirety. We're all burdened with what came before us. Everything that has happened has shaped the world in one way or another. We're all tethered to the larger world, to the past and its consequences. That's what the world is – a series of lives slowly decaying into history. We can't escape it. (Manenzhe *Scatterlings* 153)

Postmemory here is not something which is merely inherited from one generation to another. Rather a child inherits the whole of its parents' history, which also contains that of many generations of parents before them. Manenzhe presents postmemory of an earlier era troubled by an inherited sense of loss. The other texts in this cohort show that inequality did not end with apartheid, but *Scatterlings* illustrates that it did not begin with it either. Her novel allows South African postmemory to encompass more than just apartheid. South Africa was the victim of the same colonial oppression which blighted much of Africa (and many other countries around the world.) As conceptions of memory have moved towards a "travelling" model, not defined by national boundaries, it appears that literature, too, may be adopting such an outlook.

Conclusion

The apartheid as a lived experience does not feature heavily in these texts. This is true both in terms of how the contemporary characters reflect on their own apartheid experiences (not at all) or their parents or others of an older generation (very little.) This is perhaps somewhat surprising given the significance of apartheid in both literary and political discourses in South Africa. Almost every academic article or non-fiction book published on South Africa refers back to the importance of the national trauma of apartheid. It is also contrary to theories of intergenerational trauma, which would suggest that the children of the apartheid might feel a strong need to tell their parents' stories. The perception of a lack of change, and the importance of the moment which they are living through may be the cause of a lack of representation of apartheid. In the next chapter I will explore, in the absence of apartheid, what emergent South African authors are writing about instead.

Chapter 4: Being normal, postapartheid anxiety and literary concerns

Zakes Mda suggested that writing as a South African now is more difficult than it was in the past. Speaking in interview he explained that:

> the past created ready-made stories. There was a very clear line of demarcation between good and evil, you see? Black was good; white was bad. Your conflict was there. There were no gray areas. We no longer have that. In this new situation, black is not necessarily good. There are many black culprits; there are many good white people. We have become normal. It's very painful to become normal. (Mda)

This painful normality is the subject that most young, South African authors are writing about. They betray an insecurity about devoting time and words to the normality of their lives, yet have chosen to do so regardless. Based on the books I have chosen for this thesis, and many other publications which I did not include, young writers are concerned with the present moment.

All the works included in the literature I have chosen for this thesis, with the exception of Rešoketšwe Manenzhe's *Scatterlings*, describe life in modern-day South Africa. *Always Another Country* (2017) Msimang's memoir includes important political moments, but this forms a backdrop, rather than being the main focus. Her life, and that of her sisters, are central to this South African story. Mohale Mashigo's *The Yearning* is set in contemporary Johannesburg and follows the life of a young woman working in advertising, although flashbacks do return to the apartheid years, little political commentary is made about it. You would not know, if you did not know the date the novel is set, that the young Marubini is living under apartheid. *Coconut* (2007) and *If You Keep Digging* (2019) make only limited reference to large scale political events and focus instead on ordinary lives. *Coconut* describes the lives of two young black girls, one living in poverty in a township and the other part of the new black middle class and attending a newly desegregated school. *If You Keep Digging*, Keletso Mopai's short story collection, has a diverse cast of characters, from a teenage mother-to-be to neglected school children and labourers in South Africa's mines. For a variety of economic and social reasons these people's perspectives and experiences are often not included in literature. *If You Keep Digging* tells that the stories we normally hear about South Africa exist only on a surface level of South Africa identity. Where major historical events do feature in these texts, they are told from an individual perspective, rather than portraying the causes and ramifications. The inclusion of certain events or experiences makes them worthy of being part of the South African narrative.

A focus on the present moment applies not only to young female authors, but also to male authors (Chapman 5). Younger writers, according to Chapman, seem far more preoccupied with the new than the old South Africa one. They are conscious of living at an important moment of history, and feel pressure to make the most of it. They also identify multiple problems in contemporary South Africa and appear to feel a greater urgency to explore these issues than those of the apartheid era. Chapman paints a picture of the subject matter explored by these writers citing M. Green, who explains that there is: '… no concentration on race and little attention to apartheid" (10). This is by contrast to older authors for whom the apartheid years still dominate as a source of fiction and memoir.

Younger female writers are creating a fiction of black femininity, describing the condition of being a young, black woman in South Africa today. They also describe life for young women, often though not exclusively in an urban setting. Their accounts overall do not shy away from presenting the problems faced by women in the new South Africa. The subject matter and characters contained within these texts are varied, but often represent people who are like the authors themselves in terms of ethnic and social background. The cast of characters included in these texts are not the only way they contribute to a widening of collective memory.

The events these authors choose to portray are important because of what they say about what it means to be South African today.

Resisting the past, taking responsibility for the present

Stephen Frosh in his work on postmemory identifies the risk of defining yourself by the past (Frosh 12). He claims that it can be difficult to represent the present moment, or to understand that it has any importance if you come from a group or nation which is dominated by its past (12). In a country like South Africa which has recently experienced radical social change, it is even harder to avoid this. These young authors do not define themselves as postapartheid, but it is the label which is most often placed on them. Their work is political, they want to highlight things that are still unequal in South Africa, even after the end of the apartheid. One of the reasons for this may be the radical change which most of these authors have experienced in their lifetimes. Chapman cites a *New York Times* article on Mhlongo, one of the most success authors of the black masculinities cohort he identifies:

> Mhlongo and his cohort have in one short decade made social and economic leaps that might previously have taken generations. Born to a poor family in Soweto under apartheid, he came of age in a culture of postapartheid possibility and has joined, however precariously, a black middle class that's a small but growing fraction of the population. As such, he and other young black novelists carry the full promise – and burden – of their country's future (Donadio).

Donadio's article identifies the difference between the lives of today's young black authors and those of their parents or grandparents. Although this is a time of great possibility, it is also a time of great responsibility. This is also true for all the young black writers in my cohort of authors. The exception to this is Msimang, who grew up relatively wealthy and outside of South Africa. However, she certainly has not escaped the impetus to succeed because of the perception of having inherited a privilege her parents did not have. She describes how her parents were among the first black men and women to achieve various high-status positions in South Africa, and the sense of needing to achieve something great which this produced in her. The others have had educational and employment opportunities which simply were not available to their parents. They are aware that the number of black people with the same privileges as them is still small, and that South Africa as a society is still very unequal. Their writing is therefore important in order to try to ensure a better kind of future.

Being normal: postapartheid anxiety

Coconut, representing the lives of two young black girls, also provides a contribution to collective memory that is unusual. The narrative voice, which alternates between Ofilwe and Fikile, is highly self-conscious about their right to contribute to cultural memory and the construction of a South African identity. The novel is set in a South Africa approximately contemporary to its publication in 2007. The final narrator, a voice which is neither Fikile nor Ofilwe, but who is never named, dismisses the story as “not newsworthy” (Matlwa *Coconut* 191). This shows a discomfort on the part of the narrator that shows that the everyday experiences of a young black South African woman cannot in her mind be worthy of being told, let alone published. The narrator also claims that “it is not great literature,” which again plays into the idea that great literature talks about a distinct set of people in a setting (191). However, the publication of novels such as *Coconut*, and its award-winning success, shows that what is great literature is not perceived as the narrator fears, and that a variety of experiences can be contained within great literature. This novel shows the tension between postmemory of the apartheid, something undeniably “newsworthy,” and a resistance to having your own life “evacuated” by the past, to use Hirsch’s term (“Writing after the Holocaust” 5). The result of this is a narrative of early postapartheid years, but a narrator who experiences fears that her story is not important enough. These are not necessarily authorial concerns, although the narrator is not a clearly identifiable character in the text. Matlwa here is illustrating the feeling of young South African women that their stories are not important, yet she is doing so in a novel which allows their story to be told.

Economic inequality, lack of material change

If You Keep Digging is Keletso Mopai's short story collection, published in 2019. All of her stories are set in the postapartheid period. Her collection does not betray the same insecurity as Matlwa's novel regarding the importance of the stories which are being told. Her stories, like Matlwa's, are generally everyday stories of normal life in modern day South Africa, which highlights a concern with ongoing inequality in South Africa. Her first two short stories are set in 1996, and represent a residual racism left over from apartheid. She quickly moves on from the transition period to look at other features of contemporary South African life. In one of her stories, a young miner dies in a mining accident. Many young South African men work in conditions which are not very much improved from the apartheid era. Deaths are not uncommon, and people are driven to work in dangerous jobs due to a lack of financial alternatives, rather than apartheid regime laws. Poverty is also a feature of Matlwa's *Coconut,* Fikile grows up in a very vulnerable situation due to financial dependence on her sexually abusive uncle. She also works in a very insecure job. Her boss blames her for things entirely beyond her control, like a transport strike, and constantly threatens her with unemployment. A lack of redistribution and continued poverty is a shared concern of these two authors.

Gendered violence, being a woman in South Africa

Another important theme across all these novels is violence against women. This is not a postapartheid problem but a problem which has persisted despite the end of apartheid. In *Coconut* Fikile is abused by her uncle, Marubini in *The Yearning* is also a victim of childhood abuse. Msimang also portrays her own childhood sexual assault in her memoir *Always Another Country. Period Pain* contains an example of "corrective rape" where a woman is targeted for sexual assault due to behaving or being perceived to behave in a certain way, normally related to non-heteronormative sexuality or gender identity (Naidoo). If these authors are creating a narrative of "black femininity" to match the "black masculinity" noted by Chapman, it is shocking but not surprising that gendered violence features so heavily in their work. Sexual violence is very common in contemporary South Africa, and is an important part of the story of being a woman there. (Schalkwyk 2). These authors are writing about the new normal in South Africa, and sadly this normal includes a very high rate of sexual violence.

Changes from 2007 to now: *Coconut* to *Period Pain*

What changes have taken place in the literature produced at the start of my chosen time period, to that at the end of it? Although the work of each author is based on their individual interests and styles, it is still possible to notice wider trends. Almost all the texts I am focusing on, apart from *Scatterlings*, focus on contemporary South Africa. One author, Kopano Matlwa, published *Coconut* in 2007 and *Period Pain* in 2016. The change in focus in Matlwa's work is from a transitional postapartheid setting to a contemporary setting where the apartheid is just a memory and not particularly relevant to everyday life. The apartheid is not referred to very often in *Coconut*, although residual racism and inequality impact greatly on the two main characters. The apartheid is shown to be the source of the problems Ofilwe and Fikile face while growing up. They experience racism from white people who feel entitled to treat them in this way because a very short time before they were legally allowed to discriminate against them. A lack of redistribution following the apartheid is fictionalized in Fikile's living in terrible conditions, being vulnerable to the whims of her white boss. Even rich Ofilwe is excluded socially at her formerly all-white school, for being "too dark". *Period Pain*, by contrast, highlights failures which are placed at the door of the ANC government and South African people themselves, rather than the apartheid regime. The focus of the story is a young doctor who becomes involved in a campaign to support immigrants to South Africa. The terrible state of public healthcare is blamed on lack of funding, which is occurring in the novel's contemporary, postapartheid setting, and is not a fault of the apartheid government's policies. Although the apartheid government's failure to fund services used by black people will certainly have had an impact, clearly there are issues which persist around access to services. The novel also highlights racism that has nothing to do with apartheid but is instead directed from South Africans towards immigrants from other South African countries. Matlwa has moved from a concern with the remnants of apartheid to a focus on what South Africans should be improving today.

Where now for South African literature?

Scatterlings is the most recently published novel. In contrast to the other literature considered in this thesis it does not explore contemporary South African life. Instead it looks at memory itself, how South Africa came to be what it is today, or at least some elements of this coming to be. The novel appears to be searching for the beginnings of apartheid, or at least the beginning of the structuring of racial laws in South Africa. The story focuses on Dido, the child of a black mother and a white father. She has just become illegal, in the first of many laws controlling who could marry whom in South Africa. Whilst the novel is set in 1927, the way its characters think and talk about identity is very much in a contemporary style. Identity is portrayed as fluid and complex, with characters identifying with others who are from similar backgrounds to them.

One novel clearly does not form a trend, but this novel has in common with other recently published literature that it is looking back to the past before apartheid. Mbao identifies this trend in his work on the *Sunday Times Literary Awards*. He notes the inclusion of many historical novels, spanning a time period from the 1880s until the 1920s where Manezhe's novel takes place (Mbao "Feeling Towards the Contemporary" 91). Recently, in South Africa many new novels have looked to the precolonial or preapartheid past (91). I believe that this trend will continue in the future

Conclusions

What most of these texts have in common is that they focus on the time between the end of the apartheid and the present day. These writers are aware that they have become normal, that the apartheid struggle between good and evil is no longer relevant to their lives. However, they are prepared to struggle through this normality in order to represent who they really are, rather than relying on the past to provide clear answers. They are not afraid of Mda's "grey areas" but embrace the complexity of postapartheid life. While *Scatterlings* is set in the nineteen twenties, it deals with the complexities of contemporary life in South Africa. Manenzhe looks to the past, but not the immediate past, to illustrate that South Africa and its memory are far more complex than merely apartheid or postapartheid. The structural inequalities of colonialism continue to affect South Africa to this day, and *Scatterlings* is an attempt to search for the roots of present day inequalities.

Chapter 5: Critical response to ‘emergent’ South African authors

Literature plays an important role in the creation of collective memory. Erll and Rigney describe the way literature represents the construction of collective memory, as well as containing collective memory at a content level. They divide the functions of literature into three principal roles: literature as a medium of remembrance, literature as an object of remembrance and literature as a medium for observing the production of cultural memory (Erll and Rigney 112). They explain that “by imaginatively representing acts of recollection, literature makes remembrance observable. As such it not only helps produce collective memory … but also cultural knowledge about how memory works for individuals and groups” (113). These texts are a medium of remembrance, reflecting on the turbulent end of apartheid and the transition years. They also reflect on the way in which cultural memory is produced, looking at the inclusion and exclusion of certain events and perspectives from groups which are generally marginalised.

What is required for a work of literature to form part of collective memory, to be an object of it, rather than merely represent it? Erll and Rigney suggest that it takes many years for a work of literature to become part of collective memory. This is increasingly less true, and works of literature are quickly dispersed, read and reviewed. The longevity of a book clearly cannot be known, nor the extent to which it will capture the public imagination. Having said this, there are certain indications to which texts will become classics and work their way into collective memory. The works of literature I have included in this thesis face an uphill battle in order to become part of collective memory. The problem is two-fold; literature by young, black women is commonly ignored by the critical establishment, and where it is not, its literary value is not taken into account. Works of literature quickly vanish from view, despite initially promising sales (Mbao “Feeling Towards the Contemporary” 91). Whilst the way in which literature becomes significant to a culture may be becoming more diversified, it is significant that Mbao states that even his students, who are engaged with literature, were unable to name formerly prize-winning novels from only a few years before (91). Erll and Rigney's assessment that literature often bridges the gap between generations as texts "circulate at a later point in time" is thus not true for these works of literature. The rapid falling from view that Mbao identities has implications for collective memory in South Africa today but also from the way in which South Africa of the early twenty-first century will be remembered in decades to come.

No black literary spaces: publishing and literary festivals

But can these texts ever be objects of collective memory? The obstacle literature written by young, black writers faces is the lack of literary spaces where it can be read, discussed and evaluated. This lack of spaces is two-fold. Publishing is still a predominantly white field, as well as the critical and academic establishment. Zusika Wanner, a successful novelist, expresses the hierarchy which exists in authors' ability to have their work published:

> White Man. White Woman. Black Man. Black Woman. I, as a black woman, am at the bottom of the totem pole of the industry in both journalism and publishing. Black brothers who have not written nearly as much as I have will get paid more than I do. I am no longer surprised when I chat with white women and white men, and I hear how much they are getting in advances versus their black and white counterparts, even when our book sales are more or less on par. And this totem pole is not unique to South Africa. (Wanner 191)

Wanner identifies the challenges that face even those who manage to get their work accepted for publication. They are paid smaller advances, which makes it hard to survive as a full-time writer. Those authors who are published also face a challenge in terms of spaces in which to be read and discussed. Carli Coetzee, describing the Abantu Book Festival in the Soweto Theatre in 2016, states how unusual this festival was in providing a black space for writers and readers. She describes the poet Lebo Mashile as referring to the "gap." Coetzee explains: "the nature of the 'gap' did not need to be glossed for the audience, although its significance might be missed by others less attuned to the ways in which the publishing industry and literary culture in South Africa have worked to marginalise Blackness/blackness and black reading audiences" (C. Coetzee 121). Here Coetzee illustrates the effect of lack of black spaces, leading ultimately to a marginalised black readership. Reflecting on her words at a later date, Coetzee added that even this space was limited as those in attendance were generally already involved in black reading and writing spaces, so the challenged remained as how to open up such spaces more widely.[9]

Mbao presents a more optimistic perspective on the reading and writing of South African literature. As part of the panel for the *Sunday Times CNA Literary Awards* he noted that literature was arising more from black spaces, such as reading groups, that the still white-dominated universities were not the "taste makers" that they had once been (Mbao "Feeling Towards the Contemporary 89). However, he also notes in the critical and academic establishment not only a lack of interest in contemporary South African literature, but also a belief that it is not "worth reading extensively." Perhaps then the critical silence on young, black female authors does not matter as much as it might have done some decades ago.

However, in terms of the study of collective memory it is very important indeed. As Mbao identifies, the "shelf life" of a novel is incredibly short. His students, literature undergraduates who have an interest in the field, were unable to name novels which won the *Sunday Times CNA Literary Award* in 2017 or 2016. Mbao explains that the novels they can remember which were published some years ago were those they read at school. If contemporary literary works are not receiving critical evaluation, it seems likely that their shelf life will be short as they will not make it onto academic syllabi.

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[9] Comments made at the African Memory Studies Chapter's Reading Group 13th October 2022 on her book *Written Under the Skin* 2022

Critical response to emergent writers

Rachel Donadio, writing in 2006, expressed the belief that was shared by many at the time, that writing by black South Africans would become the predominant form of South African literature:

> Since the end of apartheid, the national and international spotlight has been shifting to black writers, driven by an expectation that this is their moment to write the next chapter of South African history: the political, social, and economic coming-of-age of the 80 percent of the population that was formally disenfranchised. (Donadio)

These authors have certainly experienced “their moment” in South Africa. This has not necessarily been reflected by the international reception of their work. Kopano Matlwa and Sisonke Msimang have achieved more international renown, but all these authors are successful at least within South Africa. Many of them have achieved commercial success alongside their awards. However, their work is still not viewed as being important by the critical establishment, either within or outside South Africa. Recently Damon Galmut won the Booker Prize. When he won, he was compared to other South African greats such as J.M. Coetzee, Andre Brink and Nadine Gordimer. Mbao, writing on new South African fiction, claims that a “writer and literary reviewer of some renown” declared that Galgut’s novel has “an imaginative heft to match Galgut’s fellow South African writers Gordimer, Coetzee, and Brink” (90). Mbao expresses concern about this comparison:

> What does it mean that South Africa’s notable writing is continually framed by a programmatic prize economy that celebrates writers whose pre-eminence occurred in a context from which other registers of South African writing were invariably excluded, ignored or maligned? (90)

He insists that not only has there been a lot of recent fiction published by emergent, but that the literary field also contains authors who have been publishing for decades, including Zakes Mda and Lauren Beukes. This, he points out, makes the fixation on older South African authors all the more unexpected (90).

The authors whose work I am focussing on certainly belong to the group who would have been “excluded, ignored or maligned” (90). The effect of having Brink, Coetzee and Gordimer as the international benchmark means that the new writing of South Africa is often forgotten. Clearly many writers are still very young and may not have produced their magnum opus yet. However, through my analysis for this thesis I have found a lot of work of great literary merit. Their work, and that of other new South African authors, should at least also be a point of reference for South African literature. It would be unrealistic to expect an international audience to ignore authors like Coetzee, but critical reviews of literature should reflect the fact that South African literature has changed at lot since 1994, or even 2004.

This does not seem to be only a problem in terms of the international reception of South African texts. Mbao explains that:

> I have witnessed how literary departments have wandered away from any defined preoccupation with contemporary South African fiction. Many of the scholars whose work a decade ago was shaping my study and research in the field, and who were engaged in mapping what form postapartheid literature would take, have retired. Those who are still active are engaged in writing on topics with greater transcontinental currency within the university economy: oceanic discourses, the various ‘-cenes’, nonfiction aesthetics, and other ‘sexy’ topics. The feeling I often get is that it is regarded as passé to be at all interested in the contours of contemporary South African literature. I have had conversations in which colleagues expressed feelings of impatience with the

> idea that South African fiction might have anything in it worthy of reading extensively. (89)

Mbao attempts to overcome the problems he has identified by analysing very recently published novels. Using the long list of the South African Literary Awards as his starting point, a prize which he is on the judging panel for, he evaluates important new literature in South Africa. His focus is narrow as far as publication date is concerned, as only recently published works are considered for this prize. Mbao’s scope in this essay is broader than mine in terms of authorship focusing on new literature regardless of the age or gender of the writer. He mentions Manenzhe’s work *Scatterlings* and praises it for its characterisation and exploration of a historical period which has not been the subject of much literature. In an earlier article for the *Sunday Times* from 2016 he praised *The Yearning* and attempted to promote it and other recently published South African literature (Mbao “Stop Going Back to the Farm”). Matlwa’s 2009 publication *Coconut* forms a key part of his Master thesis. Alongside the authors Mbao and I have in common as a focus, he also includes a lot of fiction by young, black authors of both genders.

All this would suggest that South Africa literary criticism, at least, is aware and recognises the literary importance of young, black authors. Michael Chapman’s essay in the same collection, however, has a very different perspective on new South African literature. Chapman’s scope is far wider than Mbao’s, as he is looking at contemporary literature published in the last thirty years. He identifies a cohort of young black writers, all male ,who talk about the urban South Africa experience. He finds no equivalent for young female writers. He claims he does not focus on very new writers as they have not achieved much critical attention yet. He clarifies that “the writers on whom I have focused all arrived on the literary scene prior to the last decade of the thirty-year period to which this ‘theme’ issue is devoted.” His reason for doing this is partially because “[out of] the fictional works to have appeared in the last few years, relatively few so far have elicited detailed commentary." I, too, have found that recently published literature has attracted little commentary, but I believe it is worthy of it. Whether these young female writers will attract more attention in the future is impossible to say, yet I do not think the critical almost-silence on their work can be entirely attributed to the newness of their publications or status as authors.

Michael Chapman's recently published review of South African literature in the past thirty years only references Kopano Matlwa from all the authors I have chosen, and only refers to *Coconut* (Chapman 12). Chapman is studying a far greater period of time than is the basis of this study, and he has not chosen to limit his review by either gender or race. Chapman describes the popularity of "local crime thrillers" and a large variety of non-fiction work, particularly biographies and memoirs. He also refers to a final kind of literature as popular is fiction that has nothing to do with South Africa, that might have been written anywhere by anyone. This fiction he excludes from his study of South African literature, either by merit of not being "South African" or due to it not being "serious" literature (5). The very definition of "serious" literature is problematic because literature produced by black women is often not identified as serious. Lynda Gichanda Spencer identified that authors who received critical attention were often "white and or male" ("Young, Black and Female" 66). She lamented that the first generation of postapartheid writers "have received almost no critical engagement" (67) What engagement in the subsequent decade there has been has tended to focus on such authors' "newness" and sociological rather than literary interest (C. Coetzee 122).

Where black women's writing has received critical attention, it has often been in the form of pigeonholing it as a certain kind of literature. Zusika Wanner, a black woman writer, describes an encounter with a white female journalist, who labels her novel chick lit.

> She was ghettoising me, I said. I am black. And I am a woman. But I want to be a good writer primarily. Did my work stand up on the global stage or not? Or was it good

> enough for black women only? And if black women are the majority in South Africa and I am therefore the standard, shouldn't it just be called a good book? And I was chick lit versus what? Could she point out to me the male authors in South Africa whose books she'd referred to as 'cock lit'? Take Coetzee, with his women characters who aren't well rounded and don't seem to have any agency; was he cock lit? (Wanner 187-188).

Wanner attempts to explain to the journalist why this is not appropriate, unfortunately she is unable to get the other woman to understand the importance of this mislabelling. In this chapter I will scrutinise the consequences of the critical response to these authors, which is dominated by pigeonholing their work, or ignoring it altogether.

This is not only an issue for black, female writers. Among work treated as sociologically but not literary interest of the contemporary period, Chapman identifies a movement by young black male authors, general writing about urban spaces (10). He defines this literature as a fiction of "black masculinity" and claims "there is a certain curiosity-sociological as much as literary-in these novels (10). He acknowledges that Zakes Mda stands "somewhat apart" from these representations of black masculinity, yet still considers his work less in terms of its literary merit and more in terms of interest due to what it explores. This response to black writing, treating it as of little literary interest, is in contradiction to the "cult status" i.e. popularity which he acknowledges that it has gained (5).

As well as a tendency to dismiss writing by black women as "chick lit" and male writers as producing only fiction of black masculinity, there has been a generalised response to younger, black authors in treating them constantly as "new" authors, whether they actually are or not. Carli Coetzee stresses the importance of not claiming that young, black writers are "new" and assessing their work as merely sociologically important rather than focussing on its literary merit. She describes the way this process in terms of Thando Mgqolozana, who has been a successfully published author since 2009. He and other contemporary authors were often:

> described as ‘emergent’ authors or ‘new voices’: descriptors that entrench ways of reading his work (like that of Kopano Matlwa, another author and public figure whom I discuss in this chapter) as always and timelessly ‘new’ and fresh. This way of reading the work of Matlwa and Mgqolozana ignores the deep literary and intellectual precursors in the work of these authors. The stress on the newness and freshness of the work deletes the contextual and historical bloodline (C. Coetzee 122).

Focusing on these authors as new both undermines the longevity of their work, and its literary merit. It also implies, Coetzee argues, that black writing is somehow always new. I will be looking at these texts from a political and sociological perspective, but primarily from a literary one by exploring the way they represent different constructions of collective memory. These works did not come from a void but instead from a varied and interesting tradition of black writing.

The writers I am focusing came of age at a significant moment of history, meaning their perspective is unique. However, they are still influenced by the writers who came before them. These writers are emergent, to use Lynda Gichanda Spencer’s term, due to the particular situation in which they are writing. Spencer explains her use of the term emerging or emergent:

I use the term to define black women writers publishing for the first time in a liberated state. The current political climate in both countries has inaugurated a new era for women writers; cracks are widening for these new voices, creating more spaces that allow them to foreground, interrogate, engage and address wide ranging topics which lacked more forms of expression in the past (Spencer *Writing Women* 2)

Coetzee coincides with Spencer’s use of the term and suggests the need for an intergenerational project to map the development of black writing. She suggests this in order to avoid the casting of black writing as perpetually “new” and the ignorance of its historical roots. She recommends conducting this as an intergenerational project, to research the roots of black literature and black literary spaces. As a white Western academic, I cannot engage in the creation of black literary spaces. However, I will try to place the authors included in my study in a literary as well as political context, in order to trace their literary development.

Barbara Boswell, who has written extensively on black female writers before, during and after apartheid, explains the importance of reading black female writers in context:

> A black South African feminist criticism is attentive to the historiography of black women's existence within past and present South African societies, and notes the ways in which historical constraints have impeded the lives of black subjects represented in texts it seeks to elucidate. It carefully seeks out and closely observes the subjectivities of black women in relevant texts, utilising, again, the unique vantage point afforded by black women's subjugated knowledges. (Boswell *And Wrote My Story Anyway* 256)

Boswell's study spans the apartheid years up until the works of postapartheid writers Kagiso Lesego Molope and Zukiswa Wanner, where my thesis begins. These writers portray the lives of South African women and the challenges that they face. They are the last stage of a lineage which leads up to the authors I focus on in this thesis, one which stems from the start of the last century. Boswell describes an early publication by a black writer: "In print, the earliest body of poetry by a black woman is the work of Nontsizi Mgqwetho, a migrant from the Eastern Cape to Johannesburg, who, from 1920 to 1929, produced a substantial corpus of poetry in isiXhosa in the Johannesburg-based newspaper, Umteteli wa Bantu" (51). Meg Samuelson, also writing on women writers, compares the literary experience of an early white female author:

Situated on opposite sides of the colonial divide, taking up different generic approaches and grappling with divergent concerns, Olive Schreiner (1855–1920) and Nontsizi Mgqwetho (published during the 1920s; date of birth and death unknown) enter into print culture an emergent national and feminist consciousness, while negotiating female authorship. The fate of their respective oeuvres is indicative of the differential challenges women have faced in coming into and remaining in print in South Africa (757).

Samuelson explains that Schreiner's first novel achieved classic status, although she published under a male pseudonym originally. Mgqwetho, by contrast, despite the initial popularity of her work, was for many years forgotten: "biographical information on Mgqwetho is thin, and her fate, following the publication of her last poem in January 1929, unknown" (758). Boswell, by contrast, focuses on the content and form of Mgqwetho's contribution to literature: "Her poems were overtly political, commenting on politics within the African Native National Congress, and containing appeals for black solidarity" (51).

Boswell also describes early novels and a novella which were published during the early twentieth century. The feminist stories of young, black women which make up my canon have precedent in earlier writing by black women. Boswell writes:

> Victoria Swartbooi's novella, UMandisa, published in 1934, which emphasises the importance of ubuntu through the coming-of-age story of Mandisa, the protagonist (Daymond et al. 2003, 206). UMandisa has been hailed as a proto-feminist novel: Hoza (2012, 63), for example, reads it as a 'self-consciously crafted feminist-oriented novel', while for Daymond et al., it offers an alternative vision of Xhosa femininity – one that prizes education for women over marriage and immersion into patriarchal culture. (52)

In *Surfacing* Barbara Boswell describes her response to Miriam Tlali's writing. The importance of black literary heritage is clear to see here. Not only did Boswell find herself in Tlali's writing, she was also able to construct her own identity as a writer due to being able to read Tlali's work. She writes:

> How can I fully begin to tell the story of what Miriam Tlali has meant to me? It is a story I will grapple with for the rest of my life, as her multiple meanings and significations in my personal, political and professional life continue to unfold. She was

> a pioneer, a trailblazer – a Black womxn who carved a path for that little girl – me – who decided at six that she wanted to be a storyteller and writer; who let go of the dream as she grew older and examined the world and saw no one who looked like her, writing. A girl whose world was turned upside down by the discovery of Miriam Tlali and the worlds she created in her fiction. I was the girl who became a scholar of Black womxn's literature; able, much later, to carve out a professional path in an unforgiving system, due partly to Tlali's life and work. (Boswell "Echoes of Miriam Tlali" 199)

Black women writers have also contributed to transition literature, engaging with the TRC and the "elision of women's experiences in the liberation movement" (Boswell *And Wrote My Story Anyway* 153.)

Whilst acknowledging the challenges faced by black women writing, I wish to show, through this short introduction, that there is a rich and varied tradition of black women writing in South Africa. It is a challenge to strike a balance between acknowledging the stifling effect the apartheid had on black women's writing, and not falling into the trap that Coetzee identifies of continually focusing on the newness of black writing. Following Coetzee and Lynda Spencer, I will evaluate these writers as "emergent." Spencer describes emergent writers in South Africa due to the particular political situation which exists after apartheid:

> new political freedoms have opened up spaces for previously muffled female voices to construct forms of female representation that engage both the literary and the political. In the midst of these new freedoms, female writers are emerging and finding cracks in which to foreground the female experience in the new nation state, inserting women's voices and concerns into the national agenda…(Spencer *Writing Women* 6)

They are a unique group because of the specific circumstances in which they are writing, not simply for being black women who write. In this sense, they are emergent in terms of the literature they produce, and not simply for who they are as authors. Their work contributes to the construction of the nation, as Boswell notes, and the construction of collective memory, the focus of this study.

Consequences of lack of black spaces and critical silence

Despite the hope Mbao and Coetzee present for the creation of black reading and writing spaces, this is still something to which the majority of readers, and indeed writers, do not have access. Commercial and critical success is not completely defined by gender and race, but it still plays a very important role. One of the most famous and commercially successful South African authors, J.M. Coetzee, has been both praised and criticised for his representation of silencing and trauma in his novels, particularly *Disgrace*. Rather than attempting to narrate the traumatic experiences of the two central female characters he represents how their stories are silenced by the narrator. Derek Attridge, speaking in praise of this narrative decision asks if it is "possible to do justice to the otherness of the other in the language and discursive conventions that have historically been one of the instruments of ensuring that this other is kept subordinate?" (Attridge 17). Such ideas also led Elizabeth Alsop to praise Coetzee's "principled withholding" in choosing to represent the process of silencing rather than the experience which exists behind the silencing (100). The absolute alterity of the other cannot be represented, it is argued by either David as a character or even Coetzee as a writer. Instead, this impossibility is a worthier subject of exploration for a novelist such as Coetzee.

These arguments recall Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern, and her famous, and perhaps famously misinterpreted claim that the subaltern cannot speak (Ashcroft et al 97). Spivak explained that the empire subject attempts to speak for the subaltern, and forces the subaltern to speak within the discourse of this self which means that it ceases to be subaltern (1988, 24). However, this does not mean that there are no circumstances under which the subaltern can ever speak, but rather that the subaltern cannot be heard within the dominant discourses of the colonial or patriarchal system.[10] Young, black women, have achieved agency in South Africa and are, as Boswell says “daring to write” (*And Wrote My Story Anyway* 20). Persistent structural inequalities lead to a certain kind of author, and a certain kind of narrative voice being predominantly written, published and read. The critical focus on established older authors such as Coetzee only exacerbates this problem. There is nothing wrong with principled withholding, if other authors are able to publish the stories which are being withheld. But, as Boswell argues, whole worlds have been excluded from the literary world (20).

Conclusion

The gender and race of writers is an issue of representation, both on an authorial level and in terms of the kind of characters and stories included in the publications. Naturally, all writing is an act of empathetic imagination, and authors of all genders and races can represent people who are very different from the author themselves. However, it seems that they do not, or at least not often. The writers included in this thesis have commented on the lack of young black female characters in the literature they were exposed to. Mohale Mashigo in particular has talked about not finding characters like themselves in the fiction that she read, particularly as a child (Mashigo “We Bury Our Stories”). By contrast, these young female authors all write about characters like themselves, at least in terms of age, race and gender. Stories that were not being told are now being told, Boswell’s “worlds” are visible to all readers (20). These texts illustrate distinctive features of South African existence, due in part to their gender, which is something I intend to explore in this thesis but not to take for granted.

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[10] I think it’s important to note here, that the female authors, and the majority of the characters who they describe are not subaltern. A lot of writing on female voices questions whether or not sulbatern voices can be heard, following the work of Spivak. By the very fact that their stories have been published and read they are already part of the dominant discourse. I will look at how these authors represent their experiences as people who identity as women, and the characters they write about who do the same.

Chapter 6: reflections of writing and memory

Contemporary South African authors represent acts of collective memory and show the production and repetition of culturally significant events and narratives as their characters experience them. Not only do they represent collective memory, but they also produce it as cultural artefacts. In this chapter I will analyse these texts as objects of collective memory and the extent to which the authors reflect on their own role as creators of collective memory. These young writers are creating a collective memory of their times, the first years of democracy in South Africa. This act of creation is not limited to only the postapartheid years. Their writing interacts with earlier cultural memory, and rewrites myths both ancient and those of the apartheid. I will also consider to what extent these authors are trying to contribute to South African identity narratives and collective memory and to what extent critical response acknowledges their role.

These texts, by what is included within them and the lives they choose to represent, are contributing to collective memory production in South Africa. The events they narrate are worthy of being recorded in literature, and thus are important, precisely because of featuring a cast of characters who are often overlooked when nations construct accounts of their cultural memory. Perhaps because of this the texts portray a self-consciousness on the part of their narrators, an anxiety related to their claim of being able to construct South African identity. This occurs on a textual level, and is supported by the interviews of these authors, who comment on being unable to read works written by people like them. They reflect that they were also unable to find characters like themselves in the fiction they encountered as young people. The uncertainty about whether their stories are important enough to be worth being told stems from the lack of privilege of many of the characters, who are young (sometimes children) female and black. They are multiply disadvantaged due to age, gender and race. By focusing on their stories these authors are changing literature as a source of cultural memory for dominant groups to something more diverse. Although there is not necessarily a direct correlation between an author and who they choose to write about, these authors evidence both by their experience and their work that young black women have struggled to find representation both as characters and as authors.

Authorial intention, and how important it should be to the reader or critic, has long been a controversial issue. There are a range of views on whether we should consider the intention, or indeed biographical details of the author at all. Roland Barthes claimed "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject steps away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (253). Whilst acknowledging that it may not matter in terms of the experience of reading what the biographical details of the author are, it does matter in terms of the publication and reading of certain authors.

I would also argue that the author's background has an impact on what, and particularly who, they choose to write about. The destruction of all points of origin ignores the fact that most published work throughout history has been written by white men. That may very well not matter purely in literary terms, or even in terms of representation as it is perfectly possible for a white, male author to create authentic, realistic black female characters. These authors are also, at least relatively speaking, privileged voices.

However, I still believe it matters who is writing for two reasons. The experiences described by my cohort of writers are simply not contained within the majority of South African literature. The authors themselves, as described in the interviews below, identify the lack of young, black, female characters in popular and particularly classic literature. This lack of representation has not been fully rectified in postapartheid South Africa. Michael Chapman relates this lack of representation to the apartheid policies of segregation. Perhaps surprisingly in a multi-ethnic democracy: "most people in South Africa continue to live in areas which, under apartheid, were reserved for their ‘race group’ or where, before 1990 in the inner cities, ‘group area’ laws had ceased to be policed” (11). Describing South African literature today, Chapman claims that novels written by white authors contain:

> Characters [that] live in the still predominantly white suburbs; young black African writers [who] depict life in the townships or the inner-city: the Hillbrow of fast-food joints that proofreader Tearle lived to regret. Coloured writers [that] write nostalgically of District Six (the Coloured suburb, in Cape Town, which was demolished by the bulldozers of the apartheid state), or write defiantly or with bitter humour of life on the gangster-ridden Cape Flats. (Chapman 11)

Representation is not only a matter of the social background of the author, but this background certainly plays an important role. Perhaps especially in South Africa, where different communities are still so divided, the necessity of reading authors from previously marginalised backgrounds is crucial. For this reason, and for the purposes of this study, I wish to assert the ethical and political importance of who the author is. However, I would argue that the motivation of social responsibility means that critical response to these texts should be equal to that given to texts by white authors. As outlined in the previous chapter, these texts have literary merit and are not merely sociological curiosities.

The South Africa these young black authors are portraying is different from how it has traditionally been portrayed. This generation of authors come from a South African tradition of committed literature which is trying to tell and to a large extent change the South African (hi)story. These authors are aware that stories of women like them have often not been heard, due to lack of access to education or the inability to publish work. These authors want to write partially to compensate for this problem. They write with an awareness that a lot of women like them are unable to write or to publish their work.

Reflections on writing

As outlined in the introduction, my thesis considers the work of five authors: Sisonke Msmimang and her memoir *Always Another Country*, Mohale Mashigo and her novel *The Yearning,* Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* and *Period Pain*, Rešoketšwe Manenzhe's *Scatterlings* and Keletso Mopai's short story collection *If You Keep Digging*. These works were selected as they were written by young, black female authors, who had published their first book after 2007. The books were selected to cover a range of genres, but a similar topic: a portrayal of South African life and the construction of South African identity. The authors are to varying degrees engaged with political issues and the concept of memory construction.

To what extent are these authors trying to contribute to South African identity narratives and collective memory? The authors of these texts appear to be attempting to write their experience into the narrative of South Africa. They still see their position as somewhat liminal, yet they have expressed ideas about the production of identity in South Africa and who gets to decide what that means. Wanner assessment of the publishing industry being white and favouring books by white authors naturally leads to proportionately fewer black writers being published and their works not receiving the same promotional effort as books by white authors (Wanner, p.187). It does not matter if these publications do not become classics; rather, the fact of young black women being able to publish them at all is already a massive shift in terms of what may be able to form a part of collective memory in the future. These books are being read both within and outside of South Africa, impacting on the way in which issues such as race and gender are understood nationally and perhaps internationally too. Collective memory is influenced by books that people read, rather than the books literary critics think that they should be reading. The intention of the author is important, not perhaps to how we read the text but in terms of understanding the texts as objects of collective memory. It is significant who is speaking about which topics. Naturally, it is difficult to judge critical and audience reception in terms of the formation of collective memory, as these texts are so recent. Erll and Rigney explain that literature often forms a part of collective memory many hundreds of years after its first publication, often providing “a bridge between generations” (112). This has become far less true with bestselling works like Harry Potter becoming popular around the world and exporting a British idea of friendship bravery and boarding school (as well as magic) to many different countries. The works I am dealing with are not as well-known as bestsellers such as Harry Potter, yet they are all reasonably widely read. I am going to consider the potential impact of such works now and in the future. I will also consider the intention of the authors to assess the way in which they consider the role of their own work in contributing towards identity formation in South Africa.

Sisonke Msimang

As outlined in the introduction, the authors chosen for this thesis are all female, black and young. It matters that these authors are being published, as historically black women’s voices have been excluded from the canon. As Sisonke Msimang writes in the preface to *Always Another Country* (18) “I’ve written this book because too few of us—women, refugees, South Africans, black people, queers--believe in our instincts enough to know that our hearts will be our saviours.” She suggests that such people’s stories are under-represented, compared to the “heroes” they do not count themselves among (18). In a note on *Always Another Country* Msimang writes: “I wanted to show that this, too, is Africa” (title page). Msimang sees her writing as a way of expanding collective memory. This memoir, for her, is a way of ensuring stories like hers do not remain overshadowed. There are many unheard stories, which Msimang believes are also part of the “recent history” of South Africa, but which are not necessarily always understood as such.

Msimang finds the issue of identity problematic as she believes that writing about her family is interpreted as a political act, where she did not intend for it to be so. In an interview with R. Wood Msimang talks about the intention behind her writing:

> I tried very hard not to write this book in didactic terms. I didn't want to write about identity (though I did in places) I wanted to weave a sense of how the people I grew up with were these eccentric, funny, fully human characters — which unfortunately, is still seen as political. The fact that they are contemporary complex Africans not living in villages and traveling the world and continuing to be African — well that is who they are. (Msimang "A Sort of Home")

She is aware, however, that writing this memoir was also a political act, or at least will be understood as such: "and yet writing about this is cast as a political act". She refers to the "on-going battle black people face everywhere — both in real and literary terms". Msimang is concerned with readership, and who she is representing herself and others for. She talks about the difficulty of this situation:

> So, there's a double bind there — you are writing about yourself as you are and you are for yourself and for your people, but you are also conscious of constructing a new narrative about who you and your people are for an audience that has low expectations. The latter is not a huge concern in my mind, but they become a big deal because of how loudly they read, in other words, how much power they have. (Msimang "A Sort of Home")

The ability of some people to read loudly, either as critics, academics or just members of society with more power has a huge impact on what is read, and especially what is read as part of the South African story. Carli Coetzee in her work on black literary spaces has raised a similar idea, that those who attend literary festivals are predominantly white, and are having black literature explained to them. She reflects on author Thando Mgqolozana's response to constantly being read in a certain way by white readers:

> Henceforth he would no longer agree when invited to speak on panels as someone who interpreted blackness for a white audience, who found all he had to say refreshingly 'new'. 'Look at yourselves! It is not normal!' Mgqolozana said to the audience, calling attention to the weirdly skewed make-up of the audience, but also to the assumption that such a room is 'normal' and normative, and asserting that there are other ways of reading and being. (C. Coetzee 125)

Msimang is aware, as Mgqolozana is, that certain audiences can "read" her work, and not imagine that there might be other ways of reading it.

Mohale Mashigo

Reflecting on the kind of lives she represents, Mashigo shares Msimang's idea that what she writes about is Africa too. She explains the importance of representation, and her experience of growing up never reading about people like herself. She describes when that changed:

> *Nervous Conditions* about African female experience in Africa / Europe came into my life when I was in high school. Even then I didn't know people were writing books about Africans. My uncle is from Zimbabwe so *Nervous Conditions*[11] felt like it could be about people I knew. Suddenly it occurred to me that I could write about people I knew—that we belonged in stories too. (Mashigo "We Bury Our Stories")

She explains that she had grown up with Pippi Longstocking[12] and did not understand that books could also be about people like her. By writing her novel, Mashigo is contributing to broadening representation in South African literature.

In a podcast interview with C. Haith for the University of Oxford Mohale Mashigo also addresses the issue of imagining the South African nation. She stresses the importance of being able to know the past, in order to be able to imagine a different future: Mashigo tells Haith that: “if we don't imagine a different world based on who we are and knowing what kind of a past we had and maybe I'm speaking specifically about South Africans, if we don't think about where we come from, then how do we imagine?” (24:31-24:48). In an earlier interview with Jennifer Malec she stresses the importance of integrating both the good and bad memories of the South African past into narratives of collective memory:

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[11] Tsitsi Dangarembga (1988)

[12] The fictional main character of a series of stories by Swedish author Astrid Lindgren.

> … we won’t talk about the bad things that have happened but prefer to role-play this weird rainbow nation nightmare. Sometimes we rob ourselves of valuable lessons when we wipe away memories—be they of apartheid or any kind of trauma. I get that there is a lot of shame and pain in our past but erasing it isn’t going to fix anything. This country is such a frustrating place; we bury our stories and memories and wonder why we are in so much pain. (Mashigo “We Bury Our Stories”)

The importance of representing memory in literature is clear, as Mashigo refers to this idea in her novel as well as in interviews.

Keletso Mopai

In my 2020 interview[13], Mopai explains how her stories were written in the hope that people would see themselves represented within them. She says: “I had hoped somehow that someone will feel seen in the characters and know they aren't alone. And it did that, I receive messages from readers of the book who express how my writing has spoken for them- their rage, sadness, etc” (Mopai “Interview”). Interestingly, she sees her role as “speaking for” those who cannot speak for themselves. Speaking for is a complex issue, and critics such as Spivak have objected to this on the grounds that it is impossible to represent the “other” in the discourses of dominant groups. In this way, an author cannot speak for any community, but only for themselves.

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[13] See annex A

Somebody has to speak for such groups, or their stories would simply never be told. The problem is not one of empathetic representation, which I would argue Mopai more than achieves, rather it is that the people she represents are so rarely able to tell their own stories, let alone publish them. That is a socio-economic issue, related to the time and expense required to write a book, publish a book, or indeed to learn to write at all. This problem will not be solved by writers only representing people who are like them, but rather by enabling more people to live in the kind of conditions which allow them to write.

Without representation in literature, people who do not have voices will never feel "seen," as Mopai expresses it. She was not only aiming to help people see themselves, but also to be seen by others in their nation. She explains:

> there is also empathy I was seeking from the stories (I realized way later after publication) from those who know these kinds of characters (orphans, rape victims, people living with mental health issues, queer people etc.) but somehow overlooked or ignored them prior to reading "*If You Keep Digging*" (Mopai "Interview")

Challenging other South Africans to be aware of others who are very different from them, but equally South African, shows that identity formation was indeed a concern for Mopai. She explicitly links her choice to feature young, black female narrators in her stories, to her own identity. She claims that "because the mainstream consumption aren't authors interested in the lives of young Black women. That's why it is important to publish more talented Black writers who can tell these stories and be read by a wide audience" (Mopai "Interview"). Mopai is attempting to right that wrong by writing herself, and by representing people like herself.

Literature as an agent for change is implemented through issues of representation. Mopai wants to represent those who are not able to represent themselves, and indeed refers to such a wide variety of characters and backgrounds to create an impression of the whole of South Africa living in her pages. Mopai is aware that writing cannot directly implement change:

"…my writing alone would not instantly change the state of my country, no matter how many times I write about problems that affect South Africans" . She believes that she can bring about change by forcing people to see what is happening, by making the suffering she sees appear as part of the national narrative: "My job, however, is to place a mirror in front of us and interpret and portray what is reflected. And what I see is mostly devastating, and often what those kind of sad stories do is invoke fear, tears, or introspection. For me that's a good start to changing how we see ourselves and the world we live in" (Mopai, "Interview").

Kopano Matlwa

Kopano Matlwa has extensively addressed the issue of identity creation in interviews about her work. She is optimistic about the future of South Africa, and to some extent promotes the idea of South Africa being an "exceptional" place. In an interview with *The Johannesburg Review of Books* (2017) she commented on the need to keep believing in South Africa as a nation:

> Without hope what remains really? One has to remain hopeful, defiant even. I think that's what is so exceptional about us as South Africans, we are a defiant people, we continue to believe in ourselves and what we are capable of achieving as a nation, despite the odds in many ways being stacked against us. (Matlwa "It Was a Hard Book to Write")

In another interview by Gary Van Wyk for "21 icons", a project aiming to interview modern day South African "icons," she describes the way in which she is fascinated by other people's stories. She describes her motivation for writing due to the discomfort of trying to understand who she was in postapartheid South Africa: "my discomfort provoked me to write. I was growing up in postapartheid South Africa, trying to figure out who I am" (00:50-00:57). She explains that this was in the context that still valued being white over being black: "what was considered to be good was everything that was considered white" (00:57-01:10). This left her with a void, in terms of what her own identity could be. How could she identify with anything outside of the dominant discourse of culture? This caused her to question: “what does it mean to be black, African and female in the new South Africa, and who decides?” (01:01-01:6) Her novels are her attempt to be at least one of the voices which contribute to understanding what such an identity means.

Rešoketšwe Manenzhe

The most recently published author in my cohort is Rešoketšwe Manenzhe. Her debut novel *Scatterlings* has won many prestigious South African literary prizes.[14] Due to the novel’s publication in 2020, not so much interview material exists on Manezhe’s thoughts on the intention behind her writing of this particular text. The novel is self-consciously concerned with the nature of being South African, an issue which Manenzhe has referred to regarding her work. In an interview I conducted with her in 2022[15], she describes a lack of complexity in the way that South African memory is perceived internationally:

> We remember a lot more than what people see as remembering. So then it becomes two stories…the world sort of remembers one thing…but South Africans themselves remember very differently. So, for instance, we remember the Steven Bikos, Neil Aggetts, there's so many more people that we looked to and these people had a hand in creating South Africa. Sara Baartman, all of these people, they had a hand, but they're not necessarily universally celebrated like other people like Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. (Manenzhe “Interview)

Manenzhe is not denying the importance of figures such as Mandela. Instead she wishes to remind us of the many different figures who contributed to making South Africa what it is today. The multi-faceted nature of South African memory is reflected in Scatterlings, whose characters span a multitude of different backgrounds. Each person has their own idea about what it means to be South Africa and correspondingly their own concept of South African memory.

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[14] Winner of the 2021 HSS Award for Fiction by a Single Author, The University of Johannesburg Prize for South African Writing in English, the South African Literary Awards, for Fiction in English in the category of "First Time Published Author" and winner of the 2020 Dinaane Debut Fiction Award.

[15] See Annex B

In interview with Jennifer Malec, the editor of *The Johannesburg Review of Books* Manenzhe describes what she was trying to achieve in writing *Scatterlings*. She explains that the novel focuses on conflict: “conflicts between epochs, between cultures, between worlds” (“Dreams Can Become Enemies” 08:28-08:35) These cultures are all nominally South African, but do not sit comfortably together. South African identity for Manenzhe is complex, and her work attempts to find a way to represent that complexity rather than to present a unified identity. Her novel engages with the importance of memory with not only South African identity, but also the situation in contemporary South Africa. She describes the stories she tells as: “everything that brought us to where we are today” (12:28-12:33) She sees the varied memories of the different characters she has created as an essential part of the formation of the apartheid, and contemporary South Africa.

Like many of the other authors in this cohort, Manenzhe denies that a comprehensive “reckoning” occurred following the end of apartheid, and is fearful as to the impact this failure may have on the future:

> I think South Africa is very interesting in that it never had a full reckoning of what happened in apartheid. I mean, there was the truth and reconciliation commission, a forum where the families of individuals who had gone missing were trying to figure out what had happened to their families. I feel that was poorly done because there was really no acknowledgement of some of the wrongs that were done. A lot of it was kind of done in the spirit of we need to just hush this all up and kind of move on. We need to move on, black people need to get over it. (Manenzhe “Interview”)

The TRC is not a source of reconciliation for Manenzhe. She sees it as having failed as it did not really help the victims. The intention behind it was to focus on national rather than personal recovery, something I will be analysing later in this thesis.

Manenzhe does not consider that collective memory is necessarily gendered but rather that women are more inclined to attempt to make sense of collective memory because their position is the present is difficult to understand. She sees an interest in memory as a means of trying to explain the current state of South Africa, and those whose lives are, in her view, less comprehensible, would naturally be drawn towards it. In terms of the experience of black, female writers, she laments that:

> …it's not, necessarily sustainable just being a writer…I'm always exhausted having to keep a day job, is it feasible… how do I feed myself? These are questions that are very important. I've been, of course, lucky enough to secure a few deals that can feed me for a little bit. That's nice, I just wish that kind of thing was a lot more common. I only know maybe four of us or three of us who are South African based to have agents and therefore have even have an opportunity to enter a global market.

Manenzhe is a successful writer, yet she has had to continue working in her “day job” in order to survive. This situation is of course even more challenging for yet to be published authors, or those who have not had the same degree of success and Manenzhe.

Manenzhe’s work, like Mopai’s, contains a varied cast of characters, from a ten-year-old girl who has a Dutch father and a mother from the Caribbean, to a middle-aged Afrikaner farmer. Manenzhe clarifies that all of these characters were strangers to her, rather than suggesting she is any better able to represent people like her. She claims that she was “trying to represent people (you) I don’t immediately understand” (Manenzhe “Interview”). Her book and its focus are unusual, however, suggesting that her contact with the collective memory of pre-colonial South Africa and its myths and legends has been an influence. She believes it is important to explore “how we experience the same place so differently” (28:00-28:03) She describes how people try to identify her by where she is from and her people, and she wonders if they think they can understand her world like that. She wants to represent this experience which she identifies as particularly South African.

Conclusions

Representation is not only solved by having more diversity of writers. Issues with authorship and who is speaking for whom continue, as it is still a relatively privileged life being described. Consequently, as contributions to collective memory these texts will still largely contribute to dominant narratives. However, these texts portray the lives of ordinary young black women, who have historically been excluded as agents or even participants of collective memory. The role of literature in forming collective memory is something which cannot be judged so soon after the historical events and the publication of these novels. However, by being published at all, these works of literature mean that Matlwa’s hope that people like her can be part of deciding what it means to be young, female and black in South Africa may be realised.

Section 2: Collective memory, group and nation

Chapter 7: Cultural identity, national narratives and collective memory

Cultural identity, understood in Stuart Hall’s terms is an act of “positioning” ourselves against a history which is “constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth” (226). Hall argues that the creation of postcolonial identity is not merely an act of recovery of a precolonial identity (224). Forming a cultural identity will always involve negotiating collective memory since this identity is “a matter of becoming as well as being” (223). Collective memory is necessary for the positioning of any group, whether an ethnic or religious group, or even a nation, to create a sense of cultural identity. As outlined in the introduction, nations do not have memories, so they have to create them through narratives of collective memory. (A. Assmann, “Transformations” 54). Even in nations with a high level of homogeneity, such narratives are always a source of contention. Narratives develop and change through the generations dependent on a variety of influences and on the groups which create them.

Maurice Halbwachs acknowledged the inherent plurality of memory as the groups to which people belong are not fixed, and people do not remain part of the same groups all of the time. Aleida and Jan Assmann further developed the idea, insisting on the state of permanent change inherent in collective memory and the groups which use it to form their identity. Jan Assmann writes: “individuals possess various identities according to the various groups, communities, belief systems, political systems, etc. to which they belong, and equally multifarious are their communicative and cultural, in short: collective memories. On all levels, memory is an open system” (114). Although the Assmann’s work acknowledges that individuals belong to various groups or social frames, some critics have read their work as suggesting that memory is derived from “pre-existing groups” (Feindt et al. 26). It is important to be aware that it is not only people that move between different social frames, but also to note that the social frames themselves also change. For the purpose of this chapter, I will treat neither the groups nor the memory that they produce as “preexisting” but instead consider the way groups are mediated and constituted by collective memory, just as much as memory is created by groups.

Collective memory is a means of constructing a desired identity by recording and responding to the past in a particular way (A. Assmann "Transformations" 54). This desired identity, the "we" Assmann describes, is constituted by all the group's members learning and participating in the same memory. It is also the result of being part of a group, from a nation to a family, which shares memory according to its relevance to that desired identity (53). Collective memory can be further divided into collective and cultural memory. Cultural memory is broadly contained within traditions and practices, which members of the community must take on as their memory to fully form part of the community. This cultural memory can stretch as far back as creation myths, or the earliest events contained within a nation's history books. The time scale is less important than how the events remembered contribute to the desired group identity in the present day (J. Assmann 112-13). Communicative memory, by contrast, is the memory that is contained within smaller groups, normally families. This performs the same group identity-creating function but works with events that are verbally communicated and contained within living memory (111).

Cultural memory and identity are described in terms of possession of memory by Jan Assmann. He claims that "cultural memory reaches back into the past only so far as the past can be reclaimed as "ours." This is why we refer to this form of historical consciousness as "memory" and not just as knowledge about the past" (113). Assmann's words on reclaiming the past are particularly pertinent in the case of South Africa, where cultural memory of precolonial times is something that needed to be reclaimed, as it was partially lost during colonialisation and apartheid. According to Edward Said "collective memory is not an inert and passive thing, but a field of activity in which past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with political meaning" (185).

Notwithstanding the inherently unstable nature of memory communities, South Africa nonetheless can be said to have suffered a crisis which broke down established social groups and narratives about the past. Occupation by an imperial government causes a rupture in the way colonised people are able to position themselves against the narratives of the past. Michael Rothberg explains the effects of colonialism of collective memory thus: “colonialism interrupts both communicative memory (between generations) and cultural memory by the imposition of a foreign one” (364). Formulating his theory of collective memory according to the communicative and cultural model, Rothberg illustrates how colonialism interrupts both forms of memory. Generations are unable to communicate with each other about their shared histories, due to a variety of factors including legal sanction, linguistic control, or even enforced separation. Rothberg references Amílcar Cabral when he considers colonisation and decolonisation as acts of cultural memory (Rothberg 365). Rothberg describes “an act of collective memory” framing Cabral’s liberation theory in terms of regaining control over collective memory (365).

Colonialism and the colonial apartheid state have disrupted collective memory, both cultural and communicative, and that disruption is represented in contemporary South African literature. Both forms of memory, understood together as collective memory, were dramatically altered during colonial rule of South Africa and the subsequent apartheid. Cultural memory in formerly colonised states, in particular, is one of constant revision. Cultural memory in South Africa was abruptly changed due to a colonial invasion and apartheid rule and, again, since the inception of democracy in 1994. This change in collective memory did not occur because knowledge about the past had changed, but rather because the “identity function” which that knowledge about the past was required to perform had been dramatically altered (J. Assmann 113). The apartheid regime required certain events to be forgotten, such as state-sponsored murders. The political meaning of memory in South Africa remains highly contentious, and consensus is yet to be achieved.

Collective memory in contemporary South African literature is represented as something which is controlled by group narratives. The dominant metanarratives tend to be related to the state, or to those with political and social capital. Colonialism has disrupted different forms of collective memory, and much of the work of constructing group identity in postcolonial societies like South Africa stems from reconstructing cultural and communicative memory. However, the necessity of creating a stable national identity is shown to be at odds with preserving the individual narratives of South African people. The way in which the trauma of colonisation and apartheid is recorded as a crime against the people of South Africa, without diminishing the voices of those who were the victims of actual crimes committed by apartheid, is another pressing concern for postcolonial literature.

Section structure

In chapter 8 I explore the destructive impact of colonialism and the way that contemporary authors represent its far-reaching damage of collective memory. Even after a country has become postcolonial, colonialism still affects the desired national identity and thus the collective memory which is preserved. The chapter 9 studies the way in which cultural memory of precolonial times has been preserved, despite the imposition of a colonial collective memory. New hybrid memories have also been developed alongside the dominant narratives of memory. The chapter 10 considers the way in which the apartheid registers in South African collective memory, and the problems of representation presented by a collective trauma. In the chapter 11 I observe the construction of postcolonial memory on a national level, and the silencing effect this can have on the variety of group and individual narratives of memory which exist in South Africa. The chapter 12 reveals the consequences of memory work directed towards reconciliation rather than redistribution, and the ways that contemporary authors are questioning this cultural and political choice.

Chapter 8: Colonialism, apartheid and collective memory in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* and Rešoketšwe Manenzhe's *Scatterlings*

Cultural memory which exists outside of dominant colonial narrative is supressed by devaluing the non-standard histories and thus identities it produces (Rothberg, 2013, p.364). Events and stories, handed down through generations by countries' indigenous inhabitants, were apparently forgotten, forcibly repressed or merely presented as uncivilised by the dominant colonial state. Contemporary literature shows that despite that repression, these ideas have had, and continue to have, a profound impact on South Africans today, and the way they can understand their own identity in the face of this loss.

I will analyse the work of two authors, Kopano Matlwa and Rešoketšwe Manenzhe, exploring the way in which this process is represented in contemporary literature. *Coconut,* by Kopano Matlwa (2015) as outlined in the previous section, is a novel which is narrated by two young black women living in Cape Town. The novel is divided into two parts, narrated by Ofilwe (Fifi) and Fikile (Fiks) respectively. The narrative voice of each girl moves between a young child and a young adult, illustrating their journey as they grow up. Ofilwe is rich and privileged, part of the new black middle classes. Fikile is a poor waitress living in the townships with her abusive uncle. The novel portrays their attempts to come to terms with the new South Africa and to negotiate their place within it. Ofilwe initially tries to adopt the identity of her predominantly white classmates. When faced with their rejection of her due to her race she attempts to rediscover an alternative collective memory and identity which can allow her to form a new identity for herself. The process is more challenging for Fikile as she does not have access to education or positive role models in the way that Ofilwe does. She comes to realise that her employment situation is unfair and that she cannot escape being seen as black by those around her simply by controlling her behaviour and image.

Rešoketšwe Manenzhe's novel is set in the mid-1920s and illustrates the destructive effect of the Immorality Act on a family living in South Africa. Alisa, the mother, is of Afro-Caribbean heritage but grew up in the United Kingdom. Her husband, Abram, is Dutch and came to South Africa as an adult. Their children Emilia and Dido come under suspicion due to the Act, as the validity of Abram and Alisa's marriage is questioned. The family is wealthy and thus far that has protected them to some extent from the racism of colonial South Africa. Afraid of the consequences of the Immorality Act, Alisa murders her youngest daughter, Emilia. Alisa commits suicide on the name night as she murders Emilia, clearly intending to destroy everything about herself and her daughters. Alisa attempts to murder both the little girls by giving them poisoned juice. She also sets fire to the house, destroying evidence of her and Abram's marriage, which has become essential since the immorality put their daughter's legitimacy in doubt. Although Dido suffers from smoke inhalation, she recovers fully from the physical impact of her mother's actions. Following these terrible events and fearing the relentless questioning from mysterious governmental figures, Abram and Dido go on the run to escape further persecution.

The novel explores the role of memory and its loss in this tragedy. South African memory is shown to derive from around the world. It is interconnected and forces even the most reluctant characters into acknowledging the importance of those who they would cast as other. Manenzhe's novel illustrates that South African memory is infinitely more complex than most political narratives of the nation would allow.

Desired identities, undesirable people in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* and Rešoketšwe Manenzhe's *Scatterlings*

In *Coconut*, cultural memory, outside of the dominant white cultural identity, has been corrupted and become a source of shame, where it is not entirely forgotten. Colonialism has destroyed cultural and communicative memory of pre-colonial times, which means that it is hard to develop an identity based on non-standard collective memory. The accepted cultural memory asserts itself in two ways, through culture and what is deemed desirable behaviour and through a portrayal of history mediated through control of the education system. This dominant cultural identity is strongly linked to whiteness yet is not perceived as a group identity but is understood as normal. There is considerable precedent for this. Whiteness is generally an invisible racial group, the norm by which others are judged, and perpetually found to be inferior (Lopez 2). For school-aged Ofilwe the superiority of whiteness is unspoken, it is merely how those around her understand the world. The collective memory of colonialism which supports such identity production is also not perceived as such, but rather as a natural way of understanding South Africa and its history. By this I mean, no one tells Ofilwe she is inferior because her people were colonised by others. Colonial superiority is not being asserted alongside racial superiority; however, the narratives of racial superiority were originally developed to justify the colonial process (Ashcroft et al. 218). There is a direct correlation between colonial expansion and an explosion in discourse of race (219). As Glenn Adams and Tuğçe Kurtis claim: "the narratives of history and identity that underlie constructions of everyday experience are not 'just natural' or objective accounts of the past, but instead reflect the perspective and serve the interests of people in positions of dominance" (8). Collective memory creates a desired group identity, in a colonial country this identity is naturally that of the dominant colonial group.

In the case of *Coconut*, this desired identity is apparent in Ofilwe's childhood during the apartheid era and her teenage years during the transition. Ofilwe grows up with her parents and older brother, attending her mostly white private school, where her identity is something which is constantly diminished in importance. The desirability of whiteness and white culture means that any cultural behaviours not related to that are seen as unimportant. The meaning of the word *Coconut* in the title "refers to a self-loathing black person who looks up to white people to validate his or her self-worth" (Phiri 166). Spencer suggests "the space occupied by the 'coconut' is not a subversive space of possibility, but a painful and potentially damaging one" ("Writing Women" 161). Ofilwe is certainly damaged by her inability to be either part of her family's cultural heritage, or the cultural norms of her school friends. Ofilwe attempts to be the same as her white schoolmates, but to her great disappointment, she is never really accepted. She is "too dark" and only invited because the other children find her "cute" (Matlwa *Coconut* 42). Her brother Tshepo points this out to her:

> Friends, Ofilwe, know your name. Friends ask where you come from and are curious about what language you and yours speak. Friends get to know your family, all of them, those with and those without. Friends do not scoff at your beliefs, friends appreciate your customs, friends accept you for who you really are (43).

Ofilwe's "friends" are uninterested in her and frequently exclude her because she does not look or behave in the same way as them. This is notable in terms of holidays, many of her friends take vacations in the same place whereas Ofilwe goes to visit her family in their village. Her family eat different food and even take baths at different times of day. Most of the children are happy to condemn her as impossibly different due to her blackness. However, some children attempt to change her in order to make her more palatable to the white world which they all inhabit. Her friend Belinda, who wants to help her to fit in better, even tries to modify her speech:

> Say 'uh-vin' Fifi. You bake a cake in an 'uh-vin', not 'oh-vin', 'uh-vin'." "This is boring, Belinda, let's see who can climb the highest up that tree." "No, Fifi! You have to learn how to speak properly." "I can speak properly." "No you can't, Fifi. Do you want to be laughed at again? Come now. Say 'uh-vin.'" "Uuh-vin." "Good. Now say 'b-ird.' Not 'b-erd', but 'b-ird.' (49)

Ofilwe insists that she can speak properly, but what Belinda has understood is that she does not speak "properly" according to the social norms of the world they inhabit. Ofilwe does not have the same accent as the white children, further marking her out as different. This difference can only ever be an inferiority. Ofilwe as an older teenager, after she breaks off her friendship with Belinda, feels sorry for her. She is aware the Belinda does not understand what she has done, and both children are forced to bear the weight of the racist system which surrounds them. She explains:

> I feel sorry for Belinda. I feel sorry for me... I think at heart she is a good person. But I am a good person too. She meant well. But we were different. And somewhere between grades three and ten that became a bad thing. It hurts hurting your friends. But she hurt me. You miss the laughs, the delirious things you'd do and the madness you shared. But after a while its agony playing a role you would never dream of auditioning for. (48)

Ofilwe's difference is always marked as inferiority. Even a "good person" within this system cannot help but understand the superiority of whiteness that persists in postapartheid South Africa. This may be configured as cultural differences, but in the end in it comes down to skin colour. Since blackness of any kind cannot be a desired identity, consequently collective memory which constitutes black identities also has no value.

Scatterlings is set in the mid nineteen-twenties. During this period the laws which will later form the basis for the apartheid are beginning to be passed. The South Africa Manenzhe presents in her novel is clearly racially divided; however, this division is not codified in the way it will be during the apartheid. Abram and Alisa, a mixed-race couple, have been living undisturbed as a couple and their children have been attending school without either the school or the parents of other students objecting. Thus far, the novel suggests, the impoverishment of most black people due to the colonial conquest of their lands was sufficient to satisfy the white minority government. At the time that this novel was set, the government has become concerned about black people who have managed to escape the social structuring of society along racial lines. Mr Ross, the government official who visits Abram and his family, describes black people who are property owners. Worryingly, from Mr. Ross's perspective, these property-owning, black people have also started to claim citizenship in South Africa. He suggests that social and economic equality is so undesirable to the government, and Mr Ross himself, as to be ludicrous:

> There's been trouble up in the north, up in the Transvaal. Troublesome place it is, the north. People doing as they please. You know they found a native with more money in his bank than all the white men there. Just nonsense, Mr van Zijl. Nonsense! (Manenzhe *Scatterlings* 19)

He also tells Abram about a man who was not legally married to a "native" woman with a mixture of threat and warning (23). If Abram is not legally married, then he will also be imprisoned as the probably fictitious man in the story. Abram is aware that the man in the story is not real, rather it is a parable of what happens to men who indulge in the immorality of having a relationship with a woman who is not white.

Black identity is not merely undesirable, as it is in *Coconut*, it is dangerous. As Alisa points out to Abram, both of them could go to prison. The novel never makes it clear what will happen to the children following the de-legalisation of their parents' marriage. Abram tells his daughter Dido that she may be taken from him. The novel creates the ominous impression that something worse will happen. Being of mixed heritage in this context is criminally undesirable. Abram and Dido escape the country, something which Abram feels driven to do because of the threat to himself and his daughter. The novel does not reveal what would happen to Dido but creates a sense of unease as suspicious men go to her school and ask questions about her. What exactly they plan to do is not made clear but their intentions are evidently sinister.

The Immorality Act represents the codification of the undesirability of blackness. This act was really put into place in South Africa in 1927 in order to outlaw relationships between people of different races (Martens 223). The law is not the only means by which this is conveyed to the black characters in this novel. In the social sphere being black is a cause for rejection and social isolation. Black identity not being desirable, a reality which is impressed upon the woman and the girls in this novel by wider society, extends to all aspects of appearance and behaviour. Alisa, Abram's wife and mother of Dido and Emilia, was brought up as the adopted child of white parents in England. She experiences the worlds' discomfort with her, which causes her pain. She is a black woman in a white world, she is wealthy and has received a typical education for a middle-class British woman at that time. Her parents give her access to spaces that are normally denied to black women; yet she remains excluded from society. Her parents are upset by the fact that they cannot find anyone they deem appropriate to marry her. When she is travelling on the boat to visit South Africa, none of the other passengers in first class will talk to her except for Abram and his Russian friend Yuri. Her experience is not so dissimilar from Ofilwe's as however well she performs white identity, it is never good enough. Her appearance and the markers of racial difference found there override all the perfect English behaviours she has learned.

During the voyage she takes to Africa she is driven to suicidal thoughts by the rejection of the other passengers and the rejection by wider society that it represents. She writes in her journal: "in times such as these, I find the power of the sea, the finality it offers, very attractive" (Manenzhe *Scatterlings* 153) She wishes, as Ofilwe does, that she was not black: "I wish there was a spell or a prayer I could say to wash the darkness of my skin away" (153) However, this desire is motivated not by a visceral dislike of herself, as it is in Ofilwe's case, but rather a wish to hide who she is and her history. She elaborates:

> If I wasn't who I am, black as I am, no one could assume my history. No one could, by simply looking at me, assume that my family had been stitched from the symptoms of a plague, the remnants of slavery, or, quite simply, the transience of life. If I wasn't who I am, they couldn't so easily see evidence of tragedies I inherited from my ancestors. But I am black and this history is etched in my blood. It marks my skin (153).

Her skin is undesirable because of the history it tells. Race as a category was largely created to serve the racism arising for colonial conquest. Conquered people needed to be definably inferior in order to justify the colonisers' treatment of them (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p.219). Even in the case of a rich, British woman, racial categories continue to perform this very function. Alisa is able to be British only when she cannot be seen. She illustrates her situation thus:

> And if I stood behind a curtain and recited, as fluently as my governess taught me, every lament ever sung by Keats and Shakespeare, these peers of mine might sing praises. If I spoke of the universe, as it was untangled by Copernicus and Kepler and Galileo, they might praise that too. But if the curtain should fall and my skin be revealed, will they praise, or renounce these treasures as tainted because someone like me dared to touch them? (Manenzhe *Scatterlings* 154)

It might appear at first glance that Alisa despises her skin colour; however, *Scatterlings* does not bear out that interpretation. She does not, as Ofilwe does, long to be white. Instead she is troubled by the difference between who she is expected to be according to her class and status, and who she is allowed to be because of her race. She does not believe that she is inferior to those people who judge her so harshly, yet she has no way of either persuading them or forcing them to accept her. She is both too English, and not English enough for her companions aboard the ship, and white society in general.

Alisa's murder of her daughter Emilia and her subsequent suicide are presented by Alisa herself an act of protection. Writing in her diary she explains that since she feels compelled to commit suicide she must also murder her daughters. She writes "I couldn't spare my daughters the burden of my skin, but I must spare them this – this thing I must do. I can't leave them behind. They would be shunned. One tragedy they could survive, but not both at the same time" (184-85). Suicide for Alisa has become an unavoidable thing, so she has convinced herself that she must not inflict on her children the tragedy of abandonment by making sure that they also die. Such thoughts are difficult to understand, yet perhaps make more since when we consider how Alisa has been abandoned, however unwillingly, by her biological parents. Having suffered the loss of parents as a child herself, she may see this as a crueller fate to inflict on her daughters than leaving them behind. The world that they would have to navigate without her appears so terrible to Alisa, that she cannot leave them to face it alone. Faced with the impossibility of being black Alisa avoids Ofilwe's cultural suicide, and never rejects her own skin. Despite this defiance, she is not able to carry on living in the culture she finds herself.

Loss of memory, imposition of history in *Coconut* and *Scatterlings*

The effects on collective memory of there being one desired identity are clearly illustrated throughout *Coconut* and *Scatterlings*. *Coconut* illustrates the process of cultural memory being replaced by the imposition of a foreign collective memory. Cultural memory for Ofilwe begins with colonialism. Jan Assmann proposes that cultural memory reaches only back to the point where it explains who a group is as a people. If the desired identity is not produced by a certain event it is simply not remembered. He writes "it is only by forgetting what lies outside the horizon of the relevant that it performs an identity function" (113). This is both on an individual and collective basis, the event is not remembered by individuals because it does not appear in the narratives which make up collective memory. Aleida Assmann further develops this idea, showing that forgetting can be "a positive resource for leaving a trouble past behind" or "a form of suppression and continuation of violence" ("Dialogic Memory" 201).

Coconut illustrates this process of forgetting in practice. The emphasis on Western culture, and its apparent importance compared to Ofilwe's own, is compounded by her lack of cultural memory about pre-colonial history. The history she has been taught in school is not one of neutral historical facts but is built around the cultural memory of British and Dutch colonialists. Aleida Assmann has explored the complexity of treating history as something which is objective, by contrast to memory which is based on the selection of knowledge for a group. She writes: “historiography… involves rhetorical use of language and, despite all claims to impartiality, a specific vantage point, an unacknowledged agenda, a hidden bias” (2008, p.53). This is certainly the case in terms of the history that Ofilwe is taught in school and even that which is deemed significant by her own family. The ignorance of pre-colonial African history and the promotion of a British or European one aims to create a feeling of identity which is related to the colonial power. As Aleida Assmann suggests, there is “a close alliance between the nation-state and the history textbook” (“Transformations” 64) In such contexts, she argues, the difference between collective memory and history breaks down: “if we look at the sector of public historical education we can observe a similar self-enforcing relationship between history, memory, identity, and power. In this context, history becomes the stuff…political memory, identity, and myth is made of” (64).

This lack of knowledge is a result of the education system, but also of a popular culture which looks outside of the country to find its history. Ofilwe is amused by her grandmother’s obsession with Princess Diana[16], but reflects on her own royal family with concern, asking: “Does my royal family still exist, some place out there in barren, rural South Africa? Please, do tell me about their dynasty” (Matlwa, 2015, p.18). Here Matlwa is pointing out that Ofilwe has more knowledge about Princess Diana, part of the British royal family, than she does about her own royal family. Of course, this is perfectly acceptable if Ofilwe identifies as being more connected to the British royal family than to one of the South African ones, but it is clear she does not. She describes the missing dynasty as “my royal family” illustrating the crucial difference between history and memory; she is reaching back to a past which she recognises as hers, the crucial possessive like the “ours” described by Jan Assmann as defining the difference between the two. He explains: “cultural memory reaches back into the past only so far as the past can be reclaimed as "ours"” (J. Assmann 113). Ofilwe wants to have an identity as part of the Tlou people, the group to which her mother's family belongs, but she is simply unable to discover their history.

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[16] Former wife of Prince (now King) Charles III of Great Britain, who died in a traffic accident in 1997

The way in which she has been taught about the past means that she does not have any knowledge at all about what happened before or during colonisation. History, though by definition different from collective memory, is not always different in practice, there are "certain contexts in which history and memory are…conflated in democratic nation states" (A.Assmann "Transformations" 64). Whilst transition-era South Africa was a democratic state, history and memory are difficult to distinguish due to the selection of events which are served up to Ofilwe as part of her history education. She admits: "I am afraid my history only goes as far back as lessons on the Dutch East India Company in grade two at Laerskool Valley Primary School" (Matlwa *Coconut* 18). History, as it is taught in school, is excluding the collective memory of pre-colonial times. Ofilwe reflects on a positive image of her people: "Were they once a grand people, ruling over a mighty nation, audaciously fighting off the advance of the colourless ones? Do you perhaps know where they are now?" (18).

It is not only the knowledge of pre-colonial history that has been denied to Ofilwe but also the history of the damage of colonisation and its consequences. She admits: "I have heard some hiss that the heirs to their thrones sit with swollen bellies and emaciated limbs under a merciless sun, waiting for government grants. Surely that cannot be true" (18). Ofilwe has neither been taught about the pre-colonial history of her people nor what has happened to them as a result of colonisation and apartheid. She knows nothing of the achievements and suffering of those she identifies as her people.

Colonialism in *Scatterlings* is presented as the cause of loss of culture and community. History of pre-colonial times has been lost and what remains is the memory of slavery, trauma and loss. The character who best identifies the devastating effect of loss of traditional and culture is Mmakoma. Mmakoma works as a nanny, taking care of Dido and Emilia. Following

Emilia's death and Alisa's suicide she attempts to persuade Abram of the importance of cultural memory to his daughter Dido's recovery. Mmakoma is aware of the weakness of her position as a black female employee yet tries to help Abram and his family understand their situation better. Mmakoma explains to Abram the way in which her community lost its lands and consequently its traditions. Legislation was used to deny people access to land which had been historically theirs. Mmakoma describes it thus:

> It was a small thing that started with fields, fields – fields for maize and cows and a way of life. Fields meant only to be looked at, but never ploughed or grazed or carried into a child's history. Fields that once belonged to a people, then didn't. Fields, Meneer, fields that carried a clan. And only when I came here I finally knew the name of the thing that scattered the clan. The Natives Land Act, they call it. (Manenzhe *Scatterlings* 67-8)

The loss of land and scattering of the clan is only one of the consequences of colonialism. Mmakoma also describes to Abram the laws imposed on her people which caused them to die. This death is failing of culture: "if a man comes to tell us that a thing is forbidden to us, we start to die. Our ways die. I'm telling you these long stories because I want you to understand Africa…" (68). Africa as she has lived it has been altered irreparably by colonialism. Mmakoma tries to preserve her culture from this death by sharing her memories, partly with Abram, but most significantly with Dido. Her "telling of the long stories" is Mmakoma's attempt to resist this inevitable destruction of her culture. Even if she is unable to save it, she can at least stand as witness to its destruction. Mmakoma is convinced that Abram and Dido should stay, but, perhaps unsurprisingly, her words are not enough to persuade him. He is too afraid of actual material to be worried about loss of memory and culture. Dido by contrast appreciates the importance of Mmakoma's traditions and wants to be welcomed into her culture.

Scatterlings illustrates that colonialism causes loss of collective memory not only within colonised lands but also via the enslavement and dispersal of conquered people. Alisa was born in the Caribbean but was brought to the UK as a young child. She was brought up by a white British couple, who have a mysterious connection to her biological father, which is never fully explained. Alisa's father died when she was a young child. She remembers a story which he told her. It relates to the cultural memory of his people, but for Alisa it is so out of context that she is unable to form any kind of connection:

> …he called me to his side and for the first time told me stories his people had carried across the seas. But the salt of the sea, the farness of Africa – these things had changed those stories. His wealth, in its entirety, was a broken tale that had spoiled with time ... (Manenzhe *Scatterlings* 140)

Alisa does not know very much about her history, and nothing at all about her mother who apparently died when she was very young. The loss is not the same as Ofilwe's, however, as Alisa does not have anyone she could ask and the possibilities of recovery are denied to her. This inability to find out about herself leads to her travelling around the world trying to find a connection to somewhere. Alisa has only unreliable memories of her own childhood, and no sense of her parents let alone her ancestor's culture. This is very traumatic, she mourns her own lost memories: 'Sometimes I remember the house where I lived with my father,' I started. 'But sometimes I don't. In these times I wonder whether the memories I do have are true, or whether I have imagined them over the years. (Manenzhe *Scatterlings* 146-47).

She also grieves for what her parents lost. A friend asks her why she wishes to search for a home in Africa, a place her parents never lived in, rather than the Caribbean, she struggles to explain:

> I think in the end I loved the Caribbean simply because I was born there, and my parents were born and buried there. But I also resented it since, by the rules of colonialism,

> Jamaica is an extension of the British Empire. It was under the Empire that my parents were born as slaves and died in squalor. Also, my experience of England was never pleasant. I couldn't love it. (Manenzhe 157-158)

Her parents were forced to live in the Caribbean and the cultural memory created there was predominantly one of slavery and suffering. In her search for a sense of belonging, this is not what Alisa is looking for. Part of the loss is due to slavery; Alisa's father was disconnected from his own cultural memory in turn by being enslaved. Alisa's suffering is in part due to trauma, both her own and the inherited trauma of her ancestors. Her father was named twentyfive because his mother had been forcibly separated from her other, older children. His mother believed that naming him twentyfive would protect him. This was a link to a much changed cultural memory as Alisa writes in her diary:

> at the time there was a myth-rumour, twisted out of African beliefs, that if a child were given a bad name, the ancestors wouldn't covet that child, and so the child lived long. My grandmother, desperate enough to at least suspect that slave owners and African ancestors might have similar outlooks on some things, gave my father the callous name. It worked. They lived on the same plantation until she died. (141)

The loss of collective memory is part of the trauma. Alisa tries to search for a place to feel at home, travelling to the places which she knows or believes that her family might be from. However, this is always ultimately unsatisfying, and she does not find a place which feels like home for her. The weight of intergenerational trauma she carries is based on not belonging, not having memories, not knowing the traditions or even origins of her family.

As well as what she has lost and cannot recover, Alisa also refers to what is conveniently forgotten by the colonial power and its people. The loss of memory of her ancestors and cultural background is total. She does not know where her family came from and has nobody to ask.

Her history, as defined by those with the power to do so, begins with enslavement. Anything that came before that is disregarded to the extent that it no longer exists. Alisa writes:

> My history started before it started, but today Mrs Windsor and her cronies narrated only the past they know. They did so with a level of intimacy they shouldn't be allowed. Although they don't know me, it's also true that they do. They can say: 'Alisa Miller isn't her father's daughter. From pity, he saved her from some Caribbean tragedy. What a kind man he is.' All they have to do is look at me and see I'm a carrier of slave blood, not a daughter or a woman. (153-54).

Alisa cannot counter their narrative with her own. Her history really does belong where they say it does, as colonialism has robbed her of any chance of knowing what came before. Hall's suggestion that cultural memory is not merely a recovery but also an act of creation is pertinent here. Alisa's cultural memory of pre-colonial times cannot be recovered, and the rupture of slavery is also part of her cultural memory (Hall 223).

Alisa also identifies the narrative process which occurs when nations create collective memory in order to present themselves in the best light. She explains that the history of her life is truncated, starting in the middle of itself due to the pre-colonial history which has been obliterated: "And it is such a brief history, one that starts right in the middle of itself, as though a people's history can start without a proper beginning, without a place of origin" (Manenzhe, *Scatterlings* 153). She despises the way in which Britain is happy to ignore the destructive elements of colonialism, and focuses instead on the abolition of slavery:

> People like to ignore inconvenient nuances, though. In the same way, the British Empire doesn't like to speak about its role in the proliferation of the slave trade. It does, however, like to remind of the role it played in its ending. Such is the way things go – some stories start in the middle because no one wants to hear the beginning. They can be told quickly because no one wants to know the details. Sometimes all that matters is

> the conclusion. How to free a people, or, why all people deserve the dignity of freedom, a story can start like that, without first telling why the people needed freeing. (153)

The need for freedom is, as Alisa implies, a consequence of enslavement. Britain was heavily involved in the creation of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Cities such as Liverpool and Bristol became rich through slavery, yet as Alisa correctly identifies this history is silenced. The people Alisa encounters are aware about the slave trade, yet they are able to ignore its existence when they question why Alisa forms part of their society. They make no link between her presence in the UK, and colonialism. Ambalavaner Sivanandan's now well-known phrase: "we are here because you were there" points out what seems to be an obvious truth about empire (Srilangarajah). Yet the very existence of this phrase, and its widespread usage today, only serves to illustrate the continuing ability of people belonging to the dominant group to ignore parts of history which do not serve their collective memory.

Cultural memory as cultural practice in *Coconut* and *Scatterlings*

Cultural memory exists within traditions that neither Ofilwe nor Alisa are able to take part in. As well as a lack of knowledge about her past, Ofilwe has also not participated in cultural practices which would allow her to internalise collective memory. Aleida Assmann describes how collective memory forms group identity:

> Each "we" is constructed through shared practices and discourses that mark certain boundaries and define the principles of inclusion and exclusion. To be part of a collective group such as the nation one has to share and adopt the group's history, which exceeds the boundaries of one's individual life span. The individual participates in the group's vision of its past by means of cognitive learning and emotional acts of identification and commemoration." This past cannot be "remembered"; it has to be memorized…only through internalization and rites of participation does it create the identity of a "we". ("Transformations" 53)

Ofilwe has not participated in either adopting “the group’s history” or “emotional acts of identification and commemoration.” The effect of this is that she is unable to feel part of the group with which she wishes to identify. It is important to remember that all individuals belong to many social groups, whose frameworks form both their individual and collective memories; however, these groups are fixed neither in relation to the individuals within them nor to their own narratives of construction. There is no “homogeneity of the commemorating groups” nor reason to “privilege tangible manifestations of memory” (Feindt et at. 25). There is no reason that Ofilwe should have to belong to or identify with the cultural memory of her parents, much less with that of those who simply happen to share the same ancestral background. What Matlwa shows in *Coconut*, however, is that she wants to but cannot.

Ofilwe’s mother, Gemima, wants her to participate in community traditions, but is completely unwilling to elucidate the collective memory which lies behind them. Therefore, her mother tries to justify the importance of the traditions as they exist today, but with a lack of cultural memory, Ofilwe simply does not feel as though she belongs. When required to attend a funeral of a person she has never met, the child half of Ofilwe’s narrative voice explains:

> My mother tells me, “It is respect, Ofilwe. Maybe she not know you or even me very very good. But these things we must do. We must be there at the funeral. Hmm? All of us must be there. These things are of immense importance. Very very great importance. We appreciate each other. We support each other. Next thing it is misfortune on our family. Huh? Just think about that. Also us, we will need these people”. (Matlwa *Coconut* 18)

Despite the claim of “very, very great importance” her mother offers only a limited explanation of why these things are important. Ofilwe, quite reasonably, cannot see why she will need someone who as far as she can tell plays only a peripheral role in her life. The older narrative voice of the teenage Ofilwe, who cuts across young Ofilwe’s confusion, wants to take part but realises she cannot. The sense of loss is palpable as she describes how she self-excludes from the rest of the participants at important cultural events: “At nuptial and burial ceremonies, at thanksgiving days geephasa Badimo, I stand in reverence, out of everybody’s way, silently taking it all in, feeling most inadequate amongst a group of people who all seem to know exactly what roles they play in the age-old Pedi rituals” (8-9).

Her sense of inadequacy is compounded by a fear that she, one day, will be in charge of organising such ceremonies: “As the only female grandchild, I fear that day when my turn comes to run these sacred occasions” (8). Ofilwe does not know why she does not know what to do, suggesting: “perhaps there was a class I missed, lessons in my youth that I was supposed to attend and for some unexplored reason did not” (8). However, *Coconut* as a novel does look at this unexplored reason. Ofilwe was brought up in an environment that devalued traditional expressions of culture. When she attempted to find out about the cultural memory underpinning traditions she was not allowed to do so, primarily due to the responses of her mother, who did not want to talk about the past. Tlhalo Raditlhalo uses the term “cultural suicide” to describe Ofilwe’s behaviour, but he also makes clear that this comes about due to the actions of her parents and others like them: “cultural suicide rests with the children of the middle classes and is facilitated by their parents” (31). Jan Assmann insists that “remembering is a realization of belonging, even a social obligation” (114) Ofilwe has not taken part in the social obligation of cultural memory, and now cannot achieve a sense of belonging.

The loss of cultural memory due to the colonial system is only compounded by the breakdown of communicative memory between Ofilwe and her family, principally though not only her mother. Communicative memory, as defined by Jan Assmann, focuses on the ways families or small groups create memories by verbally sharing them, and these are memories which at least one person in the group remembers (111). Ofilwe attempts to gain information from her mother about the beliefs of her ancestors before colonialism, but her mother is unable to answer. When Ofilwe asks “what did we believe in before the Dutch came” her mother answers “Badimo.” which translates to ancestors. This is not a very full explanation of cultural practices or the stories upon which they are built, so Ofilwe tries to ask again: “Badimo? What else?” However, her mother answers “just Badimo” (Matlwa *Coconut* 9). She is unable, or perhaps unwilling to share the traditions of her people with Ofilwe. When Ofilwe asks about pre-colonial history, and the traditions associated with it, her mother dismisses her questions: “‘Tshepo says the missionaries tricked us Mama. Or doesn't it matter’ ‘No. It does not matter Ofilwe’” (9). Her mother is not only refusing to talk to her about the history of her people, but also denies that who they were and what they believed could be important.

It is hard for Ofilwe to understand why traditions are important when their basis in collective memory is put aside in this way. Adams and Kurtis stress the importance of collective memory for orienting people in their everyday behaviours: “everyday experience takes shape within larger narratives of nation and society that are rooted in stories about the past, give meaning to present events, and propose courses of future action consistent with interpretations of the present” (8). Ofilwe’s mother has encouraged her to ignore her cultural past, so her mothers’ expectations seem unrealistic. Ofilwe is rejecting tradition because she does not know why it is important, and when she tries to find out, she is rebuffed. Her mother shows some awareness that she is responsible for Ofilwe’s refusal to engage with certain cultural behaviours. Describing a meeting with some older women, where Ofilwe did not behave as she would have wished, Gemima complains to her own mother:

> Those women are my elders, not even I would speak with them in such a manner. “Hi”. Just like that, Koko. “Hi”. As if. You’d think she’s doing them a favour by greeting them. Is a simple “Dumelang bo Mama” too much to ask? It’s not right, Koko. No, it is not right one bit. What kind of children am I raising? (Matlwa *Coconut* 21)

This rhetorical question goes unanswered and Ofilwe's mother does not alter her behaviour. Ofilwe continues to grow up believing that her cultural roots are unimportant.

In *Coconut*, Ofilwe has no protection from her mother's shame about old-fashioned traditions. Where cultural practices do occur, they are a source of embarrassment both to Ofilwe and to Gemima. Her maternal grandmother, Koko, wishes for there to be a ceremony to celebrate Ofilwe's father's new job. Ofilwe's father organises it, in the loosest sense of the term, and it is a disaster. Rather than blaming her husband for failing to organise the correct elements, Ofilwe's mother blames her mother:

> You happy now, ma? Now that you was embarrassing me in front of the eyes of my in-laws and my neighbours. Now that you cover my carpet with blood, fill my kitchen with dirty flies and chased my husband away from her home. You had to make your presence be felt, nê ma? Everybody must know Koko is here. You could not just let a good thing be. No ma, you must insist that this witchcraft be performed. You must be reminding all of us of our backward ways. Did Arthur's drunked prayer of thanks please the gods, ma? Is the gods now happy? Or now must we perform another ceremony to find that out? (74)[17]

Ofilwe's mother is ashamed about what the neighbours will think about them, and her husband's lack of care is obvious. Ofilwe's mother blames the tradition, rather than her husband, and is angry with her mother for even suggesting that they held the ceremony at all. The importance of these traditions, the cultural memory which says that it does matter how they are performed, has been almost entirely lost. These two novels show how traditional practices can be a source of shame when they come into conflict with a desired identity.

Ofilwe mourns the loss of the community, yet without a sense of collective identity, it is almost impossible for her to return to it. The cultural crisis experienced in *Coconut* relates to the trauma of colonialism that is never acknowledged by the adults around her as Ofilwe grows up. Matlwa illustrates that collective memory has a huge impact on who Ofilwe will be able to become. Ofilwe has not lost an identity which is hers. Identity is not fixed, Matlwa shows that identity is neither transparent nor unproblematic. It is “never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (Hall 68). Some parts of a potential future identity have been foreclosed to her, and she becomes painfully aware of that. Ofilwe describes the disconnection to collective memory, and her inability to see a way that she can reconnect with traditions and practices that she has come to realise are important to her: “I do not know how I am supposed to know, and whether I will ever know” (Matlwa *Coconut* 60). Ofilwe does not know where she is going, this sense of lack of direction, a loss of identity stems from her lack of knowledge about the past. She explains: “Oh, sometimes I want to cut my toes, just one and then another until I cannot cut them anymore…Right there I would sit and not take another step. That would be OK, too: I do not know where I am going anyway” (61-2).

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[17] English is not Gemima's first language. Ofilwe notes that she is not completely comfortable using it. Matlwa has included errors in her speech to represent this.

The desire for self-mutilation is based on not knowing where she is supposed to go. This self-mutilation has been going on throughout the novel as Ofilwe tried to model herself into something which her peers would accept. She does not recognise herself as the person she has come to believe that she should be: “I hate my ears, for they are the greatest liars I have ever known…as soon as I speak a word they play it back to me in an accent that is not my own” (61). Even when she learns more about her culture and history, she is not able to relate to what she learns. It does not form a part of her collective memory, and thus she experiences her identity as something fractured and unclear. She even fears attempting to recuperate an identity based on collective memory:

> I do not know where I may have lived before, or who I may have been. I do know that this world is strange, though, and I somewhat of an anachronism. Locked in. Uncertain

> whether I have come to love this cage too. Afraid of the freedom that those before the time before-before knew. There is jeopardy in the sky. (75)

She fears trying to remain part of the dominant narratives of a desirable identity, but also fears the freedom of developing an identity outside of “this cage” (75).

Communicative memory, as well as cultural memory, is notable by its absence in *Scatterlings*. Abram and Dido talk to each other, but they are the only parent and child who appear to do so. Alisa was unable to talk to her mother, and only knew her father as a young child. Her adoptive parents are also strangely absent from the novel, featuring mainly as obstacles in her search for her true identity. Parents are rarely present in this novel, with the exception of Abram, and even where they are present they do not share stories with their children about their history. Alisa’s adoptive parents do not tell her anything about how she came to live with them. She in turn does not tell her daughters about her own history. Alisa finds it difficult to talk to her children. The sense of loss and lack of belonging she feels is something that she does not want them to feel. However, rather than combatting this sense of loss by telling the girls about their identity, she repeats the silence that she was met with in her young life.

Alisa expresses the idea that she does not want Dido to inherit anything from her, and she denies her memory because she thinks it has no value. Communicative memory in families is broken in this novel, despite Abram and Dido’s attempt to resurrect it. A lot of the suppression of collective memory is done in the name of protection from the trauma of the past. However, the absence of communicative memory and a sense of identity causes trauma in its own right.

Conclusion

The trauma of colonialism in *Scatterlings* is presented as a loss of both communicative and cultural memory. Generations of people grow up without any sense of where they came from. This is partly due to institutions such as slavery, which separated parents from children, but is also due to a reluctance on the part of parents to share their traumatic history with their children. Children are not protected by this silence, however, as it leads to a complete lack of a sense of belonging. In Alisa's case the breakdown in identity which results from her disconnect from cultural memory eventually leads to her suicide. Dido is to some extent able to recover where her mother could not, however this recovery is presented as tenuous. A breakdown in collective memory due to colonialism is damaging to all the characters, even those like Abram who are not aware that it is important to them. Alisa does not hate her skin but feels that the world despises it so much that death is the better option for her and her daughters. The undesirability of black skin leads not to the "cultural death" described in *Coconut* but to the all too real death of Alisa and her daughter.

Coconut shows the impact of the trauma of colonialism on societies who lose the ability to position themselves in relation to the narratives of the past. As Ofilwe's education in school, events which are not perceived to be important in forming the dominant group's cultural identity are simply excluded from history. It is cultural memory, which is being propagated here, this is not a history which aims at objectivity (Nora 9). Yet those who share these narratives would undoubtedly claim historical status for their cultural memory.

This has an impact on the way in which groups interact, as communicative memory fails to record the importance of everyday events, and their link to wider cultural behaviours and narratives is lost. This impacts the way in which young children growing up as part of the non-dominant social group are able to participate in cultural memory, or indeed understand its importance at all. Cultural memory has been lost, both through the imposition of another history, that of the colonial rulers, and due to a breakdown in communicative memory caused by a general under-valuing of her culture, and the trauma that years of systematic racist violence have had on her family. The next chapter will explore how contemporary writers suggest that collective memory can resist the destruction which results from imperialism and exist both as counter-history and in exile.

Chapter 9: Reconstruction of collective memory, decolonisation and the postcolonial

In the previous chapter I described the way in which colonialism and its associated institutions such as slavery and forced removals cause a breakdown in both communicative and cultural memory. In this chapter I will explore the way in which cultural memory of colonised peoples survives despite the imposition of a new colonial narrative of history upon it. Cultural memory can survive in traditions which resist suppression, and stories which form both part of communicative memory within families and a wider cultural memory. This resistance to colonial metanarratives of nation can be both conscious, as a deliberate attempt to remember important events or cultural practices, or an unconscious continuation of traditions and a preservation of memory within groups alongside the state-sanctioned metanarratives of history. Contemporary South African authors represent the ways in which pre and postcolonial memory is resistant to the imposition of other cultural memories upon it.

Colonial narratives of memory are part of the construction of the colonised nation. They cast the colonised people as inferior and minimise their stories and cultural practices (Rothberg 365). Frantz Fanon was one of the first to identify the relationship between colonisation and a rewriting of the narratives of history. He claimed "colonisation is not merely satisfied with holding a people in its grip and emptying the natives brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (Fanon 37). Decolonisation, according to Amílcar Cabral is "always an act of culture" (p.43). He explains that since colonisation is a means of cultural control, the reverse must also be true in that any nation wishing to be truly free must become not only politically but also culturally liberated. Colonisers "made us leave history, our history" and in order to decolonise the postcolonial state "must return to the upward paths of our culture" (43). Michael Rothberg uses Cabral's revolutionary theories in order to show that decolonisation is always also an act of collective memory. He claims that: “the struggle against colonialism is in part a struggle for control of collective memory” (Rothberg 364). The resistance of collective memory to dominant narratives fulfils this function of decolonisation. This is both in terms of collective memory which has been preserved despite the colonial attempts to supplant it, and elements of those narratives that can form part of new postcolonial identities. The first phase of decolonisation, the political overthrow of the colonising power, can hardly be said to be easy. Yet, achieving cultural independence has presented an even greater challenge to postcolonial nations (Oyedemi “Postcolonial Casualties 223).

Astrid Erll’s theory of travelling memory also presents a different form of resistance to nationalist narratives of memory (111). She illustrates that as well as individuals belonging to many different groups and thus collective memory traditions, memory travels within and between these groups. Whilst a colonial nation may attempt what Rothberg describes, to impose an alternative collective memory on a nation, it can only ever be partially successful, as memory can never be fixed in this way. Precolonial memory persists, in spite of everything, and new hybrid memories are created in ethnically mixed communities which have arisen as a result of all their members being designated black according to the racial divisions of the apartheid regime.

The previous chapter considered the damaging effects of colonialism on collective memory, and the complexity of forming black identity in a society where only whiteness is prized. This chapter will consider the way in which these texts represent collective memory which has survived in non-dominant groups throughout colonisation of South Africa and the subsequent apartheid. Cultural memory, in terms of traditions, myths, languages and practices that were forcibly repressed under colonialism are resurrected and serve to help these contemporary characters shore up their own identities in a modern South Africa. Communicative memory disrupted under apartheid is brought back as stories that were once thought best forgotten and told once again within families and communities. In subsequent chapters I will consider the ways in which the authors show that these creations of collective memory are limited, and to some degree limiting. However, these texts show that although much has been lost, there is still hope for recovery and new acts of creation.

-Rothberg's claim that decolonisation is an act of collective memory implies that groups can take steps to rediscover and recreate their cultural identity by restoring narratives of memory (364). Whilst this is clearly not something an individual can perform on their own, the discoveries that the characters in these contemporary texts make about their culture and history contribute to the change that South African collective memory is going through. These texts illustrate that the attempts of their central characters to position themselves in South Africa involve an attempt to at least understand and access, if not fully control, collective memory. Ofilwe in *Coconut* is attempting to recover memory that she knows has been lost, where Sisonke Msimang is trying to force a utopian collective memory from exile to survive in the face of a dysfunctional postapartheid state. In *Always Another Country*, cultural memory is preserved by a group in exile, whose hopeful version of South African identity is devoted towards the future, but involves recording the past in a way that reflects what they want South African identity to become. The travelling nature of memory is a form of resistance to colonial metanarratives of being South African in both *Scatterlings* and *The Yearning*.

Cultural memory preserved in exile: Sisonke Msimang's *Always Another Country*

Cultural memory in these texts is illustrated as a counter-history against the dominant national narratives of the apartheid state. It is contained both within the country, in traditions, practices and stories which oppressed groups manage to preserve. It is also preserved by groups in exile. In *Always Another Country*, Sisonke Msimang the 'author-narrator' is not able to grow up in her own country. Sisonke and her two sisters are brought up in various countries, from Kenya to Canada because her father, who she describes as a freedom fighter, is wanted as a terrorist in

South Africa. The construction of her identity as South African shows the relative importance of a shared cultural memory as opposed to geographical location in order to form an identity. In *Always Another Country* Msimang shows that, if anything, cultural memory is preserved more strongly in exile. The diasporic community produces a collective memory of the apartheid struggle which paints them in a positive light and leads to the natural progression towards freedom. The refugees and freedom fighters who passed through her house were not normal people to Msimang: “they were possessed with the secret of freedom, a sort of inner spirit that propelled them forward and made them look-to my wide eyes at least-as though they were soaring” (*Always Another Country* 33).

Her life and that of her family is recounted dominated by significant events for cultural memory in South Africa. The day Nelson Mandela was imprisoned is used as a point of reference for her parents meeting. She tells her father’s story in parallel to that of South Africa, as a connection between her cultural and communicative memory. She says that as Mandela stands trial “the young man who will one day be my father has already been in Russia for a year” (14). This is something which continues throughout the novel, so that when she begins to describe her own life too, it is explained in the context of the significant events occurring in South Africa. Dominant narratives for Sisonke, growing up as she does in an exiled pro-ANC community, are in fact the ones of South African history told by the rebels. She is not confronted by the dominant narratives in the way that Ofilwe in *Coconut* is, although, in having to grow up in exile, she is living with the consequences of these narratives.

The collective memory of the anti-apartheid struggle is passed from parents to children, as well as those visitors who Msimang so admired. She not only observes this memory but participates in it as well. This, as Aleida Assmann claims, is a vital condition for inhabiting a certain identity (2008). It is what Ofilwe is unable to do, despite living in South Africa. This is an imagined community, based not so much on citizenship as a belief in the struggle against apartheid (Anderson, 1983). This is something which Msimang took part in from a very early age. At the start of the memoir, after recounting her parents meeting, she describes herself and her siblings thus: “My sisters and I are freedom’s children, born into the ANC and nurtured within a revolutionary community” (14). Their identity is based on being part of the ANC, the poetic joy of being freedom’s children is clearly a source of pride. As a child their games were dominated by the political discourses behind their parent's freedom fighting: “instead of playing cops and robbers we play capitalists and cadres” (15). The collective memory which dominated their childhood was that of the South African anti-apartheid struggle, and not in the various countries where they were growing up; whilst playing they: “call out the names of our heroes” (15). They are “our” heroes, not only their parents’ heroes, though they are too young to understand these individuals’ importance. Again, as Aleida Assmann explains, they are identifying with a desired group identity, a “we” which is dependent on a shared understanding of historical memory (“Transformations” 53). Their games help them to feel part of a South African nation which they have never seen.

The struggle for freedom is what helps to form her identity, more so than the event of freedom itself. She is clear that she belongs to a group, with its particular history and collective memory. The group’s aim is to make this memory part of the new South African identity. Her belief in this group allows her to believe in the future as she describes it: “you learn that you will be fine if you believe in the collective, your tribe” (Msimang *Always Another Country* 17). Unlike the other two novels the collective memory portrayed here is not based on a pre-colonial collective history but instead the history of the anti-apartheid struggle. Msimang specifically links her state of exile to the way in which she relates to South Africa as a nation. She believes: “exile made me love the idea of South Africa” (17). Her identity as South African is stronger than the apartheid state’s claim that she is not, and perhaps even stronger because of the fact of the apartheid state denying her South African nationality. She understands her identity as bound up not only in South Africa, but also in the struggle to create a new South Africa: "...the dream of freedom was a sort of home for us." South Africa, as we will see in the following chapter, is less of a home now that it is free, than the dream of freedom was a home for them (15). However, Msimang's story illustrates that cultural memory can be preserved in exile in spite of the colonial powers' attempts to eradicate it.

The reconstruction of cultural memory: *Coconut*

In *Coconut* what has been preserved has sneaked through despite the best intentions of Ofilwe's neglectful school system and uninterested parents. Ofilwe is trying to belong to one group, but fails because she is socially rejected, so begins to form a connection to a different cultural memory based in her family and their history. Marubini, by contrast, is able to be part of more than one group without this being a source of conflict. All real (non-fictional) individuals, will form part of many groups, and these groups are in themselves not fixed but changing. Matlwa in *Coconut* is able to illustrate the conflict between two collective memories, a dominant white apartheid idea of the past and South African identity, and a counter-history which remembers pre-colonial traditions, or traditions which have continued despite official ignorance or condemnation of them. In *The Yearning* Marubini's identity is more fluid and less fixed, based on the many different cultures and traditions in her life, whereas for Ofilwe it is a conflict between two groups.

Coconut shows that although Ofilwe has lost a lot of her cultural heritage, not all those around her have. She describes herself as "an anomaly," and whilst *Coconut* does not entirely bear that out, it does show that this does not necessarily need to be the outcome (Matlwa *Coconut* 75). One constant reminder is her brother Tshepo, who, despite being rather sanctimonious, helps her when she wants to learn about her culture. He has grown up with the same parents, but has managed to find out about their culture, though it comes at the price of a complete breakdown of his and his parents' relationship. He also acts as a constant reminder to

Ofilwe of what she has failed to become. Once she has made the decision to stop being friends with Belinda and the other white children who patronized her, she makes friends with a group who, like Tshepo, are familiar and comfortable with their cultural memory. On her sixteenth birthday Ofilwe is distressed when her friends begin to describe what they call “home-home” (58-9). She describes the conversation, in which she was not able to take part:

> Siphokazi changed the topic of conversation. IsiZulu, isiXhosa, sePedi, seTswana. Tongues flared, now dancing to a different kind of music. She spoke of what she called home-home, not the urban house she lives in now, but the home-home they left behind in the rural Eastern Cape. He laughed at the memory of the stubborn red mud that he remembered too, and how he thought he was the only one who battled to get it off his shoes after half a day’s walk. .... Everyone recognised the importance of the passing of these words, as each girl and boy shared their clan names and the histories behind them (58-9).

By using the term “home-home”, they are referring either to where they grew up before moving to the city, or the place that their family originally came from. Is it not that Ofilwe has not had this experience, she went to visit her cousins and grandparents in the village where her mother grew up. Unlike her friends, she was contemptuous of her cousins when she visited, basking in her superiority as one who was not expected to perform the same chores as the others. Until her friends describe the places they are from, and the significance of their clan names, she does not fully realise that there is anything which she might have missed out on. The novel is hopeful in its portrayal, however. The other young people mostly have remembered, and Ofilwe’s older brother Tshepo is able to tell her what her own clan’s name is and its significance “‘Tlou’ is ours, Tshepo later said, and ‘Sereto’ the poetry behind it” (59). Ofilwe takes care to memorise the words: “I had repeated the words over and over again, desperate not to forget. How foolish I must have looked, sitting there silently with not a thing to share. How angry I was at Siphokazi for shattering my night and at Tshepo for always having an answer for everything and at myself" (59). She is beginning to take part in the required ritualisation of memory, which will help her be part of the community she so desires to enter (Assmann, A., 2008). She feels humiliated in front of her friends, by not having anything to share. But *Coconut* as a novel illustrates that something has been preserved, that not all has been lost; even Ofilwe's loss appears to be temporary and not permanent. The process of rebuilding identity is not easy and involves Ofilwe being angry with herself, yet she is to some extent able to recover what she feels she has lost.

Who are the real South Africans? Travelling memory in *Scatterlings*

Cultural memory can be resurrected through the sharing of memory between friends and family, as illustrated in *Coconut.* Cultural memory of colonised peoples also persists alongside the dominant metanarratives of the colonial powers. *Scatterlings* represents the travelling nature of collective memory. Group memory exists alongside the narratives of South Africa promoted by the state of "natives" who must be controlled and separated from the white South African population. *Scatterlings* illustrates that being South African is far more complex than that. The person who is accepted by the state as being a South African is Abram, who was born elsewhere and does not speak any of the South African languages fluently. However, he has citizenship so he can easily and comfortably claim that status. Other characters are denied citizenship, or full citizen on the basis of their race.

Scatterlings has a cast of South African characters from a host of different backgrounds, and illustrates the falsity of the single group narrative which is being promoted by the state of what it means to be South African. These characters also belong to a multitude of other nations, social groups. They hold allegiances and beliefs which all contribute to the way in which they are South African. The novel itself resists colonial metanarratives by revealing that memory is constantly changing and travelling. This cast of characters in itself and the memories they hold challenges the colonial myth of South African history as being merely black and white. In representing the travelling nature of memory as resistance to colonial and postcolonial metanarratives, *Scatterling*s as a novel also resists such narratives. *Scatterlings* inhabits the zones of amnesia which colonial metanarratives create. Manenzhe insists on the importance of the stories which do not fit, the stories of plural collective memories and individuals who not only identify with many groups but who also change which groups and how they identify with them.

There are two characters who represent the way in which memory travels and resists the attempts of the colonial state to fix it. Even though Alisa's character paints a bleak picture of the loss of pre-colonial memory and the inheritance of trauma, she actually has retained some cultural memory that she is unaware originally stems from southern Africa. She tells her children a story which unbeknownst to her has travelled across the oceans from Africa to the Caribbean. The novel begins with this original story:

> IT WAS FIRST TOLD BY THE SAN PEOPLE, that in the blackness of night, a girl took roasting roots and ashes from a fire and threw them into the sky. Thus the stars were born. A path was made in the sky, and hunters who were lost followed it home. (Manenzhe *Scatterlings* 6)

This story travelled across the ocean on the slave ships and somehow made its way to Alisa in this form:

> By the year 1927, and possibly for the sake of her own survival, Africa had begun to bend herself into irony. That was how it came to be told by Alisa van Zijl, who had, herself, bent her name from Alisa Miller, which she had bent from the mononym Alisa; that is how it came to be told by this Alisa to her daughters, that once, a suckling child was thrown from the breast of a god-woman. Gushing milk sprung from the god-woman's breast and into the sky. Thus the stars of the Milky Way were born. (7)

She took it back to South Africa her with her, via England. The irony which Manenzhe identifies is part of the hybridity of memory as it travels. Of course, the story has been changed. However, it has not entirely been lost. Alisa as a character is herself symbolic of the way in which memory travels, moving as she does from country to country trying to find somewhere that she feels at home.

The other character who resists the imposition of colonial narratives through the preservation of cultural memory is Mmakoma. Mmakoma is well-versed in the cultural memory of her people. She has lost status due to colonialism, as she explains, while in her culture women and elders were respected. Now she has to delicately attempt to persuade Abram to let her adopt Dido, her dead mother and sister into her people. Mmakoma performs a ceremony in order to lay Alisa and Emilia to rest properly, as well as to ask her ancestors to acknowledge Dido as part of their culture:

> ‘It is I, Mmakoma,’ said Nanny Gloria, ‘the eldest daughter of Khelelo and Matome, the seeds of Mokope and Moselana, of the Great Leopard of the Mmamolapi rivers. I beg you to heed me, for I have come to beg the gift of bonds for these orphan people. I give them to you. Please hear their names, mark their blood and keep them safe’. (76-77)

Abram is sceptical about this ceremony but understands the need of people to belong. Thinking it might help Dido recover from the loss of her mother and sister, he agrees to participate. Mmakoma names Dido and calls upon her ancestors to protect her. Dido feels a sense of relief and does feel like she belongs:

> The song carried her name through the wind, through time and time, and all the echoes of the people that bound her where she stood. That call lulled her. It wove her into its endless ribbons of foreign faces and strange names and shadow memories. It pulled her

> gently, and then strongly into the pot, where the faces and names and memories told her stories that sheltered her soul. (78)

As explored in the previous chapter, *Scatterlings* illustrates the destructive effects of colonialism. However, there is also a kinship created by colonialism. Erll describes one of the forces which can make memory travel as being slavery (111). Manenzhe, as I have claimed, illustrates the way that cultural memory and changes through slavery and forced removals. She also suggests that the resulting cultural memory of slavery and colonial loss creates a collective identity too. This brings to mind the words of Stuart Hall, who insists on the importance of the colonial experience as part of cultural identity, which cannot be ignored in the attempt to resurrected pre-colonial identities.

It is Abram who describes a kind of kinship of slavery. He notices that his employees appear to know Alisa in a way that Abram himself does not. Abram is clearly grieving and devastated at the loss of his daughter, but his inability to understand his wife stems from far further back than his wife's decision to end her and her daughter's life. He is aware that what he was not able to feel is something which is shared between Alisa and his employees:

> it became apparent from the way they spoke about her that despite the distance they had kept, they had nonetheless felt a form of kinship to Alisa. Most of them were descended from slaves, from the East Indies, India, Angola, and other far places they'd heard in the telling of stories. Sometimes the name of a place was all they knew. The somewhat more fortunate were those descended from the San, the Khoi and the various Bantu tribes scattered in that corner of the world; they could at least estimate where the bones of their ancestors were buried, which seemed important to some of them. (Manenzhe *Scatterlings* 46)

This kinship allows Alisa to be taken in by Mmakoma's ancestors. The kinship that they share is one of wandering; they have all become lost or lost something because of colonialism and its consequences. In Alisa's case this is slavery, in the case of Mmakoma's people it is because their lands were stolen. Mmakoma attempts to convince Abram not to allow her to conduct the ceremony: "Miss Alisa was an orphan woman. I will beg for this last refuge for her. My forebears will take her, I know. They were an orphan people too – expelled from their lands to some barren valley" (Manenzhe,70). Mmakoma also acts in defiance of the colonial strictures which insist that race, and particularly skin colour, is the most important marker of who belongs where and with whom. Her ancestors, she explains, do not care about skin. Aware as they are of what it means to wander without a home, they will be happy to take care of Dido, her sister and her mother.

The possibility of creating a hybrid memory out of the ashes of colonialism is a source of hope for Mmakoma, and despite not understanding why, for Dido and Abram too. Dido belongs to Mmakoma's people and also to Abram's: she has membership of multiple groups. This is not a contradiction to Abram or Dido, although the authorities cannot cope with the possibility of children of mixed heritage. Although memory travels, *Scatterlings* shows the colonial state's intolerance of this. They would rather obliterate children like Dido, than acknowledge the plurality and unfixable nature of cultural identity.

Cultural memory travelling within South Africa: *The Yearning*

In *The Yearning* Marubini draws on many sources of collective memory, which is always changing, from social groups around her which too, are always changing. The process, for Marubini, is far less harrowing than it is for Alisa or even Dido in *Scatterlings*. Her parents and grandparents identify to varying degrees with Zulu or Sepedi cultural practices, without conflict between them, or within Marubini herself. *The Yearning* shows that cultural memory has been preserved both through cultural practices and the stories which people tell each other. Marubini's grandparents educate her about their different backgrounds and allow her to feel part of them all without limiting her to choosing one. Marubini is a "township child" who feels confident changing between languages and ways of being depending on the context in which she finds herself (Mashigo *The Yearning* 24). This novel presents cultural memory as flourishing, though not without complication. Marubini points out her mother's fear of tradition, and her lack of understanding being a source of that fear. Her grandparents, in their different ways, inform her understanding of culture.

Even though cultural memory is presented at times as a source of shame, such as in the case of Mashoka, Marubini's mother, in *The Yearning* it is also a source of power and comfort for Marubini. This is a contrast to *Coconut*, and there are several factors which appear to influence this more positive relationship with the collective memory of her community. Firstly, Marubini is growing up in a township, an area which contains people from all different backgrounds. Townships were created as a result of forcible removal of black people from other areas. However, the result is not cultural loss but rather the creation of new cultures which draw on a variety of traditions. The groups which produce collective memory are shown to be incredibly porous, with ideas being exchanged between different groups. There has been a tendency in the field of Memory Studies to view groups as static, but this is not the case. Feindt et al suggest that there is a risk of "treating social groups as essential and static entities" as though memory were derived "from pre-existing groups" (26). *The Yearning* shows both that Marubini has access to the cultural memory of memory groups, but that they also interact and change.

For Marubini, unlike Ofilwe in *Coconut*, language is a source of fun and she continually mixes languages even in the same sentence: "Why don't amadlozi want uBaba to be with me?" (Mashigo *The Yearning* 24). Her speech combines the different languages she knows, and the novel switches between them in much the same way. The novel itself reflects this, the narrator switches between languages, containing passages in English, Sepedi and Zulu. These are not separate but entirely mixed. The meaning is possible to work out from the context, so the reader can engage with the multi-lingual situation but still understand what is being said.

Marubini does not always know what the other characters are talking about but she feels part of the community so even when she does not understand this does not upset her. She describes her grandfather and her mother talking: “They were speaking a language I didn’t really understand. When I enquired what language they were speaking Ntatemoholo informed me it was Sepedi. He told me that I was a township child and that I spoke bits and pieces of many languages” (24). She does not mind that she speaks “bits and pieces of language” because “The people around me understood me perfectly, so I wasn’t too worried about not speaking Sepedi. I enjoyed being a ‘township child’” (24). The feeling of being understood is important, but the identity of township child in itself is a form of identity. She is unconsciously taking part in linguistic and cultural history; it is not a struggle for her in the way that it is for Ofilwe in *Coconut*. She does not feel that she has lost a connection to cultural memory, because her community, which is made up of a variety of ethnic and cultural groups, has its own mixed identity. Ofilwe in *Coconut* is living in an exclusive white suburb where there is little to no cultural variation. Marubini has the advantage of hearing different languages and witnessing different cultural practices. She understands without needing to think about it that these things are all part of South African culture, as she can see it taking place before her eyes.

A collective memory has been preserved in Marubini’s community, not only in the language but also in traditions, practices and creation stories. This is not, in fact, a singular collective memory. Ofilwe is introduced to a variety of different beliefs and practices through her grandparents and parents. Marubini is also able to take part in traditional social practices and learn their importance without it threatening her identity. Traditions are maintained in her community: she is able to take part in a coming-of-age ceremony. She describes her feelings: “I felt very important on that day. All the homes that had an initiate slaughtered an animal and cooked a lot of food" (184). Being able to take part in such a ceremony allows her to feel a member of the cultural memory of her grandmother's people. Her grandmother tells her: "You are one of us now Marubini" (184). By following traditions and learning the secrets she has become part of the women of her community. She sees her grandmother as a guide, which is in sharp contrast to Ofilwe, who feels she has no one to show her where to go. Marubini recognises the importance of this guidance, asking her grandmother: "Will you always guide me, even when I'm big?" (183). The community guides Marubini, allowing her to participate and learn about aspects of her identity. The cultural memory she is partaking in cannot be "remembered" instead "it has to be memorized" (53). As she grows up Marubini will learn more about the history of her father's family and their beliefs. However, this act of participation is as important as learning about the facts of cultural memory. As Aleida Assmann "explains, it is "only through internalization and rites of participation" that an identity can truly be constructed ("Transformations" 53).

A variety of traditions and cultural practices are still continuing in the township community where Marubini grows up. She does not only participate in these traditions, she is also made part of the group by learning about the collective memory, mainly in the form of myth or religious narrative, which lies behind them. Her father tells her about his calling to be a sangoma, a healer. He makes her feel special by impressing on her the secret nature of this information: "some people won't be happy with me for telling you this" (Mashigo *The Yearning* 55). He insists that she is part of the community, appealing to a collective identity which means that she inherits these secrets: "don't go telling anyone else our secrets" (Mashigo, 2017, p.55). The quest for identity, explained by her father involves searching for where he came from, returning to where his mother grew up, needing to heal himself. He has "a calling" (Mashigo, 2017, p.56). Her father is connected to the past, to the cultural memory, and he connects her to it through communicative memory. "The ancestors communicated their wishes through my body, I was at one with my source" (Mashigo, 2017, p.58). The direct connection to a cultural memory contained within mythical history, through the ancestors, is mediated to Marubini through her father.

Not only does memory travel, but the way in which we understand our memories travels. Marubini does not need to choose between a Western understanding of trauma, or a spiritual interpretation of her visions. Stef Craps and Gert Buelens have argued against the use of ideas of trauma, formed in a particular social and historical context, as neutral (2008, p.4). He claims that they come with a set of assumptions which are often in conflict with ideas of healing in countries such as South Africa. This novel is resistant to the imposition, it draws on "western ideas" of trauma but does not feel the need to follow them completely. Healing from trauma is presented as both a psychological and spiritual experience. Marubini experiences visions or dreams, which she is unable to interpret properly but which are bound up in traditions of her people and memories of her father. They also link her dreams to a suppressed traumatic memory from her childhood, but they are also visions associated with her calling, and she describes how: "Baba calls to me in my dreams" (172). She is unsure how to describe these visions or dreams, asking herself: "who is to say whether it's trauma or the calling" (168). Her visions are interpreted by the characters in the novel as being ambiguous. They do not rule out "western" ideas of trauma, but they also do not rule out traditional ideas of having a calling to be a sangoma (Craps and Buelens 4). The author is trying to show that interpretation according to many theories is possible, that there is not one right way to understand disruptive memories and visions.

The combination of a typically suburban identity, and a more traditional role is portrayed in *The Yearning.* Marubini's reconnection to historical memory and myths does not prevent her from living her modern life. She is proof of the ideas that people are made up of a variety of collective memories and thus identities, and that none is more of the past than another.

Marubini becomes a healer, although it is not entirely clear whether her father is her teacher. The cultural memory she and her family have preserved allows her to know that this is something that she wants. Crucially Marubini does not have to give up her Cape Town life in order to embrace other parts of her identity. In the final chapter of the novel, her friends come over to see her, to drink gin and tonic and play with her child. In the strikingly modern scene, the traditions of her cultural memory fit in easily and do not cause complications. The baby's name is Chari. This, she tells her friends, is "the name of a river in Cameroon, where I met my teacher" (Mashigo *The Yearning* 185). Marubini's identity forms a bridge between tradition and modernity, and she finds no difficulty in combining these two worlds. Not only does memory travel, but the way in which we understand our memories travels. Marubini does not need to choose between a Western understanding of trauma, or a spiritual interpretation of her visions.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the process of recovering lost memory, and the way in which cultural memory resists the imposition of colonial narratives of collective memory and identity. Even in *Scatterlings*, where the trauma of slavery and forcible removals leads to a character's suicide, there is still a hopeful vision that a form of collective memory can be created which creates a space for those like Alisa who are lost. The consequences of loss of cultural memory are less devastating in *Coconut*, although their impact is still profound. And Ofilwe, despite her belief that she does not know where she is going, appears to gain a sense of cultural orientation as the novel progresses. Although *The Yearning* is more positive about the possibilities for hybrid identities in South Africa, both novels explore that as something achievable for at least some of the characters. The collective memory formed in exile, in *Always Another Country*, is less contested in Msimang's youth, but will be challenged by the realities of the new postapartheid South Africa.

These different counter histories, collective memories which preserve pre-colonial or anti-apartheid identities are rooted in the past but oriented towards the future. The characters in these texts are looking towards the future, as South Africa was at the end of the apartheid regime moving towards the transition. To a great extent it still is today. Access to memory is shown to be essential to the formation of new identities that encompass all that these young women are, and not only some aspects. These authors show that there is a possibility for new kinds of South African identity through the creation of collective memory and the resurrection of lost cultural memory. This has certain links to the ideas of the TRC, where painful testimony had to be collected in order to create a coherent South African identity going forward. This process, that of registering collective trauma as part of collective memory, will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 10: Writing apartheid into collective memory in Sisonke Msimang's *Always Another Country* and Mohale Mashigo's *The Yearning*

At the end of apartheid, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed with the aim of rewriting collective memory to more accurately represent the new desired South African identity. The purpose of the TRC was to: "bring to light past injustices in order to build an open, common-ground understanding of history, which in turn would provide a foundation for an emerging national identity as a progressive multicultural community" (Adams and Kurtis 9). The TRC was not only designed to create an understanding of history, but also to register the collective memory of the apartheid as a national trauma. This organisation was designed to allow South Africa to move forward as a nation by archiving the crimes of apartheid and allowing them to be known, thus making them accessible for the formation of cultural memory on a national level.

Glenn Adams and Tuğçe Kurtis have investigated the TRC in terms of the way in which it produced the postapartheid South African collective memory. They outline the motivation for creating such an entity: "faced with the destruction of trust, many communities have advocated that post-conflict African governments implement some form of TRC as a means to construct a shared sense of collective memory, collective identity, and collective purpose." (8) Such memories had to include the crimes of the apartheid. Cultural memory had already existed within many of the groups affected by the apartheid, as they were fully aware of the crimes that had been committed against them. However, these crimes had been denied by the apartheid state on a national level, with zones of amnesia created by the state's racist narratives. Adams and Kurtis explain that the idea behind the recording of this testimony was the "production of collective memory" which was "based on the truth" of ordinary people's experiences. These constructions of collective memory provide the foundations for corresponding imaginations of community…" (9).

In this chapter I will consider how the experience of the trauma of apartheid is shown to form a part of South African collective memory. In other words, how the pain inflicted by colonialism and apartheid is integrated into collective memory. I will consider how the process of constructing a postcolonial national memory of the collective trauma is illustrated in these texts, as well as the extent to which they challenge this model. According to Cathy Caruth trauma is:

> a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event…the pathology cannot be defined either by the event itself—which may or may not be catastrophic, and may not traumatize everyone equally—nor can it be defined in terms of a distortion of the event, achieving its haunting power as a result of distorting personal significances attached to it. The pathology consists, rather, solely in the structure of its experience or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. (4)

Collective trauma, although to some extent related to Caruth's definition, is a complex idea based on a multitude of theories, some of which suggest that it does not exist at all. Trauma can be understood in individual terms as an event which cannot be consolidated into an individual's narrative memory. No event in itself is traumatic. It is the way an event is experienced, as a persistent present, that is the condition of trauma. The event repeats in the psyche, though often sufferers from post-traumatic distress disorder do not remember the event happening at all, or do not remember experiencing it fully even when they know it happened. The treatment for this psychological disorder is based on the idea that being able to speak about trauma is cathartic. This was something that the TRC saw as part of its function, as Stef Craps explains the TRC focused on: "the cathartic role of victim testimony and the closure it must bring" ("Wor(l)ds of

Grief" 56). He explains that opening "wounds" was done only to "deal with the past effectively and so close the door on that dark and horrendous past forever" (56). This still refers to the individual wounds of the victims of apartheid, but the nature of the closure appears to be more collective. In this context it is not clear who benefits from closing the door on the past.

There are two fundamental ways of understanding collective trauma according to trauma theory. Firstly, and mostly controversially, as a crisis in meaning, where a nation or society represses an event or series of experiences due to their traumatic nature. As individuals who experience trauma can suffer from a breakdown in identity, so nations who suffer the "cultural crisis" of trauma suffer a traumatic collapse in the national identity. Jeffery Alexander insists that no event is inherently traumatic. Many events constitute a social crisis; an epidemic or a natural disaster or any event which is seriously disruptive or harmful to a large swathe of the population. To be a trauma this social crisis must be transformed to a cultural crisis:

> For traumas to emerge at the level of the collective, social crises must become cultural crises. Events are one thing, representations of these events quite another. Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of a society's sense of its own identity. Collective actors "decide" to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go (Alexander 10).

This is not to say that people are deciding to be traumatised. Rather that, as a group, they acknowledge that an event, or a series of events, presented a threat to their cultural identity, or even damaged this cultural identity beyond repair. This means that certain events register as traumatic, whilst other similar events do not. Alexander explains that culturally speaking it is the registering of the event as trauma which makes it traumatic, not the nature of the event. He writes: "Whether or not the structures of meaning are destabilized and shocked is not the result of an event but the effect of a sociocultural process" (Alexander 10).

As Kai Erikson writes about the effect the kind of trauma Alexander describes has on a group. He explains a traumatised community "no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared… 'we' no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body" (Erikson 153–54). Erikson suggests that some events have a genuinely traumatizing effect on society itself. He explains: "Sometimes the tissues of community can be damaged in much the same way as the tissues of mind and body…" (154). This idea of damage suggests that society is being traumatized as an entity, rather than the people who make it up.

Nations, or other imagined communities, do not have psyches (David 7). They may have collective memory in the sense that I have already discussed, the selection of events to build a desired identity, but they cannot forget in the sense of unconscious repression which occurs in trauma. Nations "can repress with psychological impunity"; their collective memories can be adapted without consequence (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 301). However, a traumatic event for a nation can be one that causes a crisis of representation in terms of its collective memory. For South Africa, the apartheid was certainly that. The memory work, of representing the trauma of individual South Africans as a crisis for all, was conducted by the TRC and is now being completed by contemporary South African writers. I will be using the term collective trauma in the sense of a crisis of representation both for the state, its people and for all parts of the apparatus of creating collective memory, including literature. In *Always Another Country* Sisonke Msimang illustrates this process in action, showing how the social crisis of apartheid was recorded and registered as a cultural crisis for the South African nation.

The second formulation of collective trauma is the idea that where many people have suffered a traumatic response to a devastating event, such as the apartheid, society is traumatized purely by merit of being made up of people who have all gone through this experience. Erikson describes this situation in terms of a mood which can dominate a group:

"traumatic wounds inflicted on individuals can combine to create a mood, an ethos—a group culture, almost—that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up. Trauma, that is, has a social dimension" (Erikson 185).

Even this second theory is fraught with difficulty. Stef Craps has shown that by focusing on individuals who suffer trauma, postcolonial states have ignored the societal implications of the reason for these peoples' trauma. Craps, in his analysis of the TRC, claims that its failures are linked to its conceptualizing of trauma: "…insofar as the TRC mapped Euro-American concepts of trauma and recovery onto an apartheid–colonial situation, it was subject to the same problems and limitations faced by trauma theory" (Wor(l)ds of Grief 51). These problems and limitations, according to Craps range from applying culture specific norms (Western norms) as though they were general rules, to a focus on forgiveness, the value of which as healing for society or individual victims is disputed. He writes that trauma theory:

> is actually a Western artefact, 'invented' in the late nineteenth century. Its origins can be located in a variety of medical and psychological discourses dealing with European and American experiences…means there is nothing self-evident about the notion that Western definitions of trauma can be unproblematically exported to other contexts" (Craps "Beyond Eurocentrism" 48).

I will illustrate the way in which these texts treat trauma, and whether such discourses are presented as relevant in a South African context. The apartheid registers as a trauma in the way Erikson describes, as the collective trauma of many individually traumatised individuals. It exists as a crisis of representation.

Witnessing trauma in *Always Another Country*

Sisonke Msimang returned to South Africa as a young woman, having experience the apartheid years at a distance. Her memoir covers her childhood during the apartheid, her home coming as a young adult to the newly democratic South Africa, ending with her partial disillusionment with the South African “rainbow nation” dream. She believes she is unaware of many of the crimes of apartheid due to having grown up in exile. She is not alone, however, in knowing little about the worst abuses of the apartheid regime. Such crimes were forgotten by the narratives of the apartheid regime, and the often poor and disenfranchised black victims were not seen worthy of national record. This means that their disappearances were not looked into, and their deaths at police hands were either not archived, or put down to an accident that had occurred while the accused was trying to escape. The suffering of the victims of apartheid was unknown on two levels: firstly many people simply did not know what had happened to their family members; but secondly it was also not known on a national level. The South African apartheid state did not acknowledge such crimes, so they did not appear in archives or narratives of collective memory. Judith Butler claims:

> This differential distribution of precarity is at once a material and a perceptual issue, since those whose lives are not "regarded" as potentially grievable, and hence valuable, are made to bear the burden of starvation, underemployment, legal disenfranchisement, and differential exposure to violence and death. (*Frames of War* 25)

In response to her work, Stef Craps describes the failure to properly grieve those who suffered under apartheid, and continue to suffer due to a failure to fully decolonise South Africa. He explains that their deaths do not register as a tragedy. Part of the purpose of the TRC was to alter the collective memory of apartheid, so that this suffering was grieved by the nation, and that its victims were transformed into “grievable” beings. The extent to which it was successful remains a matter of dispute.

Msimang attends the TRC hearings, and whilst representing the testimony she heard there, she also focuses on the effect it has upon her as a South African. She appears convinced of the importance of telling traumatic stories, both for the benefit of the individuals involved but also for the good of society. This view was common at the time, many people from politicians to social theorists claimed that silenced voices must be allowed to speak in order for South Africa to heal. Commenting on the TRC Njabulo Ndebele claimed:

> **…** the passage of time which brought forth our freedom has given legitimacy and authority to previously silenced voices. It has lifted the veil of secrecy and state-induced blindness . . . Where in the past the state attempted to compel the oppressed to deny the testimony of their own experience, today that experience is one of the essential conditions for the emergence of national consciousness. (21)

This was a conscious effort to heal a nation based on the act of giving testimony. The apartheid registers as part of cultural memory. Msimang describes the process of how it is created as part of cultural memory: “night after night on TV, the victims of apartheid are broadcasting their stories” (*Always Another Country* 252). The process of repetition is made clear, and the format makes it appear inescapable.

Her position in the hearings is also complex. She does not present herself as a victim of apartheid, and the experience of exile certainly did not come under the remit of the TRC, nor does she understand herself as one. She feels like an outsider: “I am attending as an observer and the word suddenly feels like an accurate representation of who I am: an outsider” (253). The hearings, creating as they do the new collective memory of apartheid, perform an identity function. This process is represented by Msimang, she has to write a report on the hearings, but it has had such an impact upon her that she admits: “I am writing for myself” (256). She explains that the hearings, the representation of her country’s trauma, made her identify with being South African, despite having felt something of an outsider before. Her feelings about the TRC are complex: “the TRC makes me want to be South African, even as it shows me how lightly I got off…” (256). She understands her role in South Africa to be the same as that of the victims she has heard at the TRC, as a witness who can also give testimony. The collective memory of the trauma of the apartheid, and the collective memory of the moment of registering that trauma, the TRC itself, means that her role in South Africa seems to her to be one that "bears witness" (256). Collective memory in South Africa has found a place for the trauma of apartheid and the act of finding this place has formed part of collective identity. The TRC hearing is also presented by Msimang as the victims of apartheid telling their stories, with little reflection of the scope of people included, something which will become criticized after the fact. There is power in the words spoken, and the very action of speaking about something which the apartheid regime did not consider important. She describes the process of bearing witness and asks rhetorically: "what do they testify to? Traumatic loss, things hidden, loved ones missing and violence" (253). After describing people looking for lost loved ones, she says with an almost painfully casual tone: "they come to ask if anyone has seen them, to check if anyone knows where they went" (253). The low expectations of those asking, contained within the word "check," conveys the way in which these people have formerly been treated by the state. The very fact that they are able to give testimony seems to Msimang a hopeful sign for South Africa.

Despite presenting the TRC as an opportunity for the victims of apartheid to finally tell their stories, she nonetheless portrays an uneasiness about the context into which they are speaking. Msimang gives a hint to the reader that registering this event as a collective national trauma might be more complex than it first appears. The role of the perpetrators in this process is something which troubles Msimang. She shows an awareness that despite the number of victims "the perpetrators deny having done anything" (252). The shifting of blame involves "pointing the finger either at higher-ups or at junior level staff" (252). She suggests that "untold misery and violence" was committed "by shadows" (252). The frustration at the way in which officials are refusing to take responsibility angers her, she ironically remarks that "ghosts had bludgeoned the victims to death" (252). She is horribly aware of how the orderly South Africa cities she visits during the hearings hid a long history of torture and violence that she was unaware of, or at least unaware of the extent of it. She presents “the disjuncture between the clean exteriors of both cities (Johannesburg and Cape Town) and what happened in their shadows, in the dark places the apartheid hid from view, as an overwhelming, troubling juxtaposition” (255). She presents the TRC as an opportunity to bring those places to light, and also to register the ongoing hypocrisy of those who refuse to acknowledge what they have done.

She recognises the internal tension of the hearings. They were designed to allow for the production of truth, based on reconciliation from all sides. However, the perpetrators are still denying their crimes, the victims are able to share their stories but do not receive the answers that they have come for. As Marzia Milazzo writes: “mostly black people who are forgiving and reconciling” (131). It is not presented as a two-way process; the perpetrators continue to hide from their guilt. Msimang struggles to see the purpose of reconciliation with such people: “it feels like I might split in half from the tension of it, from trying to hold the country’s history and its tenuous present together in my mind; trying to reconcile what has been done with how we plan a future together” (Msimang *Always Another Country* 255). It is not only reconciliation between victims and perpetrators, it is trying to reconcile the collective memory of the past with the desired present. Since the desired present is for a South Africa united not divided, the collective memory of the trauma of apartheid must somehow be made a means for achieving that, and not a barrier. However, overall, she accepts the importance of hearing these voices, and the belief that it is better that these stories are told rather than continue to be kept hidden.

The limits of trauma in Mohale Mashigo‘s *The Yearning*

Andre Brink claimed that the enquiries of the TRC must be “extended, complicated, and intensified in the imaginings of literature” to avoid a society which “cannot sufficiently come to terms with its past to face the future” (30). Mohale Mashigo, in her novel *The Yearning* ,takes on this challenge, engaging with the discourses of trauma of the TRC, but also showing its limitations and other models of healing. Mashigo uses individual trauma to represent the traumatized society. She focuses on the importance of not repressing trauma and illustrates the damage that unrecognised trauma can do both to individuals and societies. In this way she is somewhat aligned an important theory in South Africa at the end of apartheid, associated with the TRC, that the trauma of apartheid had to be consciously brought into collective memory. However, Mashigo complicates this idea, suggesting that it is not as simple as merely narrativizing trauma before witnesses. Even whilst she does this, Mashigo suggests that this acknowledging and speaking of trauma is not enough to achieve healing for the victim, nor the society from which she comes. She is both engaging with the TRC by portraying the dangers of suppressing trauma, but also questioning the fundamental truths upon which it was based.

Mashigo creates a parallel between integrating trauma into the narratives of personal memory and integrating trauma into the narratives of collective memory. The novel begins by framing the story that will follow in terms of the creation of memory-based identity, asking: "Why do we sacrifice so much of the present to hide the past?" (Mashigo *The Yearning* 1). This question places the repression of memory that occurs in Marubini's story in a larger, South African context. The action of sacrificing the present for the benefit of the past was a highly contested one in the postapartheid years. How much forgetting was involved in the act of reconciliation, and what effect that had on the victims of apartheid continues to be a key point of tension in South Africa. Mashigo presents the importance of acknowledging good and bad in the past, for the benefit of the present, rather than attempting to forget: "the Yearning never stops until we embrace everything that brought us here" (1). She stresses the importance of acknowledging that the past was far from perfect: "Why do we take away the future's knowledge of itself in order to make the past seem perfect?" (1). Marubini's life, and the way in which it interacts with collective memory, is a metaphor for how societies should deal with traumatic events.

The description of her birth is made to seem like a legend or myth from the ancient past.

In the first line of the novel ordinary life is told like a legend "My mother died seven times before she gave birth to me" (1). Her double role as part of her complex heritage and collective memory, as well as being an individual is highlighted by the way she is introduced in the novel. Her importance, and her role in the creation of collective memory is made clear in this initial part of the story. She is described as "an ancient queen." Her grandmother, who is responsible for the storytelling explains: "You were a new beginning for us who had lived long lives and needed respite" (6). Her birth was significant even beyond her immediate family. Though this story is an example of communicative memory, a family history remembered by them all, it is told as though it were a myth. Marubini does not remember being born, but this is part of her identity, the way in which she is remembered. She explains: "I can't say for sure how much of Nkgono's story is true. But I liked hearing it. Every year on my birthday she still calls to tell me the story of how her daughter gave birth to a beautiful but stubborn granddaughter" (7). Marubini's symbolic importance has been established, which allows her to act as a symbol for a traumatised culture and not only as a traumatised individual. The story of the repression of trauma which follows acts as a parable for the nation. It is not possible, Mashigo shows, to fully repress trauma. The good and the bad must be integrated into the national narrative, as well as into each individual's life.

Marubini, the central character in the story, suffered a trauma as a child. She begins to experience symptoms which could signify a post-traumatic response. Post-traumatic symptoms can be: "re-experiencing the trauma…because traumatic events cannot be categorised and integrated within the beliefs (or schemas) about ourselves, others and the world that we held before the trauma – they simply cannot be located within our existing cognitive map of the world" (Kaminer and Eagle 61). Marubini experiences these traumatic incidents as occurring in the present, she can see and hear things around her. Such events are even felt physically as "a big, cold hand falls on my shoulder." (Mashigo *The Yearning* 61) This is not a memory, but the occurrence of an event she was not able to fully experience at the time. As Caruth explains: “it is this inherent latency of the event that paradoxically explains the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of historical experience: since the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time” (7).

In Marubini’s present day, as a young adult, events occur which she perceives as being entirely beyond her control, yet she is the only person present. She is badly cut by glass, which only she can have broken. However, she describes it as though she had no agency: “the glass shatters and spins slicing into my wrist” (79). She describes what her friends and family believe to be self-harm as a horrible accident, explaining: “I wasn't trying to end my life, I was fighting for my life” (79). Erikson describes traumatic recall in this way: “our memory repeats to us what we haven’t yet come to terms with, what still haunts us” (184). Whilst traces of the original event appear in her adult memory, Marubini does not understand what they mean, she has not yet come to terms with what happened. She only knows that they are a source of great fear.

Mashigo has created the character of Marubini so that she can be understood both as a traumatised individual and also as representing the damage society does when it tries to deliberately repress trauma. Marubini’s family tried to help her as a child, by removing the trauma from her body, through a ceremony which Marubini, too, has forgotten about. This ceremony involved removing the pain from her body by draining the blood which contained her trauma. This process was conducted by her father, who, as a sangoma, a traditional healer, was able to hide the memory from her. As she explains: “every healer knows that memories are located in the body” (Mashigo *The Yearning* 147). This removal, however, was not sufficient to shield her from suffering, as the memories of what she cannot remember keep coming back to the surface. The action of deliberate repression, however well intentioned, has far greater parallels with a national based narrative repressing trauma, than the way in which trauma victims experience (or rather, fail to fully experience) a traumatic event. The novel engages with the idea that the repression of traumatic events is very damaging to the individuals concerned. It is important to tell your story, and to remember, regardless of how painful that may be. Marubini, when she is finally able to remember the ceremony which took away her pain as a child, explains: “nobody but me can see there is something good being torn away with the bad” (142). When her family help her to remember again, Marubini is able to recover to some extent from the experience. An acknowledgement of the trauma helps her to heal, but this is not the only factor in her recovery.

Trauma is a complex issue in a postcolonial context. It is often presented as being a neutral way of analysing certain psychological responses, but as Stef Craps points out the theoretical definition of trauma was developed almost exclusively in the United States as a response to Western ideas of what could cause trauma. The novel suggests, as Mashigo said in an interview, that “there are different ways to heal” (Mashigo “We Bury Our Stories”). In this way the novel is complicating the overly simplistic idea that either individual or collective trauma can be healed simply by telling. Craps claims that: “after all, in collectivist societies individualistic approaches may be at odds with the local culture” (“Beyond Eurocentrism” 49). Mashigo suggests that such approaches are not “at odds” but that they are simply insufficient for a person like Marubini who is competent at “code switching” between different group affiliations (Mashigo “We Bury Our Stories”). Mashigo uses code-switching to refer to the ability to move from language to language, but also from culture to culture without difficulty. It is something that she feels comfortable doing, and identifies this ability in Marubini too. In *The Yearning* Mashigo combines the post-traumatic stress disorder treatment of acknowledging and creating a narrative into which the trauma can be placed, with the traditional sangoma ceremony performed by her father, both of which contribute to her cure. Both “the truth” provided by her mother and grandmother, and her father’s action of carrying her “pain to the ancestors” played a role in her healing (Mashigo *The Yearning* 132 ,173). Craps and Buelens describe the way that postcolonial trauma novels can provide “a response to trauma that asserts the relevance of localized modes of belief, ritual, and understanding, thereby undermining the centrality of western knowledge and expertise” (2008, p.5). Marubini may not have been entirely healed by her father’s intervention into her trauma, but in reconnecting with him and their ancestral beliefs she is able to heal more fully. Collective modes of healing are shown to be at least as effective as individualistic ones. While the individualist approach to Marubini’s trauma is not at odds with the local culture, it is shown to be insufficient.

Conclusion

All these texts show in very different ways that talking is not enough: the pain is still there. Mashigo and Msimang are hopeful about possibilities for healing, and do not rule out the sharing and recording of trauma as a way of understanding past pain. The social group is reconciled with itself by acknowledging the wrongs which have been done to it. It is not, however, reconciled with the perpetrator. The place of the perpetrator in *The Yearning* is largely absent, and in no way implicated in the healing of trauma, either by being forgiven or through retribution. This has parallels to Msimang’s account of the TRC, which shows the act of speaking to be important, but not enough to remove the pain, particularly when the lack of the perpetrator’s admission of guilt is taken into account. Doubt exists in both these texts, regarding the idea that talking about past trauma will either heal the victim entirely, or the society which facilitated or witnessed their suffering. Literature can explore the feeling of those involved in the TRC, rather than the politicians who promoted its peace-keeping abilities. The victims, as well as the TRC staff, “were under no illusion that holding hearings, letting people talk, and publishing reports would automatically bring about social healing” (Craps, 2010, p.57). Contemporary writers such as Mashigo and Msimang are able to acknowledge this politically inconvenient truth and explore more fully what healing really means in South Africa today. The next chapter will look at other possible modes of healing, and why they, too, have failed to materialise in postapartheid South Africa.

Chapter 11: Resisting postcolonial collective memory in the new South Africa in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut*, *Period Pain* and Keletso Mopai's *If You Keep Digging*

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created "as a mechanism for production of a national consciousness." By bringing to light "past injustices" it would create "a common-ground understanding of history, which in turn would provide a foundation for an emerging national identity" (Adams and Kurtis 9). This might seem something impossible to expect: how could collective memory be capable of reconstructing a national identity for a country shattered by years of apartheid and political struggle? However, to a large extent this is what was expected during the transition period, where memory work was placed at the centre of South Africa's move from an apartheid state to a multi-racial democracy. Aretha Phiri writes:

> "The year 1994 heralded the birth of a 'new' South Africa and the institution of a black presidency. With the aid of media-generated phrases such as 'Rainbow nation' and 'Simunye—We are one!' the country espoused nonracialism and celebrated its vision of a multicultural society unified in its sense of a diverse but universal humanity." (2013, p.161)

Diversity was required to incorporate a variety of identities, and unity to ensure the safety of the nation. A mechanism needed to be developed in order to allow for the collection of testimonies from which a collective memory, and thus a collective identity, could be formed. To this purpose, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was founded.

The idea behind the TRC was to record crimes committed during the apartheid, and so bring together a variety of collective memories from the apartheid years (Adams and Kurtis). These memories were sharply contrasted, as well as the identities of those who formed part of rival groups. Bringing a degree of consensus, at the very least regarding the apartheid years, would allow a new identity to be formed, based on events that all South Africans remembered together, however reluctantly. The hearings were publicly broadcast on television and anyone from the public could attend any of the hearings. The aim of the memory work conducted in South Africa was to allow all South Africans to form new identities within the narratives of the past. The narratives of the past, at the moment of transition, entirely lacked consensus.

In this chapter I will consider the limitations of the process of recovering and reasserting collective memory, and limits of memory work as a panacea for the still very much existing issues of identity which South Africa faces. The postcolonial accounts of collective memory that we saw constructed in the previous chapter experience resistance. The recreation of national memory as encompassing diverse identities has not been fully successful due to a failure to democratise collective memory, where a lot of previously dominant groups wish to hold on to older versions of South African collective memory. This chapter will consider to what extent a collective national memory has become democratic as South Africa has moved to a multi-racial democracy. Have new collective accounts of the past, and traditions and other memory practices, started to form a part of a new postcolonial narrative of South African memory?

The texts I will be investigating for this chapter are Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007) and her most recently published novel, *Period Pain* (2016), and two short stories from Keletso Mopai's short story collection *If You Keep Digging* (2019): "Monkeys" and "In Papa's Name." Keletso Mopai's paired short stories portray the difference between someone growing up in an Afrikaner farming community, and in the poverty-stricken township, in terms of what they understood being South African to be. The two young boys portrayed in this text have strikingly different collective memories which inform their understanding of South African history and its present-day reality.

Contemporary texts show that pre-existent collective memory is pervasive, even where new versions of history begin to be told. Both *Coconut* and "Monkeys" portray a resistance amongst diverse white social groups to accept the new South African identity, and to let go of their formerly privileged collective memory. White characters populate these texts, who are unable to give up on their former memories of their place in South Africa. What is at stake for them is not the past, but rather the future and their very place as citizens within a multi-racial South Africa. Acknowledging that their memories of the past involve a degree of forgetting along racial lines would threaten their identity as white South Africans. The construction of collective memory is dependent on forgetting. That which does not serve a group or nation's narrative about itself, which cannot be counted as "our" history, is forgotten. Stories which do not contribute to the formation of group identity are, therefore, forgotten too (Assmann, J., 2008, p.113). This process can be malicious, for example a state refusing to archive its crimes, but it can also come as a result of events not being remembered by ordinary people because they simply did not seem important. These texts show that, rather than doing this, previously dominant white communities cling to their collective memory and their own version of how they came to be in such a position in South Africa. Consequently, these texts illustrate white individuals who are still able to present colonialism and apartheid as positive, not only for themselves and others of their ethnicity but for all South Africans. Control over public space consolidates and reflects an ongoing sense of ownership over a South Africa which they now, legally at least, must share.

Kopano Matlwa's *Period Pain* is the story of a young doctor, Masechaba, who is struggling at her job in a busy public hospital. She befriends another young doctor, Nyasha, who is originally from Zimbabwe. Their friendship, and the xenophobic violence which eventually destroys it, is a means for Matlwa to explore what it is to be South African today. Matlwa illustrates that it is not enough to merely create new postcolonial narratives, such narratives must also have space for divergent stories that do not fit neatly into any group identity. Masechaba becomes involved in campaigning against the xenophobic violence which affected the country in 2008. The consequences of this decision illustrate the dangers of siding with those who are still not considered fully part of South African history and identity. Verne

Harris, commenting on what he sees as the limitations of memory work in South Africa, explains that he does not “wish to question the need for new metanarratives in rebuilding a society damaged by generations of oppression.” He goes on to explain that the memory work he has witnessed “runs the risk of being trapped into a totalising agenda and of foregoing the opportunity to harness truly liberatory energies” (Harris 4). It is not enough to end white dominance of national collective memory, where new metanarratives of South Africa lead to the exclusion of other social groups, often disadvantaged immigrants. Matlwa’s *Period Pain* illustrates the pitfalls of memory work, however well-intentioned, to represent the memories of all without exclusion.

Land and collective in Keletso Mopai‘s “Monkeys” and “In Papa’s Name”

The transition from a colonial or apartheid collective memory to a postcolonial version is clearly not something which can be completed quickly. This process is shown by contemporary authors to be, at best, not yet fully complete. As Aretha Phiri explains, the white population “continue to benefit as a result of the persistence of more subtle kinds of white privilege” (162). Many white South Africans in these texts are reluctant to give up their previously privileged position in society. Their perception of their “right” to certain privileges is bound up in an understanding of the importance of their history as a part of South Africa. This cultural memory is not an objective matter of what has happened, as it is not complete knowledge about the past, but selected events and narratives which contribute to the formation of their identities. This history is by no means objective, though the people who form part of this memory group may understand it to be so. Historical events only form a part of collective memory in so far as they contribute to our understanding of who we are now. Events may be recorded that do not fit in with this aim, but they are not remembered collectively unless they play an important role in a group’s understanding of who they are.

If You Keep Digging, Keletso Mopai’s short story collection, is a study of the creation of identity, memory thus inevitably playing a central role in her stories. For the purposes of this chapter I will focus on the story “Monkeys”, which can be read as a diptych alongside “In Papa’s Name”. These stories are the account of one day in 1996, during the first years of democracy in South Africa. The stories are told from two different perspectives. The two narrators live very different lives, they are both ten-year-old boys, but one is an Afrikaner living with his parents; the other is an orphan whose father was murdered by the apartheid regime. The two boys do not meet though they live in adjacent areas. The first story, “Monkeys”, is told by the Afrikaner child. He describes his difficult homelife with his violent father, though the main focus of the story is his friend Kevin’s birthday party. Through the child’s eyes we see the adults around them as they manage or fail to adjust to the new South Africa.

The role of memory is crucial to understanding the behaviour of the Afrikaner adults in this novel. Cultural memory is attached to various objects, including the pre-1994 South African flag. The narrator’s parents hide the flag when they have visitors. When questioned, the narrator’s mother tells him that some people might find it offensive, though she does not explain why. The boy explains:

> Ma covered the flag in the dining room like she always does when strangers come to see the house. I once asked her why. She said it’s an old South African flag and that people might find it inappropriate. But Kevin’s father has the same flag nailed up at the back of his garage, and he never hides it when people go to their house. (Mopai “Monkeys” 15)

The narrator is confused because Kevin’s father also has the same flag and he does not hide it when people come. The child has understood that the flag is significant but does not understand why it needs to be hidden.

Historical links to the land, as well as to the idea of the old South Africa, dominate the ideas of the older generation. This is something which is threatened by the new democracy, which may result in land being returned to its previous inhabitants. This actually happened to an incredibly limited extent in South Africa, compared to other postcolonial nations like Zimbabwe, but it is clear that this loss of land is a preoccupation for the narrator's father. The unnamed child explains what his father has told him, about who the land belongs to: "black people from this area say they own the land we're living on. Some of the Balobedu people say their ancestors lived here a long, long time ago" (15). Though the boy knows about this claim to the land, it has been presented to him as, not a falsification of history, but merely something which is overwritten by more powerful collective memory. He explains: "Pa told us this with so much anger, his veins popped out on his eyelids: 'Who do these people think they are? My grandfather owned this farm'" (15). This is also factually true, his grandfather did own the farm, but it is presented as though this historical truth overrides any previous claim. It is clear to see that collective memory is at work here, the important historical fact is the one which is remembered by this group. The father is aware of the new social order, exclaiming: "you know, just because Nelson Mandela is now president they think they own everything in this country. They want the land, they want the mines, and now they want our farms … unbelievable!" Redistribution is presented as contrasting to the justice of historical ownership of land, rather than in support of it. The narrator's father says he will never give up the land which belonged to his father and grandfather (15). The narrator remarks: "I think that's why he is selling it" to avoid it being taken from him (15). This plays into a fear that land will be returned to its original owners. The boy's family clearly feels under threat, and perhaps are planning to leave South Africa, though that is never explicitly stated. His father actively discourages him from speaking to the black couple who come to visit the farm to see if they want to buy it, clearly not wanting to acknowledge that they are going to live in it.

As we can see from "Monkeys", the concept of a connection to the land plays an important part in Afrikaner identity. They were victims of persecution by British colonialists, and this features strongly in their collective memory. This short story clearly illustrates the feeling of having a right to the land based on historical memory. However, it also shows the necessity of forgetting in order to sustain this particular identity. The narrator's father complains about areas of South Africa which are "all Zulus, no whites." The father claims: "The whole of Natal is owned by the Zulus. But are any whites crying like caged animals about that?" (15). This presupposes a choice of where to live which was generally not available to non-white people during the apartheid. Many groups were forcibly removed from their land, or from multi-racial areas in cities, like District 6 in Cape Town. Many of these people were forced to live in "homelands" located within South Africa created by the apartheid state to provide a migrant labour force ("Forced Removals in South Africa"). This was the case for the Zulu people in Natal. They were already (before the apartheid) the dominant ethnic group in this area, but many Zulu people living outside what came to be known as KwaZulu were forced to go and live there in the 1970s, due to the 1970 Bantu Homeland Citizenship act ("Forced Removals in South Africa"). This forcible removal often robbed the people subjected to it of their South Africa citizenship, and the land they were given in exchange for their old land elsewhere was of a low quality. The number of a particular ethnic group living in an area was a direct result of apartheid policies, but this is simply not acknowledged at all by the father.

The father's view of who should have access to what land also shows a misconception, or more likely a lack of interest in the demographic makeup of South Africa. Even in 1996 white people made up a very small minority of the population, so it should not be surprising that there are areas which do not have many white residents. The collective memory with which the father has been brought up has no difficulty in seeing the land as his ancestral home, even while he is able to ignore that others, too, may have an ancestral claim to this land.

Postcolonial spaces in Matlwa's *Coconut*

"Monkeys" is focused on a rural, Afrikaner community. *Coconut,* by contrast, portrays an English-speaking white, elite and middle-class community in the city of Cape Town. Their identity is far less connected to the land of South Africa, though their identity as South Africans is shown to be very important to them. The control of space, based on their right to decide who can be there and what behaviours are permitted, is based on historical and actual control of public spaces, rather than ancestral land. However, *Coconut* shows that the white community generally believe they have a right to public space due to the collective memory of their role in South African history. This narrative is very different from the one in "Monkeys" as it is not explicitly based on ancestral rights but is curated in order to maintain the same sense of entitlement.

Ofilwe and Fikile, despite growing up under very different circumstances still experience this control in the same way. Ofilwe describes the impossibility of being black in public spaces. She describes the sense of entitlement of white south Africans who no longer forbid black Africans to occupy shared spaces because: "the law prevents it"; however, they continue to control the social norms of public space (Matlwa *Coconut* 31). She explains:

> … they will scold us if we dare, not with their lips, Lord, because the laws prevent them from doing so, but with their eyes. They will shout, "Stop acting black!" "Stop acting black!" is what they will shout. And we will pause, perplexed, unsure of what that means, for are we not black, Father? No, not in the malls, Lord. We may not be black in restaurants, in suburbs and in schools. (31)

Historical control of public space remains, even where the law no longer allows it to be divided on a racial basis. The tool of control is now social, rather than legal. Ofilwe goes on: "Oh, how it nauseates them if we even fantasise about being black, truly black. The old rules remain, and the old sentiments are unchanged. We know, Lord, because those disapproving eyes scold us still; that crisp air of hatred and disgust crawls into our wide-open nostrils still" (31). The historical right to public space continues through the tools of social shame, since the law does not allow any other means.

Coconut, similarly to "Monkeys", also portrays a convenient amnesia about the colonial past. This occurs both on a state-sanctioned level, through education, but also on a personal level due to oversimplifications or misrepresentations of history. A clear example of selective memory occurs when Fikile's colleague Ayanda argues with a white female customer, in the café where he and Fikile both work. After a conflict over a cheese sandwich the woman suggests that Ayanda, the waiter, should be grateful to her as: "if it wasn't for us you wouldn't be able to read" (150). The collective memory this taps into is a perception that rather than being an exercise of political and economic control, the colonization and subsequent apartheid were part of a civilizing mission. It is this collective memory which allows the woman to treat Ayanda in the way she does. He should be grateful to her, for her race's role in South Africa's colonial history. The use of "we" when she is clearly referring to her own ancestors, taps into the idea that collective memory represents the past as ours, she is "remembering" something that happened many years before her birth (A. Assmann "Transformations 53). This woman is clearly engaging in an act of emotional identification which allows her to identify as having taken part in events many hundreds of years ago.

Other characters in *Coconut* reflect this idea. The owner of a restaurant where Ofilwe's brother Tshepo works suggests that the black employees should be grateful to her for creating jobs. He reports the restaurant owner's explanation that: "she does not normally do this" so he must not forget that he is "very fortunate" (28). She claims she helping the unemployed, whilst described her fellow South African citizens as "lazy, ungrateful people who don't deserve nothing'" (28). There is a motif of gratitude and indebtedness running through *Coconut*, a perception on the part of the white minority that the black majority are not owed anything for colonialism, but instead are in debt for the efforts of the civilizing mission. The selective way in which the economic and political destruction of pre-colonial societies is being remembered is allowing white people to continue their sense of entitlement, even if the law no longer grants it to them.

New metanarratives, new xenophobia in Matlwa's *Period Pain*

Thus far this chapter has considered the role of racial and social dominance in the formation of new South African memory-based identities. Dominant groups are able to have their narratives recognized as part of the cultural memory of South Africa, because they have the social and economic capital to force the realities of their narratives into being. This does not occur only with the continuation of white origin myths; new myths are being created by the postcolonial nation. These narratives still have their own zones of exclusion (Harris 4). During the decolonization of the transition and its aftermath some narratives were able to form a part of South African national myths. The texts I have considered so far have looked at the transition period, or shortly afterwards. White cultural memory is presented as significant in these texts. There is a change, however, when we begin to consider later novels which are set in the 2010's. *Period Pain* by Kopano Matlwa looks at the formation of collective identity, for a new South Africa. This novel shows the way in which this is done at the expense of new immigrant communities by using collective memory of the anti-apartheid struggle. It also illustrates the violence meted out to those who fail to conform to these narratives.

Period Pain portrays a strong sense of South African identity. The focus of the TRC was on creating a South African identity that was universal, a rainbow nation. However, the meaning of this identity, and who is allowed to be part of it, remains a contested area to this day. Sadly, this is not merely theoretically contested, but xenophobic violence against immigrant communities has been a feature of South African postapartheid democracy. Belonging to the South African nation is based on legal citizenship and even ethnic origin, rather than residency in the country (Nyamnjoh 40). Immigrants from the rest of Africa, mainly Zimbabwe and Mozambique, are especially seen as outsiders, suffering xenophobia in a way that European immigrants do not. Postcolonial nationalism based on a re-inclusion of cultural memory to national narratives still appears to create division. Even Masechaba, who is horrified by the xenophobic violence sweeping South Africa to the point that she creates a campaign against it, still believes that South Africans are inherently superior. She explains "I am lucky to have been born South African, it's not her (Nyasha's) fault she wasn't" (Matlwa *Period Pain* 42). She does, however, admit to a feeling of resentment: "Sometimes I want to tell her to go back to her own country and fix her own problems and stop meddling in ours" (42).

Period Pain illustrates a conception by some South Africans that they have earned the nation of which they are now a part. Masechaba, the central character and narrative voice, has a complex relationship with her mother. Her mother does not like the fact that she has gone to live with a Nigerian doctor colleague, Nyasha. She suggests that Nyasha, a skilled surgeon working in the South African National Health Service, intends to steal from Masechaba. She explains: "Everything you've worked so hard for will be gone, and you'll be left with the nothing they arrived in this country with" (38). Masechaba's mother weaponizes cultural memory in order to exclude Nyasha and other immigrants from being a part of South Africa. The anti-apartheid struggle is presented as an attempt to take control of the South African nation only for those defined as citizens. Masechaba's mother claims a strict understanding of us and them in terms of who has the right to enjoy postapartheid South Africa: "they come to our country to take from us all the things we fought for" (40). This is particularly complex as all black residents in South Africa, regardless of where they were born, were disenfranchised by the apartheid system. Francis Nyamnjoh in his important work on citizenship in South Africa outlines the way in which apartheid conceptions of citizenship have been maintained in democratic South Africa (40). Nyamnjoh asserts: "few Makwerekwere who slaved away in the apartheid mines as undocumented migrants have been granted citizenship in the new South Africa, where ‘only nationals matter’” (Nyamnjoh 40).

Conclusion

Memory studies has traditionally focused on the experience of less dominant groups in a nation, and very often on groups which had suffered a group trauma due to the actions of the state. This is for several reasons, the first of which being that this group’s memory runs counter to what is commonly understood to be the history of the nation. It is viewed as separate, less important and not constituting part of the national identity. This means that this group’s collective memory is likely to present a very different vision of the past to the dominant groups. In a colonial setting, for example, the collective memory of the colonizing group will be understood as objective history, where the collective memory of the colonized groups will be considered myth and legend or even pre-historic. This process of disempowerment has the result that non-indigenous white communities encountered in these texts can view themselves as the true South Africans. Their collective memory tells them that South African history began with their ancestors and not earlier.

Other power imbalances are also portrayed in these texts, with even postcolonial metanarratives of memory excluding immigrant communities. The anti-apartheid struggle is portrayed as an attempt to achieve something for South Africans at the expense of excluding new immigrant communities. Placing South African identity, according to a citizenship-based model, at the centre of collective memory means that certain experiences are bound to be excluded as they do not contribute towards the desired South African identity.

These texts suggest it is not possible to impose a new collective memory, or at least not if some socio-ethnic people have so much invested in retaining old identities, or in building new ones of South African exceptionalism. Certain groups have more social or economic capital, which means they are able to form the present social reality in line with their collective memory and identity expectations. The impact that a focus on memory in South Africa has had upon these power imbalances in the new, democratic South Africa will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 12: Memory work, reconciliation and redistribution in Msimang's *Always Another Country,* Keletso Mopai's *If You Keep Digging* and Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut*

South Africa in the mid-90s was teetering on the edge of civil war, with tension between not only the white beneficiaries of apartheid and the oppressed black majority but also between the various ethnic and political groups(Nattrass 280). South African identity was under threat, with disparate groups losing their sense of having a common identity. It was a time of great insecurity, which led to a desire to establish a clear collective memory, because "when identity becomes uncertain, memory rises in value" (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 194). The idea of creating a "rainbow nation" as a new South African national identity was popular with community leaders and politicians (Milazzo). This led to the focus of the TRC to be rather more on the "reconciliation" aspect of its remit than the "truth" it was trying to establish. The consequences of this have been significant in postapartheid South Africa.

In this chapter I will consider the way in which contemporary authors explore the failure of collective memory to build a South African identity in the face of continued poverty and inequality. I will analyse not only the limitations of memory work in terms of ensuring a more equal society in South Africa, but also the implication of such memory work in allowing such poverty to continue. By focusing on trauma inflicted by individuals, rather than the extensive societal damage caused by the apartheid as a system of economic control, the TRC and other institutions of memory work allowed the economic structures of the apartheid state to continue unchallenged in some cases.

The apartheid was not acknowledged as an economic crime by the TRC and the government. Patrick Harries claims the TRC "hesitated to investigate companies, or to call on them to pay reparations" despite its calls for "the government to compensate victims of gross human rights violations" (Harries chapter 6). The apartheid certainly was a financial crime, with many non-white people losing land, property and wealth. Many people designated as non-white by the apartheid government were forced to work for paltry amounts of money and had no access to education which would have allowed them to work in a job leading to an escape from this poverty. The failure to acknowledge this as part of the crimes committed by the apartheid state was crucial in the model of redistribution that was then followed. As Stef Craps explains: "by defining as victims only 'those whose rights had been violated through acts of killing, torture, abduction and severe ill treatment' the TRC failed to adequately address the injustices of apartheid as a legalized system of oppression which had blighted the everyday lives of many millions of South Africans" ("Wor(l)ds of grief" 56). To bring to light the truth about apartheid, it would have had to "put centre-stage the experience of apartheid as a banal reality" (56). The TRC did not only largely ignore the financial aspects of apartheid, but by doing so allowed racial inequalities caused by apartheid to continue into postapartheid South Africa. By ignoring such factors and downplaying the economic focus of apartheid the memory work of the TRC was complicit in: "downplaying, individualizing, pathologizing, and depoliticizing the lived experience of subjection" (56). The TRC's focus on trauma led to a pathologising of the aftermath of apartheid, cementing its place as a phenomenon which was individually traumatic, and perpetuated by evil and often law-breaking individuals, rather than a system of economic and social control. Gert Buelens and Stef Craps claim: "a narrow focus on individual psychology ignores and leaves unquestioned the conditions that enabled the traumatic abuse" (4). They describe the way in which this focus leads to a particular kind of cure which is inadequate in the face of structural state violence: "understanding social suffering in medical terms encourages the idea that recovery from the traumas of colonialism is basically a matter of the individual witness gaining linguistic control over his or her pain" (4). This means that "psychological healing risks becoming privileged over material recovery: reparation or restitution and… the transformation of a wounding political, social, and economic system" (4).

Due in part to this lack of acknowledgement, redistribution was perceived to be less important than forgiveness and reconciliation. This means that for many, mostly black, South Africans their situation has not materially changed since the end of apartheid. Marzia Milazzo (2016, p.132) explains that “racial disparities persist” and the state’s response to this is to “violently suppress demands for equality.” She explains that “poverty has worsened since the democratic dispensation.” Poverty continues to operate on racial lines: “white people, less than 9% of the population, continue to collectively own over 80% of the land” (Milazzo 132). She points out the effects of this inequality, life expectancy for black people is “less than fifty years” compared to “over seventy years for white people” (Milazzo 132).

The texts I will be using for this chapter are Keletso Mopai’s “Monkeys” and “In Papa’s Name” from her collection *If You Keep Digging* (2019), Kopano Matlwa’s *Coconut* and Sisonke Msimang’s’ *Always Another Country* (2017). *Always Another Country* explores the failure of memory work in South Africa through the eyes of the relatively privileged Sisonke, who is nonetheless alarmed by postapartheid South Africa’s failure to live up to her expectations. In *Coconut* (2007), as well as presenting Ofilwe’s perspective, Matlwa also imagines South Africa from the perspective of Fikile, who is living in extreme poverty in a township. Matlwa illustrates the way in which material deprivation both prevents access to understanding collective memory from a postcolonial perspective, and how it gives the lie to the myths of South African exceptionalism contained within the rainbow nation narrative. Mopai’s “In Papa’s Name” illustrates the link between loss of memory and present-day poverty. It is not enough to re-integrate a lost and suppressed past into collective memory, when the present is still being lost to the kind of poverty that people lived under during apartheid.

Return from exile in *Always Another Country*

South African exceptionalism and the rainbow nation myth falter in the face of a postapartheid South Africa which is not as expected. The collective memory with which Sisonke Msimang, author of *Always Another Country*, grows up lionises the independence struggle and posits its natural conclusion as a free and equal South Africa. This, as Sisonke narrates, is only partially achieved**.** She, of all the authors in this thesis, was initially the most confident about the importance of creating a new South African identity and the positive effects it can have. The collective memory which sustained her and her family in exile is, however, shattered in the face of postapartheid South African realities.

Msimang, as we have seen, came from a family who played an important role in the anti-apartheid struggle. Sisonke recounts the challenges to her identity she experiences when living in postapartheid South Africa. Her identity developed, at a distance, through important South African events. After the end of apartheid, she returns to South Africa. It is the return to South Africa, not the absence, that is the greatest challenge to her identity. She writes that it is not the reality of freedom which carved her identity, but the struggle for it: "...the dream of freedom was a sort of home for us" (Msimang *Always Another Country* 15). South Africa is less of a home now that it is free than the dream of freedom was a home for them. Msimang illustrates that the power of collective memory to forge identity can be lost if the promised great future, the natural outcome of the collected memories of the group, fails to live up to expectations. Msimang's experience of life in the new South Africa suggests that the new dispensation is working for black people. In many ways Msimang's story in the new South Africa is not unusual, despite her exiled years in Kenya and Canada. She forms part of a new middle-class elite. However, as she quickly comes to see, if this is a sign that the rainbow nation is moving from a narrative to a lived reality of equality, it is extremely limited. The postapartheid period has seen some families designated as black or coloured, and previously denied a place amongst South Africa elites, moving into powerful positions. Msimang's family is relatively wealthy, having lived abroad where her parents worked earning good salaries. Her parents form a part of the new South Africa and contribute a lot to postapartheid society. She explains that her parents are "the first black man" and "first black woman" to do many things and to hold significant roles in the private and public sector (242). As the child of such parents, Msimang is: "…used to things falling into place…" (291). Families like hers were able to both contribute to and take advantage of the new South Africa, in a way that many other families could not. The existence of such black individuals who were able to progress has been highlighted by Aretha Phiri who describes them as "black diamonds" (164). By this she means that there are a few successful black people who were integrated into the predominantly white middle classes. This was able to happen without any significant impact on working class black people.

Msimang is aware that her privilege is related to her family's comparative wealth as land-owning black South Africans. Many South Africans had their land stolen, either in colonial wars or later by the apartheid government. She understands that this is what has allowed her family to develop and preserve cultural memory, as they have retained a connection to the land: "We never lost our land. This I will find out in the decades to come made all the difference to who we are and who we were able to become" (Msimang *Always Another Country* 159). Msimang's disappointment with the new South Africa, as opposed to the dream of freedom she grew up with, begins with the realisation that what her family is able to achieve is not something available to many black families. She describes the area where she lives with her parents, a desirable neighbourhood in Cape Town. However, as she points out: "we have no black neighbours" (242). She is aware that what she and her family have achieved in South Africa is the exception and not the natural culmination of the history which she has cherished since childhood.

Postcolonial poverty in *Coconut* and *If You Keep Digging*

Coconut's use of parallel narrators shows from a first-person perspective what Msimang describes in her memoir: the life she is living is very unrepresentative. *Coconut* is a novel, so Matlwa is able to imagine the experience of a very different child to Ofilwe, Fikile, who has grown up in poverty and cannot access the things that Ofilwe takes for granted. Ofilwe and Fikile's respective experiences of identity creation as they grow up are contrasted by the author. Ofilwe is from a black family who have become prosperous after the end of apartheid. She lives in a large comfortable home in an exclusive gated community. She attends a private school and has a life full of material comforts. Fikile, who is of a similar age to Ofilwe, has already left school and is working as a waitress in an upmarket café. As a young child and in her early teens Ofilwe's views on black South African identity are almost indistinguishable from Fikile. As young children, they both believe in the cultural superiority of whiteness. For Ofilwe this is caused both by a lack of knowledge about her history, but also the many pop cultural references which dominate the lives of her, and her school friends. Fikile reads American magazines and idolises being "rich and brown" (Matlwa *Coconut* 140). Fikile has "caramel-blond hair" that she carefully pins in, and her proudest possession are her green contact lenses (117). Ofilwe, at least initially, also rejects all aspects of black identity and dreams of being white and accepted.

As the girls grow up their viewpoints begin to diverge. Ofilwe, who has greater access to education, finds that whilst still affected by apartheid norms, she is able to identify that there is something missing from what she is being told. The young people who surround her also have access to information and education, and by contrast to Ofilwe, have families who are happy to share information about their cultural heritage. As we have seen, she begins to reconnect with her cultural memory, and this is a painful process for her but at least one she is able to begin. Matlwa shows that it is her position of relative privilege that allows her to reconnect with this history. On the only occasion where Ofilwe and Fikile meet or at least are in the same place at the same time, is when Fikile is serving Ofilwe's family at the Silver Spoon café where she works. As she sees Fikile working Ofilwe despises her, for Fikile's desire to be white, and for the way she flirts with the older white male customers: "Yes, we've noticed that you've been very busy indeed. She says this with a smirk, her eyes pointing to Paul's table, who sits there staring at me" (173). Ofilwe reflects on a story which her brother Tshepo told her. The story is a form of origin myth for the start of the apartheid in South Africa. It highlights that, however hard you try to fit in, you will never be able to be part of the dominant group if they do not identify you as their own. Ofilwe wonders: "if anyone has ever told Fikile this story" (33)/ It is unlikely that such a story would make any difference to Fikile. She is aware of her lack of power, and the very limited ways in which she can alter her situation, much like Ofilwe. She hopes that she will be able to achieve some kind of financial security, or at the very least receive more money in tips, if she pleases customers like Paul.

Both Ofilwe and Fikile wish that things were different, and are trying their best with the options open them to change their lives. Ralph Goodman explains: "the cultural geography of *Coconut* is an account of conditions in the new South Africa as they are, counterpointed by the compensatory mechanisms of the two protagonists who feel that conditions ought to be very different, but are powerless to effect change" (111). Their powerlessness is because despite political decolonisation being achieved, cultural and economic decolonisation have not been. Despite the apparent cultural nature of both the girls' rejection of blackness, the role of economic colonisation cannot be overstated. Fikile's desire to be white is directly related to her desire to escape poverty.

Fikile, living in poverty with her abusive uncle, is reminded constantly of what it means to be black and poor in South Africa. Her life is far more typical than Ofilwe's. The ANC publication on affirmative action (cited in Liese Sall 4) states that: "at the moment, every white schoolchild gets three times as much spent on his or her education as every black pupil." They further explain that this is not only in terms of education, "the same applies to just about every other form of governmental spending, whether on health or street lights or rubbish collection or farm support" (4). Fikile is living through the results of this failure to redistribute wealth. She tries to find an escape out of poverty and lands on becoming white as a solution to her problems.

As a young child in early postapartheid South Africa she tells her teacher she wants to be white when she grows up “because it’s better” (Matlwa, 2007, p.135). Her teacher asks her “what makes you think that?” and Fiks replies: “everything” (Matlwa, 2007, pp.135-136). She has witnessed the terrible poverty and deprivation suffered by herself and the black families in her neighbourhood. She uses this poverty as a means of keeping her dreams on track. She explains that as she does not have running water she has to wash with a bucket, which “can serve as a constant reminder to me of what I do not want to be: black, dirty and poor. This bucket can be a daily motivator for me to keep me working towards where I will someday be white, rich and happy” (118). Fikile blames black people, both individuals and as a group for the poverty and hardship they live in as a result of apartheid.

Her response to the poverty she sees around her is to blame the victims of it. She complains:

> Black people! Why must they always be so damn destructive? And to think, they have never invented a thing in their squalid lives and yet they insist on destroying the little we have. Just look at how scummy the townships are. Have you ever seen any white suburb looking so despicable? (134-5)

The division between black and white areas during the apartheid is something which has only slightly changed since the end of the apartheid regime. The reason why black communities appear “scummy,” as Fikile describes it, is due to years of deliberate non-investment by the apartheid government. Her desire to be a rich brown South African means that black deprivation and the deliberate creation of the townships cannot feature as part of her memory.

Fikile is suffering as she tries to make her way in the new South Africa. Despite the narratives of the rainbow nation, the practical requirements of her life suggest to her constantly that she is inferior. She works for the racist owner of the Silver Spoon, who holds her responsible for the actions of other black people. This can be seen when there is a transport strike. Most of the participants are black, so the daughter of her boss at the Silver Spoon refers to them as “you people” identifying Fikile with a group that she has tried hard to demonstrate she is not part of (144). Narratives of collective memory which imply inherent equality naturally fall flat when the present-day struggle reminds Fiks of her vulnerability to dominant social and racial groups.

Keletso Mopai’s short story collection looks at the lack of change in South Africa postapartheid. Fikile’s experience is shared by many of the characters who populate her stories. In “In Papa’s Name” the narrator is unable to learn about his family’s history. In this short story Mopai makes explicit the connection between the kind of memory work which South Africa engaged in, and the way in which poverty was allowed to continue, despite the ANC’s generally left-leaning political background. This is not to say that a redistributive attempt would have necessarily been successful, rather that a political decision was made to not do this. The ANC was very concerned about businesses leaving South Africa and plunging the country into poverty. If this had happened, so the argument went, it would have been impossible to help the victims of apartheid. This meant that rather than financial retribution against those who had profited from the apartheid, their actions were quietly forgotten. This was justified by the memory work which focused on certain kinds of crimes. Many others, particularly crimes against large groups involving economic oppression, were forgotten by the state and never came to be part of collective memory.

The crime which has occurred in “In Papa’s Name” appears at first to be a violent one, the narrator’s father has been murdered. However, as the story develops, we see that the poverty in which the narrator lives is also a consequence of apartheid. Mopai shows the link between the forgetting of the crime, and the ease with which everyone is able to tolerate the narrator’s poverty. Communicative memory has broken down within his family; both his parents are dead and his aunt is reluctant to talk about his father’s role in the anti-apartheid struggle. The boy explains: “Aunty never wants to talk about my parents. Not Mama’s suicide, not Papa’s murder, not anything” (Mopai “In Papa’s Name” 25). Naturally as a young boy he has no narrative control over history: he can only know what he is taught in school and by his family. The boy has no source of information to find out about his father: “Ask that Apartheid guy Verwoerd; oh yah, he’s dead too. So, I don’t know. All I know is that Papa died fighting Apartheid” (25). He cannot force his aunt to talk about his parents and cannot have access to Verwoerd or indeed any other authority figure who might be able to tell him what happened to his father. He also has no material control over the present. He is economically disadvantaged, living in desperate poverty similar to Fikile. The injustice of this is something he is aware of, as he describes his poverty compared to that of the children of other anti-apartheid activists:

> I should be rich. I should be living in a mansion. That’s how I see it. Other children of struggle heroes seem to be rich. They go to private schools. They speak English in nice twanging accents. They swipe cards and drive cars. And when they show up at school, the other kids bow at their feet. But here I am holding my yellow container, ready to run for my life. (25)

Some children of apartheid activists are acknowledged by society, but for reasons which never become clear in this story, this has not happened in his case. The woman who serves the food at school sometimes gives him a little extra “because she knew his father” but this small act of kindness is the most significant recognition or recompense that the boy receives in the whole story. The lack of acknowledgement of his family’s trauma from those around him shows the transition period as a time of convenient forgetting, those who committed crimes prosper while the victims are forgotten. Why he is not living this life is not made explicit in the short story. It is, however, clear that the failure of memory is linked to the boy’s desperate poverty. The boy stands in for all those who were forgotten victims of apartheid, who carried on being forgotten even after the fall of the regime. The continued poverty in which they live results from a failure of memory work which was so focused on reconciliation that it forgot about redistribution. Because clearly none of the children should be living in this way, they are all victims of apartheid and its structural inequalities which have polluted the new South Africa.

The boy focuses on the unfairness of the way wealth is divided up in the new South Africa: "Walking to school, I see Moshole ahead of me. He's always swinging his suitcase, for everyone to see that Vvele??? his father bought him one. His father is not even a hero or anything. He's just a loan shark, and he drinks like nobody's business" (27). Truth and reconciliation allowed amnesty for those who committed crimes. The narrator suggests that this might be the case in terms of Moshole:

> I've heard rumours that Moshole's father killed women and men with his white boss during Apartheid. Even today, he threatens to butcher people when they don't pay back the money they borrow from him. I'm telling the truth, strubob, I've heard the stories. I've also overheard Aunty say, gossiping through the wire fence with our neighbour, that there are ghosts in his house. I'm only telling you what I've heard (27).

Crimes of the apartheid are only whispered, where the sacrifices made by those like the narrator's father are forgotten. This short story shows that the real injustice is amnesty and wealth for criminals, and poverty for victims.

Marzia Milazzo claims that: "economic reparations alone… cannot rectify collective dispossession" in a context where "neoliberal capitalism and colorblind racism systematically reproduce racial inequality" (131). It is not only that victims were forgotten and poverty continued, but poverty continued because it was collectively decided that it was all right to forget certain kinds of apartheid crimes because of the need for unity. The forgetting can continue in the new South Africa, which means that many of the present-day beneficiaries of the apartheid regime do not have to face the crimes of the past and their continued impact today.

In “Monkeys” the Afrikaner narrator feels sorry for the poor black children, one of whom is the narrator of “In Papa’s Name”, in the same way as he feels sorry when he finds out the monkeys at the zoo have died. He describes how: “the boy leading the pack is wearing a ripped T-shirt and khaki shorts full of holes. I feel sad inside, like when we found out about Baboons’ death. The kids all seem so poor and hungry.” The poverty is a sad accident, he cannot relate it to his own history. Though the narrator in “In Papa’s Name” can, he is not in a position to change anything, and anyway, it seems that no one cares what he thinks.

Conclusion

The memory work conducted by South Africa not only failed to implement change, but to some extent caused the lack of change. People could (only) bring claims to the TRC if they had suffered “gross human rights abuses,” which included murder, torture and other kinds of violence. These crimes, of course, were very significant and it is natural that the Commission considered them. However, many more people were the victims of economic crimes. These crimes shortened life expectancy based on race, and condemned a large part of the population to extreme poverty. The promotion of reconciliation may well have averted the 1990s crisis, amongst other factors, which threatened to derail South Africa into even greater violence. However, there remains a lot of inter-group violence, and violence directed towards new immigrant communities in South Africa. There is a link between the failure to remember crimes of economic oppression during the apartheid, and the fact that South Africa remains one of the most unequal countries in the world.

Section 3: Collective memory and gender

Chapter 13: Collective memory and gender, who remembers and who is remembered

South Africans have focused on an important question since the end of apartheid. What does it mean to be a South African? Understanding who they are, and where they have come from is seen as essential for securing peace, security and a future for the nation. However, this experience has often defaulted to a male experience of being South African. This has happened both in terms of how colonialism and the apartheid are reflected upon, but also in the way in which postapartheid South Africa exists in collective memory.

The relationship between gender and collective memory in South Africa is the subject of this final section of my thesis. In the study of collective memory issues of gender have historically been ignored (Hirsch "Practicing Feminism" 2). Sylvia Paletschek and Sylvia Schraut explain that "so far, scarcely any research has explored the representation of women in national memory and the role of gender in cultures of memory" (10). This is despite the fact that gender is a "product of cultural remembrance" which "is called up by memory and social practices and is constantly re-inscribed" into collective memory (10). Women have historically been marginalised in discourses of memory which only reinforces their status of secondary importance (Paletschek and Schaser 164). This is not a tendency which has been left behind with the overthrow of colonial regimes, but one which persists in the construction of postcolonial identities.

In attempting to rewrite South African collective memory the concerns of women have continued to be side-lined by those tasked with creating such narratives. Despite attempts to include the perspectives of women in the construction of postcolonial South African memory, male experience continues to be treated as a non-gendered neutral. This occurrence is common in the construction of a nation state: "not only have the needs of postcolonial nations been largely identified with male conflicts, male aspirations and male interests, but the very representation of national power has rested on prior constructions of gender power" (MacClintock 8). Such identification with male interests leads to the construction of a collective memory which silently excludes the experience of women. Cheryl McEwan argues that this is something which has always existed in South African society and continues into the postapartheid period. She explains that: "black women have often been most marginalised by colonialism and apartheid and excluded from dominant accounts of history (McEwan 740). According to McEwan society is, or at least has been, organised around the needs and priorities of men. Naturally enough, collective memory reflects this as it is both created by and serves to sustain the society from which it comes. Ayşe Gül Altinay and Andrea Petö have analysed theoretical work on memory and gender:

> Among the major journals in the field, History & Memory has published no article with the term "gender" or "women/men" in its title, between its first issue in 1996 till 2014 (only five with "women" or "feminism" among subject terms) and Memory Studies has published only one article with "gender" in the title between 2008, when the journal started coming out, and 2014 (with four others having "women" either in the title or among the keywords). (7)

Their findings evidence a lack of interest in the field of memory studies at the role that gender plays in the construction of memory. This is something which is changing, with new publications insisting on the importance of gender such as Hirsch's 2019 *Women Mobilizing Memory*.

Acknowledging the gendered constructions of collective memory is essential to understanding the failures of South Africa's collective memory work. The TRC can be seen as the original act of exclusion of women's voices from the record of apartheid experience. This is not to say that the TRC was at fault where other processes of creating collective memory were successful. The role of the TRC was central as setting the way in South Africa would remember, and the national narrative to which it would subscribe:

> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) played an instrumental role in the invention of the new South African nation as rainbow nation. It provided a space in which liminal rituals of incorporation and group cohesion – rituals, in other words, of re-membering – were performed. Due to the pivotal role that it accorded to memory, the TRC, in the words of Njabulo S. Ndebele, instigated a national 'restoration of narrative' (1998b, 27). Its project is symptomatic of narrative and historiographical practices in the transition years (Samuelson 2).

The public response to the TRC has been so overwhelming as to overshadow much of the other "memory work" which took place in postapartheid South Africa. It is emblematic of all other processes of archiving and memorialisation which took place during the transition. This may be changing now, with a concerted effort by memory theorists to make space for narratives about and constructed by women. This is both a work of retrieval in terms of finding stories that have been hidden but also a work of construction by creating spaces for women to contribute to new narratives of collective memory:

> For the last thirty years, feminist scholarship has been driven by the desire to redefine culture from the perspective of women through the retrieval and inclusion of women's work, stories, and artifacts. This period has also seen an explosion of literary and cultural production by women in numerous languages and cultures that in itself has shaped much of the cultural memory of the late twentieth century. Much of recent feminist scholarship touches directly or indirectly on questions of cultural memory. For instance, feminist writing on sexual abuse and violence against women has been intensely preoccupied with memory, trauma, and transmission in the family and in society. (Hirsch and Smith 3)

Insisting on the importance of these ‘everyday’ stories counters what Marianne Hirsch describes the “current era of monumental memory that supports nationalist, ethnocentric, and masculinist imaginaries” (“Practicing Feminism” 10). National collective memory does not need to be only about ‘significant events.’ As history has moved from a study of ‘great men’ to a focus on ordinary people, so memory studies are beginning to focus on commonly occurring events and the way in which they interact with political situations. This academic attempt is not matched by the political programmes of most Western nations and indeed many postcolonial ones. Nations choose their significant events with little reference to gender. Despite this, these events are always gendered, as Hirsch explains:

> Recent anniversaries marking the end of the Second World War, the liberation of Paris, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Rwandan genocide, the Easter Rising in Ireland, the 1967 War in Israel, were all observed in similarly monumental ways, highlighting nationalism and militarism, on the one hand, victimization and suffering, on the other—all distinctly gendered. (2)

The move towards a more democratic form of collective national memory has not been linear. In the 1990s there was a focus on trauma and untellable histories. Today the focus on events such as those listed above means that there is little space for imaginaries of memory outside of the masculine norm. There is a divide between what is happening in the political mainstream and the efforts of academics and some marginalised groups to assert the complexity of collective memory.

In this introduction it is necessary to define terms I will be using throughout this section. This is always a difficult thing to do when it comes to gender as so many of the terms involved are so contested. It is hard to avoid discussing the category of ‘female’ or ‘woman’ and avoid falling into gender essentialism, without remaining entirely silent on female experience. Hirsch, in her ground-breaking collection on gender and collective memory, also deals with the problem of defining women. She, too, is cautious to avoid ascribing certain values to women or to being female, claiming: “we certainly do not suggest that all those who identify as women stand and act for politically progressive ends, nor do we mean in any way to essentialize femininity” (2). She suggests rather a focus on “race and gender-based violence and traditions of activism invented by and associated with women” as well as allowing for a multitude of identities applied by society and those who identify as women” (2). Her solution is to allow the different writers in her collection to define ‘women’ and ‘gender’ according to their own terms. In this I will partially follow her, by taking the lead from the literature I am working with in order to define these terms.

The novels, memoirs and short stories I cover here do not focus on issues such as being transgender, although there is some reference to non-binary individuals, which means that the issue will not be addressed in this section. The complexities of sexual identity are simplified to some degree by these authors who strongly equate biological womanhood with a female-gendered experience. This is both externally established as the characters are defined as women by others, but also in the way the characters themselves identify. The authors do, however, focus on issues of gender non-binary identification or gender fluidity. Female characters do not always behave in the ways expected of them according to their culture’s definition of what a woman should be and are often punished for it. I will consider sexuality in so far as it impacts on a particular gendered experience of collective memory. ‘Woman’ is not a gender, although female gendered expectations come along with being a woman. The literature I will focus on here tends to treat woman as a sexual category, so as not to complicate this issue. Gender is shown to be a social construct, with destructive consequences for those women who fail to uphold the rules. Therefore, in this section I will be looking at gender roles and equating female experience to the category of women, while maintaining an awareness that these categories by no means always overlap, and that both contain a degree of social construction.

There is significant interesting debate on this topic, but my main interest is what it means to be a woman in terms of how a person is treated and able to operate in society. This means not only those who identify as women but more importantly those who are identified by their community as being so. Ronit Frenkel observes the position of South African women which is both empowered and disempowered. She writes: “South Africa has the largest percentage of women in parliament in the world… Yet, South Africa also has the highest levels of rape and violence against women in the world” (Frenkel 1). These contradictory indicators highlight the particularity of South Africa’s past, as well as the continuities between the apartheid and postapartheid periods.

Women’s role in society has a direct impact on the part they play in collective memory. In postapartheid South Africa women are to some extent empowered as creators and witnesses, but still to a lesser degree than men. At the same time, they lack the ability to give testimony on all subjects as their experience is perceived to be limited to certain roles. Frenkel points out that this ambiguity has arisen from the apartheid positioning of women, but also the postapartheid need to reconstruct South African identity. She explains:

> While women’s struggles were subordinated to the larger anti-apartheid struggle out of the necessities of a nationalist agenda, in a postapartheid context, the residue of these modes and repertoires of operation coupled with the patriarchal nature of apartheid, has resulted in ambiguous gender positionings that are highlighted by such polarised statistics – where women are clearly both empowered and victimised, seen and unseen, included and excluded in different ways (Frenkel 1).

I will explore the relationship of women and collective memory looking at this dual inclusion and exclusion, considering the ways that an apparent inclusion can exclude more than it shares by challenging all women’s experience into a few token ‘female’ experiences. The lack of women contributing to the postapartheid creation of collective memory is a direct reflection of women’s status within society. In South Africa women’s roles are still very strictly defined:

> Women are relegated to a secondary status within South African society. They suffer discrimination and disadvantage in almost every sphere of society. The society can be understood as being divided into a public and private sphere where the world of business and Government is seen as the male realm where the state and citizens interact. (Goldblatt and Meintjes 10)

Women do not view their testimony as important, because their life experiences are not viewed as important by society. As Lauren Graybill explains: “our society constantly diminishes women's role and women themselves then see their experiences as unimportant” (4). I will balance the need to focus on traditionally defined women’s experiences and the diverse roles many women played during the apartheid and continue to occupy in postapartheid South Africa

Gender, too, is in part constructed by cultural memory and expectations about women contained within it. Sylvia Paletschek and Angelika Schaser explain that “gender is a product of cultural recollection; it is called up by memory and social practices and constantly re-inscribed into collective memory” (166). They assert that “memories are gendered” and asks us to consider “who remembers what, how, why, and for whom...” (166). Gender in collective memory from this perspective plays a great role in issues of representation and power. Hirsch also stresses the importance of power in the construction of collective memory. She writes: “gender is an inescapable dimension of differential power relations, and cultural memory is always about the distribution of and contested claims to power. What a culture remembers and what it chooses to forget are intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony, and thus with gender” (Hirsch “Practicing Feminism”). In this section I will explore the relationship between gender and collective memory in the varied representations provided by the authors of contemporary texts. It is important to identify where memory is silently gendered, so as to appear gender-neutral. Accounts which claim universality must be questioned: "to give women a stronger presence in culture(s) of memory it is at first necessary to analyse the seemingly gender-neutral space of national memory with regard to its gender-historical implications and to contextualize historical gender stereotypes which claim universal validity" (Paletschek and Schraut 23). The ways contemporary authors challenge claims of universal validity and work towards the production of a female collective memory will form an important part of this section.

Feminism is another term which cannot be taken at face value in the postcolonial context. Hirsch explains that feminism "has a variety of meanings in different cultural and historical contexts" ("Practicing Feminism" 2). Despite this, there is a tendency "among theorists to speak of feminism and Western feminism in particular, as though it were monolithic" (Mekgwe 166). Susan Arndt identifies a trend in the criticism of feminism within Africa: "one central critique is that feminism does not see beyond Western societies and hence ignores or marginalizes the specific" (Arndt 10). As we saw in the first section of the thesis in terms of trauma, some terms come loaded with unspoken geographical grounding. Feminism in Spain is not the same as it is in South Africa, and its points of difference are viewed by some critics as being at least as important as its similarities. Important issues in feminism have often been interpreted differently in an African context. As Frenkel explains: "issues surrounding victimhood, voice, agency, subjectivity, power, gaze, silences, knowledge and nation have often been recast in African feminist theory and need further exploration in South Africa today" (2). African feminism has had many of its own theorists, whose ideas often focus on the intersectional[18] disadvantages faced by black, African women. Some of these are outlined by Frenkel:

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[18] Describes the interconnected nature of social groupings such as race, class, and gender creating disadvantage. . See Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1989

Alternative terms for feminism abound in African feminist theory. Alice Walker coined the term ‘Womanist’ to highlight the racialised nature of experience and to centralise black women within a different sort of (polarised)feminist tradition that recognises social, political, national and cultural issues in its conception of gender; O’Molara Ogundipe uses ‘Stiwanism’ which is an acronym for social transformation including women” (2). These theories acknowledge the intersectionality of race and gender, and deny the idea that all female experience is equal.

As well as constructing a locally specific idea of feminism, African theorists have struggled with the perceived conflict between tradition and feminism. Women in colonial nations are not only of secondary importance due to their gender, but also their race. They are “doubly colonised,” this term “associated with various feminist theorists, woman are colonised by men and by the empire” (Ashcroft et al. 89). Spivak, as set out in the introduction, working with the same ideas, describes the way in which they are even more unable to speak than the male subaltern (28). If feminism is Western, then in attempting to speak for the subaltern in feminist terms will only silence her further. However, feminism has been an important part of the decolonisation process and the anti-apartheid struggle. Baderoon and Lewis claim that: “black South African feminists have always spoken – through action, creativity and words. Many came to prominence during the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1970s, but others were visible before then” (1). Frenkel identifies the difficulty of trying to “incorporate varying traditions within a woman-centred agenda that respects different ideas of tradition, be these traditions struggle-based or part of indigenous practice” (3). The contemporary authors I consider in this thesis show that tradition is not something fixed but something mutable that changes with society’s needs. Tradition is often called upon by those in power to control the women in these texts. However contemporary authors show that traditions have always contained potential and power for women. It was often colonial intervention which led to the cementing of patriarchal structures as it was most convenient for colonisers. These authors illustrate South African feminism which bridges the divide between traditional collective memory and a changing role for women.

Section structure

Chapters fourteen and fifteen evaluate the way in which female collective memory exists within the myths and traditions of different South African groups. Chapter fourteen considers the process of gendering and creating collective memory through the telling of myths. Chapter fifteen analyses the role of tradition in the creation of collective memory and the role gender plays in how people can take part in such constructions. Women share stories and engage in practices which confirm their role in the community and their sense of identity. These stories and practices are often hidden. They are hidden both from the people who analyse such societies, the nations in which these groups exist, and largely from the groups themselves. Contemporary authors are exploring the feminist potential in such myths and traditions. Chapter sixteen will evaluate the role the Truth and Reconciliation Commission played in this process. Drawing on the use of the voices of women and the figure of the woman in colonial narratives, I will explore what the TRC tried to do differently and the extent to which it was unable to escape the silenced female body as an archetype rather than hearing from women who had experienced the worst of apartheid. This will form the basis for my investigation in chapters seventeen and eighteen regarding the role contemporary literature plays in the creation of postapartheid memory. Violence against the female body, both literal and literary forms an important part of the analysis of these chapters, as it is a theme which dominates all my chosen texts. Finally, chapter 19 will explore the creation of new collective memory about the lives of women in post-transition South Africa.

What has been the effect of this male focus on the construction of postapartheid collective memory? It is now over twenty years since the TRC hearings which began the complex work of trying to create a complete picture of South Africa. What has literature contributed to our understanding of collective memory in South Africa, and the experiences of women within it? Section two of my thesis aims to answer these questions and discover whether collective memory in South Africa can be said to be working towards a record of the experiences of both men and women.

Chapter 14: Rewriting and reciting myth in Keletso Mopai's "Becoming a God"

Collective memory operates through a variety of different means, from communicative memory between families, to cultural memory contained in myths and traditions. The collective memory of a nation, as outlined in section one of this thesis, is held within history books, museums and commemorative events and institutions (J. Assmann, A. Assmann). Collective memory of groups that do not have the status of a nation state is often contained within oral history, including myths and legends. The truth status of these narratives is unimportant compared to the identity forming function they serve as part of collective memory. Myths describe where a community has come from, and how its members should understand their position in the world. Myths, like all other kinds of history are not neutral but contain biases depending on the desired identity of those who created them. The relationship between such myths, the groups they belong to and the gendering of these communities will be the focus of this chapter.

In what ways does myth function as collective memory?[19] Myth is a narrative which may or may not be generally understood to be factually true. Its significant feature is that it represents important values of a society or nation. Historians may credit certain aspects of a myth with being partially true or based on truth. However, the myth overall is not believed to be true, or to have enough basis in reality to gain the status of history. It is "a symbolic narrative, usually of unknown origin and at least partly traditional, that ostensibly relates actual events and that is especially associated with religious belief" (Buxton, et al.). Cultural memory, as I have shown in the first section of this thesis, is not the same as history and therefore occupies a similar position to myth where its truth status is dependent on the values it portrays, and not the actual accuracy of the events it describes. Cultural memory is principally what a group chooses to record, in the form of memorials, traditions or even myths.

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[19] The word myth is used extensively to describe apartheid era and postapartheid nation-building narratives. These stories are myths in the sense that they are symbolic stories, which claim to speak the truth about the nation. However, they are not mythical in the sense of a traditional story whose roots are lost in time. Instead, the word myth is used to imply that governments are creating deliberately falsified accounts of history and the nation. I will be looking at the creation of this kind of myth later in chapter three of this section, where I explore the gendered production of cultural memory in South Africa.

Myths are the subject of constant recreation. As they have been handed down through oral history, they have been constantly improved to reflect the changing needs of the tellers. Alternatively, they can be used to reassert values which a society is leaving behind, by reciting a more accurate original version. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney highlight the dual purpose of myth, both to preserve the old and to explain the new. They write that: “a significant part of literary production consists of the rewriting of canonical texts and, more generally, of earlier cultural narratives such as folk tales and myths.” They highlight the dual nature of retelling: “These rewritings may take the form of pious commemoration (of re-citation, as it were) or of critical contestation” (Erll and Rigney 113). In both these forms, the act of retelling or rewriting myth provides an essential contribution to collective memory. They conclude: “…such acts of literary remembrance contribute in a very specific manner to the ongoing production and reproduction of cultural memory, as well as to our reflection on that memory” (113). The recent trend for feminist retellings of myth[20] is only a perhaps more self-conscious repetition of what naturally happens with myths over time. The duality of collective memory, in that it forms identity but also arises from the identity of certain groups, is essential to the project of attempting to rewrite social values. The self-conscious rewriting of myth is something which can be seen in contemporary South African literature, as well as the Anglo-American examples cited in the footnote.

Myths tend to use female characters in a purely allegorical way; they are rarely the protagonists but instead exist to illustrate something about the male protagonist and the world that he inhabits. In this way myths are inherently patriarchal, as collective memory itself is, because the society from which it arises prioritises the needs and stories of men (McClintock 8). Female experience channelled into distinct roles. The formation of society makes it inevitable that the subject of collective memory is automatically male. Women appear more often as symbolic objects in order to aid the telling of the story rather than as agents who take action. These allegorical roles represent certain meanings within collective memory, rather than an identity-forming function for a female subject.

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[20] *Circe* 2018 Madeline Miller, Pat Barker *The Silence of the Girls* 2019

Contemporary South African authors have incorporated elements of myth into their writing, even retelling myths in order to represent modern day South African experience. An interest in memory and how it shapes society has led to many authors wishing to update the earliest stories in order to reflect important societal voices. Keletso Mopai’s short story “Becoming a God” is a loose retelling of the myth of the Rain Queens. She retells this story in order to challenge its inherent assumptions about the roles of men and women, but also to show that cultural memory is not static but can change. Mopai is showing the feminist potential within this myth, but also shaping and changing the story to show her own experience of being a woman in South Africa. Feminism, as I outlined in the introduction, is a somewhat conflicted concept in South Africa. Mopai’s form of feminism acknowledges the intersectionality[21] of black African women, and explores the role of myth within feminism, rather than something that must be left behind. Furthermore, Mopai illustrates that myths have the potential to be rewritten in order to reflect the changing society.

Women in myth

The position of women in society influences the part they play in each society’s myth. African myths are varied, and it is unwise to make too many generalisations about trends within them, although many critics have done so. The role of women in South African society is complex, particularly when we consider the entirety of sub-Saharan Africa and trends which can be identified in myth. However, society has often been overwhelmingly organized with men in positions of power and authority: “marriage and motherhood are used in African societies as the instrument with which to gauge a woman’s social development and success. The laws, rules, and regulation of culture in Africa allot authority, respect, and power in a community to the menfolk” (Bamidele and Abuh 184). Myths naturally reinforce such roles, placing the female characters in the position of women in society, notwithstanding the mythical elements of the story. Women perform only very distinct roles such as mother or monster, even those who are granted deity status (Kilson 136). Such roles are reflective of the roles women normally play in society, or perhaps more importantly the roles society likes to imagine that they play.

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[21] See Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1989

Kilson explores the allegorical roles, often contradictory, which women hold in African myth. She argues that “women are regarded not only as producers of life but also as sources of danger as expressed in notions about the polluting nature of blood - especially the blood of menstruation and the blood of childbirth (e.g., Swazi, Ganda, Bemba, Azande, Lamba, Khoikhoi, Nyakyusa, Yao)” (136). She describes the result of this duality: “women, therefore, are anomalous creatures - intimately associated with the well-being of society through their life-giving attributes and deeply threatening to life through their polluting qualities. Traditional African religious ideology, therefore, stresses the domestic orientation of women's lives, affirming their reproductive role, while disdaining other aspects of their sexuality” (136). Ismahan Soukeyna Diop explains the roles that female gods often hold in African myths. Even those who are deities and are not restricted to the female domestic sphere, are given power only in a limited sense: “…the figure of the devouring mother, is present, combining the power, greed, strength and beauty, of the woman goddess, associated with the chaos. This figure is always against the order of the world, and shall be defeated by the hero to restore balance” (Diop 17).

It is important to stress that the limited role of women is not restricted to African myths. In the European traditions also women often fulfil a limited range of roles. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to elucidate the ways in which mythical allegory in Europe differs from African traditions. However, African traditions tend to have a stronger focus on female deities and female fertility. Diop writes that "the myth of an all-powerful and prehistoric female divinity has been discovered in the traditions of Australian, and African peoples…" (Diop, 2019, p.7). Female divinity is also present in the myths of other nations, but rarely as an all-powerful god. Pan African traditions include this form of mythological female figure, including many in South Africa. Whilst it is very interesting to look at archetypal trends within African myths, it is important to acknowledge that each myth is group and society specific. In order to avoid the pitfall that I mentioned at the start of this section that it is tempting to over-generalise about African myth, I will focus on the myth tradition represented in Keletso Mopai's "Becoming a God." This will allow me to develop more thoroughly the idea of what contemporary authors are doing with myth, without extending my findings beyond the South African context.

The Rain Queens: the original myth

As I outlined in the introduction, Western analysis of African tradition, whether by colonial authorities or academics, has often over-emphasised the patriarchal elements in comparison to the European values that they upheld. In her short story Mopai illustrates that African myth contains powerful women, whilst not shying away from highlighting the misogynistic elements contained within such myths. Mopai explains that "Becoming a God" was largely inspired by the history of the Rain Queens of Bolobedu (Mopai "Say Something in Balodedu"). The Balobedu people were ruled by the Modjadji Queens for more than 400 years (Motasa & Nortjé-Meyer 1). The Rain Queens only marginally predate the colonial period, but they arose out of the traditions of this community that far predate colonialism. The mythical element of their story is how they came to be rulers, and their ability to change the weather, as well as their having other spiritual powers. The origin story myth involves a girl being incestuously impregnated by her father, after he is instructed to do so by the ancestors with the promise that their female offspring will have the power to make it rain. The daughter the girl gives birth to goes on to become the Rain Queen. Mopai shows the patriarchal elements of this original myth, but also shows where female power already existed within these stories.

The historical origins of the Rain Queens are unclear, despite the myth claiming the birth of daughter due to incest. For the existence of Rain Queens is not mythical at all. The Balobedu people have been governed by a matrilineal line of female monarchs since 1800. A new rain Queen has recently been crowned, after a gap of many years (Mopai "Say Something in Balobedu"). The Rain Queen's gift of making rain meant that the Balobedu people lived peacefully alongside other groups, rather than becoming involved in wars or struggles over land. Many leaders of other groups, including Shaka Zulu, sent representatives in order to receive the blessing of the Rain Queen (Mopai "Say Something in Balobedu"). Behind the mythical story, there are other histories which hint at the reason behind the adoption of female monarchs. There are stories which suggest their people turned to matriarchy because of deadly rivalry between male heirs, or perhaps because all the sons had to go away to war. Mopai describes the story of the Rain Queen's thus:

> The Rain Queens, who were traditional leaders of Balobedu, were claimed to have magical powers to compel clouds to shed rain and were considered royalty. They were so powerful that even the famous male figures such as Shaka Zulu, who was a leader of the Zulu people and known for his combat skills, considered the Rain Queens a threat. They were later secluded and dubbed 'witches" by the Apartheid government. The new queen of Bolobedu, aged fourteen, was recently designated in 2018, after many years

> without a leader. True to her ancestry, rain did pour on the day of her naming ceremony. (Mopai "Say Something in Balobedu")

She identifies the power of the women, and the respect paid to them by other, male, leaders like Shaka. Mopai's retelling of the myth fulfils the need identified by Erll and Rigney, to commemorate what she admires about her history. This is far from a "pious" commemoration but instead retells the story in a way which addresses the needs of Mopai's social group in the 21st century.

Mopai has clearly identified a myth which she believes contains feminist elements. She has chosen to rewrite it to focus on the problematic areas of the narrative for a young South African living in contemporary South Africa. She draws out the patriarchal elements of the society from which the Rain Queens come, by moving the story to a modern-day setting. Despite her retelling's contemporary background, the society in which Mmadjadji the protagonist finds herself in still holds on to the values of prioritising the needs of men over those of women. Mopai's version of the story begins with the father as the Storm God, existing in a society where male patriarchal power is clearly dominant. Mmadjadji's family follow the rulings of her cruel and tyrannical father, despite his abusive behaviour. Respect for custom and the patrilineal line overcome any objections anyone might have to the father becoming the Storm God. The story begins by placing the main character, Mmadjadji, in the context of powerful male ancestors. Whether or not the original Rain Queen's male ancestors were spiritually powerful is not clear, however they certainly had power within their social group. Her sense of self and pride is connected to these men who not only featured in the important stories of her people, but also direct ancestors of her own.

> Like everyone she'd heard stories: of men who morphed rocks into glass with their bare hands, who dipped thumbs into a bowl of ash and turned it into fire, who transformed into wild animals, and who caused disastrous storms in the night. But, for Mmadjadji,

> these were tales of her own great-grandfathers. These were her ancestors (Mopai "Becoming a God" 141).

The importance of the male characters in myth is thus introduced very early on. Mmadjadji's mother does not mention any female ancestors, and there is little doubt that in the mythical past all power belonged to men. Mmadjadji's favourite story is that of the Storm God. He is a healer as well as a rainmaker, but he also enforces biblical norms following the concept of sin. Mopai simultaneously highlights the higher status of men in traditional South African culture, but at the same time shows that this is an element that it shares with the Christian church. This grandfather character is an invention by Mopai, there is no historical evidence of the Rain Queen's ancestors being viewed as gods. If that is the case then, why has Mopai made this narrative change? By having spiritual inheritance configured as patrilineal, Mopai can emphasise the change her story introduces to myths of memory. It also shows that her story is a challenge to the idea that memory is constructed around a male subject. She gives the reader much evidence at this point in the story to see that cultural memory is formed around the acts and ideas of men, allowing her to introduce the contrast of her female story-telling subject.

Mopai illustrates that traditions are not static but constantly evolving. Collective memory is built on traditions, which find their roots in important narratives and desired identities. They are, however, able to change and adapt as societies' needs change. This is not something which is limited to African traditions. Astrid Erll stresses the importance of understanding that memory is not static but in fact travels (110). Memories do not belong to strict geographical areas; they instead move and develop. Nor do they belong to particular genders or generations. They change and adapt to changes in society. As Ronit Frenkel explains, "the insertion of cultural difference as a mode of defense in the mistreatment of women hinges on the idea of traditions being ahistorical, immutable and misogynistic – an insult to any dynamic tradition" (3). Mopai's story explores the idea that misogyny is in no way ahistorical but instead is a tool of existing power structures to maintain the social order. Frenkel is concerned about a reconnection with pre-colonial culture being used as an excuse for sexist treatment of women. She highlights the link between misogyny and colonialism, rather than accepting that pre-colonial cultures were inherently misogynistic (3). African traditions, and their traditional myths. to some extent became fixed at the time of colonisation. The colonial leaders took the aspects they found useful for controlling the subject population and suppressed those parts they found unhelpful. They also copied the patriarchal structures which they knew from home and used them to understand the structures they found in the nations they colonised. Unfortunately, this has to some extent continued in postapartheid South Africa. Certain communities which traditionally had matriarchal structures have chosen instead to focus on patriarchal structures as traditional. Mopai has shown however that traditional myths can be a site for radical change, rather than only allowing society to continue as it did before.

Mopai shows that African culture has not always been the same and that it does not need to be in order to be authentic. By this I mean that Mopai shows that the myth of her people (she belongs to the Khelobedu speaking Balobedu people) is not something static, it can be changed in order to incorporate new realities and tell new important truths. Her reading of the Rain Queen cultural memory is as a story of negotiating gender and sexuality in South Africa today. She has created a new story, that of the Storm Queen. Her story has parallels to the story of the Rain Queens but differs in some important respects. Mopai has taken a traditional story and considered both its misogynistic implications but also the power it bestows upon women. The myth she explores has both potential for telling a female history that is not limited to predefined roles such as mother, as it shows women as possessing spiritual power. The female narrator also has a personal power which she uses to overcome the abuse that she suffers.

There is a particular event in the story of the Rain Queens which Mopai uses to draw attention to a very important issue for women in South Africa today. South Africa has a very high level of sexual violence, something which is included in this story. The incestuous relationship in some versions of the Rain Queen story also has a parallel in Mopai's version. In the original myth the incest is presented merely as a necessary condition for the creation of the rain queen, the daughter of the raped woman. However, this is presented as a sexual assault, rather than something necessary in the creation of the Rain Queen. This is an important change to the story. Mopai illustrates the silences left behind in traditional myths. In the original story, we do not ever find out what the mother of the Rain Queen thought or felt about her daughter, or the assault which caused her conception. Mopai does not remove this element of the story but instead uses it as an opportunity to highlight the automatic male perspective of myth.

Mopai describes the assault in terms of another serious problem in South Africa, corrective rape. This is a worryingly common occurrence in South Africa where homosexual women, or women who are identified as being so, are raped by men who believe that it will make them heterosexual. Kammila Naidoo reveals the devastating extent of this problem: "Since 2000 there have been close to 40 lesbian women murdered and on average about ten lesbians are raped each week by men who subscribe to the view that they are 'correcting' the women's sexual orientations" (Naidoo). Mopai's decision to include an instance of corrective rape in her story shows how rewriting of myth can allow authors to express new concerns about society that were not present at the time of the myth's creation. This is an entirely new element to the story. Since the original mother of the Rain Queen is silent in the first version of the myth, we do not know anything about her. The act of incest itself is not really important in the myth, it does not require explanation or justification. Only the child born from the incestuous relationship, the future Rain Queen, is significant. In the Rain Queen myth, the queens are very powerful, but the first woman was impregnated and was passive, she did not have any power. As we have seen, her perspective simply does not exist in the original story. Mopai's story turns this around by illustrating that women have power not only through birth but also within themselves. It is Mmadjadji, the victim of incest and rape, who becomes powerful, and not any daughter who she may or may not give birth to in the future.

However, Mopai does give an explanation from the perspective of both the father and the daughter. The father justifies his assault by claiming that Mmadjadji needs to "feel like a woman" (Mopai "Becoming a God" 144). He claims that her behaviour is too masculine and implies that she is gay. The rest of her family are complicit in this abuse. When they find out that she is pregnant, they blame her for it and do not seem interested in the perpetrator. Her uncle reports that the Storm God has commanded that the baby must be aborted because otherwise the ancestors will be angry. The young girl is not aware that all the gathered family members are probably aware of how she came to be pregnant. As we follow her into early adulthood, she is able to reflect that they did actually know her father was responsible: "Years later, she'd realise that they did not ask who'd impregnated her because they knew" (145).

Mopai illustrates that the incest present in the original story is not something which can be passively recreated in modern South African myths. In Mopai's story, the assaulted woman speaks about her experience. The experience is just as important to the story as the mythical powers which Mmadjadjii eventually gains. The horrible trauma that she has suffered makes Mmadjadji question the cultural memory she has been brought up with. For a time, she rejects it entirely. She refuses to see her family, and asks herself: "were there ever any gods in her family in the first place? The stories about the Storm God and his forefathers, were they made up? Was her childhood all a lie?" (147). However, Mopai shows in her retelling that it is possible to question certain aspects of cultural memory without abandoning that memory entirely. It is not a choice between Western or African traditions, instead elements of tradition can be integrated into contemporary society without harming either the tradition or the lives of young women.

Women are not generally the protagonists in myths. This is true of many South African traditions and most cultures around the world. Mopai shows that this does not necessarily need to be the case. There is no need to reject her group's spirituality in order to make space for the values, which are clearly important to her. This can be seen in her presentation of female characters and their relationships with each other. At the start of the short story, cultural memory is grounded in the masculine, all of her significant ancestors are male. Her father's abusive actions at the beginning of the story create the impression that their relationship will be very significant to the rest of the story. However, this is not the case. Mmadjadji as a female protagonist interacts primarily with other female characters, and they are essential for the important events of the story. When Mmadjadji becomes ill she has to return home, not to attempt to resolve the trauma caused by her father but instead to rebuild her relationship with her mother.

The cause of Mmadjadji's illness is two-fold. It is partly linked to her finding her gift as a healer, an idea I will explore in the next chapter. It is also due to the conflict between the mother and daughter. Her father, who has died in the meantime, never reoccurs in the story, neither as a traumatic memory or a spiritual visitation. He dies near the start of the story, there is no reconciliation or revenge. He has simply become unimportant to the story. It is instead the relationship between the two women which is essential to the resolution of the story. The trauma her father caused is clear, but he is irrelevant to her as a woman. Her aunt explains the reason for her illness: "the gods ... they can't take this bad blood between Mmadjadji and her mother. They need them to reconcile, or they both die" (153). She chooses to save her mother, by reconciling with her. She apportions the blame for her suffering to her father and manages to understand that her mother was also the victim of his actions. In this way women are placed centrally to this story. This story is grounded in female experience and the importance of female relationships. Women in this story are the subjects of cultural memory, and the hidden truth behind the myths is revealed. Women were always involved in these stories, but they are not remembered as protagonists.

Conclusion

Mopai's retelling of the myth of the Rain Queens is a powerful reminder of the complexity of tradition contained within myth. By considering the silent mother figure in the original Rain Queen myth, Mopai shows that South African myths offer possibilities to contemporary authors to consider the roles and treatment of women in South Africa today. Mopai's act of retelling is one of both commemoration and contestation. She has taken the parts of the myth which she thinks are useful for forming a South African identity today and challenged the parts which she believes need to change. In the next chapter I will consider the place of other forms of traditions beyond myth in the shaping of cultural memory.

Chapter 15: Women and cultural memory: finding women's stories in South African traditions in *Scatterlings*, *The Yearning* and *If You Keep Digging*

The previous chapter of this section is a close reading of Mopai's contemporary retelling of a myth. She illustrates that South African myth has space for female power. Such myths are also available for contemporary readings which focus on a different idea of what it means to be a woman. In this chapter I will explore female spaces which exist within collective memory in terms of traditions and communicative memory. Female only memory practices are shown by contemporary authors to hold the potential for creating an identity for women by embracing both continuity and change in collective memory. I will discuss two different aspects of tradition in order to evaluate this; traditional healing practices and communicative memory between women in a community. I will examine female spaces in cultural traditions which are often ignored or diminished by misogynist structures, both pre- and postcolonial. As outlined in the introduction I will be using the divide introduced by Jan and Aleida Assmann between cultural and communicative memory (2008,2011.) They propose that collective memory should be further subdivided into cultural memory and collective memory. Cultural memory includes national narratives of memory and all formalized traditions and commemorative events. Communicative memory by contrast exists within smaller groups such as families and spans only three generations, as it is communicated by word of mouth. This, alongside cultural memory in the form of traditions and rites of passage, will be the focus of this chapter.

Collective memory is not only something which is learned, in the form of stories or histories. Instead, it is also a process of participation (A. Assmann "Transformations" 53). In order to truly share the collective memory of a given community it is necessary to participate in its traditions and practices. She writes "The individual participates in the group's vision of its past by means of cognitive learning and emotional acts of identification and commemoration" (53). This past cannot be remembered, but rather it must be memorialised through rites and practices that relate to the collective memory (53). In different societies these rites of participation might vary from a form of salute, words spoken at a memorial service, or as in the case of South Africa, traditional healing practices. These rites include traditional practices whose adherents might struggle to identify a specific memory associated with them but form a part of the narratives of their ancestors. Assmann explains that taking part in cultural memory is what differentiates it merely from history, whether that be the creative retelling a myth and thus participation on a narrative level or taking part in a ritual. The identity forming function of collective memory means that individuals need to feel that the collective memory is their own, even if the original myths or religion it refers to were formed many years before they were born.

Traditional spiritual healers play an important role in South African culture. Their importance is described by Jean-Francois Sobiecki, following the World Health Organisation's definition of a traditional healing as: "the health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral-based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises, applied singularly or in combination to diagnose, treat and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being" (Sobiecki). Sobiecki suggests that "traditional medicine is by no means an alternative practice in South Africa, with an estimated 72% of the Black African population in South Africa relying on this form of medicine" (Sobiecki). It is often used alongside publicly available state-provided healthcare, a system which has suffered from many issues during the postapartheid period. This tradition exists within many different ethnic and social groups in South Africa. These individuals heal both physical complaints and spiritual ones. The distinction between the two in this tradition is not as marked as it might be in Western medicine. Both men and women can occupy the position of healer, allowing for interesting narrative possibilities for authors writing about the South African experience today. Contemporary authors have found a space to explore female spirituality and power, both where it was already operating within existing systems and by reimagining cultural memory to allow for new possible understandings of collective identities. I am going to consider the role of the female healer in Mopai's short story "Becoming a God." I will then evaluate the similarities and differences to the way in which such a journey is presented in Mohale Mashigo's *The Yearning.* Both these texts show the female power existing within traditional cultural memory, and the dynamism it contains allowing it to encompass new social developments.

I will also consider the presentation of the role of women in spiritual practices as it is presented in Mahenwe's *Scatterlings*. Mmakoma, also known as Gloria, feels torn between her obligation to her rich employers to raise their children, and the need she perceives in these children to be connected to their ancestors. Mmakoma is not part of a female group or network alongside another cultural tradition, she is rather the last person left who can preserve a traditional way of life which she still sees the value of. Her status as a black woman means the importance of her knowledge and power is constantly diminished and undermined, yet she manages to pass it on to Dido, the young girl she takes care of.

Mashigo and Mopai show that there have always been alternative female traditions, in pre-colonial and colonial societies, even within seemly very patriarchal societies. Women have always been keepers of traditions, but they have also been interpreters of history and culture in the field of memory. Mmakoma in *Scatterlings* maintains her people's traditions and the stories and beliefs which surround them. This role has often been overlooked, both within communities and by those who study them. Women "rob themselves of the status of being active subjects of past history, but also of the authority of being worthy narrators and interpreters of the past in the present" (Paletschek and Schraut 20). Mopai, Mashigo and Manenzhe illustrate that Paletschek and Schraut's assumption that women are robbing themselves of this power is at best a generalisation. These authors show that women always have contributed to collective memory, in the counter narratives they share and the rituals they participate in. They may not have always been able to do so publicly, and they very fact that they did so has often been ignored. However, that does not mean that such counter histories do not exist.

In *The Yearning* Mashigo also demonstrates female only traditions, which appear on the surface to be of lesser importance than the male only traditions, actually contain hidden power. Women have hidden such rituals and presented their meaning as purely relating to women as secondary to men. These traditions are dismissed by the community at large as unimportant, but the authors illustrate the way in which they have always existed as a counter to dominant cultural memory narratives. In Mopai's "Becoming a God" the tradition of woman as healer is explored in the context of a collective memory which focuses on the role of patrilineal gifts. In *Scatterlings* Mmakoma is able to rescue her charge Dido, who is devastated after the death of her mother and sister. This is not explicitly linked to her being a woman, yet the only characters in this novel who successfully engage with the past and tradition are women.

Africa, tradition and myth

African tradition and spirituality have often been viewed by Western observers as patriarchal. This has occurred for two reasons. One is that most traditions around the world are patriarchal. The second is because the colonial rulers choose to only engage with male leaders and structures which reflected the organization of the societies from which they came. They ignored female leaders, and further ingrained a system which minimized women's power by consolidating it with European beliefs about power and authority. Ronit Frenkel explains:

> In most histories of colonial conquest, the colonising power refused to negotiate with women or acknowledge women as leaders in a public context. The collusion between colonial powers and indigenous male leaders led to female exclusion from higher structures of power across colonial sites from Africa to Asia to the Americas (although women were central to the colonial project's 'civilising mission', as they were often the

> agents for the transmission of Christianity and western ‘values’ in the domestic sphere). (Frenkel 3)

She goes on to explain this means that tradition has to some extent been rewritten. The aspects that were compatible with the colonial project were allowed to remain, where other elements were suppressed. This was a project to consolidate power: “the colonialists were thereby able to incorporate local male leaders within their enterprise to varying degrees, while indigenous male leadership could consolidate power and exclude women from such operations. The exclusion of women was a colonial necessity, part of remodelling in Africa in the image of the British motherland” (Frenkel 3).

Unfortunately, this tendency is not something which was limited to colonial authorities but has extended to academic fields such as anthropology. Marion Kilson acknowledges that the masculine perspective favoured by anthropologists is partly due to public structures of authority often being between men. However, she also explains: “… even in societies where women play important public roles, such as the queen mothers in several Akan- and Bantu-speaking societies, these roles usually have been studied not on their own merits but only in their relation to some male” (Kilson 134). This has led to the tendency to blame colonialism for the imposition or at the very least strengthening of patriarchal structures. It is certainly true that some patriarchal structures were imposed by colonial rule, but not that none were existing before. T. Ezeigbo claims that, “it is rather more correct to say that the extent of devaluation of women varied from one society to another. For example, women appeared to have had more rights and to have been accorded more recognition in Yoruba land than they were in traditional Igbo society (Ezeigbo 294) Ezeigbo’s work focuses on Nigeria, but the point is more widely applicable to sub-Saharan African nations that suffered colonisation. The pre-existing structures were still patriarchal, just perhaps not in the same way as the Western model. In this chapter I intend to explore the nuances in different South African cultures, drawn out by Mashigo and

Mopai. Their work represents processes of collective memory and draws out the importance of gender within them. This complicates the usual gender-neutral model, with its inherent but unspoken bias.

Becoming a healer in *The Yearning* and "Becoming a God"

Jan Assmann explains that cultural memory, whilst belonging to society in general, nonetheless has its experts: "cultural memory always has its specialists, both in oral and in literate societies. These include shamans, bards, and griots, as well as priests, teachers, artists, clerks, scholars, mandarins, rabbis, mullahs, and other names for specialized carriers of memory" (J. Assmann 114). Healers, though not directly mentioned by Assmann, certainly also count amongst the specialized holders of memory in South Africa. They have a strong link to the ancestors and are able to interpret their signs, as well as reinforcing traditional spiritual practices through their cures. Healers in South Africa are often known as Sangomas. This is a Zulu term but is colloquially used to refer to a wide range of healers in South Africa. This is a spiritual calling; a person is called to it, they do not choose it (Stobie). Such people are generally respected in South Africa. Mohale Mashigo references this respect in *The Yearning*. Marubini's father, who is a Zulu, is spared by an armed group targeting Zulus in the pre-transition 1990s violence. They let him go because he is a healer, respectfully calling him Baba and apologising for their behaviour. This literary representation of inter-ethnic respect for healers is backed up by real life findings too. Cheryl Stobie has conducted a fascinating study of traditional healers and how they are viewed by the rest of their social groups. She identifies their importance, and also the role that women are allowed to play in the healing community. Stobie explains the role of healers in the Zulu tradition, which has parallels to many other ethnic groups in South Africa. She writes: "sangomas enjoy great power in the Zulu community. Although most are women, all are referred to respectfully as Baba, or Father" (150). The role of women as honorary men in this tradition illustrates the way in which women were able to participate in traditions which bestow power and respect, even in societies where they appear to be less respected.

The role of women in spiritual practices has largely been overlooked by the academic community. Makgathi Mokwena writes that: “until very recently, historians of religion have tended to present accounts of religious experiences gathered mostly from the men. In many instances, women's roles were completely ignored [and this] is particularly true for African women's' experiences of most religions, but most significantly, of traditional African spirituality” (Mokwena 87). Despite the importance of spirituality and tradition in the formation of cultural memory, women’s pivotal role has been constantly underplayed. The exclusion of female experience of spiritual practices from the record is being tackled by contemporary scholars. Mokwena notes that she “found the dearth of any gender analysis of traditional African healing practices regrettably telling” (2004, p.87). She explains that traditional healing has always been an area where women could participate on a more or less equal footing to men. She has conducted a study of healers from a range of traditions, asking them to reflect on their own experiences as women in this high-status position. She writes that “opportunities for authority are available to both women and men in a more balanced manner” (89). The authority of spiritual healers is based on their connection to the ancestors, which is where their healing powers come from. In her extensive research on spiritual healers in South Africa, Mokwena writes “there tends to be as many female as male ancestors. Both hold the same authority within the eyes of the followers, and enjoy the same ritual ceremonies, because they tell you about the rituals to perform for them. A female ancestor can pass on her gift to a male relative, and vice versa” (89). This part of cultural memory allows for female participation. Mopai and Mashigo are investigating the gendered construction of cultural memory in traditional practices as well as women’s place as recorders of memory.

In “Becoming a God” Mopai makes reference to the importance of healers. The principal character, a young woman called Mmadjadji, follows the difficult and painful journey of becoming a healer, although her powers eventually come to exceed that calling as she becomes a god. She is abused by her father as a child. When she returns to her community she is unable to reconcile with her mother, causing them both to fall suddenly very ill. In order to heal she must accept her powers and reconcile with her mother. The process she goes through is similar to that which traditional healers must endure, though they do not usually become gods. They often suffer terrible physical illness as part of the spiritual transformation when they choose to follow their calling. In an interview conducted for this thesis[22], Mopai outlined to me the influence of the healer tradition in her story:

> Becoming a God was also inspired by the process of becoming a traditional healer in South Africa, where one goes through hardships or becomes sick while on their journey of becoming a healer. And in this story, I term them gods because of their great powers. I wanted to show how magic can be passed through generations in an African family, and that wouldn't mean they use black magic or are witches. The word "witch "has a lot of baggage in my country unlike in the western world or as portrayed in American films, so I moved away from that and rather explored power, however mythical or real. (Mopai “Interview”)

In “Becoming a God” Mmadjadji’s journey to become a healer involves a serious illness. Mmadjadji and her wife Bontle return to her village shortly after her father dies. There she argues with her mother, about her father’s actions and about her lesbian relationship which her mother rejects as not being part of their traditions. Following this visit she becomes seriously ill: “shortly after Mmadjadji and her wife return to their house in Randburg, she falls ill. Bontle finds her lying on their bedroom floor, unmoving. When she shakes her, Mmadjadji lies there like stone, not talking or looking at her – she just stares at the wall” (Mopai “Becoming a God” 150). Bontle tries medicine and faith healing suggested by her Catholic mother but nothing works. Bontle suspects that Mmadidji's mother might have cursed her, however when they finally return to the village and Mmadjadji's family, they find her mother equally ill: "Bontle is shocked by what they find in Bolobedu. Mmadjadji's mother is so thin, a breeze might engulf her body and throw her to the ground. Her skin is ashy from the waist down, and her hairs can be counted on one hand. They find her lying on a blanket in her living room, surrounded by family" (152).

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[22] See Appendix A

The illness is caused by the ancestors, who are punishing the family for ignoring Mmadidji's powers, and trying to make the young woman realise the powers that she holds. It is only in her acceptance, and her community's acceptance, of her powers that she is finally able to heal herself, her mother and the rest of her community. Mopai suggests a spiritual cause to Mmadjadji's malady, but also an emotional need to forgive her mother and to reconnect with her family. Mmadjadji's illness continues until she is able to reconcile with her mother and accept her role in society. She first has to heal herself, and then is able to heal her mother. She is disturbed by the expectation being placed upon her as she feels very resentful of her mother. "When Mmadjadji has fully transitioned, she knows she is expected to heal her mother" (Mopai 154). However, in the end she does choose to heal her. "Mmadjadji looks down at her mother again. She slowly kneels beside her and holds her thin hands. Her mother sturdily grasps her, lifts her chest and screams as if giving birth for the first time. To everyone's wonder, bit by bit, Mmadjadji's mother's body returns" (154). The link between physical and spiritual healing already existing in South African sangoma traditions is extended by Mopai to also include the healing of contemporary traumas. Mmadjadji is healer, but not just of herself or physical maladies. She eventually becomes a God, but one who has many healing powers. Her power as a healer is not limited to healing physical problems, but also takes on a greater meaning. She is also able to heal her community. Her family are suffering from the wrong they inflicted upon her, failing to protect her from her abusive father and punishing her for her own suffering. The whole village is healed when they acknowledge that Mmadjadji did not deserve to be treated as she was. The healing she and her mother go through is partly physical healing, but also has an important spiritual element. “Becoming a God” performs a dual purpose in exploring the role of female healers by illustrating their place in collective memory and in present day South Africa. Much as in her retelling of a mythical story, Mopai finds the feminist potential already existing within the traditions of her community. Yet she also feels comfortable in finding the possibilities for healing beyond the scope of the spiritual and physical addressed by the traditions.

Rewriting gender roles through myth in “Becoming a God”

In postcolonial societies there is sometimes the tendency to oversimplify cultural memory by suggesting an unrealistic continuity and inflexibility of traditions belonging to groups suppressed during colonial times. Mopai shows, however, that women were always creators and preservers of cultural memory. Though her community favoured her father as the Storm God “because he was the eldest son” and forgave him for his abusive behaviour, the tradition of female healers wins out in the end. Her family accept and even encourage her to become a healer, not only to save herself and her mother but the whole community. The inflexibility her family initially demonstrate towards a non-male god or healer leads to a reification of pre-colonial culture, rather than allowing it to develop and change as society changes. Values which may have been imposed by a colonial power, or existed before colonization, are not necessarily relevant or appropriate in today’s society. Ronit Frenkel explains that:

> … the idea that we are able to identify conservative cultural practice as belonging to a specific ethnic group… as authentic cultural production points towards an atavistic understanding that we can live without. This sort of reactionary logic can be seen as forming a trajectory between systems of understanding from colonial times into the

> present where the otherness of ‘native’ cultures is claimed, projected and disavowed in the construction of knowledges. (5)

The reification of culture and tradition is illustrated by Mopai in her family’s initial response to her father and herself. Mmadiji is gay, she marries a woman and demonstrates certain behaviours which her community interpret as “masculine” and punish her for. Being a traditional female healer in South Africa has been associated with gender fluidity and non-heteronormative sexuality. In Mopai’s story we see evidenced this part of the tradition, but also the hostility with which non-cis gendered people are treated in the name of tradition, family and community. Homosexuality is something which meets violence in modern day South Africa, from lynching to corrective rape. This form of rape is motivated, or so its perpetrators claim, by a desire to force gay women to be or at least act heterosexual. When Mmadjadji’s father rapes her, he uses her failure to meet his idea of gender norms identity to explain why he does it. He tells her “you need to feel like a woman. You are not a boy. You may dress like one, act like one, but you’ll never be a boy …” (143). It is unclear whether this is simply a convenient means of justification for his terrible actions, or whether he really believes that what he is doing is merited by her failure to comply to his idea of what a girl should be. Traditional culture in this way is used as a means of control. She dresses “like a boy” according to his traditions, which means she must be punished. The perpetrator’s motivation is perhaps unimportant, the girl is still left with the impression that there is something wrong with her, which takes her many years to leave behind. Frenkel explains that: “the utilisation of ‘culture’ to enforce compliance, particularly in terms of gendered roles, is not a new phenomenon in any context” (3). Homosexuality and gender non-binary identifications are seen as not traditionally South African, as not belonging to the group. This again reflects the reification of culture, refusing all change that is not desired by those in power as “inauthentic” (3).

Mopai's story strongly challenges this narrative, both through the central character, and the comments she makes about her treatment, and through the course of the narrative which vindicates her. She calls out her family's hypocrisy, following gods who insisted that her baby had to die, but not that the perpetrator must be punished. When she becomes pregnant due to the rapes, her family make her feel as though she is responsible even though she is still a young child of twelve: "sitting there with her family, Mmadjadji felt disgusting and unwanted" (Mopai "Becoming a God" 144). There is no attempt to establish the perpetrator, let along bring him to justice: "During the meeting, no one in the family asked her who'd tiptoed into her bedroom, dug through her clothes with their long nails, and planted the seed in her belly. No one asked about the numerous times he'd touched her. Not a single mouth mentioned her father" (145). She confronts them asking if the god who now wants her to reconcile with her mother is the same god who has made her suffer so much: "The same god who told you to kill the baby? The same god who says I can't love another woman?" (153).

Mopai shows people using tradition and religion as an excuse for homophobia and misogyny. They are fully prepared to ignore certain lapses of tradition, but not others, depending on who is committing them. Her mother is another example of the use of culture to achieve control. She tells Mmadjadji that it is not a part of their culture and traditions to be homosexual. When confronting her she explains "Mmadjadji, you know this is a sin. This is not our tradition. Our family does not –" (149). Here her mother is evoking several authorities in order to condemn her daughter, that of family, the immediate community. Mopai does not allow this to become entirely the fault of African traditions. Her mother also invokes sin, using Christian ideology to back up her homophobic beliefs. Using colonialism to back up tradition is shown to be convenient for those in power and authority.

Mopai subverts the idea of an automatic patrilineal inheritance, which is a colonial era interpretation of laws of inheritance which fitted in with their world view. Frenkel explains that inheritance by daughters is something which really happened in many South African ethnic groups. Just like myths, traditional structures of organising society were not static. She cites the case of Shilubana, a woman who was chosen by the Royal Family of the Valoyi to be the next chief after the death of the former chief. Her right was legally contested because she was a woman. Frenkel explains that the legal system uses colonial codification of traditional African laws of inheritance. This is a colonially convenient misinterpretation of customary law, which ignores that fact the fact that customary law in South Africa has always changed as society changed. This fossilization by colonial powers allows patriarchal aspects of South African tradition to remain, even where groups are ready to elect a female leader. She writes "the codification of traditional practice to undergird patriarchal constraints, coupled with an andro-centric legal system in a male-dominated present, is challenged by a progressive constitution that is only as strong as its legal application allows in postapartheid South Africa" (Frenkel 3). The space within different groups to allow for female power is supported by the constitution but must still fight to overcome embedded legal/social norms.

Although her mother denies the possibility of such a role, South African tradition does allow for female inheritance of power. Her mother sees her role as the producer of sons, rather than an individual who can heal in her own right: "Years from now, when you become a woman, you will bear a son, and he will become a god too" (143). The rest of her family respect her father because he was the "first born son" despite his obvious defects. Mopai illustrates that these individuals are mistaken, and that healers can be both male and female. Mopai illustrates the fluid nature of social structures. The family she represents is certainly influenced by collective memory and the traditions which are both based on it and form it. However, she shows the capacity of change without needing to abandon tradition. The true inheritor of the storm god, Mmadjadji's grandfather, was never her father. It is not only Mmadjadji who is able to see this, her family also come to this realisation. Not only do they accept that she is the true spiritual heir to her grandfather, but they also realise that her father was never really the Storm God. Her uncle, who was one of the main perpetrators in the cover up of her rape and forced abortion acknowledges their mistake: “Clearly we were wrong. The Storm God would never choose someone he believes is evil” (153).

The other family members acknowledge that they assumed he was the heir of the original storm god because he was a man. Her aunt explains: “your father was not chosen by the gods. We only named him a god after your grandfather died because he was his firstborn son” (153). Here Mopai illustrates the patriarchal nature of culture, which inevitably leads to cultural memory which is also structured in a patriarchal way. However, the family are able to adapt and change, they are not fixed to this model of organising society. They do not feel the need to give up on their culture, instead they find a way to make it inclusive. Mopai describes the moment Mmadjadji becomes queen:

> Later in the evening, the sky unleashes lightning bolts like bombs, windows shatter, trees and mud-houses fall to the ground like splintering glass, dogs huddle into corners and howl in the dark, heavy rain pours to the ground as if cleansing the village, and Mmadjadji becomes the first woman in her family to become a god. They will call her the Storm Queen. (154)

Their actions are rewarded by a sign that Mmadjadji is the true storm god. It is not only better for Mmadjadji that she is acknowledged as the Storm Queen, but also better for her whole community.

Becoming a healer: *The Yearning*

The duality of the psychological and spiritual reasons for ill health is mirrored in *The Yearning*. Marubini, by contrast to Mmadjadji, is brought up by her mother, grandfather and grandmother in a loving home. The trauma she suffers is not caused by the family and they do their best to help her to heal. Her father, who is a traditional healer, tries to physically remove the trauma from her. Marubini too is a healer, not only in the traditional spiritual sense, but also of her own trauma and that of her family. As I explored in the first section of this thesis, the protagonist Marubini suffers the effects of post-traumatic stress due to her abuse in childhood. However, Mashigo does not only point to trauma as the cause of her black outs and dreams or visions. Marubini questions whether her visions are traumatic memories, or rather signs of the future and the past that she is not yet able to read: “who is to say whether it’s trauma or the calling” (Mashigo *The Yearning* 168). Her visions are also interpreted by the characters in the novel as being ambiguous. They do not rule out “western” ideas of trauma, but they also do not rule out traditional ideas of a calling to be a sangoma. The author is trying to show that interpretation according to many theories is possible. There is not one right way to understand disruptive memories and visions. Her grandmother, who is very aware of healing traditions although she is not a healer herself, explains to her granddaughter that she is not yet sure if Marubini is a healer or not:

> According to Gogo, it’s too soon to tell if I have the Calling or not. She is convinced the gift has passed on to Simphiwe. ‘It’s too early to decide anything, Marubini. These things show themselves in their own time. They need us to respect them,’ Gogo keeps telling me, when I get impatient with not having answers. (168)

Marubini’s gender is not presented as a cause of doubt as to whether she is a healer or not. The ancestors will simply decide, as they did in the case of her father.

The role of women in cultural memory: *Scatterlings*

The role of women in collective memory extends beyond healing into other religious and spiritual practices. However, this role is often ignored in analysis of collective memory. Gender is simply not addressed, and the narrative defaults to a male subject: “women as actors, their agency and their self-perceptions and aims are often marginalized and forgotten” (Paletschek and Schraut 10). Women believe that their experiences are less important: “female eyewitnesses assume that they do not have anything relevant to recount; they regard their lives as meaningless with regard to big history" (20). Men reports on the past and tradition are "assigned greater significance in the family and especially by women" (20). The literature analysed in this thesis contradicts the perception that it is primarily men who construct and disseminate collective memory. In *Scatterlings* woman play the dominant role in the transfer of cultural and communicative memory.

At least one character is *Scatterlings* is very aware of the importance of cultural memory, yet struggles to convey this to the other characters in the novel. Mmakoma is responsible for caring for Dido and Emilia. She takes care of all their material needs, yet she is aware that she is partly responsible for failing to care for them. She is tormented by her own ancestors who suggest she is not looking after the children as she should. Their names are the first problem, they are plucked from nowhere and not linked to any cultural history. The children are not aware of their ancestors, but equally importantly for Mmakoma, their ancestors have not been properly made aware of them. The rootlessness caused by this is presented by Mmakoma as incredibly damaging. The novel to some extent bears out her interpretation of events. Alisa's suicide is linked to her disconnection from cultural memory, and Dido's feelings of being lost is also related to that. Mmakoma believes that Dido needs to be properly named, that her people will accept Dido as one of their own. Dido needs ancestors: damage and loss are inflicted by lack of cultural memory. After the death of her mother and sister, Dido's need to be connected to cultural memory becomes even more urgent to Mmakoma. The ceremony performed is not specifically related to being a woman, nor is a separate part of female culture that she has preserved. However, her role in helping Dido is linked to her female status as a carer of children. Mmakoma is able to help Dido recover from her terrible loss to some extent. The connection Mmakoma forges for Dido is not to Dido's real, unknown ancestors but to her own ancestors. Her act of mothering allows Dido to feel part of a group, in a way that her mother

Alisa never could. Not only does she connect to Mmakoma's ancestors, but she also reaffirms her relationship with her father, realising that they are each other's "people" too.

Mmakoma's status as an elder is not recognised by anyone else in the novel. As a carer of the children, her ancestors insist to her that she has responsibility to bring them up with knowledge of their ancestors as well as to materially care for them. She has noticed what she perceives as the parents' negligence of their children, through ignorance, but has not commented. Her ancestors refuse to leave her in peace but instead haunt her dreams:

> 'Help the children,' they say. 'Tether the children to life,' they say. 'Eh, you who is sleeping and burning small incense and keeping quiet, help those children you are supposed to be raising,' they say. 'Do you see that you are not raising children? Do you see that you are raising ghosts? Why are you wasting your time with ghosts, heh?' (Manenzhe *Scatterlings* 59).

It is the patriarchal nature of colonialism which means that Mmakoma cannot act in the way she would like. She is doubly disadvantaged by being both a woman and black. Any knowledge she has is seen as having no value. A Mmakoma explains, women, and especially poor black women, do not have the status as guardians of collective memory that they would have had in pre-colonial times. Mmakoma complains: "The Ancestors don't understand that this is not an easy world anymore. They don't care that it's not enough to simply be touched by time first, to be an elder" (59).

She explains that in her culture women were respected as leaders, and money and skin colour held little importance: "Now there are things like money and skin and education, and somehow men are becoming more important than women" (59). This is not only something she has noted in the colonial country and amongst white people, but something which is affecting her own people. She explains that "even in her own tribe, where it is taboo to have a king, and the highest thing a man can be is a regent …or chief, as the white people say. Who had decided this sudden importance of men, she didn't know. No one knows. That is just the way things are going these days." (59). The importance of men to the colonial power means that her traditions are being overwritten. The chiefs Mmakoma refers to had less status and power than the queens, yet these are who the colonial power chooses to recognise as they mirror European gender roles. Manenzhe illustrates the importance of women in pre-colonial cultures, and how they continue to perform the role of guardians of collective memory even when their status is denied. She also illustrates the process by which African cultural memory was overwritten to fit the patriarchal structure of the British Empire.

However, much as group memories exist within and ignored by nations, female gendered traditional practices also exist with sub-national groups. Mmakoma is able to perform the ceremony and help Dido, she is the only person in the novel who is concerned with her cultural heritage rather than her immediate danger in a South Africa which is hurtling towards apartheid. These practices are often less respected than those conducted mainly by male leaders, but they still create a strong sense of group identity, which is the main purpose of collective memory, where it is used for a purpose to reinforce a desired identity. Mmakoma is able to help Dido partly because Abram does not take the ceremony she conducts entirely seriously. Abram is a loving father to Dido, and generally appears to try to be a good person. He does not believe that people need to belong to a place as Mmakoma does, but believes in other people's need for that belief. This is a position that he takes as a man, and particularly as a white man, whose sense of belonging wherever he wanted has not been challenged until the events which occur in the novel.

Mohale Mashigo's *The Yearning* also attempts to illustrate women's important but often hidden role in the construction of cultural memory. In *The Yearning*, Marubini's grandmother is symbolic of women's hidden role in the construction of memory. Her grandmother is the teller of myths, and a creator. Every year on her birthday Marubini's grandmother calls her to tell her the story of her birth. She links her granddaughter to powerful women from ancient myths. She suggests that Marubini had special powers: “You emerged and brought us into the future” (Mashigo *The Yearning* 6). There are even echoes of the Rain Queens from Mopai’s story, though this myth is not referred to explicitly: Her grandmother says: “Everything changed when you were born. The summer rains fell...” (7). This is a form of communicative memory, the kind of stories which families share, but it is functioning as though it were a myth.

Community traditions which are female dominated tend to be dismissed as unimportant by the community as a whole, even by other women. Her grandmother is also responsible for helping her to find her place in the community. The community is shown to be somewhat divided on what the place of women should be. Marubini’s grandmother and the other women who help her want to introduce the young girls to their traditions and help them to find power within themselves. Marubini learns of some people’s trepidation and her grandmother’s desire to help young girls become strong women: Not all parents were keen on the idea of their young daughters taking this rite of passage.

> ‘It is how the times are,’ I heard Nkgono tell one of the women who helped her. ‘People don’t see the use for something that makes women stronger. They would encourage it if we were making sure that these girls didn’t know how to be powerful and belong to themselves. (184)

There is a marked contrast between what the community at large is being allowed to believe the girls are learning, and what they are actually learning. Marubini describes her experience of the rite of passage:

> In the days that followed we were divided into groups and taught many wonderful and shocking things by the old women who were in charge of this rite of passage. I got to know my mind, spirit and body better. We learned how to stay connected to our source and how we were connected to the forces of nature. (184)

The old women perform a deception to make their activities more acceptable. They do not explain the knowledge and tradition they are sharing and allow the community to believe that the girls are being taught to "be good wives." The women explain that they allow people to believe this because:

> otherwise we would not be allowed to teach you what we do. So now you can never tell anyone what you learn here … ever. The people who will know are people who have been through this too. You are now part of an elite group of women who have been through this rite of passage and belong to themselves. (184)

The necessary deception in order to pass on female cultural memory means that the true nature of the ritual must remain secret. Despite Mashigo's insistence of the importance of female communicative memory, and the sharing of secrets between generations, it is clear that the community regards this practice as something additional to the cultural practices they all share. Such practices are not entirely desirable, and women must negate their status as "worthy narrators and interpreters" in order to be allowed to continue with such memory practices (Paletschek and Schraut 20).

Conclusion

Mopai and Mashigo explore the roles of women in the construction and preservation of cultural memory. Both authors illustrate that South African traditions allow women to occupy the 'expert' role as identified by Assmann. Mashigo takes a more positive perspective on women's role. Marubini's journey to being a spiritual healer is welcomed by her family and community. Mmadjadji, by contrast, has to force her family to see that she can have a place within their cultural memory, even as a woman. Even in Mashigo's optimistic vision, women are shown to hide their practices of cultural memory to make them more palatable for the rest of the community. The cultural memory here is historical, based on ancient traditions and practices. The next chapter will explore the role of gender in the creation of contemporary collective memory. The role that women can play and their status as witnesses is as conflicted in postcolonial memory as it is in traditional cultural memory.

Chapter 16: Women, testimony and the TRC

This chapter, by contrast to all the others which make up this thesis, will not focus on contemporary South African literature. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the conditions from which contemporary literature of memory arose and to trace the roots of its representation of women. The TRC has dominated political and literary discourse, its hearings cast a long shadow over contemporary South Africa. Responding to the TRC became a dominant theme in transition-era South African literature and its proceedings “loom large over” postapartheid literature (Samuelson 2). This chapter will explore the norms of remembering the trauma of apartheid which were established, and the way in which gender was important for the creation of these norms.

How did the TRC create the conditions for the gendered production of collective memory of trauma in South African literature? As we have seen in the introduction, collective memory has historically been gendered towards the male experience. The TRC, however, did not necessarily need nor intend to follow such traditions. Indeed, an attempt was made to have women testifying regarding their apartheid experiences. This project was unsuccessful, for a variety of reasons which I will explore below.

The TRC focused on the creation of a very limited part of collective memory, the representation of the trauma of apartheid. The way in which apartheid trauma was defined by the Commission meant that women were often witnesses not to their own experience, but to that of (male) others. Female ways of witnessing, including drawing upon oral storytelling traditions and even silence in the face of unspeakable trauma, were unrecognised by the Commission. The experience of women, where it was recognised at all, was channelled into the trauma of sexual violence. Women’s actions as activists were ignored, and their sufferings as victims of gendered violence were emphasised. The female body was made to speak for South Africa, where female voices, when they spoke at all, only spoke of men. Contemporary authors have pushed back against misogyny contained within traditions and rituals, however they are also responding to the unconscious misogyny of the creation of new myths, such as the Rainbow Nation postapartheid metanarrative. This narrative claimed a unity which has been hard to live up to: “the transition heralded a shift away from a nation characterised by division to one united under the hazy glow of the ‘rainbow’. It is thus an era in which the South African nation was actively re-invented and re-imagined” (Samuelson 2). Meg Samuelson asserts that despite the “glow” of this rainbow narrative, the effect on women was destructive: “its project of remembering the nation dismembers women” (2). This dismembering refers to the way in which women’s bodies were used to tell the story of the nation. I will set out the way this occurred in the TRC in order to assess the extent to which contemporary literature also relies upon such a destructive narrative.

Creating the nation through trauma: background to the TRC

The TRC attempted to integrate the voices of women into its construction of collective memory. It had only limited success in this area. In the previous two chapters we have seen that female perspectives are often to some extent hidden in different social groups’ collective memory. This is even more true in nation-state collective memory. I will contrast the processes of the TRC with traditional attempts to create the nation. I will also identify any parallels between the creation of the colonial and postcolonial state through metanarratives of memory. In the creation of a nation the figure of ‘woman’ is often used as part of narratives of memory. This is particularly the case in colonial narratives of conquering a colonised nation. What did the figure of woman mean in postapartheid South Africa as it passed from the transition period into democracy? To what extent did the TRC reinforce rather than change such understandings?

Women and the creation of the nation have historically formed parts of national allegories. Women are not witnesses to the creation and building of the nation, but rather symbolic in the creation of that nation’s collective memory. Trauma is turned into allegory, as we saw this to some extent in Mopai's mythical retelling. The voice is silenced, in favour of the speaking body.

Meg Samuelson explores the way in which nations use the bodies of women to create themselves. Building on Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities she explains that nations are "imagined, frequently, through gendered tropes: women bear the symbolic weight of nationalism; their bodies are the contested sites on which national identities are erected and national unity is forged" (2). The female body is often used as an allegorical symbol, where the voices of women are silent. Samuelson further develops this idea, suggesting the practices of forgetting which are required to make the figure of woman into a usable form for the creation of the nation: "through acts of amnesia and foreclosure, or 'disrememberings', women are shaped into the ideal forms that reflect the desired national body – usually that of Mother, or simply Womb" (2). The example she gives of this process occurring in a South Africa context is Sarah Bartmann. Famous in South Africa and internationally, Bartmann was exhibited both during her lifetime and after her death as the Hottentot Venus. Samuelson argues that this did not stop with the end of the imperial age. She insists that postcolonial South Africa continues to use Bartmann's body to support the construction of a new national identity. She writes:

> Her body – already cast as 'sexualised savage' – was re-cast and re-covered in service to the project of legitimating the 'new' South Africa, as it traversed from the imperial stage of the early nineteenth century to the nation-building theatre of the transitional era. This is an exemplary case of the use of a woman's body in both imperial and nationalist projects (85).

Although this is an extreme case, Samuelson argues that it is emblematic of the way women's bodies are used to construct the nation. This is not limited to colonial projects, but also occurs in the nationalist projects of postcolonial nations.

The TRC did not necessarily have the same disregard for the women of South Africa as the creators of these narratives. However, there are certain similarities. The TRC used all victims' testimony in order to form the collective memory of the postapartheid nation. In the case of women this was exacerbated by the fact that they gave far less testimony than men. Where they did give testimony, it was overwhelmingly focused on crimes against their person, rather than accounts of their activism. The damage done to their bodies came to speak more for the nation and the women themselves than their own testimony.

The TRC hearings: a failure to witness

The TRC hearings were designed to perform more than one function. Firstly, they were designed to create a record of the crimes and other traumatic events suffered by South Africans during the apartheid. The purpose of this activity was to create consensus regarding the way the apartheid would appear in South African collective memory postapartheid. This, it was hoped, would allow South Africa to move forward with a newly formed inclusive South African identity. Fiona C. Ross explains the Commission wanted to "create a…complete picture" identifying victims and their whereabouts, as well as potential amnesty for perpetrators (28). The focus of the Commission was on the "individual violation of rights", it did not consider "the forms of structural violence or the racial discrimination that characterised apartheid" (27). Human rights abuses, beyond the legal human rights abuses codified in the apartheid era law, were to be the focus of investigation. The collective trauma of apartheid would be integrated into collective memory, allowing the Rainbow nation of South Africa to move forwards. The TRC's work led to a concept of collective memory that implied that all South Africans had suffered a collective trauma–apartheid- from which they collectively needed to recover. A traumatised community "no longer exists as an effective source of support." The conception of an identity based on "we" or "us" ceases to exist "as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body" (Erikson 185). Traumatic events can also cause a crisis of representation, where former narratives of national memory no longer encompass a groups' identity and understanding of itself (Kannister 301). The structure of the hearings led to a focus on male experience, despite a considerable effort by the Commission to prevent this. Despite the organisation of female only hearings, the focus remained on male experience. Why was this?

One reason is the way in which the suffering of apartheid victims was understood by the Commission. The TRC did not address the normal suffering of people assigned to the black and coloured groups during apartheid. Financial impoverishment due to the structure of labour laws and other rights was not included amongst the crimes the Commission sought to cover. Poverty in apartheid South Africa, like poverty everywhere, predominantly affected female-led households. This means that the apartheid trauma of not being able to educate your children, not being able to see your children because you had to work far from home, or even not being able to feed your children did not register as a crime over which the Commission saw itself as having jurisdiction. Fiona Ross explains:

> According to the Act's definition of a victim, only those who had been found to have suffered a gross violation of human rights could have access to reparation, and, among them, only those victims who had made a statement by the time the Human Rights Violations Committee closed the statement-taking process on 15 December 1997. This means that millions of South Africans were excluded, because either they may not have suffered a gross abuse of human rights in terms of the Act—but, nevertheless, suffered the daily violations of living under apartheid—or they could not access the TRC, denying them the chance to make a statement before the Commission (Ross 9).

The lack of focus on the financial aspect of apartheid was not only a feature of the Commission. Companies which had profited from apartheid, unlike those of Nazi Germany during World War II, were not made to pay reparations or even face their own complicity.

Lawsuits were brought against companies such as Daimler, Ford, General Motors and IBM. These were not supported at least initially by the ANC government and were largely unsuccessful. As Ross explains, part of the unstated purpose of the Commission was "Naming the Apartheid as a particular kind of violence" (25).

If grinding poverty was not within the remit of the TRC hearings, then what crimes did they hope to expose? The other parallel purpose of the TRC hearings, alongside repairing the nation, was to allow people who had suffered during apartheid to give testimony and, it was hoped, purge their own personal trauma. The focus on individuals who had suffered human rights abuses, above and beyond the everyday abuse of not being white in apartheid South Africa, were the mainstay of the hearings. The focus was far more on the healing effects of giving testimony, rather than punishing the perpetrators, though the Commission did have some capacity for granting or denying amnesty. The healing nature of this testimony was for the individuals involved, but also, it was hoped, for the nation.

The TRC hearings were designed to create consensus regarding the way apartheid would appear in South African collective memory after apartheid thus resolving the crisis of representation following apartheid trauma. Fiona C. Ross explains the TRC wanted to "create a complete picture" identifying victims and their whereabouts, as well as potential amnesty for perpetrators (27). Testimony would be given, which would heal both the victims and the nation. This "simplified model of psychoanalysis" which Ross identifies, was designed to avoid "repetition" (30). The TRC was an act of archiving, rather than commemoration. It focused on closure, and South Africa moving forward as a nation with the past firmly recorded and no longer open for discussion. The TRC focused on "the cathartic role of victim testimony and the closure it must bring" (Craps "Wor(l)ds of grief" 56). Opening wounds was done only to "deal with the past effectively and so close the door on that dark and horrendous past forever" (56). In this context, it is not clear who is supposed to benefit from closing the door on the past: the individual or the nation. Looking back on the TRC more than twenty years on, it is clear that the Commission, along with other measures, helped to avoid complete societal breakdown in the transition period. The benefit to the new South Africa was limited as many groups felt that their victimhood was channelled into politically convenient terms, or simply elided by the whole TRC process.

The structure of the hearings led to a focus on certain groups' experiences, despite a considerable effort by the TRC to prevent this. The main cause was the way in which the TRC defined violence, as well as the expectation of the kind of narrative that would be produced. This was largely of evil individuals, who had committed crimes against predominantly male political activists. Their crimes would be revealed, recorded and the South African state would be able to move forward with such crimes firmly assigned to the past. Fiona Ross explains how this narrative arose:

> The Act that brought the Commission into being instructed a narrow understanding of the apartheid past. In construing apartheid as a particular violence whose effect was to produce victims, the Commission elided questions of agency and resistance and thereby precluded an assessment of power's work in constituting subjects. At the same time, it instantiated other subjects – perpetrators and victims (Ross 20).

The victims and perpetrators were identified as those who had suffered or inflicted bodily harm. This was, as Ross explains, a dramatic shift from the more holistic understanding of harm and violence contained within the original Act:

> Multiple forms of social destruction described in the founding statement – deep divisions, strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice – are here reformulated in the Act's concern with 'gross violations of human rights.' Two transitions are involved in this formulation of injury: from 'apartheid' to different manifestations of 'violence'; and from 'violence' to 'gross violations of human rights' (28).

This reformulation had the effect, however unintentional, of minimising certain kinds of suffering which were more often experienced by women.

Jane Poyner writes that the TRC has "shown that bearing witness to the past plays a constitutive part in healing the trauma inflicted by apartheid, allowing victims of the regime and the nation as a whole to move towards the concept of the "new South Africa" (104). However, whilst the usefulness of the TRC to the creators of a new state is not disputed, its value to victims, particularly female ones, is not so clear. Rosemary Jolly explains that "the TRC lacked the social and structural context to be able to conceive of these women as victim-survivors, authors and subjects of their own narratives; instead, they were more often than not perceived as secondary players in a story whose focus was seen to be the interaction between male perpetrators and their overwhelmingly male "primary" victims" (Jolly 623).

The very basis of the Commission meant that crimes suffered by men, rather than women, were more likely to be the focus of the Commission. Ross explains that even allowing for the narrow definition of victim, women who had suffered human rights abuses were still more likely to testify about the experiences of men. Based on the data she has collected, Ross claims that only 14% of women's testimonies represented their own experiences. This was in sharp contrast to men, who mostly spoke of themselves. Women were not seen as activists. They were not asked to comment on their political activity, but rather on the crimes committed against them. This created the tendency to focus on the bodies rather than the words of the women speaking at the TRC. Rosemary Jolly writes that the TRC "could not recognize the ability of those stories to testify to women's experience as crucial in and of itself" (622). This tendency occurred in terms of all those who spoke at the TRC, as the overwhelming aim of the Commission was to create collective memory of South Africa rather than to preserve individuals' experiences. This was exacerbated in terms of women as their stories were firstly often used in the investigation of crimes against men, and secondly as crimes against the new

South African nation, not against the women themselves.

In response to the growing awareness that women's stories were being ignored, the TRC created women's only hearings in order to try to restore balance. Specialised women's only hearings reproduced essentialist categories. "As the TRC became increasingly anxious about its failure to capture the story of women and the story of sexual violence, it began to conflate the two: 'woman's story' was reduced to one of sexual violence, and sexual violence was identified as a defining female experience" (Samuelson 120). It meant that women were understood as the victims of sexual violence rather than other forms of violence. This is despite the fact that: "only 40 per cent of the TRC's cases of sexual abuse, where the victim's sex was specified, concerned women" (120). 'Sexual Abuse' is a central category in the chapter dedicated to the Special Women's Hearings in the Final Report" (120). There was little investigation into the active role of women in anti-apartheid activism although it was often this behaviour that caused them to become victims of the apartheid state in the first place. The TRC focused on sexual violence in the context of the body instead of spoken experience. In this way female experience of apartheid was turned into an allegory for the nation, just as much as in the early colonial narratives. Women did not speak, but their bodies spoke as part of the narratives of healing that arose from the TRC. The focus on crimes of sexual violence may have deterred women from giving any kind of testimony.

Despite the TRC's focus on such crimes, women faced a strong counter-current against giving testimony on sexual violence. As well as social pressure, women faced a direct form of coercion "not to discredit the liberation movement by revealing abuses committed by comrades in their own organisations, and even direct pressure from government ministers not to disclose stories of sexual assault" (McEwan 745). This double form of pressure meant that women were only heard when speaking on sexual violence, yet many obstacles were placed in the way of their even giving this form of testimony.

The TRC has struggled with the idea that it is simple to "unsilence" those who have previously been silenced. Ronit Frenkel argues that victims were required to speak in order to heal the nation. Victims must "speak, grieve and heal" or "we cannot have a community – which is nation" (Frenkel 157). Spivak's work on the subaltern has often been used to highlight the problems with unsilencing.[23] The TRC allowed women to speak, but hearing their testimony was not as simple as simply providing women's only hearings. The question remains: can the subaltern speak in the discourse of the powerful elite, even a postcolonial one? (Spivak, 1988, p.28). Responding to Spivak's claims, Helene Strauss writes that: "the TRC was unable to respond to the singularity of the woman's voice" (54). I would argue again that this was not exclusively the case with women, it is impossible to collect anyone's story for the purpose of creating a postcolonial nation without insisting that it tells a story about something beyond the individual victim. The singularity of each story must be lost in order that they can serve the purpose of recreating the nation. Women's voices are not exactly silenced, as their stories are required; but their stories do not belong to themselves but to the story of the nation. The exploitation of narratives, which Jolly memorably refers to as "story-stealing", is not a side effect of the TRC but part of its purpose (635). Although the stories are not being forgotten, in this way the victims are being "disremembered" according to Samuelson. Jolly describes the way that the TRC, charged with recording the unreported (and un-reportable) crimes of the apartheid, could not recognise "inarticulate" responses (624). She writes "it is important to state that the transcript of the hearing could not, and does not, record incoherent words spoken in extreme emotion, certain statements that were screamed in agony, rather than merely "stated", as well as the body language of the speaker" (624).

Ayşe Gül Altınay and Andrea Pető explain that not all silences are equal, and so unsilencing may be beneficial or not depending on the situation. They claim that not all silences are equal and condemn the assumption that we should “celebrate all forms of unsilencing as equally progressive, without taking into account the context and politics of unsilencing” (12). The effect of the TRC’s unsilencing has led to a strong counter reaction against forcing people to speak as well as a belief in the discourse of silence as a response. This is clearly an understandable tactic to adopt for those who believe they will not be heard, but it leads to a lack of testimony from women who experienced the violence of the apartheid regime. A middle point between silence and forced testimony is something which contemporary authors are exploring to this day, largely still in response to the narratives which arose from the TRC.

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[23] See Spivak 1988

Conclusion

The TRC’s depiction “as a healing intervention” meant that both “South Africa and South Africans were likened to “wounded bodies” (A. Miller 156). The trauma of individuals is equated to that of the state, and there is a failure to distinguish between individual and national trauma. Miller explains that “truth telling”, it was imagined, would restore “the wounded South African psyche” and “recollection” was presumed to ensure “non-repetition” (156). Lea David describes this as a “flawed approach, based on psychoanalysis and the indubitably resonant notion of an ‘ill nation contaminated with its contested past’(9). This became the bedrock of the ‘dealing with the past’ agenda in the 1990s. It not only erroneously assumed that individuals and collectives act similarly upon their traumatic past, but also applied medical diagnostic categories of mental illness, which ignore cultural differences and universalize culturally specific meaning systems to frame how one interprets and constructs the suffering self.” The result of this, David explains, is to constitute the nation not the individual as the traumatised victim: “once those Western, Freudian-derived psychological explanatory models are applied to a nation as a whole, ‘dealing with the past’ becomes encoded as a therapeutic remedy that has beneficial psychological consequences for ‘healing the nation’” (9). In this way, the nation was treated as a subject, in a way that the individual speakers at the TRC were not. Women’s stories were excluded from the creation of postapartheid collective memory of the apartheid era. The female body was used as part of allegory to form the postcolonial nation. The silencing of women, and the way in which their bodies are made to speak in the formation of collective memory became an important theme in the contemporary South African literature that was written following the TRC hearings. The issue of whether unsilencing of those previously silenced is possible in the context of literature will be the subject of my next chapter.

Chapter 17: Leaving the transition behind, new traumas in *Period Pain*, *Disgrace* and *If You Keep Digging*

The silencing of women and the TRC's attempt to 'unsilence' them was not fully successful. The response by contemporary writers to the TRC has led to a focus on sexual violence: "fiction published during the transition has been vocal on the subject of rape" (Samuelson 122). Meg Samuelson explains that such writers are not only treating rape as a symbol, but also dealing with its very real prevalence in South Africa: "rape is more than a metaphor in South African society of the transition. It is…an endemic social disorder" (122). Samuelson is concerned that: "while the literary output on rape has matched the spiralling statistics besetting transitional South Africa, it largely – and non-mimetically – reduces rape to an 'allegorical seme' (Spivak 246) within a narrative of race" (Samuelson 122). This means that sexual violence as a phenomenon in postapartheid South Africa is appearing in literature more often as a symbol than as a lived reality. Raped women have historically been silenced, the importance of their story being placed outside of their own narrative and bodily experience. The TRC attempted to overcome this, by providing a space for women to speak. However, their speaking was still being performed as part of the construction of collective memory, rather than having value in itself.

Rape has "traditionally served as a figure for imagining new, exogamous national beginnings" (Bernard 663). This has been true for colonial nations, and I will argue here that it is also true for postcolonial nations, in particular South Africa. The account of sexual violence is elided, with a focus instead on what the body of the woman means in terms of the nation. In colonial countries this is strongly linked to the birth of a child, who represents the newly colonised nation. Rape in literature functions as a traumatic absence which reflects not upon the victim but upon the society which they inhabit. Traditionally "rape exists as an absence or gap that is both a product and source of textual anxiety" (Higgins and Silver 3). In this way women are silenced, where their bodies are made to speak for the nation. This inevitably "draw(s) attention away from bodies and register(s) anxieties regarding the defilement and invasion of 'sacred boundaries' of collective identity" (7). Historically rape has been used in the political and literary spheres to shore up the actions of colonising nations. Black men are presented as a threat to white females, as Samuelson explains:

> The discourse of the 'black peril' operated as a regulatory regime by which black men were cast as rapists and white women were marked as fragile and threatened bearers of race purity, dependent on white male protection. Black women were constructed as unrapable, and written out of this scene of sexual violence altogether; their abjection from the discourse of rape was established within the institution of slavery (141).

Samuelson's work focuses on the transition period, which she defines at the ten years following the end of apartheid where she explains "the TRC's operations loom large in the literature produced during the first decade of democracy" (2). The literature I have focused on in this thesis is post-transition, published in the second decade of the twenty-first century. I want to explore if these texts construct the relationship between rape and nation in a different way to transition era texts, as well as in contrast to the TRC. In order to make a comparison I will analyse a transition-era text, J.M Coetzee's *Disgrace* and try to highlight the ways in which its representation of rape is a contrast to contemporary publications. *Disgrace* will be explored alongside Kopano Matlwa's *Period Pain* and Keletso Mopai's short story "Professor Banda."

I am using Coetzee's *Disgrace* as a point of comparison as it by far the most famous and widely read novel on the subject published in postapartheid South Africa. *Disgrace* explores the idea of 'unsilencing' by illustrating that some narratives are inaccessible to the normally male creator of national narratives. I do not wish to argue that this is because Coetzee is a male author. His presentation of rape in *Disgrace* is a staging of his central character David, and by implication the reader's own inability to respond to a story of rape without reading in with preexisting narratives about rape and race. Although *Disgrace* is exploring the idea of silencing, the reader is left with a textual silence where the rape is still filling an allegorical role, much as it did in colonial metanarratives of creating the nation. Kopano Matlwa still explores the symbolic meaning of rape, yet her staging of silencing still allows the reader to access the narrative of the victim and not only the perpetrator. In Kopano Matlwa's *Period Pain* the central character Masechaba rejects historical interpretations of the crime committed against her. The novel, however, uses the trope of the child born from rape. This allegory was traditionally used in nation-building myths and its presence in *Period Pain* sits somewhat uncomfortably with Matlwa's rejection of historical readings of sexual assault. Keletso Mopai's work "Professor Banda" rejects the idea that unsilencing is impossible and tells stories that are not often heard whether in literature or within society itself. This is not necessarily because they are female, but because imagining the experience of the victim of rape does not appear to present them with the ethical difficulties many critics have identified Coetzee as facing. In defending Coetzee, the majority of critical opinion has shut down options for the representation of rape, particularly ruling out realism. An argument has been put forward by Attridge and Marais amongst others that the way in which Coetzee represents rape is the "responsible" way to do so. In this chapter I will explore the other ways contemporary authors are representing sexual violence and its relationship to collective memory.

Silence and trauma in J.M Coetzee's *Disgrace*

Disgrace is the story of David Lurie, a middle-aged, white university professor who is suspended following a relationship with a student, Melanie. Following his suspension David goes to live with his daughter Lucy on her smallholding. They are both attacked in her home, he is almost killed and she is sexually assaulted. David suspects their black neighbour was in some way involved in the crime which was committed by young, black men. The novel explores the aftermath of this event and how David comes to terms with Lucy's decision not to report the rape. David cannot hear Lucy's story because such stories have been made to "speak" for the nation. He does not even acknowledge that there is a story to be heard, in terms of his own treatment of Melanie. *Disgrace* explores the idea of telling, and whether it is as empowering as institutions such as the TRC have suggested. *Disgrace* suggests that perhaps being forced to tell is in fact another kind of silencing. Coetzee, she claims:

> engages with the ethical complexities of addressing such a delicate issue in ways that criticise the Commission's efforts to encourage women to share their stories of sexual violence publicly. In opposition to the TRC's public approach, the author tries to renegotiate women's privacy and intimacy by exploring silence as a more accommodating space for women's painful memories. (Samuelson 177)

David attempts to persuade his daughter Lucy to tell both him and the police what has happened to her. Elleke Boehmer, following David's analysis, has suggested that Lucy is merely an example of the traditional trope of raped and silenced woman. She writes "for Lucy, silence is rather an accomplice to the self-serving need of others... a continuation of subjection..." (Boehmer "Not Saying Sorry" 350). Boehmer describes Lucy's refusal to tell as an "unquestioning acceptance of her suffering" and concludes that such silence cannot be read as anything other than "proof of victimization" (Alsop 96). Though Boehmer may infer that Lucy is silenced through shame or fear, what the novel actually portrays is her refusal to tell her father what has happened, and her refusal to justify why she has not told the police. Lucy refuses to tell and thus is silenced according to her father; however, she defends her right not to tell: "I don't need to defend myself before you" (J.M Coetzee 134). Lucy's silence is a resistance against David's insistence that she must defend her decisions before him. Lucy is coerced not to be silent but rather to speak, as Alsop claims: "her voice is not stifled but actively sought out" (Alsop 85). Coetzee explores silence as a means of resisting David's assumption that Lucy must narrate her experiences to someone, specifically to David himself, before they can be said to belong to her. Alsop suggests that there are some experiences which are simply not possible to narrate. However, I would argue that what *Disgrace* appears to suggest is that Lucy's experience cannot be narrated to David, rather than not being possible to narrate at all. The public reception of *Disgrace,* aside from the accounts which dismiss it as perpetuating racist stereotypes, has tended to laud Coetzee's textual strategy as the only ethical way to respond to sexual violence. The critical consensus, whether it believes that Lucy is silenced or silent, seems to coalesce around the idea that she cannot be heard. The novel stages specifically David's failure to hear her, to make space for her to tell her story as she would wish.

Lucy rejects the abstractions which come with a historical reading, telling David: "No you keep misreading me. Guilt and salvation are abstractions. I don't act in terms of abstractions. Until you make an effort to see that I can't help you" (112). This historical reading of Lucy which David performs is not endorsed by *Disgrace* but instead is "staged as a misreading" within the novel (Marais "Liberal Funk" 33). Attridge reminds us that "like all Coetzee's novels, *Disgrace* offers the temptation of an allegorical reading" (Attridge 173). The temptation to read Lucy allegorically is clear, despite her insistence on the personal nature of her story. Lucy insists that she should be able to decide the meaning of her own experiences, but this is something which is very hard for her father, and indeed for many readers, to accept.

Rapes such as Lucy's were historically given great prominence due to their utility for colonial powers. Graham describes "the obsession with narratives of interracial rape that has characterized much discourse on race and sexuality in South Africa" (Graham 9). Black Peril was the narrative, or rather set of narratives, which formed a part of the justification for the fear and hatred of black colonial peoples. Inter-racial relationships were "rendered unthinkable" (Graham 10) and the possibility of inter-racial sex could only be present in the "morbid" form of sexual threat. The white female body acts as the "cherished frontier" in colonial discourse which must be defended, as the land must, from the dangerous black male (Graham 8). Though

David is not intentionally making such a reading, his description of the rape in historical terms places his narration in the tradition of black peril. He sees the rape as being symbolic of South Africa rather than something which happened to Lucy. *Disgrace* illustrates that experiences like Lucy's have never been elided; they have always been forced to speak for the colonial state. What David appears to be unable to understand is that whilst it is certainly possible to make a historical reading of Lucy's rape, or to provide historical reasons for it, this has no effect on the fact that Lucy experienced the rape as a personal experience. The perspective is David's, and the reader is aligned to him in their efforts to understand the many others who he encounters. The novel resists the idea that the perspective of the other can simply be incorporated to the same and still remain other. By whatever means David tries knowing, imagining or dismissing the other, its alterity remains hidden from him. Marais claims that "Coetzee is aware that that which he seeks to say cannot be said, and that by nevertheless seeking to say it he will have made the novel the site of its own excess" (Marais "Accommodating the Other" 100). The issue here is that there are few alternative voices being provided by other South African authors, at least not by any who have the recognition of Coetzee.

In their work *Rape and Representation*, Brenda Silver and Lynn Higgins explore the importance of who describes a rape, claiming: "who is speaking may be all that matters" (1). This means that even to determine whether or not an act of rape has occurred, it is important to consider who is reporting the event: "who gets to tell the story and whose story counts as 'truth' determine the definition of what rape is" (1). *Disgrace* is the canonical text on rape in postapartheid South Africa. It has been interpreted widely by critics as a successful attempt to show the process of silencing raped women undergo. Coetzee's novel shows that who is listening, or speaking is crucial to the interpretation of rape. However, in South African literature there is a dearth of widely read literature where it is the victim that is speaking. Lucy

Valerie Graham fears that this novel will only contribute to the further silencing of women: “to consign rape to a space outside articulation may contribute to a wider phenomenon of silencing” (265). If women, and particularly black women, are always cast as the unknowable unspeaking other, rather than being spoken for, we are still, as the reader, faced with silence. If books by those who felt that they are able to break this silence were also being published as read as widely as *Disgrace*, this would not be a problem. However, this is clearly not the case. In terms of the stories coming out of South Africa about rape, the overwhelming one is silence.

This phenomenon is compounded by the idea that trauma must be represented in a particular way in order to be truly representing the experience of trauma. There is only one acceptable way to write about trauma: maybe only one acceptable way to write about rape. This is a feature of critical response which has occurred in the context of trauma: “within trauma studies, it has become all but axiomatic that traumatic experiences can only be adequately represented through the use of experimental, (post)modernist textual strategies” (Craps and Buelens 5). An alternative tendency exists in postcolonial trauma narratives: “an attachment to realism and indigenous literary practices is interpreted as a deliberate eschewal of the Western discourse of unspeakability, recourse to which is seen as politically debilitating” (5). Again, this is not to suggest that a postmodernist novel cannot represent trauma or sexual violence. Postmodernism is not “inherently Eurocentric” nor are “realism or indigenous literary forms” a “postcolonial panacea” (5). What is problematic is the “rush to dismiss whatever deviates from the prescribed aesthetic as regressive or irrelevant” (5). The connection between aesthetic form and ethics is something which has been applied to contemporary South African literature:

> Rather than positing a necessary relation between aesthetic form and political or ethical effectiveness, trauma theory should take account of the specific social and historical contexts in which trauma narratives are produced and received and be open and attentive

> to the diverse strategies of representation and resistance which these contexts invite or necessitate. (5)

In the following sections I will explore the work of Kopano Matlwa and Keletso Mopai, as alternative trauma presentations that do not completely elide the narrative of rape.

Silence and trauma in *Period Pain*

Period Pain illustrates the way in which rape victims are silenced, but this is not mirrored in a textual silence as it is in *Disgrace.* Matlwa stages the silencing differently from Coetzee as the central character's story still appears. *Period Pain* tells the story of Masechaba, a young doctor who is raped in a politically motivated attack after becoming involved in pro-immigrant protests. The rape occurs "off stage" and it takes Masechaba a long time to be able to express what happened even in her diary. However, she is eventually able to do so. She describes not only the attack but also the aftermath, and her recovery. The process of silencing is illustrated as a failure to listen. Women being forced to talk about their ordeals for the benefit of others is another theme in this novel. In contrast to *Disgrace* the process is seen through Masechaba's eyes. Matlwa shows in a variety of ways how those around her fail to hear her. This is a response to the idea that rape victims are forced to tell, but that their words are subsequently not heard. The listener's inability to hear the individual woman, and not to understand her in the totalities of rape narratives mean that the women does not feel heard. As Francesca Mussi explains:

> Although the TRC is not mentioned explicitly, Masechaba's inability to express her pain in words invites readers to challenge the reconciliation project carried out by the South African Commission, and, in particular, its core assumption according to which truth-telling—or, to put it in other words, granting victims the possibility of sharing their painful stories—can facilitate healing and forgiveness, especially within the context of women's suffering (Mussi 219).

Rather than claiming that Masechaba cannot put her story into words, it is rather that her words are not deemed important. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the police. She describes a visit to the police station with her mother:

> We went back to the police station this morning. They showed me the initial statement that was taken and explained that they were still busy with the case. I wanted to tell them they'd written it all wrong. That the men didn't say, 'Where are you friends now?' But that they said 'Where are your kwere-kwere friends now?' I wanted to point out that it was my mouth they forced open, not my eyes, and that one first put his penis in my mouth and I had to suck it because I was scared. They left out that it felt like something was tearing inside. (132-3)

Her descriptions of the crime are graphic, but this does not appear to have any impact on the police officers. Masechaba has not been silent, like Lucy, but has reported the crime to the police. The details of the case are apparently insignificant to them but are crucial to Masechaba. She has no power to force them to record the crime in the way that she wants. It appears that they do not think that her words matter, as the record is treated with disrespect by the officers:

> I'd told them that the second or third penis in my vagina grated like a fork against a brick, but they didn't write that down. The statement the officer had taken and reinterpreted was written on a page torn from an exercise book. Why did he use blue ink instead of black? At medical school I was taught that legal documents needed to be in black ink. (132)

Masechaba is unable to have the event properly recorded. This again has parallels to processes of the TRC which struggled to record properly the crimes committed against women due to the impossibility of giving testimony in that context.

Period Pain also looks at the issue of silencing in terms of the exploitation of stories of rape. The role of rape in the collective memory of the nation is varied, from colonial myths of forming the nation, to “Black Peril” narratives to further cement the racial divide. South Africa has a long history of such myths. Matlwa illustrates that this is by no means something which belongs to the colonial or apartheid past. What happens to Masechaba is exploited by different characters for their own political ends. These characters want her story to feature as part of the narrative of the South African nation, or to be forgotten in order that it will not be used against black people.

Even her therapist attempts to use her story, to fulfil a narrative about South Africa. The therapist describes her rape as “corrective rape” This term is more usually applied to the sexual assault of women, by perpetrators who identify them as not heterosexual (Naidoo). The rape is claimed to ‘correct’ the women’s sexuality. In the case of Masechaba, the men who attacked her claimed to be doing so because of the petition she had started to defend the rights of immigrants within South Africa. Her therapist views this as a different kind of corrective rape:

> She then had the nerve to say that there’s a blog for women like me, for women who’ve been gang raped. ‘Correctively raped’ as she called it, a rape to correct what their society deems abhorrent behaviour. She says in our society many people don’t like foreigners, and the men who raped me might have seen my behaviour as threatening societal norms, and felt it their duty to correct me. She said this has been seen in the gay and lesbian community, but she hadn’t seen it reported in the context of xenophobic violence. She said it would help to try to understand where the men were coming from. It would help my healing. She’d been thinking she and I might write a scientific paper about it together, if I was up to it. Of course, she would be the first author, as it was her idea. But I would be acknowledged (Matlwa *Period Pain* p.119-20).

The therapist is not the only character who sees the narrative potential of what has happened to Masechaba. However, her friend Nyasha wishes to silence the narrative that she identifies as being too easy to construct out of events. She is wary of the story being used to prop up myths like Black Peril:

> When I got back to our flat that night, the 'night of the rape' as Dr Phakama would insist I say, Nyasha said I shouldn't tell people what had happened. She said it would just give white people more ammunition, so they can scoff at us and say, 'You see, we told you your people are animals.' She said the police would handle it, and I shouldn't let the white doctors suck me into their self-pity. She said our country was still growing and adjusting, and that these things would settle with time. She said she was sorry for what happened to me, but that I should rise above it and be like the forefathers of the nation, who denied themselves for a greater cause (127)

This is a more realistic account of the way that blame functions, on a real world rather than literary level. Masechaba blames herself and others blame her. Her rape is not being used as a symbol in the creation of the nation, but to prop up other people's narratives. Nyasha cannot see past the meaning of the rape, to seeing what has happened to her friend. Masechaba recognises this, though only comments in her diary afterwards:

> I remember being furious. Why couldn't Nyasha let go of her anger even for just a minute, when I, her friend, her sister, so badly needed her to put it aside and just hold me? Her hands were always so full of good arguments, unsettled debts and old grudges that there was no room for anything else. (127)

Matlwa identifies the same process of silencing as Coetzee but resists it not by textual silence but rather by reasserting the importance of the body and mind. Her body is not a only a symbol, but a real, damaged physical reality. Matlwa closely explores the effect the attack had on Masechaba. She describes the breakdown of her sense of time, and the permanence that has accompanied the attack. Masechaba writes in her diary: "but when it's your own life and you're living it, there is never so clear a distinction. I'm still being raped even now, even when I'm not. I can’t say when one stopped and the other began. I am being rape” (118). In the staging of silencing in *Disgrace* there is no space to know what happened to Lucy in her own words. Rather than accepting that there is no way of listening to the victim, here Matlwa illustrates that although silencing happens, sexual assault can appear on a narrative level.

Masechaba contrasts the desire of those around her to read historically, with the physical reality of her experience:

> How do they expect you not to lose your mind? They pull you open again and again, ram themselves into you again and again. Leave you with disease, warts, worms, pimples, pain, blood, rot coming out of your body. Your body! Why? Because of the gold mines, they tell you, because of the Dutch, because someone at some point stole from them, because they never had fathers, because of Zimbabwe and Shaka and the government, because of xenophobia, unemployment, apartheid, colonialism, because of history, because of the serpent, because of Adam and Eve. Because of anything and everything. Because they can. Just because. This is the problem of knowing, of knowing but not knowing, of knowing too much but not enough to fully understand. Webs and webs of lies. History is a con man; history writers change stories to suit the times (their times!) and memory is weak and unreliable. And truth? Any man’s guess. And what of woman? The first fool. (122)

She is not necessarily denying the veracity explanations that she lists here. It is simply that it does not reflect what she herself has experienced. It is an explanation of the perpetrators and their intentions, not of what she went through as a victim. The historical readings provide a justification for actions which for Masechaba are wholly unjustifiable.

Masechaba also describes the process of physical and mental recovery. Her body is healing almost more quickly than she would like, as it is so far ahead of her psychological recovery:

> I looked in the mirror this morning. I stood before it with my towel at my feet to see what has been done to me. My body looks the same. I still have that weird malformed nail on my left baby toe, like a crumbly stone you can't put nail polish on. My eyes look the same. I think there might be bags under them, but those might have been there before. I have no scabs, no bruises. The stains I used to see seem to have disappeared. A bit of cramping, but maybe it's premenstrual pain. Otherwise I look exactly the same. If I didn't tell, no one would know. (124)

Matlwa plots the process of Masechaba's recovery, whilst insisting on how distant what has happened to her is from the way in which those around her wish to use the sexual assault.

Despite her refocusing on the body and the story Masechaba wants to tell, *Period Pain* does still seem to use some of the tropes associated with rape and creating the nation. Masechaba becomes pregnant and her child becomes a symbol of hope for her. Meg Samuelson explains the use of the figure of the raped woman to construct narratives of nationhood, particularly in colonial nations:

The available language on rape in South Africa appears inadequate in expressing the experiences of those subject to rape. The gap between the social reality and the rhetoric of rape is evident in the racialised structures of literary rape in the transition years. These fictions culminate in the swelling figures of raped bodies: raped women are transformed into mothers, who, through the 'mixed race' issue of rape, procreate the 'rainbow' nation (Samuelson 122).

Masechaba's daughter is not mixed race, however the idea that she is a hopeful new start is similar to that of the original rape myths. Mussi writes: "Masechaba names her little girl Mpho, her "gift", because, despite coming from so much darkness, Mpho gifts Masechaba with love and a new life" (Mussi 149). Masechaba describes her baby as "like a blank page, like a fresh start. My fresh start" (149). However, in a literary sense there is so much symbolic value bound up in terms of the use of rape in collective memory, that for the reader Mpho cannot be a “blank slate.” It is perhaps unavoidable that the rape speaks for something beyond itself if the narrative is made available. Masechaba’s name means nation in Sesotho (C. Coetzee 134.) It is hard, then, not to read her story allegorically. A child born of rape building the new nation is such an established trope, as Samuelson points out, that Masechaba’s baby must necessarily be read with that in mind.

Power dynamics and “me too” in *Disgrace* and “Professor Banda”

For the final part of this chapter, I want to draw out some important contrasts between the Melanie storyline in Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and *Professor Banda* by Keletso Mopai. Essentially these two stories are very similar. They involve a university professor who has a sexual relationship with a much younger student. There is an implication of coercion, though this remains ambiguous in both the stories.

In *Disgrace*, Coetzee performs a subversion of the black peril narrative, not only by illustrating its construction through David’s mind, but also “by simultaneously scripting…the white peril, the hidden sexual exploitation of black women by white men...” (Graham 437). This narrative is scripted as absence: the “sexual exploitation” remains largely hidden from David himself. Melanie is not silent; in fact she reports David to the university authorities. However, Coetzee illustrates that David silences her in terms of his narrative by being unable to recognise it as rape. Melanie’s possible rape is elided on a textual level: David does not describe it as such and the novel seems unable to recognise the event as a rape. Melanie’s rape is entirely elided because to David it does not count as rape, and thus it is not. As Judith Butler explains “the politics of violence operate through regulating what will and will not be able to appear as an effect of violence. There is, then, already in this foreclosure a violence at work, a marking off in advance of what will or will not qualify under the signs of ‘rape’…” (Butler “Contingent Foundations” 169). David's empowered position means that he can present his relationship with his student Melanie as “not rape.” Furthermore, he can present his actions as something which is outside of history, that must be read only in terms of himself. Farodia, a committee member on the panel who reviews David's conduct, insists that his relationship with Melanie is part of "the long history of exploitation" (J.M. Coetzee 53). She sees his exploitation of Melanie as an allegory of the nation just as David sees Lucy's rape. Rassoll, another committee member wants him to describe it as "the abuse of a young woman" rather than an "ungovernable impulse" which is David's description of what has happened (53). David uses his feelings for Melanie to construct a story about himself, as separate from history, he is "a servant of Eros", where everyone around him can be contained by history. (91) At the committee hearing he insists that "there are no undertones in this case" (53). David is aware that his own experience cannot be contained within historical frameworks. The response of the committee, however, show that such an interpretation can be made of David's actions. Coetzee shows that Lucy's silence resists David's allegorical construction of her experience, much as he resists the constructions of the committee by refusing to tell. Coetzee considers the ease of making historical readings but illustrates how this always inevitably fails to encompass the singularity of the individuals involved.

Coetzee draws attention to the question of who is speaking, and that we should try to listen for who is not. Critical response, however, has not always questioned David's description of events; Melanie's rape is not even recognised as potentially being as such, and David's description of it as "not quite" rape is simply accepted (25). Lucy Hughes-Hallett writes that David "seduces a young female student" (Graham 440). In their acceptance of his account, the normality of an empowered male narrator defining what is and is not rape is made apparent. However, the novel undermines David's constructions even as it silences Melanie's perspective. David's account of his relationship with Melanie is troubled by the lack of her perspective. Coetzee illustrates that David's perspective is eliding violence in the way he describes events. David describes "making love to her", but the syntax betrays the possibility of rape even though it is not explicitly described as such (19). Melanie is described as “averting her face” and afterwards when she “frees herself” the narrator tells us “he makes no effort to detain her”, with the implication that she was previously captive (19). Though Melanie does not talk about the experience within the novel, and the novel offers a reading of her silence which defies David’s description of “not quite rape.” Melanie’s perspective is not present; the novel registers that David’s description of “not quite rape” is only ever his own perspective (25). David simply cannot comprehend Melanie’s perspective and the novel resists the idea that he could by refusing to even represent her.

In *Disgrace* the reader is aware that David is not being honest with himself about his relationship with Melanie, however there is no way for the reader to tell what she has actually experienced. As with Lucy, the textual silence illustrates our inability to know. “Professor Banda” by Mopai provides the entirely opposite perspective on coercive relationships between students and teachers. It is told from the point of view of the student, and the professor barely speaks throughout the story. The main part of the story is Bokang the narrator and central character explaining to a disciplinary panel what happened between her and her professor. Professor Banda is a popular teacher made famous the narrator claims by his “intimidatingly good looks” (124). He flirts with Bokang, the narrator and central character. She is clearly uninterested in him and feels uncomfortable: “when I looked at him, he didn’t even attempt to disguise his interest; he just smiled at me. I was flabbergasted and thought what an arrogant pervert he was” (124). When he fails her on an exam that she is certain she ought to have passed, she goes to confront him. Professor Banda, according to the student, requests that she call him so they can meet privately. He gives her an extra 30% on the exam, with no explanation as to why. He implies to her that she came to his office knowing that he was attracted to her and for this reason would change her grade:

> After a moment of silence, he said, “Why do you look surprised? You came all the way to my office for me to change your mark, knowing well I have feelings for you. And when I do change your mark, you act surprised? You are a very charming and beautiful lady.” (124)

Bokang explains to the panel that she felt coerced into having sex. However, there is an implication that she may be the one who is responsible for what has happened. Dr Booth asks her “do you believe that Professor Banda sexually harassed you, or did you willingly start offering him sex in exchange for good marks?” (126) She tries to explain that she felt coerced by the threat of failing a course, which might have led to her having to leave university. However, this level of coercion is not accepted by Dr Tese, the other member of the panel: “But Ms Gumba, he didn’t force you, you could have just filed a complaint to his superiors before all this got out of control. Now, he’s suspended and is all over the news, and might be losing his job altogether or going to prison for that matter, because of you” (126) He blames her for the relationship. He seems to be almost entirely blaming her, there is little space left for Professor Banda to take any blame.

Bokang is not silenced by this, however. She rejects responsibility and explains that she knows she is not the only student who has made such a complaint.

> first of all, I’m not the one who filed the complaint – my friend did. Secondly, who would have believed me if I said he failed me on purpose? The freaking dean? No one cares. What this system cares about is what mark is written on the scoreboard! And thirdly, tens of female students and former students have come forward since Ntokozo’s complaint, claiming that Professor Banda sexually harassed them! So tell me, Dr Tese, how is any of this my fault? (126)

Bokang is not silenced by the panel, and they are forced to hear her story. Her friend Ntokozo asks her afterwards how the panel went, and she is uncertain. However, the act of speaking is empowering. As Ntokozo says: “don’t worry, Bokang,” she smiles. “We have already won.” (127). Mopai illustrates that there are new understandings of sexual violence which are unrelated to myths and related to the stories women want to tell. The TRC, sexual harassment panels and perhaps even wider society may not be fully ready to hear them, but women are speaking out. In the time since *Disgrace* was written perhaps we have become less interested in what the perpetrator is or is not able to understand and are ready to accept narratives of survivors.

Conclusion

Disgrace attempts to show that silence can be a means to counter the forced performance of narratives of rape. *Period Pain* and *The Yearning* do acknowledge the role of rape as a symbol in their work, yet they still let the female characters speak about their experiences. Coetzee is showing the unspeakability of rape: female authors showing that it is speakable, yet still fall into using rape as a symbol. Kelteso Mopai, by contrast uses realism to represent sexual violence as significant in itself, and not only as a symbol. The critical idea that Coetzee’s silent response to rape is the only ethical response is limited and particularly problematic when we consider the readership of Coetzee’s novel as compared to the other authors’ work. The critical response has suggested that *Disgrace* is the only “responsible” representation of rape, or that it is “giving agency back to women” (Mussi 177). This would be less problematic if books by black female authors and their representations of rape were being read as widely as Coetzee’s work. This is very far from being the case, however.

Chapter 18: Female authors and the construction of collective memory

In this chapter I want to consider the way female authors are creating a collective memory of contemporary South Africa. In the last chapter I explored the way that rape, a real and endemic problem in South Africa, is used as a symbol for significant occurrences in South Africa today. The experiences of women are often elided from literature particularly in terms of collective memory. The figure of woman as an archetype is more important for telling other stories about the nation, rather than women's stories being deemed as important enough to figure as part of collective memory. In this final chapter I will explore the stories presented by contemporary female authors which explore what life is like in South Africa for women today. I want to consider memory beyond apartheid trauma: female experience in postapartheid South Africa. What writers are choosing to record explores a variety of positive and negative experiences that form a part of life in South Africa for women today.

What does it mean to write female collective experience into memory? Marianne Hirsch claims that "the study of memory has been slow to integrate the analysis of gender and sexuality as markers of social difference" (Hirsch "Practicing Feminism 2). Topics which relate directly to male experience are viewed as inherently more important: "men and women relate themselves and are related to different historical themes and topics, which are regarded as more (male) or less (female) relevant" (Paletschek and Schraut 20). Gender and sexuality as markers of difference mean that women often view their stories as not significant enough to form part of the national narrative. Silvia Paletschek and Silvia Schraut explain that "more often than men, female eyewitnesses assume that they do not have anything relevant to recount; they regard their lives as meaningless with regard to big history. Male eyewitnesses, however, assume for themselves both authority and relevant factual knowledge. Their statements about the past are assigned greater significance in the family and especially by women" (20) It is not only that the archives of the state are dismissing the importance of female testimony, but that women themselves are underestimating its importance. In this chapter I will explore what female authors are doing to reassert the importance of the lives of women in narratives of the nation.

Thematic concerns of women's writing

Is there anything essentially different about a woman or man writing? Creating a character is always a work of imagination which encompasses all aspects of a person including gender but also age, race and nationality amongst many other factors. In the previous chapter we saw the importance of who is speaking in the construction of narratives about women. It may well matter very much who is speaking, as we saw in the last chapter, in terms of the narrative the reader is able to access (Higgins and Silva 1). But does it matter who is writing? Cecily Lockett argues: "a man, no matter how sympathetic and progressive his views, can never be in the same position as a woman…for a man, the negotiation (between experience and feminism) is blocked, doubly contradictory: his experience is her oppression" (8). I do not agree entirely with Lockett's statement, as people do not possess just one polarising identity such as male or female, or black or white. All of our identities are intersectional and empathetic understanding does not stem purely from being the same as someone else. It is clear that writing about certain subaltern groups has led to lazy assumptions and a tendency to "speak for" others, which Spivak suggests is the only way we can speak about the subaltern at all. However, all literature is a work of creation and imagination. I do not think that the biographical details of the author defines how successful their imagination of a character can be. If published work is so dominated by people who are privileged by gender, race or even economic status, the alternative appears to be that we never hear the stories of those who cannot publish books themselves.

However, it is inarguable that female authors, particularly black female authors, form a very small part of the South African canon. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney have investigated how literature functions as a part of the production of collective memory. Whether certain works of literature are deemed worthy of being objects of remembrance is something that Erll and Rigney view as highly contentious: “many of the traditional discussions about canon-formation within literary studies can indeed be revisited as exemplifying the ways in which societies squabble over which foundational texts deserve commemoration or not” (Erll and Rigney 112). I do not aim to answer the question of whether the specific texts I have included in this paper should form part of the South African canon. However, I am interested in exploring why such authors, young, black and female, do not form such a large part of the canon as might be expected more than twenty years after the end of apartheid. It matters that these authors are writing, as historically black women’s voices have been excluded from the canon: “South African society, structured in recent history by the oppressive and exploitative systems of colonialism and apartheid, has historically been organised in a way that systematically excluded black women from writing and other forms of cultural production” (Boswell *And Wrote my Story Anyway* 4).

The practical result of this is that fewer black female authors have published work, and where they have it: “has largely been ignored in mainstream criticism of South African, African and postcolonial literatures” (20). Writing as a black woman in South Africa involves reimagining a nation that has no space for you: “those doubly disavowed in South Africa by apartheid on the grounds of their race and gender, have constructed the nation through representations of themselves, their realities, and the nation in both apartheid and postapartheid South Africa” (34). These conscious acts of culture are an attempt to address the imbalance in publication and readership of texts which negotiate South African memory and identity. In this thesis I aim to “make visible the works of black women whose literary production has been ignored by androcentric and racist critical traditions in South African literature” (Boswell 19). This does not mean that the work of authors such as Coetzee does not have value, merely that it needs to be seen as having value alongside these contemporary texts.

Another issue with attempting to focus on women’s stories written by women is the issue of who is being unsilenced and by whom. Ayşe Gül Altınay and Andrea Pető ask:

> What do we choose to “unsilence” through our political and academic interventions? Who are the “subjects” who are remembered, rehistoricized, rethought in feminist memory work? Which women are remembered, which women continue to remain absent from our imagination, research and writing? What, in other words, are the politics of our own “unsilencing” projects? And who are “we,” in the first place? (Pető and Gül Altınay 9)

I have created this canon myself. They are books published in English, which are at least to some extent known about beyond South Africa. The authors whose work I am considering here have managed to write and have their work published. Even if we accept that the subaltern can in fact write and be heard, can these women really be considered subaltern? Although they are disempowered in comparison to white, male authors, they are in a hugely privileged position compared to most South African women. The value of including their stories in the postapartheid South African canon may be limited if their experience is so entirely unrepresentative.

Despite this caveat, I believe that certain topics are explored more often by female authors than across the canon in general. I also do not believe that by focusing on unheard voices that we as academics silence others, they are already silenced. I want to explore the particular issues that women are writing about and evaluate their contribution to collective memory. There are reoccurring themes which these female writers focus on, which are issues generally ignored by currently canonical South African literature. Whilst sexual violence is certainly an important topic, which is included to a greater or lesser extent in every piece of literature I have discussed in this thesis, it is not the only topic that these female authors have in common. These writers explore the “slow violence” of women’s lives in South Africa today.

Borrowing from Rob Nixon, Marianne Hirsch uses this term to describe the trauma inflicted upon women in everyday acts of harm against them (“Practicing Feminism” 19).

This normally occurs in terms of policing of their appearance and behaviour. Women are not legally forbidden from doing any activities. Their access to employment, and even to public spaces, is limited if they do not control their own appearance to fit as closely as possible to white ideals. The women in these texts go through painful chemical hair treatments and use dangerous skin lightening products in order to try to achieve this idea of perfection. However, women in these texts are also activists, doctors and mothers. Women’s role in South Africa is not limited to only that of victim. Matlwa’s *Coconut* finishes with this explanation of the value of the story which has just been told:

> I do not know how to make it pretty. I do not know how to mask it. It is not a piece of literary genius. It is the story of our lives. It is our story, told in our own words as we feel it every day. It is boring. It is plain. It is overdone and definitely not newsworthy. But it is the story we have to tell (Matlwa, *Coconut* 191).

Female experience in South Africa: Appearance

One of the most important themes across the literature I have chosen for this thesis is the continued existence of racism in South Africa. This racism is particularly related to appearance and beauty standards when it comes to women. Blackness is associated with being poor and not clean. This is clearly part of the South African experience for young women today. In order to explore the way that beauty standards police black women’s experience I am going to analyse Kopano Matlwa’s *Coconut*, and Mopai’s short story “Hair Tales” from her *If You Keep Digging* collection. I will be exploring “instances of gendered so-called microaggressions” the young female characters are growing up and assessing the “cumulative effect” of this “violent assault on her identity as a girl child and later as a young woman” (Murray 3). This is, as Matlwa describes it “the story we have to tell” (Matlwa *Coconut* 191) It may not currently be counted as a significant event in terms of national cultural memory, but it speaks to the experience of growing up in South Africa today. That these experiences should be worthy of forming part of collective memory is something that is closely linked to the production of gendered ideas of collective memory. A wider diversity of authors will surely help to lead to the inclusion of female experience as “newsworthy.”

Beauty and ideal physical appearance continue to be valued based on lightness or darkness. In Kopano Matlwa’s *Coconut* this does not only encompass being black or white, but also skin tone with lightness being favoured. Ofilwe and Fiks, growing up in starkly different environments, still strive for light-skinned perfection and other markers of whiteness such as straight hair. Ofilwe straightens her hair, a painful process designed to fulfil Western beauty ideals: “a painful exothermic chemical reaction. Burn. Burning. Burnt. When Ous Beauty asked me if I was ready to wash it out, I said no. I wanted every last tiny weenie curl straight” (Matlwa *Coconut* 5). This process is so painful that she cuts her hands digging her nails into them, however she won’t let the hairdresser stop until every trace of curl is gone.

In Ofilwe’s case it is not only her parents but also her school, which confirms the superiority of white culture. Her sense of self, like that of many teenagers, is formed by her peer’s assessment of her. When she is criticised by her brother for having only posters of white celebrities on her walls, she is genuinely able to counter that maybe there were no black faces that appealed to her. As a young girl, she does not seem to be aware of the beauty standards that she has taken on board and which she will never be able to live up to. She asks: “what did it matter anyway? It was purely a coincidence; perhaps there were no black faces I liked in the magazines I cut out from” (92). The older narrative voice reflects on Ofilwe’s choices and sees them as a part of ongoing dislike of blackness that is being internalised by black children:

> in every classroom children are dying. It is a parasitic disease, seizing the mind for its own usage. Using the mind for its own survival. So that it might grow, divide, multiply

> and infect others. Burnt sienna washing out. DNA coding for white greed, blond vanity and blue-eyed malevolence. IsiZulu forgotten. Tshivenda a distant memory." (92)

Ofilwe's attempts to be integrated into the "in-crowd" are not always successful. Whilst playing spin the bottle, the game dictates that she and another boy have to kiss. He refuses to kiss her saying "no ways, her lips are too dark" The young Ofilwe is incredibly ashamed, rather than angry. She accepts that there is something wrong with her, and that the less black she can be, the better. The input about the value of a light complexion that Ofilwe receives from her classmates and wider society forms her opinion about her own worth.

Fiks dreams of a future where she is part of a rich, comfortable world, where she is loved and accepted. When her primary school teacher asks her what she would like to be when she grows up, Fiks tells her "I want to be white, Miss…" Another child tells her: "You'll always be as black as dirt" confirming the values of blackness and whiteness which Fiks has already thoroughly absorbed (135). As she grows up and realises she cannot be white, she aspires then to be, as she describes it "rich and brown" (140). The problematic nature of her future aspirations doesn't trouble Fiks. She embarks on "project infinity" which aims to both help her escape her poverty and vulnerability, but also to make her 'brown'. This for Fiks means wealth and beauty. Her "most prized possessions" includes some green contact lenses and skin lightening cream. Fiks uses skin lightening cream and green contact lenses, in order to appear beautiful and white. She is not able to distinguish between these two ideals. The girls are fighting for agency by living up to the prevailing norms: "Being 'unacceptable' in terms of the prevailing gendered and racialized ideals of beauty would render them even more marginal in a society where whiteness and masculinity continue to carry both real and symbolic power" (Murray 106). The girls are not outliers; their behaviour is entirely rational as the world around them confirms the value of whiteness. This phenomenon is not the girl's fault: "the confusion that the children then suffer is not of their making; much like the hair industry and its denigration of what constitutes black beauty, cultural suicide rests with the children of the middle classes and is facilitated by their parents" (Raditlhalo 31).

Mopai's "Hair Tales" moves away from the idea of internalised beauty standards, towards the way in which society is enforcing such ideals. "Hair tales" illustrates the effect of such standards from a very young age, up until adulthood. The first place where white beauty standards are enforced is within schools. A young girl's natural curly hair is described by the school as "unhygienic." The teacher puts pressure on the mother to do something about the little girl's hair: "Tshepo will come home with a letter that reads: 'Dear Miss Molomo. Please, this is the last letter I am writing regarding your daughter's hair. I suggest that you cut it or relax it. It is untidy and unkempt. This is against the school's hygiene policy – Mrs van der Walt'" (Mopai "Hair Tales" 60). There is no explanation as to why the hair is unhygienic, but natural black hair continues to be associated with being unclean even after apartheid. The names of the girl's teachers suggest that they are probably white Afrikaners. In this way Mopai highlights the racial element of this treatment. As the little girls grow up, their hair changes from being unhygienic to being dangerous. A teenage girl is humiliated by her teacher because of her hair:

> After a hot shower, I blow-dry my hair and straighten it. I initially had an afro because my school doesn't allow girls to plait their hair, but I got rid of it. That's because, on my first day at school last year, Ms Peters, the life orientation teacher, came to my desk and asked me, "Rosa, what is that on your head?" Blood rushed to my fingertips and I ran my left palm over my hair. When I couldn't feel anything out of the ordinary, I replied, "I don't know, Ms Peters, what is it?" She said, "Girl, there is a bird's-nest in that bush of yours." My classmates laughed at me until their stomachs hurt. I stared at my desk and sucked back the tears. (61)

As well as publicly humiliating the child in front of her parents, the teacher has also reported her, as though her hair was a kind of behaviour. She and her family are powerless to do anything against this bullying: “when I got home, Mama relaxed my hair with Dark & Lovely and tied it into a ponytail, because Ms Peters reported my afro as ‘destructive’ to the principal” (61). Again, there is no explanation as to how the girl’s hair could be destructive.

Both Matlwa and Mopai here show that despite the end of apartheid female South African experience is dominated by their appearance which is deemed too black. This is something which comes from celebrity culture, from institutions such as schools and even from their friends. Both authors illustrate the way in which young women must internalise these standards in order to be able to participate in modern South Africa. They always inevitably fail but must continue to try in order to not be deemed “destructive.”

Female experience in South Africa: Violence

In the last chapter we saw that sexual violence is often used as a symbol of the nation or some process that the nation is going through. Although sexual violence is endemic in South Africa, actual acts of violence against women rarely appear in literature beyond their symbolic value. Mopai’s work does not treat rape as a symbol that can contribute to narratives of the South African nation, but instead as a sadly common occurrence. It is something which has a place in the collective memory of transition, but not merely as a symbol of the fate of the nation. “Madness” provides a first-person perspective on sexual violence. It doesn’t symbolise anything, and there is no hope such as that found in *Period Pain.* This story does not attempt to be part of a South African narrative of memory, but instead insists on the importance of this young girl’s experience. It is not a comment on the TRC, or colonial myths, but rather an investigation of an all-too-common experience in South Africa.

“Madness” describes the experience of a young girl in modern day South Africa. The main character Dikeledi is a young teenager, who is suicidal following the rape and subsequent pregnancy: “…I hate myself and this baby, every second that it’s inside me. That three months ago, I wanted to drink a bottle of Jik and end it all" (Mopai "Madness" 7). Her mother, who refuses to accept she has been raped, blames her for getting pregnant:

> When I told my mother what had happened, she said I was lying. She said I was a rotten-spoilt-promiscuous drunkard. When I found out I was carrying, she said I was an irresponsible, stupid girl who doesn't even know who got her pregnant. That I was bewitched. She also said I was sent into this world to make her suffer. (10)

Her perceived bad behaviour means that even if she was raped, it is still her own fault. Her mother tells her friend that:

> She tiptoed and climbed out the windows and the walls like some thief in the night – running to some pub every weekend! Do you hear me, Lisbeth? Every single weekend, Dikeledi went to that pub to drink. She is a drunk!...As a mother raising a daughter by myself, I wonder, where did I go wrong? Did I spoil her too much? Was taking her to the best schools harmful to her? Now, she doesn't even go to school because she's ashamed of her big stomach." (9)

She is shamed by her mother, who does not want her to be present at her brother's funeral. She is angry at her mother's attempt to silence her, yet still feels unable to tell what really happened: "should I rather announce to everyone in attendance that one Saturday night, a man I'd never met before grabbed me on my way home, pushed and pressed my body against his car seat, and forced himself on me? That he was so strong, squeezing me down like a shoe crushing a cockroach, that when I tried screaming and kicking, my entire body felt paralysed?" (9-10). There is no important symbolic ending to this story, as is the case in *Period Pain*. It is simple a record of the everyday violence that many young girls suffer in South Africa.

Female experience in South Africa: activism

The texts I have chosen for this thesis focus on the difficulties of growing up in postapartheid South Africa. There is a great deal of description of suffering, either through violence or because the characters do not feel like they fit in due to their appearance or other factors beyond their control. However, these texts also show that women in South Africa are more than just victims of ongoing postapartheid injustice. Women appear as workers and activists, as mothers and friends. I will explore a few examples of the roles of women in postapartheid South Africa that whilst not uncomplicated, are not directly traumatic. Two of the texts chosen for this thesis represent women as workers and activists, not merely victims of the postapartheid state. In *Period Pain* Masechaba is a doctor and activist. In *Always Another Country* Msimang works towards creating the new South Africa she cares so deeply about.

Msimang describes growing and having to deal with the normal problems of adolescence. She did not grow up in South Africa but returned there as a young adult to work. Both in her personal and working life she finds a way to shape the country she was exiled from. When she encounters injustice when she returns to South Africa, she feels empowered to counter it. She chastises an older woman for referring to her servant as “my Zulu.” She is also involved in defending the victims of racism she witnesses. As a rich independent person with a foreign passport, she feels able to stand up for those who are not able to defend themselves often due to poverty. She shows that there is a role for women in South Africa that is empowered and can empower others.

In *Period Pain* Masechaba is moved by the violence she witnesses against immigrant communities to start a petition. She publicises this work on the television and it is fulfilling. She also works as a doctor in the underfunded public sector. Although she by no means sees herself in this way, others see her as a role model:

Father Joshua wasted no time. Within weeks of receiving my medical practitioner’s license from the Health Professionals Council of South Africa, he asked me to speak to the youth about careers. He said young people needed to be encouraged. Our people didn’t value education anymore, he lamented, and maybe if they saw someone like me doing well, they might be inspired (Matlwa *Period Pain* 21).

She is able to take pride in her activism, despite the condemnation she receives from some people at the hospital. Although it is apparent that she enjoys the publicity, it is also true that she is pleased to be able to do some good for her country and a cause she believes in:

> Lord, it's so strange, You know. I always knew You were going to use me for something important, but I couldn't have guessed it would be this. It really feels great to be at the forefront of something good. I can't remember the last time I achieved something single-handedly. I'm finally coming into my own. The Mail & Guardian described me as a young activist, an inspiration. I've never thought of myself as an activist, as inspiring to anyone, but there it all was, and they said it, not me (81).

When she is attacked Masechaba sees herself as being reduced merely to her gender, or even to her sexual function as a woman. She explains:

> There's nothing extraordinary about my story, it happens everywhere, every day. It doesn't matter that I'm highly educated, a doctor, that I started a petition that made the newspapers. I have a vagina. That's all that matters (21).

The novel does not bear this out, however. Masechaba is a complex character who makes an impact both through her work and her activism. Although she despairs of her life meaning anything following the attack, she is able to recover and continue to contribute. *Period Pain* illustrates the complexity of activism by women in South Africa, followed as they are by the constant threat of violence. However, the novel shows that women are taking part in creating collective memory in contemporary South Africa. They are promoting the issues they care about and forcing those around them to accept the cruelty of their anti-immigrant narratives.

Conclusion

The danger inherent in regarding certain experiences as unique to women is that it risks recreating the essentialist categories which trap women in the first place. However, female writers do seem to be attempting to diversify the roles that women play in their novels, short stories and memoirs. This does not only mean that they are moving away from the figure of the woman as symbolic, but also that they explore a variety of different ways of being a woman in contemporary South Africa.

Conclusions

Representations of collective memory in literature by young, black, South African, female writers are explored in this thesis. This exploration foregrounds the role that gender, race and generation play in the construction of collective memory both on a textual level and in terms of the authors themselves. My conclusions are outlined below – explaining how young authors experience generational disappointment, and the decreasing representation of apartheid in their work. I will also present my conclusions regarding how these authors engage with the limitations of a national perspective on memory, how memory is portrayed and re-written from a feminist perspective, and finally the deliberate memory-work these authors have engaged in through their writing.

Generational disappointment

The integration generation convey a sense of disappointment about the current state of society in their literature but retain hope for the future of South Africa. Their childhoods began in the apartheid years, and they came of age in a moment of great hope when the ANC won the first fully democratic elections. Their adult lives have been marked by widespread societal disappointment, firstly in the so-called Rainbow Nation and then with the failure of the ANC government to achieve as much change as was hoped. Both this hope and this disappointment leads the authors to highlight issues in South African society today. They may well blame the apartheid for the problems that they identify in postapartheid South Africa, however they are shining a spotlight on what is happening now, rather than the crimes and suffering of the past. As van der Vlies suggests, this disappointment is inevitable in a society which was, and to a large degree remains, so future focused. The dreams of postapartheid life were never going to be fully realised, even if not adapting a reconciliation rather than redistribution dominated approach might have led to a greater degree of success, or perception of success. Political events have also played a role in a nation plagued by corruption, disillusionment with the ANC and continued racism, but primarily the lack of material change in people's lives.

Limited representation of apartheid

Apartheid is rarely represented in these texts either in terms of inherited memory or the characters' own memories. The unfinished nature of apartheid and the incomplete process of decolonisation (Oyedemi "Postcolonial Casualties" 218) contribute towards a sense of urgency regarding the problems that persist in South Africa today, rather than the problems of the past. They largely ignore the apartheid in their literature. It does not exist as a traumatic absence in collective memory, but rather is part of a continuum of cultural and economic injustice. In other words, the apartheid has not truly ended. I have suggested that a lack of change following the democratic de-colonisation of South Africa may have had a serious impact on the construction of the apartheid as a national trauma which is in the past. This is not to say that nothing has changed. Legally, black and white South Africans are now completely equal. Black people now work in all areas of employment and can live wherever they choose freedoms which were completely denied during the apartheid regime. The area where change has been limited is in terms of economic and social decolonisation. However, apartheid for many people has not ended. Mopai, Matlwa and Msimang in particular show us that that is the case. They identify both enduring poverty and the powerlessness that it implies. They also explore another kind of powerlessness, linked to a failure to decolonise the social sphere. End of apartheid did not mean the end of social and cultural inequality. Public spaces and beauty standards remain controlled by ideals deriving from the culture of the European colonisers. Manenzhe, approaching from a different perspective, shows that apartheid was not the start of racial inequality. Her novel ties South Africa to other postcolonial nations, not treating it as exceptional because of apartheid but rather a victim of the same colonial oppression that affected much of the world.

Representation of apartheid decreasing

The apartheid has become less significant during the time period I have chosen for my study (2007-2020). Early works of literature such as Matlwa's *Coconut* display a greater concern with the apartheid; *The Yearning* focuses on trauma configured in a similar to the TRC. Later works, and texts by the younger authors of this cohort either look to the present, or further back in the past in their representations of South African identity and memory. Contemporary literature has moved from a concern with democratic decolonisation to a focus on economic and cultural decolonisation. Younger authors and more recent publications are even less focused on apartheid than the older members of my cohort (Msimang) or early publications (Matlwa's *Coconut*). *Coconut*, an early publication, focuses on cultural decolonisation, with some reference to the economic issues which blight the country. Their contribution to cultural memory consists of attempting to capture the moment they are living through, whilst being plagued by doubts that what they have to say is not really significant enough. *The Yearning* approaches memory from the perspective of traumatic absence, yet still presents the possibilities of hybrid, postcolonial memory which travels between the individuals and groups which makes up South Africa. The later publications focus on economic decolonisation and are, in general, less hopeful (*Period Pain*, *If You Keep Digging*). Manenzhe's *Scatterlings* looks to an even broader sense of cultural loss, linking South Africa to other postcolonial nations.

Memory is not national

Memory, even within the borders of South Africa, is shown to be always travelling (Erll). The characters in these groups belong to a variety of groups which help to form their complex identities. These can perhaps be most clearly seen in Manenzhe's *Scatterlings*, where narratives from all around the world contribute to a picture of South African identity and collective memory. Attempts to create national narratives, such as the TRC, are presented as failures by this generation of authors. They insist on the complexity of South African society, where no single narrative is sufficient to describe all its people. Mashigo illustrates the way in which people belong to a variety of traditions even within South Africa. She shows that they can comfortably switch between social groups and ways of being. Such code switching does not need to be a source of conflict. From a less positive perspective, Mopai explores the motivations of those who were privileged during apartheid and illustrates their reluctance to give up narratives of collective memory which support their former position. Manenzhe takes this further, looking to the origins of the mixture of peoples that modern day South Africa has become. This generation of writers is moving towards asking why, rather than simply pointing out the problems they see in contemporary South Africa. Rather than looking just at the injustices of the apartheid, or the present day, they are illustrating the trends and movements that present possible explanations regarding how this situation came to be, such as xenophobia, colonialism, or misogyny. The factors that affect South African's lives are not only national, but also international.

Rewriting and representing female experience

The experiences of women have often been used in collective memory to tell stories of the nation. These female writers are reclaiming myth, rewriting it to reflect women's important role in the creation and sharing of collective memory. Collective memory in South Africa is strongly affected by gender even where that connection is not acknowledged. Collective memory is often understood as a non-gendered neutral; however, contemporary authors demonstrate how important gender is to the stories that are included in national narratives. Collective memory has "a male orientation despite the claim that it is universal and inclusive" (Paletschek and Schraut 10). Women's testimony and experiences are often elided, or only preserved for their symbolic value: "Women as actors, their agency and their self-perceptions and aims are often marginalized and forgotten" (10).

The collective memory which female authors are producing through literature in contemporary South Africa is at odds with the symbolic way female experience was traditionally used in literature. The hidden narratives of female experience in traditional culture and myth are exposed by contemporary South African writers. This cultural memory is often pre-colonial but has still been strongly affected by the colonial and apartheid eras. These authors show the often-colonial routes of misogynistic traditions, and the way in which matriarchal structures were down-played both during and following colonial times. The contemporary authors whose work featured in this thesis exploit the feminist potential of cultural memory, as well as performing rewritings of cultural memory in order to reflect the current concerns of women in South Africa.

In the postapartheid period the TRC laid the groundwork for the relationship between women's testimony and trauma. The complexity of the 'unsilencing' attempted by the TRC and the link it made between women and violence in South African collective memory continues to dominate South African literature to this day. These texts insist on the importance of the realities of life for women in postapartheid South Africa. The women they portray are not merely symbols or allegories to be used within narratives of collective memory. They are witnesses and givers of testimony fulfilling a variety of roles with South Africa today.

Consciously writing collective memory

These authors are consciously attempting to create a collective memory of contemporary South Africa. They are concerned about a lack of books published by authors of a similar social demographic to themselves. Despite the external generational disappointment these authors personally have achieved a great deal, both in the literary world and in other professional fields. However, both their work and their views expressed in interviews reflect an awareness that they are in a minority and have had to work against rather than with the new South Africa. These authors are not concerned with representations of apartheid, but rather have a sense of the importance of events occurring in their own lives. They appear to share a sense that their work makes an important contribution to collective memory and the sense of who South Africans are and where their country is going. They tackle issues such as violence and poverty, as well as racism. The works share a sense of expectation placed on young people as a generation, and the pain at feeling that despite gains which have been made they are still a long way from achieving those goals. These works of literature read as disappointed but not defeated. These young authors are engaged with the idea of South Africa, and finding a way to love it again. Manenzhe writes:

> It will sound naïve, but I guess I'm trying to find the beauty in our country. There is a lot to be frustrated with; so it's become necessary to actively find reasons to love this place. That was one of the reasons I searched for the folktales that I fused into the book. Such simple moments of beauty are necessary. I suppose my message then would be for people to try to be more in touch with our home. There's a lot of beauty to be found. (Manenzhe "Dreams Can Become Enemies")

Contemporary South Africa writers are attempting to contribute to a collective memory which is not colourblind but rather considers the concerns of young, black women and has a space for their experience. The writers I have included in this thesis take an intersectional approach, aiming for: "a culture of memory which not only takes into account gender, but also social, cultural and ethnic difference" (Paletschek and Schraut 25). This is still very much a work in progress, but the examples of contemporary literature considered in this thesis show the important role that authors have to play in creating a new kind of collective memory for South Africa. I have tried to find a balance between acknowledging the "emergent" nature of these writers, and not merely assessing them as "new" and of cultural rather than literary interest. It is important to acknowledge the traditions they are writing into, but also the obstacles that would have prevented many authors like them in the past achieving publication and widespread readership. Literature by black women has long been ignored or dismissed by the critical and academic establishments. These writers, to borrow Boswell’s words, have written their stories anyway. Manenzhe, speaking on the topic of young, black, female writers claimed: “There need to be a lot more of us. There can't just be stories that are the exception” (Manenzhe “interview”). Whatever South African literature becomes in the future, as the apartheid becomes a distant memory, writers such as these and their exceptional stories deserve to be a celebrated part of it.

Appendix A: Interview with Keletso Mopai

Interview conducted the 8th September 2020 (unpublished)

As well as If You Keep Digging, you have published many other short stories. What draws you to this medium?

Someone once said it's because of instant gratification one has after finished work and that's why short story writers write short stories. I found that intriguing, that the reason I write shorter works is because longer works take too much time and kind of drag a story that could have perfectly fit into less than 5000 words. Perhaps that's the reason I'm drawn to short stories, and because I know myself, I don't like over writing or over explaining things, hence readers often commend my minimalistic way of writing and simpler prose. For me personally, I believe it's because I enjoy short stories, they are so hard and challenging to write contrary to what people think and I love that. I like reading short stories too; the best writers I know have written short fiction or are short stories writers. I also enjoy getting my work published in my favorite journals, any writer would tell you how acknowledging it is for your work to get featured in a good journal that pays well and has a lot of readership. So, there's that. There is a need for me to keep perfecting my craft and short stories have so far worked well for me.

What inspired you to write this short story collection? Why did you think that these stories needed to be told?

With If You Keep Digging, I didn't decide one day that I was going to write a short story collection. The stories were already there (as some were already published). I needed two or more new short stories in order to complete a short story collection of twelve stories that have similar themes. What inspired me to publish a collection, however, was because of the stories themselves; I knew how important and impactful they'd be to people in my country or anywhere in the world because of the themes I covered. I had hoped somehow that someone will feel seen in the characters and know they aren't alone. And it did that, I receive messages from readers of the book who express how my writing has spoken for them- their rage, sadness, etc. There is also empathy I was seeking from the stories (I realized way later after publication) from those who know these kind of characters (orphans, rape victims, people living with mental health issues, queer people etc.) but somehow overlooked or ignored them prior to reading *If You Keep Digging.*

Many of your characters, and particularly narrative voices, are young, female and black. Why do you think such voices are so under-represented in literature?

Because the mainstream consumption aren't authors interested in the lives of young Black women. That's why it is important to publish more talented Black writers who can tell these stories and be read by a wide audience.

Your short story collection has an incredible range of perspectives from individuals who have had strikingly different life experiences. How did you develop authentic voices for these different characters?

I made sure that I visualize the characters. This I did by closing my eyes and having conversations in my head. Some characters were easier to write about because I'm familiar with their lives, like the first short story in the collection, titled Madness which follows a young pregnant girl whose mentally ill brother was discovered dead in a bush. I'm familiar with the mentally ill brother issue because I grew up in a township where mentally ill people roam the streets and are ridiculed just as the character Lucky in that story. Then there are stories like Monkeys, the third story in the collection which was particularly difficult to write since the main characters in the story were white and lived in a farmhouse, a scene I'm not familiar with. So, it really depends on the characters and how hard I have to work on the story in order for the story to be believable, authentic and to sound right in the readers ears.

Many of your stories seem to focus on negotiating identity under difficult circumstances. Is this something which you think is particularly important in South African literature and culture?

I'm influenced by my surrounding and though I might have not realized at the time as I was writing but South Africa is a very difficult country to live in. The way our society was designed and was shaped by the Apartheid system makes living extremely hard. And so my job as a storyteller is to reflect the current times in my country and how social constructs affects our interactions. So yes, it is important.

The issue of memory comes up in many of your stories, specifically with younger generations not being fully informed of the experiences of older generations. Do you think that this is an attempt to protect younger people, or that the trauma is too difficult to talk about?

I think the "rainbow nation" phenomena created in 1994 was and is such a big fat lie that a lot of South Africans believed or believe in. In this rainbow nation the ills of the past are long gone, and we are "together" in our different skins and backgrounds, Black, white, colored and Indian. We believed in this so much that we were unaware about the extensive damage that has already occurred; we just fixed what we thought was broken. Even when the pipes were leaking and the whole family couldn’t sit together on the same table, we lived together, separately. It's not about protecting young people, that mama and Dada went through a traumatic experience and want the children not to know how it affected them, it's not that, it's simply just placing a gum on a gunshot wound and telling everyone else in the world that you are okay. Mandela is president, so everything is good. Black politicians became rich, everything is perfect. Black and white people enter the same rooms, absolutely good. That's exactly what happened to South Africa; we lied to ourselves.

What do you think is the role of a storyteller? What do you hope to achieve through your writing?

Would it seem strange if I say I'm hopeless? It would be, but sometimes I am. Because my writing alone would not instantly change the state of my country, no matter how many times I write about problems that affect South Africans. My job however is to place a mirror in front of us and interpret and portray what is reflected. And what I see is mostly devasting, and often what those kind of sad stories do is invoke fear, tears, or introspection. For me that's a good start to changing how we see ourselves and the world we live in.

I find your writing very political and inspirational, as it gave me an insight into people’s lives that are very different from my own. It reminded me of Sisonke Msimang’s TED

talk[24] where she discusses whether storytelling can be "a catalyst for social action." Do you think it can be?

Yes, definitely. I see my writing as some sort of activism, just as a musician or a painter can express rage or love or whatever feeling they are going through their work, I too express my voice through my stories.

Two of the stories in your collection *If You Keep Digging*, "Monkeys" and "In Papa's Name", offer two strikingly different versions of the same day, why did you choose to include them in the collection in the order you did?

I wrote "In Papa's Name" in 2017 during a mentorship writing program, and it was an accessible story to me because of the setting, which is my home township. The ending of the story where the four boys are walking around in their neighbourhood and come across a flashy car really bothered me. The occurrences in that scene were troubling, for me as a writer, and so I was curious. The two white boys in the car who throw bananas at the Black boys, who are they? Where do they come from? Why were they in that township and at that time? I needed to know these things and the questions wouldn't leave me. So then came the character Nicolas in the story Monkeys, who lived in a nearby town and was living in a farm. Everything that developed in Monkeys was me trying to understand what happened at the end of "In Papa's Name". Though I had written In Papa's Name first, I placed Monkeys before "In Papa's Name" in the collection because I wanted the connection between the two stories to click only at the end of reading "In Papa's Name". Another reason was because I wanted to create a sense of range since the first story in the book is from a perspective of a Black voice and "Monkeys" has a different voice of that of a white child.

The central character in Monkeys is largely sympathetic, are the stories a comment on the way racism is structural rather than (or as well as) actions taken by individuals?

In South Africa, racism is like an engine that drives our society. White people enjoy having the upper hand, at schools, workplaces, and in public spaces i.e. places of amusement. I don't know how many racist incidents we've had caught on video in the recent years and exposed on social media. So, we can't even imagine what happens when the camera isn't there. There are multiracial schools today that have separate toilets for white and Black kids. There is also a separation of white from Black colleagues at some workplaces. Apartheid has done so much damage and because human beings enjoy feeling powerful, majority of white South Africans aren't willing to change. We see it in the way they create stories about how there is a high rate of white farmers; there is no evidence to substantiate that. South Africa has a town called Orania, a white community in the Northern Cape that has separated themselves from the rest of the country; they have their own currency and governance. I mean that alone shows how ridiculous this country is set up.

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[24] Sisonke Msimang "If a story moves you, act on it" TEDex. posted Jan 13, 2017.

"In Papa's Name" shows a central character struggling with the loss of his parents. He is unable to talk to anyone about his parents, and there is a sense that society has also forgotten about him. Do you think that a reluctance to remember is an issue in South Africa, particularly in contrast to the "memory work" which happened after the fall of the apartheid regime?

Absolutely. There is a constant saying by white South Africans in particular "forget the past. apartheid is over." it disturbs me every time when one says that. How do we move forward if we forget? You don't get over a traumatic experience by simply forgetting it, if that's even possible. You deal with a wound by inspecting it and not putting a gum on it, sugarcoating it in the name of a "rainbow nation". It's amusing to me at times, that thousands of Black lives were lost during apartheid but somehow a few years later after the regime ended, we have to "forget" because of a new black democratic president. Is that realistic? And perhaps that was the best way to move forward at the time to avoid chaos but was it the best way to do it? Shouldn't wealth be distributed. Shouldn't there be land distribution and compensation. Shouldn't there be a way to restore dignity? None of that was done and now it's clear as day how not going through that process is dividing us socially and economically. South Africa is the most unequal country in the world, that's very discouraging after twenty years of democracy. There has been improvement but is that enough when majority in our country is still poor and unemployed regardless of level of education. Today, we realize that because white South Africans benefited from apartheid and black South Africans needed to start at the very bottom in order to reach their white counterparts, we have a long way to go, and it seems we aren't going anywhere but rather imploding.

These two stories are based in 1996, when I believe that you were four years old. How did you imagine the experiences of your characters in this time, which presumably you don’t remember?

I wrote from a perspective of postpartheid South Africa and because I know much hasn't changed in my country since 1994, it wasn't hard to imagine the time then and how hopeful and yet unequal South Africans where back then, which is the same state now. Many of your stories focus on violence, whether murder or abuse. This violence is often, though not always, gender-based. Is this something that you feel is particularly important to write about, or something that you feel is very prevalent? Femicide and rape rates are the highest in South Africa. This is a problem that needs a solution and my frustration shows in my stories. Every single day there is a headline about another woman who had been murdered by someone close to them or even a stranger. It's really frustrating and discouraging to be a woman in South Africa. At the end of Professor Banda Ntokozo says to Bokang: “We have already won.” Do you think that this is true for these characters, and for survivors of abuse generally as their voices start to be heard more often? To this day, I don't like how that story ended. I don't think it offered a true reflection because it was too hopeful. I concluded the story during the rise of the “me too” movement and perhaps because of my fickle heart I hoped things will be different. I do admit that there has been change because abusers are brought forward and dealt with publicly, but there are victims of sexual misconduct that are still afraid to speak up because they are afraid of being judged, which was the case of Bokang in Professor Banda.

I found Becoming a God a really interesting story, and probably the hardest to understand as someone not from South Africa. Could you tell me about the inspiration behind this story?

“Becoming a God” was largely inspired by the history of the Rain Queens of Bolobedu, if you read my essay "Can You Please Say Something In Khelobedu" published on Catapult, I talk about the magic and power they had. Becoming a God was also inspired by the process of becoming a traditional healer in South Africa, where one goes through hardships or becomes sick while on their journey of becoming a healer. And in this story, I term them gods because of their great powers. I wanted to show how magic can be passed through generations in an African family, and that wouldn't mean they use black magic or are witches. The word "witch" has a lot of baggage in my country unlike in the western world or as portrayed in American films, so I moved away from that and rather explored power, however mythical or real.

Appendix B: Interview with Rešoketšwe Manenzhe

Scatterlings includes many different voices, people of different ages, races, genders and backgrounds. What were the challenges in achieving authenticity for all these characters?

One of the biggest challenges I had was simply that I haven't lived any of these people's lives and it's a different time period. I don't have a lot in common with any of them except perhaps Mmakoma (Gloria) and Josepha. Those are the people I would say I have the most in common with. But everyone else, I had to imagine outside of myself, which meant I had to do a lot more research than perhaps another writer would have to do. I also had to be a lot more observant. So, in writing, for instance, someone like Dido who is a child. And yes, I was a child once upon a time, but I think my memories of being a child are coloured by nostalgia and all of those nice things we feel as we grow older. So, I had to be just a bit more observant of how a child would do this, how a child would feel in this instance. That was honestly very difficult.

I didn't have a problem with the race and gender aspects of it, to be quite honest, simply because I just imagined them as people. These people had to have desires and if I could answer what their desires, what their motivations were, what drove their dynamics, all of those things. If I could answer those questions, I felt that I could answer that and write that honestly. But, going back to the issue of not having lived these people's lives, there had to be a bit of imagination on my part. I hope those two ideas that I've just expressed now don't contradict each other because they felt like to me that they didn't, when I was writing the book.

I found it interesting that Bram and Alisa aren't a perfect couple separated by the Immorality Act, they are a couple separated by the law but also by their own difficult histories, particularly Alisa's. Why did you want to add that extra level of complexity?

One of the things that often gets cited when people talk about the Immorality Act is how it was just a petty act that the apartheid government or the preapartheid government just kind of sprinkled on top of the obvious racism. People mention it as this thing that was just stopping love, as though it was just that part. That has honestly always annoyed me a little bit because the law was actually a lot deeper than that. It was not just because they were just trying to stop love, like it was not a Romeo and Juliet thing. It's like the Natives Land Act, these things had to build on each other. If the government allowed white people and black people to get married to each other, black people or black parents could take advantage of their children's votes or their children's rights as the offspring of white people .If you have one white parent, there could be some leeway; biologically you were entitled to this privilege. And that was one of the reasons that that act came into play. It wasn't because they were just trying to stop Romeo and Juliet kind of love. It was because apartheid or the preapartheid laws, they had to be absolute, they had to completely exclude certain populations.

In in writing this novel, I really didn't want to give the impression that the law is the thing that stopped their love. The law had to be the thing that causes the tragedy that really sort of sheds a wider light on the, the tragedies that a lot of South Africans had to endure. It just didn't make sense for me to kind of feed into the sort of misconstrued idea that this law was just petty that it didn't really serve anything except to be kind of frivolous.

Both personal and collective memories are often referred to in the novel. What is the importance of such memories, in your view, in the creation of individual and group identities? Is there such a thing as South African memory?

I think memories, especially collective memories, are very important because these are the stories, we then go on to tell each other about our lives. What we remember and what we choose to emphasise then becomes the narrative. That old saying about history being told from the perspective of the victors, kind of feeds into this as well.

In terms of there being a collective South African memory, this one has been quite interesting for me, especially just seeing how we look at South African history with a modern lens. When I try to reconcile that with the world's understanding of a South African memory one of the most jarring things for me, the most shocking things for me is, has how the world constantly only wants to remember, for instance, Nelson Mandela. So that's something that I would think that people think is a South African memory or a South African collective kind of agreement. But when you look into South Africa itself, the collective memory is actually quite, splintered is not exactly the right word, but it goes in different directions.

We remember a lot more than what people see as remembering. The world remembers one thing, and the idea is that South Africans remember this one thing too, but South Africans themselves remember very differently. So, for instance, we remember the Steven Bikos, the Neil Aggetts, there's so many more people that we looked to and these people had a hand in creating South Africa. Sara Baartman, all of these people, they had a hand, but they're not necessarily universally celebrated like other people like Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu.

I found the interaction of memory and history in your novel very interesting. The superficially important historical event of the novel is the Immorality Act; however, your novel exposes the many smaller injustices that are held in Alisa's memory, which lead to her suicide. Why was it important to you to tether these personal experiences to a significant historical event?

So as soon as I realised that I was writing historical fiction, I also realised that, history is a very difficult thing to play around with because it exists. It is rigid. You can't change it. You can change how you tell it, and you can certainly change the mood and so forth, or tell it in a positive light, one thing in a positive light, light, one thing in a negative light. But history, the fact, the facts themselves, the truth itself, it's there. That thing, you cannot, you absolutely cannot change that.

And so, that it wasn't very interesting to me to just tell a story of the Immorality Act because it's such a landmark thing. People know what it is, but again, you know, people's interpretation of what it means is something that I sometimes struggle with. And so it became very important to me to examine this not only as an Act that was applied to South Africa, but as a thing that affected the personal lives of ordinary everyday people.

So even going beyond Alisa, you can see that it affects someone like Gloria, even though she's not in a relationship with a white man or a white woman, she's very divorced from this act itself as it stands. However, when you dig deeper, it also affects her. I was a lot more interested in that. None of my primary characters are historical. These are all people I imagined, so I needed to just kind of have that freedom to imagine what this big, big thing would've done to these people.

A lot of first novels are said to be autobiographical in some way, and many younger authors focus on their experience of the end of apartheid or the transition or South Africa today. Why did you choose to write a historical novel?

I chose historical novel and I went back as far as 1927, simply because like the 1980s, the 1960s, those are very well documented. But I was personally interested in what happened before that. How did we get here? Because 1948 doesn't just happen. 1948 is when apartheid officially starts but I was very interested in how do we get here? What happened before that? As I read more, I found out all of these laws, they came by stages. So we have things like the Native Land Act, we have the Immorality, Immorality Act. All of these things that came before actually ended up dictating like that the laws have to be, and the discrimination had to be, absolute.

With every kind of law that was passed, there was kind of a loophole, and that loophole would necessitate a new law, which would necessitate a new law which would necessitate a new law. In the end, in 1948, official apartheid *had* to happen. And so that's why I went back in history and it's specifically why I went so far back in history. It was because I wanted to see from my own personal perspective, which I can then fictionalise, what happened, what went wrong? How did we get to such a messed-up situation, and why was it so hard to dismantle it?

Women seem to carry the burden of memory in your books, both in terms of preserving the stories of a community but also the memories of a family. They write journals, tell stories and keep the connection to the ancestors. Do you think that collective memory is gendered?

For me it's not that I find that, collective memory is necessarily gendered, but I think a lot of the time, if you are the wronged party or a quote unquote “natural victim”, in any situation, there would be kind of inclination to diagnose, to try and figure out how did we end up here. So I think perhaps women have a stronger inclination to try and understand their position because, it's not a position that makes sense by any matrix. So you just kind of sit and think: this is what my reality is. Why is this my reality? What has history contributed to this reality and so forth and so forth.

In *Scatterlings* memory seems to both haunt and to comfort, how can we draw on memories of the past to move forward in a positive way without forgetting, rather than to be haunted and traumatically attached to the past? Do you think in South Africa the balance between forgetting and remembering has been found?

I think South Africa is very interesting in that it never had a full reckoning of what happened in apartheid. I mean, there was the truth and reconciliation commission, a forum where the families of individuals who had gone missing were trying to figure out what had happened to their families. I feel that was poorly done because there was really no acknowledgement of some of the wrongs that were done. A lot of it was kind of done in the spirit of we need to just hush this all up and kind of move on. We need to move on, black people need to get over it.

In the context of South Africa it's like if you, if you scratch yourself or you get stabbed or something, so that's a stupid example, but it's like if you get stabbed and it's a very deep wound and you bleed a lot and it really damages you, but you never even go to the clinic to get it bandaged. And so now you've just got this gushing wound that continues to bleed until someday it maybe stops, but you never examined it. You never tried to heal it. And there's just that ticking bomb and that fear, that anxiety, that one day something internal is going to fail because you never actually went back and tried to figure out what went wrong. You never tried to do it. You just moved on in time because you were like, Okay, I just need to get over this. I think that's what happened with South Africa, so there can't be, in my opinion, a burdening or a haunting because we never actually did the necessary or the proper acknowledgement of what happened. We just kind of moved on, it's been ticking and ticking and ticking and it bursts out every once in a little while. There are indications of something going wrong or something being in incredibly, terribly wrong, and there's a very intense, unsettling building up of anxiety and tension. And that frightens me. That frightens me because I don't know where it's going, but I do know that it's going to a very terrible place.

In *Scatterlings* Alisa is said to have kinship with the staff present at her funeral, despite the "distance" they had maintained. Dido and Bram are able to gain kinship with Mmakoma through a deliberate act. It seems that kinship in your novel can be both unconsciously held or sought out. How would you describe your conception of kinship and how does it relate to belonging to a certain place?

Being South African, one of the first things we ask each other as South Africans when we first meet is that, where are you from? That's because as South Africans, we recognise a question of geography, a question of place indicates more than just someone's geographical origin.

For instance, if I told you I live in a certain suburb or a certain township or a certain village, there's already some form of background you can try to build around me. If I mention an affluent suburb that you know is an affluent suburb, you can kind of try to build my economic background. In South Africa, when someone says a place, if I say I'm from Limpopo, you can actually build an economic background or social class and all of that stuff. That's also a result of apartheid spatial planning. So certain people of a certain class of a certain race could only live in certain areas. So, there's a lot of that, when someone tells you immediately where they're from, you can immediately think "ah, so you are this type of person."

But another thing that we get from naming a place that we come from is a sort of history as well. If I tell you I'm from Limpopo, you can sort of build a history, you can immediately narrow down which tribe I belong to. You can immediately narrow down which language I would speak at home.. Whether I'm from a village or a city, you can narrow down a whole lot of things about me and if I go on to tell you that my parents came from this place or that place you can then also narrow down something like a history. So, my parents or my grandparents would've been displaced there from during apartheid times. And apparently a lot of people from other countries don't necessarily ask each other these questions more specifically in Africa. And it made them a lot more like uncomfortable when we asked it as South Africans. But for us, that wasn't really like a bad thing. It was kind of like, Hello, how are you? Where are you from? Because we are also trying to find how we related in some way. Do we belong to the same tribe? Do we speak the same language?

There's an old joke in South Africa about how no one is from Joburg, everyone else is from somewhere else, and they go to Joburg for work. So, when you meet in Joburg and you ask a person, where are you from? You're trying to figure out, are we the same people? Can we speak with, with each other without having to use English? So, there's a lot of historical kind of background to it. And the sense of belonging to a place, it's one of those uniquely, or perhaps not uniquely, I shouldn't assume, but it's one of those South African things that I don't necessarily know how to explain. Like when you're a South African, you just kind of get it.

Your novel explores the idea of inherited destiny. A character is said to have war in his blood, and Dido inherits her mother's tendency to "dwell too much in memories." Is this a metaphor for the way memories of wrong can echo down the generations, such as inherited collective trauma?

So, there is something that speaks to the concept of inherited trauma There's this theory that, one of the reasons that black men specifically kind of walk with the swag that kind of makes it look like the limping. I'm not sure if you know what I'm talking about. Like, they walk like with a little bit of a swag where, you know, it's kind of like a rhythm, right? And if you didn't know, you would kind of assume that one of their legs is injured. One of the theories is that that came about because of how black men in the Americas who were enslaved would get hobbled when they ran away. So when they came back, they would get hobbled, one of their feet or ankles would be deliberately disabled by their white masters, to discourage them from ever running away again. And they couldn't run because, well, now they have this permanent limp. So over time those slaves would have gained a sort of notoriety or a kind of infamy among other slaves. Even though they had failed and they had been brought back, they would still kind of be heroes, because then you would know if you see someone who walks like that, you know, at one point they ran away, like they dared to defy the system. They dared to be free. And there was a kind of beauty in that. And so over time you see this, this swag kind of developing in individuals who didn't even get hobbled. And to this day, even today, we still have black men swaging around and, and it's something that you inherit. It's something that they intentionally do, it's not a physical, biological ability that just happens at birth. They have to actively do it.

I know it's kind of like a myth also. So I'm not sure like how true all that I have just said is. But I was kind of like exploring those sorts of ideas, like what do we inherit without even knowing we've inherited them? Like traumas, but also what's cool, all of these things, we pass them on a lot of the time without even realizing it.

Alisa describes herself as marked by history: "If I wasn't who I am, they couldn't so easily see evidence of tragedies I inherited from my ancestors. But I am black and this history is etched in my blood. It marks my skin." What role does the body play in collective memory and the remembrance of history?

I think specifically for black people, you know, we are kind of marked. I love being black and I love, I love black people and it's always shocking to find that other people don't love us. That they can just look at us and decide that they don't love us simply because we are black, and that is something that we can't escape. I walk into a room and that is immediately announced. You know, I love it. I love that people look at me and see a black woman. But because people look at me and see a black woman, they are not necessarily always happy, you know? And I just wanted to kind of explore that idea of what happens when people don't even give you a chance. Like you just walk in and they've already decided who you are, what you've done, what your background is, what your talents are, what your capabilities are, by simply looking at you.

You don't even have to say a single word. They don't even need to know what you can do, whatever. They can just look at you and decide an incredible amount of things based on your skin colour or your hair. Like that's all they need. So I wanted to speak to that, because Alisa, if she had been a woman who was black, but passing, as in, she kind of looked white. If she was mixed race like her daughters. She would not have the same experience, and again, it wouldn't be based on anything other than the fact that people would just look at her and decide all of these different things about her. So that's what I wanted to explore there.

Bram describes Alisa's suicide as "cowardice." In her journal she reflects: "I couldn't spare my daughters the burden of my skin, but I must spare them this – this thing I must do. I can't leave them behind." In my reading of the novel Alisa's act was one of desperation brought on by the impossibility of belonging, neither brave nor cowardly. How did you want her action to be understood?

I didn't want to make the decision for readers to be quite honest with this one. I didn't. I wanted to just present what she had done and what had happened and let people decide. And that's why Alisa's journals are placed, where they are placed, where they are in the book. Because you need to kind of just understand that a terrible thing happened. And then later on without justifying why it happened, kind of get a little bit of a background to that. So I wouldn't call it courageous either. I think it was an act of desperation. But having said that, I think there was a degree of selfishness to it because Alisa didn't need to inflict that on her children. I feel like she didn't give them a chance. You know, there's a lot that could be written about that. What chance do you have as a black girl, in 1927, in the world? There's a lot that can be said about that, but personally, I'm of the opinion that simply because people are living in incredible hardships doesn't mean that they don't deserve to live.

You know, even in the time of slavery. Those enslaved people's lives, they had a right to want to live their lives. You know, of course not under those conditions, but simply because they had those hard conditions doesn't mean that their lives were not something that could. You know, in their private moments or whatever, be beautiful.

That's my opinion. But again, I would never judge Alisa or anyone who, who does what she does. I think people struggle very differently. You know, I think we all just, you know, sometimes people have tried so hard for so long that it's just, it's just so exhausting. And I try to really express that in the book.

South Africa as a nation has devoted a lot of time to the creation of collective memory. Do you see your novel as forming part of national collective memory? What do you think is the role of the storyteller in the creation of collective memory and identity?

Yeah, I do. Well, my very conceited, selfish hope is that my book does enter kind of the national or public consciousness and it kind of enlightens a little bit where it can. I think story tellers are very important, because that can sometimes be easy to consume more specifically because, you know, if you write an ugly time like 1927, especially for black people, as a writer, you can choose happy endings for these people. I can find loopholes and leeways to make this a palatable reality. That's why fiction appeals to me. That's why storytellers appeal to me. That's why I think storytellers are, are important because especially fiction, you know, it can be just a little bit easier to consume something if it can be hopeful because, and I don't mean to dismiss nonfiction, but if I'm just reading a book on 1948, I know how that book ends. You know, if it's nonfiction, like I know how that ends, but if it's fiction, I can imagine that. I can imagine the characters just getting happy endings.

In interviews you have referred to the importance of investing in young, female authors. What was your experience of writing and publishing your novel like? Do you feel hopeful for the possibilities for young women to be able to tell their stories in published form in the future?

I think we still have a very long way to go as a country in terms of just investing in the arts in general. But globally, I'm a little bit more hopeful because, you know, post 2020 the does seem to be a lot more opportunities. I hope that's just not smoke and mirrors and it's actually happening. So I am a little bit hopeful, and my hope personally is that the South African industry grows just a little bit more because it is very difficult to sort of survive on what we make as South African writers. And I don't mean to assume people's economic backgrounds or realities, and I don't mean to knock on my own country.

And I don't mean to be like, oh, feel sorry for us third world, country, whatever. But it's not, necessarily sustainable just being a writer. And that's why I’m exhausted. I've come from the lab, I have had to keep a day job. So that then begs the question, if I'm always exhausted having to keep a day job, is it feasible? Is it worth it for me to remain a writer? You know, how do I feed myself? These are questions that are very important. I've been, of course, lucky enough to secure a few deals that can feed me for a little bit. That's nice, I just wish that kind of thing was a lot more common. I only know maybe four of us or three of us who are South African based to have agents and therefore have even have an opportunity to enter a global market. It’s not nice when it's just you, because then also after a while it kind of starts feeling like you're bragging. There need to be a lot more of us. There can't just be stories that are the exception.

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