



NEW COMPARISONS IN WORLD LITERATURE

# The Worlding of the South African Novel

Spaces of Transition

Jane Poyner

palgrave  
macmillan

# New Comparisons in World Literature

Series Editors

Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee

Department of English Comparative Literary Studies

University of Warwick

Coventry, UK

Neil Lazarus

University of Warwick

Coventry, UK

New Comparisons in World Literature offers a fresh perspective on one of the most exciting current debates in humanities by approaching ‘world literature’ not in terms of particular kinds of reading but as a particular kind of writing. We take ‘world literature’ to be that body of writing that registers in various ways, at the levels of form and content, the historical experience of capitalist modernity. We aim to publish works that take up the challenge of understanding how literature registers both the global extension of ‘modern’ social forms and relations and the peculiar new modes of existence and experience that are engendered as a result. Our particular interest lies in studies that analyse the registration of this decisive historical process in literary consciousness and affect.

### **Editorial Board**

Dr. Nicholas Brown, University of Illinois, USA

Dr. Bo G. Ekelund, University of Stockholm, Sweden

Dr. Dorota Kolodziejczyk, Wroclaw University, Poland

Professor Paulo de Medeiros, University of Warwick, UK

Dr. Robert Spencer, University of Manchester, UK

Professor Imre Szeman, University of Alberta, Canada

Professor Peter Hitchcock, Baruch College, USA

Dr. Ericka Beckman, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

Dr. Sarah Brouillette, Carleton University, Canada

Professor Supriya Chaudhury, Jadavpur University, India

Professor Stephen Shapiro, University of Warwick, UK.

More information about this series at

<http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/15067>

Jane Poyner

The Worlding  
of the South African  
Novel

Spaces of Transition

palgrave  
macmillan

Jane Poyner  
Department of English  
University of Exeter  
Exeter, UK

New Comparisons in World Literature

ISBN 978-3-030-41936-3

ISBN 978-3-030-41937-0 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41937-0>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer  
Nature Switzerland AG 2020

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover image: © Angela Bax/EyeEm, Image ID: 717386907

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

*For Sami and Layla,  
and in memory of their biggest cousin, Ewan*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If this is a book exploring change, it is also one about coming to terms. During the course of the research, we welcomed our twins, Sami and Layla, who have added sparkle to my life. This book is dedicated to them. So too has my family been coming to terms, in a deeply private way: the book is also dedicated to our beloved Ewan and to his mother, Cathy, my sister, who has shown great courage in the face of terrible loss.

I would like to take the opportunity to remember Benita Parry, my Ph.D. supervisor, who has shaped my thinking and the way I work. Benita was a fierce and exacting critic and has made significant contributions to our understanding of culture in the world today. Intellectually generous, she was warm, irreverent and outrageously funny. She was one half of a supervisory team (with Neil Lazarus) that any student would wish for; together, they nurtured numerous scholars like me in the fields of world and postcolonial literatures and cultures. Benita, Neil and Rashmi Varma helped to bring to life the Postcolonial and World Cultures group at Exeter, kindly travelling South to deliver inspiring talks to our exciting new group.

Thank you to James Graham for his input as editor into Chapter 8 on Ivan Vladislavić, as well as other conversations about South African literature, and to Katie Reid for her insightful interview with Vladislavić about his “staying-at-home book”. Katie was good enough to allow me to use this material before it was released for publication at the 2014 ASAUK conference at Sussex University.

I have had the pleasure of working alongside some tremendous colleagues, friends and students at Exeter. Thanks to them all, especially to the Postcolonial and World Cultures group: Chris Campbell, Florian Stadtler and Kate Wallis (Treaşa de Loughry, sadly for us, returned to Ireland). Angelique Richardson and Sally Flint have been supportive colleagues and friends.

The University granted me institutional leave to finish the book. The AHRC and the British Academy funded early gestations of the project, for which I am indebted, including trips to South Africa where I was warmly hosted by UCT. My work has been energised by visits to Wits, UWC and Stellenbosch. Many thanks to *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* for granting permission to republish Chapter 8 on Ivan Vladislavić's *Portrait with Keys*.

Thank you to the New Comparisons in World Literature series at Palgrave Macmillan, edited by Neil Lazarus and Pablo Mukherjee, and to Rebecca Hinsley at Palgrave for their support of the project and through the process to publication.

I would like to thank my wonderful network of Larkhall friends outside my sphere of work, who have helped with the practicalities of childcare when I needed the time to finish the book and with whom we have spent so many happy times. These friends include: Cath, Tania, Tom D, Tamsin, Tom R., Sal, Chris D., Lucy, Alessandro, Wendy, Chris J., Kirstie, Cecelia, Adrian, Melinda, Kristof, Norah, Alex, Naomi, George, Nick, Emma, Mark, Marcia, Ali, Clare, Chris H. and Anna. Thanks to my wonderful family, especially my father, stepfather John and, of course, my mother.



# CONTENTS

1	Introduction: The Political Imperative of Ordinariness	1
2	The Spectacle of Truth	17
3	Irrealism and the “New” South African Historical Novel	65
4	Zakes Mda’s Itinerant Utopias and Unruly Women	113
5	South African AIDS Narratives and the Question of Modernity	157
6	White (Dis)Possession in <i>Triomf</i> and <i>The Good Doctor</i> : Land, Race, Class	197
7	Joining the Dots: Environment, Disease and Enterprise in the “New” South African Novel	235
8	Art and Visual Culture in Ivan Vladislavić’s <i>Portrait with Keys</i>	277
	Index	301



## CHAPTER 1

---

# Introduction: The Political Imperative of Ordinariness

If culture serves as a “barometer of change” (cf. Vladislavić, *Portrait* 31), *The Worlding of the South African Novel* analyses literary responses to political transformation. The premise of the book develops out of an apparent paradox: that despite South Africa undergoing momentous political transition, little in the socio-economic reality *has* actually changed. The country has veered from racial to what Patrick Bond calls “class apartheid” (*Elite* 198): the “systemic underdevelopment and segregation of the oppressed majority, through structured economic, political, environmental, legal, medical and cultural practices largely organised or codified by Pretoria politicians and bureaucrats” (*Elite* 198). Capitalism was the driving force determining the development of racial segregation: the “racist logic” of apartheid, as Neville Alexander argues, was “to guarantee cheap black labour and the continued profitability of ‘maize and gold’” (Alexander 22).<sup>1</sup> That it is predominantly Black South Africans who continue to make up the working classes gives a distinctly racial inflection to class relations today. (Niq Mhlongo voices many Black people’s belief that “there is no black middle class in South Africa, only poverty masked by graduation gowns and debts” [Mhlongo, *Black Tax*].) The changing demographics of segregation has in part been entrenched by the ANC’s about-turn from the radical Left to neoliberalism and a free market economy, in Alexander’s words, “the most startling reality South Africans have to deal with”: the shift towards “market fundamentalism, by

people who still consider themselves to be ‘communists’ and ‘socialists’” (Alexander 2). The lifting of apartheid through the negotiated settlement between the Afrikaner National Party, the ANC and other oppositional groups like the South African Communist Party (SACP), coupled with the inauguration of the ANC-led Government of National Unity in 1994, paved the way for South Africa to be readmitted to a world platform (including world trade). Yet the social realities of millions of ordinary South Africans remain in crisis: housing, employment, access to basic amenities like water and electricity, land reform, the AIDS pandemic, an entrenched patriarchy, sexual violence and environmental justice are some of the key sites that trouble the national myths of rainbowism and South African exceptionalism (the illusion that South Africa, celebrated as now having the world’s most progressive constitution, has somehow averted its fledgling democracy from the fate of those other African countries that have fallen foul of the forces of neocolonialism and global capitalism [Lazarus, “South African” 611]). Always mindful of the ways in which aesthetic form “encompass[es] not only style and technique but a mutually transformative relationship with content” (Bahri 4), the present book is an attempt to engage with this reality as it has been animated in the contemporary South African novel over a twenty-year period, from approximately 1994 to 2014.

A series of neoliberal reform programmes were introduced under the leadership of the ANC to hasten the country’s path to the global market (of course, modern South Africa from colonial times was built on the back of capitalist enterprise with the tapping into natural resources like gold and diamonds). The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), from 1995; the Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR) from 1996; and the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA), from 2005, replaced in 2010 under new President Jacob Zuma by the New Growth Path (NGP), were all promoted as aiming to eradicate poverty and unemployment by means of free trade. But these programmes, like the wider New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) instituted by Mbeki in 2001, were also “homegrown” forms of structural adjustment akin to the Washington Consensus—a raft of economic policies supported by institutions like the IMF, the World Bank and the US treasury ostensibly to support developing countries out of economic crisis (Bond, *Elite* 1; 125; 229; Alexander 151) but that were to dig them further into crippling debt and dependency on imperialist powers. The “implicit premises” of NEPAD, for example, as Bond argues,

were to “armtwist” developing countries into “deeper integration [...] into the global financial system to promote economic growth and development” (*Talk Left* 77). Alongside Mbeki’s cornerstone of an African Renaissance, which was to promote African culture as well as develop a strong, agential African economy (Lazarus, “South African” 618), these policies were indicative of what Bond makes titular reference to as the “talk left, walk right” practices characterising Pretoria’s new, neoliberal elite.

How are these socio-economic realities registered in the South African novel? With the benefit of a degree of historical perspective, we no longer should worry, as many commentators did on the eve of democracy, about the South African novelist’s sense of purpose in the political-intellectual sphere within which they have a long and illustrious history. As South Africa emerged from apartheid, capturing the mood of the time, Rob Nixon in 1996 posed the conundrum that, with the end of apartheid, creative writers apparently “have gained key freedoms but lost, in the process, the very stresses that fuelled their creativity” (“Aftermaths” 64). National introspection during apartheid, which stocked the South African novel with the spectacular events of apartheid’s violent oppression, has given way to extroversion, to a global perspective, reflecting both the freedoms of which Nixon writes, and the impact on ordinary lives of the South African government wholeheartedly embracing a free market economy.

The novels analysed in this book, whilst not bypassing the broader sweep of history, implicitly test the ANC government’s macroeconomic policies through the depiction of what Bond calls the “*micro-level experiences of daily life*” (Bond, *Elite* 3)—something which fiction, in capturing the lived experience of the social reality, is ideally equipped to do. Whilst I am not trying to suggest that the selected novels necessarily convey an overt critique of the political status quo in the “new” South Africa, what I am arguing is that, in content and literary form, they engage in critically challenging and seemingly re-energised ways with the social realities of ordinariness in South Africa today. Whilst South Africa has a very singular history and has followed a singular path to political transition and national reconstruction, the social reality of its poorest communities is marked in ways not dissimilar to impoverished peoples across the world. In other words, the socio-economic outcomes of the South African transition are not exceptional. As my title to the introduction suggests, ordinariness as the banal oppression of apartheid that the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission (TRC) was not equipped to tell becomes a political imperative in these works to reveal that the South African novelist continues to press against the idea of literary commitment that animated cultural debate during apartheid.

Here, we might pause to revisit Njabulo Ndebele's famous critical injunction on the cultural sphere when he argued in 1986 that culture had been reduced to an "art of anticipated surfaces" (*Rediscovery* 19) under the pressures which apartheid's spectacular violence rendered it, including creatively crippling and draconian censorship laws. Writers often, but not always, felt it their moral-political duty to challenge the apartheid state in their fiction; some challenged the sense of obligation under which this was seen to place them, whilst others questioned the kinds of culture such an environment produced. These debates are well known and have been copiously documented and discussed in a vigorous public sphere constituted by public forums and talks, writers' groups like the historically liberal and largely white PEN South Africa<sup>2</sup> and the more radical Congress of South African Writers (COSAW), whose founding president was Ndebele (cf. McDonald 204–6), and print media such as the *Mail & Guardian*, the *Daily Maverick* and *GroundUp*, and in South African-based political and literary journals like *Staffrider* (the last issue of which appeared in 1996), *Drum*, *Johannesburg Review of Books*, *Transformation*, *Alternation*, *Current Writing* and, retrospectively, in *Scrutiny*<sup>2</sup>, the first issue of which appeared in 1996. Needless to say, Nadine Gordimer's questioning of "an orthodoxy of opposition" in social realist forms in her book, *The Essential Gesture* (1988), and Lewis Nkosi's acerbic assessment of Black social realist fiction, which was, he claimed, nothing more than "journalistic fact parading as outrageously as imaginative literature" (*Home and Exile* 126), set the tone amongst those resisting the apparently inevitable aesthetic limitations that literary commitment risked producing. Much, too, has been said about the so-called bifurcation of Black social realism and white experimentalism (Pechey, "Post-Apartheid" 165), a cultural commonplace that critics like David Attwell and Michael Chapman, more circuitously, have once again challenged. Attwell shows how Black social realist literature during apartheid was often far more self-reflexive than this "critical orthodoxy" has given credit; Chapman identifies the heteroglossia of African literature (Attwell, *Rewriting* 177;

Chapman 1–2), textured by the old and the new, by traditional forms like praises and by contemporary references such as Kwaito music, by journalistic reportage and by the short story form.

*The Worlding of the South African Novel* has benefited, I hope, from the historical perspective enabling the necessary process in the public-political sphere of taking stock. At the time of writing, it has been more than 20 years since Nelson Mandela stepped out of Victor Verster prison on his long walk to freedom. In the course of writing, I have always held to the view held by many and based on my own reading in South African history, politics and current affairs, that the new South Africa looks depressingly too much like the old (cf. Mhlongo, *Black Tax*). Nearing the end of period under study, in 2009, Jacob Zuma would become the new President, but despite his popular appeal as the “darling” of the working classes (Gqola, *Rape* 182), his term was blighted by corruption scandals and a charge made against him in 2005 of rape when he was Deputy President of the ANC—a “difficult moment in South Africa’s post-transition period”, as Pumla Gqola recalls (*Rape* 100).<sup>3</sup> Critics like Bond, Alexander and Neil Lazarus have provided my anchor in fields beyond my academic expertise. But it was with the publication of the 2015 Warwick Research Collective’s (WReC’s) *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature*, of which Lazarus along with fellow South Africanist Benita Parry is a part, that this project properly found its intellectual feet since it was the idea of world-literature as the cultural logic of capitalist modernity that seemed most adequately equipped to account for the relationship in the South African novel between culture, the transitional society and a government whose neoliberal agenda has failed its many impoverished constituents. The WReC loosely draws on Franco Moretti’s notion in his “Conjectures on World Literature” essay of “distant reading” to this end, in that, unlike the traditional close reading of literary studies, it will not abstract “from [language and literature’s] social determinants and structuring conditions of existence” (WReC 26).

The WReC’s theory of world-literature emerges from the writings of Immanuel Wallerstein and Fernand Braudel, amongst others, on the capitalist world-system made up of core, semi-peripheral and peripheral societies, as one that produces experiences of modernity that are both combined and uneven. In Johannesburg, for instance, described by Ivan Vladislavić in his fictionalised memoir *Portrait with Keys* (2006) as the “Golden City, [...] the capital of buying and selling” (*Portrait* 49), images of subterranean societies jar with those of shopping malls

“designed to simulate the neighbourhoods of a conventional city” (*Portrait* 155); or Noria’s shack in Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying* on which Toloki “plasters pictures of ideal kitchens [...] and] pictures of ideal gardens and houses and swimming pools, all from the *Home and Garden* magazines [...] a wallpaper of sheer luxury” (*Ways of Dying* 111). Modernity emerges in combined and uneven forms: combined in that it is determined globally by capitalism; uneven in that it manifests itself differently across and within those very same spaces at the same time, accounting for the simultaneous existence of traditional cultures alongside hyper-modern ones within the same geopolitical locales, and for great poverty rubbing up against great wealth: “Modernity is to be understood as governed always – that is to say, definitionally – by unevenness, the historically determinate ‘coexistence’, in any given place and time, ‘of realities from radically different moments in history’” (WReC 12). As world-systems theory reveals, underdevelopment and maldevelopment are not simply symptomatic of capitalism, they are actively *produced* by it: capitalism is dependent upon them. After all, it is the poor who resource cheap labour markets in the developing world upon which multinational corporations and manufacturers depend. As the WReC argues, “capitalist development does not smooth away but rather produces unevenness, systematically and as a matter of course” (WReC 12).

Situating a political-economic debate within a theory of culture to explain the proliferation of “catachresis at particular moments of systemic crisis” (WReC 66), the WReC develops a literary analysis of peripheral modernity through what Michael Löwy terms *literary irrealism*—the cultural register of combined and uneven development. The literary effects of irrealism include any combination of “discrepant encounters, alienation effects, surreal cross-linkages, unidentified freakish objects, unlikely likenesses across barriers of language, period territory” (WReC 17). Not unlike the magic realism of its early Latin American proponents, which enabled literature to convey the paradox of the *unimaginable* horrors of lived human *realities*, irrealism emerges in literary form even in otherwise realist texts as an expression of the “shock” (WReC 72) of the “spatio-temporal compression of modernity”, a form of “time travel within the same space” (WReC 17). Drawing on Löwy, WReC’s argues, critical irrealism

does not, for all its investment in imagination and the imaginary, deny the existence of nature and social words independent of human perception or apprehension. This foundational homage to realism, or remembrance of

it, gives critical irrealist texts the ability to articulate powerful critiques of actually existing reality, which, as Löwy writes, have variously taken the forms of ‘protest, outrage, disgust, anger, anxiety, or angst’[.] (WReC 83).

Irrealism is thus a form of literary experimentation expressing a “crisis of representation” (WReC 21) coinciding with and indicative of the crises engendered in modernity.

This of course begs the question, why not literary *modernism*? Anticipating such probing of the difference between irrealist and modernist experimentation, the WReC states that they do not wish to “repeat the disciplinary privileging of ‘modernist’ over ‘realist’ writing[.]” Just as irrealist or magic realism will grapple with the unconscionable horrors of modern reality, so will modernism, as Theodor Adorno has articulated and glossed by the WReC, “register and resonate with the systemic crisis of European modernity”. As the WReC makes clear, “what is at stake in Adorno’s defence of modernist literature is paradoxically (its) realism” (WReC 66). Of course, several scholars making up the WReC are stalwarts of the critical, Marxist strand of postcolonial theory: Sharae Deckard, Lazarus, Pablo Mukherjee, Benita Parry and Rashmi Varma are all well known for their interventions in the field, and Lazarus and Parry have long articulated an interest in postcolonial modernisms. In a chapter in *The Postcolonial Unconscious* that draws on Raymond Williams’ *The Politics of Modernism* book, Lazarus probes the hegemonic assumptions of literary modernism when he writes that, “all forms of cultural production displaced by modernism – those, that is, that were not *modernist* – were pronounced *pre-modern* and disparaged as such, as relics, mere anachronisms, forms whose time had definitively come and gone”. Lazarus goes on to locate modernism’s “anticolonial dimension” (*Postcolonial Unconscious* 28) to formulate a notion of *postcolonial* modernisms: a “*modernist writing after the canonisation of modernism*” that revitalises its *raison d’être*, its criticality: “namely, says ‘no’; refuses integration, resolution, consolation, comfort; protests and criticises”. Lazarus groups these forms of postcolonial criticality under the term *disconsolation* (*Postcolonial Unconscious* 31). Despite pointing out that irrealism, “above all [will] be experienced in the [semi-,]peripheries of the worldsystem” (66), it is telling, perhaps, that none of the following—“colonialism”, “postcolonialism”, “imperialism”—appear in the index to the WReC book.



Weakening the role of the imperial paradigm of the kind adopted by postcolonial critics and colonial discourse analysts before them, the WReC argues that it is primarily *capitalist* relations rather than imperialist ones that determine and shape modernity. They take Edward Said to task, for instance, for his “tendential severing of imperialism from capitalism” which leads him in *Culture and Imperialism*, they argue, “to neglect the structuring dynamics, agencies and vectors of modern historical development”: namely, capitalist accumulation. By eliding imperialism with “the West”, they argue, Said also problematically smooths over the unevenness of capitalist modernity and the inequities it produces as it is experienced *within* “the West” (WReC 32), meaning, for instance, that Said would overlook differences between, say, France and Slovakia, or within individual countries themselves. Cognisant of the role colonialism and imperialism have played in forwarding capitalist relations, I take the view that the former colonies and a continued imperialist project within semi-peripheral and peripheral societies are at the sharp end of the uneven development capitalism produces. There is therefore both a pressing need to take seriously the exigencies of inequalities in (semi-)peripheral societies like South Africa’s, and also consequently that such geopolitical locales will produce rich cultural contexts in which to do so. The remarkable cultural production in the spheres of art, music and literature bearing witness to the continued inequities experienced by ordinary South African folk is testament to this.

My point of entry into a literary study of political change and socio-economic stagnation in South Africa is the idea of intellectual space, which is not unlike Jürgen Habermas’s public sphere, though more socially accessible across classes. Defined by sociologist Mamphela Ramphele in *A Bed Called Home* (1993) and redeployed by South Africanist Rita Barnard in *Apartheid and Beyond* (2007) not as the rarefied space of the ivory tower, but as “the capacity for critical awareness of one’s environment and the position one occupies in the power structure of one’s society” (5), which, akin to Virginia Woolf’s thesis on a room of one’s own, conjoins physical with intellectual space (Ramphele 5; cf. Barnard, *Apartheid* 123). Thus intellectual space, as it is used in this book, denotes forms of critical (often dissenting) *thinkingness*. Writing about the impoverished apartheid prefabs used to house Black migrant workers in Cape Town during apartheid, Ramphele shows how apartheid stymied Black intellectual thought by policing and constraining physical space, including the home. Resonating with Henri Lefebvre’s notion of representational

space, which, although a space subject to domination, is the site of artists and others seeking to imagine new forms of social space, intellectual space “relates to the symbolic framework within which social interaction is conducted, and is the space within which norms are set for ‘legitimate’ discourses” (Ramphela 5). Opening up “critical awareness” of one’s subjectivity, intellectual space enables processes of hegemonic demystification (Ramphela 5).

*The Worlding of the South African Novel* explores the ways in which the South African novel of transition opens up intellectual spaces on key nodes in public debate on the South African transition and nation building: the spectacle of truth in the public forum of the TRC; the historicising of the spectacular yet covert histories of state-sanctioned terror; Black utopianism and intellectual practice; land reform; AIDS as the preeminent site within which modernity is tested; environmental justice and, finally, the role culture plays in open-endedly (reflexively) memorialising the past are all sites animating public debate on the question of the shape and direction South Africa would take as a new democracy. As the discussion that follows hopes to show, these are novels of ideas that test the ground of a transforming public sphere. Whilst not claiming these novels are representative of a “South African literary canon”, whatever that might mean given the cultural and linguistic complexities, variety and richness of South African fiction, the novels I have selected constitute disparate examples of the ways in which culture reflects upon and contributes towards national reconstruction through its relentless probing of what Timothy Brennan would call the “myths of the nation” (Brennan 44).

Drawing upon Benedict Anderson’s notion of the imagined national community that emerged concurrently with the rise in Europe of print capitalism as a consequence of the shift towards texts printed in vernacular languages (Brennan 48), and on Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia and dialogism (Brennan 50), Brennan argues that the “Third-World” novel is the ideal genre in which to imagine the “composite” quality of the decolonising national community (Brennan 51). The present book is not a repudiation of third-world nationalism, but, taking up Frantz Fanon’s portent about the *pitfalls* of national consciousness, identifies the ways in which the South African novel, like the festering wounds of the dead but fantastically reimagined MK operative Dulcie Oliphant in Zoë Wicomb’s *David’s Story* (2000), keeps open fundamental questions about the past in order to shape a better future within the present. Lazarus in a similar

vein dismantles the “myth of South African exceptionalism” by invoking Fanon when he argues that,

within South Africa, the assumption has been that, with *our* particular and particularly irreducible history—which is today, our history of struggle—*our* decolonisation, when it came, would not prove to be the neocolonisation that it had been elsewhere; our nationalism *would* correspond to the “all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people”. (Fanon, *Wretched* 119; qtd. in Lazarus, “South African” 611)

Lazarus points to the macroeconomic policies of the ANC-led regime (e.g. GEAR and NEPAD) and to Mbeki’s African Renaissance to show how the social realities of South Africa today expose the illusion that South Africa is somehow unique on the African continent in resisting the rapid decline to economic collapse and political failure.

Of course in South Africa, the short story form has had much currency in a longstanding and robustly resistant public sphere during apartheid. *Drum* magazine, prominent in the 1950s but in circulation today, and *Staffrider*, which ran from 1978 to 1996, are just two examples where the short story, particularly by Black writers, flourished and became an important facet of this resistant public sphere and to which writers like Alex La Guma, Es’kia Mphahlele, Bloke Modisane, Mthobi Mutloatse, Lewis Nkosi, Can Themba and Christopher van Wyk were frequent contributors—some were also editors.<sup>4</sup> In his essay closing *The Drum Decade: Stories from the 1950s* collection, Chapman argues that *Drum* “initiat[ed] the search for a black urban voice” within South Africa (“More Than” 227) and that stories from the early 1960s tended to shift focus towards the “precariousness of the Sophiatown writer-intellectual” (“More Than” 209). Mike Kirkwood, *Staffrider*’s first editor, describes the magazine’s “grass-roots readership” (Kirkwood 28) and purpose of working “outside the bounds of institutional life in [apartheid] South Africa” (Kirkwood 23), whilst Irikidzayi Manase categorises the magazine as “a repository of the popular imagination of predominantly ordinary South African black, Asian and coloured writers” (Manase 55). This touches on the crucial issue of accessibility and a novel-reading elite. Short stories in South Africa, like theatre and television, have had the ability to reach a wider audience, not least because books come at a significant premium (cf. McDonald 321–3). Nevertheless, in the context of South African

fiction as world-literature, the novel, with its composite form incorporating competing and often discordant, unsettling voices and compressing space and time within its pages, in this way has the capacity to capture the breadth of unevenness as it emerges across modern, capitalist societies.

I begin in Chapter 2 with two founding moments in the fledgling democracy's national narrative: Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990 and the inauguration of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1995, which was established to bring about restorative justice through public truth-telling and the granting of amnesty at a series of public hearings. Analysing three TRC narratives, J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999), Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun* (1998) and Njabulo Ndebele's *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* (2004), I consider the problem of truth-telling as public spectacle and the effects of mediatising truth as was seen during the TRC hearings. From discussing the flexibility of truth in the hands of the TRC, which, I argue, the fictions demonstrate further enabled the ANC's neoliberal macroeconomics (cf. Bowsher 1), I turn in Chapter 3 to the ways in which aspects of South Africa's spectacular history in its covert operations abroad were not adequately addressed within the institutional processes of the TRC as the nation was said to be coming to terms with its violent past. I theorise the notion of the new South African historical novel which deploys irrealist literary forms to engage in critical ways with the overwriting of South Africa's use of state-sanctioned terror, for example, during the Border or Angolan War and US President George Bush's "war on terror". New historical novels like those analysed in this chapter—Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story*, Ishtiyaq Shukri's *The Silent Minaret* (2005) and Mike Nicol's *The Ibis Tapestry* (1998)—narrativise irrealist literary experiments (Moretti 61) in order to situate the apartheid regime's covert operations within a longer history of militarised capitalism. In Chapter 4, I address the fictional portrayal of utopianism in Black intellectual thought in Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* (1995) and *The Whale Caller* (2005). Mda reworks the figure of the Black beggar of Black social realist fiction of the apartheid period to reveal how the underclasses in South African society remain excluded from the public sphere. In these two novels by Mda informal housing reflects the ways in which Black intellectual space amongst South Africa's poorest communities continues to be stymied by conditions of abject poverty. The novels depict notions of utopia through dreamscapes that reflect on the hopelessness of the contemporary milieu. Through Mda's unruly women (cf. Gqola, *Reflecting* 151), they imagine feminised counterpublics that look

forward to more inclusive notions of public debate. In Chapter 5, I turn to representations of the AIDS controversy in South Africa in three academic novels, Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) and Niq Mhlongo's picaresques, *Dog Eat Dog* (2004) and *After Tears* (2007), to consider the ways in which AIDS became the preeminent site in which the idea of modernity within South Africa has been tested. In Chapter 6, I explore the land question from the perspective of whites through the genre of the irrealist, gothic-style novel. Replete with the typology of the classic Gothic novel, Damon Galgut's *The Good Doctor* (2003) and Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf* (1994), translated in 1999 from Afrikaans into English by Leon de Kock, reveal how it is *settlement* that produces the "gothic effect[...]: *the very fact of imagining that one is at home*" (emphasis added; Gelder 198). In both these contemporary novels, we see how white protagonists experience a sense of (dis)possession in their relation to the very land *from* or *to* which Black peoples historically had been removed. The problem of understanding Thabo Mbeki's well-known yet bizarre response to the AIDS crisis is pressed further in Chapter 7 when I discuss Imraan Coovadia's *High Low In-Between* (2009) and Nadine Gordimer's *Get a Life* (2005) as literary representations of human disease that operate within the terrain of environmental injustice. In the final chapter, I turn to the portrayal of art and visual culture in Ivan Vladislavić's irrealist fictionalised memoir, *Portrait with Keys* (2006), to think through the refusal to draw a line facetiously under the past, as Alexander cautions against (118). I consider how art and visual culture can revivify important futureoriented, restorative debates on how South Africans deal with the country's past. But, I argue, the book also reverses the gaze to lay bare *a politics* of remembering and cultural memory: the book asks, who is doing the remembering, and in whose interests?

The book is not an attempt to schematise a contemporary South African literary canon—in such an invigorating, productive sphere this task would not only be insurmountable, it would also detract from the pressing questions on culture's engagement with transition. Yet there are tendencies that are worth commenting upon in the transitional novel's endeavour to animate spheres of intellectual debate on the idea of a "new" South Africa that were, during this period, in the process of taking shape. Motifs of storytelling and storytellers proliferate (conversely often taking the form of the refusal to tell), mediated by uneasy narrators (Zhao 69; cf. Moretti 63) aware of the limits of their agency or their complicity in the atrocities of the South African past. Similarly,

dreams, mythmaking, fantasies and utopia all serve to ironise the myths of the “new”, autonomous nation, undercut by images of the ubiquitous subterranean, itinerant and informal communities that cast these myths in a very different light. Themes of connectivity and, conversely of missing links, serve to flesh out gaps in the national narrative that have been actively suppressed or overlooked, adding more history to the received accounts that have obscured the larger truths of the South African apartheid and then the new neoliberal regime. If the book is limited by its focus on Anglophone novels (only *Triomf* was originally written in a language—Afrikaans—other than English), rather than novels published in South Africa’s other African languages and Afrikaans, this reflects my own limitations, aside from some rusty French, as a monolingual scholar, but also the fact that English has been accepted as the *lingua franca* in a publishing industry also constrained by the capitalist world-system. Indeed, the global hegemony of English is thematised in Mpe’s *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, with its reflection on the difficulties encumbering local writers wishing to publish in an indigenous language, here, Sepedi. More significantly for the purposes of this study, working in translation, the WReC argues, opens up possibilities of an “enabling counter to the doxic position on the impossibility and undesirability of translation” (WReC 27). Comparative literary studies, the WReC argues, has been dogged by an “unambiguous fetishism of language (and hence of the authority of professional experience)” where it would be better served by “commitment to cultural dialogue or social mutuality” fundamental to the meaningful linkages to be made between a world literary system and capitalist modernity (WReC 27).

In “South Africa: Example or Illusion?”, Alexander asks, what, if anything, we can learn from the South African transition? “It is important”, he writes, “at the beginning of the twenty-first century that we identify all those dynamic features of our societies – if there are any – which hold the promise of a more civilised existence for the majority of people on Planet Earth” (Alexander 137). More than ever, the world is riven by inequalities and injustice. But for all the intolerance and abject suffering, the political imperative of addressing crisis is mobilising voices of informed (intellectualised) dissent. The momentum of movements like social and environmental justice and anti-globalisation deliver hope where there has seemed to be none. By opening up intellectual spaces on debates revivifying the public sphere, we see the continued history of critical dissent reflected in the very themes and forms of the transitional South

African novel. Perhaps, beyond the pleasure of the text, this critical edge is the value we can take from such novels as world-literature as they engage with capitalist modernity.

## NOTES

1. The mining industry during apartheid, for instance, depended upon the lowest possible wages for Black workers in order to ensure that the price of gold “was allowed to be determined freely according to the ‘normal’ laws of supply and demand” (Alexander 21).
2. See Peter D. McDonald, *The Literature Police*, for a discussion of the politics of PEN SA during apartheid (166–71).
3. Zuma was acquitted of rape, but admitted to having unprotected sex with the alleged victim, who was HIV positive and openly gay. As recently as October 2019, a corruption charge filed a decade ago relating to an arms deal was reopened by the South African High Court against Zuma (Burke, “Zuma to Stand Trial”).
4. Es’kia Mphahlele, Mthobi Mutloatse and Christopher van Wyk also served as editors of *Staffrider*.

## WORKS CITED

- Alexander, Neville. *An Ordinary Country: Issues in the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: U of Natal P, 2002.
- Attwell, David. *Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African Literary History*. Scottsville: U KwaZulu-Natal P, 2005.
- Bahri, Deepika. *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics and Postcolonial Literature*. Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2003.
- Barnard, Rita. *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007.
- Bond, Patrick. *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa*. 2000. Revised & Expanded edn. London: Pluto, 2014.
- . *Talk Left, Walk Right: South Africa’s Frustrated Global Reforms*. Cartoons by Zapiro. 2nd edn. Scottsville: U KwaZulu-Natal P, 2006.
- Braudel, Fernand. *Civilisation and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*. 3 Volumes. London: Fontana, 1985.
- Brennan, Timothy. “The National Longing for Form.” *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1990. 44–70.
- Burke, Jason. “Zuma to Stand Trial on Corruption Charges Relating to \$2.5bn Arms Deal.” 11 October 2019. *Guardian*. 5 December

2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/11/zuma-to-stand-trial-corruption-chargesarms-deal-south-african-president>.
- Chapman, Michael. *Art Talk, Politics Talk: A Consideration of Categories*. Scottsville: U KwaZulu-Natal P, 2006.
- . “More Than Telling a Story: *Drum* and Its Significance.” *The Drum Decade: Stories from the 1950s*. Ed. Michael Chapman. Intro. John Matshikiza. 1989. 2nd edn. Scottsville: U Natal P, 2001. 183–227.
- Coetzee, J. M. *Disgrace*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1999.
- Coovadia, Imraan. *High Low In-Between: A Novel*. 2009. Noida: HarperCollins, 2010.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1961. Trans. Constance Farrington. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967.
- Galgut, Damon. *The Good Doctor*. London: Atlantic, 2003.
- Gelder, Ken. “The Postcolonial Gothic.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014. 191–207.
- Gordimer, Nadine. *Get a Life*. 2005. London: Bloomsbury, 2006.
- . *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics and Places*. Ed. Stephen Clingman. London: Jonathan Cape, 1988.
- . *The House Gun*. 1998. London: Bloomsbury, 1999.
- Gqola, Pumla Dineo. *Rape: A South African Nightmare*. Johannesburg: Jacana, 2015.
- . *Reflecting Rogue: Inside the Mind of a Feminist*. Johannesburg: Jacana, 2017.
- Kirkwood, Mike. “Staffrider: An Informal Discussion.” *English in Africa* 7.2 (1980): 22–31.
- Lazarus, Neil. *The Postcolonial Unconscious*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011.
- . “The South African Ideology: The Myth of Exceptionalism, the Idea of Renaissance.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103.4 (2004): 607–28.
- Manase, Irikidzayi. “Making Memory: Stories from *Staffrider* Magazine and ‘Testing’ the Popular Imagination.” *African Studies* 64 (2005): 55–72.
- McDonald, Peter D. *The Literature Police: Apartheid, Censorship and Its Cultural Consequences*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.
- Mda, Zakes. *Ways of Dying: A Novel*. 1995. New York: Picador, 2002.
- . *The Whale Caller*. Viking: London, 2005.
- Mhlongo, Niq. *After Tears*. Cape Town: Kwela, 2007.
- . Ed. and Intro. *Black Tax: Burden or Ubuntu?* Johannesburg; Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2019. Kindle.
- . *Dog Eat Dog*. 2004. Modern African Writing. Athens: Ohio UP, 2012.
- Moretti, Franco. “Conjectures on World Literature.” *New Left Review* 1 (2000): 54–68.
- Mpe, Phaswane. *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. Pietermaritzburg: U Natal P, 2001.



- Ndebele, Njabulo S. *The Cry of Winnie Mandela: A Novel*. 2003. Banbury: Ayeibia Clarke, 2004.
- . *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture*. 1991. Scottsville: U of KwaZulu-Natal P, 2006.
- Nicol, Mike. *The Ibis Tapestry*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.
- Nixon, Rob. "Aftermaths." *Transition* 72 (1996): 64–78.
- Nkosi, Lewis. *Home and Exile*. London: Longman, 1965.
- Pechey, Graham. "Post-Apartheid Narratives." *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*. Ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margeret Iverson. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994. 151–71.
- Ramphele, Mamphela. *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town*. Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1993.
- Shukri, Ishtiyaq. *The Silent Minaret*. Johannesburg: Jacana, 2005.
- Van Niekerk, Marlene. *Triomf*. 1994. Trans. Leon de Kock. London: Abacus, 2000.
- Vladislavić, Ivan. *Portrait with Keys: The City of Johannesburg Unlocked*. London: Portobello, 2006.
- Wicomb, Zoë. *David's Story: A Novel*. Cape Town: Kwela, 2000.
- WReC (Warwick Research Collective). *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2015.
- Zhao, Henry Y. H. *The Uneasy Narrator: Chinese Fiction from the Traditional to the Modern*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995.



## The Spectacle of Truth

The iconic moment in 1990 when Nelson Mandela stepped from the gates of the Victor Verster Prison in Paarl, South Africa, to a euphoric reception from supporters after twenty-seven years in jail, broadcast to millions around the world, was to be followed not long after in 1995 by another, similarly foundational moment in South Africa's national narrative: the inauguration of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Though by no means the first such commission, it was to become a model for other post-conflict societies as they worked towards reconstruction through transitional justice and national reconciliation: Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi and the Solomon Islands were all to look to the South African example (Renner 264). As Judith Renner shows, following South Africa, "National reconciliation processes thereby commonly rely on a more or less standardised procedure, in which the alleged 'victims' and 'perpetrators' of past human rights violations come forward and tell their personal stories to the wider public" (Renner 264).

The public broadcasting of personal stories in the context of the TRC has provided fiction of the period, textured by a lexicon of truth and reconciliation, forgiveness and reparations, fertile ground to test the success of South Africa's transition. From my own reading, I would speculate that *all* South African fiction of the transitional period (which for practical reasons I limit to 1994–2014) engages at some level with the TRC, either explicitly (e.g. Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* [2001]; Mandla

Langa's *The Memory of Stones* [2000]) or implicitly (e.g. Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* [2000]; Lauren Beuke's *Zoo City* [2010]). I consider three novels here: J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999); Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun* (1998) and Njabulo Ndebele, *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* (2003). In this opening chapter, I consider how such narratives analogously portray the truth-as-spectacle promoted by the TRC and the mediatizing of the TRC as event (cf. Krabill 568; Dayan and Katz) to think through the question, whose interests did truth-telling serve? I argue that the novels illustrate the strategic flexibility of truth (cf. Renner 263) produced in public spaces like the TRC—the University disciplinary committee in *Disgrace*, the courtroom in *The House Gun* and a notional Zulu *ibandla* in *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*—to expose the failure of the TRC adequately to address the larger truths of apartheid: namely, its banal, socio-economic oppression. In each novel, truths about spectacularly violent crime, tested in these spaces, are offset against the larger injustices of everyday oppression characterising apartheid and perpetuated in the “new” South Africa. In Ndebele's novel, for instance, juxtaposed with the symbolism of the disgraced Winnie Mandela, who in real life had become central to the iconicity of her husband (Hassim 898), we read of “Home and dislocation. That is the experience of millions of victims of forced removals. [...] Symbols of dislocation. Mass stories of people who built homes and communities and then watched them demolished by apartheid's bulldozers” (Ndebele, *Cry* 81–2). I argue that, by critiquing a rights discourse that individualises “victims” and “perpetrators” (Bowsher 11) and that was enabled by the ways in which the hearings were mediated by broadcasters and the press (cf. Posel and Simpson 8–9; Krabill 568; cf. Goodman, Tanya 73–98), the novels validate the claim by recent commentators that, not only did the TRC perpetuate the combined and uneven development experienced during apartheid, but that it actually *facilitated* the ANC's neoliberal agenda (cf. Bowsher 1; cf. Bond, “Reparations” 117–8).

The TRC sat between 1995, when it was ratified by the 1995 Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, and 1998, the year of publication of its Final Report. According to the Minister of Justice, Dullah Omar, who was instrumental in drawing up the Act, it would facilitate a “stepping stone[ ] towards the historic bridge [...] whereby our society can leave behind the past of a deeply divided society”. The Act was to “provide the secure foundation which the Constitution enjoins” (Omar qtd. in Truth and Reconciliation, *Report* Vol. 1 48); in other words,

its mandate first and foremost was nation-building. Justice, other than a restorative, transitional form, was typically regarded as “competing” with notions of truth-telling and reconciliation, and was seen as the necessary sacrifice in the process (Renner 283). The TRC’s primary functions were threefold. Firstly, it was to bring the *truth* of South Africa’s brutal recent history to light through processes of amnesty and public testimony, charting gross human rights violations “within or outside South Africa” between the years 1960 and 1994. Whilst the authors of the *Report* conceded that the Commission’s focus was “narrow and restricted” (Truth and Reconciliation, *Report* Vol. 1 29), it was responsible for “compil[ing] as complete a picture as possible of [ ] events and violations” within this time frame (Truth and Reconciliation, *Report* Vol. 1 24). Secondly, it would make *reparations* to the victims of apartheid and/or their families. However, whilst its powers of subpoena were considerable, in terms of reparations the TRC’s powers were limited: it could make recommendations on reparations to the government, who were responsible for the payments, but in reality these were significantly delayed and the amount awarded drastically reduced from the figure originally mooted by the TRC (Tutu, “Foreword” 1). Thirdly, and a product of the first two objectives, the TRC endeavoured to facilitate *reconciliation* between perpetrators and victims that would pave the way for nationbuilding. To take account of these three functions the Commission was divided into two main operations, the Amnesty Committee and the main Commission, comprised of the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee and the Human Rights Violation Committee. For amnesty to be granted, abuses had to be ruled politically motivated and the whole truth of the applicant’s crime had to be confessed. Whilst the Amnesty Committee dealt with the perpetrators of violence, the main part of the Commission dealt with its victims. This reflected the “victim-centred” approach deemed problematic by many critics because it individualised “victims” versus “perpetrators” at the expense of the larger, socio-economic injustices of apartheid (Truth and Reconciliation, *Report* Vol. 6 168).

Akin to Nelson Mandela’s steps on his long walk to freedom (the armed struggle, he declared on his release, was not over until democracy was won), the TRC captured the local and global imagination. It was headed by Reverend Desmond Tutu as its Chairperson, who, like Mandela, was charismatic and instantly recognisable. During the early years of the fledgling democracy a confessional vernacular of truth, reconciliation, forgiveness and healing animated and textured public debate on

how to deal with the recent past and move forward. Local interest in the TRC within South Africa was reflected in interest overseas: the process was seen to set the standard for bloodless transition from authoritarianism and a violent past. A flurry of international workshops and conferences was hastily organised, some, leading up to and during the process, working in an advisory capacity, whilst others debated and (con)tested the TRC's successes and failures. A vast body of opinion pieces, academic papers and books was spawned in its wake. Numbering among these are Deputy Chairperson Alex Boraine's *A Country Unmasked: Inside South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (2000); Antjie Krog's confessional account of the TRC, *Country of My Skull* (1998); Deborah Posel and Graeme Simpson's edited volume *Commissioning the Past* (2002) and Claire Moon's *Narrating Political Reconciliation* (2008); public intellectuals like Mahmood Mamdani, Neville Alexander and Kader Asmal made important interventions into the debate.

The TRC received extensive media coverage both at home and abroad, and the media played a key role in disseminating the TRC's objective of national reconstruction by helping to form a sense of shared national consciousness (Krabill 568–9; Posel and Simpson 8–9). The Commissioners had reluctantly agreed to the TRC Amnesty hearings being aired on national television. The hugely popular *TRC Special Report* on commercial station SABC, produced and hosted by Max du Preez, for instance, which provided coverage of the hearings for two years and was screened weekly for between half an hour and an hour, had in 1996 the highest viewing figures of any television current affairs programme in South Africa, averaging 1.2 million viewers every week (Verdoolaege 191). Annelies Verdoolaege shows that in the process of the TRC's mediation, testimonies and confessions that validated the TRC's narrative of national reconciliation tended to be the ones on which the media focused (Verdoolaege draws on the archive of the *TRC Special Report*, which ran from April 1996 to March 1998 [Verdoolaege 190–1]). Close-ups of victims ready to forgive and perpetrators ready to confess and ask forgiveness predominated (Verdoolaege 193). Scenes troubling the national narrative were also televised to lend an authentically objective quality to the hearings (Verdoolaege 193–4).

The considerable body of commentary on the TRC has tended to focus on the complex ethical, legal and political constraints it has faced: indeed, the legal-political limitations of the TRC's constitution are often pitted against the ethical, moral ones, especially centring on the question

of justice in its retributive, distributive and social forms—being compromised by truth-telling. A common criticism has been the lack of clarity around the concept of truth, which tended to veer between Christianised forms to legal or political ones. Tutu's words on the complexities of truth-telling which the TRC modelled in his foreword to the Final Report belie this slippage, here between therapeutic recovery and the law: "It had to provide the space within which victims could share the story of their trauma with the nation; and it had to recognize the importance of the due process of law that insures the rights of the alleged perpetrators" (Tutu 1). Justice, as many commentators have argued, was the necessary compromise in the pursuit of negotiated settlement and nation-building (cf. Truth "Transforming" n.p.). The TRC has been widely discussed as a confessional forum in which perpetrators confessed in a mood of "Christian revivalism" (Parry, *Postcolonial Studies* 188) to the victims of their crimes—we encounter a quasi-religious idiom reflected in much of the fiction. Forgiveness for the crimes would be sought by perpetrators from the victims but, ultimately, the Commission would grant this in the form of amnesty. Not surprisingly then trauma studies has been widely applied as a model of analysis in approaching the psychopathology of trauma and therapeutic recovery at the TRC. Both quasi-religious and psychotherapeutic aspects resituated within the context of the public-political arena of national reconciliation leading to nation-building have been key points of contest in debates on the TRC and chime with criticisms of the human-rights approach to the process that "individualised" victims and perpetrators and "psychologised" nation-building (Moon 72; Bowsher 11). Resulting from this, critics observed, was the misplaced use of private testimony (victims) and confession (perpetrators) to stand for the abuses enacted upon an entire community (Parry 188).

In the cultural sphere we see TRC narratives emerge as parables of truth-telling in public spaces. The protagonist in *Disgrace* Professor David Lurie is required to report to a university disciplinary committee to answer charges of sexual harassment of a young female student, who we assume by South African designation is "coloured" because Lurie calls her "Meláni: the dark one" (Coetzee, *Disgrace* 18). In an analogy of the TRC (cf. Boehmer, "Sorry" 135; Poyner, "Rerouting" 184), Lurie is expected to confess to his crime—increasingly, critics categorise it as rape (cf. Graham, Lucy, 437; Marais, 58)—and apologise to the victim. Rosemary Jolly notes that critics often derided the TRC as "a circus" (Jolly, "Desiring Good[s]" 699)—not Jolly's assessment—just