

THE UNSPOKEN VOICES OF APARTHEID: CONFESSIONS OF THE
INTERREGNUM

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ABSTRACT

THE UNSPOKEN VOICES OF APARTHEID: CONFESSIONS OF THE INTERREGNUM

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This thesis examines the relationship between silence and confession in Athol Fugard's *Tsotsi*, Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother*, and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* in order to show that the act of confession is often problematic, specifically when some characters choose to remain silent while other characters encourage their speech. The withholding of speech, then, becomes an act of empowerment and a rhetorical endeavor, where silence is more than the absence of speech; it is a way to communicate. Whether silence is to bring about a specific purpose, or is enforced because a character does not understand his or her situation and therefore cannot offer a sincere confession, the character has the power to choose whether or not to confess his or her story. Furthermore, this thesis explores the shift of control in three political climates: During apartheid, at the end of apartheid, and in post-apartheid South Africa in order to reflect the transferal of power from white hands to black hands. As suggested in the novels, the ability to speak correlates with the amount of power a subject has.

INTRODUCTION

After World War II, many colonies under European rule began to push toward independence, and this action resulted in the diminishment of white supremacy in those areas where colonial domination had previously succeeded. However, South Africa was an exception and it became isolated for its continuous efforts toward complete segregation of South Africa's inhabitants, and it rejected decolonization and desegregation. Though European rule departed in specific areas around the globe, and its traces of white supremacy were ebbing away slowly in other nations, South Africa served as a breeding ground for racism, where "discrimination became even more entrenched" than ever before, a pseudoscientific version of "Social Darwinism," as Nigel Worden notes in his extensive research into South Africa's history, when whites placed themselves on top of the evolutionary scale and placed blacks at the bottom, claiming blacks to be "primitive" (75).

This ideology of separation and white dominance led to South Africa's apartheid era, a period in history marked by fear, violence, and resistance. James Barber contends that "The aim of apartheid was first and foremost to safeguard the racial identity and dominance of whites, by development along separate racial lines" (Barber 140). White South Africans feared that the black population as a result of increased urbanization brought forth by industry, being the majority, would end white dominance, and the only solution available was to safeguard economic and political power for the white South Africans and to force separation and "follow separate roads" (Barber 140). Following "separate roads" meant the white population was, as Leonard Thompson notes,

“Conditioned to regard apartheid society as normal...and wherever White encountered Black, White was boss and Black was servant” (200-1).

Although it has been acknowledged that the apartheid era began with the National Party’s victory in 1948, the history leading up to the shift in political policy is worth noting, as the years prior provided the foundation of the apartheid era and made complete segregation possible through the passing of many laws. The 1913 Native Land Act, in its most basic form, helped set into motion racial separation: It forbade Africans from purchasing land or occupying land outside of the reserves, except as laborers.¹ Consequently, African tenants were evicted from white-owned land, and their white employers subjected those tenants who were allowed to remain to an increased workload (Maylam 148), and with a continuous supply of cheap black labor, the whites were free to replace black laborers at any time (Thompson 206). Ultimately, this process enforced a power dichotomy that situated whites as superior and Africans as inferior.

The Natives Land Act provided the impetus for segregation, and just ten years later, segregation would continue to expand in response to the 1923 Urban Areas Act. The act attempted to control the influx of Africans into urban areas. The act allowed for the beginning of complete segregation of whites and Africans. Although these areas were intended to be fully functioning, with advisory boards and elected African officials who could voice concerns but not change policy, few municipalities actually established these areas; however, the act did provide the foundation for urban segregation by establishing residential segregation, implementing influx controls, enabling fiscal segregation, and creating a segregated local government (Maylem 149). Africans could not freely enter

¹ 77 percent of the country’s land was white owned. See Jonathan Kaplan’s introduction to *Tsotsi* (x).

designated white areas unless they ministered to the needs of white people. Once the African worker could no longer serve the white man, he or she must leave the area. The influx of Black South Africans into white urban areas was managed through the implementation of the Pass Laws, which required Black South Africans to carry passes or reference books stating their employers and their business in these specific areas. These passes helped manage how many Africans were allowed to enter and stay in the urban areas (Barber 83). In accordance with the Urban Areas Act, the 1937 Native Laws Amendment Act was more rigorous in regulating passes. During this time, the urban African population was growing, and worried policy makers, concerned with the influx, felt it was necessary to limit the size of the urban black population further than it had already been limited under the Urban Areas Act.

Apartheid was the result of the white supremacy's fear of losing hold on domination (Maylam 143). Apartheid had profound effects on the lives of countless South Africans, and it affected South Africa's political history, beginning before the peak of apartheid's reign. Athold Fugard's *Tsotsi* is representative of the political landscape of South Africa in the 1950s. Set during the beginning of apartheid, Fugard's novel shows the moral transformation of Tsotsi (formerly David), a young gangster who represses his traumatic past and becomes a criminal to survive the harsh environment that apartheid has set up for him. As a child, David loses his mother to a pass raid, and after he runs away when his angry father kicks and kills his pregnant dog, he becomes an orphan of the streets. Alone, David must learn to survive, and as he grows older, he becomes the leader of a violent and deadly gang that consists of Die Ap, Butcher, and Boston – who will be the impetus for Tsotsi's transformation from ruthless killer to a man capable of feeling

for others.

Thirty years later, as South Africa approached the 1980s, the country was experiencing an interregnum. Nadine Gordimer, an anti-apartheid activist, co-opts Antonio Gramsci's term [interregnum] to describe South Africa during this period of transition from black subjugation to black resistance, when racial tensions were at their highest and black youths, subscribing to Marxist beliefs, were refusing to remain submissive and compliant to white control. Whereas Fugard's novel represents an era when the apartheid government enforced the power structure that privileged white South Africans and offered little black resistance, the 1980s and 1990s marked the era of black resistance, when the political climate of South Africa was changing rapidly, and the years leading up to the end of apartheid were extremely violent. Unlike in the 1960s when black resistance was forced underground, the "comrades" – South Africa's black youth who subscribed to Marxism – of the 1980s and early 1990s were acknowledged as the future of South Africa. The "comrades" were encouraged, as part of the liberation movement, not necessarily to take control of the country, but to dismantle the apartheid government and thus make the country ungovernable through physical action.

In this transitional space, power began to shift and as whites began to lose control, the political climate was unstable and the future of the apartheid regime (and South Africa) was uncertain. In her speech "Living in the Interregnum," Gordimer confronts the uncertainty of the interregnum. Gordimer's theory that whites should step down from a position of control and follow blacks is particularly useful in my examination of the shift in power and control that will be traced in the various political climates discussed in my thesis: the early years of apartheid, represented in *Tsotsi*; the years leading up to the end

of apartheid, represented in *Mother to Mother*; and post-apartheid South Africa, represented in *Disgrace*.

A major difference between the 1960s and the 1980s is that the black population no longer submitted to control. Consequently, the two opposing forces clashed and created a space where violence could breed. In essence, the black population achieved success; it created chaos in a system that had functioned so well for many years, and the white government could no longer keep control over a subservient population.

Sindiwe Magona's novel *Mother to Mother* is an embodiment of this act of black resistance, and it highlights the bloodiest years leading up to the end of apartheid. Told through the eyes of Mandisa, the black protagonist and the mother of Mxolisi, the young man accused of murdering a white American student, the novel exists as a fictional retelling of a real life murder that took place in Guguletu, South Africa in 1993. Amy Biehl, a white American student fighting apartheid, was taking two of her fellow students home when four young black men killed her on her last day in South Africa. Devastated by what happened in Magona's hometown and to her childhood friend, and realizing that had she not left Guguletu for the U.S. she could have easily been in the same situation as her friend, Magona wrote *Mother to Mother* to explain why such a horrible event could happen. To a certain extent, Magona justifies the murder through a confession to the white mother, and in a larger context, to the western world that is oblivious to the violation of human rights happening during apartheid. Through Mandisa's confession, Magona paints a picture of what Mandisa's environment looks like and how her climate, which makes it hard for her to raise her children well, creates men like her son Mxolisi

who have no regard for authority and end up turning to a life of violence because there is no other way to make change happen.

This resistance did create change, and after the apartheid regime fell in the 1990s, the old South Africa's political landscape under apartheid transformed into what is known today as post-apartheid South Africa, a period in which white control has begun to diminish. Though apartheid has ended, South Africa's problems with race relations have not, and the country is still dealing with apartheid damages. J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* reflects this shift in political power. In the novel, David Lurie, a white adjunct professor who is asked to resign from his university because he sexually assaults his student Melanie leaves the city and joins his lesbian daughter Lucy who lives on her farm and shares her land with her black neighbor and assistant Petrus. On the farm, three black men – the youngest being related to Petrus – assault both Lurie and Lucy, and Lucy is gang raped while Lurie is thrown into a bathroom and set on fire. Instead of going to the police and reporting her rape, as Lurie hopes, Lucy does not; instead, against her father's continuous insistence, she chooses to remain silent – refusing to confess – and agrees to marry Petrus, who, in exchange for her land, will keep her safe as his third wife. By trying to understand Lucy's silence and lack of confession, Lurie comes to terms with the wrong he inflicted on Melanie. Finally, he acknowledges what he did was wrong, and as a result he begins to take the first steps towards reconciliation, an act related to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I describe confession as acknowledgement and an act brought about through storytelling, and this idea of confession as storytelling is problematic for some of the characters in *Tsotsi*, in *Mother to Mother*, and in *Disgrace*. These confessions (as stories)

are often forced, and the push for characters to tell their stories against their will usually results in violent acts because many of the characters in these novels do not know how to come to terms with the trauma they experience. In Coetzee's "Confessions and Double Thoughts," he discusses the notion of self-deception as it applies to insincere confessions, that if there is a possibility that the confessor cannot understand his or her trauma, then the confessor cannot produce a sincere confession. In order to truly confess one's story, the confessor must fully understand his or her situation and acknowledge his or her trauma. This understanding happens when Tsotsi is finally able to tell his story to Boston; when Mandisa writes her letter to the white mother; and when David Lurie can move towards some understanding of his wrongdoing while Lucy refuses to confess her story, not because she must admit that she has done something wrong, but because she understands that her silence will ensure her future as a white woman living in post-apartheid South Africa. Whereas some characters move towards a confession, through the process of understanding their trauma, other characters understand their admission (or confession) will serve no purpose, and therefore she chooses silence. I examine the connection between confession and silence, specifically through speech and the withholding of speech, and I explore the notion of silence using Cheryl Glenn's theory of silence as empowering; Coetzee's argument in "Confession and Double Talk," that true confession can only happen when there is no possibility of self-deception; and Nadine Gordimer's speech "Living in the Interregnum" and her belief that whites must be willing to let go of control and follow blacks into the "new" South Africa. Furthermore, acts of confession, which I will evidence in my analyses of *Tsotsi*, *Mother to Mother*, and

Disgrace, are violent processes that some characters in the novels resist while others encourage.

Tsotsi represses his traumatic childhood experiences and withholds his speech while Boston, his educated and former fellow gang member, pushes him towards a confession that ultimately leads to Tsotsi beating Boston nearly to death. Mandisa, the protagonist in Magona's novel, offers a confession in the form of a letter to the white mother of the U.S. student Mxolisi kills in a political frenzy, and because her son will not confess his story, even though she encourages him to do so, she takes it upon herself to confess for him. In *Disgrace*, David Lurie, the white male protagonist, sexually assaults one of his students and refuses to tell his side of the story when his committee asks for a sincere confession. Not understanding himself entirely, he cannot offer a sincere confession because he does not believe that what he did to his student is wrong; ironically, when his lesbian daughter Lucy is raped on her country homestead, he encourages her repeatedly to tell her story and she refuses each time, an act that puts strain on their already fragile relationship.

Through my reading and analyses of Fugard's, Magona's, and Coetzee's novels, I argue that the withholding of speech, by refusing to confess, allows many of the characters in the novels, to a certain extent, to control their situations: Tsotsi refuses anyone a glimpse into his interior self (including himself); Mxolisi will not confess his crime, and he takes the blame and goes to prison as a result. Both David Lurie and Lucy refuse confessions, although for different reasons – Lucy's silence allows her to become a part of the "new" South Africa whereas Lurie does not truly understand why he is not able to offer a confession, but he turns to silence because he is not able to acknowledge

that he was wrong; he cannot acknowledge he was wrong because he does not understand that what he did to Melanie was wrong. Thus, he remains a part of the “old” South Africa.

I examine silence through the withholding of speech using Cheryl Glenn’s theory that silence is both a form of communication and an act of empowerment. In her work *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, Glenn explores the relationships between speech and power. She confronts the notion that speech is associated with power and that silence exists as a passive agreement; in turn, she subverts this idea: silence becomes an act of power for individuals who withhold speech. I use Glenn’s theory of silence as power to examine the nature of confessions and what it means to be silent in a space where others push continuously for acknowledgement, admission, and confession.

In conjunction with Glenn’s theory, specifically regarding speech and silence, I discuss the role of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that was created shortly after apartheid rule ended. In order to confront these apartheid damages and propose a solution to bring a broken nation together again, South Africa formed the TRC, a way for South Africa’s apartheid victims to confess their stories and for apartheid perpetrators to apply for amnesty and to be absolved of their crimes. The confessional nature of the TRC, particularly the hesitancy to tell stories and relive traumatic experiences, can be traced in Athol Fugard’s *Tsotsi*, Sindiwe Magona’s *Mother to Mother*, and J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*.

In the introduction to Jillian Edelstein’s *Truth and Lies*, Michael Ignatieff discusses the TRC’s functions, claiming the TRC was set up to deal with apartheid crimes. Through public hearings, a panel of amnesty commissioners decided whether or

not to absolve war crimes, and in order to receive amnesty perpetrators were required to confess their crimes to the public in full. They were not required to repent or apologize, but perpetrators had to prove their crimes were politically motivated and not committed for personal gain (17). Though the TRC was created to help South Africa move forward and help deal with race relations, the confessional nature of the TRC had its flaws, and both sides (The African National Congress and the apartheid government) were not, as Ignatieff contends, “entirely able to face the truth that the TRC uncovered” (16). The TRC did not choose sides; its only goal was to unearth the truth, regardless of whose truth was uncovered. But this idea of confession is problematic because neither side wanted to fully disclose their stories nor did they want to accept responsibility for their crimes. Or, it is not that these perpetrators did not want to accept responsibility; rather, they may have not believed what they did was wrong, and to them they were acting as a movement and not as an individual.

I explore this notion – that acts of crime are, in some way, politically motivated, and the individuals who commit these crimes do so because they feel they have no other choice. In the end they are the ones who receive the consequences, or those individuals become the scapegoats through which the country can act out its violence as well as blame for its crimes, as in the case in *Mother to Mother* when Mxolisi, a young black man – who is one of many men – kills a white American student and takes the blame for a crime committed in a political frenzy. Some scapegoats are not “agents to be used” at all; instead, in the case of the murdered white woman, she is the scapegoat who must die because of her race’s longstanding history of racism. Though she is not a participant of

the apartheid regime, and is there to help end apartheid rule, she is killed nonetheless for the color of her skin. In the end, someone must always take the blame.

Finally, I trace the transferal of power, specifically the transition from white control to black power, beginning with Fugard's *Tsotsi*, when black South Africans had no power outside their disadvantaged communities, moving into *Mother to Mother*, which marks the era of black resistance, when black South Africans began to push against white control, and ending with Coetzee's *Disgrace*, which positions post-apartheid South Africa as a place where white power is no longer privileged. I suggest that this transferal of power that is traced through each of the novels has a direct impact on the silence in all three novels, as it applies to Nadine Gordimer's theory that in order to rebuild the "new" South Africa, whites must be willing to step down from their position of power and they must allow blacks to lead without a dominant white influence directing the move toward recovery.

Tsotsi is used to foreground my analysis of the transfer of power while *Mother to Mother* and *Disgrace* are demonstrations of how this transfer of power takes effect, from the height of black resistance in Magona's novel to the end of white power in Coetzee's novel, and these two novels – *Disgrace* more so than *Mother to Mother* – are written testimonies to Gordimer's belief that whites must step down, as evidenced in *Disgrace* when Lucy withholds her speech and submits to Petrus, her black neighbor, who will eventually take over her farm. This transfer of power, as it applies to silence and the authority to speak in the three novels, is in conjunction with Gordimer's theory. The white voice is absent in *Tsotsi*, just as the white individuals disregard the shantytowns where *Tsotsi* lives; the white mother's voice in *Mother to Mother* is absent in Mandisa's

one-sided monologue, in which Mandisa confesses for her son and gives reasons for his behavior; and finally, *Disgrace*'s Lucy chooses to remove her voice, doing exactly what Gordimer advocates: letting go of control and following.

CHAPTER ONE

THE INTERREGNUM AND SILENCE: SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORICAL CONTEXT
UP TO THE 1980S AND *TSOTSI*

In the epitaph to her speech “Living in the Interregnum,” Nadine Gordimer defines the concept of the interregnum using Antonio Gramsci’s phrase: “The old is dying, and the new cannot be born” (375). By the time Athol Fugard’s only novel *Tsotsi* was published, the apartheid regime had reigned for over three decades, and had become, as Gordimer claims, “a habit” (378), but as the 1980s approached, South Africa was beginning to experience a shift in control in the form of black resistance. The established, or “old” order of white control began to lose power as opposition struggled to dismantle apartheid; as resistance increased so did the tension between blacks and whites of South Africa.

Although *Tsotsi* was written in 1960, it was not published until 1980, when South Africa was experiencing an interregnum, a period of transition that began to challenge and upset the longstanding tradition of white privilege. In 1976 – just four years prior to *Tsotsi*’s publication – blacks rebelled against the subjugation of white control. The Soweto Uprising, the result of black rebellion, ushered in what Daniel Lehman asserts is “the most contentious decade of apartheid” (89). It is significant that Fugard’s novel was published shortly after Gordimer’s speech², which advocates that in order for the new

² See Daniel Lehman’s article “Tsotsi Transformed: Retooling Athol Fugard for the Thabo Mbeki Era” in which Lehman discusses Stephen Gray, the South African writer and critic, who discovered Fugard’s manuscript of *Tsotsi* (a series of papers) in a tin trunk and convinced Fugard to allow him to edit and collate *Tsotsi* on the condition that Fugard

South Africa to emerge “Struggle must be firmly in black hands” (378). In 1960, a hopeless time when black resistance was forced underground, a novel that featured a black protagonist who redeems himself, would not have been appropriate; instead, Fugard’s novel would have to wait until the 1980s, when black resistance began to rise again. Fugard had to silence himself until a time when South Africa could hear Tsotsi’s story.

Tsotsi tells the story of Tsotsi, a young gang leader, and his followers Die Ap, Butcher, and Boston. The gang, excluding Boston – an educated man – finds pleasure in killing and inflicting pain, and they have become expert killers who have no regard for human life. When Boston breaks Tsotsi’s one rule (not to ask questions about his past) and causes him to think about his repressed trauma, Tsotsi reacts violently and nearly beats Boston to death. Throughout the course of the novel, Tsotsi begins to remember small pieces of his past until he is able to remember the trauma that led him to flee the protection of his home and enter into a life of the streets. When Tsotsi remembers who he was – David – he begins to move toward a cathartic confession. His regained humanity, brought forth as he tries to take care of an orphaned baby, leads him to sacrifice himself to save the child, the child he names David after himself – a child without parents and a child without a future.

Fugard’s *Tsotsi* is an embodiment of South Africa’s rich political history and is a testimony to the negative effects of apartheid, not only shown through the experiences of Tsotsi, the gangster protagonist of Fugard’s only novel, but also through the hardships many of the other characters endure. For the purpose of this chapter, I will use *Tsotsi* to

would have the final call on public circulation. Fugard also made clear that he neither wanted to “revise, rewrite – or even read – the novel” (89).

engage with apartheid history as it reflects the many political movements of its time. Furthermore, I will discuss Tsotsi's apartheid environment, and through this explanation of the political climate in which he lives, I will demonstrate the moral transformation Tsotsi undergoes when he accepts his traumatic past and moves from ruthless killer to a man who develops empathy. Tsotsi regains his lost humanity by confessing his story.

Tsotsi's future is destroyed when a pass raid devastates his childhood. As a young child David (as Tsotsi was called before his trauma) is content living with his mother while the two of them wait for his father to return home the following day, presumably from protesting as a part of the African National Congress (ANC). David's mother knows it is only a matter of time before she is taken away in a pass raid, and in response to the cynical old woman who lives with David, her acceptance of her fate is echoed in her words, "It will come Mama. It will come" (146). Knowing that the inevitable will come, she prepares David for that day:

Time and again in the past his mother had unexpectedly called him, and kneeling down so that she could look straight into his eyes told him with a strange urgency in her voice what he had to do if ever it happened that she was taken away.

"Don't you move, you hear. Stay in the room and wait for me there. Do you hear, David? Do you hear what I say? Listen David. Listen carefully.

Wait for me. I promise, I promise I will come back. (154)

Knowing that without a father at home he would be left defenseless, David's mother tries to protect her son by assuring him that his father will come back. The night she is taken away David recalls hearing the "sound of stones being tapped on lamp-posts. It was the

warning to run away and hide because the police had come on another raid...without any warning the sleepy-eyed, frightened people, caught without a pass, or just caught” (150-51). In reference to apartheid history, the control of the influx of Africans in urban areas allowed police to take away David’s mother and countless others, regardless of whether they had a pass or not. The sentiments of many Africans taken away during pass raids are captured in Fugard’s words, in which David hears the jumbled shouts and pleas of the towns people: “...the police station...two pounds ten shillings...like last...law courts...Don’t cry, David...bring food...bring my pass...bring money...For gawd’s sake bring money man...” (152). After this pandemonium, there is nothing but silence and David is alone.

As a young child who “hasn’t even been born to the troubles of the world,” David does not understand why his mother has not come back in the morning like she promised she would. Fugard seems to break the narrative and offer commentary on the present situation. Rita Barnard asserts that Fugard saw the “cruel effects of the pass laws firsthand” while working for the Native Commissioner’s office in Johannesburg during a miserable period of his life.³ Fugard poses the question, “What do you do with broken sleep, or terror, or empty blankets or the despairing process of a tomorrow that means your turn to search for that person, that precious person who has been taken away and might never be seen again?” and answers, “If you are lucky, you will find him, but then you will have to find money to help him out of the strange labyrinth of the law.”

³ See Rita Barnard’s essay “Tsotsis: On Law, the Outlaw, and the Postcolonial State.” *Contemporary Literature* 49.4 (2008): 548. For more information, see Jonathan Kaplan’s introduction to *Tsotsi* where he provides biographical information of Fugard’s experiences with the Pass Laws, quoting Fugard: “Seeing the machinery in action taught me how it works and in fact what it does to people” (xii).

Furthermore, Fugard is struggling to come to terms with what is happening around him on a daily basis, as evidenced in one character's response to the pass raid that takes Tsotsi's mother away: "Why man? Why just like that, like out of the air, like lightning, any place, any time? Don't you know?" (153). In a time when many Africans are searching for any sign of hope, Fugard seems to respond to the plight of the townspeople by answering his character's question: "Because we are defenseless. You saw them, how they came and took what they wanted and then went and we did nothing. Anything can get at us...It's the siege of our life, man. So what do we do?...Carry on. Carry on" (153). The old woman's comments reverberate feelings of hopelessness when she responds to David's sobs, saying "They took your mother and the rest of the world...Where is God in heaven!" (156-7). The idea of taking the rest of the world extends past the notion that the police have taken away actual people; the "rest of the world" is both political and personal, and can be applied figuratively. Politically, the government has stripped away the Africans' rights to a home and to live freely without fear of being taken away; personally, the government has reduced Africans to feeling defenseless and powerless, ripping apart families and taking away loved ones. It has created rampant fear, and with no support from a government that has excluded them, the Africans must simply endure and "carry on."⁴

David must adopt this "carry on" doctrine if he is going to survive. His father does not deliver what David's mother promised – better days; instead, he offers his son a hard lesson in return: there is no hope for happiness or better days. The turning point in David's life that ultimately allowed for his transformation into Tsotsi occurs when his

⁴ See also Lindiwe Dovey "Redeeming Features: From *Tsotsi* (1980) to *Tsotsi* (2006)." *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. 19.2 (2007): 150.

father returns home and discovers that his wife Tondi has been taken away. In a moment of pain and devastation, David's father is powerless and must find a scapegoat to exert his anger. David's dog is the undeserving recipient, and David must witness firsthand the cruelty of life:

He had to open his eyes, and when he did he wished he hadn't, because for all his tears and prayers he could not close them until it was over. He had kicked her and she was walking around in circles, biting at her own back legs and rolling over and over in the sand. She stopped and tried to stand up but she could only do so on the front ones. Her eyes were red, and her muzzle blind with pain and knowing what was coming she turned her head to the hok and started that way...her ribs heaving, she gave birth to the stillborn litter, and then died beside him. (161)

The "yellow bitch" is representative of a whole race oppressed by apartheid rule, or the apartheid state as a whole. Similar to David, the dog as a pup had not been hardened by years of being chained, and is described in earlier times: "She used to play with him, running up to his feet and rolling over on her back with her legs curled in air so that he could scratch her belly with his toe" (146). David laments, "She doesn't play anymore" (147). The juxtaposition of the dog as a puppy to the dog's nature now is indicative of the loss of innocence and transformation that every child under apartheid rule must undergo. The child is simply a part of the "stillborn litter" that apartheid births. There is hope for life only to be stifled and made dead by a harsh and relentless reality, designed to destroy the very core of a human being. Like the "small black cloud" of flies

that feed on the stillborn litter left out to rot, David is left alone to contend with the world around him, in which his soul must “rot” in the process.

In response to David’s earlier contention that “she [his dog] doesn’t play with me anymore” his mother reassures him by claiming “You’ll have other playmates soon enough” (146). Though she is literally talking about other puppies, the response foreshadows David’s fate of finding new playmates in the river children, the pseudo-family he adopts in order to survive. The river children serve as a temporary shelter for David where he learns survival techniques that will help him transform into the Tsotsi he will grow up to be. When David runs away from his angry father, he runs until he encounters the small pack of orphans who at first taunt him until they realize he is one of them. They accept him when they realize that he doesn’t have a mother or a father and proceed to tell him that “he will learn” (162).

Ironically, David will learn, not in the traditional educational sense, but he will learn the ways of the street – a direct response to the 1953 Bantu Education Act where the government seized control of all Africans’ education and prepared them for nothing more than manual labor (196) and as Maylam claims, “[s]tudents were subjected to a distinctive syllabus, geared more to practical learning to prepare Africans for subservient, menial roles” (183). In essence, David’s educational ideology is exchanged for Tsotsi’s ideology of violence; he will learn how to become a criminal. Tsotsi’s “education” is recorded in the following passage:

He learnt the lesson of his body, the lesson of hunger. Crying, or sadness, or sitting still meant hunger...he hungered this way through the day, his stomach shrinking to a hard knot he held in his hand. He learnt all the

lessons, he learnt them well. He never stopped learning, it seemed.

Because after the river gang – broken up one night by a police raid – came other gangs of older boys, and harder, harsher lessons, and that simple lesson of keeping his body alive another day. He learned to watch for the weakness of sympathy or compassion for others weaker than yourself, like discovering how never to feel the pain you inflicted. (167-8)

Because David has been reduced to criminality in order to survive and keep his body alive another day he loses himself, shouting “David...it [the old David] said, David! But no more! He dead! He dead too, like Willie” (167). Furthermore, he rejects his old life because “Warmth was a pain...was a memory, was a pain” (165); instead, he moves toward the life of a *tsotsi* – resorting to criminal activity, refusing his name and adopting *Tsotsi*, the name given to him by an Indian shop owner who chases him away from his shop (168). A life of violence is easier than remembering the warmth that is no longer there. A life of violence is the only way to survive, and forgetting his past allows him to move forward.

In the introduction to *Tsotsi*, Jonathan Kaplan discusses *Tsotsi*'s repressive nature and suggests reasons as to why *Tsotsi* becomes a ruthless killer with no conscience; he has no regard for the “casual termination of human life” (xiv). Kaplan asserts, “*Tsotsi* knows nothing of himself, not name nor age nor origins. Shorn of history, he has no identity, and when he thinks of himself he thinks of darkness...Fugard's character appears to have no point of human access, like the malevolent system that has created him” (xiv) and that “criminality offered a chance for survival; only the most ruthless

might thrive” (x). Consider how the townspeople react when Tsotsi and his gang, “the harbingers of the night,” pass by:

Rooms were suddenly grey and cold and mothers calling their children off the streets where shadows were running like rats after the four pipers...brave men stepped aside to let him pass, and the shopkeeper hurried out to board up his windows and bolt his door, or as small as fatherless children and the whispers of hate they scuttled away down the alleys. He knew it also as his meaning. Life had taught him no other. The brave ones, stood down because of him, the fear was him, the hate was for him. It was all there because of him. He knew he was. That is why his passing down the crooked street, men looked the other way and women wept into the dust. (7)

Tsotsi, in an environment that favors the strongest, positions himself at the top of the power structure in order to survive. Tsotsi is an example of what Francis Wilson and Mamphela maintain about the influence the environment can have on a child: “Children may be socialized into vandalism or find themselves having to adopt violent measures as a matter of survival and, in the process, losing any sense of right and wrong” (Thompson 201). Given the place and time, as well as the apartheid situation, a deadly tsotsi *can* exert a powerful influence over his fellow beings; in a sense then, his fellow beings are in a double bind – they are not only oppressed by the white-centered government but also by the tsotsis.

According to Kaplan, in the 1950s, tsotsis or “gangsters” were a ruthless force that threatened the African townships. These tsotsis “preyed on their fellow Africans,

robbing, murdering and raping with impunity” (xi). The authorities did nothing to help with the violence. Kaplan describes the tsotsis he grew up with as “unbridled violence as pitiless and unthinking as the sharks that lay in wait outside the nets off Durban beach. In the townships, tsotsis were its “predators, killers with a superlative attention to mortal detail”; they were meticulous and very skilled in the art of killing. With no precise reason, tsotsis were a sinister force, often inflicting pain for the sake of pain (xi).

As mentioned earlier, tsotsis care little to nothing for human life, and this notion is demonstrated in Tsotsi’s actions when he chooses to murder Gumboot, a happy black South African man returning home to his wife after time away for work. No specific reason exists for Tsotsi’s gang to kill Gumboot other than his smile that “was as white as light” (10). Unlike Tsotsi, Gumboot is one of the “honest men who went about their own business of getting home safely and quickly” (11). Even though Gumboot tries to beat the system of apartheid, he stands no chance against Tsotsi who has “chosen” him. Apartheid has created “idle hands” (2) whose only purpose in life is to kill, the only act that gives meaning the lives of Tsotsi and his gang (3). In Rita Barnard’s essay “Tsotsis on Law, the Outlaw, and the Postcolonial State” she asserts, “The postcolonial state has found itself incapable of creating work opportunities for all its citizens and protecting them from destitution. One result of this tendency is a frightening degree of unemployment, particularly of young, unskilled, black males” (562). Because there is not enough work, Tsotsi and his gang must take the money from others.

Tsotsi seems to care little about the money that Gumboot accidentally reveals, another reason Gumboot is singled out; instead, tsotsis only wants to inflict pain. In Gumboot’s last few seconds of life Tsotsi, in a moment of hate, whispers an obscenity

referring to Gumboot's mother, so that it will disfigure the face in death (12). Tsotsi seems to be a direct representation of the tsotsis Kaplan discussed in his introduction to the novel, the kind of tsotsi that would sometimes instead of murder would stick a knife into the spine of his victims to achieve a certain outcome. Also, the tsotsi would sterilize the knife so he could prolong the suffering of his victim, to keep his victim from dying of infection (xi). Though he has mastered the art of killing, Tsotsi does not do it for the money; he chooses to focus on pain instead of monetary gain.

A pivotal moment in the narrative that upsets Tsotsi's relentless routine of killing occurs when one of his gang members, Boston, confronts Tsotsi after killing Gumboot, the man Tsotsi chooses purposefully to mess with Boston, who has a tendency of getting sick after jobs. Boston's main purpose in the narrative is to serve as Tsotsi's foil who pushes him to enter into forbidden territory: Tsotsi's interior self. Before Boston breaks Tsotsi's rule and asks him questions about his past, Tsotsi can feel himself changing. Fugard writes, "It is exactly the same as always...in a strange way, it had no longer felt the same" (16). This sudden change of feeling is a result of hearing Boston cry after killing Gumboot. Though Tsotsi does not realize it, Boston's actions have already set into motion Tsotsi's transformation from inhumanity to humanity, and from hopelessness to redemption.

Tsotsi's feelings of unease are heightened when Boston, very drunk, confronts him asking, "What's your name Tsotsi...your real name? How old are you? Your folks Tsotsi. Your mother...or father. Sister? Jesus! What about a dog?" (16-26). Because Tsotsi repressed his memories when he ran away from home years before, he no longer knows the answers; however, when Boston asks his first question Tsotsi subconsciously

attempts to remember what he purposely forgot. Unintentionally, Boston becomes Tsotsi's savior, who proves to be the impetus in Tsotsi's redemption. Proceeding against the admonishments and breaking the "silence" rule, Boston awakens Tsotsi's inner feelings and pushes him into the night where he will meet his ultimate savior: the baby who helps envelop him in a cloud of memory.

The image of the baby as savior manifests itself early in the narrative, and with possession of the child Tsotsi is able to re-witness fragmented pieces of the past he turned away from many years before. Whereas before, Boston's interrogation and his beating would have created an uneasy feeling, now Tsotsi realizes "It had no longer felt the same" (16) even though Tsotsi resists change and reassures himself "I will do exactly the same as I always do" (16). But Tsotsi has reached a point of no return. The small memory he remembers in the night entices him to look further inside his psyche where as long as he has the baby he can rediscover who he was. Furthermore, Tsotsi begins to identify with the baby, whom he later names David. In an internal revelation, Tsotsi acknowledges the impact of the child: "He had become the repository of Tsotsi's past. The baby and David, himself that is, at first confused, had now merged into one and the same person" (175).

Upon Tsotsi's adoption of the baby as his surrogate son comes the moment when Tsotsi understands the injustice of the apartheid state. More importantly, Tsotsi realizes the baby will become him; he will grow up to be a man without hope of escaping the fate set before him. Looking at the baby Tsotsi ponders, "The police raid, the river, and Petah, the spider spinning his web, the grey day and the smell of damp newspapers were a future awaiting the baby. It was outside itself. He could sympathize with it in its defenselessness

against the terrible events awaiting it” (175). Tsotsi then takes on the role of the father and does what is necessary to keep the baby alive. Unlike his own father who took away life, Tsotsi will fight to sustain a life all the while encouraging the baby to “Stay alive – David. I’ll get you mother’s milk” (176). Tsotsi, who identifies with the child’s helplessness, is doing everything he can to keep the child alive, because he is subconsciously nurturing the old David of his past. In a moment of crisis, when the baby is near death, Tsotsi seeks the help of Miriam.

At the sight of the baby’s pitiful state Miriam pleads, “Give him to me. He is sick. Give him to me and I will take him and look after him” (179). As any parent would react, Tsotsi becomes defensive and thinks he will kill her if she tries to take the baby away from him (179). The parental defense Tsotsi demonstrates is interesting because of the duality of the protection he enforces, both for David and for his own wellbeing. Emotionally, Tsotsi has feelings for the baby and works to keep the baby alive; mentally, Tsotsi inadvertently protects his past. Giving up the baby would mean that Tsotsi would be giving up himself; in essence he would be giving up his new role as father and his transformation would be lost. Without the child he will return to the life he led before the baby entered his life. His identity becomes his purpose and without the baby he is fragmented, a notion that resonates in Boston’s words concerning himself: “He’s just pieces. Just pieces held together by dried blood, like something broken...who the hell wants the pieces of a man” (187).

Although the baby has helped Tsotsi pick up the pieces of his former life, perhaps the most notable effect the baby has on Tsotsi is helping him find empathy, first for the baby and later for others he would have otherwise killed and without hesitation. Tsotsi

does not realize that he is changing, and only when he chooses Morris Tshabalala and fails to murder him, does he come to an understanding of how he has been transformed from a killer to a man that feels, claiming, “Yes man. I’m telling you all the time I’m feeling with you” (114). This notion of humanization is indicated in the following passage:

“Why do you have to kill me Tsotsi?”

“I don’t have to.” This meant nothing to Morris Tshabalala until the young man said it again. “I don’t have to.” Then Tsotsi stood up, and with something like a laugh he walked a little distance away where he stood for a long time with his hands on his hips. “I don’t have to. It’s over, beggar. I let you live.” (114)

The choice to let Morris live is a testament to Tsotsi’s transformation. Tsotsi first encounters Morris, who mistakenly insults Tsoti, shouting “Yelp of a yellow bitch!” (75). Morris’s bitterness results in him being marked by Tsotsi: “I’ll take you, you bastard, he thought. Tonight I’ll take you. His choice was made” (99). In a “cat and mouse” game, Tsotsi chases Morris. Morris’s fear triggers an emotion from Tsotsi’s past that forever changes the course of Tsotsi’s life. Morris, left crippled from a mining accident who drags his legs in the same way the dying dog did reminds him of his yellow dog, and the memory finally comes into focus and Tsotsi, like Morris, understands what it is to feel fear; more importantly, both men understand what it feels like to experience warmth. Though the two men have different associations of warmth, it becomes their guiding force. For Morris, warmth is an indication that he is still alive; for Tsotsi, he remembers what it felt like to feel the warmth of his mother’s love.

Tsotsi empathizes with Morris because Morris has been defeated, both physically and mentally. Morris has nothing to live for except the little warmth he feels in his hands. This sentiment is echoed in Morris's confession to Tsotsi: "Sunshine. Sunshine in stones. The warm stones of the streets. I felt it tonight at the end of the day. I must feel it tomorrow. If my hands don't feel I'll make a hole in my trousers and sit with my soft bum to feel, or lay my face on the ground...do you understand now? I want to live" (114). Whereas Morris needs physical warmth Tsotsi needs emotional warmth to keep him on the path to redemption. The warm stones beneath Morris's numb hands represent the "thawing out" process – the move from dehumanization to humanization – of Tsotsi's inner being. The memories have shown that Tsotsi has known what warmth is, and just as the warmth of the stones are desired for Morris, the memories are desired, and the need to "rediscover" himself is crucial for Tsotsi. His eye-opening experience with Morris becomes "an unexpected turning in his life" (119) and Tsotsi reflects, "Looking back, it felt as if he had woken up to a day of another man's life" (119). Tsotsi's empathy has awakened him and he has been born a new man, even though he will die shortly after this awakening when he tries to save the baby from a collapsing building.

Though Tsotsi has reclaimed his dignity, the novel does not allow him to exist as a changed man, nor does it allow other characters to rise above their fate. Instead, the novel punishes those characters who try to resist the apartheid system, such as Boston. Boston not only pushes Tsotsi into his transformation but he is also, in many ways, a proponent of protest. He is not the typical tsotsi, inhumane and without direction; Boston is an educated man who had the potential to rise above a life of criminality, but a

misunderstanding between a young girl and himself causes him to be expelled from a life of potential and into a life of ruin.

Before the present time in the novel, Boston had tried to make a better life for himself. His attempt to rise above the life of a tsotsi is a testimony to his protest against his fate. Boston, who was Walter Nguza before his downfall, was a good student – “nearly always first in his class” – who had received a scholarship to study in Johannesburg and later attended school to be a teacher. Boston was the “man with a future.” (190). When Boston “tries his luck” with a fellow student, “not knowing that you went just so far and not further” (192) and unintentionally rapes her, he is expelled from school and presumably will never find a job as a teacher. His previous life was “finished. Everything. Finished as dead as cigarette ash” (191). At this point in the novel Boston is faced with the streets or returning home to his proud mother; he chooses to turn to the streets so his mother will think he is still in school.

When Boston is forced out on the streets he encounters Johnboy, an illiterate man, and helps forge his pass. The relationship Boston creates with Johnboy leads him into an illegal business where he competes against, and directly challenges, the apartheid system. Where pass laws were meant to control the influx of Africans into urban areas, Boston helped reverse that process. With his illegal business, Boston represents an era of protest that surged during the 1950s.⁵ The most notable act of protest that occurred during the 1950s was the Sharpeville Massacre (1959), where constables, frightened by the size of

⁵ According to Laura Wright in *Visual Differences*, “South Africa in the 1940s and 50s the district was a seedbed of political activism by the ANC and the Communist Party” (47). Nigel Worden maintains, “In the 1950s, the ANC protested against the government’s new discriminatory legislation, with the aim of mobilizing widespread defiance of unjust laws such as curfews, pass laws and segregation of amenities (112-13).

the march, panicked and fired out into the crowd, shooting many marchers in the back (Worden 121). What was supposed to be a non-violent march against anti-pass laws resulted in 69 fatalities and 108 wounded marchers (Worden 121). Many protesters were massacred that day, but what is perhaps more devastating than the silencing of those individuals was the ending of resistance. Pheko contends, “The Sharpeville campaign had not achieved the abolition of passes nor the ultimate overthrow of the government. But Sharpeville shook the whole country and changed its political climate” (94); Furthermore, Worden maintains that Sharpeville “revealed the failure of non-violent resistance and forced a new approach from opponents of apartheid” (121). In 1960 the South African Government established the Unlawful Organization Bill that banned the PAC, the ANC, and any form of apartheid resistance (Pheko 93). With resistance stifled, the government could continue on with its apartheid reign, which meant that apartheid subjects could do little to nothing to change their situation and simply had to adopt Miriam’s philosophy on life: “We just got to live. Isn’t that so? That’s what it is. That’s all it is. Tomorrow comes and you got to live” (223).

The tomorrow that comes is never better than its yesterday, and the failure of non-violent resistance is latent in Fugard’s novel. When a character resists it results in their demise. Morris resists the life of a beggar only to become dependent on the pennies people throw at him, resulting in his loss of pride and his negative feelings of self-worth that makes him question his existence: “Why do I go on? I am no better than a dog and slower” (79). Boston struggled to create a different life for himself but instead was reduced to living the life of a tsotsi.

Though Boston is a part of Tsotsi's gang, initially chosen for his wits, he does not belong and never will. Boston cannot find his place among his fellow gang members because he has decency, or what Tsotsi calls a sickness (18). After killing Gumboot, Boston begins to talk about decency, and none of the other men understand what he is talking about. Boston claims that his decency has made him sick: "That's why I got sick! Decency!" (18). When Butcher asks what the word means Boston says, "Everything you are not" (18). This moment in the narrative sets Boston apart from the other three and eventually causes him to be shut out from the group. Whereas the other men see it as a sport to kill and do not care about their victims' lives, Boston's "sickness" keeps him humane. Tsotsi demands that Boston "Go see a doctor, man" (19); ironically, Boston will become Tsotsi's doctor and will help Tsotsi find a cure for his sickness.

Though these characters live a life of suffering, Tsotsi's death proves to be the most tragic. Once Tsotsi's transformation is complete and he has redeemed his humanity, finally being able to recognize his former self, he declares, "My name is David Madondo" (224). However, his life-changing moment is short lived. When Tsotsi realizes the ruins he has hidden the baby in are about to be bulldozed because "the white township had grown impatient" (225), he runs to save the baby screaming "No! Stop! Stop it!" (225). At the last moment possible, as the walls are falling down, Tsotsi makes it to the baby:

He got there with seconds to spare. He had enough time to dive for the corner where the baby was hidden, before the first crack smacked along the wall and the topmost bricks came falling down, time enough even then to look, and then finally to remember. Then it was too late for anything;

and the wall came down on top of him, flattening him into the dust. They unearthed him minutes later. All agreed that his smile was beautiful, and strange for a tsotsi, and that when he lay there on his back in the sun, before someone had fetched a blanket, they agreed that it was hard to believe what the back of his head looked like when you saw the smile. (225-26)

This moment in the narrative correlates with the destruction of Sophiatown in 1955⁶, where, as Kaplan contends, a once thriving black culture was destroyed in order to create a white suburb called “Triomf/Triumph” (xiii); consequently, the dislocated blacks were relocated to Soweto, an African township that subjected its inhabitants to extreme living conditions (Kaplan xiii). Tsotsi witnesses the relocation first hand, especially when he encounters the group of men hired to re-zone the area:

They were one of the demolition squads, busy each day now as they broke down doors and windows and tore off the roofs of a few more houses so that no more people would come into the township. They were being carted away in lorries to some other place, so that one day the township would be no more. (53)

Like Tsotsi, who dies the moment he regains his humanity, Sophiatown is destroyed. The re-zoning of Sophiatown is therefore a place of both creation and destruction. Tsotsi is

⁶ The relocation of blacks was made possible by the Group Areas Act (1950), and Worden maintains the idea that the act “extended the principle of separate racial residential areas” (108). The forced removals were often justified by slum clearance that involved massive urban restructuring (Worden 108). Sophiatown remained one of the few remaining places that allowed blacks to own their properties (Kaplan xiii). When these properties owners were told to leave they refused and, according to Worden, these people “had to be forcibly relocated by the police” (113).

reborn an empathetic man but is killed moments after; Sophiatown is destroyed to create new space.

Fugard's ambiguous ending thus echoes Laura Wright's assertion that Tsotsi's fate is tied directly to Sophiatown's destruction (47); furthermore, the ending is a testament of apartheid reality where one cannot hope to change his or her own fate because the system will not allow for change. What is interesting concerning *Tsotsi* is that Fugard abandoned his novel in 1960 and left it unpublished for 20 years until Stephen Gray convinced him to publish it, four years after the Soweto rebellion (1976) where 15,000 students marched in protest against the horrible conditions of Soweto's education system. Many children were killed, and unlike the Sharpeville massacre that stifled resistance, the protestors retaliated; they fired on police officers and destroyed administration buildings and beer halls. Following the Soweto uprising resistance escalated and there were boycotts and schools were burned down. It seemed the Black Consciousness movement⁷ influenced the protest (Worden 134-35).

The political climate of the late 1970s and into the 80s was vastly different than that of the early 1960s, specifically after the Sharpeville massacre. It is appropriate that Fugard's novel would be published during the 1980s and not the 1960s when, more than likely, seeing as the novel – a bildungsroman – features a black protagonist who moves from disbelief to belief and redeems himself, the ending would have been too unrealistic in the 1960s when hope was a bleak prospect. Therefore, Fugard was responsible for his

⁷ According to Worden, the Black Consciousness movement advocated creation of a new social identity of their own. Where the ANC's and the PAC's tactics failed and black inferiority resulted in ineffective organization and resistance, the "all black" ideology of the Black Consciousness movement provided the remedy for change. In essence the movement sought to "produce real black people who do not regard themselves as appendages to white society" (132). It emphasized black pride and self-assertion.

own authorial silence. As the political climate changed, and blacks began to fight back for their rights, it seemed that hope was restored and that change was not impossible; therefore, *Tsotsi* could be published in the 1980s when frustrated blacks were going through a transformation themselves.

Fugard's novel suggests these feelings of not knowing what changes were coming, and the ambiguous ending lends to this assumption. There is no conclusive evidence as to whether or not the baby survived just as there is no guiding path for South Africa to follow. The baby became a part of Tsotsi's future, and because he placed the baby in the ruins, Tsotsi's (as well as the baby's) future is uncertain. Tsotsi, being a representative of the apartheid state as a whole, reflects the uncertainties many blacks and whites felt during the first interregnum when the political climate was shifting rapidly and the White South African government's control was diminishing.

The apartheid system gives Tsotsi no other choice than to turn to a life of violence. The novel is bleak in that it offers no hope for change and transformation. It exists as a direct representation of the apartheid state's goal of keeping the established order, an arrangement of enforcing the power structure that privileged white South Africans and kept black South Africans subservient. During the time in which the novel was written, Fugard could not write about a protagonist who redeems himself; instead, he had to shut away his protagonist until a later time when South Africa was ready for the change that *Tsotsi*, the novel, allows.

CHAPTER TWO

POST-APARTHEID AND SILENCE: THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

COMISSION AND *MOTHER TO MOTHER*

Whereas Fugard's novel represents the hopeless political landscape of the 1950s, Sindiwe Magona's novel *Mother to Mother* embodies an era of hope in the form of black resistance that began in the early 1980s and continued to escalate into the 90s. The years leading up to the end of apartheid, as evidenced in *Mother to Mother*, were violent and inhumane. Before South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa's racial tensions appeared to have reached their height, and the black liberation movement was refusing to yield to white control. Eventually, the long-enduring apartheid regime fell, but the struggle did not end there; the country, ravaged and torn apart by racial injustice, had to pick up the broken pieces and build a "new" South Africa. But how does a country rebuild itself when its foundation is cracked and unstable? Now that apartheid had ended, how did the nation move forward? A way of coming to terms with the nation's history was the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Though there were many positive effects of the TRC, such as acknowledging the past in an effort to keep from repeating past mistakes, the commission was also flawed in that it preoccupied itself with the past, a process that obstructed the nation's attempts to forgive and move forward.

Like Fugard's novel, which attempts to humanize a dehumanized character, Magona's novel shows the effects of apartheid (that considered and treated black South Africans as less than human) created these dehumanized characters and that the

environment helped shape the apartheid subjects into desensitized murderers. Magona's novel seeks not necessarily to justify the white woman's murder but to provide readers with an understanding of what the end of apartheid looked like, and how this political landscape and the white woman being in the wrong place at the wrong time – a "Perfect congruence" (210) – led to her murder. Given the nature of the situation and the political climate, the time and place forge to form a deadly setup, during which the white woman becomes the scapegoat for the apartheid subjects to purge their violent tendencies.

In Magona's fictional setting, Mandisa, a black South African mother confesses to a white mother not only her son's story, but her story of growing up during apartheid. Mandisa's son Mxolisi, a young black man, has murdered the white mother's daughter. Throughout the novel, Mandisa explains the hardships she and her family have experienced, and through this confession she explains how and why a murder like the white woman's was expected. Instead of placing all the blame on her son, Mandisa places the blame on all parties involved, suggesting that the white woman had no place to be in South Africa, especially in Guguletu, and that her false sense of security played an equal part in her murder. The white woman's desire to do good could not match against the black youth's desire to dismantle the apartheid regime, and her status as white woman, regardless of her reason for being in South Africa, made her a target of black youth.

As suggested in Magona's novel, the black youth become instruments to be used by the black leaders for political acts. As a result of the encouragement of black leaders, these individuals became a part of a larger purpose that served the resistance effort. They became a collective force caught up in the politics of apartheid, and they lost their personal selves in the process. They killed because leaders encouraged violence. My

reading of Magona's novel implies that in the youth's eyes, and especially in Mxolisi's mind, people cease to exist as people and become targets. These targets were identified as any person who contested the youth's actions or opposed the youth's ideology of violent protest as a means for change. Although the black youth were able to push back and to some degree could begin to assert their independence, this "success" had severe consequences for all involved -- not only black but also white. These consequences transcended national boundaries and apartheid's war was no longer South Africa's problem alone; ultimately, the world (specifically the western world) could no longer ignore apartheid's reign. It is in this political environment that a dehumanized and dehumanizing population was created, and although innocent people were killed on a regular basis, the story of Amy Biehl's murder caught the attention of the U.S. because of Biehl's status as a white American student working to dismantle apartheid rule.

As a result of years of oppression followed by the idea that change would only come about through violence, I suggest the black youth became a dehumanized and mechanized force, and existed as political agents that could be used to liberate black South Africans from the shackles of the white government, and Sindiwe Magona's novel *Mother to Mother* represents the violent nature of black resistance. The two opposing forces of apartheid -- the "Young Lions" to whom Magona refers in her novel and the white government and militant forces -- created violent territory, and when apartheid control began to diminish, South Africa needed to find a way to reconcile the two forces and to try and repair a country that had been ripped apart by racial injustice. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a highly contested way of coming to terms with and making amends for the injustices of apartheid, was the only answer South Africa

could propose at the time. This chapter will explore the ways in which *Mother to Mother*, through a fictional representation of the goals of the TRC, accomplishes what the TRC could not. Though the TRC was set up to give a voice to individuals, both black and white, who felt apartheid's injustice, some people felt it did not accomplish this goal. Martin Meredith believes the commission focused on "fame" stories, or the most extreme cases, and failed to recognize the everyday stories of apartheid and the suffering of the everyday people (20). In a country that gave voices to some and stifled others, Magona provides a detailed account of Mandisa's life, and the untold story behind his action, a story that carries with it a particular history that influences the action and is often overlooked by those people not accustomed to a particular culture and its influences.

Mandisa, the novel's protagonist, provides a detailed account of all the events in her son Mxolisi's life that influenced him to commit a heinous crime. Mandisa laments that the hatred that spurred her son to kill a white woman has existed long before Mxolisi's and even her time. As a young child, Mandisa sits and listens to her grandfather tell what he considers to be the true account of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing prophecy, an event that led the Xhosa people to kill all their cattle and burn all their crops. As suggested in the novel, the Cattle-Killing prophecy, prophesied by Nongqawuse, would purge the land of all whites that had settled in South Africa, only if the Xhosa people killed all their cattle and burned their crops. Then, the sun would reverse itself and the land would be returned to what it was before whites settled in the area. The prophecy did not come true, and as Renee Schatteman contends, the prophecy "resulted in the deaths of as many as forty thousand people, the slaughter of some four hundred thousand heads of cattle, and the dispossession from more than six hundred thousand acres of land" (275).

Though the aftermath is tragic, what is more devastating is not so much the effect but rather the cause -- a motive fueled by hate and desperation. The prophecy weakened the Xhosa and made it possible for whites to stay and control the land. In the novel, many years have passed since the prophecy failed, but Mandisa's grandfather laments, "The biggest storm is still here. It is in our hearts – the hearts of the people of this land. For let me tell you something. Deep run the roots of hatred here. Deep. Deep. Deep" (175), suggesting there is still resentment.

Mandisa is too young to understand why she must hate and distrust whites. As a young child she is ignorant of race and prejudice, a notion that resonates in her question to her grandfather: "Why is there hatred in the hearts of the people?" (175). Perhaps Mandisa's first recognition of the effects of racism and the conflicts between the two different representations of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing prophecy come when she reveals that her teachers, controlled by the white government, have told her the reason for the Africans killing their cattle and destroying their crops was because they were "superstitious and ignorant" (175). Mandisa's grandfather asks her to listen:

Deep run the roots of hatred here. So deep, a cattle-worshiping nation killed all its precious herds. Tillers, burned fertile fields, fully sowed, bearing rich promise too. Readers of Nature's Signs, allowed themselves fallacious belief. In red noon's eye rolling back to the east for sleep. Anything. Anything to rid themselves of these unwanted strangers. No sacrifice too great, to wash away the curse. That deep, deep, deep, ran the hatred then. In the nearly two centuries since, the hatred has but multiplied. The hatred has but multiplied. (176)

The grandfather's belief is very different from Mandisa's teacher's story, that claims the Xhosa people were "superstitious and ignorant" (174) for following the false prophet. He paints a picture of a desperate population that would do anything to rid the land of whites -- even offering the ultimate sacrifice in hopes that the sun would reverse itself and return to a time when the white presence was unknown. The hatred has only multiplied and increased because the desperate sacrifice the Xhosa people made did not achieve its goal of ridding the land of whites. Whereas the Africans would have been able to take back what was rightfully theirs, the failed prophecy allowed whites to keep what was not theirs and to take even more. The now weakened Africans either had to submit to white control or die if they did not. It is for this reason that the hatred ran deep then and runs even deeper now. The "raging storm" brews on in their hearts, an act the grandfather contends, "is more dangerous than howling winds and raging waves. You can run from those and seek shelter elsewhere, perhaps escape them altogether. How does one run away from the heart, one's own or that of another?" (176). The Xhosa Cattle-Killing prophecy manifests itself in *Mother to Mother* to demonstrate that the hatred is a long-standing tradition that both sides are unwilling to forget. The Xhosa cannot forget because the feelings in their hearts are a constant reminder of the wrongdoing their race suffered years before that continues to affect them in the present.

In the present time of the novel the raging storm lives on, specifically through Mxolisi who enacts the "deep dark private yearnings of a subjugated race" (210). The inclusion of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing prophecy provides a framework for the current situation in the years leading up to South Africa's independence. The prophecy is juxtaposed with Mxolisi and the youth violence at the time the novel takes place, during

the final years and bloodiest years of apartheid. The youth of Guguletu attempt to take matters into their own hands; they will do what the prophecy failed to do and purge the land of white control. With this ideology that the only way to end white authority is through violence, the “Young Lions” move through the townships and burn property. To a more inhumane degree, the youth could “necklace”⁸ a person, an innocent-sounding term that amounted to a human being burned alive all while “cheers rose from the crowd. The children drew nearer and nearer. Nearer to the figure writhing on the ground. Grotesque, smoldering magnet. The spectators were positively mesmerized, dazzled by the brilliance of their handiwork. Drunk with power” (76-77).

“Drunk with power” is an accurate phrase to describe the youth of Guguletu as they are portrayed in the novel. Aided by the encouragement of their peers and leaders, the Young Lions are a ruthless force that Mandisa maintains “had tackled the much feared-feared enemy, the big *gogga* that had for so long trampled on their parents and on the parents of those parents. And theirs before them” (76). Mandisa goes on to further lament, “Our children fast descended into barbarism. With impunity, they broke with old tradition and crossed the boundary between that which separates human beings from beasts. Humaneness, *Ubuntu*, took flight...it went and buried itself where none of us would easily find it again” (76). This environment that encouraged barbaric acts created the “beasts” that, in turn, became the dehumanized apartheid subjects who will later murder an innocent white woman fighting for human rights -- their human rights.

Mandisa claims that the youths like Mxolisi are not to be blamed entirely for the murder.

⁸ Necklacing is when a person places a tire around another person’s neck, pours petrol, a flammable liquid into the tire (the outer part of a wheel) and then ignites the tire. Many of the leaders did not condemn the practice and instead applauded the method (Magona 76-77).

There are factors, such as the environment, that are outside the youths' control, and the apartheid environment led Mxolisi in a straight and narrow path to the perfect opportunity to act as an agent and kill an innocent woman, targeted for the color of her skin and for no other reason. The same environment that encourages violence turns around and points accusing fingers when Mxolisi commits the crime.

Before Mxolisi kills the white woman, the people in his township consider him a good person, but when he murders the woman all the good he did before no longer is recognized. An essential moment in the narrative is when Mandisa provides an account of how in the eyes of others her son transforms from savior to killer, no longer having the support of a community who encourages his violent behavior. Mandisa reveals:

To everyone he was a hero. People I didn't know from a bar of soap stopped me. Young and old, they stopped me on the street to tell me: Mother of Mxolisi. Your child is really a child to be proud of. In this day and age, when children do everything but what is decent. We really thank the Lord for you. Yes, we really thank Him because of the son He has given you! Some boys've dragged a girl over there...no one thought to intervene...thanks to Mxolisi, the girl had escaped certain rape. And who knows what they would have done to her after that...This boy of yours has a good heart. (162-63)

The same people that praise him for saving a woman and praise Mandisa for raising a good son, now look at Mxolisi as a murderer. In the letter to the white mother, Mandisa claims the same townspeople who praised her son before now call her "Mother of the beast. Mother of the serpent. The puffadder's mother. Satan's mother" (115). Mxolisi is

no longer the savior he once was; all the good in him was taken away when he was renamed as a murderer. In order to combat her son's newfound names, Mandisa divulges information about Mxolisi's past so that she can attempt to re-humanize her son, or show that underneath the vicious mask he is wearing is an innocent child who is "One boy. Lost" (210). Mxolisi should not take all the blame because he is a product of his environment, and not acting on his own desires as an individual.

The novel suggests that like many of the youth of his time Mxolisi exists as an agent. He is a tool that can be used by the leaders, individuals who declare, "Make the country ungovernable" (73) and who are "aided and abetted by adults we [the community] calls leaders. People whose words and deeds we emulate without question" (73). Buying into the notion that the only way to achieve change is through violence (as history has suggested), he acts violently at the expense of his humanity, similar to Tsotsi and the crimes he commits. Tsotsi has lost his humanity because the laws of the apartheid institution have taken his mother from him, and losing his mother has forced him into a life of violence where he must kill in order to survive. As long as Mxolisi can be used as part of a collective force to act out apartheid crimes, it does not matter that he is a human being with the capacity to feel, or feel for others beside white people. Mxolisi, as agent, ceases to exist as an individual; instead, "The group opens up and swallows him. In their midst, he is lost. You couldn't tell him from the others now" (11). Mandisa's use of the word "lost" has a double meaning. Physically, Mxolisi is lost in the huge crowd, a representation of the force and power the youth of Guguletu have, as well as the lack of authority figures to keep them under control. Once Mxolisi crosses the threshold and is "swallowed" into the crowd, he becomes a different person, an invincible man willing to

be a part of the collective whole.

Just as Mxolisi is physically lost he is also mentally and emotionally lost, a contributing factor that has led to his particular development into an isolated and malleable young man. Mandisa describes Mxolisi's childhood:

He grew as though he were a sapling during a summer of bountiful rains. As fast as he shot up physically, other aspects of his development were even more spectacular. At two, he could say things in a way anyone could understand, not just his mama. By that age he knew more words than children twice his age. He ran the day he learnt to walk. He was such a marvel child that everyone loved him. (145)

The information Mandisa reveals about Mxolisi's childhood serves to reflect how the child's environment and the traumatizing events he endures when he is young shapes him into the man he is today. A key scene in the novel that negates Mandisa's earlier claims of the marvel of her son's abilities comes when Mxolisi unintentionally kills two of his childhood friends, not firsthand, but when he reveals their hiding place shouting, "Here they are! Here they are, in the wardrobe!" (148). A simple mistake -- a child thinking he has found the two boys in a game of hide-and-seek -- causes the two boys to try and run away. They do not escape and Mxolisi watches as the police shoot his beloved friends. Through witnessing his friends' murder, and associating his words with their deaths, he experiences trauma that "zipped his mouth and he would not say one word. Not one word more -- for the next two years" (148). Mxolisi's silence, brought forth through trauma, is similar to the trauma that Tsotsi (David) encounters as a young child when his angry father kicks and kills his dog. This violence marks the beginning of Tsotsi's silence and

his will to forget his past because, like Mxolisi, the trauma of his past is too much to bear and he represses the experience. Though unintentional, Mxolisi's speech is to blame for the death of his two friends.

This incident has a profound effect on Mxolisi's life. Mandisa laments, "For days, then weeks, we waited for him to come back. Return from wherever he had gone. Clearly, he was not with us. Had not been since that day those two boys were killed. We waited. Had he permanently lost his power of speech?" (149). For the next two years Mandisa tries to get Mxolisi to speak, but all her attempts are futile. The boy will not talk, even when he is tricked, an indication of the complication of putting trauma into words (Magona 151). To remain silent is Mxolisi's assertion of power, and his choice to tell the whole story to his mother, and blame others, is what Cheryl Glenn in *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* claims, "enacts strength and power, ideas that make immediate sense to us when we remember our helplessness in the face of someone else's silence...No amount of talking on our part will catalyze their speaking or break their silence sooner than they want" (31).

Mxolisi, as well as Tsotsi, is an embodiment of Glenn's idea. By remaining silent he has the power to control his words; furthermore, he has the power to control how his words affect others. Because his words have killed two of his beloved friends he assumes all control of his future words, deliberately refraining from using them, perhaps so as not to cause further damage to others -- specifically others he loves. If we read Glenn's ideas of silence as empowering into Mxolisi's refusal to tell his mother the whole story of the white woman's death, then it can be said that Mxolisi -- afraid his words might cause harm, as they did as a young child -- will not name the others also responsible for the

murder.

Mxolisi's refusal to tell his story is linked to the TRC and the problem of forcing confessions, often traumatic, on those apartheid subjects who are not ready, nor want to confess their stories. As seen in Tsotsi's behavior, forcing confessions from people not ready to tell their stories often results in violence. Boston pries into Tsotsi's past and pushes him to tell his story; as a result, he is nearly killed. Tsotsi has control over his speech and he fights to keep control over his silence, echoing the African proverb, as referred to in Michael Ignatieff's introduction to Jillian Edelstein's *Truth and Lies: Stories of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*: "Truth is good, but not all truth is good to say" (16).

Later on in Mxolisi's life he will refuse to use his words to hurt others, keeping control of his tongue and protecting people. Toward the end of the novel Mandisa is led on a secret series of car rides until she reaches the house where Mxolisi is hiding from the authorities. Mxolisi begins to confess to his mother the events of the white woman's murder, but when she asks him why he is hiding he contends, "They say I did it, Mama! Believe me I was just one of a hundred people who threw stones at her car...many people stabbed her. I was not the only one there!" (195-97). Thinking back to Mxolisi's past and the trauma he experienced, it is interesting he chooses not to reveal the other people who were involved; instead, he takes the blame himself when he refuses to name others, while others turn their backs on him and call him a murderer. Mxolisi becomes the scapegoat while others remain free. Glenn discusses, through Kenneth Burke, the notion of the scapegoat and how the scapegoat brings people together: "Nothing brings people together, helps them identify, makes them consubstantial faster than a common enemy on

whom they can transfer all their frustrations, disappointments, guilts, and grudges” (50). As the scapegoat for his community’s violent actions, the people feel their best chance at survival is to turn their backs on a man they once encouraged to target the people who impeded the efforts of black resistance.

What is interesting about the use of scapegoats in Magona’s novel is there are two who act in different ways: Mxolisi and the white woman. As discussed earlier, Mxolisi becomes the scapegoat when the white woman is murdered because somebody has to take the blame, even if there were “Hundreds of people who threw stones at her car” (195). If Glenn’s ideas are to be applied to the white woman’s situation, then the idea of the collective identity, or the collective force banding together to act out the killing, is appropriate for how the murder takes place. The white woman, or in a larger context the white population, exists only as a target whose job is to bring the mob together where they move as a whole and not as individuals. And unfortunately for the white woman, the mob of angry youths can take out their frustrations, disappointments, and grudges on her even though she does not deserve to die. Unknowingly, when the white woman crosses the border into Guguletu and into a lawless land, she crosses into a different mentality -- a different way of living -- where “Violence is rife. It has become a way of life” (45).

Though Mandisa laments the white woman’s death, she does not believe her son is the only one to blame; instead, she blames the white woman as well, and in a larger context she blames the western world for filling the white woman with a belief that she could be safe even though “she believes in what she is doing” (2), and therefore has no “inborn sense of fear” (2). Mandisa asks, “Was she blind not to see there were no white people in this place?” (2) and “Did she not feel awkward, a fish out of water, here?” (3).

Mandisa is suggesting the white woman is partly to blame for her own death because “To people like your daughter, doing good in this world is an all-consuming, fierce and burning compulsion” (2) that has blinkered her perception of apartheid violence *and* has given her a false sense of security. Perhaps the woman’s false sense of security develops as a result of what Mandisa claims of white people: “White people live in their own areas and mind their own business – period” (3), which suggests the white woman may have not understood the danger she was placing herself in when she arrived in Guguletu because the western world (the U.S., primarily) “minded their own business” (2) while the residents of Guguletu “live here, fight and kill each other. That is our business” (3). Everyday crimes and acts of violence go unnoticed, as indicative in Mandisa’s contention, “You don’t see big words on every page of the newspapers because one of us kills somebody, here in the townships” (3). But when that somebody is a white woman, an American student, the U.S. begins to pay attention, and the story “was all over the place. Pictures too” (3).

The sad case rests with the fact that the white woman, under her false sense of security, and given every chance in life to want to do good for others, is killed because her killer, “Had already seen his tomorrow...long have the men been waiting for the chance at a day’s wage...but chance has been busy in that other world...the white world. Where it dwelt, at home among those other beings, who might or might not come with offers of a day’s employ” (203). In essence, the white woman’s chance at doing good is juxtaposed against Mxolisi’s chance at a good life that may never come.

The letter Mandisa writes to the victim’s mother is a one-sided monologue, and the victim’s mother can only hear Mandisa’s words and is never given the opportunity to

speak back or confess any emotions. Throughout the novel Mandisa often breaks through the narrative (in the form of her letter to the white mother) to come forth and question the motives of the white woman in order to grasp why she would come to Guguletu, a place where “only black people live” (3) and “where she [the woman] does not belong” (1).

This one-sided monologue is significant because the victim’s mother is not allowed to participate in the conversation, and instead must listen to Mandisa’s confession.

Magona’s novel seems to be implying that a two-way communication is not what is important; what is significant is that the white mother, a symbol for the larger western world as a whole, must listen and not participate in an environment where she does not and cannot understand how to co-exist in South Africa’s black townships, a place where Mandisa asserts, “white people mind their own business while we live here, fight, and kill each other” (3). Mandisa’s assertion that white people “mind their own business” (3) is a notion that also exists in Fugard’s *Tsotsi*, and demonstrates how, as I suggest, the white population chose to turn a blind eye to apartheid happenings as long as the black apartheid subjects did not bother them. *Tsotsi* reflects on the term “city” when he comments that Terminal Place is “the backyard because of its relationship to the rest of the city, which was the white man’s world” (72).

But while Mandisa’s letter seems to suggest that white people have no place in the black townships, the novel itself contradicts that assertion. Though readers do not hear the victim’s mother’s side of the story, or understand her feelings, the novel’s intended audience is the western world because Mandisa speaks to a white mother and deliberates on why a white woman would feel safe coming to a place like Guguletu and trying to bring about good change. This note-worthy contradiction drives home one of the novel’s

central arguments: the western world must first understand the apartheid situation, its atrocities, and its people before it can help foster change. Mandisa does not write the letter to the victim's mother so she can discuss what has happened. Mandisa only wants to explain how and why such an atrocity could happen and to show that there are more people to blame than just a young boy holding a knife. More importantly, Mandisa implies that the killing is everyone's fault – Mxolisi's and the white woman's doing. One for having the mindset of generalizing all white people as targets and the other for having the naïve mindset that she could travel to a different environment and expect the same treatment she would receive back in her native country.

CHAPTER THREE

DISGRACE AND WITHOLDING SPEECH: RESISTANCE AND AUTHORIAL
SILENCE

J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* tells the story of David Lurie's shame and the move he makes towards understanding his sexual relationship with one of his students, Melanie, through the rape of his daughter, Lucy, a white lesbian farm owner living in South Africa's countryside. After Lurie is asked to leave the university in which he teaches part-time as an adjunct professor, he moves to the farm that Lucy runs with the help of her assistant Petrus, a black man who buys some of Lucy's land and, in turn, gains power in the "new" South Africa. When Lucy is raped and Lurie is attacked by three black assailants, they must come to terms with what has happened to them. As evidenced through Lucy's actions, the two must try and forget what has happened to them, or at least not resist their situation.

This reluctance to let go of past events and move forward disturbs David Lurie, the white male protagonist. Set in post-apartheid South Africa, the novel's action is focused on two acts of rape: David's rape of Melanie and the gang rape of Lucy. Both Lurie and Lucy will not tell their sides of their stories, and they refuse to offer a confession. Lurie and Lucy's silence, then, is intentional, and Coetzee facilitates their silence by not offering a glimpse into Lucy's interior and focalizing the novel through Lurie, a character who truly does not know himself. He is a man who cannot make sense of his thoughts and feelings and therefore cannot find a way to tell his story. What I suggest in my reading of *Disgrace* is that Lucy's and Lurie's silence is about the

impossibility of speech in post-apartheid South Africa and the transferal of power (that results in violence) from white hands to black hands.

Coetzee has been criticized for his depiction of black on white crime. Carine Mardorossian contends that “South African critics and reviewers were outraged by its dark and pessimistic assessment of postapartheid race relations” (72) and that the novel “Perpetuates the worst nightmares and clichés about South Africa as a violent society” (73). What this review fails to acknowledge is that the novel is not speaking for South Africa’s race relations as a whole; instead, readers are meant to experience the subjectivity of David Lurie’s thoughts, as he would experience post-apartheid South Africa as a man trying to come to terms with a role-reversal that situates black power over white control. In this chapter I will explore the ways in which this transfer of power takes place, and I will discuss the effects this transfer of power has on the characters in the novel, specifically in the way characters are silenced. Furthermore, I suggest that Lucy’s silence allows her to play a part in the reforming of the “new” South Africa, an act that coincides with Nadine Gordimer’s notions of what must be done to assist this transformation: “They [blacks] must determine what will be the priorities...whites must be willing to follow” (378). With this idea in mind, I suggest that white control must yield to black power, and whites, as Gordimer suggests, must be prepared to follow and support the black effort to rebuild the new South Africa. Where whites have been accustomed to power, they must be *willing* to let go of control.

Though I do not feel the white voice must be absent to bring about this change, I do suggest that only when whites can step down and compromise their own power will there be any sort of reconciliation in South Africa. Furthermore, I explore the idea of

Lucy's silence as empowering, not only for her, but also for her father David Lurie, an idea that Cheryl Glenn discusses in her work *Unspoken*, in which she claims, "People leave some things unsaid in order to be able to say others" (153), a notion that will lead to an understanding of Lucy's character and offer insight into her motives. Lucy's silence becomes the impetus for Lurie's moral transformation that ultimately pushes him to acknowledge that what he did to Melanie was wrong. In essence, Lucy's silence leads to Lurie's apology. Lurie, resists the changes that are happening all around him, and he cannot understand the transformation that is taking place, both politically and personally. However, when he experiences post-apartheid violence personally, he begins to make sense of the rape of his student, and begins to take the first steps towards reconciliation, an action that can lend to reading that David Lurie models the moral transformation – of empathy and understanding – that South Africa must undergo over time.

The political landscape, as represented in the novel, reflects a different set of terms than both *Tsotsi*, and even *Mother to Mother*, which was published nearly around the same time as *Disgrace*. But whereas *Tsotsi* reflects the political tensions in the 1950s, and *Mother to Mother* tells a story at the end of apartheid, *Disgrace* provides an account of what it means to live in post-apartheid South Africa, and the novel articulates the resistance of a changing world, not only in the tension between the old and the new, a notion that also manifests itself in Fugard's and Magona's novels, but in many different forms as well. What is most significant in this novel is the resistance between the shifting ground of political power in a "lawless" land where white privilege is not present. Lurie cannot accept this shift, but Lucy understands this all too well, and the reason she remains silent and resists her father's urging her to tell her story to the authorities may be

that she acknowledges that Western law is not recognized in the country. Lucy comments, “Wake up, David. This is the country. This is Africa” (124). In post-apartheid South Africa, where democracy has been established, Grant Farred claims, “*Disgrace* portrays a world in which democracy has produced not (more) responsible citizens, but blasé South Africans. Democracy has created not accountability to the state and its functioning, and subjects in their turn demanding accountability, but alienation, citizens living their own brand of post-(apartheid) faithlessness” (357). Lucy’s omitting the whole truth undermines Lurie’s belief that Western law will protect him in a climate that does not uphold the standard, white-privileged law that Lurie was subject to in the city.

But before I move into my analysis of how power is transformed in the country, particularly on Lucy’s farm, it is important to understand Lurie’s world, his place in post-apartheid South Africa. A closer look into Lurie’s white-centered world will yield some sort of understanding for his action and thought processes. Consider Lurie’s state before he moves to the country and shares Lucy’s small farm. He is an adjunct professor forced to teach a subject he is not passionate about. He considers his students ignorant, calling them “Post-Christian, posthistorical, postliterate, they might as well have hatched from eggs yesterday” (32). David’s assessment of his students suggests the new generation of students could care less about earlier times, especially the Romantic poets that Lurie offers as the one special-field course professors at Cape Technical University are allowed to teach, the course that Lurie claims “is good for morale” (3). It is significant that Lurie teaches a course on Romantic poets, because Romantic poets are said to be passionate. The passion of the Romantic poets is juxtaposed against the lack of passion that Lurie

experiences in his students, and he feels lost and emasculated and contends that “[h]e is more out of place than ever” (4) and that “[o]vernight he had become a ghost” (7).

It is appropriate that Lurie compares himself to a ghost. Lurie thrived in his younger years, but he cannot find his place in present time. In fact, Lurie’s attempt to live by the old codes of his life, specifically in dealing with women, propels him into a scandal that results in his “forced” resignation from the university. In his younger years, Lurie could have any woman he wanted just on the basis of his attractiveness. As he ages, Lurie comes to realize that he no longer has the magnetism he once had, but where his looks have faded his desire has not. He still, according to himself, is a “servant of Eros” (89). This immense desire is what leads Lurie down the wrong path because now he has to pursue women, and he finds that he does not know how to pursue a woman in his new state. He notes, “If he wanted a woman he had to learn to pursue her; often, in one way or another, to buy her” (7), which he does with Soraya, his weekly and “exotic” prostitute.

Soraya is significant in the narrative in the way she is used to demonstrate Lurie’s internal conflicts and his inability to distinguish love from desire. When Lurie purchases Soraya’s services, she pretends to “in love” with him as part of her job, and even though he recognizes that “No doubt with other men she becomes another woman” (3), he still believes that she has feelings for him, on the account that desire is a two-way connection, when in fact his desire for Soraya is one-sided. When Lurie tracks her down and enters into her private life, she cuts off all communication with him – evidence that she acknowledges her “desire” for Lurie is part of her job; unfortunately for Lurie, it is not so easy for him to comprehend.

Lurie, then, cannot be trusted to understand the limits of his love and desire because he clearly cannot find the distinction between the two. It is in this failure that Lurie comes to sexually assault Melanie Isaacs. Even though Lurie realizes that she is young (younger than his own daughter), his desire for Melanie is too overwhelming. He thinks: “A child! No more than a child! What am I doing? Yet his heart lurches with desire” (20), and he recognizes what he is doing is wrong, but he justifies his actions with passion, declaring, “A woman’s beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it. She does not own herself. Beauty does not own itself” (16). At this point in the narrative Lurie acknowledges his male privilege, and he exerts the privilege, his white power, over Melanie, against his better judgment. What this declaration translates to, or at least through Lurie’s eyes, is that as a woman Melanie has no right to her own beauty and therefore cannot turn away from Lurie’s sexual advancements.

In essence, Melanie must submit to Lurie’s desires because he has the desires of a man, and as Rosmary Nagy contends, “As far as he [Lurie] is concerned, he was not responsible for his actions: he was simply a ‘servant of Eros’, following male sexual instinct the way a male dog whines at a bitch in heat” (712) and that “he continues to believe that he is not really responsible for what happened with Melanie” (713) or, as I will add, he doesn’t feel responsible because he cannot make sense of what he has done. Furthermore, Lucy Graham claims that “David speculates that ‘beauty does not belong to itself,’ and thus justifies his underlying assumption, as Melanie’s educator, that she is somehow his property” (438). Lurie’s mindset, situated within the power of white privilege, will not allow him to take full responsibility for his rape. In his eyes, his sexual

assault was “Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core” (25).

Eventually, after some time, Melanie tells the story of her sexual assault to authorities, and she files a formal complaint against Lurie. Although this story is told, it never reaches the readers, and this silence is achieved through Lurie’s refusal to hear the charges filed against him. What complicates his hearing is that he does not defend himself and resists hearing her story, and he surrenders by saying, “I have no defense” (41). Lurie’s refusal suggests that he does not want to acknowledge that he was wrong and give the committee what it wants: a confession, not a statement that he is guilty, but public acknowledgement that he understands that what he did to Melanie was wrong. Lurie challenges the committee by arguing, “Frankly, what you want from me is not a response but a confession” (51). Lurie is not wrong in his assumption. His jury does want a confession and not a response. One committee member claims, “There is a difference between pleading guilty to a charge and admitting you were wrong, and you know that” (54), and even though Lurie is pleading guilty to the charges, Eleni Coundourotis recognizes the jury wants to ensure that Lurie’s apology is heartfelt, claiming, “Neither his straightforward admission of guilt nor his ‘confession’ are viewed as sincere enough” (861). In J. M. Coetzee’s essay “Confessions and Double Thoughts,” he explores the idea of confession and claims, “The end of confession is to tell the truth to and for oneself” (230). If we are to apply Coetzee’s assertion to *Disgrace*, then, the committee’s encouragement of Lurie’s confession will only yield what Dostoevsky indicates, as cited by Coetzee: “The self cannot tell the truth of itself to itself and come to rest without the possibility of self-deception” (130). Therefore, Lurie will not offer a sincere confession

because, according to Dostoevsky, he has not found a state of “faith and grace” (“Double Thoughts,” 230).

Furthermore, with regard to self-deception, Lurie cannot offer a sincere confession because he does not understand that what he did to Melanie was wrong. Believing that he was a slave of Eros, and therefore cannot be fully responsible (or guilty) for his actions, he refuses a confession, on the grounds that the confession would mean nothing to him, and as Sue Kossew avers, “Refusing an empty confession, one that is not sincere, results in David being asked to leave the University” (159). Lurie understands, “Private life is public business. They wanted a spectacle: breast-beating, remorse, tears if possible. A TV show, in fact. I wouldn’t oblige” (Coetzee 66). All that Lurie will reveal is “My case rests on the rights of desire...I was a servant of Eros...it was a god who acted through me” (89). Therefore, Lurie’s inability to accept responsibility for his actions, claiming he cannot help his desire because it is a man’s nature, keeps him from understanding that his desire for Melanie led him to sexually assault her.

Lurie’s denial of confession combined with his refusal to hear Melanie’s charges, silences Melanie, supporting Lucy Graham’s assertion that “The experience of the violated body is absent, hidden from the reader” (433). Because readers never hear her story, we must make sense of the rape through the few details Lurie provides, which as mentioned earlier, we cannot trust as a reliable source.

But Melanie’s silence (made possible through Lurie’s refusal to confess) is different from the silence that Lucy adopts; whereas Melanie confesses, Lucy does not, which makes her silence an act of empowerment. Silence in *Disgrace*, in the form of withholding speech, becomes what Cheryl Glenn discusses as a form of communication,

where “No matter where it is dictated or how it is directed, silence is recognized as silence” (10). In the novel, silence proves to be a complicating force that drives a wedge between Lucy and her father, specifically when he misreads her silence, believing “she would rather hide her face, and he knows why. Because of the disgrace. Because of the shame” (115). Lurie’s misreading coincides with Glenn’s notion that “Often, silencing is an imposition of weakness upon a normally speaking body” (xix). But what Lurie fails to acknowledge is that silence can be empowering, and Glenn goes on to say, “Silence can function as a strategic position of strength” (xix). Where Lurie sees weakness he fails to see there is also strength. Lucy’s silence remains strong despite Lurie’s incessant pleas that she speak and publicly acknowledge what has happened to her, even though she maintains, “It is my business, mine alone” (112).

Lurie’s pleas for Lucy’s confession can be juxtaposed against his own refusal to confess. In a similar way, both Lurie and Lucy withhold their speech and therefore have the power over their stories. What is significant to note here, however, is that once again Lurie fails to recognize that he places himself outside the realm of standards that he tries to force on everyone else. He does not understand that he is asking Lucy to do the same thing that he refuses to do when his university asks him to confess. And, just as confused as the committee is by Lurie’s silence, Lucy’s withholding of speech, in Lurie’s eyes, makes her inconceivable to him. Louise Bethlehem notes, “Her [Lucy’s] refusal to disclose her suffering renders Lucy enigmatic, incomprehensible, he does not understand...her willful silence becomes part of her strangeness” (170). Much of the conflict surrounding the novel revolves around Lurie’s attempts to understand his daughter’s silence even though, as Lucy contends, “I can’t talk any more, David, I just

can't because of who you are and who I am, I can't. I'm sorry" (155). Lucy seems to be insinuating that Lurie will never understand her on the grounds that he, formerly situated in a position of male privilege, cannot understand her because they neither share the same principles, specifically in their treatment of others (both animals and humans) nor do they occupy the same space in post-apartheid South Africa – Lurie, a white male, and Lucy, a lesbian female, have different mindsets: Lucy can be read as a character who believes the solution to negative post-apartheid relations is through compromise – silence and giving up power; Lurie would rather seek vengeance claiming, "Vengeance is like fire. The more it devours, the hungrier it gets" (112).

Though it is Lucy's choice to remain silent, she must be willing to come to the realization that her story will not be hers alone. Lucy Graham asserts, "But if female silence in Coetzee's previous novels could be linked to 'the power to withhold,' Lucy's refusal to speak about her experience certainly does not empower her and means that her story belongs to her rapists" (442). Lucy's refusal to tell her story will allow her rapists to escape without any consequences, and they will be free to "make up stories to justify themselves" (158), as Lurie says to Lucy, but what Graham fails to recognize is that it is Lucy's choice to remain silent, and that Lucy has a reason for withholding speech. I suggest that Lucy's silence is a result of her understanding of her situation in post-apartheid South Africa, a place in which she has no control or power over her circumstance. If she is to remain in this political climate, she must submit – and her actions lend to the reading that she acknowledges her limited options and chooses to not get the police force involved.

Her personal story will always be hers, but her willed silence cannot remain out of the public eye, a notion that echoes in Lurie's words: "Like a stain the story is spreading across the district. Not her story to spread but theirs: they are its owners. How they put her in her place, how they showed her what a woman was for" (115). Although Lurie notes the shortcomings of the police force claiming, "The best is, you save yourself, because the police are not going to save you, not any more, you can be sure" (100), his ironic statement shows that he is clinging desperately onto old and otherwise useless ideology. When they investigate the house for clues Lurie recalls, "The policemen avert their eyes and pass on" (109), yet he resists Lucy's silence and encourages her to put her trust in the police force and into a system that may have functioned appropriately in the city.

This justice does not apply in the rural countryside where Lucy, a white lesbian without a husband, lives alone on her farm. She has little power or control over anything else but what she can grow on that land. Her only power rests with her land, and in South Africa power has always been tied up in the land, and the seed of apartheid was planted long before its dated inception. Paul Maylam discusses the 1913 Land Act and how black tenant farmers were forced off their land. The law also regulated land and allowed for natives to own a small percentage of land, and only in certain areas of the country (148). Situated in my argument, this act is significant in that it marked the first instance of the transfer of power from native hands to white hands. When Lucy is raped, her rape can be seen as black power being reinstated at the loss of white control. In Maria Lopez's article "Can We Be Friends Here?" she discusses this idea of property as power, specifically in the beginning stages of democracy in South Africa. She asserts, "In the first years of

South African democracy, the existing system of property in land, together with the power relations associated with it, was being superseded and reformed...the effects of these measures were especially felt in rural areas, where everything revolves around the property and distribution of land” (925). It seems fitting that where black tenant farmers lost control of land many years ago, and in turn lost power, that Lucy’s black assailants enter onto her property and regain their lost power. On her land, Lucy and Lurie are violated, their possessions are taken, and they are left afraid of future attacks; in essence, they have lost control and are left powerless over their situation, a complete role-reversal.

In relation to Lucy’s situation, the main motive for her rape can be read as to shame her, to reduce her status and take away her power all together. She is forced to bear the shame of the entire white race, and through her rape, white power is taken, and she submits to black power. Now that her power has been taken, and she recognizes that white privilege has no place in post-apartheid South Africa, she understands that in order for a white woman to remain on the land she must become a part of a patriarchal institution that will position her as inferior, even if that means she has to “Start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity...like a dog” (205). Rosemary Nagy acknowledges this loss of power when she asserts, “But in her view, to be reduced to nothing and to start again is the price for the past and the future. The reversal is stark” (714). But Lucy doesn’t view this submission as an entirely demeaning and humiliating manner, unlike her father who utters, “How humiliating. Such high hopes, and to end like this” (205). Nagy’s acknowledgement of the reversal is vital in not only Lucy’s eyes, but Lucy’s hired help as well, a black man named Petrus who Lucy claims, “Is my new assistant. In

fact, since March, co-proprietor. Quite a fellow” (62). Whereas Lucy sees Petrus as a friend and an equal, and who shares in Petrus’s celebration of gaining land, declaring, “This is a big day in Petrus’s life” (128), Lurie never trusts Petrus and blames Petrus, in part, for Lucy’s rape. He argues: “Petrus is not an innocent party, Petrus is *with* them” (133). Lurie does not agree with Lucy’s submission, especially to a man who may or may not have played a part in her rape. Lucy, however, understands what she must do in order to survive: she must give Petrus her land.

In *Disgrace*, losing land is equivalent to losing power, and while the land is not physically taken away when Lucy is raped, Petrus will take it eventually. Petrus occupies an ambiguous space in the novel, especially as post-apartheid society is concerned. He is a living representation of South Africa’s political transformation. Once hired help and a tenant farmer, he begins to rise from his position and develops into a self-sufficient landowner who will become Lucy’s protector and owner of her land, which is ironic because it is implied that Petrus is behind Lucy and Lurie’s attack and could have encouraged the act so Lucy would give up her land in exchange for safety. On the day of Lucy’s and Lurie’s attack, Petrus is gone and Lucy screams, “Petrus! But there is no sign of Petrus” (92). Similarly, Lurie also screams for Petrus, “Shouting as loudly as he can” (93), only to discover, “Of Petrus there is no sign” (108). Lurie’s mistrust of Petrus can be read in Lucy’s neighbor’s words, “Not one of them you can trust” (109).

Though Lurie does not trust Petrus and encourages Lucy to turn away from Petrus claiming, “For God’s sake...one way or another, it was he who brought in those men in the first place” (133), she knows she must sacrifice her land and her authority, give up all her power, and give it to Petrus, the new power-holder of the new South Africa. This

transfer of power and property from white hands is an example of what Nadine Gordimer declares in her speech “Living in the Interregnum,” that for the new South Africa to emerge whites must stand back and let blacks rebuild the country on their own. She declares: “Struggle must be firmly in black hands. They must determine what will be the priorities...whites must be willing to follow” (378). Particularly in Lucy’s situation, she must be willing to follow and submit to Petrus’s will. When she does give up her land to Petrus, this transaction will, as Lopez claims, “highlight the end of white privilege over the land” (927). Coinciding with Gordimer’s assertions, white power has no place on the road to recovery and it certainly does not have authority in post-apartheid South Africa.

Lucy’s position in post-apartheid South Africa is to be used, and she exists as a figure who is subjugated by the men in the novel. Lucy is raped because she is white; she must give up her land because she is a woman. When she gives up her land, she does so because she needs security from both, and the only person that can provide her with the protection she needs is Petrus. Petrus knows that as a woman, a white woman, she cannot live safely without his help. When talking to Lurie, Petrus is confident that he can protect her, arguing, “Lucy is safe here. It’s all right. You can leave her, she is safe” (138). Though Petrus assures Lurie that his daughter will be safe, Lurie does not believe Petrus’s reassurances and disputes Petrus’s claims, declaring, “But she is not safe, Petrus! Clearly she is not safe!...who says it is all right?” (138). Petrus goes on to allege: “I say” (138). The text suggests that Petrus not only has control over the land, but that he also has control over Lucy’s safety, and that Lucy will be safe only when she gives up her land and her rights. In essence, she is the catalyst of the transferal of power from white hands to black hands and she must be silent in the process.

Lucy understands that she must lose everything to find a place in the country. She must start from scratch, even if that means she will have to submit to patriarchal rule by becoming Petrus's third wife, an act that would contradict her lesbian sexuality directly. As the sacrifice (or the scapegoat), Lucy knows that in order to move forward she must give back what her race took away many years ago: land. She understands that in order to exist she will have to compromise. Sue Kossew declares, "It is Lucy's acknowledgement, too, of her having to share the land, to make compromises, that enables her to take tentative steps towards overcoming her disgrace and finding a way to live in a future South Africa that not entail just guilt and punishment" (161). Because Lucy has adopted this new mindset of guilt and shame from being white, she feels that she must compromise in order to find her way. She will give Petrus the land, and agree to marry him, because she is without power. This notion of compromise seems to be one-sided, and really can only be granted by Petrus. He is the one who will marry Lucy. By consenting, she will, as Kossew claims, "Acknowledge the power of African law rather than Western tradition and law" (161). This compromise will result in the complete loss of her former identity, and in exchange for her silence and her compromise, she will be safe, but she will no longer be the independent woman that she was.

Lucy becomes a scapegoat who must be sacrificed in order to usher in a new day, or in the context of *Disgrace*, the new South Africa. If one reads Lucy's silence as sacrifice, she is forced to bear the sins of her race, physically through her rape, all while adopting that it is her destiny, or her duty to atone for these sins. She accepts her "punishment," and she feels responsible for not only for her race's past sins/actions but also for the future of South Africa. Her adopted mindset, that she must pay and that the

“debt collectors” must collect, shows that Lucy may understand that to challenge the new order would be futile and reckless and would hinder change and progress. In order to understand this reading of Lucy’s adopted mindset and her willing to adopt the role of scapegoat, consider the following passage:

I think they do rape. I think I am in their territory. They have marked me. They will come back for me. What if that is the price one has to pay for staying on? They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying? Perhaps that is what they tell themselves. (158)

It is because Lucy can justify her rape for the atonement of white crime that ends up justifying her silence, or at least from her reasoning. Lurie, however, is not easily persuaded, nor convinced that her sacrifice can, in essence: “expiate the crimes of the past by suffering in the present” (112). Her response to Lurie’s confusion and to his desperate pleas for her to defend herself, concludes her final thoughts on in the debate with her father: “Until you make an effort to see that, I can’t help you” (112).

What Lucy seems to be suggesting here is that Lurie has been misreading her all along, and unlike her, he cannot see the bigger picture, or the reason for her sacrifice. Lucy reduces herself to something that is “collected.” She no longer has white privilege and belittles herself by contending, “But you are right, I meant nothing to them, nothing. I could feel it” (158). In a sense, she is correct; she as Lucy Lurie meant nothing to her rapists. However, she fails to recognize that she can be used, and not just as an outlet for sexual satisfaction. In that respect, she sees no self-worth other than her paying the price for white sin. In her rapist’s eyes, her white body is used for much more than for sexual

gratification, or a “heat of the moment” act. It can be implied that Lucy’s assailants rape her not to seek revenge but to assert their control. Lucy believes she is raped for something that has happened in the past; however, her rapists have an agenda in mind and a much more specific role for body.

Lurie begins to touch on this agenda after he discovers that Lucy is pregnant by one of her rapists. He contemplates, “They were not raping, they were mating. What kind of child can seed like that give life to, seed driven into the woman not in love but in hatred, mixed chaotically, meant to soil her, to mark her, like a dog’s urine?” (199). It is important to dissect some of the terminology in Lurie’s thoughts in order to arrive at some understanding of what Lurie comes to see as the purpose of his daughter’s rape. Lurie suggests that the rapists were not raping, but instead were mating. If one rapes, the act is not generally to produce offspring; it is to exert power over someone else, to take what is not theirs.

To contrast, mating is much more than raping; it is reproducing, and brings two forces together. Therefore, Lucy’s primary role in post-apartheid South Africa, as evidenced by her pregnancy, is for communion. Her body, as a vehicle, will be used to mediate between the two races, as well as birth the ideology of the new South Africa, that the power now belongs to black South Africans. So when Lucy claims, “It was so personal. It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set eyes on them” (156), she is right that the act was personal. Though they had never met her, they had met oppression and had felt, and still feel, what it is like to be oppressed, to be the subjugated race. Furthermore, the act was personal because “as a forward looking

people” the rapists are taking back the power that was once theirs, and just as they have felt the effects of apartheid personally, they sought to force the same feelings on their victims through personal acts of violence.

Lucy’s silence then is brought on by her feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness, but her refusal to confess her story leaves Lurie even more powerless. The three rapists are not the only men who can redefine Lucy’s story. Because Lucy refuses to tell what happened that day on the farm, Lurie is left to create her story, where he imagines that he becomes the man:

Lucy was frightened, frightened near to death. Her voice choked, she could not breathe, her limbs went numb. *This is not happening*, she said to herself as the men forced her down; *it is just a dream, a nightmare*. While the men, for their part, drank up her fear, reveled in it, did all they could to hurt her, to menace her, to heighten her terror. *Call the dogs!* they said to her. *Go on, call your dogs! No dogs? Then let us show you dogs!* (160)

Through this imagining of the horrific incident, readers begin to shape some understanding of how Lucy’s rape happened. Lurie, being fascinated with Romantic poets – specifically Byron – has a habit of refashioning stories, as evident in his long-standing project of writing an opera with Byron as the main character, most likely because like Byron, who engaged in scandals all throughout his passionate young life, Lurie has a voracious sexual appetite as well, who has an inclination to involve himself in extreme fits of passion where he asserts, “I was a servant of Eros...it was a god who acted through me” (89). Lurie claims he was a “servant” to Eros, which implies that he was helpless to his intense desire for Melanie.

After Lurie comes to terms with his sexual assault on Melanie, he takes steps towards reconciliation, and he does this not only by accepting responsibility for his actions and going to Mr. Isaac's and formerly apologizing for the pain he has caused the family, but also through his internal reflections on Teresa, the middle-aged woman in Lurie's opera. He begins to move towards asking for forgiveness, or questioning whether forgiveness is possible. Lurie exclaims, "Poor Teresa! Poor aching girl! He has brought her back from the grave, promised her another life, and how he is failing her. He hopes she will find it in her heart to forgive him" (214). He has created heartache for Teresa, allowing her lover to leave her. Essentially, he has created this life for her, and whereas before it would not have bothered him that his character, "With her heavy bust, her stocky trunk, her abbreviated legs...the complexion that Byron once loved turned hectic...overtaken with attack of asthma" (181) was alone and unhappy, it does bother him now and he asks himself, "Can he find it in his heart to love this plain, ordinary woman? Can he love her enough to write a music for her? If he cannot what is left for him?" (182).

It is significant that Lurie is forced to imagine Lucy's story in a time when he must come to terms with what he did to Melanie. Throughout most of the novel, Lurie cannot understand Lucy's silence and urges her to seek vengeance on the three rapists. Where he tries to force responsibility on them, he is unable to accept the responsibility of his alleged rape. With each attack on Lucy's silence, he is reminded that, through Lucy's words, "Until you make an effort to see that ["She is not trying to expiate the crimes of the past by suffering in the present" (112)], I can't help you" (112) and "I can't talk any more, David, I just can't because of who you are and who I am, I can't. I'm sorry" (155),

suggesting she cannot reveal her story to her father, because he is responsible for making another woman feel the way she does: alone. Even Bev Shaw knows that Lurie cannot understand because, “Where rape is concerned, no man can be where the woman is” (141). However, Lurie’s mindset of post-apartheid relations begins to change when he is forced to adopt the rapist mentality in an effort to understand his own daughter’s rape. He begins to take responsibility for Melanie’s rape, or at least to acknowledge that he was at fault saying to Bev Shaw, “There was a young woman. But I was a troublemaker in that case” (147).

Because Lurie is left powerless from the rape, unable to help Lucy, he feels ashamed of what he has done and takes the first steps towards reconciliation with Melanie’s father, a God-fearing man who embodies the doctrines of repentance, represented in Mr. Isaacs’s request for Lurie to “Come break bread with us” (167), a way for Lurie to begin to make amends. During this dinner, for the first time, Lurie apologizes for what he has done: “I am sorry for what I took your daughter through. You have a wonderful family. I apologize for the grief I have caused you and Mrs. Isaacs. I ask your pardon” (171), to which Mr. Isaacs replies, “At last you have apologized. You are sorry. The question is, what are we going to do now that we are sorry” (171-72).

Throughout the novel and against his will, Lurie changes even though he remarks, “Only as long as I don’t have to become a better person” (77). Toward the end of the novel, however, Lurie confesses to Mr. Issacs, lending to a reading that the white man in post-apartheid South Africa can reclaim his dignity, something that Lurie struggles to regain, and eventually does – somewhat.

Before the rape Lucy promises Lurie, “No one will ask you to change” (77), and although he resists, he does change. Perhaps the most significant way he shows this change is through his treatment of animals, the silent beings in *Disgrace* who are disposed of when nobody wants them. In order to see how Lurie changes, consider the following conversation between Lurie and Lucy:

Lucy: “This is the only life there is. Which we share with animals...That’s the kind of example I try to follow. To share some of our human privilege with the beasts. I don’t want to come back in another existence as a dog or a pig and have to live as dogs or pigs live under us.” (74)

Lurie: “Yes, I agree, this is the only life there is. As for animals, by all means let us be kind to them. But let us not lose perspective. We are of a different order of creation from the animals. Not higher, necessarily, just different.” (74)

The conversation between Lucy and Lurie sheds light on Lurie’s perspective on the treatment of animals. He is not cruel and he does not hurt animals intentionally, but what he does acknowledge is that he does not consider the mistreatment of animals to be a problem and seems to have the perspective that it is the way of life. When Bev Shaw comments, “Thank you, Mr. Lurie. You have a good presence. I sense that you like animals,” (81) Lurie responds, “Do I like animals? I eat them, so I suppose I must like them, some parts of them” (81). Lurie’s perspective begins to change after Lucy is raped, especially in how he deals with assisting Bev Shaw as she euthanizes the unclaimed dogs in her clinic. Nagy asserts, “He learns the depths of grace when killing animals, doing all

he can for them when their time comes, but nonetheless giving them up” (723). What Nagy is referring to is Lurie’s attitude toward the treatment and disposal of animals.

A pivotal scene that evidences this changed perspective is how Lurie feels for the two sheep that are tied up and to be slaughtered for Petrus’s party. Two days before the sheep are going to be slaughtered, Lurie doesn’t understand why they cannot graze. He asks Petrus, “Those sheep, don’t you think we could tie them where they can graze?” (123). When Petrus declares they are to be slaughtered, Lurie remarks on how the sheep are “destined since birth for the butcher’s knife...they exist to be used” (123), and he then takes it upon himself to untie them so they can graze. When Lurie finds them tied up again he thinks, “It seems a miserable way to spend the last two days of one’s life” (125), and he even considers buying the sheep from Petrus, but he knows that Petrus can buy more sheep to slaughter, but what is most significant is that he feels for the animals and recognizes that “A bond seems to have come into existence between himself and the two Persians, he does not know how” (126). Lurie is disturbed by their impending slaughter and he does not know why and he apologizes, saying, “I’m sorry. I never imagined I would end up talking this way” (127). Although Lurie does not understand the changes happening internally, Laura Wright sheds light on Lurie’s changed feelings. She maintains:

But he [Lurie] seems to be able, at least on a physical level, to empathize with the trauma inflicted on women through rape by recognizing, through his body in the form of its revulsion to meat, the trauma inflicted on animals through slaughter. In a rhetorical context, women are treated “like meat” when they are raped, a metaphor that underscores David’s

subsequent relationships with animals who literally become meat when they are killed. (97)

After Lucy's rape, Lurie is repulsed by meat, a notion that echoes in his words, "I am going to eat this [the meat of the slaughtered sheep]. I am going to eat it and ask for forgiveness afterwards" (131). The fact that Lurie is going to ask for forgiveness is evidence of his moral transformation. Before the rape he declares, "Do I like animals? I eat them, so I suppose I must like them, some parts of them" (81), but now he has a new perspective on meat and though he may not make the lucid connection between slaughtered meat and the treatment of his daughter's body as meat, a notion that echoes in Wright's assertion, "David's aversion to meat begins to take shape, for reasons he cannot fully understand, only after Lucy is raped" (97), he subconsciously makes this association even though he declares, "He does not know how" (126).

Silence as empowering for some becomes a violent process for others, particularly in reviving the speech of the silenced. When external forces try to force internal reflections into the public sphere, most often in the form of confessions, the process often produces violent reactions. Glenn recognizes that the withholding of speech "is not simply what happens when we stop talking. It is more than the mere negative renunciation of language; it is more than simply a condition that we can produce at will" (4). Silence is a form of communication, and it is this misunderstanding that creates a powerless feeling for Lurie. Lucy's silence can be read as a compromise between race relations in post-apartheid South Africa, where in order to find her place she must buy into Lopez's belief that the only solution is "more than just cooperating with one another – it is literally sharing everything (930). If we believe Lopez's assertion here, then it

seems reasonable that Lucy would give away the rights to her land and become a part of Petrus's household, given the fact she may understand white power has no place in South Africa at the present moment. This assumption leads to one possible reason she remains silent, even as the victim, and Lucy's choice to remain silent may indicate the white voice needs to be absent as post-apartheid South Africa moves toward reconciliation.

Tsotsi and *Mother to Mother* support this notion as well, as evidenced by the absence of the white voice entirely. In both novels, the white conscience is filtered through black eyes, as Tsotsi reflects on the white experience: "He looked at the street and the big cars with their white passengers warm inside like wonderful presents in bright boxes, and the carefree, ugly crowds of the pavement, seeing them all with baleful feelings" (87) and Mandisa imagines what the white woman was doing the day of her murder, and she provides an account of a one-sided confession where the white mother is never given the opportunity to respond or to be heard.

Though there are intimations as to what occurred during both Melanie's and Lucy's rape, Coetzee does not offer an inside look into the thoughts of the two female victims. Instead, the action is funneled through Lurie's white conscience, and because readers are left to view particular events and situations through Lurie's interpretations of his actions and the actions of others surrounding him, there can be no definitive understanding of the novel as a whole. Readers (similar to Lurie's struggles of trying to make sense of his surroundings and the actions that occur) must make their own sense of the multiple acts of violence that occur within the novel, and in a larger context, with the political landscape of the "new" South Africa, particularly the transfer of power that takes place under these multiple circumstances. As ambiguous as Coetzee's novel is,

given that there is no definitive reading, the progression of South Africa is even more uncertain, and this uncertainty brings forth the question the novel suggests: can certain stories be told in post-apartheid South Africa? The silence in the novel indicates that at the time in which it was written, similar to many victims' strife concerning the TRC's goals, South Africa's harrowing story of its past is not ready to be told and must instead wait until another time. *Disgrace* tries to force the white voice to surface, but is never successful because Lucy, as Eleni Coundourotis contends, "disclaims dignity because she rejects her white privilege" (857). Perhaps this loss of white power is what is needed to rebuild the "new" South Africa, and the white voice must be withheld in order to usher in this new era of political change.

CONCLUSION

As evidenced in *Tsotsi*, *Mother to Mother*, and *Disgrace*, the nature of confession and the act of confessing one's story is problematic for many of the characters in the novels, especially for the characters who would rather withhold speech than relive past trauma. Some characters do not confess their stories because they cannot understand their situation whereas others refuse to confess because they cannot come to terms with the trauma they have experienced. Furthermore, some characters withhold speech as an act of empowerment, such as Lucy Lurie who understands her situation completely and who has come to terms with her trauma and chooses to remain silent nonetheless, against her father's pleas. In contrast with Tsotsi, who chooses to repress his trauma and to forget his former life so as to move forward, Lucy refuses to confess her story because she realizes that in order to exist as a white woman living in post-apartheid South Africa, she must submit to a black man.

Lucy's submission can be read as the transference of power that takes place in post-apartheid South Africa where whites are no longer privileged and who have little control over what happens to them, a role-reversal and contrast to how blacks were treated during the beginning of apartheid's reign in the 1950s, as evidenced when Tsotsi's childhood is destroyed after a pass raid takes away his mother. Black South Africans can assume a position of control in Lucy's post-apartheid setting because of the era of black resistance seen in *Mother to Mother* that became the impetus for the transference of power (and set-up) that will allow Lucy's rapists to get away with their crime. Lucy understands that she must exchange the little power she had on her country homestead for the security Petrus

can offer her, and to accomplish this, Lucy must not tell her story to the police force and she must not take action against her rapists.

Lucy's choice to remain silent, then, is an expression of the African proverb: "All truth is good, but not all truth is good to say." In post-apartheid South Africa her confession will neither change her situation nor further her cause to put the past behind her and move forward. Lucy's withholding of speech is juxtaposed against Mandisa's need to confess her story to the white mother. The confession, a one-sided monologue, gives Mandisa the opportunity to reveal the truth of the apartheid situation to a white mother whose daughter is murdered for her false sense of security and her misguided notion that she would be safe. Because the white mother is not given the chance to speak, she must instead listen, an example of Glenn's notion that the other aspect of silence is listening. The white mother must not only acknowledge Mandisa's confession, but more importantly, she must also *hear* her story, and therefore must understand (only by listening) that the blame for the white woman's murder should not fall on Mxolisi alone; instead, everybody (both blacks and whites) are responsible for the crime. I suggest that Mandisa's confession serves a specific purpose: emphasizing that not one race should be blamed for South Africa's present situation.

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